# DA---Assurances

## Assurances---West Asia

### 1nc---DA

#### Afghan withdrawal sent mixed signals to US allies, but reassurance through maintaining regional troop deployments is vital to maintain credibility.

Montgomery 21 [Evan; 2021; director of research and studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments; “CREDIBILITY CONTROVERSIES: THE IMPLICATIONS OF AFGHANISTAN FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC”; <https://warontherocks.com/2021/09/credibility-controversies-the-implications-of-afghanistan-for-the-indo-pacific/>] brett TDI

In the end, Washington’s involvement in Afghanistan might not influence the credibility of its other security commitments nearly as much, or as adversely, as many pessimists maintain. But any influence the Afghanistan experience does have might not be as negligible, or as beneficial, as more optimistic assessments suggest. Rather, it could turn out to be a case of mixed signals and missed opportunities. Policymakers have incentives, therefore, to take steps that mitigate potential credibility damage, leverage the withdrawal to realize credibility gains, and avoid a situation where Washington fails to meet the expectations it has set for itself.

What would that look like?

When policymakers fear that a state’s credibility is in doubt, they usually turn to a standard playbook of corrective actions: making public statements that reaffirm existing security commitments, offering quiet assurances to allies and private warnings to adversaries, launching high-profile diplomatic engagements with strategically important partners, ramping up arms sales to keep those partners close, and deploying military forces to show the flag near potential flashpoints. The problem, though, is that these measures are often designed to combat skepticism about interests and questions about resolve, not questions about capabilities and skepticism about strength. Addressing the latter set of concerns requires a very different set of actions: successfully employing forces in operations that are relevant to the commitments in question, holding exercises that simulate those operations, conducting experiments that showcase emerging technologies or the novel application of existing technologies, and deliberately releasing information about new or sensitive systems through exhibitions of various sorts.

After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, there are likely to be fewer questions about what the United States is willing to do in other theaters when push comes to shove and more questions about what it can accomplish against its rivals when put to the test. If so, policymakers should not expect measures that are aimed at improving perceptions of U.S. interests and resolve to repair or improve American credibility, at least not on their own. Instead, they should focus their attention on practical steps to create and communicate military power — two closely related but distinct objectives.

#### The plan decks allied confidence. Unilateral withdrawal sparks fear of general decline, AND undermines regional diplomacy.

Wechsler 21 [William F.; 5-24-21; director of the Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council; “No, the US shouldn’t withdraw from the Middle East”; <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/no-the-us-shouldnt-withdraw-from-the-middle-east/>] brett TDI

Rather than argue for a return to pre-2003 policies, which often involved restraint but also typically required consistent US presence and leadership, the authors advocate instead for a radical military withdrawal that would inevitably have much wider implications. They state that their proposals “might strike some as dramatic.” In this case, it can be argued, “some” would include all long-standing US regional partners and the vast majority of US national security professionals, both Democratic and Republican, who have worked on the region for decades.

My colleagues’ specific recommendations include the following (I have bolded some parts for emphasis):

“substantially reduce the number of US forces permanently stationed in the region,” including a call to “end or reduce the permanent deployment of forces to Kuwait . . . as well as in other major bases in Iraq, Bahrain, and Oman”

“scale down or eliminate routine US Navy deployments” including the “anachronistic requirement to maintain a US carrier battle group”

“terminate routine overflights in the region” and “close many of the associated bases that support these operations”

Make no mistake: this is a call to repeal the Carter Doctrine, shut down the US Fifth Fleet (headquartered in Bahrain), and eliminate much of the infrastructure, built over more than half a century, that allows the United States the placement and access required to protect US national security interests. This would be no mere redeployment or retrenchment. It’s an argument for ending the routine projection of US power into the region through the air and over the seas, and removing all US military personnel stationed within key partner nations, regardless of the preferences of their leaders. No matter how artfully described, such a policy would be immediately and correctly recognized by all regional leaders as a general US withdrawal.

At that point, the biggest flaw in this plan would become immediately evident. The authors assert that, in order to protect US interests, the United States should then make “greater investments in intelligence and early warning,” seek “close coordination with regional states,” and engage in “robust diplomacy.” While these are worthy goals, in the context of a general withdrawal they are entirely unrealistic.

My colleagues assume that our relationships with host country policymakers and security-sector officials would freeze in place and remain after departure. They assign zero value to the day-to-day interactions between US forces and intelligence professionals, the influence this allows the United States to wield, and the atmospherics that can be gathered as a result. They ignore the criticality of military relationship building and how the strength of those relationships transfers into improved interoperability and common strategic perspectives. They ascribe limited agency to US partners, assuming that these partners will not feel abandoned by the United States and seek out alternative arrangements to meet their security needs. You can surge a lot of things, but as Admiral William McRaven has said, “you can’t surge trust.”

Furthermore, the calls for greater reliance on diplomacy in the region would come as a surprise to almost every modern US president—with Trump, perhaps, the sole exception—and their secretaries of state, each of whom dedicated disproportionate time to exactly that. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton became the personal action officers for diplomacy at Camp David between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and the Palestinians, respectively. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger first made an art of “shuttle diplomacy” in the region, and Secretaries James Baker and John Kerry proudly boasted of the number of trips they had taken there. President George H. W. Bush spent countless hours on the personal diplomacy necessary to build a coalition to liberate Kuwait, and thus restore the status quo, while his son, who upended that status quo, had regular personal calls with the leaders of Iraq and Afghanistan.

This diplomacy was possible only in the wider context of American military strength, a self-evident linkage of hard power and diplomatic prowess. Now that Russia has reentered the region militarily, it too has successfully leveraged its newfound position for its diplomatic ends. At the same time, former regional powers that have long since withdrawn militarily do not tend to find themselves at the center of regional diplomacy. A simple trade-off seeking to replace military power with diplomatic power is wishful thinking, at best.

This approach is particularly infeasible when applied to US counterterrorism objectives. The authors argue that “adequate counterterrorism capacity can be maintained primarily with more robust access agreements and cooperation from local partners,” without explaining how access agreements are supposed to improve in the context of US withdrawal—or how the United States is supposed to maintain cooperation with people who feel it is in the process of deserting them. The approach assumes, as my colleagues write, that the “threat is mostly local and manageable with only a small, residual US military presence, if that” (emphasis added). In reality, Salafi jihadists have a near-perfect record of shifting to external attacks once they have attained a local sanctuary, and successful indirect action requires the United States to take on more risk, not less.

Similarly, as recent events clearly demonstrate, a requirement for “over the horizon” counterterrorism and “offshore balancing” requires more regional naval presence rather than less. With no shortage of irony, the US departure from Afghanistan has recently necessitated the deployment of the only aircraft carrier based in Asia toward the Middle East. Moreover, since the new policy is to support Afghan national security forces from afar—exactly as my colleagues prefer—it will require the United States to keep more ships and aircraft in the Gulf region, operating out of many of the same bases that the authors want to close.

In the end, there is no win-win scenario when it comes to withdrawal: no way to protect US interests without taking on the necessary costs or risks, and certainly no way to do so and still maintain (or improve!) regional partnerships and US diplomacy.

Which brings us to the last of my colleagues’ recommendations. When the United Kingdom announced its general withdrawal from the area by 1971, it could do so with confidence that the United States would be willing and able to protect freedom of navigation and other common interests. Looking ahead, only China is likely to be in a similar position in the coming decades. Unfortunately, recent Chinese actions strongly suggest that rather than signaling continuity in strategic approach—as the shift from the United Kingdom to the United States did—a reliance on China would represent a more fundamental discontinuity: from free trade to mercantilism.

My colleagues discount this concern, either by dismissing the possibility altogether (by quoting others who refer to this as a “red herring”) or by implying that Asian countries that are otherwise circling each other warily in their own region will decide to work together harmoniously in this theater, since they all have “a strategic interest in the security of the sea lanes through which oil supplies flow.” One of the authors was more explicit back in 2014 (again, cited in the more recent publication), when he wrote that “the administration should explore burden-sharing with… China on sea-lane security.”

Perhaps China would not seek a unilateral capacity to secure its energy resources as it continues to build a modern blue-water navy. Perhaps China would not apply to the Gulf any lessons from its aggressive and norm-breaking approach to the South China Sea. At best, acting on such assumptions would be a tremendous risk to take, but my colleagues unfortunately do not explore the potential downsides. Moreover, if the United States were to withdraw, as the authors propose, we would be left with few options should China later prove to be less benevolent than they seem to anticipate.

#### Specifically – European allies. Plan signals broad retrenchment that saps credibility

McGee 21 [Luke; Aug 25, 2021; UK and European Policy and Politics Editor for CNN Digital; “Afghan withdrawal leaves allies to face harsh reality of US's departure from world stage”; <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/08/24/politics/biden-afghanistan-weakens-the-west-globally-intl-cmd/index.html>] brett TDI

London(CNN)The sudden fall of Kabul and the Taliban's near-total takeover of Afghanistan has left many of America's long-standing partners wondering what will become of the values-based, US-led international order.

While President Joe Biden's withdrawal of troops by August 31 is inevitable, the speed at which the situation descended into chaos, and the White House's lack of contrition and flexibility has left allies spinning.

On Tuesday, Biden's fellow G7 leaders, led by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, pressed the US President to extend that deadline in order to get foreign citizens, Afghan people who have aided allied troops and other vulnerable groups out of the country. But Biden stood firm.

As America's allies -- most notably in Europe -- see it the United States is walking away, washing its hands of a crisis it played a large part in creating, and with scant regard for the problems that doing so creates elsewhere.

As one senior European official told CNN: "When America reversed course on Syria, it sparked a crisis in Europe -- not the US."

Refugees from Afghanistan wait to board a bus after arriving and being processed at Dulles International Airport in Dulles, Virginia on August 23, 2021. Around 16,000 people were evacuated over the past 24 hours from Afghanistan through the Kabul airport, the Pentagon said on August 23, 2021, as the US speeds toward completing its airlift by an August 31 deadline.

The reason this is so hard for allies to swallow is because so much of the world's foreign policy, especially in Europe, is based on the assumption that the US's commitments to the values-based Western order, through the UN and NATO, are iron-clad.

Europe's reliance on the US in terms of international affairs is nothing new. Throughout the Trump presidency, European diplomats and officials repeatedly spoke with CNN about the need for something they call strategic autonomy. However, a lack of any coherent policy has slowed these efforts -- and in the context of Afghanistan, that means when the US withdraws, everyone withdraws.

NATO's treaty opens with the pledge that: "The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments."

The UN charter it references reads: "The purposes of the United Nations are ... To maintain international peace and security, and to that end ... to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace."

Critics are struggling to see just how Biden's recent behavior squares with these commitments -- and worry that it confirms America's retreat from the world stage. Biden has argued however that his country's anti-terror mission in Afghanistan was achieved a decade ago -- when American troops killed Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden -- and that the US is still a leader elsewhere on the global stage, including in humanitarian efforts.

Speaking on Tuesday about his meeting with the G7, Biden told press: "We talked about our mutual obligation to support refugees and evacuees currently fleeing Afghanistan. The United States will be a leader in these efforts and we'll look to the international community and to our partners to do the same."

"All of us agree that we're going to stand shoulder to shoulder with our closest partners to meet the current challenges we face in Afghanistan, just as we have for the past 20 years," he also said.

But many have doubts about what that means in practice.

"To me, this shows is the end of one geopolitical era, which was about creating a liberal international order, and the beginning of a new one, which is about the competition between China and America," said Mark Leonard, director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, ealier on Tuesday.

A Taliban fighter stands guard at a checkpoint in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021.

America's exit from a key strategic area has also created opportunities for its international enemies to increase their influence in Afghanistan on very different terms to those required from the West.

Historically, American -- and by extension Western -- support for countries like Afghanistan was given on a quid pro quo basis.

"What made support from the West so attractive to countries around the world was the underpinned commitment to helping countries build liberal, open democracies and a society grounded in the rule of law," says David Lidington, chair of the Royal United Services Institute and a former deputy Prime Minister of the UK.

"One of the consequences of the defeat in Afghanistan is the lack of confidence in the West, which can only be a good thing for China and Russia who can offer their support with zero regard for rule of law or human rights," he adds.

China's new relationship with the Taliban was already in the works back in July, before the militant group took control of the country. China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, met a Taliban delegation in northern China, where the two sides reached an agreement: China would help with Afghanistan's reconstruction, and in exchange the Taliban would ensure regional stability.

As CNN has reported, the fall of a stable Afghan government and subsequent triumph of the Taliban is not necessarily a good thing for China and, in some respects, presents more of a headache that anything else.

However, the early stage at which China met with Taliban leaders confirmed the perception, at least in the eyes of America's European allies, that China is ready to capitalize on the void left by the US -- if unlikely to fill it militarily. Based on current reports from Afghanistan, how the Taliban achieves stability now is unlikely to meet the Western human rights standards -- but might not pose an obstacle to Beijing's support, given China's own poor record on human rights.

Russia has also made overtures to the Taliban in recent days, with its foreign ministry saying it would not evacuate its embassy as Kabul fell. Though the Taliban is -- at least on paper -- officially proscribed by Moscow, the Kremlin does have working contacts with the Taliban, who, it claimed, have "started to restore public order" since seizing power.

This is the same Russia that supported stability in Syria by providing its brutal president, Bashar al-Assad, with firepower and aiding in airstrikes against rebel groups. Russia has denied this, saying it was exclusively targeting ISIS.

It is also the same Russia in which opponents of the Kremlin are poisoned and imprisoned.

TOPSHOT - Afghans gather on a roadside near the military part of the airport in Kabul on August 20, 2021, hoping to flee from the country after the Taliban's military takeover of Afghanistan.

China and Russia have in recent years acted in tandem, using international institutions to poke the West in the eye.

According to Velina Tchakarova, director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, China and Russia are already "operating within the existing global order with the clear goal of disrupting it, dismantling its multilateral structures" to further competing views of multilateralism that contradict the West's.

"Coordinated efforts by China and Russia in the UN Security Council (e.g., Iran and now likely Afghanistan) and other international organizations will continue to grow as both states seek to improve their international image as norm-setters in a rapidly changing rules-based world order," she adds.

The withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, and the subsequent race to evacuate vulnerable people, fits into this narrative.

Rightly or wrongly, the US's commitment to withdraw by such a hard deadline will be seen as the catalyst for the Taliban taking control of the country. How it handles the consequences of that will likely color how both its allies and its enemies view the US's legacy in Afghanistan.

Leslie Vinjamuri, director of the US and the Americas Programme at Chatham House, says people will "judge the US in Afghanistan based on how it manages the unfolding humanitarian situation, whether it takes large numbers of immigrants, what kind of humanitarian assistance it commits to."

She adds that if "Afghanistan descends into a failed state or a grave humanitarian crisis unfolds, many people will blame the US, rightly or wrongly. And undoubtedly this will feed into the narrative of US hypocrisy when it comes to human rights."

By extension, that blame and those accusations of hypocrisy, will also land at the feet of the Western allies who, once the US decided it was time to leave, had no choice but to go too. And that provides one hell of an opportunity for those who wish to take the West's place on the world stage -- without the moral obligations.

Taliban fighters stand guard in front of the Hamid Karzai International Airport, in Kabul, Afghanistan, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021.

The fight for Afghanistan may be over, but some believe there is still work for the West to do.

Tom Tugendhat, a British lawmaker who served in Afghanistan and chairs the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, thinks that the Western alliance still has a role to play in Afghanistan -- one which will have global implications.

"We can invest in the UN and start and use its programs to support the Afghan people," Tugendhat said. "We can bring in regional partners in India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and others to work together. The Taliban isn't universally popular, but it is inspiring others. Islamist groups in Africa and in Asia are drawing inspiration and we need to work with partners around the world. We need to start acting internationally."

The reputational cost to the West of what's happening in Afghanistan won't be fully known for some time. What is clear for now is that if America's allies want the option to serve their own interests globally, they need to accept that as things stand, they are inadequate.

That means countries that have for so long relied on the stability of the US commitment to promoting Western values will need to rethink their foreign policy.

If Mark Leonard is correct, and this really is the end of a geopolitical era, those countries will need to refocus their priorities on a new, scary basis: That the US simply isn't that interested anymore.

#### AND – East Asian allies. The perceived regional vacuum spurs fears over energy access

Alterman 20 [Jon; 10-19-20; Senior Vice President, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy, and Director, Middle East Program; “Pivoting to Asia Doesn’t Get You Out of the Middle East”; <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pivoting-asia-doesnt-get-you-out-middle-east>] brett TDI

Of all of President Donald Trump’s foreign policy ideas, the one that may enjoy the broadest public consensus is that the United States has been overcommitted to the Middle East. Seemingly endless U.S. military engagements, intractable problems, and rising energy self-sufficiency all push a growing number of Americans to argue for a far lighter footprint there, in favor of a shift in focus to the Pacific. There, the United States can partner with dynamic economies, engage with fast-growing populations, and confront Chinese aggression. Much of the same argument was behind the Obama administration’s “rebalance to Asia,” announced almost a decade ago.

The problem with that argument comes when you talk with U.S. partners in Asia about that plan. Almost completely reliant on the Middle East for energy, they fear a U.S. rebalance away from the region will leave them both vulnerable to upheavals and even more susceptible to Chinese pressure. Put simply, they worry that a greater U.S. focus on China at the expense of the Middle East will prove self-defeating, because a U.S. abandonment of the Middle East actually will make China more dominant in Asia.

Energy is at the core of this, and it a huge issue for both the United States and China. The United States is the largest energy consumer in the world, and China ranks second. In the last few decades, unconventional oil and gas has transformed U.S. energy markets. Shale deposits accounted for almost two-thirds of U.S. oil production and three-quarters of gas in 2019, and they helped transform the United States from being the world’s largest oil importer in 2013 to a net energy exporter by 2019. While lower prices have cut U.S. production in the last year, the knowledge that the United States has adequate low-cost hydrocarbons to fuel its economy for decades has had a profound psychological effect.

Asia is in a very different place. South Korea imports more than 98 percent of its fossil fuels. Typically, between 70 and 80 percent of South Korea’s crude oil comes from the Middle East, while for Japan it’s close to 90 percent. Substantial imports of natural gas from the region deepen Asia’s ties to the Middle East even more.

China also pays close attention to the Middle East, since about 50 percent of its crude oil comes from there. Feeling that the Middle East was a source of insecurity because of U.S. preponderance there, China has tried for decades to boost its domestic energy production—and shift away from its smog-producing domestic coal—with only modest effect. China has neither the geological formations nor the water necessary for large-scale unconventional oil and gas production. China also has tried to diversify its import sources since it became a net oil importer in about 1993, but that hasn’t worked as well as they hoped, either. Even as China develops new supply relationships—including with the United States—the Middle East remains its largest source of oil.

The Middle East has also grown dependent on China. China is not only a huge market in absolute terms (now accounting for 14 percent of all global oil demand), but it also has been the biggest contributor to global oil demand growth for two decades. As U.S. and European imports decline, exporters seeking to expand sales look to China. To pursue those relationships, China has established what it calls “comprehensive strategic partnerships” with three major oil producers—Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—and along the way became the largest bilateral trading partner of all three.

Until now, China has been content to develop its Middle Eastern relationships beneath the penumbra of the U.S. military presence. By advertising the modest scope of its ambitions, Beijing has sought to be a friend to all. The approach has been a wise one. Combined with a consensus in the region that China’s role can only grow, it set off something of a bidding war for Chinese affection. Saudi Arabia boosted its exports to China in the 2000s partly to split China away from Iran; Iran has grown even more dependent on China because it is otherwise so isolated in the world.

But China has done more than merely advance its commercial ties. It has been sending an increasing number of its navy ships to the Middle East; it chose Djibouti for its very first overseas military base; and it is working its way into regional arms markets—especially through selling drone aircraft. China is also seeking to embed itself into regional infrastructure projects, building factories, ports, and telecommunications systems. China does much of this through its state-owned enterprises, which enjoy government-backed financing. China has built relationships aggressively with government officials in the Middle East, casting itself not only as a willing partner, but also as one that is able to move quickly and without the regulatory and legal encumbrances that often accompany international business activities.

U.S. allies in Asia look at China’s growing role in the Middle East, and what seems to be the United States’ receding one, and they worry they will be squeezed. China’s approach to its immediate neighborhood in East Asia, including but not limited to asserting ownership over islands in the South China Sea, has been a pattern of patient, deliberate, and coordinated moves over years that often seem relatively innocuous in isolation. By the time their impact is fully recognized, there is little to do about it.

Asian allies of the United States worry China similarly will seek to become dominant in the Middle East before anyone understands what has happened, and then use its dominance of Middle Eastern energy in order to advance its control over them.

U.S. allies in Asia have placed a huge bet on the United States over the last 75 years. China’s increasingly assertive actions in Asia have pushed them to seek more U.S. engagement in their neighborhood, and the increased U.S. focus on Asia is a part of that. Yet, these same allies worry that if the United States’ focus on Asia comes at the expense of the Middle East, the whole enterprise will backfire.

One option worth considering is to work more closely with U.S. allies in Asia to advance shared security interests in the Middle East, perhaps under the framework of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy or some successor concept. Implementation will be a challenge, but it provides an important model to align the United States with the strategic interests of its allies and partners. Another is to be more selective in identifying U.S. priorities in the region, acknowledging that China’s rise in some aspects of regional life is probably unstoppable.

The United States might want to pull out of the Middle East, but as long as Asia sees vital stakes there, a U.S. future in Asia will require a future in the Middle East, too. It is up to Americans, working with governments in the Middle East and Asia alike, to shape it in ways that serve U.S. interests.

#### Withdrawing assurances causes global miscalc---extinction.

Cirincione & Brown 20 [Joe & Zack; 5-20-20; national security analyst and author with 40 years of experience working these issues in Washington, D.C., former vice president for national security at the Center for American Progress, AND Policy Associate and Special Assistant to the President at Ploughshares Fund; “Why letting our allies get nuclear weapons is a bad idea”; <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/05/20/why-letting-our-allies-get-nuclear-weapons-is-a-bad-idea/>] brett TDI

It is tempting to think that it would be cheaper and more effective to have distant allies like Germany or South Korea or Saudi Arabia get the bomb rather than link their security to U.S. forces, bases, and assurances. Nuclear theorists like Kenneth Waltz point to the so-called “pacifying” effects of nuclear weapons, saying their existence makes states “exceedingly cautious” and therefore less likely to fight similarly-armed opponents. If more countries had the bomb, the logic goes, fewer wars would occur.

But countries do not obtain the bomb in a vacuum. The nuclear posture and strategic decisions of nuclear-armed nations have a significant, often immediate, impact on the nuclear acquisition decisions of other nations. More simply: If your adversary or your neighbor goes nuclear, you will, too.

There is nothing automatic about the nuclear domino theory, and it has been successfully countered in some regions, but the theory is generally correct. The Soviet Union got the bomb because, as Stalin told his scientists after Hiroshima, “The balance has been broken. Build the bomb. It will remove the great danger from us.” Britain and France got the bomb because the Soviets (and the U.S.) had it. China did the same, then India got the bomb because China did; Pakistan because India did.

Nuclear competition in Asia would not end if South Korea decided to build a nuclear arsenal. Others in the region would likely follow suit. Japan, Taiwan, perhaps Vietnam. Similarly, a Saudi bomb would likely beget an Iranian bomb, a Turkish bomb and even an Egyptian bomb. Far from making the region — and the United States — safer, these arms races would blanket the globe with nuclear tripwires, each primed to unleash unprecedented destruction at the slightest twitch.

Where you stand determines what you see. Kennedy and the other presidents stood atop the chain of command, and their own experiences with that awful responsibility (particularly with the near-miss of the Cuban Missile Crisis) colored how they saw nuclear politics. They recognized the limitations of theory in a world characterized by imperfect information and the frictions of human interaction. They understood what the nuclear theorists could not — that more countries having nuclear weapons would only increase the risk of their use, not lessen it.

Three months before the Cuban Crisis, Kennedy’s Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, gave a speech in Ann Arbor, Michigan where he laid out this danger. “The mere fact that no nation could rationally take steps leading to nuclear war does not guarantee that a nuclear war cannot take place,” he said. “Not only do nations sometimes act in ways that are hard to explain on a rational basis, but even when acting in a ‘rational’ way they sometimes, indeed disturbingly often, act on the basis of misunderstandings of the true facts of a situation. They misjudge the way others will react, and the way others will interpret what they are doing.”

Any attempt to rationalize nuclear relationships — treating adversaries like two sides of a balanced equation — removes the human factor: the tendency towards irrationality and error. In a world with just a handful of nuclear states, that factor has already nearly led to apocalypse. In a world with a dozen more, those risks would go up exponentially.

It does not have to be this way. For over 50 years, since the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, successful diplomacy, security assurances, and global norms have largely kept nuclear proliferation at bay. The nightmare scenario of dozens of nuclear states has so far been averted, in no small part through the conscious and continual effort of American presidential administrations of both parties. Yes, there will always be those who advocate for more nuclear weapons in more hands. But the forces of restraint, and with it, survival, have prevailed and can continue to prevail if U.S. policy leads the way.

## Uniqueness

### UQ---West Asia

#### Afghan withdrawal sent mixed signals to US allies, but reassurance through regional troop deployments is vital to maintain credibility.

Montgomery 21 [Evan; 2021; director of research and studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments; “CREDIBILITY CONTROVERSIES: THE IMPLICATIONS OF AFGHANISTAN FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC”; <https://warontherocks.com/2021/09/credibility-controversies-the-implications-of-afghanistan-for-the-indo-pacific/>] brett TDI

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What would that look like?

When policymakers fear that a state’s credibility is in doubt, they usually turn to a standard playbook of corrective actions: making public statements that reaffirm existing security commitments, offering quiet assurances to allies and private warnings to adversaries, launching high-profile diplomatic engagements with strategically important partners, ramping up arms sales to keep those partners close, and deploying military forces to show the flag near potential flashpoints. The problem, though, is that these measures are often designed to combat skepticism about interests and questions about resolve, not questions about capabilities and skepticism about strength. Addressing the latter set of concerns requires a very different set of actions: successfully employing forces in operations that are relevant to the commitments in question, holding exercises that simulate those operations, conducting experiments that showcase emerging technologies or the novel application of existing technologies, and deliberately releasing information about new or sensitive systems through exhibitions of various sorts.

After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, there are likely to be fewer questions about what the United States is willing to do in other theaters when push comes to shove and more questions about what it can accomplish against its rivals when put to the test. If so, policymakers should not expect measures that are aimed at improving perceptions of U.S. interests and resolve to repair or improve American credibility, at least not on their own. Instead, they should focus their attention on practical steps to create and communicate military power — two closely related but distinct objectives.

#### US credibility is in doubt, but it’s still holding post-Afghan withdrawal

McKercher 22 [Asa; 2022; Royal Military College of Canada; ““How reliable an ally?”: Surveying American power and credibility after the fall of Saigon—and Kabul”; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00207020221115438>] brett TDI

The fall of Kabul is, then, perhaps not the bellwether of American decline or retrenchment that it seems. Then again, the 2020s are not the 1970s. Indeed, over the course of the 2010s, US credibility took several hits. President Barack Obama’s failure to respond to Syrian despot Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons against dissidents—crossing, in the president’s words, a “red line”—evidently called into question American security guarantees to countries in the Middle East. John Kerry, Obama’s secretary of state, later acknowledged that the failure to strike al-Assad “cost us significantly in the region. And I know that and so does the president. … Perception can often just be the reality.”36 Giving voice to this notion, Jordanian King Abdullah II remarked to a reporter, “I think I believe in American power more than Obama does.”37 There were other serious doubts raised under Donald Trump, who questioned the stationing of US troops in South Korea and mused about not honouring Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, leading less nationalist-minded members of his administration to offer assurances to wary allies.38 But apparently the damage was done. “The times when we could completely rely on others are, to an extent, over,” German chancellor Angela Merkel commented after Trump’s fateful trip to Europe in May 2017. “We Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands.”39 Trump’s increasingly erratic and punitive conduct toward friendly governments over the course of his administration led some analysts to urge a revaluation of Canadian foreign policy. In particular, talk of a new Third Option emerged, with the aim of lessening dependence on Canada’s southern neighbour. As then Canadian foreign minister Francois-Philippe Champagne remarked in 2020, “Pax Americana is probably behind us.”40 What the future holds is unclear, but as in 1975, analysts today might wonder of the United States: how reliable an ally?

## Links

### XT Link---Retrenchment

#### Military presence is vital to constrain proliferation cascades---best studies.

Brooks & Wohlforth 16 [Stephen Brooks, Ph. D in Political Science from Yale, Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College, Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University AND William, Daniel Webster Professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College; 2016; “Assessing the Security Benefits of Deep Engagement”; Page 103-108] brett TDI

Deterrence Effectiveness The determinants of deterrence success and failure have attracted scores of quantitative and case study tests. Much of the case study work yields a cautionary finding: that deterrence is much harder in practice than in theory, because standard models assume away the complexities of human psychology and domestic politics that tend to make some states hard to deter and might cause deterrence policies to backfire. 1 Many quantitative findings, mean- while, are mutually contradictory or are clearly not relevant to extended deterrence. But some relevant results receive broad support:

* Alliances generally do have a deterrent effect. In a study spanning nearly two centuries, Johnson and Leeds found “support for the hypothesis that defensive alliances deter the initiation of disputes.” They conclude that “defensive alliances lower the probability of international conflict and are thus a good policy option for states seeking to maintain peace in the world.” Sechser and Fuhrmann similarly find that formal defense pacts with nuclear states have significant deterrence benefits. 2 3
* The overall balance of military forces (including nuclear) between states does not appear to influence deterrence; the local balance of military forces in the specific theater in which deterrence is actually practiced, however, is key. 4
* Forward- deployed troops enhance the deterrent effect of alliances with overseas allies. 5
* Strong mutual interests and ties enhance deterrence. 6
* Case studies strongly ratify the theoretical expectation that it is easier to defend a given status quo than to challenge it forcefully: compellence (sometimes termed “coercion” or “coercive diplomacy”) is extremely hard.

The most important finding to emerge from this voluminous research is that alliances— especially with nuclear- armed allies like the United States— actually work in deterring conflict. This is all the more striking in view of the fact that what scholars call “selection bias” probably works against it. The United States is more inclined to offer— and protégés to seek— alliance rela- tionships in settings where the probability of military conflicts is higher than average. The fact that alliances work to deter conflict in precisely the situations where deterrence is likely to be especially hard is noteworthy.

More specifically, these findings buttress the key theoretical implication that if the United States is interested in deterring military challenges to the status quo in key regions, relying only on latent military capabilities in the US homeland is likely to be far less effective than having an overseas military posture. Similarly, they lend support to the general proposition that a forward deterrence posture is strongly appealing to a status quo power, because defending a given status quo is far cheaper than overturning it, and, once a favorable status quo is successfully overturned, restoring the status quo ante can be expected to be fearsomely costly. Recognizing the significance of these findings clearly casts doubt on the “wait on the sidelines and decide whether to intervene later” approach that is so strongly favored by retrenchment proponents.

The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation Matthew Kroenig highlights a number of reasons why US policymakers seek to limit the spread of nuclear weapons: “Fear that nuclear proliferation might deter [US leaders] from using military intervention to pursue their interests, reduce the effectiveness of their coercive diplomacy, trigger regional instability, undermine their alliance structures, dissipate their strategic attention, and set off further nuclear proliferation within their sphere of influence.” These are not the only reasons for concern about nuclear proliferation; also notable are the enhanced prospects of nuclear accidents and the greater risk of leakage of nuclear material to terrorists. 9 8

Do deep engagement’s security ties serve to contain the spread of nuclear weapons? The literature on the causes of proliferation is massive and faces challenges as great as any in international relations. With few cases to study, severe challenges in gathering evidence about inevitably secretive nuclear programs, and a large number of factors in play on both the demand and the supply sides, findings are decidedly mixed. Alliance relationships are just one piece of this complex puzzle, one that is hard to isolate from all the other factors in play. And empirical studies face the same selection bias problem just discussed: Nuclear powers are more likely to offer security guarantees to states confronting a serious threat and thus facing above- average incentives to acquire nuclear weapons. Indeed, alliance guarantees might be offered to states actively considering the nuclear option precisely in order to try to forestall that decision. Like a strong drug given only to very sick patients, alliances thus may have a powerful effect even if they sometimes fail to work as hoped. 10

Bearing these challenges in mind, the most relevant findings that emerge from this literature are:

* The most recent statistical analysis of the precise question at issue concludes that “security guarantees significantly reduce proliferation proclivity among their recipients.” In addition, states with such guarantees are less likely to export sensitive nuclear material and technology to other nonnuclear states. 12 11
* Case study research underscores that the complexity of motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons cannot be reduced to security: domestic politics, economic interests, and prestige all matter. 13
* Multiple independently conceived and executed recent case studies nonetheless reveal that security alliances help explain numerous allied decisions not to proliferate even when security is not always the main driver of leaders’ interest in a nuclear program. As Nuno Monteiro and Alexandre Debs stress, “States whose security goals are subsumed by their sponsors’ own aims have never acquired the bomb. … This finding highlights the role of U.S. security commitments in stymieing nuclear proliferation: U.S. protégés will only seek the bomb if they doubt U.S. protection of their core security goals.” 15 14
* Multiple independently conceived and executed recent case research projects further unpack the conditions that decrease the likelihood of allied proliferation, centering on the credibility of the alliance commitment. In addition, in some cases of prevention failure, the alliances allow the patron to influence the ally’s nuclear program subsequently, decreasing further proliferation risks. 17
* Security alliances lower the likelihood of proliferation cascades. To be sure, many predicted cascades did not occur. But security provision, mainly by the United States, is a key reason why. The most comprehensive statistical analysis finds that states are more likely to proliferate in response to neighbors when three conditions are met: (1) there is an intense security rivalry between the two countries; (2) the prospective proliferating state does not have a security guarantee from a nuclear- armed patron; and (3) the potential proliferator has the industrial and technical capacity to launch an indigenous nuclear program. 18 19 16

In sum, as Monteiro and Debs note, “Despite grave concerns that more states would seek a nuclear deterrent to counter U.S. power preponderance,” in fact “the spread of nuclear weapons decelerated with the end of the Cold War in 1989.” Their research, as well as that of scores of scholars using multiple methods and representing many contrasting theoretical perspectives, shows that US security guarantees and the counter- proliferation policy deep engagement allows are a big part of the reason why. 20

The Costs of Nuclear Proliferation General empirical findings thus lend support to the proposition that security alliances impede nuclear proliferation. But is this a net contributor to global security? Most practitioners and policy analysts would probably not even bring this up as a question and would automatically answer yes if it were raised. Yet a small but very prominent group of theorists within the academy reach a different answer: some of the same realist precepts that generate the theoretical prediction that retrenchment would increase demand for nuclear weapons also suggest that proliferation might increase security such that the net effect of retrenchment could be neutral. Most notably, “nuclear optimists” like Kenneth Waltz contend that deterrence essentially solves the security problem for all nuclear- armed states, largely eliminating the direct use of force among them. It follows that US retrenchment might generate an initial decrease in security followed by an increase as insecure states acquire nuclear capabilities, ultimately leaving no net effect on international security. 21

This perspective is countered by “nuclear pessimists” such as Scott Sagan. Reaching outside realism to organization theory and other bodies of social science research, they see major security downsides from new nuclear states. Copious research produced by Sagan and others casts doubt on the expectation that governments can be relied upon to create secure and controlled nuclear forces. The more nuclear states there are, the higher the probability that the organizational, psychological, and civil- military pathologies Sagan identifies will turn an episode like one of the numerous “near misses” he uncovers into actual nuclear use. As Campbell Craig warns, “One day a warning system will fail, or an official will panic, or a terrorist attack will be misconstrued, and the missiles will fly.” 22 23

Looking beyond these kinds of factors, it is notable that powerful reasons to question the assessment of proliferation optimists also emerge even if one assumes, as they do, that states are rational and seek only to maximize their security. First, nuclear deterrence can only work by raising the risk of nuclear war. For deterrence to be credible, there has to be a nonzero chance of nuclear use. If nuclear use is impossible, deterrence cannot be credible. It follows that every nuclear deterrence relationship depends on some probability of 24 nuclear use. The more such relationships there are, the greater the risk of nuclear war. Proliferation therefore increases the chances of nuclear war even in a perfectly rationalist world. Proliferation optimists cannot logically deny that nuclear spread increases the risk of nuclear war. Their argument must be that the security gains of nuclear spread outweigh this enhanced risk.

Estimating that risk is not simply a matter of pondering the conditions under which leaders will choose to unleash nuclear war. Rather, as Schelling established, the question is whether states will run the risk of using nuclear weapons. Nuclear crisis bargaining is about a “competition in risk taking.” Kroenig counts some twenty cases in which states—including prominently the United States—ran real risks of nuclear war in order to prevail in crises. As Kroenig notes, “By asking whether states can be deterred or not … proliferation optimists are asking the wrong question. The right question to ask is: what risk of nuclear war is a specific state willing to run against a particular opponent in a given crisis?” The more nuclear- armed states there are, the more the opportunities for such risk- taking and the greater the probability of nuclear use. 27 26 25

### XT Link---Unilateralism

#### Even if allies support the content, unilateral withdrawal ensures prolif.

Lanoszka **’18** [Alexander; 2018; Assistant Professor Department of Political Science Balsillie School of International Affairs University of Waterloo; Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, “Atomic Assurance: The Alliance Politics of Nuclear Proliferation,” p. 149-157]

How do alliances curb potential or actual cases of nuclear proliferation, if at all? Many scholars argue that alliances are effective tools for bridling the nuclear ambitions of states. When allies do try to acquire nuclear weapons, their alliance relationships serve as conduits for the guarantor to coerce a nonproliferation outcome. In this book, I show that such optimism about the role military alliances play is overstated. Alliances can deter nuclear proliferation if they marry written pledges of support with compatible foreign policy and defense doctrines as well as in-theater conventional deployments. Yet alliances are prone to severe adjustments that can unsettle the ally. When guarantors make major unilateral changes to the security relationship, through undesirable doctrinal announcements or troop withdrawals, abandonment fears intensify. The affected ally becomes so doubtful of its received guarantees that it becomes more likely to engage in nuclear proliferation–related behavior. Unfortunately for the guarantor, curbing such behavior once it has started is very difficult. It requires fixing the broken security guarantee that prompted the nuclear interest in the first place. Nonmilitary tools like economic sanctions may be the best coercive instruments available, but their viability depends on the extent to which the ally relies on the guarantor. Simply put, alliances are better for deterring potential than for preventing actual nuclear proliferation.

The empirical cases support this argument. Table 2 summarizes the main findings. Fears of abandonment in West Germany intensified after July 1956 amid rumors that the Eisenhower administration would reduce the size of the US Army by a third. Shortly thereafter, West Germany joined France and Italy in a short-lived and unsuccessful effort to develop nuclear weapons. Throughout the subsequent decade, Bonn deflected calls for it to make clear nonproliferation pledges while obtaining enrichment and reprocessing capabilities. Its alliance with the United States certainly constrained its decision-making, but arguments that distinct coercion episodes prompted West German leaders to renounce nuclear proliferation are overstated. Domestic politics and prestige considerations were important factors as well.

Japan followed a somewhat similar trajectory. It began evaluating the strength of its received security guarantees more fastidiously following China’s nuclear device detonation in late 1964. Yet Japan did not begin making serious moves in investing in nuclear technology until the prospect of American withdrawal from Vietnam and even East Asia became highly likely at the end of the decade. Similarly to West Germany, Japan did not have an actual program dedicated to the production of an indigenous nuclear weapons capability. But like that of West Germany, Japan’s stance toward nuclear nonproliferation remained dubious. When Japan finally ratified the NPT, it did so largely because of domestic politics. Ideational arguments about the inherent value of the bomb were also influential. The United States provided assurances when asked to do so but had largely refrained from efforts to compel Japan into making nonproliferation commitments. Nevertheless, some controversy ensued not long after NPT ratification regarding activities at a Japanese reprocessing plant.

South Korea had a clear intent to acquire nuclear weapons. Despite South Korea’s weathering various provocations by North Korea, what triggered South Korea to seek nuclear weapons was Nixon’s unexpected announcement that the United States would withdraw one US Army division from the peninsula. Thankfully for Washington, South Korea depended on the United States for economic and technological goods, thus rendering South Korea vulnerable to American efforts in suppressing the program in 1976. Still, South Korea’s interest in nuclear weapons was not entirely snuffed out. Some speculate that the program went further underground. Whatever the truth, safeguard violations did occur in the 1980s.

Although I have not studied them at the same level of detail, the five smaller cases further corroborate the argument. Great Britain and France both sought nuclear weapons in part because of having to fight alone and without American support. What distinguishes Great Britain from France is that Great Britain came to depend on American technology for its nuclear deterrent. Great Britain still retains operational independence, but the French nuclear arsenal is fully autonomous from the United States. For its part, Norway remained satisfied with the security provided by the United States, so much so that it rejected having much of an American conventional military presence until the 1980s when it accepted pre-positioned gear from the US Marine Corps. Only very briefly at the beginning of the Cold War did Norwegian military leaders consider nuclear weapons. By contrast, Australia wanted more alliance goods but had no guarantor—whether the United States or Great Britain—that would supply them. On the basis of its security fears, Australia had a nuclear weapons program that it eventually renounced following a change in government. Alliance coercion arguably played no part. Finally, Taiwan began its attempt to produce nuclear weapons once it sensed that the geopolitical tide was turning against it. The United States gradually seemed more open to accommodating China, which had by that point come to possess nuclear weapons. What ensued was a cat-and- mouse game that spanned about two decades. The United States used different levers to ensure that Taiwan would not go nuclear, but its success in restraining Taiwan’s ambitions appears to have had more to do with intelligence than with sanctions per se.

The takeaway of this book is that alliances are better for deterring states from engaging in nuclear proliferation–related behavior than for compelling states to give up their nuclear weapons programs. In this chapter, I address the implications for theory and policy. In so doing, I outline possible avenues for future research as well as how my analysis sheds light on contemporary policy problems.

Theoretical Implications

My argument has several theoretical implications for how we should think about key questions in international relations theory. First, I show that my analysis bears on a contemporary debate in international relations regarding how beliefs about credibility are formed. Second, I argue that scholars are wrong to divide the study of nuclear weapons from that of conventional military power. Third, I add to the growing scholarship on the effectiveness of coercion in international relations by considering the alliance politics of nuclear proliferation.

THE BASIS OF CREDIBILITY

One major debate among international relations scholars concerns the basis of credibility: what makes threats—and, for that matter, promises—believable? A dominant school of thought holds that assessments of credibility turn on situational considerations like the war-fighting capabilities and geopolitical stakes involved behind the threats or promises that states make to one another.1 Policy makers are thus foolish to believe that they can develop reputations on the basis of their historical record for keeping or breaking commitments. This perspective has received criticism. For one, past actions communicate—intentionally or not—the interests that states have, whereas situational assessments depend partly on the historical record. 2 For another, this school of thought has mischaracterized the work of Thomas Schelling, which it has held responsible for the belief that commitments are so interdependent that reputations for keeping commitments are necessary for deterrence. Schelling instead argued that past actions matter in cases where states are continuously negotiating with each other, not in all coercive bargaining encounters.3

My findings further challenge the perspective that current, ahistorical calculations of power and interest determine credibility. I find that in attending to the foreign policy doctrines and conventional military deployments of their guarantors, allies accord importance to the local military effectiveness of their guarantors. Still, some actions undertaken by the guarantor can provide information as to its interests and foreign policy interests, especially if those actions include major and unfavorable military redeployments. In brief, my findings blur the distinction between reputation, on the one hand, and current calculations like power and interest, on the other hand. To be sure, I do not offer a systematic test as to the sources of alliance credibility. I examined narrowly how abandonment fears intensify so as to make states more likely to engage in nuclear proliferation–related behavior. Scholars should thus focus more on alliance credibility as a dependent variable.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CONVENTIONAL MILITARY POWER

States form judgments about the security guarantees that they receive with reference to the conventional military capabilities that their guarantor could muster on their behalf for defense and deterrence purposes. The reason why allies look to the conventional capabilities of their guarantor is that they value deterrence-by- denial as much as they do deterrence-by- punishment, if not more. Indeed, from the perspective of allies like West Germany and especially South Korea, nuclear weapons are partly a means for offsetting the conventional superiority of adversaries, especially when those same adversaries possess nuclear weapons as well.

Unfortunately, scholars separate the study of nuclear weapons from that of conventional military power. Many studies of nuclear proliferation simply assume that nuclear weapons represent a special category, even though the factors that predict which states have nuclear weapons can also predict which states would have access to fifth-generation fighter jets, third-generation advanced tanks, ballistic missile capabilities, and so forth.4 In social scientific parlance, these studies neglect an important endogeneity problem, whereby conventional and nuclear weapons systems are related to each other. States that experience unfavorable alterations in their received security guarantees might opt for nuclear weapons, because they cannot develop sufficient conventional military capabilities for deterring an adversary in time. Some states, like Great Britain and France, acquire nuclear weapons because they already have most leading military technologies. Interestingly, the best works on conventional deterrence and military power neglect the nuclear dimension altogether.5 To take one example, excluding the role nuclear weapons have played in the Arab-Israeli conflict—as John Mearsheimer has done—could lead to mistaken understandings of how deterrence in general succeeds.6

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COERCION

The core message of this book is that military alliances are better at preventing nuclear proliferation than stopping it once it has started. I have presented evidence that apparent success stories of alliance coercion are less than what they appear. What does this finding mean more generally for international relations scholarship?

Schelling famously wrote that compellence is harder than deterrence because the former seeks to change the status quo, whereas the latter seeks to maintain it. Much of the recent literature seems to support this maxim, notwithstanding the difficulties in empirically distinguishing deterrence from compellence.7 Drawing on data regarding compellent threats, Todd Sechser observes that strong states have trouble compelling weaker states because those weaker states worry that capitulation would lead to new demands. Their very strength leads strong states to underappreciate these reputational concerns.8 Using similar data, Todd Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann show that nuclear weapons rarely confer any bargaining leverage on its possessors, since they are useless for territorial conquest and involve high costs as tools for punishment.9 Dianne Chamberlain finds that because using military force has become less costly for the United States, weak adversaries discount its threats.10 Dan Altman argues that states do not even bother with coercion at all in making territorial gains—they grab what they want rather than dispute a proposed territorial division in a crisis.11 Some disagreement exists among scholars. Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal write that “the possession of nuclear weapons helps states to succeed in their confrontations with other states even when they do not ‘use’ these weapons,” whereas Matthew Kroenig argues that nuclear superiority confers an advantage in crisis bargaining.12

All these studies, however, focus on coercive bargaining between adversaries rather than between allies. When scholars examine military or nonmilitary threats that states make to their allies, the issue-area under dispute usually revolves around nuclear proliferation.13 My case studies show that alliance coercion in this domain is often difficult for the United States to do effectively. That is not to say that alliance coercion is never effective. Such a view would be sorely mistaken. Rather, my argument is that its effect is more subtle and indirect than commonly presumed. Still, a more general or comparative study of intra-alliance coercion would benefit international relations scholarship—one that encompasses other issues such as wartime coalition participation and peacetime burden-sharing. 14 Many empirical questions still need an answer. For example, is alliance coercion more effective in some issue areas than in others? Why or why not?

THE NUCLEAR SOURCES OF AMERICAN PRIMACY

The case studies also suggest that to understand the preponderant role of the United States in international politics, we should not overlook the nuclear dimension. Unfortunately, many existing theories of hierarchy and hegemony often view the world in largely conventional military terms, as the books of David Lake and John Ikenberry do.15 This oversight is problematic for the very reason that whatever one thinks of the global military presence of the United States, it is at least partly the product of a consistent desire to forestall nuclear proliferation. Daniel Deudney adds that “unipolarity, to the extent it still exists, is made much easier and more durable by nuclear weapons” because the deterrent effects they generate help stabilize interstate relations and inhibit encroachment and counterbalancing.16 Nuclear proliferation undercuts hegemony because it negates American power projection capabilities.

Claiming that nonproliferation has been as much a goal of American grand strategy as openness and containment might be a slight overstatement, however. 17 Sometimes other foreign policy goals get in the way—the Kennedy administration discovered this tension when it came to value nuclear nonproliferation while voicing its frustrations with the defense and monetary policies of West Germany. On occasion foreign policy goals are complementary so as to reinforce each other: quashing Taiwan’s nuclear ambitions was important for Sino-American relations. Moreover, the United States has good reason not to enshrine nuclear nonproliferation as an overriding priority that trumps all other foreign policy objectives: states would have an incentive to manipulate American interest in nonproliferation. Accordingly, despite what realists say about the lack of a central enforcer of rules in the international system, states would be able to “dial 911” for help by signaling some intent to acquire nuclear weapons.18 But partly because the United States has conflicting foreign policy interests, this option remains problematic for allies to use.

The nuclear dimension of American global leadership might, then, be more complicated than what seems to be the case at first glance. If the United States views nonproliferation as a goal unto itself, then it might be an offensive realist: that is, it uses whatever means to secure regional—if not global—hegemony at the expense of other states.19 In contrast, if nonproliferation is a goal that is either subordinate or complementary to other interests, then the United States might be a defensive realist. In other words, it might not see nuclear proliferation as problematic per se and can in fact be open to it, but it sometimes works hard to forestall it lest the spread of nuclear weapons would complicate other foreign policy objectives.20

GREAT POWER MANAGEMENT OF WEAKER STATES

This book addresses how American security guarantees can forestall nuclear proliferation. It does not investigate how the security guarantees of other major powers—namely, the Soviet Union and China—can affect the nuclear interest of their own security partners.

My argument has implications for understanding nuclear proliferation and nonproliferation within non-American alliance systems. Consider first the Soviet Union and its alliances.21 Romania was the only Warsaw Pact member out of seven to covet nuclear weapons, whereas both East Asian allies—China and North Korea— made efforts to acquire nuclear weapons in the Cold War with varying degrees of success. Despite the contiguity of the Soviet Union with all those countries, its security guarantees to them varied in quality. For better or for worse, none of these countries held the Soviet geopolitical interest and hosted Soviet armed forces to the same extent, if at all, as the industrialized Northern Tier of the Warsaw Pact (Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia). 22 Romania might have been a member of the Warsaw Pact, but it perceived a growing disconnect between its security interests and those of the Kremlin between the late 1950s and early 1960s. In particular, it did not wish to be consigned to being the soft agricultural underbelly of the Soviet bloc.23 Moreover, the Soviet Union accorded so much significance to its holdings in Central and Eastern Europe that it cared less about developments in East Asia. Chinese and North Korean leaders might have reached this conclusion in the 1950s when the Soviet Union appeared disinterested in the fate of its communist partners during the Korean War.24 Those countries thus discounted Soviet support early and decided to develop nuclear weapons. And so the dynamics outlined in this book could very well be applicable to the Soviet context.25

My argument bears insights for how China has managed the North Korean proliferation problem. Interestingly, North Korea began considering whether to acquire nuclear technologies shortly after China withdrew its forces from North Korea in 1958.26 North Korea had good reason to discount Chinese security guarantees, formalized as they were with a 1961 mutual defense treaty. After all, China came to North Korea’s aid in the Korean War only when American-led forces approached the Yalu River. As Jonathan Pollack writes, Pyongyang “faced four decades of continuous nuclear threat . . . without a countervailing nuclear retaliatory threat of its own or allied nuclear deployments on its own territory.”27

But what has China done about North Korea? A common refrain is that China can and should do more to curb its ally’s destabilizing ambitions, especially since China is the main source of North Korea’s trade, food, arms, and energy.28 Despite how scholars sometimes argue that guarantors seek to prevent nuclear proliferation in order to preserve their standing and power projection capabilities, China appears exceptional in having shielded its ally from multilateral sanctions for the most part. One can argue that it has even free-ridden on American efforts to restrain Taiwan and South Korea without doing much of the same toward North Korea. However, my analysis yields two notes of caution. The first is that China might have perceived that reversing North Korea’s nuclear program was not in China’s interest, especially if China’s worries about regime stability, refugee flows, and a reunified Korea are legitimate. The second is that experts might be overestimating China’s ability to restrain its ally, especially when North Korea has by now developed certain missile capabilities and thermonuclear weapons. To be sure, Beijing could have at least forbidden North Korean citizens from receiving training in China—scientists who probably went on to participate in advanced weapons development in their native country.29 Still, in the improbable event that North Korea renounces its nuclear weapons, it would likely do so for non-alliance reasons.

Policy Implications

The policy implications of this study seem grim. Not only does the denuclearization of North Korea seem fantastical, but also any move toward acquiring nuclear weapons on the part of an ally would be extraordinarily difficult for the United States to reverse. The policy community should take small comfort in how American decision makers have restrained the ambitions of South Korea, Taiwan, and West Germany. The successes of those decision makers were at best overstated.

Yet there are upsides. One is that the United States can deter nuclear weapons interest among its allies. Given how vital strong security guarantees are toward this end, American decision makers thankfully have a say. More specifically, they can recalibrate doctrines and deployments so as to shape perceptions of credibility. Ally leaders appear to refer to these metrics in their own nuclear decision-making. We should thus remember that it is of the utmost importance that American defense planners take the time to think about the effects of their moves from more than just a budgetary or rational perspective. Having Marines in Okinawa might make little tactical or operational sense, but shifting them thousands of miles away could still be destabilizing. Symbols matter, and they may matter more from the perspective of allies than from the perspective of Washington.30 Nevertheless, the symbolic nature of such deployments should not be overstated. Allies value them because they believe such forces can put up a fight against an adversary should deterrence fail. In a world of anti-access and area denial (A2/ AD) military technology, a United States that practices offshore balancing might experience overwhelming difficulties in entering a theater of operations so as to aid an ally under siege. An onshore presence makes the United States look more capable and resolved to allies and adversaries alike.31 That said, withdrawing forces unilaterally might be counterproductive when it comes to having an ally bear a greater share of the collective defense burden. If the ally feels threatened by a nuclear-armed aggressor, then it might arm itself in ways that are to the detriment of the guarantor’s own interests.

Another upside is that decoupling does not make nuclear proliferation inevitable. 32 Because North Korea is developing capabilities so that it could strike the continental United States with nuclear weapons, some observers fear that Washington would become less likely to defend South Korea and Japan in order to avoid being attacked. Accordingly, those two allies sense that their interests are becoming decoupled from that of the United States and so would strive to secure themselves nuclear weapons of their own. Yet this fear is overstated. For one, they have already endured decoupling throughout the Cold War and after the Soviet Union and China had acquired survivable second-strike capabilities. For another, my analysis suggests that decoupling need not translate to nuclear proliferation as long as those allies believe that the United States would fight on their behalf and deny adversaries battlefield success. Providing hostages for the sake of extended deterrence is insufficient. Having aligned doctrines and in-theater deployments capable of inflicting harm on the adversary can influence such beliefs in a positive direction.

Perceptions of credibility are malleable, but we must be careful not to overstate idiosyncratic factors. Many analysts and experts worry that President Donald Trump’s unique style of communication can undercut deterrence and destabilize alliance relations. For example, in an excellent overview of his attitudes toward nuclear weapons, Jeffrey Michaels and Heather Williams caution that his use of social media could lead to misperceptions and miscalculations by friends and foes alike.33 According to this argument, an errant tweet would undermine American credibility. My analysis suggests that such concerns may be slightly exaggerated. A tweet is but one signal among many. Allies like South Korea and Poland will pay more attention to the military basis of their received commitments than to Twitter accounts in going about their nuclear decision-making.

#### A unilateral withdrawal is perceived as America First optics that crush alliances.

McGee 21 [Luke; Aug 25, 2021; UK and European Policy and Politics Editor for CNN Digital; “Europe left exposed as Biden walks America away from the world stage”; https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/20/europe/europe-left-exposed-intl-cmd/index.html] brett TDI

When US President Joe Biden finally broke his silence on the [chaos unfolding in Afghanistan](https://cnn.com/2021/08/16/politics/white-house-afghanistan-biden-crises/index.html), European allies who’d had high hopes for a reset in the [transatlantic alliance](https://cnn.com/2021/01/16/europe/trump-has-trashed-the-transatlantic-alliance-intl/index.html) were left dismayed.

Their disappointment was not at the contents of Biden’s address, but the America First optics of the leader of the free world washing his hands of a global problem. The unilateral decision to withdraw seemed to somewhat contradict Biden’s claim upon entering the White House [that “America is back.”](https://cnn.com/2021/04/28/world/biden-100-days-foreign-policy-intl/index.html)

A crisis like the one unfolding in Afghanistan has, for some, hammered home the bleak reality that, without America, Europe’s immediate ability to control its own destiny is limited.

From London to Paris, Brussels to Berlin, the sudden fall of Kabul shone a light on Europe’s limited diplomatic heft, military capacity, and political stability.

Diplomats and officials all over the continent have privately expressed their sorrow that this is where we are: If the US says it’s over, it’s over.

We know from [comments made](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/13/us-withdrawal-afghanistan-mistake-uk-defence-secretary-ben-wallace) by Britain’s defense secretary, Ben Wallace, that he thought the withdrawal was a mistake and signaled victory to the Taliban. UK government officials told CNN they had tried to encourage both the Trump and Biden administrations to slow down, but failed to convince them.

Starkly, Wallace said in a recent interview to Sky News that when the US “took that decision, the way we were all configured meant that we had to leave.”

Multiple European officials and diplomats told CNN of their shock at Biden’s assertion that the only US interest in Afghanistan was to neutralize the terrorists who attacked the US in 2001 and prevent further attacks on American soil.

They now fear the humanitarian and political consequences of mass migration from a country run by militants who’ve historically harbored terrorists and that is connected to mainland Europe by land.

Without the might of America to keep a lid on the situation, Europe is undeniably more exposed. As one EU official put it: “When America reversed course on Syria it sparked a crisis in Europe, not the US.”

When former President Barack Obama U-turned on his decision to attack the regime of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad following reports that he was gassing his own citizens, it had a knock-on effect still being felt today.

Not only did millions of Syrians flock to Europe seeking refuge, but the vacuum left by America left room for terrorist groups to build bases from where they could launch and inspire attacks across the world.

Geography and history suggest that once America is gone and the Taliban takes complete control of Afghanistan, ordinary citizens left behind who fear persecution will make every attempt to flee the country for somewhere safer.

### AT: Other Assurance Solves

#### Credible defense commitments are the thing that prevents prolif.

Brands, Edelman, & Mahnken 18 -- Hal Brands, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins University. Ambassador Eric S. Edelman, American Diplomatic History PhD from Yale University, renowned for his service to the American government. Thomas G. Mahnken, International Affairs PhD from John Hopkins University, Research Professor at John Hopkins University, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. [Credibility Matters: Strengthening American Deterrence in an Age of Geopolitical Turmoil, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/credibility-matters-strengthening-american-deterrence-in-an-age-of-geopolit/publication/1]

Understanding Credibility

In international politics, credibility represents the degree to which an actor’s threats and promises are believed by other actors in the international system; it is a function of the degree to which an actor’s words are taken to be believable. If a country’s commitments are credible, then its adversaries and allies believe that those commitments can and will be upheld when subjected to pressure. If they are not considered credible, then there is some significant doubt about whether the country can make good on assurances or threats. “In international politics,” Daryl Press writes, “credibility is a prized asset. A country whose promises are credible can build valuable alliances because potential allies will not fear betrayal or abandonment. A country whose threats are credible can deter many enemies and prevent costly wars rather than fight them.”2

Credibility is thus a subjective perception rather than an objective reality—what matters is less whether a country will actually make good on its threats and promises than whether other actors believe that it will. “A bluff taken seriously,” Henry Kissinger once wrote, “is more useful than a serious threat taken as a bluff.”3 And like deterrence, credibility is a function of both perceived capabilities and perceived resolve. If a country possesses enormous military capabilities but is seen to lack the will or resolve to use them in a crisis, then its threats will not be credible to adversaries, thus undermining deterrence, or to allies, thus undermining reassurance and reducing its ability to forge lasting coalitions. As Thomas Schelling wrote, “To fight abroad is a military act, but to persuade enemies or allies that one would fight abroad, under circumstances of great cost and risk, requires more than a military capability. It requires projecting intentions.”4 Likewise, a state may be perceived to have the will to defend its interests, but if it lacks the capabilities to effectively do so, its pledges will not be seen as credible. “Deterrence requires a combination of power, the will to use it, and the assessment of these by the potential aggressor,” Kissinger wrote in the early 1960s. “Moreover, deterrence is a product of those factors and not a sum. If any one of them is zero, deterrence fails.”5

U.S. policymakers have long been preoccupied with establishing and maintaining the credibility of American commitments, and with good reason, given the global role that Washington has played since World War II. For nearly four generations, the backbone of America’s geopolitical posture has been its worldwide network of alliances, partnerships, and security guarantees. By some estimates, the United States is now pledged—either formally or informally—to defend over sixty countries around the world.6 The United States relies on these guarantees to deter adversaries from pursuing aggression or aggrandizement; to dissuade allies from engaging in dangerous behavior, such as nuclear proliferation or arms-racing; and thereby to maintain stability and peace—and all the blessings that go with it—in the world’s crucial regions. These guarantees, in turn, serve their purpose only if both adversaries and allies believe that the United States can and will honor them.7 Credibility is thus the geopolitical coin of the realm for America; U.S. global strategy and the international system it supports hinge on whether American threats and promises are seen as convincing.

#### Credibility theory is true -- studies.

Brands **’**20[Hal; 2020; Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins University; NDC Research Paper, “Does U.S. Credibility Matter? Trump Is Putting It to the Test,” https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-01-16/does-u-s-credibility-matter-trump-is-putting-it-to-the-test]

This position was always a bit of a head-scratcher, because it required accepting that what a country does today has no impact on what others expect it will do tomorrow. Fortunately, a third wave of scholarship has now knocked down the more extreme academic critiques, without obscuring important nuances in how credibility actually works.

Cold War historians have suggested that U.S. intervention in Korea, which Josef Stalin had not expected, did strongly influence his views of whether Washington would also resist blatant communist military provocations elsewhere. We now know that John F. Kennedy’s perceived weakness in handling the botched Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 encouraged Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to think he could bully the young president by trying to evict Western forces from Berlin and secretly shipping nuclear missiles to Cuba.

Looking beyond the Cold War context, America’s relatively timid responses to al-Qaeda attacks during the 1990s encouraged Osama bin Laden to think that a major strike on the U.S. homeland might drive Washington out of the Middle East altogether. Likewise, a number of political science studies, many of them using statistical methods to divine broad trends, demonstrate that states that honor their commitments and meet challenges head-on are more likely to win allies and deter future challenges.

Why does any of this matter? For one thing, it shows that it is foolish to brush off concerns about credibility, as Obama did in remarking that “dropping bombs on someone to prove that you’re willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force.” Especially in cases where the U.S. is interacting repeatedly with a single challenger, or where its reaction to one challenge might reasonably be expected to yield clues about its reaction to a similar type of provocation in the future, you can bet that Washington’s choices will shape global views of its credibility and resolve. It seems almost certain that Trump’s reticence in using force against Iran through nearly all of 2019 influenced Tehran’s willingness to gradually increase the military pressure — and so it’s plausible that killing Soleimani may throw a wrench in the calculations of Iran or other Middle Eastern actors who are tempted to use force against American interests.

### East Asia Link

#### Pivoting to Asia ironically hurts East Asian allied assurances. The perceived loss of energy security freaks out allies.

---2nd to last paragraph = consult East Asia/Japan CP

Alterman 20 [Jon; 10-19-20; Senior Vice President, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy, and Director, Middle East Program; “Pivoting to Asia Doesn’t Get You Out of the Middle East”; <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pivoting-asia-doesnt-get-you-out-middle-east>] brett TDI

Of all of President Donald Trump’s foreign policy ideas, the one that may enjoy the broadest public consensus is that the United States has been overcommitted to the Middle East. Seemingly endless U.S. military engagements, intractable problems, and rising energy self-sufficiency all push a growing number of Americans to argue for a far lighter footprint there, in favor of a shift in focus to the Pacific. There, the United States can partner with dynamic economies, engage with fast-growing populations, and confront Chinese aggression. Much of the same argument was behind the Obama administration’s “rebalance to Asia,” announced almost a decade ago.

The problem with that argument comes when you talk with U.S. partners in Asia about that plan. Almost completely reliant on the Middle East for energy, they fear a U.S. rebalance away from the region will leave them both vulnerable to upheavals and even more susceptible to Chinese pressure. Put simply, they worry that a greater U.S. focus on China at the expense of the Middle East will prove self-defeating, because a U.S. abandonment of the Middle East actually will make China more dominant in Asia.

Energy is at the core of this, and it a huge issue for both the United States and China. The United States is the largest energy consumer in the world, and China ranks second. In the last few decades, unconventional oil and gas has transformed U.S. energy markets. Shale deposits accounted for almost two-thirds of U.S. oil production and three-quarters of gas in 2019, and they helped transform the United States from being the world’s largest oil importer in 2013 to a net energy exporter by 2019. While lower prices have cut U.S. production in the last year, the knowledge that the United States has adequate low-cost hydrocarbons to fuel its economy for decades has had a profound psychological effect.

Asia is in a very different place. South Korea imports more than 98 percent of its fossil fuels. Typically, between 70 and 80 percent of South Korea’s crude oil comes from the Middle East, while for Japan it’s close to 90 percent. Substantial imports of natural gas from the region deepen Asia’s ties to the Middle East even more.

China also pays close attention to the Middle East, since about 50 percent of its crude oil comes from there. Feeling that the Middle East was a source of insecurity because of U.S. preponderance there, China has tried for decades to boost its domestic energy production—and shift away from its smog-producing domestic coal—with only modest effect. China has neither the geological formations nor the water necessary for large-scale unconventional oil and gas production. China also has tried to diversify its import sources since it became a net oil importer in about 1993, but that hasn’t worked as well as they hoped, either. Even as China develops new supply relationships—including with the United States—the Middle East remains its largest source of oil.

The Middle East has also grown dependent on China. China is not only a huge market in absolute terms (now accounting for 14 percent of all global oil demand), but it also has been the biggest contributor to global oil demand growth for two decades. As U.S. and European imports decline, exporters seeking to expand sales look to China. To pursue those relationships, China has established what it calls “comprehensive strategic partnerships” with three major oil producers—Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—and along the way became the largest bilateral trading partner of all three.

Until now, China has been content to develop its Middle Eastern relationships beneath the penumbra of the U.S. military presence. By advertising the modest scope of its ambitions, Beijing has sought to be a friend to all. The approach has been a wise one. Combined with a consensus in the region that China’s role can only grow, it set off something of a bidding war for Chinese affection. Saudi Arabia boosted its exports to China in the 2000s partly to split China away from Iran; Iran has grown even more dependent on China because it is otherwise so isolated in the world.

But China has done more than merely advance its commercial ties. It has been sending an increasing number of its navy ships to the Middle East; it chose Djibouti for its very first overseas military base; and it is working its way into regional arms markets—especially through selling drone aircraft. China is also seeking to embed itself into regional infrastructure projects, building factories, ports, and telecommunications systems. China does much of this through its state-owned enterprises, which enjoy government-backed financing. China has built relationships aggressively with government officials in the Middle East, casting itself not only as a willing partner, but also as one that is able to move quickly and without the regulatory and legal encumbrances that often accompany international business activities.

U.S. allies in Asia look at China’s growing role in the Middle East, and what seems to be the United States’ receding one, and they worry they will be squeezed. China’s approach to its immediate neighborhood in East Asia, including but not limited to asserting ownership over islands in the South China Sea, has been a pattern of patient, deliberate, and coordinated moves over years that often seem relatively innocuous in isolation. By the time their impact is fully recognized, there is little to do about it.

Asian allies of the United States worry China similarly will seek to become dominant in the Middle East before anyone understands what has happened, and then use its dominance of Middle Eastern energy in order to advance its control over them.

U.S. allies in Asia have placed a huge bet on the United States over the last 75 years. China’s increasingly assertive actions in Asia have pushed them to seek more U.S. engagement in their neighborhood, and the increased U.S. focus on Asia is a part of that. Yet, these same allies worry that if the United States’ focus on Asia comes at the expense of the Middle East, the whole enterprise will backfire.

One option worth considering is to work more closely with U.S. allies in Asia to advance shared security interests in the Middle East, perhaps under the framework of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy or some successor concept. Implementation will be a challenge, but it provides an important model to align the United States with the strategic interests of its allies and partners. Another is to be more selective in identifying U.S. priorities in the region, acknowledging that China’s rise in some aspects of regional life is probably unstoppable.

The United States might want to pull out of the Middle East, but as long as Asia sees vital stakes there, a U.S. future in Asia will require a future in the Middle East, too. It is up to Americans, working with governments in the Middle East and Asia alike, to shape it in ways that serve U.S. interests.

## Impacts

### Germany !

#### Germany gets the bomb in months.

Steff **’16** [Reuben; 2016; Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Global Security at the University of Waikato; Strategic Thinking, “Strategic Thinking, Deterrence and the US Ballistic Missile Defense Project: From Truman to Obama,” p. 139-140]

Commentators like Samuel Huntington and Zbiegniew Brezinski asserted that a world without US primacy would be a world of violence and disorder, less democracy and economic growth; American primacy facilitates global peace.1 Thus BMD was cast as inherently defensive; it enables the US to protect the global commons and international economic system that benefits all nations as the US assumes the role of a global-ordering superpower.2 Bush administration officials supported this position, in line with Hegemonic Stability Theory, holding that BMD could restore the freedom of action that would be lost in the second nuclear age, by allowing America to retain the capability to project power.3 There is some support for the nuclear age thesis. Firstly, nine states have nuclear weapons and apparently 49 countries have the know how to construct them.4 Secondly, to reduce greenhouse gases, many states may soon judge it prudent to construct nuclear power plants. Thirdly, states like Japan, Germany and South Korea have latent nuclear weapons potential and could apparently militarize their program in the space of a few months; Myanmar was suspected of having a covert program; Russia helped Iran build its Bushehr power plant and many states around the Persian Gulf are considering developing civilian programs. Syria also had a covert nuclear program until an Israeli strike in 2007.5 Finally, the IAEA is tasked with the contradictory mission of promoting the spread of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and inhibiting its diversion to military purposes. These goals are not mutually exclusive as the former provides a path towards weaponization.6

#### It causes Russian threat perception AND countermeasures.

Ischinger **’18** [Wolfgang; 2018; Professor of Security Policy and Diplomatic Practice at the Hertie School and Founding Director of the Centre for International Security; Hertie School, “Germany’s Dangerous Nuclear Flirtation,” https://www.hertie-school.org/en/news/allcontent/detail/content/germanys-dangerous-nuclear-flirtation]

Second, a German nuclear bomb would damage the strategic environment in Europe – to Germany’s disadvantage. Russia would interpret German steps toward a nuclear arsenal as a direct threat to its own national security and would likely adopt military countermeasures. That, in turn, would make it even harder to pursue the vision of a pan-European order of peace and security, a core foreign-policy goal of all German governments since that of Konrad Adenauer. Moreover, a German nuclear ambition might jeopardize the delicate balance of power in Europe – including between Germany and France, for example – with incalculable consequences for the long-term cohesion of the European Union.

### East Asia !

#### East Asian prolif would be quick

Sanger et al 17 [David E. Sanger is a national security correspondent and a senior writer for New York Times and senior fellow in The Press and National Security at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard. Choe Sang-Hun is the Seoul bureau chief for The New York Times, focusing on news on North and South Korea, and a 2010-11 fellow in Korean studies at the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center of Stanford University. Motoko Rich is Tokyo bureau chief for The New York Times and a graduate of Yale University and Cambridge University, 10-28-2017, "North Korea Rouses Neighbors to Reconsider Nuclear Weapons," New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/28/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-japan-south-korea.html>] TDI

Long before North Korea detonated its first nuclear device, several of its neighbors secretly explored going nuclear themselves. Japan briefly considered building a “defensive” nuclear arsenal in the 1960s despite its pacifist Constitution. South Korea twice pursued the bomb in the 1970s and 1980s, and twice backed down under American pressure. Even Taiwan ran a covert nuclear program before the United States shut it down. Today, there is no question that both South Korea and Japan have the material and expertise to build a weapon. All that is stopping them is political sentiment and the risk of international sanctions. Both nations signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but it is unclear how severely other countries would punish two of the world’s largest economies for violating the agreement. South Korea has 24 nuclear reactors and a huge stockpile of spent fuel from which it can extract plutonium — enough for more than 4,300 bombs, according to a 2015 paper by Charles D. Ferguson, then president of the Federation of American Scientists. Japan once pledged never to stockpile more nuclear fuel than it can burn off. But it has never completed the necessary recycling and has 10 tons of plutonium stored domestically and another 37 tons overseas. “We keep reminding the Japanese of their pledge,” said Ernest J. Moniz, chief executive of the Nuclear Threat Initiative and an energy secretary in the Obama administration, noting that it would take years if not decades for Japan to consume its fissile material because almost all its nuclear plants have remained offline since the 2011 Fukushima accident. China, in particular, has objected to Japan’s stockpile, warning that its traditional rival is so advanced technologically that it could use the material to quickly build a large arsenal. Analysts often describe Japan as a “de facto” nuclear state, capable of building a weapon within a year or two. “Building a physical device is not that difficult anymore,” said Tatsujiro Suzuki, former deputy chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission. Japan already possesses long-range missile technology, he added, but would need some time to develop more sophisticated communications and control systems. South Korea may be even further along, with a fleet of advanced missiles that carry conventional warheads. In 2004, the government disclosed that its scientists had dabbled in reprocessing and enriching nuclear material without first informing the International Atomic Energy Agency as required by treaty. “If we decide to stand on our own feet and put our resources together, we can build nuclear weapons in six months,” said Suh Kune-yull, a professor of nuclear engineering at Seoul National University. “The question is whether the president has the political will.”

#### East Asian prolif goes nuclear.

Tan '15 [Associate Professor At the University of New South Wales; Andrew T.H., Security and Conflict in East Asia, p. 31] TDI

East Asia’s arms race leads to the classic problem of the security dilemma, in which a state that is perceived as becoming too powerful leads to counter-acquisitions by other states. This results in misperceptions, conflict spirals, heightened tensions and ultimately open conflict, thereby destroying the very security that arms are supposed to guarantee (Jervis 1976). East Asia’s sustained economic rise since the end of the Korean War in 1953 and the lack of any major conflict since has lulled many into believing that growing economic interdependence will make war unlikely in that region (Khoo 2013: 47-48). However, this is a false premise as significant historical antagonisms have remained. Japan’s imperialism prior to 1945 and its failure adequately to account for its past continues to stir up strong nationalist emotions in China and South Korea. In additions, the divisions between North Korea and South Korea are as strong as intractable as ever, leading to an arms race on the Korean peninsula. The situation is compounded by the weakness or absence of regional institutions, regimes and laws that could regulate interstate relations, build trust and confidence- and security-building measures which were in pace in Europe during the Cold War and helped to calm tensions as well as contain the arms race exist in Asia. Within East Asia itself, the Six-Party Talks have focused only on the Korean issue and have not managed to stem North Korea’s open brinkmanship that in early 2013 almost brought the Korean peninsula to war again. The arms race in East Asia is dangerous owing to the increased risk of miscalculation as a result of misperception. Chinese policymakers appear to be convinced that Japan is dominated by right-wing conservatives bent on reviving militarism (Glosserman 2012). At the same time, there is also a perception within China that given its growing strength, it should now aggressively assert what it perceives to be its legitimate claims in the East and South China Seas. Thus, China’s nationalist discourse perceives that the problems about disputed territory emanate from other powers, not China (Sutter 2012). The consequences of conflict between China and Japan, on the Korean peninsula or over Taiwan, however, will not stay regional. As a key player in East Asia, the USA, which has security commitments to Japan and South Korea, residual commitments to Taiwan, and troops on the ground in East Asia and in the Western Pacific, will be drawn in. The problem is that any conflict in East Asia is not likely to remain conventional for long. In fact, it is likely that it would rapidly escalate into a nuclear war because three of the key players, namely China, North Korea and the USA, possess nuclear weapons.

### Prolif !

#### Doubts about future intentions cascade, independently triggering revisionist probing and arms races.

Mitchell **’17** [Wess; 2017; President of the Center for European Policy Analysis; “The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and The Crisis of American Power,” p. 157-162]

First, recent evidence suggests that a policy of U.S. military retrenchment would make major regions less rather than more stable. For decades advocates of offshore balancing have asserted as an unproven dogma that a reduction in American alliance commitments would lead regional states to automatically balance against threatening powers, replacing the function of containment normally provided by U.S. extended deterrence, and that this would make regions more stable— all at lower expense to the United States. Recent experience provides a laboratory for testing the validity of these claims. As discussed in chapter 4, the behavior of U.S. allies over the past few years has shown that small states do not only balance against threats as offshore balancing advocates would predict; some also acquiesce in revisionist behavior through various forms of accommodation. More over, while many U.S. allies are investing in greater local military capabilities, it is not just taking the form of defensive postures; many are considering offensive or even nuclear capabilities that could contribute to regional destabilization unless accompanied by a U.S. security presence. The deterrent value of defensive alliances and the benefits of combined U.S. and allied balancing against rivals, once lost, may not be so easy to replace.

Second, it is not clear that jettisoning alliances would result in the financial windfall to the United States that many offshore balancing advocates expect. Losing the advantage of forward positions provided by allies would impose two new kinds of cost on the United States. One is the need to increase air and naval power: to achieve a level of power projection capability similar to what it possesses through overseas basing, much of which is on the territory of allied states, the United States would have to develop a significantly larger air force cap able of conducting offensive and lift operations mainly from North America and U.S. territories. It would also have to design and build large numbers of airplanes capable of crossing large distances into hostile air zones, a technological feat that is costly and unlikely to be achieved anytime soon. Similarly, relying on the oceanic moat would call for a much larger navy capable of maintaining a continuous presence across multiple oceans. Developing such a force would cost the United States a lot of money— perhaps as much if not more than it currently spends on overseas installations.5 A second, longer-term problem would be strategic in nature: the high costs of achieving reentry into the global rimlands once the United States has lost a forward presence there. The wars of the twentieth century are a reminder of the degree of national economic, military, and human exertion required of a power in America’s geographic position to achieve landfall in the Eurasian littorals and mainland once regional balances have been upset. Fortunately, in those eras, U.S. enemies did not develop the capability to deny the United States access to these regions. In the era of rapidly accelerating A2AD warfare technology, it cannot be assumed that America’s technological edge would allow it to do so again without enduring prohibitively high costs in U.S. blood and treasure— costs that are likely to be higher than any temporary savings from an ad hoc retrenchment.

A Strategy To Strengthen Alliances

Alliances remain the best-known instrument at America’s disposal for guaranteeing its national security and competing effectively against rivals in the new conditions of the twenty-first century. No other current or foreseeable strategic alternative is likely to provide cost-effective replacements to built-in advantages that alliances offer to the United States at as low a cost. And contrary to claims of many critics on both left and right, they are likely to continue to offer a strategic value to the United States under conditions of economic austerity and contested primacy; indeed, they may be even more important to the United States under such conditions than in the immediate post– Cold War period, when America’s power was less constrained and its rivals less numerous. In a more competitive landscape, alliances may represent the crucial margin of advantage when our edge in other traditional areas of strength is, at least for a time, less decisive. The costs of losing even a portion of these relationships, whether through defection or through continued slippage due to rival probes and U.S. devaluation, could be high. It could mean a weaker barrier against great-power war, a more permissive environment for the territorial growth of Eurasian competitors, and perhaps someday the need for a larger U.S. military to reproject power in and restabilize the system once its balance has been lost— all on the iffy proposition that the United States can achieve similar benefits by bargaining with large rivals or by withdrawing from the complicated affairs of the world’s regions entirely.

It is therefore in the strategic interests of the United States to strengthen its alliances. Doing so should be an urgent policy priority at a moment of intensifying probes by U.S. rivals and widespread doubts about American intentions and capabilities in the international system. Already these patterns represent a significant global challenge for the United States; allowed to persist unchecked, they could lead to a general and potentially militarized crisis in the U.S.-led international order, with multiple vulnerable allied frontiers in various stages of advanced geopolitical competition, alliance fragmentation, or even local war. Given the strategic similarities of probing efforts in such hotspots as eastern Ukraine and the South China Sea and the fungible nature of frontline allies’ concerns in these regions, the prospects for a multiregional crisis involving American power are higher today than at other any point in the modern era. However, such a crisis has not yet occurred, giving the United States an important and perishable window of opportunity to shore up its alliances as a preventive to further destabilization. A strategy to do so would focus on restoring American strategic credibility and raising the visible costs that aggressive powers would have to pay to revise the system to their favor. It would prioritize those alliances most in need of attention while working systematically to reinforce the central pillars of U.S. extended deterrence that are most in danger of collapse.

#### Credibility gaps spill over---extinction.

Beauchamp ’18 — Zach; senior reporter at Vox, where he covers global politics and ideology, and a host of Worldly, Vox's podcast on covering foreign policy and international relations. June 12, 2018; “How Trump is killing America’s alliances”; *Vox*; <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/12/17448866/trump-south-korea-alliance-trudeau-g7>; //CYang

Thankfully, those predictions turned out to be wrong. There are multiple reasons for that, but one big one — one that also helped keep relations between other historical enemies, like South Korea and Japan, peaceful — is a shared participation in US alliance networks. The US serves as the ultimate security blanket, preventing these countries from having to build up their own armaments and thus risk a replay of World War I. But if American alliance commitments become and remain less credible, it’s possible this order could crack up. America’s partners aren’t ~~stupid~~. They understand that Trump is the product of deep forces in American politics, and that his victory might not be a one-off. If they think that this won’t be the last “America First” president in modern history, depending on America the way that they have in the past could quickly become a nightmare. The worst-case scenarios for a collapse in the US alliance system are terrible. Imagine full Japanese and German rearmament, alongside rapid-fire proliferation of nuclear weapons. Imagine a crack-up of NATO, with European powers at loggerheads while Russia gobbles up the Baltic states and the rest of Ukraine. Imagine South Korea’s historical tensions with Japan reigniting, and a war between those two countries or any combination of them and China. All of this seems impossible to imagine now, almost absurd. And indeed, in the short run, it is. There is no risk — zero — of American allies turning on each other in the foreseeable future. And it’s possible that the next president after Trump could reassure American allies that nothing like this could ever happen again. But the truth is that there’s just no way to know. When a fundamental force for world peace starts to weaken, no one can really be sure how well the system will hold up.

#### Prolif causes extinction---accidents, brinksmanship, and loose nukes

Kroenig 15 [Matthew, Associate Professor and International Relations Field Chair in the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, 2015. “The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?” Journal of Strategic Studies, Volume 38, Issue 1-2, 2015; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2014.893508>] brett TDI

The spread of nuclear weapons poses at least six severe threats to international peace and security including: nuclear war, nuclear terrorism, global and regional instability, constrained US freedom of action, weakened alliances, and further nuclear proliferation. Each of these threats has received extensive treatment elsewhere and this review is not intended to replicate or even necessarily to improve upon these previous efforts. Rather the goals of this section are more modest: to usefully bring together and recap the many reasons why we should be pessimistic about the likely consequences of nuclear proliferation. Many of these threats will be illuminated with a discussion of a case of much contemporary concern: Iran’s advanced nuclear program.

Nuclear War

The greatest threat posed by the spread of nuclear weapons is nuclear war. The more states in possession of nuclear weapons, the greater the probability that somewhere, someday, there will be a catastrophic nuclear war.

To date, nuclear weapons have only been used in warfare once. In 1945, the United States used nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing World War II to a close. Many analysts point to the 65-plus-year tradition of nuclear non-use as evidence that nuclear weapons are unusable, but it would be naïve to think that nuclear weapons will never be used again simply because they have not been used for some time. After all, analysts in the 1990s argued that worldwide economic downturns like the Great Depression were a thing of the past, only to be surprised by the dot-com bubble bursting later in the decade and the Great Recession of the late 2000s.Footnote48 This author, for one, would be surprised if nuclear weapons are not used again sometime in his lifetime.

Before reaching a state of MAD, new nuclear states go through a transition period in which they lack a secure-second strike capability. In this context, one or both states might believe that it has an incentive to use nuclear weapons first. For example, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, neither Iran, nor its nuclear-armed rival, Israel, will have a secure, second-strike capability. Even though it is believed to have a large arsenal, given its small size and lack of strategic depth, Israel might not be confident that it could absorb a nuclear strike and respond with a devastating counterstrike. Similarly, Iran might eventually be able to build a large and survivable nuclear arsenal, but, when it first crosses the nuclear threshold, Tehran will have a small and vulnerable nuclear force.

In these pre-MAD situations, there are at least three ways that nuclear war could occur. First, the state with the nuclear advantage might believe it has a splendid first strike capability. In a crisis, Israel might, therefore, decide to launch a preventive nuclear strike to disarm Iran’s nuclear capabilities. Indeed, this incentive might be further increased by Israel’s aggressive strategic culture that emphasizes preemptive action. Second, the state with a small and vulnerable nuclear arsenal, in this case Iran, might feel use them or lose them pressures. That is, in a crisis, Iran might decide to strike first rather than risk having its entire nuclear arsenal destroyed. Third, as Thomas Schelling has argued, nuclear war could result due to the reciprocal fear of surprise attack.Footnote49 If there are advantages to striking first, one state might start a nuclear war in the belief that war is inevitable and that it would be better to go first than to go second. Fortunately, there is no historic evidence of this dynamic occurring in a nuclear context, but it is still possible. In an Israeli–Iranian crisis, for example, Israel and Iran might both prefer to avoid a nuclear war, but decide to strike first rather than suffer a devastating first attack from an opponent.

Even in a world of MAD, however, when both sides have secure, second-strike capabilities, there is still a risk of nuclear war. Rational deterrence theory assumes nuclear-armed states are governed by rational leaders who would not intentionally launch a suicidal nuclear war. This assumption appears to have applied to past and current nuclear powers, but there is no guarantee that it will continue to hold in the future. Iran’s theocratic government, despite its inflammatory rhetoric, has followed a fairly pragmatic foreign policy since 1979, but it contains leaders who hold millenarian religious worldviews and could one day ascend to power. We cannot rule out the possibility that, as nuclear weapons continue to spread, some leader somewhere will choose to launch a nuclear war, knowing full well that it could result in self-destruction.

One does not need to resort to irrationality, however, to imagine nuclear war under MAD. Nuclear weapons may deter leaders from intentionally launching full-scale wars, but they do not mean the end of international politics. As was discussed above, nuclear-armed states still have conflicts of interest and leaders still seek to coerce nuclear-armed adversaries. Leaders might, therefore, choose to launch a limited nuclear war.Footnote50 This strategy might be especially attractive to states in a position of conventional inferiority that might have an incentive to escalate a crisis quickly to the nuclear level. During the Cold War, the United States planned to use nuclear weapons first to stop a Soviet invasion of Western Europe given NATO’s conventional inferiority.Footnote51 As Russia’s conventional power has deteriorated since the end of the Cold War, Moscow has come to rely more heavily on nuclear weapons in its military doctrine. Indeed, Russian strategy calls for the use of nuclear weapons early in a conflict (something that most Western strategists would consider to be escalatory) as a way to de-escalate a crisis. Similarly, Pakistan’s military plans for nuclear use in the event of an invasion from conventionally stronger India. And finally, Chinese generals openly talk about the possibility of nuclear use against a US superpower in a possible East Asia contingency.

Second, as was also discussed above, leaders can make a ‘threat that leaves something to chance’.Footnote52 They can initiate a nuclear crisis. By playing these risky games of nuclear brinkmanship, states can increase the risk of nuclear war in an attempt to force a less resolved adversary to back down. Historical crises have not resulted in nuclear war, but many of them, including the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, have come close. And scholars have documented historical incidents when accidents nearly led to war.Footnote53 When we think about future nuclear crisis dyads, such as Iran and Israel, with fewer sources of stability than existed during the Cold War, we can see that there is a real risk that a future crisis could result in a devastating nuclear exchange.

Nuclear Terrorism

The spread of nuclear weapons also increases the risk of nuclear terrorism.Footnote54 While September 11th was one of the greatest tragedies in American history, it would have been much worse had Osama Bin Laden possessed nuclear weapons. Bin Laden declared it a ‘religious duty’ for Al- Qa’eda to acquire nuclear weapons and radical clerics have issued fatwas declaring it permissible to use nuclear weapons in Jihad against the West.Footnote55 Unlike states, which can be more easily deterred, there is little doubt that if terrorists acquired nuclear weapons, they would use them.Footnote56 Indeed, in recent years, many US politicians and security analysts have argued that nuclear terrorism poses the greatest threat to US national security.Footnote57

Analysts have pointed out the tremendous hurdles that terrorists would have to overcome in order to acquire nuclear weapons.Footnote58 Nevertheless, as nuclear weapons spread, the possibility that they will eventually fall into terrorist hands increases. States could intentionally transfer nuclear weapons, or the fissile material required to build them, to terrorist groups. There are good reasons why a state might be reluctant to transfer nuclear weapons to terrorists, but, as nuclear weapons spread, the probability that a leader might someday purposely arm a terrorist group increases. Some fear, for example, that Iran, with its close ties to Hamas and Hizballah, might be at a heightened risk of transferring nuclear weapons to terrorists. Moreover, even if no state would ever intentionally transfer nuclear capabilities to terrorists, a new nuclear state, with underdeveloped security procedures, might be vulnerable to theft, allowing terrorist groups or corrupt or ideologically-motivated insiders to transfer dangerous material to terrorists. There is evidence, for example, that representatives from Pakistan’s atomic energy establishment met with Al-Qa’eda members to discuss a possible nuclear deal.Footnote59

Finally, a nuclear-armed state could collapse, resulting in a breakdown of law and order and a loose nukes problem. US officials are currently very concerned about what would happen to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons if the government were to fall. As nuclear weapons spread, this problem is only further amplified. Iran is a country with a history of revolutions and a government with a tenuous hold on power. The regime change that Washington has long dreamed about in Tehran could actually become a nightmare if a nuclear-armed Iran suffered a breakdown in authority, forcing us to worry about the fate of Iran’s nuclear arsenal.

#### Regional prolif outweighs---it’s unprecedented and shreds traditional barriers to dyadic escalation.

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The answers to these questions are important. One-on-one nuclear faceoffs (as between the US and the Soviet Union/Russia, the US and China, China and India, and India and Pakistan) have so far proven manageable and even favourable to non-proliferation (as was the case for Argentina and Brazil). But the prospect of a Middle Eastern nuclear regatta with three or more participants in close proximity is daunting. There have been no comparable cases of multiple adversaries in the same region gaining nuclear weapons. Multilateral deterrence would be a dicey affair, due to greater uncertainties and short lead times for crucial decisions. The possibility of loose nukes, or nuclear weapons in the hands of extremist groups, would grow. The nuclear question in the Middle East is a long-standing one for good reason. Further proliferation there could make the region’s current problems, severe as they are, seem minor. Prevention based on careful analysis is the best way forward.

### Probing !

#### Nuclear war.

Mitchell **’17** [Wess; 2017; President of the Center for European Policy Analysis; “The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and The Crisis of American Power,” p. 42-71]

America’s deprioritization of allies creates opportunities for revisionist powers. Such transition is recurrent in geopolitics; international relations are always characterized by uncertainty. Policy makers have to navigate a landscape that is often difficult to delineate, full of strategic actors whose purposes are often obscure and whose power is difficult to assess. Intentions are notoriously hard to divine, in part because rival states obfuscate them but in part because often the states themselves do not have a clear and consistent perception of what they want to achieve. Uncertainty arises also out of a more quantifiable source of knowledge, an assessment of hard power, which is imperfect and results in widely different estimates. It is sufficient to recall the challenges of assessing Soviet power throughout the Cold War.

Moments characterized by alleged large shifts in relative power present particularly acute problems of assessing power and intentions, adding an additional layer of ambiguity and uncertainty. Rumors of change put in doubt the relatively well- known, or at least familiar, geopolitical situation. All parties involved are unsure about their position relative to the others, the extent of their political sway, and the match between their commitments and their power. The established great powers may have a crisis of confidence, while emboldened rising states are uncertain how far their influence extends as well as how solid and credible is the power reach of their weakening rival. Revisionist powers now openly but cautiously question what was the grudgingly accepted geopolitical status quo.

Rising powers are thus curious but careful. They are interested in pushing the existing boundaries of their influence but do not know how far they can do so without meeting a firm opposition of the other power. In the current case, U.S. rivals— China, Russia, and Iran— appear keen to assert their influence and establish what they deem their rightful position in their respective regions and in the world but are also eager to avoid a direct confrontation with the United States. Uncertain about their own power relative to the United States, they test the hypothesis of a growing American economic and military fragility and decaying political reach. To figure out the new map of power, and possibly to redraw it at low cost, revisionist powers engage in probing.

In this chapter we examine this behavior— the probing by revisionist powers. We define probing as a low- intensity and low- risk test aimed at gauging the opposing state’s power and will to maintain security and influence over a region. It is a set of actions that studiously avoids a direct military confrontation with the leading power by targeting the outer limits of its commitments and interests. There, along the outer rim of its influence, the hegemon is at the furthest of its commitments and power projection. The perception, or rather the suspicion, of its decline is most consequential along these frontiers of power because the revisionist state senses opportunities in its own neighborhood and searches for confirmation of the rival’s weakness.

Probing is an opportunistic behavior. It occurs when the revisionist states detect a permissive international situation, namely, when they think that the existing great power is retreating. It is still a behavior that is characterized by self- doubt and uncertainty, although if unanswered it results in the confirmation of the belief in the rival’s decline and may lead to ever more assertive challenges to the international order and expansions of influence by the geopolitical challenger.

Over the past few years, and with greater frequency and brazenness, regional powers opposed to the United States have been engaging in probing. Russia, Iran, and China in their respective regions have been working under the hypothesis that the United States is retreating, out of choice, fatigue, or weakness, or all three combined. The American retrenchment is more pronounced in the Middle East, with the ending of U.S. combat presence in Iraq and the drawdown in Afghanistan as well as the unwillingness to intervene in Syria, leaving a vacuum for Iranian influence. But there is an equally pervasive perception of American withdrawal or decline in the other two key regions, Europe and Asia. In Europe, the perception is that Washington is redirecting its strategic focus and resources toward Asia and has limited willpower to back its extended deterrent, giving Moscow a window of opportunity to redraw the map in Europe’s eastern “borderlands. ” And in Asia, a rising and confident China looks at a United States hobbled by financial crises, fiscal imbalances, and a decade- long military overstretch in the Middle East. The reasons are different, but the broad perception is similar: the revisionist states sense an opening left by a distracted and weakening United States. And they probe along the periphery of American influence, from Ukraine to the South China Sea through the Persian Gulf.

ORIGINS OF PROBING BEHAVIOR

Probing stems out of a tentative belief that the existing geopolitical order is amenable to change, and it seeks to confirm this suspicion. A perceived geopolitical change remains only that, perceived, until facts on the ground confirm it. An assessment of a state’s power is merely an estimate of how that state may fare in a clash with others. As such, it informs a set of expectations for the future, and it may or may not reflect reality. Often there is little agreement among powers as well as within those powers as to which assessment of power is correct.1 Today, for instance, questions about the continued resilience of American power abound both abroad and in the United States, and there are analysts on both sides of the argument.2 Regardless of where one stands on the issue of American relative decline or retrenchment, the mere existence of such a debate is a source of concern because it points to an absence of clarity on the geopolitical scene. The various strategic actors no longer know where they stand on the international pecking order and are confused as to how far their own influence can reach and what the responses of their rivals may be.3 These are periods of a tense peace but also of great uncertainty about the nature of the security environment. As a scholar put it, it is the “fog of peace” that makes strategic planning more difficult because it is unclear who the enemy is, how much power a potential rival may have, and where the boundaries of political influence are.4 As history indicates, often such an uncertain strategic environment degenerates into war, which is a “dispute about the measurement of power. ”5

The outcome of a war is the violent clarification of such confusion. It settles the dispute about the assessment of power. A victory or defeat in war, followed by changes in boundaries, military bases, or political affiliations of governments, is one way to prove or disprove a perceived alteration in relative power. As British historian A.J.P. Taylor observed, the “test of a Great Power is . . . the test of strength for war. ”6 After its defeat in the 1853– 1856 Crimean War, Russia was clearly militarily inferior to European states (even though the victorious powers, Britain, France, Turkey, and later Austria, also encountered serious difficulties in projecting power to the Black Sea theater) and consciously chose to retreat, reform, and rebuild its foundations of power, known as a policy of recueillement, in order to maintain its status as a European great power.7 There is no clearer confirmation of a state’s decline than a loss in a direct confrontation with a rising power; there is equally no better proof that the perception of relative decline was incorrect when the aspirant revisionist state is soundly defeated. In the immediate aftermath of a war it is therefore easier to assess one’s own power relative to that of the other players. War lifts the “fog of peace. ”

But war is rarely pursued simply to clarify one’s own uncertain standing relative to the other strategic actors. To engage in war, the ultimate test of power, is exceedingly dangerous, and no leader wants to enter into a violent conflict simply as a way of assessing the power of its own state relative to the target. Wars are realms of luck and un knowns as much as of more calculable kinetic clashes, and consequently the outcomes do not always align with the expectations preceding them.8 In fact, the losing party in a conflict has often entered that war having overestimated its own capability relative to the rival. Many in Europe, for instance, expected in summer 1914 to be “home for Christmas, ” only to remain in the bloody trenches for several years. Given this inherent uncertainty, the risk of being proven wrong for both the perceived rising and declining powers is high, and great powers in history seem to stumble into wars rather than consciously pursue them as tests of strength. The risks of war are incalculable and thus extremely high.

A less risky way of assessing a changing equilibrium of power is through probing. This is a form of strategic behavior meant to test existing perceptions of power relations, seeking at the same time to draw the presumably new boundaries of influence. The rising or revisionist state, in particular, is strongly motivated to test the will of its seemingly declining rival power. It has the aspiration, mitigated by the fear of the rival great power, to alter the existing geopolitical map. Such states, unhappy with the existing international order, which they perceive perhaps as imposed on them and certainly as increasingly not reflective of their own rising aspirations and power, have the most to gain from probing. If this behavior confirms the perception that the existing great power is on the wane and that the map drawn by it is no longer supported by its strength and will, the revisionist state may be able to reassert lost influence over its neighborhood and revise a previous settlement. At the same time, such a state has also a strong incentive to avoid a direct clash with its main antagonist lest the perception of its relative weakening turns out not to match reality. A strategy of direct confrontation is risky because its success is predicated on the relative weakness of the targeted power, the existing hegemon, and this is exactly what is unknown. If the probing power becomes convinced that its hypothesis of its own superiority (and of the relative decline of the rival) is true, then a direct clash may occur. But until that confirmation, a safer, less risky course of action is to engage in a probing behavior, akin to testing the water before jumping in. Probes target the frontier of the rival power’s influence, where its interests are less pronounced, its power is at its farthest projection, and its political clout at its weakest. At these outer edges the response of the great power is expected to be most restrained, while the gains of the probing state are most likely to occur.

The purpose of probing, therefore, is to gauge the resolve of the targeted powers. We will return to this later, but here it is important to note that a probing action is also a way of showing the renewed or freshly acquired capabilities and aspirations that otherwise would remain latent and without tangible effects. One cannot revise an established order by keeping one’s own intentions and capabilities hidden.

Showing a new military platform, often in a carefully choreographed event, is one way of signaling growing power. The 1907– 1909 voyage of the American “Great White Fleet, ” meant to showcase the emergent global naval strength of the United States, was one such episode. The round- the- globe cruise was not targeted at a specific power and did not aim to extend American influence over a particular state or region. Rather, it was a broad assertion of American capabilities and global reach, and the other powers, Great Britain in particular, certainly received it as a sign that the United States was a power to be reckoned with.

But probing is more than showing off. It is not simply an action of strutting on the world stage with newly acquired military gadgets and political confidence but a precisely targeted action with clear objectives. Through probing, a revisionist state aims at changing the existing geopolitical order where it thinks it can, namely, at the farthest points of the ruling great power’s influence. Probing, therefore, is not just mere signaling of displeasure with the rules of the international order and the map of power; it aims to revise the order gradually and carefully, starting from the outer layers of the rival great power’s influence.

FEATURES OF PROBING

The purpose of probing is threefold. First, a probing state aims to check whether the rumors of its rival’s weakening are true. A probe is a test, meant to elicit a response from the targeted power. Second, the revisionist state that engages in probing behavior wants to avoid a direct military clash with the existing great power. The risks of being wrong about the rival’s resolve and capability are simply too big. Third, the state’s objective is to achieve, if possible, low- cost revision of the existing regional order.

These purposes can be seen in the features that characterize a probe and distinguish it from other types of behavior, ranging from fullout aggression to commercial pressures and diplomatic démarches. First, probes are low intensity, vigilantly avoiding a direct war with the main rival power. They are below the horizon of direct military confrontation. The revisionist state has no interest in starting an allout military conflict with the rival great power, perhaps declining but still more than a match. The level of violence used, therefore, is low, and probes are limited projections of power in areas of less pronounced interest to the rival. A probing power engages in a lot of selfrestraint; it intentionally elects to keep the use of force at a minimum. It can but chooses not to escalate. A probe is a calculated gamble, not a foolish thrashing around.

The desire to avoid a war with the existing hegemon often leads the revisionist to project power under cover of civilian or paramilitary forces, part of a larger trend of “civilianization” of conflict.9 By using unmarked units to harass a U.S. protégé, a state is able to de ny authorship of provocative actions and thereby avoid a more violent and direct war while at the same time chipping away at the rival’s influence and wealth. The possibility of denying that an aggression has occurred drives costs of revisionism lower. For instance, the sixteenth- century privateer Sir Francis Drake acted on behalf of Queen Elizabeth I, raiding Spanish shipping but never in an official capacity. The queen went so far as to tell a Spanish ambassador that “Drake was a private adventurer, and that she had nothing to object to his alleged execution. ” She was careful in not provoking Spain too much but eager to “singe the King of Spain’s beard. ”10

A similar approach can be seen around the world today. The initial Russian push into Crimea in 2014 was done anonymously with unmarked special forces, dubbed by Ukrainians as the “little green men, ” a clear example of a long- standing Russian practice of tactical deception and disguise (maksirovka).11 It was an indication that Moscow was unsure whether Ukrainian forces would react, and, in the event of a determined opposition, it maintained the option of either escalating with larger conventional forces or halting operations and denying. Moscow seemed to be more careful in masking the identity of its forces in eastern Ukraine, where the local opposition was more assertive and the Western displeasure with Russian aggression more pronounced. The greater the risk of a strong response from the actors targeted, the more carefully tailored, dissimulated, and low- intensity is the probe. The use of unmarked troops and paramilitary forces allows Russia to claim that no aggression has occurred, and thus no military response from Ukraine or from the West is warranted.

China has been testing the limits of the influence of the United States and its allies in the South China Sea using an array of civilianlooking vessels. Its fishing fleet, combined with a fishery- enforcement fleet, is integrated into its military institutions and plays an active role in expanding China’s maritime reach. As Lyle Goldstein observes, this is part of a “strategy of ‘defeating harshness with kindness’ (yi rou ke gang)” whereby China deploys “unarmed fishing vessels or fisheries enforcement vessels to confront foreign vessels operating in its EEZ and claimed waters. ”12 This low- intensity push tests the fron tier of American influence in a way that makes a U.S. response difficult.13 A foray by a Chinese naval vessel into contested waters can be countered with the might of the United States and its ally’s navy; a probe by fishing vessels manned by Chinese fishermen does not warrant the involvement of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. This is risky behavior, but it also indicates a desire by China to avoid a war with the other regional powers as well as with the United States.14

If it is openly a military attack, a probe is conducted with a strong and perhaps warranted belief that the rival power will not intervene because it is distracted elsewhere and because it deems the targeted region to be of little immediate interest. This was the case of the Russian war with Georgia in 2008, when Moscow felt emboldened by NATO ambivalence to extending its membership process to Tbilisi and by the American strategic distraction by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (where a small Georgian contingent was deployed). The Russian gamble was based on the expectation of no meaningful Western, and American in particular, response. The objective was to chip away at the unwelcome Western influence in Russia’s neighborhood but without spurring an equally unwelcome Western military reply— to “singe America’s beard, ” as it were.

Second, a revisionist state engages in probing because it sees it as a low- risk but high- reward behavior. The low risk stems in part from the first feature, the carefully tailored level of aggressiveness that is expected not to elicit a full- out military response by the rival. It is also related to the third feature, explained below, namely, the fact that the immediate target of probing is geographically and political peripheral to the interests of the rival great power, and consequently contributes to the low likelihood of a forceful military response. But on top of being pursued as a low- risk action, a probe can yield high strategic rewards. Most often the revisionist power seems to direct probing behavior to its immediate vicinity, hoping to expand its influence over neighboring and thus more controllable regions.15 It is there that it has the greatest chances of extending its own political shadow successfully. Probes are rarely long- distance projections of power because incursions deep into the rival’s sphere of influence are more liable to be met with more assertive responses as well as being less likely to establish durable control by the probing state. The farther the revisionist state engages in probing behavior, the more high risk and low reward it is, and vice versa. Hence the more likely locations for probing behavior are in the near neighborhood of the revisionist power.

Furthermore, probes focus on strategically important regions, either resource rich or located along lines of communication, or both. Elizabethan England, for example, conducted raiding probes of Spain’s vulnerable transatlantic arteries bringing gold from the New World— not its stronger positions in the Mediterranean. Imperial Germany’s probes of the Anglo- French alliance targeted Morocco, located near the strategically important choke point of Gibraltar but beyond easy reach of the main British fleet. Today China’s probes of U.S. allies in Asia often target oil and gas fields in the South China Sea. In all these cases, since the goal of probing is to test the power and commitment of a rival state, it has to be directed at regions where the rival’s influence is present but not preponderant. It is unlikely that regions of no geostrategic value or with few resources have much of a presence of the rival great power, and as such they are not prime material for probing. A state may still have imperial aspirations in such regions, but not every extension of power is a probe. Probing is not simply grabbing new areas of influence but first and foremost to test the will of the rival. There may be, of course, the bonus that if the probe is successful, it may result in the addition of strategically important regions.

The third feature of probing is that it is peripheral or indirect. The target of the probe is the periphery or the frontier of the tested power where the rival’s presence is at its farthest reach, its interests are less pronounced, and thus its response is expected to be muted. Fearful of a militarily assertive response, the state that is probing is careful not to target areas that are clearly considered of primary and existential interests, such as the rival’s homeland or its immediate neighbors. Hence the visits of Russian or Iranian naval vessels to Venezuelan ports are less a probe per se than an act of grandstanding, since all sides know that the United States could quickly bring overwhelming force to bear in the event of a crisis. These are temporary publicity stunts rather than a calculated attempt to test the hegemon’s commitment to maintaining the status quo.

Probes test for perceived weaknesses, not strengths, and it is on the outer boundaries of the existing great power that its influence is likely to appear the most fragile. The revisionist power is interested in probing the power and influence of its rival in places where that influence is at its weakest, overstretched, and uncertain. During the Peloponnesian War the Spartan general Brasidas adopted such a peripheral strategy, but only a decade into the conflict. The initial Spartan approach of annual invasion of Attica, Athens’s immediate neighborhood, failed to inflict sufficient damage to end the war. It was only with Brasidas, sent north with a small force of helots (minimizing thus the risk to Spartan manpower), that Sparta changed its strategy to one similar to probing, by persuading or forcing distant Athenian allies in Thrace to switch sides. And many did reconsider their allegiance to Athens, because, as Thucydides observes, there did not seem to be much risk given the distance from Athens and their belief that this empire was on the wane.16 Striking the rival’s periphery, and its allies, not only was cheaper than assaulting it directly but also forced it to devote a lot of resources to reasserting the lost influence.

Global powers in particular have a “periphery or frontier problem” that invites probing. A lengthy frontier, distant from the homeland and thus from key logistical bases, is difficult to protect. The sheer amount of power needed to outfit the distant outposts, combined with the uncertainty as to the location and timing of potential attacks, makes it impossible to have an impermeable frontier. When a power assesses threats, the key questions of “where, when, and by whom” are directly related to the length of the imperial frontier. A regional power has well- delimited borders and a clear idea of who the rival is. For instance, from the final decade of the nineteenth century on, Germany was burdened with the possibility of a two- front war, with France on one side and Russia on the other; a serious problem of military planning caused by poor diplomacy but not a source of strategic confusion. For a global power, it is that strategic clarity that is missing, resulting in the need to prepare for multiple contingencies and ultimately to stretch resources in several theaters of potential action.17 While imperial Germany could concentrate on its two- front problem, Great Britain at the turn of the twentieth century had to consider threats from Russia (in Central Asia, pushing toward India), Japan (in the Asian littoral sphere), France (in Africa as well as the Mediterranean), and Germany (in Europe and the North Sea in particular). Through deft diplomacy, it managed to neutralize the first three, allowing it to focus on the German naval threat, thereby limiting its “frontier problem. ”

In practice, probing the periphery of a rival’s great power often translates into testing the strength of its alliances. Most great powers, or empires, expand their influence in informal ways, through political arrangements with local elites and formal alliances.18 The security of these great powers, in particular of ones with global reach, therefore resides not only in the safety of their borders but in their ability to hold rivals at a distance and thwart their challenges to faraway interests. They do so only in part through their own forces and rely heavily on the presence of allies that provide additional military strength and local deterrence (see chapter 5). Allies are at the periphery of influence and strength of great powers, and it is there that the powers’ commitment and influence are at their weakest. It is clear that a state will respond to an encroachment on its territorial possessions or to an attack against its forward deployed forces. It is less certain, however, that a state will respond in the same strong fashion to similar actions directed against its allies and their interests. The security guarantee extended to them, the foundation of the alliance, is a promissory note that carries a high degree of uncertainty. Placing bases with troops on the territory of an ally is a time- tested way of diminishing this uncertainty. As Thomas Schelling put it, the role of U.S. troops in South Korea was simply to die, buttressing the American security guarantee to its ally.19 The loss of American soldiers to an initial attack by the enemy would, so the argument goes, create powerful pressures for Washington to respond. French general Ferdinand Foch, when asked before World War I how many British troops would be needed for the security of France, replied, “One single private soldier . . . and we would take good care that he was killed. ”20

Probes by the revisionist power are not attacks against these bases and forces that underwrite the credibility of the extended deterrent. Rather, they target areas that may be of great importance to the ally but not necessarily to the security patron. That is the periphery of the periphery, so to speak, the tip of the great power’s commitment.

The United States has a particularly pronounced “periphery” problem. There are few direct threats to the continental United States, short of a large- scale assault with weapons of mass destruction or the tragic yet relatively small and isolated terrorist attack. While the absence of a contiguous threat is a geopolitical blessing, it also means that most of the menaces to U.S. interests and security are outside of the North American continent. Hence, in the competitive international environment, “the strategic position of the United States rests ultimately on its ability to project power over great distances. ”21 In practice this entails managing alliances that maintain stability and keep U.S. rivals on the defensive in key regions of the world, in particular along an arc from Europe to East Asia through the Middle East. And historically this has been, and continues to be, achieved by extending U.S. deterrence beyond the North American continent to the countries, some allied by treaty and some neutral. Such an extended deterrence is a “ ‘three- nation problem’ involving an aggressor nation, the United States, and some smaller nation which is the object of the aggressor’s designs and which Washington seeks to protect. ”22 Probing by an “aggressor nation” aims to test U.S. commitment to these “smaller nations, ” which constitute the periphery of American interests and power.

In the most successful case, probing could achieve a dual purpose: first, it tests the level and credibility of the commitment of the distant security patron, and second, it can weaken the rival alliance. It does so by targeting the foundation of the alliance, the belief that the alliance is beneficial to both parties and that it is effective. As Michael Mandelbaum has observed, alliances need to manage two concurrent fears: one of entrapment, namely, of being dragged into undesirable wars of limited significance and local interest, and one of abandonment, the apprehension of often the weaker ally of be ing abandoned by its security provider when the need comes. 23 Probing aims to increase the rival’s fear of entrapment while at the same time stoking worries of abandonment among its weaker and more dependent partners. By harassing the local interests of the rival’s peripheral allies, the revisionist power wants to drive up the risk of a local war, perceived by the rival as a distraction and a potential drain of resources. At the same time, it wants to indicate to the smaller allies that they may not rely on their security provider to defend their local, narrow interest, and that they may be abandoned. The goal is to drive a wedge in the opposing alliance by leveraging the fundamental dilemma of alliances— the fears of entrapment and abandonment.

This is where probing becomes more than a simple test of the rival’s strength. By targeting the outer edges of the existing hegemon, and thus harassing its alliance system, the revisionist is engaging in a much more significant endeavor. The contest for regional, or global, control is in the end a contest for allies. A.J.P. Taylor observed that when Germany “was bidding for the domination of Europe” in the decade before the outbreak of World War I, “her chosen method was to isolate the independent Powers one from another. ”24 As we point out in chapter 5, allies are, among other things, an extension of the distant patron’s power. Were they to peel away from the side of their security guarantor— or vice versa, were the security guarantor to decide that the risk of continued support of a distant ally pressured by a regional revisionist power is too big— it would in either case signify a retrenchment of power for that offshore patron. The loss of allies is both a confirmation of the waning sway of that rival great power as well as a further reduction in its reach. To be alone in inter national relations is to be vulnerable, inviting further aggressive behavior from the rival. Walter Lippmann observed in 1943, “No one knew, not Hitler, not Stalin, not Chamberlain or Daladier, the relative strength of the Axis and of the opposing combination. Only when Hitler succeeded at Munich in separating the Franco- British allies from Russia, had he so altered the balance of power in his favor that a war for the conquest of Europe was from his point of view a good risk. ”25 War is an extension of successful probing.

The benefits of targeting allies of a rival, rather than the rival itself, are well recognized in history. The astute observer of history and politics Niccolò Machiavelli noted in his Discourses that attacking a rival’s ally is always a preferred option: “For I know especially that if I assault his friend, either he will resent it and I will have my intention of making war with him, or by not resenting it he will uncover his weakness or faithlessness in not defending a client of his. Both the one and the other of these two things are able to take away his reputation and to make my plans easier . ”26 In the strategic behavior we describe, the probing power is not interested in “making war” with the rival, and therefore a probe is not a full- out attack on a rival’s ally or supported state. The risks of activating the security guarantees or assurances that ought to be at the foundation of that alliance are too big. But it is an offensive act of sorts, which threatens the interests of the rival’s ally. The security patron will either respond, thereby disproving the perception of its weakness, or will not, “taking away his reputation” and undermining its alliance.

China has been particularly astute in picking geographic objectives that are important to U.S. allies but only indirectly important to the United States, such as the shoals and reefs around the Spratly and Paracel Islands. By ratcheting up the pressure in these areas, China causes the targeted states to intensify their demands for American assurance while diminishing U.S. willingness to back allies over seemingly petty issues that could lead to a larger conflict. Americans do not want to risk their lives for insignificant and distant rocks. Russia achieves a similar effect by reigniting NATO’s eastern frontier through its attack on Ukraine and a series of threats against exposed NATO members around the Baltic Sea. Those are areas that until recently have not been prominent on the U.S. strategic radar screen but are naturally vital to those smaller states inhabiting the region, which in turn are driven to make increasingly vocal requests for security reassurances from Washington. As in the case of the South China Sea, however, the local and limited nature of the rival’s probes generates in Washington as much a perception of threat as fear of a larger conflict, raising doubts about the benefits of extending security guarantees to these allies and partners. In the end, these peripheral probes pursued by U.S. rivals can create a wedge between Washington and its regional friends and allies.

These three features— low intensity, low risk but high reward, peripheral— point also to the timing of the probing behavior. Probing is a strategic behavior that arises out of an uncertain assessment of power relations. It is the product of doubt, not confidence, in the resilience of the existing international order. As such it arises early on in the transition of power, when perceptions of rise and decline are not firm. The vagueness of the security environment creates among revisionist powers the perception of opportunities that a probing behavior aims to test. Hence probing should occur with less frequency in the immediate aftermath of a war, when, as we point out, an assessment of relative power carries the weight of the ultimate test, war. A defeated power may have all the incentives to upset the existing order, but unless it has no ability to evaluate its clearly weakened position, it has no capacity to do so. After a defeat probing may be tempting but is unfeasible. Such states are more likely to pursue a policy of recueillement (introspection, a moment of pause and strengthening), characterized by internal reforms, modernization, and very limited foreign engagements mostly aimed at dividing the opposing alliance.27

When, however, the perceived weakening of the founding power puts in doubt the existing international settlement, the desire to revise it is matched by the possibility of doing so. The perception of American weakening, or at least retrenchment, therefore opens up a window of opportunity for those powers that aspire to expand their own influence and resent the Western order and its institutions.

THE AUDIENCES OF PROBING

Another useful way of looking at the strategic behavior of probing is by considering the audiences involved. As we argued, a revisionist power pursues probing behavior to check whether new boundaries of influence are feasible given the perceived weakening of the rival. The main purpose is therefore to elicit a response from the targeted audiences. That response, or lack thereof, supplies information necessary to draw the new outline of the geopolitical map. Probing is first and foremost a violent and risky didactic exercise.

The most direct audience is the immediate target of the probing behavior, usually an ally, or an aspirant to be an ally, of the rival great power. Probing here seeks to gauge the willingness and capacity of the targeted state to withstand pressure, and ultimately it aims to push that state to sever itself from its security patron. As we examine in chapter 4, vulnerable frontier allies of a great power actively consider alternative strategic options, especially when they perceive themselves to be under threat from a neighboring revisionist pow er and to have a fraying security guarantee from a distant patron. A probe is meant to ratchet up the threat perception while also attempting to establish a sense of strategic isolation and separation from the security provider.

Hence as important as, if not more important than, the first audience is the second one: the distant but more powerful ally and security provider. Probing tests indirectly the regional staying power of the rival hegemon. While carefully avoiding direct confrontation, the revisionist power wants to assess the commitment of the opposing great power to its ally in the near neighborhood. What the revisionist is testing, therefore, is not the rival’s resolve to oppose other great powers, but the rival’s reliability to its own allies.28 Resolve is the willingness to risk war to achieve one’s own objectives: the more diffuse and distant the threatened interests, the less the resolve. Given that the target of probes is peripheral and not the rival’s homeland or troops and bases, the resolve is assumed to be small. Direct war between the revisionist probing state and the rival great power is unlike ly to erupt as a result. Moreover, the probing state is not interested in finding out whether the rival has the will to fight a direct war: the stakes would be simply too high and the outcome too uncertain. A direct challenge would test the resolve of the rival. Poking around the periphery, therefore, is a poor test of the rival’s willingness to fight a war. History seems to confirm this. For instance, as scholars have pointed out, Soviet leaders did not think that U.S. responses to peripheral threats (e.g., in the Third World) could serve as indicators of future American behavior when its core interests (NATO allies, Japan, or the U.S. homeland) were threatened.29 Whether the United States responded militarily or not to a Soviet foray in Angola or Ethiopia could not be easily translated into expectations of future American behavior in Europe. But it does affect the perception of whether the United States wants to fight in other peripheral areas. “If Soviet leaders were to gain the impression that the United States is firmly set upon a course of neo- isolationism and the absolute avoidance of intervention in local wars, they might become dangerously adventurous in the Middle East and elsewhere. ”30

Probing, however, tests the reliability of the rival great power— that is, its willingness to protect and stand by its ally or aspiring allies. The immediate target is not a test of the rival’s general credibility but only of its commitment to the security ties to the state. Probing wants to elicit a response (or lack thereof) from the rival great power regarding the seriousness of its commitment to the directly targeted state. To be perceived as a reliable ally means to instill the belief that promised security guarantees will hold even in cases of heightened tensions and, in final analysis, of conflict. Consequently a perception of low reliability results in the belief that the alliance is fragile and that it may be in the small state’s interest to seek accommodation with the nearby revisionist power. As delineated above, probes are care fully tailored to split the distant security patron from its regional allies, showing it to be unreliable.

Even if it achieves nothing else, probing can introduce doubts about the security guarantees, forcing the security patron to renew its promises. The less reliable the security patron is perceived by its allies, the more insistent are their demands for continued security guarantees. Probing thus imposes an immediate cost on the rival great power by reactivating a frontier region that until then was dormant and by pressing the rival to expend more resources and political capital to reassert its security guarantees.

Finally, the third audience is composed of the geopolitical onlookers, states that are watching the behavior and derive their own conclusions about the resilience of the existing great power. The strategic interaction spurred by a probe does not directly affect them, but they perceive it as a regionally circumscribed development with potentially more global repercussions. That is, a probe is limited to a specific region but has radiating effects as others also see it for what it really is: a test of the resilience and reliability of the great power that may be analogous in other regions.

Recent academic literature puts in doubt the idea that reputation for commitment is interdependent. Thomas Schelling, among others, articulated that idea in his classic work from 1966 where he argued that U.S. reputation was global, and a loss in one region would have negative impact in other areas. Reputation was not compartmentalized in different regions, in large measure because the rival, the Soviet Union, was one and the same across the world map. Hence “we tell the Soviets that we have to react here because, if we did not, they would not believe us when we say that we will react there. ”31 Academics have relentlessly questioned this argument, resulting in copious writings asserting that reputation is not interdependent and, according to some, does not even matter.32 Reputation is merely a cult and does not exist in international relations.33 Policy makers, however, disagree and continue to speak of reputation for resolve and reliability as something that not only matters and requires constant work but also is interdependent. They prefer to rely on time- tested authors, from Thucydides to Machiavelli, who consider reputation as indispensable to political power.34 In brief, there is a deep gap between academics and policy makers on the issue of reputation.

By observing recent events in the three frontier regions— Central Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia— we think that the truth is closer to Schelling’s view. It is clear that the effects of probing behavior do not remain confined to the immediate actors involved (the probing power, the direct target— usually a rival’s ally— and the rival great power). Other actors in the region are keenly aware of the revisionist state’s probing and of the responses of the United States. For instance, other states, from the Baltics to Poland and Ukraine, observed Russia’s war against Georgia in 2008 and its invasion of Crimea in 2014 with great trepidation.35 These wars were symptoms of a more assertive Russia; a source of worry in themselves. But they were also meant to elicit an answer from the United States. Any sign of American hesitation to respond quickly and firmly to Russian small wars in the two states was perceived as affecting directly these other states, not directly involved in the probing event. America’s reputation for reliability, in other words, was at stake, even though Georgia and Ukraine were not NATO members but only aspiring to closer security and political relations with the United States and the EU. Similarly, Pacific nations from Japan to Australia follow with great attention China’s probing behavior in the South China Sea that puts pressure on Vietnam, the Philippines, and Taiwan. They too seek to figure out whether the United States has the will to remain as a security provider in this region and to the “global commons” in general. How the United States responds to a probe in a particular region therefore affects its regional image.

The question is whether there is also a wider, global audience to regional probes. Do Middle Eastern leaders watch American responses to Russia’s probing in Eastern Europe? Do Kremlin elites draw lessons from U.S. actions along the “first chain of islands” in East Asia? Or, do Chinese neo- Mahanian leaders think the United States is on the wane if it accommodates Putin’s imperial fantasies? According to the latest academic literature, the answer should be negative: how the United States is perceived to be doing in one region does not translate into a similar perception elsewhere. The practical implication of such a view is that the United States should not have fought in Vietnam to prove that it would stand its ground in Europe; similarly, it ought not to oppose Putin around the Black Sea basin simply to demonstrate that it will oppose China in the South China Sea. But we are not so confident that there are no connections between regional demonstrations of will and power. It is at least plausible, and perhaps safer, to argue that there are wider, global effects of probing. First, the world is indeed global, and regions are not hermetically separated from each other. As Nicholas Spykman observed, “Global war, as well as global peace, means that all fronts and all areas are interrelated. No matter how remote they are from each other, success or failure in one will have an immediate and determining effect on the others. It is necessary, therefore, to see the world as a whole and to weigh the measures taken to achieve victory in the light of conditions in all theaters. ”36 Leaders watch and learn from other regions, more than previously in history when conflicts were limited by technology and geographic knowledge to a contiguous region. Because of their domestic opacity, it is difficult to prove that America’s rivals learn from U.S. behavior in other regions, but the question whether they do so needs to be asked. Chinese military officials, for example, have commented publicly on lessons for China from the U.S. handling of the war in Ukraine.37 As one analyst noted, “It might be impossible to determine definitively whether the Ukraine Crisis has impacted China’s risk calculus in hotspots such as the South and East China Sea, but the evidence . . . certainly suggests that such eastern reverberations are quite plausible. ”38 At a minimum we have to recognize that some cross- regional analyses do occur, and it is safer to assume that the U.S. reputation does not stay limited to a region.

Second, the much stronger effect of probing appears to be on U.S. allies and friends, the key geopolitical spectators. They watch how the United States treats other allies and form an opinion regarding American reliability. The former director of Saudi intelligence summed up the view of many officials from U.S. allied states in the Persian Gulf when he said in reaction to the Russian seizure of Crimea, “While the wolf is eating the sheep, there is no shepherd to come to the rescue. ”39 Israel was interested in the war in Georgia; Japanese analysts followed the Obama administration’s decision to cancel the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program in Central Europe; and Polish experts watch U.S. moves in East Asia.40 The probing by revisionist states is first and foremost an attempt to test the strength of their rival’s commitment to its allies and friends. In sum, probing behavior by revisionist states targets these specific audiences in order to elicit responses from them. The goal is to figure out whether and how to draw the new map of power. And it puts the burden on the targeted audiences: their responses determine whether the probe is successful.

EVALUATION OF PROBING: SUCCESS OR FAILURE

From the perspective of the revisionist power that engages in probing, whether a probe has achieved its objectives determines its success or failure. The minimum objective of the probing state is to measure the rival’s staying power in its neighboring region, an objective that is achieved whether the targeted powers respond or not, but it is difficult to interpret. The targeted rival may be tempted to ignore the probe not out of a sense of its own weakness but in the belief that ignoring the test will send a signal of strategic insouciance from its pedestal of power. Also, because of the local and limited nature of a probe, directly involving only the regional actors, it is tempting for the distant security provider to leave the response to its allies and friends. A direct and strong intervention by the offshore patron would escalate the interaction, raising the chances of a larger war, an outcome that neither party desires. But the shrewdness of a probing strategy is that it puts the targeted rival power in the position of having either to escalate the tensions in order to respond or to choose a less confrontational approach but one that risks weakening its alliances. The response to the probe, not the probe itself, is perceived as a potential cause of war. This creates strong disincentives for the tested great power to react by opposing the revisionist state’s probe in a direct and forceful way, or to respond at all. For instance, in the case of China’s probing actions in the South China Sea, the Obama administration’s approach seems to have been to accommodate Beijing, acknowledging a decline in U.S. naval capabilities and welcoming a greater Chinese role in providing security to the global commons.41 Similarly, after Russia’s takeover of Crimea, Washington’s first response was to turn the episode into a strictly regional affair. As President Obama put it in February 2014, “Any violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity would be deeply destabilizing, which is not in the interest of Ukraine, Russia, or Europe, ” tellingly not including the United States in the list of the affected parties.42

The problem is that the temptation of the existing great power to either ignore or regionalize the tension stemming from the revisionist state’s probes— an attempt to de- escalate the strategic interaction— also constitutes a response. It may, however, be one that serves for the revisionist power as a confirmation of its initial suspicion that the rival’s commitment to the region was on the wane. An unanswered— ignored or regionalized— probe is an indication that the existing map of power is open to revisions. Another way to put this is that a probe is a question of sorts: does the existing hegemon have the will and capacity to oppose the revisionist power? An attempt to dismiss the question or to let allies respond to it is a tacit admission by the tested great power that its interest in maintaining a strong foothold and influence in the region is in decline. Silence in response to a probe is telling. Probing, therefore, always elicits some sort of answer, and in this narrow sense it is a success.

The purpose of a probe is also to attain a secondary, albeit crucial, goal of beginning to redraw the map of influence without generating counterbalancing pressures from the tested great power and its allies. The most successful probe would be one that pushes the targeted small states and other regional spectators closer to the revisionist power (or at least convinces them to distance themselves from their existing security patron, the rival great power) while at the same time convincing the rival great power that it is too costly to maintain its political influence and provide security in the region. Hence the probe needs to be evaluated on what it achieves in the three audiences: the directly targeted neighboring small state, the distant security patron, and the geopolitical onlookers (in particular other states in the region). The success or failure of a revisionist state’s probe depends on the actions by these three groups, and, arguably, it can attain partial success by achieving a revision of the status quo in one audience but not the other.

For instance, a probe can succeed in extending the revisionist power’s influence over the immediate target, the ally or would- be ally of the rival, but at the same time it may generate more vigorous efforts by regional onlookers to counterbalance it through a variety of strategies, ranging from military modernization to tighter defense cooperation with the distant security patron. This seems to be the case for Russia’s takeover of Crimea. Moscow quickly conquered Crimea and destabilized Ukraine’s easternmost oblast, successfully demonstrating its ability and willingness to use force to achieve limited territorial adjustments. While Kiev maintains its political independence, it has also been shown to be weak and unable to oppose Russian pressures. The quasi– civil war in the eastern regions and Russia’s conquest of Crimea make Ukraine an unlikely candidate for a closer relationship with the EU and NATO, even if Ukrainian political elites and public opinion may continue to be in favor of it. Russia’s probe, in the form of its intervention in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, has thus been successful in neutering the westward drift of Kiev. The EU, and in particular states such as France and Germany, have now an even smaller desire to bring Ukraine closer, as it is deemed too dangerous and risky; Ukraine is not worth losing business deals with Russia, not to mention starting a war with Russia.

The Ukraine War has also damaged American credibility in the region. Washington after all had given assurances (not “guarantees, ” which are reserved for NATO members) to the Ukrainian government in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. This is undoubtedly a Russian success. But there are also other consequences of Russia’s probing, unintended and unwelcome by Moscow. Some states in the Central European region, in particular Poland and the Baltic states, have awakened from the geopolitical vacation of the past two decades. The 1990s and the 2000s were characterized by a widespread sense that threats to the territorial security of the region were minimal, and most of the strategic focus was on economic cooperation with the EU and on keeping in the good graces of the United States through participation in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is over, at least in part. While strengthening the EU continues to be a priority in Central European capitals, there is simply no more interest in “out- of- area” operations, which drain resources and time from territorial defense. From this perspective, Russian probes have altered the geostrategic outlook of some Central European states. The eastern frontier is what really matters to them now, as their threat assessment has changed. Russia, in other words, has reached an upper threshold in its probes, creating a backlash among some of the states in the region, which are pursuing diplomatic counterbalancing and defense modernization. They are also calling for more visible and permanent NATO (and in particular, U.S.) security presence on their territories to shore up the extended deterrent against Russia.

It appears therefore that Russia is less successful than the other revisionist power, China. Moscow is less subtle in its probes, choosing dramatic military interventions (Georgia and Crimea) that generate growing fear and opposition among some European states as well as the United States. In part Moscow’s more aggressive behavior is a result of a Russian assessment of the weakness and divisions of the West. But in part the seeming Russian rush to restore influence over its “near neighborhood” is due to internal demographic, economic, and political problems. The growing weakness of Russia, a great power more by courtesy and by nuclear weapons than by economic and political strength, gives little time to Putin to shore up his country’s position facing China’s rapid economic growth and Europe’s political appeal. It is a short- term approach of large probes, and it may be successful only by extending influence over its most immediate nearby target.43

China, on the other hand, may have a different time frame, allowing it to probe in a much more indirect and less violent way, though this could change in the months ahead. It is therefore more careful and guarded, pursuing a long- term strategy of small probes over, quite literally, small rocks in the South China Sea. The U.S. “pivot” or “rebalancing” to Asia makes American presence and resolve more pronounced, increasing the doubt of a U.S. retrenchment and thus, from China’s perspective, the need to be cautious in testing the limits of American influence and commitment. Moreover, the counterbalancing efforts of regional onlookers, from Japan to the Philippines and Vietnam, are increasing in intensity, in both the rhetoric used and the arms buildup. Similarly, unlike Russia in Crimea, Beijing has not succeeded in extending its direct control over a large piece of real estate. But in the end it may be more successful, because it is establishing a gradual change in the map of power, visible only after a decade- long period. Through its probes, China is pursuing a classic example of “salami tactics. ” As Thomas Schelling describes them, “If there is no sharp qualitative division between a minor transgression and a major affront, but a continuous gradation of activity, one can begin his intrusion on a scale too small to provoke a reaction, and increase it by imperceptible degrees, never quite presenting a sud den, dramatic challenge that would invoke the committed response. ”44 Many small probes into areas of contested influence do not individually invite a strong response, but they erode steadily the perception and in the end the reality of the opponent’s influence.

Moreover, a continuing sequence of gradual probes signals the seriousness of the revisionist’s intent to alter the status quo. In the mind of the hegemon, the steady drumbeat of low- intensity and peripheral incidents creates the impression that the revisionist both has special claims for and may someday be willing to fight over a particular piece of real estate. These claims are often backed up by legal, historical, or ethnic justifications and a creeping physical presence— in Ukraine, Russian forces and equipment; in the South China Sea, artificially created reefs. Over time, this places the onus of a response on the shoulders of the hegemon and its allies in the region for why the status quo should be maintained. For a weary hegemon like the United States today, probes communicate that the act of supporting the regional status quo is no longer cost free but will require a level of exertion that was not needed in the past, inevitably leading to questions of whether such effort and resulting escalation are worthwhile.

Nonetheless, it is certainly possible to see failed instances of probing, which achieve the opposite of the revisionist power’s intentions. The historic scorecard of probing states is mixed. A clear failure of probing would be if the targeted regional states and offshore security patron responded strongly, tightening their alliance and even initiating a direct war. This is an unintended consequence of a probe and can take several forms, from a tightening of alliances countering the revisionist power to increased military contingency planning and rearming. In the worst- case scenario, it results in a combination of actions that counterbalance the revisionist state more effectively and forcefully than before the probing behavior started. The revisionist state did not want nor expect this response before engaging in probing. It amounts to a disconfirmation of the initial hypothesis that the rival great power is in decline and retreat, and in the end it worsens the strategic position of the probing state.

The biggest loser may thus be the probing power, which puts in motion a series of strategic interactions that undermine its own strength. This was the case of Germany in the early twentieth century. Kaiser Wilhelm’s visit to Tangier in 1905 initiated the first Moroccan crisis, manufactured by Berlin to, among other objectives, probe the strength of the brand new and untested Franco- British Entente Cordiale. 45 By challenging French interests in Morocco in a nonviolent way, Berlin wanted to pressure Paris, “the weakest link in the surrounding chain” of states opposing Germany.46 But it desired to do that in an area and in a way that were expected not to draw Great Britain into a direct confrontation, so that Germany could demonstrate to Paris that the entente was in effect useless. Morocco was important to France but not to Great Britain, and the German Foreign Office expected that London would not back Paris. Great Britain after all was also seen as retrenching after a bloody war with the Boers and unable and unwilling to project power on land to guarantee the security of its French quasi- ally. As Friedrich von Holstein put it, the French would seek a rapprochement with Germany, in effect bandwagoning, “when they have seen that English friendship . . . is not enough to gain Germany’s agreement to the French seizure of Morocco, but rather that Germany wishes to be loved on its own account. ”47 Germany, however, greatly miscalculated the British need for a continental ally and resulting commitment to France. The Moroccan crisis was resolved in a multilateral conference in Algeciras where Berlin ended in a position that was considerably worse than before the crisis: its only support was from the weak Austro- Hungarian Empire, while London was firmly and actively on the side of Paris. Instead of weakening the nascent strategic friendship between Britain and France, “German bullying” strengthened it.48 From then on, the “European Balance of Power, which had been ignored for forty years, again dominated British foreign policy; and henceforth every German move was interpreted as a bid for continental hegemony. ”49 London reoriented its attention away from the empire and toward the European continent, gradually planning to ready an expeditionary force to come to France’s defense.50 Berlin’s probe in Morocco turned into a clear failure.51

Probing is low risk, insofar as it is tailored to minimize a strong reaction of the rival, but it is not danger free for the revisionist state. Despite the fact that it arises out of a desire to clarify an allegedly new map of power, the effects of probing are difficult to interpret. All parties involved— the revisionist power and the targeted states— can miscalculate their reactions. In a case of moral hazard, the smaller states, directly targeted by the revisionist power, may respond violently to the low- intensity probe, feeling secure thanks to the alliance with a more powerful patron. Or, sensing that their distant patron is no longer capable of maintaining its influence, they may decide the exact opposite and accept the hegemony of the rival. This was the case of Athenian allies in Thrace, switching sides under General Brasidas’s pressure and persuasion. They were mistaken because their “judg ment was based more upon blind wishing than upon any sound prediction. ”52 Athens rallied and sent large forces north to restore its sway.

The probing power can also be the one to miscalculate, either not seeing the success or ignoring the failure. The nature of probing is such that the effects are often not visible immediately and require time to alter the perceptions and realities of power. The episode of Spartan commander Brasidas is again telling. Sparta did not follow up on his successes, in part because Spartan kings were jealous of his military exploits, but in part because they thought the damage inflicted on Athens was sufficient to strike a deal and end the war.53 They were of course wrong, as the war continued for decades. Alternatively, despite being checked, the probing power may simply up the ante, seeking some gain. This may have been the case of Germany, which did not stop challenging France and Britain after 1905, despite its diplomatic isolation, the military conundrum of a two- front war, and a robust Franco- British entente. In brief, there is no easy single interpretation of a probe and its effects.

A related risk is that a probe may lead to an unintended and untimely escalation of the strategic rivalry. As we described, the purpose of probing is to see how permissive the geopolitical order is, and to that goal a probe is limited in geographic reach and means used. It targets an issue presumed peripheral to the rival great power, seeking, for instance, a small territorial adjustment that is costly to the weaker neighboring state but not deemed worthy of a direct conflict by the distant and more powerful security patron. But the limited nature of the probe is somewhat at odds with its ultimate purpose to check the limits of an allegedly declining rival great power. A probe is a low- intensity, local pinprick with wider repercussions; limited geographically yet potentially global in outcome. The probing state has a strong interest in keeping the crisis limited and circum scribed to the narrowly defined area, but it is also poking the rival great pow er to see what the reaction may be. It is banking on the fact that the probe is on the periphery of the rival’s influence and interests, and thus that the rival will not escalate the interaction. The probing challenger, in other words, is betting that its great power rival will fear entrapment, being involved in an undesirable conflict, more than loss of prestige, reputation, or influence. The revisionist power seeks to use the fact of alliances (which it lacks itself) as a source of competitive disadvantage for the hegemon. This is based on two reinforcing perceptions— first, that the commitment involved in their maintenance is an encumbrance depriving the hegemon of strategic flexibility; and second, that the hegemon’s temptation to devalue its own alliances suggests that it feels the weight of this encumbrance.

Probes therefore arise from a view that entrapment is the congenital flaw of alliances. They are the ultimate act of attempting to expose the dangers of entrapment to hegemon and ally alike. This is ultimately a gamble— an expectation, not a certainty. And the gamble can backfire, as there is always the possibility that a probe will result in a dramatic escalation since it is targeted at multiple audiences. There is thus a clear recognition that a probe has a much wider purpose than its immediate action may convey, and consequently the desire to keep it limited runs against the desire to have a much larger demonstrative effect. As a result, the interaction a probe initiates has an inherent risk of escalating into a much larger confrontation.54

The revisionist state neither desires nor expects the escalation, but its possibility and perhaps likelihood are a direct outcome of probing. A probe by definition crosses a limit, a tacit or an explicit line of influence, in the expectation that it no longer reflects the actual will and power of the rival state. The revisionist power tests limits that until then were accepted and unchallenged and takes the first step in an “escalatory ladder” of competitive behavior. For instance, Kaiser Wilhelm’s support of Boer independence in 1896 was a test of British strength in what Berlin wrongly thought was a peripher al area of the British Empire. Similarly, the Moroccan crisis in 1905 was a test of British commitment to France in a region that should have been of no importance to London. Both, however, were a “move in the European Balance of Power, ” and that, beyond the details of the individual probes, was becoming of paramount concern to Great Britain. 55 Both were met by a strong British response, intensifying the Anglo- British rivalry. Escalation here was a willful choice of the targeted power.

Finally, probing can be in many cases a violent act, raising even further the likelihood of escalation and war. Probing is a political act first and foremost, only at times pursued by military means, but it does involve a careful application of violence or threat of violence. This requires strict political control, which is easier to maintain if the probe is not militarized and violent. But the more violent it becomes, the more difficult it is to keep it under political control. The logic of war may overwhelm the political rationale. Bismarck was keenly aware that the limited wars he fought, such as the Franco- Prussian one in 1870, would result in political outcomes that were different from his objectives were other great powers to become involved. But his greatest obstacle was the German military, resentful of civilian interference in what they deemed to be affairs in their exclusive purview. Political control over a limited war is paramount, because otherwise operational war objectives can overwhelm the larger political goals.56 The fact that Russia and China probe through a variety of nontraditional means, such as fishing vessels in the South China Sea and specially formed battalions (Vostok) of Chechens, makes political control more difficult. There is an incentive to use such means in a more aggressive way than would be warranted by official state forces, because in case of defeat one can always deny control over them and claim that they are simply individual citizens. Moreover, the “civilian” paramilitary forces that the probing power uses (e.g., the “Russian separatists” in eastern Ukraine) may not be easily recalled if the conflict ceases to be useful. The civilianization of conflict has its own risks. This makes probing behavior inherently destabilizing to an international order, as it sets forces in motion that, once unleashed, can be hard to control.

Probing can, moreover, spiral into war, unexpected and perhaps unwanted by the revisionist power. For instance, in the third century BC, Rome started to probe Carthaginian power in Sicily. It extended protection to Messana (or, more precisely, to a band of mercenaries, the Mamertines, who controlled it), thereby asserting Roman influence in northern Sicily. The peaceful withdrawal of the Punic garrison from the area seemed to suggest that a war was avoidable and the probe successful in attaining a low- cost revision to the balance of power. But the Romans miscalculated and were emboldened by this small success. As Polybius put it, they “now cherished the hope that they could drive the Carthaginians out of Sicily altogether, and that once this goal was attained their own power would be greatly increased. ”57 Carthage sent a large force to Sicily and solidified its alliance with Syracuse against Rome and its new ally Messana. Rome then escalated and sent a large army to besiege Syracuse, starting the first Punic war, which lasted more than twenty years.58 What started as a low- cost, low- risk probe turned into a long and costly slugfest. To sum up, the risk of probing is that it may result in a slide toward a direct clash. Miscalculation and escalation by all parties involved can elevate what is a small, localized harassment into a wider, more violent war. Moreover, a pattern of probing may gradually lead all sides to accept war as necessary and perhaps inevitable, as each probe and reaction escalates the competitive interaction.

# AT: DA---Assurances

## Assurance Core

### Uniqueness---1ar

#### Allied confidence is down now---Ukraine.

Levite ’22 [Ariel; 6-29-22; senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Technology and International Affairs Program; “Why security assurances are losing their clout as a nuclear nonproliferation instrument”; <https://thebulletin.org/2022/06/why-security-assurances-are-losing-their-clout-as-a-nuclear-nonproliferation-instrument/>] brett TDI

Security guarantees have long served as powerful nonproliferation instruments, helping convince countries to cap and walk back their nuclear programs. It was the creation of NATO with Article 5 collective security guarantees at its core that made it possible to wean Germany off the nuclear weapons path. The same goes for the Warsaw Pact and Romania. Elsewhere, South Korea, Taiwan, and even Italy, Sweden, and Australia all had nuclear weapons ambitions at some point that were squelched by the offer of various US security commitments. It has been mostly vulnerable states, lacking such assurances, that have ventured to press ahead. The likes of South Africa, Pakistan, and Israel immediately come to mind.

Here the lessons of the most recent crisis with Ukraine come to mind. Ukraine was the only one (besides Russia, of course) of the four former Soviet republics that not only had Soviet nuclear weapons stationed on its soil during the Cold War, but actually had physical possession of these devices. It lacked only the activation codes needed to use the weapons; had it wanted to, Ukraine could have mastered triggering systems for the weapons in a matter of months. But in 1994, after much external prodding and internal soul searching, Ukraine agreed to give up on its precious nuclear possession in return for formal “assurances” for its security and territorial integrity anchored in the so-called Budapest Memorandum, co-signed by the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

The memorandum was a weak instrument, lacking both the status of a treaty and a firm collective security formula of the nature that undergird NATO’s Article 5 assurance of mutual defense. It de facto repackaged the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s pre-existing commitments to member states, codifying a commitment to respect the territorial integrity of its members and refrain from the use of force to change borders. But the personal signature of the leaders of the three external guarantors sufficed to convince the Ukrainian elite to go ahead and quickly hand over all the weapons to Russia. Remarkably, President Xi subsequently extended similar Chinese security guarantees to Ukraine in 2013. It is this very diplomatic triumph that had made it possible to salvage the cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime—the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which envisages no more than five nuclear states—that has now come back to haunt the world.

After all, Russia first reneged on its Budapest obligations in 2014 by unilaterally annexing Crimea and setting up two rebel enclaves in Donetsk and Luhansk. It has recently gone much further, recognizing the two as independent states, invading Ukraine, and challenging its very existence as an independent state, falsely claiming that Ukraine might actually pose a proliferation challenge by seeking to develop nuclear weapons of its own. While it is not in the cards now, would it be inconceivable down the road if Ukraine was forced not only to renounce its desire to join NATO but also give up on its demand for new ironclad security guarantees (“similar to NATO Article 5”) it is now seeking in the negotiations to end the war? After all, Ukraine does possess extensive nuclear knowledge and the infrastructure needed to field a nuclear weapons program if only as a lever to obtain security guarantees.

### Restraint turn---1ar

#### Exercising restraint in West Asia bolsters US assurances elsewhere.

Hickey 23 [Samuel; Jun 23, 2023; Paul Castleman Fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation; “Melding U.S. Non-Proliferation Strategy with Middle East De-Escalation Dynamics”; <https://armscontrolcenter.org/melding-u-s-non-proliferation-strategy-with-middle-east-de-escalation-dynamics/>] brett TDI

The United States and Iran appear to be circling in on an informal, unwritten understanding to prevent the simmering nuclear crisis from boiling over. Avoiding a nuclear crisis in the Middle East is in the United States’ interest, particularly as Washington remains preoccupied with other parts of the world.

The Biden administration wants to keep global attention on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and negotiating an iron-clad verification and monitoring agreement with Iran is not immediately feasible due to Iran’s recent crackdown on protesters and drone sales to Russia. However, region-led efforts to de-escalate tensions across the Middle East are complicating U.S. efforts to strengthen deterrence against Iran should the nuclear crisis reach criticality. Instead of relying on U.S. security guarantees, states are generating new security concepts to reduce tensions and establish mechanisms to maintain peace and stability. While the Abraham Accords have more openly integrated Israel into the region’s economic and security plans, the Arab Gulf states are signaling that they will not take part in Israel and Iran’s shadow war.

For the United States, the challenge is finding a way to align its non-proliferation strategy with region-initiated de-escalation initiatives. The United States’ previous efforts to isolate Iran and impose a smattering of economic sanctions have reached their limits as policy tools. Moving forward, it is imperative for the United States to demonstrate restraint and employ coercive threats exclusively in constrained situations where the alternative threatens U.S. security.

Rapprochement Across the Middle East

In 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that if Iran were to build a nuclear weapon, the United States would contemplate extending “a defense umbrella over the region;” potentially providing any state Iran might threaten with the extended deterrence assurances the United States has reserved for NATO, South Korea and Japan. Not only is the Middle East a fundamentally different security environment, but the comment elicited concern from the region that the United States would accept a nuclear-armed Iran. However, the fundamental question for the Gulf states has been whether they will choose to live indefinitely under the United States’ security umbrella, or change the security environment to ensure their independent prosperity.

In recent years, there has been mounting evidence toward the latter. The rapprochement framework signed between Tehran and Riyadh in March 2023 was the result of years of quiet diplomacy to restore relations and lay the foundation to resolve the perennial rivals’ numerous disputes, potentially paving a way to end the disastrous war in Yemen. While facilitated by Beijing, the United States’ quiet support for the negotiations achieved U.S. foreign policy aims by strengthening regional stability and reducing reliance on the United States. Further, if Iran or Saudi Arabia fails to uphold the détente, then Beijing will suffer the economic and diplomatic fallout as its economic security will be threatened and its influence will be called into question.

The Emirates have similarly restored full diplomatic ties with Iran by returning its ambassador to Iran in August 2022, and have signaled they do not want to be part of an anti-Iran coalition. Amid growing fears of Israel striking Iran’s nuclear facilities, the Emirates have assured Iran that its territory would not be used by Israel to launch a military strike on its nuclear program. The Saudi-Iranian détente may have also reduced the likelihood that Saudi airspace could be used by Israel for the same purpose. The cherry on top is the potential for Egypt to follow the two Gulf powers and reestablish relations with the Islamic Republic, which have been absent since 1980.

In a similar vein, Bahrain and Qatar are resuming relations, Syria is re-joining the Arab fold, and Qatar and the UAE are reopening their embassies after a six-year break in relations. However, these dynamics, which are not reliant on the United States, are making it difficult for the United States to raise the pressure on Iran as it creeps closer to cementing its nuclear threshold state status. The United States’ coercive bargaining efforts have grown increasingly one-sided, as it has made its threats more credible, but neglected its ability to assure an adversary of restraint.

Demonstrating Restraint

Over the past few months, the United States and Iran have engaged in indirect discussions to de-escalate tensions on multiple fronts. Recent reporting suggests that the two are in discussion to bring three Americans imprisoned in Iran home, halt proxy attacks on U.S. forces in Syria, and draw clear red lines around Iran’s nuclear activity in the absence of a deal. In return, Iran might expect the United States to not tighten sanctions, not seize Iranian oil tankers, and not seek penalizing measures at the United Nations or the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Beyond abiding by such an understanding, there is more the United States can do to deconflict its non-proliferation strategy with regional de-escalation efforts. First, bolster the credibility of the red line threat. The United States has wielded red line threats before, and the line has moved so many times over the past decade that Iran may not know where it truly lies. Showing restraint on other crisis matters in the region will bolster the credibility of the threat and reduce the chances of miscommunication. Second, the United States should support closed-door diplomacy without demanding credit. On the Saudi-Iranian détente, it appears that the Biden administration took that approach and swallowed the bitter pill of letting Beijing take credit for the breakthrough. The benefits to Beijing were not transformative and ensuring the Europeans have access to non-Russian hydrocarbons is critical to the United States’ strategy to support Ukraine. Not taking credit has already yielded diplomatic dividends and demonstrating restraint will make U.S. coercive tools more potent for future use.

### Europe turn---1ar

#### The plan provides European allies with security. It won’t be perceived a broad disengagement from world politics.

Kirshner 23 – [Jonathan, Ph.D. from Princeton, Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Boston College. Kirshner was the first World Politics Visiting Fellow at Princeton University’s Institute for International and Regional Studies, and was the director of the Economics and National Security Program at the Olin Institute at Harvard University from 2000-04, “It’s a Good Time to Leave the Persian Gulf.” The National Interest, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/lebanon-watch/it%E2%80%99s-good-time-leave-persian-gulf-206332>, March 22, 2023] TDI

On the evolving world stage, regarding the American national interest, two primary and pressing political goals stand out. It remains vital for the United States that its allies and affiliates in Europe remain secure, democratic, and well-disposed toward each other. This is an example of what Arnold Wolfers called “milieu goals”—which are especially important for countries like the United States that do not face present and immediate military threats at the border.

As Wolfers insightfully described, milieu goals relate to foreign policy measures taken to influence world politics in ways that make the international environment conducive to the thriving of national values, and one in which political allies feel secure and content in their shared affinities. For a great power, this, more than anything, is the stuffing of foreign policy in practice.

Pulling out of the Persian Gulf, then, is not the first step in a broader disengagement from world politics. Despite an increasingly audible chorus calling for the United States to withdraw from the NATO alliance, such a move would prove disastrous. The question is not, as some proponents of “restraint” emphasize, whether the alliance has accomplished the mission for which it was originally designed. The only measure that matters is whether the political benefits of continued American participation in NATO outweigh its costs. And for all the protestation about the “costs” of the alliance to the United States, and (more understandable) grumblings about whether some members ought to be making greater contributions to the collective defense, it is unlikely that the United States, which if anything seems inclined to increase its already very high levels of military spending, would save some—indeed save any—money by pulling out of NATO. But the political costs (and geopolitical dangers invited) could be extremely high, as active American engagement in Europe has had, as Wolfers would anticipate, numerous salutary effects. It has bolstered the fortunes of like-minded, friendly countries in one of the world’s geopolitical and economic epicenters, and has made war there—wars that would be exceedingly ruinous to the American interest—much less likely. From a grand strategic perspective, rather than a costly albatross, NATO has been a bargain, the best we have ever had.

### AT: Credibility---1ar

#### Credibility is nonsense – especially in the context of our aff

Larison 22 [Daniel; 9-2-2022; Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago; “Amazing: US ‘credibility’ intact a year after Afghanistan withdrawal”; <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/09/02/amazing-us-credibility-still-intact-a-year-after-afghanistan-withdrawal/>] brett

Hawks denounced the withdrawal from Afghanistan for many reasons, but one of their recurring complaints was that it threatened to wreck U.S. credibility in the world.

According to the standard hawkish view, withdrawing from a failed war signals weakness and a lack of resolve, which in turn causes allies to lose confidence in U.S. commitments to protect them and encourages adversaries to become aggressive on the assumption that the U.S. is unwilling or unable to oppose them. Hawks hold to a quasi-mystical view of credibility where a withdrawal anywhere invites aggression everywhere, and they then try to blame the withdrawal for causing whatever goes wrong anywhere else in the world afterwards.

In the year since the last U.S. forces departed Afghanistan, the record clearly shows that the hawks were panicking over nothing, and that the hawkish credibility argument is nothing more than an ideological fantasy. Policymakers should remember this the next time they are inclined to heed blood-curdling warnings about the need to maintain credibility by going to war or staying bogged down in one.

Leaving Afghanistan was supposed to deal a fatal blow to U.S. credibility with global consequences. But today, one looks in vain for the adverse effects that they predicted. U.S. alliances are no weaker, and allies are arguably more reliant on the U.S. and more trusting of its promises than before. Adversaries have acted much as they were acting before the withdrawal, and any changes in their activities are much more reasonably explained by factors specific to them and their regions.

Credibility hawks strain to link disparate events around the world to a single U.S. policy in a different region unrelated to any of the others, but this is irrational. Simply put, no government makes its policy decisions in its own region based on what the U.S. does or doesn’t do in a distant war in another part of the world. Hawks rely on the fallacy that everything that happens after a withdrawal has happened because of it.

Their argument requires us to assume an absurdly American-centric view of the world in which other states’ actions are governed by whether the U.S. maintains a military presence in an entirely different part of the world.

One need only consider the counterfactuals to realize how silly the argument is. Would keeping a residual U.S. force in Afghanistan have somehow prevented a Russian invasion of Ukraine? How would that possibly have worked? Maintaining a U.S. military presence isn’t a magical ward against misfortune. Withdrawing that presence doesn’t trigger global disaster. The U.S. should not fear quitting a lost war because of credibility concerns, and it should not choose to wage an unnecessary one for that reason, either.

If allied governments were unhappy about the way that the United States withdrew, this did not weaken their belief in U.S. commitments to them. Leaving a 20-year war in a country where America has no vital interests has no implications for Washington’s willingness to fight on behalf of treaty allies. Just as choosing not to bomb Syria had no discernible negative effects on U.S. alliances, the decision to pull out of a failed war after two decades did not diminish allies’ trust in U.S. security guarantees.

Hawks are compelled to exaggerate the significance of “inaction” or withdrawal because they cannot provide good arguments for their preferred policies. Their alarmist claims are a tacit admission on their part that these hawkish policies have nothing to do with making the United States more secure.

#### Allies don’t believe in credibility theory.

Henry ’20 — Iain; Lecturer in the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. April 13, 2020; “What Allies Want: Reconsidering Loyalty, Reliability, and Alliance Interdependence”; *International Security*, Volume 44, Issue 4; Accessed Online via University of Michigan Libraries; //CYang

Leaders believe that if their state abandons one ally during a crisis, then their state's other allies will expect similar disloyalty in the future. Thus, a single instance of disloyalty can damage, or even destroy, alliances with other states. Because of this belief in interdependence — that developments in one alliance will also affect other alliances — the desire to demonstrate loyalty has exercised a tremendous influence on U.S. policy. But is indiscriminate loyalty what allies want? The First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954–55) case study suggests that allies do not desire U.S. loyalty in all situations. Instead, they want the [US] United States to be a reliable ally, posing no risk of abandonment or entrapment. In the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, several allies worried that U.S. loyalty to the Republic of China increased the risk of unwanted conflict, and as the crisis persisted, these allies sought to restrain the United States and thus reduce the likelihood of war. Although U.S. leaders were reluctant to coerce the Republic of China into backing down during this territorial dispute with the People's Republic of China, other U.S. allies actively encouraged such disloyalty. These findings have significance for theories of alliance politics and international reputation, as well as contemporary alliance management.

Introduction

Do states judge their ally's behavior toward its other allies? If yes, how? Historically, decisionmakers have instinctively adopted deterrence theory's logic that a state's character is judged through displays of innate loyalty: if a state is disloyal to one ally, then this will create a reputation for disloyalty, which will cause other allies to doubt the state's reliability. Thus, disloyalty can have calamitous consequences: the aggrieved ally will punish the betrayal; other allies will suffer crises of faith; and adversaries will conclude that the state's alliances are cheap talk. The logic is that discrete alliance commitments are interdependent—that what happens in one alliance affects the expectations of other allies—and that this interdependence is underpinned by demonstrations of loyalty. President Lyndon Johnson said that if the United States were “driven from the field in Viet-nam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection.”1

These convictions regularly animate contemporary debates: Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser argue that if the United States were to abandon Taiwan in a conflict with China, this could deal “a fatal blow to the U.S.-Japan alliance” and might lead to South Korea “renouncing its security alliance with Washington and aligning with Beijing.”2 Aaron Friedberg writes that expecting a U.S. “back down … [and] a Chinese victory over Taiwan … to leave America's Asian alliances unscathed, is to indulge in wishful thinking of the most dangerous kind.”3 Others suggest cross-regional effects, claiming that by “retreating from the Middle East and abandoning Ukraine to Russian aggression,” President Barack Obama left “America's Asian allies … bewildered and alienated.”4 If alliance interdependence exists, and is governed by innate loyalty, then fighting for reputation is crucial, because any single alliance rift could quickly tear asunder other alliance relationships.

Some scholars, described as “reputation skeptics,” dispute this common wisdom. Skeptics argue that because “reputation is in the eye of the beholder,” the United States should never regard demonstrating loyalty as sufficient grounds for military action.5 Jonathan Mercer argues that when allies observe the United States demonstrating loyalty, they will attribute this desired behavior to situational causes and thus will not conclude that it will be loyal in future crises. In contrast, he concludes that when the United States is disloyal, this undesired behavior will be attributed to national character, but will not always cause allies to expect similar behavior in the future.6 Reputation skeptics believe that “leaders are tragically mistaken when they commit to the use of force in the expectation of long-term benefits beyond any gains in the immediate dispute.”7

### Prolif Good: Deterrence---1ar

#### **Prolif is inevitable but must come immediately to shore up defense against an autocratic entente, shore up alliances, the LIO and deterrence. No impact or cascade.**

Helberg ’21 — Jacob; a senior advisor at the Stanford University program on geopolitics and technology. He is an adjunct fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. May 11, 2021; "Unified Threats Need Decentralized Deterrence"; *Foreign Policy*; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/11/unified-threats-need-decentralized-deterrence/>; //CYang

Last month, the U.S. intelligence community released its worldwide Annual Threats Assessment. The report covered the usual range of risks facing the United States and the globe, from drug trafficking to regional instability to cyberattacks. Yet front and center in the intelligence community’s assessment — listed ahead even of pandemics like the coronavirus — were two key threats: “China’s Push for Global Power” and “Russian Provocative Actions.”

China and Russia are increasingly aligned, forming an autocratic entente aimed squarely at the West. More concerning, the two revisionist powers are putting themselves on a war footing. A strategy of decentralizing U.S. deterrence can help defend the liberal international order against the threat of autocratic territory grabs.

As Russia and China threaten their neighbors while cooperating more closely with each other, the United States confronts the frightening possibility it might face two major military challenges at once. That scenario doesn’t bode well for the U.S. Defense Department. Even if Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping didn’t deliberately coordinate, the U.S. military would struggle to effectively respond to two concurrent great-power assaults in conflict theaters that are thousands of miles apart. Washington might be forced to pick which war to wage and which to concede; either choice would deal a sharp blow to the liberal international order.

The United States may be a global superpower, but the stark reality is it does not possess the assets to deal with all the threats it faces concurrently. The United States will need a new, decentralized approach to deterrence — one that makes the most of its democratic alliance system — to avoid overextension and defend the international order it has created. And it must move quickly before strategic vulnerability leads to strategic disaster.

After World War II, the United States built a global network of alliances — NATO in Europe and a set of mostly bilateral alliances in Asia — to contain Soviet expansion and secure U.S. interests in critical parts of the globe. Those alliances serve an equally critical purpose today. They represent the hard-power foundation of the liberal international order and a check on the aggressive tendencies of revisionist dictators in Russia and China. A loss of confidence in this system of alliances — and in U.S. security guarantees that underpin the system — would shake the entire liberal order.

Traditionally, U.S. alliances also served a second, less appreciated purpose. For decades, the United States took responsibility for deterring attacks on dozens of allies and quasi-allies around the world, principally in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. It did so not simply to deter aggression but also to discourage its allies from acquiring nuclear capabilities of their own. In effect, the United States sought to contain allies as well as rivals — a luxury it could afford as an unchallenged superpower but one that is becoming unsustainable today.

But the United States now faces more, tougher adversaries than it did two decades ago. China and Russia have both conducted broad military modernization programs to undermine the United States’ ability to defend geographically distant allies in Eastern Europe and the Western Pacific. Although the Chinese challenge is far starker than the Russian equivalent, the balance of power in both regions has worsened dramatically.

Inadequate allied defense spending exacerbates the problem. Key U.S. allies, such as Germany and Japan, have grown accustomed to spending extremely low levels of national wealth — under 1.5 percent of GDP — on their own defense. In Europe and the Asia-Pacific, front-line states have little hope of protecting themselves without U.S. intervention.

Even as allied defense spending has modestly increased in recent years, the entire U.S. alliance system has increasingly come to rest on a single point of failure: the U.S. military. And in the current environment, with intensifying threats from China and Russia, this arrangement threatens the integrity of the entire alliance network.

In cybersecurity, networks that are highly centralized or have a single point of failure are particularly prone to catastrophic collapses when subjected to intense pressure. To address this vulnerability, increasing a network’s “redundancy” can make it far more resilient. This entails adding links and nodes that enlarge the number of data paths in a network, thereby making it harder for attackers to compromise the network’s overall integrity. It’s the difference between a company storing its data in a cloud service or storing it on millions of users’ phones.

The same is true in geopolitics. By decentralizing deterrence capabilities within its alliance network, Washington can make it costlier and more difficult for adversaries to compromise that network. It can also diminish the pressure for direct U.S. military intervention at a time when U.S. resources are not plentiful enough to go around.

There are historical precedents for this approach. In the 1970s, the Nixon administration coped with exhaustion after the Vietnam War by devolving greater responsibility - through arms sales, intelligence support, and diplomatic cooperation — to “regional sheriffs,” such as Brazil, Iran, and South Africa. That strategy worked temporarily but eventually faltered because former U.S. President Richard Nixon’s regional sheriffs were mostly brutal and often unstable authoritarian regimes that relied on morally abhorrent methods to contain those movements.

The new nodes, in other words, were not sufficiently reliable. Today, the situation is more favorable because in regions where aggression would be most damaging — East Asia, followed by Eastern Europe — most of the United States’ key allies are stable democracies. This matters because the United States and its democratic allies can leverage a key asymmetric advantage: Democracies don’t wage war on one another. Autocracies regularly do. Unlike China or Russia, the United States enjoys a global alliance network of largely responsible democracies that are neither militarily aggressive nor set on revising the world’s geopolitical status quo. Unlike democracies, autocracies rarely maintain long-term loyalty or trust one another — for good reason.

The United States can thus afford to delegate increased responsibility for deterrence and defense to its allies in a way that Russia or China never could because those countries lack a comparable alliance network and autocratic pacts — even when they do emerge — simply cannot boast the same level of cohesion and trust as partnerships between democracies. Look at North Korea, China’s only formal ally, where the relationship between Pyongyang and Beijing is so fraught that Kim Jong Un had his uncle executed out of fears he would act as a Chinese puppet. That’s a strategic edge the United States should exploit.

Decentralized deterrence would thus maintain U.S. commitments to these allies while empowering them to take a greater role in their own regional defense. The United States would identify key regional defense hubs in Europe and the Pacific and help them acquire the advanced military capabilities necessary to blunt Chinese or Russian aggression. Call it a 21st century version of former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt’s argument that the United States should serve as the world’s “arsenal of democracy.” Allies need to spend more, but the United States can also help them do much more with that money.

In practice, decentralizing deterrence would involve two complementary approaches.

The first approach entails substantially expanding the supply and sale of select conventional weapons to key allies. To be sure, the United States already sells advanced weaponry — including the F-35, the most sophisticated attack aircraft the United States possesses — to key allies and security partners. But F-35 exports are as much about decreasing the unit cost of each aircraft — or, in some cases, rewarding Middle Eastern partners for constructive diplomacy — as they are about strengthening allies in relevant ways against the most pressing threats they face.

The better method is to focus on helping allies and partners acquire larger numbers of relatively inexpensive, asymmetric capabilities that can blunt aggressive action or inflict a serious toll on an authoritarian attacker. In doing so, the United States can complicate Russian or Chinese use-of-force decisions by making it harder or costlier for them to secure swift military victories.

In Europe, for instance, the United States might provide exposed front-line allies, such as Poland and the Baltic states, with conventional ballistic missile capabilities they could use to retaliate against Russian aggression. This would ensure Moscow cannot act with impunity if it chooses to start a war with a smaller neighbor; there’s a price Russia must pay for its aggression even if the United States does not intervene. It would also give NATO offensive weapons inside the “bubble” of anti-access/area denial capabilities Russia constructed in Eastern Europe and the Baltic, making it easier for Washington to project power if it does intervene.

In the Pacific, Washington could encourage friendly countries like Japan, Taiwan, and Australia to invest heavily in capabilities from sea mines to lethal attack submarines to anti-ship missiles that would allow them to frustrate Chinese attacks. A decentralized deterrence strategy essentially turns China’s anti-access/area denial strategy against it, by giving front-line allies and partners the ability to significantly weaken Chinese attack forces or coercive endeavors.

The United States is already adopting a version of this strategy. According to reports obtained by Newsweek, U.S. President Joe Biden is set to approve his administration’s first weapons sale to Taiwan, which includes self-propelled artillery and related equipment. Similarly, the U.S. Army and Marines are considering how they might use ground-based fires against Chinese naval targets. Australia also appears headed in this direction: Its recent defense review emphasized the acquisition of long-range, anti-ship missiles.

A second approach to decentralizing deterrence would focus on nuclear weapons. To be clear, this would be a radical and controversial move. But if the United States is serious about maintaining a global alliance structure at a time of stagnant resources and increasing threats, it must discuss whether containing allies’ ambitions is still viable.

The logic behind nuclear deterrence has changed in recent decades. During the Cold War, the United States extended a “nuclear umbrella” over its allies, promising to undertake nuclear escalation on their behalf if it could not defend them conventionally. That was only plausible, however, because the loss of Western Europe to a Soviet attack would have radically shifted the global balance of power against the United States. Today, a Chinese attack on Taiwan or a Russian attack in the Baltic would be very damaging to U.S. interests but not so catastrophic that Washington could reasonably justify initiating a nuclear war. An attack on the periphery of the United States’ alliance system would probably not merit a direct nuclear response from the United States.

Decentralizing nuclear deterrence could enable trusted U.S. allies in the Pacific, such as Japan and Australia, to redress a deteriorating military balance by confronting Beijing’s regional aggression with the prospect of a nuclear response from countries it targets. The same approach, when applied to South Korea, could reduce the defense burdens the United States faces in protecting the Korean Peninsula.

This would not be the first time the United States acquiesced in, or even assisted, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by allies. During the Cold War, the United States ignored the United Kingdom, France, and Israel when they acquired their own nuclear arsenals, due in part to concerns about upholding U.S. defense guarantees. U.S. officials later implicitly acknowledged those arsenals strengthened deterrence and fought to exempt them from U.S.-Soviet negotiations over arms control.

Nonproliferation advocates will certainly object to decentralizing nuclear deterrence, and there are undoubtedly risks in any strategy that enlarges the number of countries that possess nuclear weapons. Yet, it is worth considering whether concerns about Australia or Japan using nuclear weapons irresponsibly are overblown, given that both countries are democracies and committed U.S. allies. Additionally, it is unlikely their acquisition of nuclear weapons would trigger a regional domino effect since the malign actor in East Asia that is most likely to seek nuclear weapons — North Korea — already has them.

Today, in fact, East Asia is home to four nuclear powers, or their forces. Three of them are openly revisionist autocracies hostile to the U.S.-led liberal order: Russia, China, and North Korea. The fourth is the United States. No U.S. ally in the region possesses a nuclear deterrent capability. A strategy of decentralized deterrence could invert this paradigm by encouraging key democratic allies to develop nuclear capabilities of their own.

The window for creative responses to a worsening strategic predicament is closing. Before it does, the United States should enact a strategy of decentralized deterrence to harden the democratic world against the threat of authoritarian aggression. Otherwise, the next threat that hits a vulnerable spot could bring everything down.

#### The nuclear umbrella is unsustainable and fails to prevent proliferation or solve deterrence.

Walt ’21 — Stephen; columnist at Foreign Policy and the Robert and Renée Belfer professor of international relations at Harvard University. March 23, 2021; "It’s Time to Fold America’s Nuclear Umbrella"; *Foreign Policy*; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/23/its-time-to-fold-americas-nuclear-umbrella/>; //CYang

Why is this statement so intriguing? Because it shows the authors of this report recognize that Europe as a whole might be more secure if it could rely on a locally based deterrent instead of continuing to shelter under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. And if that is true for the nations of Europe, then it might well be true for others. Although the report’s authors are opposed to new states joining the nuclear club (Britain and France are already members), their statement clearly implies that deterrence would be strengthened if states facing serious external threats had a nuclear guarantee that didn’t depend on Uncle Sam.

This is hardly a new issue. Since fairly early in the nuclear age, the United States has used nuclear weapons to “extend deterrence” and shield some of its allies. It sought to convince potential adversaries that the United States might use its formidable nuclear arsenal if these allies were attacked, even if the United States was not. Of course, there was always some chance that a war involving one of the United States’ allies might escalate to the nuclear level, either by accident, through inadvertence, or via deliberate decision, no matter what U.S. leaders said in advance. Even so, Washington went to considerable lengths to make its nuclear umbrella credible, partly to discourage enemies from attacking but also to convince its allies not to get nuclear weapons themselves.

Accordingly, U.S. leaders made lots of public statements linking the U.S. arsenal to its core alliance commitments, and NATO drew up various plans and doctrinal pronouncements designed to reinforce perceptions of a reliable U.S. guarantee. The United States also deployed thousands of warheads on some of its allies’ territory, along with dual-key arrangements that gave those allies some say in how, when, or if these fearsome weapons got used. Lastly, and very importantly, the United States kept trying to achieve a meaningful degree of nuclear superiority to make a possible first use of nuclear weapons to defend allies more credible. Instead of acquiring a “minimum deterrent” (i.e., retaliatory forces that could survive any possible attack and then inflict unacceptable damage on an aggressor), U.S. war plans and weapons decisions always focused on trying to come out on top in the awful event of an actual nuclear war.

Why did the United States do this? In good part because convincing people you might use nuclear weapons to defend an ally isn’t easy. One might imagine a U.S. president using nuclear weapons to retaliate against a direct attack on U.S. territory or to deter the extremely unlikely prospect of a conventional invasion that threatened U.S. independence. This is the one thing nuclear weapons are good for: deterring existential threats to their possessors’ independence or autonomy. This form of deterrence (sometimes termed “basic” or “Type I”) works because the deterring side will almost certainly care more about preserving its own independence than a potential attacker is likely to care about trying to take it away. Because the balance of resolve favors the defender, even much weaker nuclear powers can deter enemies from attacking them directly. If you don’t find this argument persuasive, remember the U.S. attacked non-nuclear Iraq in 2003 and non-nuclear Libya in 2011, but it leaves nuclear-armed North Korea alone.

By contrast, deterring a conventional or a nuclear attack on an ally by threatening to go nuclear — and convincing your allies that you really mean it — is more challenging. It is one thing to threaten to use nuclear weapons to keep one’s own country from being subjugated but quite another to do so to save an ally from defeat or domination. Or, as people used to wonder back in the Cold War, would a U.S. president really risk Washington or Chicago to save Paris or Berlin? Long after they had left office, a few former U.S. officials suggested the answer was almost certainly “no.” Extended deterrence could still work because potential attackers can’t be sure about any of this, but it still isn’t as credible as deterring attacks on one’s own territory.

The solution to this conundrum — if one can call it that — is to achieve overwhelming “nuclear superiority.” If you could wipe out an adversary’s entire nuclear force in a first strike, you wouldn’t have to fear its retaliation, and using nuclear weapons to defend an ally would be much more credible. Even if a splendid first strike were not possible, perhaps you could convince a potential attacker that it will end up even worse off than you are at the end of a nuclear war to convince it not to put so much as a toe on the first rung of the escalation ladder.

Thus, the perceived need to extend deterrence is one of the reasons why the United States has long sought nuclear superiority. It’s not the only reason: A genuine first strike capability could limit damage in the event of an actual war. A few commentators have also tried to argue — not very convincingly — that superiority would enable the stronger side to coerce weaker states in crises. Chasing the holy grail of a first-strike advantage was also popular with defense contractors and parts of the armed services because it requires spending billions of dollars annually on more and more accurate weapons, more efficient and destructive warheads, improved surveillance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and lots of other shiny objects.

Interestingly, a number of sophisticated scholars have recently claimed that technological advances have put the United States on the brink of a true first-strike capability. Perhaps in theory, but certainly not as a usable option. To see why, ask yourself what you would do if you were president and facing a serious crisis with a nuclear-armed adversary. You’ve put the armed services on alert, and there is some danger that force might be used and fighting could escalate. Suppose your military advisors and intelligence experts tell you if you order a first strike now, you can almost certainly destroy the enemy’s entire nuclear arsenal, leaving the United States unscathed and in an ideal position to resolve the dispute on favorable terms.

Being a sensible person, you’d undoubtedly ask them: “Can you guarantee that? Are you absolutely, 100 percent sure the enemy will have zero usable weapons left, and therefore, we won’t even get our hair mussed?”

“We are highly confident of success,” you are told. “But there is a slim chance that a few enemy weapons would survive and reach U.S. soil. No more than one to three.”

Even if you weren’t troubled by the moral issues involved in ordering an attack that would kill untold numbers of people (and you ought to be), would you do it? Of course you wouldn’t, because you wouldn’t want to risk losing New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, or any other major U.S. city, which is what might happen if that first strike you authorized turned out to be just a tiny bit less effective than your advisors predicted. To issue a launch order, you’d have to believe the proposed attack would work perfectly the very first time it was executed (simulations and exercises aren’t the same), almost all of the missiles and bombs that have been sitting in silos or storage facilities for years would work as designed, and the other side wouldn’t have dispersed its own forces or hidden some extra weapons in places you had failed to detect. Based on everything the United States’ knows about complex military operations and the limits of intelligence, you’d be a fool to roll the dice in this way.

One more thing: As first-strike capabilities improve, adversaries may respond by keeping forces on higher alert or adopting “launch-on-warning” procedures that increase the risk of accidental or inadvertent war. No matter what U.S. forces are capable of in theory, in short, it’s hard to see how any president would be willing to use nukes first even if the probability of “success” was extremely high. This reality casts further doubt on the whole idea of extended deterrence, insofar as it is based on the threat to deliberately escalate to the nuclear level if a key ally is in danger of being conquered.

Extending a protective umbrella over allies in Europe and Asia may have made good sense during the Cold War, both to protect them and to discourage proliferation. But the nuclear weapons environment has changed: The number of nuclear-armed states has crept upward, and several countries (India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom) are increasing the size of their own arsenals (though they remain far lower than U.S. or Russian levels). Moreover, the United States is not as tightly coupled to some of its traditional allies as it was during the Cold War, and serious rifts may continue to grow despite the Biden administration’s efforts to restore alliance solidarity and reassert U.S. leadership.

Which raises the obvious question: Does it still make sense to shield allies under the U.S. nuclear umbrella? Using the threat of nuclear use to protect other countries is not cost- or risk-free, and it may even be more dangerous than letting some other states acquire arsenals of their own and encouraging them to rely on “Type I” deterrence provided by their own national capabilities.

This view has been advanced before — most notably by Kenneth Waltz in a controversial Adelphi Paper 40 years ago. Waltz was not advocating giving other states the bomb or arguing that the rapid spread of nuclear weapons would be desirable; his central point was that trying to prevent the slow spread of these weapons was not without costs of its own and that in some cases, as he put it, “more may be better.” The question is: Is that becoming the case today?

To be sure, folding the nuclear umbrella might well have some negative effects. It might make states long accustomed to U.S. protection question its commitment (though there’s no logical reason for them to do so if it is still in the United States’ interest to aid their defense in other ways). It could also reduce U.S. influence or leverage if certain allies were no longer as dependent on U.S. protection, though folding the umbrella would not eliminate their reliance on other elements of U.S. power. Removing the U.S. nuclear guarantee might encourage a few states to pursue nuclear arms of their own, but it is not obvious that acquisition by Japan or Germany would be a terrible outcome from a purely U.S. perspective.

Moreover, even the possibility that these states might take over responsibility for deterring attacks on their own territory could have a sobering effect on a rising China and a recalcitrant Russia. In particular, it would remind Beijing and Moscow that their own behavior will affect the strategic calculations that their neighbors make in the near future, including decisions about nuclear arms. If China doesn’t want to face more nuclear weapons states in its immediate region, for instance, then its leaders should start asking themselves what they can do to make those neighbors feel less need for additional protection. The obvious answer: Stop harassing them in various ways, drop the sharp-elbowed approach to diplomacy, stick to agreements previously reached, and do more to resolve existing disputes on a fair-minded basis.

Whatever Washington ultimately chooses to do with its nuclear umbrella, the more important task is to move beyond the tendency to see nuclear weapons as potent signs of status, indispensable tools of statecraft, or powerful sources of leverage. Nuclear weapons are extremely useful for deterring direct and all-out attacks on one’s own homeland but not much else. For that purpose, a great power doesn’t need an enormous arsenal or some hypothetical capability to “fight and win” a nuclear exchange. All it needs is a stockpile that can survive an enemy attack and be able to respond in kind. Properly concealed or protected, they don’t need to be poised and ready to strike at a moment’s notice. Fetishizing the bomb and using it to try to protect others isn’t just expensive; it may also be dangerous.

#### NATO is a paper tiger. Only a Eurodeterrent solves.

Barndollar ’19 — Gil; Senior Research Fellow at CSS and a Senior Fellow at Defense Priorities. He was Director of Middle East Studies at the Center for the National Interest. He holds an AB in history from Bowdoin College and MPhil and PhD degrees in history from the University of Cambridge. April 8, 2019; “NATO Is 70 and Past Retirement Age”; *National Interest*; <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/nato-70-and-past-retirement-age-51482>; //CYang

It is appropriate to judge post–Cold War NATO a failure. The alliance is a paper tiger, beset with slashed European defense budgets and hollow forces. It has become a social club and an appetizer, a prelude to European Union membership for the formerly-communist states of eastern and southern Europe. What it is not is a credible military alliance. Nor is it making America more secure.

NATO’s performance in the foolish limited wars of the past two decades has demonstrated Europe’s failure to take either funding or fighting seriously. In the Kosovo air campaign of 1999, the Royal Air Force nearly ran out of bombs and spare parts. Moreover, it was U.S. aircraft that had to conduct about two-thirds of all sorties during the seventy-eight-day war.

By the 2011 Libya intervention, the situation had actually gotten worse. Only eight of NATO’s then-twenty-eight members chose to fight, using their air forces. Additionally, most European countries ran out of smart bombs and had to be resupplied in a hurry by the United States.

In Afghanistan, some American servicemen muttered that NATO’s ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) actually stood for “I Saw Americans Fighting.” The more charitable would grant that it was “I Saw Anglos Fighting,” including the British and Canadian troops who held ground in the violent south and southwest. Despite the undoubted valor of soldiers from all nations in the coalition, the reality was that most European contingents were hamstrung by risk aversion, restrictive rules of engagement, and national “caveats” that limited their ability to fight. Some were even worse: the Italians were credibly alleged to have bribed Taliban forces not to attack them.

NATO’s relentless expansion has also long since passed the point of farce. The alliance, fifteen members strong throughout most of the Cold War, is about to add its thirtieth state, the newly-renamed North Macedonia. Macedonia boasts a tiny army of eight thousand men and a defense budget of $120 million — a rounding error for the Pentagon. The previous mouse that roared, the 2017 addition of Montenegro, is even more militarily irrelevant. Montenegro’s entire army has two thousand men — less than two U.S. battalions, or about 5 percent of the size of the New York City Police Department. These nations have been welcomed into a mutual defense alliance because that alliance is no longer serious about mutual defense.

These new NATO members provide virtually no military capability to help others, but they do bring one thing to the alliance: heightened tensions with Russia. There is ample evidence that the first Bush and Clinton administrations reassured Russian leaders that we would not expand NATO to their doorstep. We have done so, and now wonder why we are continually needing to “reset” relations with Russia

We are told NATO’s Baltic states face the existential threat of invasion and reabsorption into Russia, but they sure don’t act like it. Despite a recent RAND Corporation war game that showed that Russian troops would reach the Baltic capitals in a maximum of sixty hours, the Baltic countries spend barely 2 percent of GDP on defense. Yet “E-stonia” can afford free internet throughout the nation.

NATO’s heavyweights, the United States excepted, are nearly as impotent per capita as the alliance’s Baltic and Balkan members. These countries have the money but they have chosen to shirk their Article 3 responsibilities and instead rely on the American taxpayer and the American soldier.

Britain, considered among the most capable NATO militaries, has slashed its defense spending to the bone since the 2008 financial crisis. The United Kingdom only clears the arbitrary 2 percent of GDP spending threshold through some pensions legerdemain. Britain can now fit its entire active duty army into Wembley Stadium, with room to spare. The Royal Navy is so short of personnel that it had a frigate and a destroyer tied to the pier in Portsmouth as “training ships” for most of 2017 and 2018.

Yet Germany manages to put Britain to shame in the free rider sweepstakes. With the fifth largest economy in the world, Germany dominates European politics. But its military, once a large and proud frontline force, is a laughingstock. Germany’s air force has regularly had less than a third of its fighter aircraft ready for combat. Its defense spending has drawn chiding and, now, outright attacks from generations of U.S. presidents. In a story reminiscent of the post–Versailles Reichswehr, due to equipment shortages German troops on a 2015 exercise used black broomsticks to simulate machine guns.

Europe still has ample resources to defend itself, even if one accepts the claim that Putin’s Russia is resolutely revanchist and not defensive or merely opportunistic in its conduct. Even without the United States, NATO has five hundred million people and a combined GDP of more than $10 trillion, more than triple Russia’s population and wealth. It also has two nuclear deterrent forces.

Only two possible reasons exist for European nations’ failure to field credible military power: they have either decided they do not regard Russia as a serious security threat, or they are content to rely on U.S. defense welfare.

#### Ukraine and a slew of other factors provide momentum — it’s more possible now than ever.

Witney ’22 — senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. His topics of focus range from the European Security and Defence Policy to the Middle East Peace Process. Witney previously served as the first chief executive of the European Defence Agency in Brussels. High Representative Javier Solana chose him in January 2004 to lead the project team charged with developing the concept and blueprint for the agency. May 26, 2022; "Five reasons driving European defence integration after the Ukraine invasion"; *ECFR*; https://ecfr.eu/article/five-reasons-driving-european-defence-integration-after-the-ukraine-invasion/; //CYang

On 18 May, the European Commission released a new set of proposals that aim to put some forward movement into the European defence ‘project’. Nothing new there, you might think: the past quarter-century is littered with the wrecks of repeated previous efforts to get member states to match their words with action. So far, the irresistible force of the arguments for greater European defence integration — “spend more, spend better, and spend more together”, in the time-honoured mantra — has made little headway against the immovable object of national inertia and vested interests. Could this time be different?

The proposals (a Joint Communication by the Commission and European Defence Agency) respond to a tasking from EU leaders at their 11 March emergency summit at Versailles, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The instruction was to “put forward an analysis of the defence investment gaps by mid-May and to propose any further initiative necessary to strengthen the European industrial and technological base.”

Analysing the capability gaps will have been relatively easy — after all, the agency has been pointing out what is missing for years. As the head of the agency and European Union’s high representative, Josep Borrell, observed at the proposals’ launch, “The European Defence Agency has been working in the last years to explain these gaps, to explain how we can and should fill these gaps. But to tell the truth, we have not gotten a lot of success and nobody was listening to us.” The emerging lessons of the war in Ukraine have mostly confirmed the earlier analysis, while highlighting the particular urgency of restoring air superiority (air defence has been neglected, and drones underutilised), countering Russian long-range artillery, and developing new systems for command and control, surveillance, and data-sharing upon which effective all-arms combat depends.

But it is not just the shock of Ukraine and the attention of European leaders (alas, history shows that such attention can be short-lived) that give hope that, this time, people may listen. Other reasons for optimism include:

1. Many of the old reasons for sterile dispute among member states have fallen away. Europeanists and Atlanticists need no longer argue about whether the focus should be on expeditionary warfare or territorial defence, or whether the point of it all is a stronger NATO or European “strategic autonomy”. The prospective accession to NATO of Finland and Sweden will further minimise the differences between NATO and EU membership; and everyone now agrees that European militaries need to make themselves more of a match for the Russians. (It would be unhelpful, and perhaps premature, to suggest that, after Ukraine, the Russians may need a longish period to lick their wounds before they again become much of a threat to anyone.)
2. Whether by good luck or judgment, the Versailles tasking focuses on the ‘back office’ of European defence. Capabilities and industry are less susceptible to theological disputes than the ‘front office’ issues of operations and deployments, which give rise to all that angst about European dependency on the Americans. (The unspoken but widely understood truth is that eventually the Americans will refocus on the Pacific, expecting Europeans to take on more and more of the burden of their own defence — but that the Americans can probably still be relied on to dictate the timing and methodology of this transition, which will help avert intra-European rows.)
3. Defence budgets are growing, with more and more allies achieving or targeting the NATO target of 2 per cent of GDP spending on defence. That means budgetary headroom — just how are the Germans going to spend their new €100 billion defence fund? – which in turn means scope for new projects, quite possibly shared with other Europeans. (The reverse effect was evident in the years of defence budget cuts following 2008: far from defence ministries embracing more pooling of resources and efforts to get more bang for their depleted euros, defence spending was renationalised and collaboration fell off a cliff.)
4. The new proposals frame what is needed in a sensible, manageable way, with three phases envisaged. First comes restoration of combat readiness — taking training seriously, and “refilling the shelves”. This relates to not just replenishing ammunition, equipment, and spares sent to the Ukrainians, but also to the “hollowing out” that always affects unused militaries — the practice of concentrating resources on maintaining a full “shop window” of apparent assets even if that means running down inventories of ammunition and spares (it is little use having, say, a squadron of a dozen aircraft if a majority are unserviceable at any given moment). The second phase is to augment existing forces and capabilities by attending to the most pressing of the capability gaps identified, and beefing up numbers where necessary. Third is the need to address the future by putting in place a longer-term modernisation agenda, requiring the integration of new technologies.
5. Finally, the Commission is proposing to deploy extraordinary financial firepower. It is offering to take charge of a coordinated war-stock replenishment exercise in the way it did with covid-19 vaccines — with €500m on offer as subsidy to incentivise member state participation. Beyond that, it proposes that member states interested in collaborating on a new equipment capability should form themselves into European defence capability consortia — which, under a new Commission regulation, would be VAT-exempt. And this tax exemption would apply not just to the initial procurement, but also to all through-life costs (operation, maintenance, and decommissioning). The Commission has further suggested that the European Investment Bank may feel moved to increase its support for the European defence industry and joint procurement (€6bn is mentioned).

This new cascade of ‘incentives’ comes on top, of course, of the more than €1bn per annum already on offer for shared R&D projects through the European Defence Fund (EDF) – which, the Commission makes clear, it also aims to increase. With so much ‘free’ money on offer, even the most blinkered national defence ministry must surely now join the queue, however counter-cultural the condition of having to collaborate with others may feel. (Hopefully national finance ministries will fail to spot that such generous recourse to the EU budget means that member states are actually being bribed with their own money.)

So — could this truly be a turning point on the long and weary road to a more coherent European defence effort? The Commission clearly believes so, and that it will be in the driving seat — they “envisage” a future European joint programming and procurement function (that is, the centralised coordination of European defence investment planning and acquisition), to be built on their EDF and joint procurement programmes.

#### U.S. security cooperation is the key factor.

Quencez ’21 — Martin; Research Fellow in the Security & Defense Program, Associate Researcher for the European Council on Foreign Relations, PhD Candidate in Contemporary History at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. September 22, 2021; “The US cannot escape the European strategic autonomy debate”; *The Progressive Post*;<https://progressivepost.eu/the-us-cannot-escape-the-european-strategic-autonomy-debate/>

The US, however, plays a more ambiguous part, and appears as the elephant in the room in most European discussions. In fact, European strategic autonomy is still very much about the US. Despite many attempts to consolidate and expand the concept to broader issues, the inertia of this debate is a perfect illustration of the inability of transatlantic partners to reform and recalibrate their relationship in order to adapt to the 21st century geopolitical environment.

The balance of power within the transatlantic security and defence partnership provides the framework for the strategic autonomy discussion. Within the alliance, the US remains a security provider, while European powers are mostly security benefiters. US political leaders — from Eisenhower to Trump — have repeatedly criticised European “security free-riding”, but their European counterparts were less than eager to change this comfortable position.

The concept of strategic autonomy has only recently gained traction in Europe when the dependency on the US has become more difficult to sustain. The evolution of the security environment in Europe and its Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods over the past ten years, as well as the growing unpredictability of US politics have led some Europeans to think that they could no longer rely on others to solve their problems.

#### Only unequivocal pressure forces Europe to take ownership. Multiple studies confirm.

Schnaufer ’21 — Tad A. II; Former Editor-in-Chief for the Global Affairs Review, PhD Candidate in Security Studies at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida, M.A. in Global Affairs from New York University. January 15, 2021; “US-NATO Relationship: The Cost of Maintaining Political Pressure on Allies”; *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*; <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2021/01/15/the-us-nato-relationship-the-cost-of-maintaining-political-pressure-on-allies/>

The Trump administration has threatened NATO allies to the point that they fear the United States may withdraw from the organization or not fulfill its obligations to Article V unless the allies meet the objective of spending two percent of their GDP on defense. Past administrations have called for NATO allies to contribute more to the alliance for decades. However, they have never called into question the US commitment to Europe. Yet, this pressure has forced the European allies to start taking greater ownership of their security at the cost of warm relations with the United States as seen through allied leader’s statements.

In order to pressure allies, the United States has to send costly signals, such as withdrawing troops from Europe, to demonstrate that their security interests have diverged. This political pressure acts as a forceful method to motivate NATO allies to do more because it provides a credible threat of exclusion from the benefits of US protection. Within NATO, only the United States maintains and controls the conventional and nuclear capacity to deter and defend against existential threats to the alliance. No other ally has the expeditionary military capacity to do so. For example, Estonia is not worried about being abandoned by Romania, Portugal, or even Germany, knowing none of them could bring a sizable military force to bear in response to a Russian invasion or fait accompli. In this case, Estonia’s chief concern revolves around the United States’ guarantee of their sovereignty through NATO. Suppose the United States can make credible claims that it is willing to abandon an ally and not fulfill its treaty obligations. In that case, the ally will experience a drastic incentive to increase its military capabilities to defend itself.

It may seem that these tensions and fears will only lead to negative outcomes, but some disunity within an alliance can yield positive results. Several articles researching the implications of free-riding and burdening-sharing in alliances have supported this notion. In Olson and Zeckhauser’s seminal article on burden-sharing, they wrote, “This fact leads to the paradoxical conclusion that a decline in the amity, unity, and community of interest among allies need not necessarily reduce the effectiveness of an alliance…” and “The United States, at least, should perhaps not hope for too much unity in common ventures with other nations. It might prove extremely expensive.” Similarly, Plumper and Neumayer note in reference to the smaller allies (non-US allies), “Unless the interests of alliance members are independent, the existence of NATO allows the smaller allies to free-ride to some extent.”

#### French umbrella provides assurance and solves runaway prolif.

Schlee ’20 — Rene; Country Director of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. March 5, 2020; "Tracking the German Nuclear Debate"; *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*; <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/15/tracking-german-nuclear-debate-pub-72884>; //CYang

A withdrawal of Germany from nuclear sharing with the Americans would have further advantages. Coordinated with other countries of nuclear sharing, such as Belgium or the Netherlands, one could send the important political signal to the Eastern European NATO countries that even a minimal nuclear deterrent under French leadership would satisfy German as well as European security interests. Moreover, it would enable Germany to present itself with new credibility in matters of nuclear disarmament. At present, Germany is in the dilemma of only being able to commit itself internationally to nuclear disarmament with half its strength, since nuclear weapons are on its own territory. However, the withdrawal from nuclear sharing could give new impetus to the debate on the Non-Proliferation Treaty.”