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GRAND STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC INCOHERENCE IN MILITARY ALLIANCES

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Abstract

When a great power attempts to check a rival, why do its allies sometimes reconcile their military capabilities with its grand strategy and sometimes appear reluctant or unable to do so? Over the decades, numerous scholars, policymakers, and pundits have come to believe that they understand the sources of *strategic incoherence* in military alliances. The conventional wisdom—i.e., the “collective goods theory” of alliance security—holds that states have chronic temptations to free-ride on the preponderant ally’s military efforts. To the extent the leading power overcommits resources towards confronting the adversary, its allies will have few incentives to revise their military postures in line with its strategic aims. If this logic is correct, the chief explanation for why a great power like the United States often finds it difficult to achieve strategic coherence in its alliance relationships lies in its own excesses. Once it dials back its security commitments, so the argument goes, allies will finally pull their own weight.

I argue that this conventional wisdom is wrong. Strategic coherence in military alliances is not uniformly conditioned by the generosity of the leading power’s security commitments. Instead, my “demand-side theory” of strategic coherence highlights the interaction between the leading power’s grand strategy and the military vulnerability of its allies. Leading powers need allies to bring specific kinds and amounts of military capabilities to the table in order to effectively implement their preferred grand strategies. However, adopting the “appropriate” capabilities is often prohibitively difficult for allies because it requires them to take on awful risks to their fundamental security interests. Doing so may, in particular, trigger unbearably costly

countermeasures from the adversary or create otherwise avoidable deficiencies in their military competitiveness. Developing these insights, I argue that strategic incoherence is especially likely when (1) the leading power tries to “outsource” military capabilities to an ally that is highly vulnerable to military predation, or alternatively when (2) its grand strategy is predicated on “insourcing” military capabilities while limiting those of a relatively invulnerable ally.

Using detailed case studies of the United States’ Cold War alliances with France and West Germany, the Soviet Union’s alliances with China and Cuba, Great Britain’s alliances in the early 20th century, and the United States and China’s East Asian alliances in the post-Cold War period, I identify the remarkably demanding conditions under which alliances in the modern era have achieved strategic coherence. This effort draws heavily on archival material and, for the contemporary East Asian cases, semi-structured interviews with regional policymakers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation analyzes the success and failure of grand strategy in the context of military alliances. It asks why, when a great power tries to enlist its friends and partners in the effort to check the expansion of a formidable adversary, the allies sometimes reconcile their military capabilities with the demands of its grand strategy but are reluctant or unable to do so at other times. In the late 1950s, for example, why did the French tailor their military posture to the American strategy of equipping its European allies with nuclear forces directed against the Soviet Union, while the West Germans failed to do the same? Likewise, in the early 1960s, why did China refuse to accommodate the Soviet Union's strategic emphasis on mitigating the risks of nuclear escalation vis-à-vis the United States in its military posture, whereas Cuba eventually did? My goal is to identify the conditions under which the leading great powers of modern military alliances have succeeded or failed to bring their allies' military capabilities into harmony with their grand strategic priorities. This should help predict when such *strategic coherence* is likely to be achieved in the future.

The prevailing wisdom is that great powers often fail to achieve strategic coherence because their allies have chronic temptations to exploit their generosity; to the extent that the leading great power overcommits military resources to the task of checking the adversary, its allies have few incentives to revise their military postures in line with its grand strategic aims. By contrast, I argue that strategic coherence in military alliances is not uniformly conditioned by the

generosity of the leading power's security commitments. The alternative theory I develop highlights the interaction between the type of grand strategy pursued by the leading power and the military vulnerability of its allies. In the context of an alliance relationship, a leading great power can either adopt an "outsourcing" grand strategy, devolving military assets and responsibilities to the ally with the goal of indirectly checking the adversary's expansion via its military efforts, or an "insourcing" grand strategy that calls for directly counterbalancing the adversary while arrogating discretion over the alliance's military actions. I argue that strategic incoherence is most likely (1) when the leading power adopts an outsourcing grand strategy while its ally is highly vulnerable to military predation, or (2) when it adopts an insourcing grand strategy while its ally is relatively invulnerable. In both circumstances, the ally cannot fit its capabilities to the leading power's demands without exacerbating its own insecurity. Doing so, in particular, may trigger unbearably costly countermeasures from the adversary or create otherwise avoidable deficiencies in its military readiness. By extension, strategic coherence will obtain if the leading power tries to implement an outsourcing grand strategy vis-à-vis a relatively invulnerable ally or an insourcing strategy vis-à-vis a highly vulnerable ally.

The question of how to make grand strategy "work" in the context of alliance politics is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. Scholars of international security have long understood that the success of grand strategy depends on matching military means to political ends, and that this situation does not obtain naturally. Arthur Stein writes that, in the United States, "the president extends U.S. [political] commitments" but "it is the military that must create plans and request forces to fulfill them. There is nothing in the process that ensures a coherent grand

strategy—one in which commitments and capabilities are matched.”¹ Accordingly, a large literature has examined the relationship between a state’s grand strategic ends and the capabilities generated by its own military establishment.² However, much less attention has been paid to the fact that great powers often need external *allies* to bring forth certain constellations of capabilities to achieve coherence in their grand strategy. This is an unfortunate neglect. In much the same way “soldiers...[do not] go out of their way to reconcile the means they employ with the ends of state policy[,]”³ allies do not always bring their military postures into alignment with the leading alliance power’s grand strategy. “It would all be tidier, less of a *theoretical* problem,” Clausewitz observed in one of his lesser-known passages, “if the contingent promised—ten, twenty, or thirty thousand men—were placed entirely at the ally’s disposal and he were free to use it as he wished...But that is far from what really happens. The auxiliary force usually operates under its own commander; he is dependent only on his own government, and the objective the latter sets him will be as ambiguous as its aims.”⁴ Evidently, then, the problem of achieving strategic coherence in military alliances has befuddled students of strategy throughout the modern era. It calls for a dedicated theoretical investigation.

Understanding the sources of strategic incoherence in military alliances also matters a great deal for U.S. foreign policy. Historically, American policymakers have betrayed no small amount of frustration over the apparent unwillingness or inability of allied countries to adopt the military capabilities that are conducive to the achievement of Washington’s strategic objectives. In the

¹ Arthur A. Stein, “Domestic Constraints, Extended Deterrence, and the Incoherence of Grand Strategy: The United States, 1938-1950,” in *Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, eds. Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 97.

² For the seminal text, see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1832; repr., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), esp. bk. 8, ch. 6.

³ Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 53.

⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 603 (emphasis added).

early 1960s, when U.S. grand strategy in Western Europe placed a premium on centralizing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s major warfighting assets and responsibilities in the hands of the United States, American policymakers complained that France seemed to be crafting its military policies with an eye toward "being able to frustrate American policy when [it] chooses to do so."⁵ At one point, as detailed in chapter 4, one senior U.S. official became so angry at France's refusal to "toe the line" set by American grand strategy that he suggested the United States might target France with a nuclear attack.⁶ In a similar vein, many of the grand strategic problems U.S. policymakers are grappling with today boil down to the problem of achieving strategic coherence with America's distant allies. Will U.S. allies in East Asia or Europe ever become strong enough for the United States to reduce its regional military footprints and "pull back" to an offshore supporting role, as many in the post-Cold War era have advocated?⁷ Alternatively, will the allies adopt the kinds of military capabilities that facilitate U.S. efforts to manage the risks of nuclear proliferation and major-power war in key regions, as others have stressed?⁸ Answers to such questions turn critically on knowing whether, and under what circumstances, allies will successfully accommodate the prescriptions of U.S. grand strategy in their military postures. In short, a study of strategic incoherence in military alliances can have applications for a wide range of important foreign policy issues.

⁵ Undersecretary of State George Ball to President John F. Kennedy, "Proposed Nuclear Offer to De Gaulle," July 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy Library (JFKL), <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/226/JFKNSF-226-006>, 7.

⁶ See Secretary of State Dean Rusk's account during a conversation with Lord Home, December 10, 1961, quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 338, fn. 193. On the need to make the French "toe the line," see Rusk's meeting with British Foreign Secretary Lord Alec Douglas-Home, September 15, 1961, quoted in *ibid.*, 303.

⁷ See ch. 6; and Barry R. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January/February 2013): 116-128.

⁸ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January/February 2013): 130-142.

Defining the Target

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the purview of this dissertation. First and foremost, this is a study of grand strategy, by which I mean an *ex ante* deductive framework policymakers rely on to identify the state's fundamental security interests in a given region of the globe and the military means required to achieve them. Some scholars understand grand strategy more expansively than I do, comprising "plans and policies...to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance [the] state's national interest."⁹ Given the difficulty of providing an analytically tractable discussion that encompasses all of these elements, I adopt a narrower definition that highlights foreign policy objectives and *military* instruments.¹⁰ Specifically, I am interested in identifying the conditions under which coherence arises between the core political objectives a great power pursues in a given region and the military posture or capabilities—i.e., the forces, doctrines, and decision-making capacities needed to perform military missions¹¹—adopted by its local allies. As noted above, other scholars have examined the conjunction between the state's foreign policy objectives and the capabilities furnished by its own

⁹ Peter Feaver, "What is Grand Strategy and Why do We Need It?" *Foreign Policy*, April 8, 2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/08/what-is-grand-strategy-and-why-do-we-need-it/>. On the contested nature of grand strategy as a concept, see Rebecca Friedman Lissner, "What is Grand Strategy? Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 52-73; and Nina Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of 'Grand Strategy'," *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 27-57.

¹⁰ Here I take cue from a number of important scholars. John Mearsheimer writes that grand strategy "is not concerned with how a nation integrates the diplomatic, economic, and military tools at its disposal to support its interests abroad. Although grand strategy is sometimes defined this way, the concept has a narrower definition here: the relationship between military means and international commitments...[T]he broader concept of *foreign policy* is all about the integration of [all] three instruments to support overseas commitments." John J. Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 17. A similar distinction is found in Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1-2. Additionally, I follow Nuno Monteiro in arguing that great powers may vary their grand strategies across different global regions. See Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ch. 3.

¹¹ I borrow this definition of capabilities from Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 41. This definition is similar to Joshua Shiffrin's concept of *military posture*, or "how the forces at a state's disposal are trained, positioned, equipped and deployed for the military scenario at hand." Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018), 29. Thus, throughout this study, I use the terms capabilities and posture interchangeably.

military establishment, variously referring to this quantity as the “coherence,”¹² “balance,”¹³ or “political-military integration”¹⁴ of grand strategy. B.H. Liddell Hart captured the crux of the matter when he wrote that

Strategy depends for success, first and most, on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the ends and the means*. The end must be proportioned to the total means, and the means used in gaining each intermediate end which contributes to the ultimate must be proportioned to the value and needs of that intermediate end—whether it be to gain an objective or to fulfil a contributory purpose. An excess may be as harmful as a deficiency.¹⁵

In short, although I break new ground by extending the concept to the alliance context, the central object of interest should be familiar to traditional scholars of international security.¹⁶

Additionally, I mainly examine the context of *asymmetric alliances*, that is, an alliance between a “leading” great power and a considerably weaker “junior” ally.¹⁷ As I elaborate in the next chapter, asymmetric alliances are the most dominant and consequential form of alliances in the modern era and therefore analytically significant. An even more important reason to focus on these relationships is that great powers have historically seen other great powers as potential adversaries by default, and thus are less likely to vary the kinds of grand strategies they implement

¹² See Stein, “Incoherence of Grand Strategy”; and Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), 7.

¹³ Steven E. Lobell, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Norrin W. Ripsman, “Grand Strategy between the World Wars,” in *The Challenge of Grand Strategy: The Great Powers and the Broken Balance between the World Wars*, eds. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁴ Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 24-29.

¹⁵ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1954), 336 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶ Note that coherence is a variable *quality* of grand strategy rather than a defining characteristic. As Nina Silove points out, “[t]he use of excessive or inadequate force makes a strategy a bad one, not a not-strategy.” Indeed, baking in the idea of coherence into the concept of grand strategy itself, as some do, would limit our ability to investigate the effectiveness or success of different grand strategies, which coherence assuredly impacts. See Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword,” 47-49 (quotation in 48).

¹⁷ In James Morrow’s original formulation, asymmetry does not strictly describe an alliance pattern characterized by significant disparities in material power, but rather one in which “the parties receive different benefits from the alliance.” However, Morrow does note that “asymmetries in capabilities are generally found in asymmetric alliances.” See James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 914.

vis-à-vis one another even when nominally part of the same alliance.¹⁸ By contrast, great powers usually have a wider range of reasonable grand strategic options when dealing with smaller allies. They can try to control and limit the ally's military potential, as they typically do vis-à-vis other great powers, or they can try to facilitate the ally's growth as an independent military counterweight against a much more formidable adversary. The danger of creating "the geopolitical equivalent of Frankenstein's monster" with the latter strategy is considerably reduced in dealings with non-great power allies, which is why leading powers can seriously consider it alongside a more domineering grand strategy.¹⁹ Since my goal is to spell out how different grand strategies can become coherent or incoherent in the alliance context, it is useful to focus on settings wherein the great power in question enjoys some latitude over which type of strategy it will pursue. Thus, although I do briefly consider how my theory might shed light on symmetrical alliances between two great powers (see related discussion in chapter 2 and chapter 6), the asymmetric alliance setting is where my arguments should offer the clearest analytical leverage.

Further delimitation is necessary. My investigation assumes an international environment characterized by high levels of military threat for the actors involved.²⁰ Particularly when it comes to the allies of the leading power, I have in mind states that are confronting the military forces of a hostile great-power adversary in their immediate geographical vicinity. Thus, although I will analytically distinguish allies that are relatively "vulnerable" to the adversary from those that are relatively "invulnerable" in the next chapter, readers should not equate the latter's situation with an absence of a serious geopolitical threat. Indeed, I will argue that these allies are so threatened

¹⁸ As explained in the next chapter, this partly explains why alliances between great powers are historically rare.

¹⁹ I borrow the phrase from Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 28.

²⁰ Indeed, it is this high-threat environment that likely provided the motivation for the formation of the alliances I examine in the first place. On this classic point, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

to the point where they cannot assume their present invulnerability will last indefinitely; at the baseline, they have incentives to continuously expand their military capabilities in order to avoid future windows of vulnerability. The leading power is less directly threatened than its allies, but nonetheless holds a vital interest in checking the adversary's encroachments against them. It anticipates that any rival that comes to politically dominate the region in question will dangerously upset the global balance of power and eventually become a direct threat to its homeland.²¹ Finally, the adversary itself is threatened to the extent that the states in its vicinity have the potential to become serious military rivals, particularly with the help of their leading-power ally.

The assumption of a high-threat environment helps further specify the interactions for which my theory can offer the greatest explanatory purchase. For example, my theory should apply quite neatly to analyzing patterns of strategic incoherence in U.S. alliance relations with France and West Germany during the Cold War, who were faced with the brunt of the Soviet threat in Western Europe. It will not extend as well to dynamics in the U.S. alliance relationship with Britain during the same period, since the latter did not occupy continental Europe and was therefore not threatened nearly to the same extent as France or West Germany. Additionally, within continental Europe, the theory will probably have less to say about strategic incoherence in U.S. relations with countries like Luxembourg or the Netherlands, whose military potential was arguably too small to meaningfully register in the Cold War balance of power and Soviet threat assessments. Likewise, the theory should have increased application to grand strategy and alliance dynamics in 21st-

²¹ Many scholars have observed that preventing the consolidation of the world's major economic and demographic resources under a single rival power is a vital strategic concern for great powers like the United States. See Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, with an Introduction by Frederick Sherwood Dunn, ed. Helen R. Nicholl (1944; repr., Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969); Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't: American Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990): 1- 51; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 40-42; and Sebastian Rosato and John Schuessler, "A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 4 (December 2011): 803-819.

century East Asia, which is widely regarded as seeing the “return” of great power competition,²² but will apply less easily to the “unipolar moment” of the 1990s when regional military competition and threat assessments were relatively muted.²³

Despite these limitations, it will become clear throughout my discussion that the scope of this study encompasses a wide array of important cases. Moreover, to the extent the international system continues to witness the consolidation of rival alliance blocs led by established and new great powers, the relevance of my theory is likely to increase over time.²⁴

Existing Arguments

By and large, the field of International Relations (IR) has not explicitly addressed the problem of strategic incoherence in military alliances. However, at least in the United States, a powerful conventional wisdom on the subject has formed among scholars, policymakers, and pundits. The conventional wisdom—the “collective goods theory” of alliance politics—emphasizes the moral hazard problem created by the preponderant alliance power’s security commitment to its allies.²⁵ As long as the leading power is unambiguously committed to counterbalancing the adversary, the reasoning goes, its allies will not feel compelled to accept costly adjustments to their military

²² See Thomas Wright, “The Return to Great-Power Rivalry was Inevitable,” *The Atlantic*, September 12, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/liberal-international-order-free-world-trump-authoritarianism/569881/>.

²³ See William C. Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 5-41.

²⁴ There is ample evidence that this is happening. See, for example, Adam P. Liff and G. John Ikenberry, “Racing Toward Tragedy? China’s Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma,” *International Security* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 52-91; Darren J. Lim and Zack Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia,” *Security Studies* 24, no. 4 (2015): 696-727; John J. Mearsheimer, “The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great Power Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021): 48-58; Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Why Chinese Assertiveness is Here to Stay,” *Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2015): 151-170; and Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁵ For the seminal statement, see Mancur Olson, Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266-279.

capabilities in line with the leading power's grand strategic demands. But once it dials back its security commitments, the allies will pull their proper weight. Over the decades, numerous policymakers and scholars in the United States have relied on this theory—whether explicitly or implicitly—to make sense of the seemingly lackluster military policies of allied nations. “[B]ecause we have had our troops there,” President Dwight D. Eisenhower lamented, “the Europeans have not done their share. They won’t make the sacrifices to provide the soldiers for their own defense.”²⁶ Half a century later, President Donald J. Trump appeared to elevate this reasoning as a guiding assumption of U.S. policy toward its allies, routinely accusing them of indulging in underactive military policies on the basis of American largesse.²⁷

Some accuse allies of being *overzealous* about their military capabilities based on a similar reasoning. In the 1960s, France’s insistence on independently employing nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union upon the outbreak of conflict at the expense of coordination with Washington was blamed on excessive U.S. generosity. “[French president Charles de Gaulle] does not fear we would desert him,” President John F. Kennedy argued, and thus “relies on our power to protect him while he launches his policies based solely on the self-interest of France.”²⁸ In the same vein, some analysts have claimed that the United States tends to enable Israel’s maverick military behavior in the Middle East by “offering [it] unconditional support” at the expense of its own strategic interests.²⁹ For many, then, collective goods theory serves as something of a master explanation for markedly different forms of strategic incoherence in America’s military alliances.

²⁶ Quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 185.

²⁷ See Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “Trump Warns NATO Allies to Spend More on Defense, or Else,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/02/world/europe/trump-nato.html>.

²⁸ “Remarks of President Kennedy to the National Security Council Meeting,” January 22, 1963, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 485.

²⁹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 307. See also Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), 44-48.

Collective goods theory is the closest thing to a full-fledged theory of strategic coherence in military alliances found in the existing IR literature; its influence among scholars and policymakers is unparalleled.³⁰ I thus treat it as the central alternative theory of reference throughout this study. As I elaborate in the next chapter, collective goods theory suffers from *prima facie* logical flaws that suggest the need for a better analytical framework. In particular, it is questionable at best whether the military security provided by a leading power to its allies meets the definition of a collective or “public” good, which is essential for the theory’s mechanisms to operate. And probably because the theory’s central assumptions do not travel well to the context of alliance politics, observed patterns of strategic coherence often confound its expectations. Indeed, it will become clear in my empirical analysis that, when examined in detail, the theory mispredicts even when applied to cases where it might be expected to perform best—that is, U.S. and Soviet alliances during the Cold War.³¹ In the final analysis, I argue that collective goods theory fails because it rests on a “supply-side” logic that attributes widely different patterns of strategic incoherence to a single variable—the leading power’s willingness and ability to supply military security to its allies—while neglecting how the leading power’s strategic interests interact with the situations and incentives of its allies. My alternative “demand-side theory” explicitly models this interaction to produce a more complete explanation.

³⁰ A sample of works that adopt some variant of collective goods theory to explain alliance dynamics includes Posen, *Restraint*; Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461-495; Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 5-48; Jasen J. Castillo and Alexander B. Downes, “Loyalty, Hedging, or Exit: How Weaker Alliance Partners Respond to the Rise of New Threats,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020); Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007); Barbara Elias, “The Likelihood of Local Allies Free-Riding: Testing Economic Theories of Alliances in U.S. Counterinsurgency Interventions,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 3 (2017): 309-331; and Brian Blankenship, “The Price of Protection: Explaining Success and Failure of U.S. Alliance Burden-Sharing Pressure,” *Security Studies* 30, no. 5 (2021): 691-724.

³¹ The classic formulation of the theory was developed largely with an eye toward explaining U.S. alliance politics in Cold War NATO. See Olson and Zeckhauser, “Economic Theory of Alliances.” Avery Goldstein observed that collective goods theory falls short in these “easy” cases as early as 1995. See Avery Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride: Alliances and Security in the Postwar World,” *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 39-71.

In addition to collective goods theory, I engage with other plausible arguments about strategic incoherence throughout my main empirical investigations. Paraphrasing Susan Stokes, the idea is to subject my theoretically-grounded interpretation of each historical case to the “discipline of alternative explanations.”³² The more we see the mechanisms and predictions of my theory corroborated to a greater extent than reasonable alternative explanations across different alliance relationships, the more confident we can be that the new framework is accurate and useful.

Contributions of the Study

This dissertation offers four major contributions. First, I develop a novel framework of grand strategy that foregrounds the impact of allies. As noted above, much of the existing scholarly literature implicitly treats strategic coherence as a “supply-side” affair: the leading great power’s willingness to supply military security to its weaker allies is held to be the principal determinant of the latter’s military choices. A grand strategy of “deep engagement,” for instance, is sometimes said to incentivize bad behavior (e.g., “cheap riding” or “reckless driving”) by the allies, whereas a grand strategy of “restraint” should lead them to adopt more desirable policies.³³ I argue that this approach is seriously flawed. By delineating why and how different allies end up advancing or compromising the leading power’s grand strategic vision despite receiving comparable security commitments, I show that explicitly theorizing their role is essential for the study of grand strategy and its outcomes.

Second, my theory explains why alliances often underperform as force-multipliers for the great powers that lead them. For a long time, IR scholars took for granted that alliances help states

³² Susan C. Stokes, “A Defense of Observational Research,” in *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*, ed. Dawn Langan Teele (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014), 34.

³³ For example, see Posen, *Restraint*, 33-50.

confront external threats by pooling or “aggregating” power resources.³⁴ However, a growing body of research demonstrates that capability aggregation is much more troublesome than the traditional theories suggest; states often bribe or threaten each other in order to make capability aggregation work, and take part in grueling negotiations to determine how their collective capabilities should be built and employed.³⁵ I add to these insights by showing that leading powers need their allies to bring specific constellations of military capabilities to the table in order to effectively implement their preferred grand strategies. However, adopting the “appropriate” capabilities is often prohibitively difficult for the allies because it requires them to take on awful risks to their fundamental security interests. I identify the remarkably demanding conditions under which great powers can effectively harness their allies’ capabilities to achieve their strategic goals.

Third, I enrich the scholarly conversation on grand strategy by examining it from a genuine comparative perspective. As Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich argue in a recent review, grand strategy research has overwhelmingly featured “Americans writing about American cases[.]” evincing “little capacity to compare cross-nationally” and exposing the literature to charges of parochialism and nongeneralizability.³⁶ Rebecca Lissner likewise writes

³⁴ This is the basic logic of “external balancing” in neorealist theory. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2010), 168-170.

³⁵ See, for example, Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004); Marina E. Henke, *Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments, and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019); Nora Bensahel, “International Alliances and Military Effectiveness: Fighting Alongside Allies and Partners,” in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, eds. Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), ch. 8; Paul Poast, *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in Military-Pact Negotiations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019); Rosella Cappella Zielinski and Paul Poast, “Supplying Allies: Political Economy of Coalition Warfare,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (March 2021): 1-7; and Stéfanie von Hlatky and Thomas Juneau, “When the Coalition Determines the Mission: NATO’s Detour in Libya,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 45, no. 2 (2022): 258-279.

³⁶ Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich, “Is Grand Strategy a Research Program? A Review Essay,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 80. An important early work on grand strategy that looks beyond U.S. cases is Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

that “the grand-strategy literature suffers needlessly from American parochialism.”³⁷ This is highly problematic for social scientific inference, which fundamentally depends on *comparison*. It also limits the practical usefulness of scholarly research, since even a literature that aims to generate “prescriptions for the future of American grand strategy would benefit from richer understanding of other states’ visions for their own power.”³⁸ In short, despite its obvious importance, the IR research program on grand strategy has been slow to progress into the realm of comparative social science. My study represents a step toward rectifying this situation. In addition to the United States’ grand strategic interactions with its European and East Asian allies, my empirical analysis features cases as varied as the Soviet Union’s alliances with China and Cuba during the Cold War, Great Britain’s alliance with Japan in the early 20th century, and China’s alliance with its only formal ally—North Korea—in the 21st century. By bringing such relationships into the fold, I show that a theory of grand strategy and its outcomes built on standard realist foundations can offer strong explanatory purchase across space and time.

Finally, my study helps clarify the potential costs and benefits inherent to the different grand strategies the United States could pursue in the 21st century. The contemporary U.S. grand strategy debate tends to oversimplify how allies will respond to Washington’s strategic choices. On the one hand, supporters of a more restrained grand strategy argue that U.S. allies will surely “step up to the plate and balance against a powerful, expansionist state in their own neighborhood” once they are no longer able to “free ride on the back of U.S. security guarantees[.]”³⁹ If the goal of American grand strategy is to counterbalance potential hegemony in key global regions while minimizing the costs of doing so, the assumption here is that U.S. allies will provide the military

³⁷ Lissner, “What is Grand Strategy?” 70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁹ Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, 170; 181.

means to achieve this goal once the United States stops subsidizing their defense. On the other hand, supporters of a grand strategy of “deep engagement” hold that the United States should maintain an active leadership role in the global security environment, and that its forward-oriented security commitments dampen allied incentives to adopt potentially destabilizing military postures.⁴⁰

I argue that both views are excessively optimistic. Historically, allies have not uniformly revamped their capabilities when the leading alliance power tries to devolve military responsibilities to them. Nor have they uniformly subordinated their military postures to a leading power bent on control and influence. Instead, for any given grand strategy, leading powers tend to successfully achieve strategic coherence with some allies but not others depending on the level of military vulnerability they are facing vis-à-vis the adversary. My findings thus highlight strategic incoherence in military alliances as an inherently “wicked” problem, that is, problems that “rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution” rather than scientific certitude.⁴¹ As Rittel and Webber observed in their classic article on the concept, there are “no immediate and no ultimate” solutions to such problems, as “the next day’s consequences of the solution may yield utterly undesirable repercussions which outweigh the intended advantages[.]”⁴² In this vein, great powers like the United States must often choose between living with strategic incoherence in their military alliances or altering their preferred grand strategy to accommodate the security needs of their allies; the choice is—and will remain—a matter of subjective political judgment. By identifying the sources of the tensions that invariably arise between the United States’ foreign policy and the

⁴⁰ This point is made most eloquently in Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment,” *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/13): 7-51.

⁴¹ Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 160.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 163.

military instruments furnished by its allies, I provide an enhanced understanding of what can and cannot be achieved with American grand strategy in the 21st century.

Roadmap

In the next chapter, I conceptualize strategic incoherence more precisely and lay out the logic and predictions of the new “demand-side theory” I use to explain this alliance pathology, juxtaposing them against those of its chief rival—i.e., collective goods theory. I also elaborate the research design I use to test my theory. I then present my main empirical investigations in chapters 3 to 5, discussing in detail how two key great powers of the modern era—the United States and the Soviet Union—sought to bring their allies’ military capabilities into harmony with their grand strategies of choice during the Cold War and why they succeeded or failed in their efforts. Chapter 6 features briefer case studies from outside the Cold War context, showing that my theory offers strong explanations for patterns of strategic incoherence in Great Britain’s alliance with Japan in the early 20th century, the United States’ 21st-century alliances with Japan and South Korea, and China’s contemporary alliance with North Korea. Finally, chapter 7 summarizes my findings and discusses their implications for theory and policy.

Chapter 2

A Demand-side Theory of Strategic Incoherence

This chapter takes a deeper look at the received wisdom on strategic incoherence and develops a new theoretical foundation for empirical analysis. At its core, the dominant collective goods theory rests on a “supply-side” logic: it posits that the leading great power’s willingness to supply military security to its allies is the principal driver of strategic incoherence. I argue that this approach is seriously flawed. By underspecifying the incentives presented to allies by the details of their security environment, that is, the “demand-side” of alliance politics, collective goods theory encounters logical and empirical challenges that are typically ignored or resolved through *ad hoc* theorizing.

My alternative theory holds that strategic incoherence is determined by the interaction between the leading power’s grand strategy and the military vulnerability of its allies. Leading powers need allies to acquire specific kinds and amounts of military capabilities in order to effectively implement their preferred grand strategies. However, adopting the prescribed capabilities is often prohibitively difficult for allies because it requires them to take on awful risks to their fundamental security interests. Doing so may, in particular, trigger unbearably costly countermeasures from the adversary or create otherwise avoidable deficiencies in their military competitiveness. Developing this insight, I argue that strategic incoherence is especially likely when (1) a leading power tries to “outsource” military capabilities to an ally that is highly vulnerable to military predation, or alternatively when (2) its grand strategy is predicated on

“insourcing” military capabilities while limiting those of a relatively invulnerable ally. I plan to show that viewing historical patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence through the lens of this theory settles most of the inconsistencies that bedevil existing scholarship.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I elaborate what strategic coherence means in the context of military alliances and discuss its importance for the study of grand strategy and alliance politics. I then delve into collective goods theory, distilling its central arguments, reviewing its impact on existing discussions of strategic incoherence, and pointing out initial challenges to its logic and empirical performance. The next three sections lay out my demand-side theory, developing its logic and identifying core implications for patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence. The sixth section discusses additional implications from the competing theories. I conclude by describing the research design used to empirically test these arguments.

What is Strategic Coherence and Why Does it Matter?

Grand strategy is a conceptual framework that identifies the state’s fundamental security interests and prescribes the military means required to achieve them.¹ In my discussion, the “coherence” of grand strategy refers to the extent to which these ends and means are “knitted together” in practice. As Barry Posen observed in a defining text of modern security studies, “the fundamental question...is whether the statesman has at hand the military instruments required to achieve those political goals deemed essential to the security of the state.”² When this question can be answered in the affirmative, grand strategy is said to be coherent. Conversely, when available military

¹ This framework may manifest as an explicit “grand plan” or an implicit “grand principle.” See Nina Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of Grand Strategy,” *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 27-57.

² See Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 25.

capabilities are ill-matched to the state's fundamental policy goals, its grand strategy is said to be incoherent.

An extensive literature has examined the relationship between a state's desired political ends and the capabilities offered by its own military establishment.³ However, the key questions of strategic coherence can be extended to the context of military alliances. From the perspective of a given alliance power, strategic coherence is achieved if allies acquire the military capabilities—i.e., the forces, doctrines, and decision-making capacities required to perform military missions⁴—conducive to its strategic goals. This situation hardly obtains naturally. As Stephen Biddle points out, there is “no single, underlying quality of generic ‘capability’ to which all specific mission capacities are epiphenomenal. Forces that can attack successfully may be ineffective in defense; forces that are powerful in a long campaign may be all but worthless if results are needed quickly; forces that can conquer an opponent quickly if heavy losses are acceptable may be unable to take any ground at all if losses are intolerable.”⁵ In short, military capabilities do not travel neatly across different strategies and missions. I will thus show anon that a grand strategy that aims to maximize the alliance's collective ability to inflict harm on the adversary requires allies to build capabilities quite different from those best suited to ensure deliberation and control over the alliance's military actions. More often than not, states must either

³ For the seminal text, see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1832; repr., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), esp. bk. 8, ch. 6. See also Russell F. Weigley, “Military Strategy and Civilian Leadership,” in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1976), 38-77; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; and William C. Martel, *Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice: The Need for an Effective American Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴ Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 41.

⁵ Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 192. Even conventional capabilities organized along Biddle's celebrated “modern system” tend to undermine mission capacity in the context of counterinsurgency operations. See Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, “Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars,” *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 67-106.

revise their strategic objectives or make their allies undertake costly adjustments to their military capabilities in order to achieve coherence.

Strategic coherence is a good thing. States that fail to achieve coherence in their alliance relationships are less likely to successfully deter adversaries or fight effectively when attacked.⁶ To say that a given alliance is strategically incoherent is equivalent to saying that it is failing to deliver the military means necessary to pursue the state's desired political ends. In Paul Poast's words, "[m]any grand strategic visions are simply infeasible if pursued noncollaboratively."⁷ This recognition is implicit in the rationalist literature on alliances, which holds that an alliance increases its member states' collective warfighting abilities insofar as it requires them to specialize their military capabilities to meet common strategic goals.⁸ States would have significantly fewer incentives to enter into alliance agreements in the first place if not for the force-multiplying effects of such specialization.⁹ Ensuring that allied capabilities are adequately specialized is the central concern of strategic coherence.

Strategic coherence also affects the durability of alliances. Because strategic coherence is so integral to military performance, incoherent alliances are less useful to their members and harder

⁶ On alliances and military performance, see Nora Bensahel, "International Alliances and Military Effectiveness: Fighting Alongside Allies and Partners," in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, eds. Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), ch. 8. Note that my arguments on strategic coherence and its relationship to alliance performance are thematically similar to Patricia Weitsman's claims about "alliance cohesion." Patricia Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004). As I elaborate below, however, Weitsman's concept of cohesion is virtually coterminous with performance, whereas I argue that strategic coherence and alliance performance are distinct concepts whose empirical relationship should be investigated rather than assumed away.

⁷ Paul Poast, *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in Military-Pact Negotiations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019), 7.

⁸ James D. Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 38, no. 2 (June 1994): 272-273.

⁹ James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (June 2000): 63-83. Relatedly, Paul Poast finds that at least 46 percent of alliance negotiations that took place among the European powers between 1815 and 1945 ended in nonagreement due to the failure to resolve incompatibilities in preferred warfighting plans. See Poast, *Arguing about Alliances*, ch. 2.

to justify maintaining.¹⁰ Again, scholars working in the rationalist tradition have long been familiar with this effect. As Brett Ashley Leeds and Barcu Savun argue, “states will choose [allies] that provide the most advantageous combination of assets in terms of power and policy compatibility.”¹¹ By extension, an alliance with a state that does not bring an advantageous portfolio of capabilities to the table may be deemed too politically costly to maintain.

The fact that strategic coherence matters so much for the military and political value of alliances has an important implication: alliance relationships forged between great powers and weaker states should be both more frequent and durable than great-to-great power alliances. The reason is straightforward: capable of holding their own militarily against any rival state in the international system,¹² great powers are usually slow to revise their strategic goals to account for the needs of their allies. Kenneth Waltz aptly summarized the attitude of great powers during the Cold War when he wrote that “[a]lthough concessions to allies are sometimes made, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union alters its strategy or changes its military dispositions simply to accommodate associated states.”¹³ Due to this basic inflexibility, strategic coherence is exceedingly rare in great-to-great power alliances. In *asymmetric* alliances between great and minor powers, by contrast, the state “at the top of the pyramid” is usually thought to possess a greater ability to bring its allies’ military dispositions into line with its strategic priorities.¹⁴ Coherence is easier to achieve and sustain because the great power can contribute disproportionately to the ally’s security, and the ally presumably has stronger incentives to adjust

¹⁰ See Brett Ashley Leeds, “Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties,” *International Organization* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 801-827.

¹¹ Brett Ashley Leeds and Barcu Savun, “Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?” *Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (November 2007): 1120.

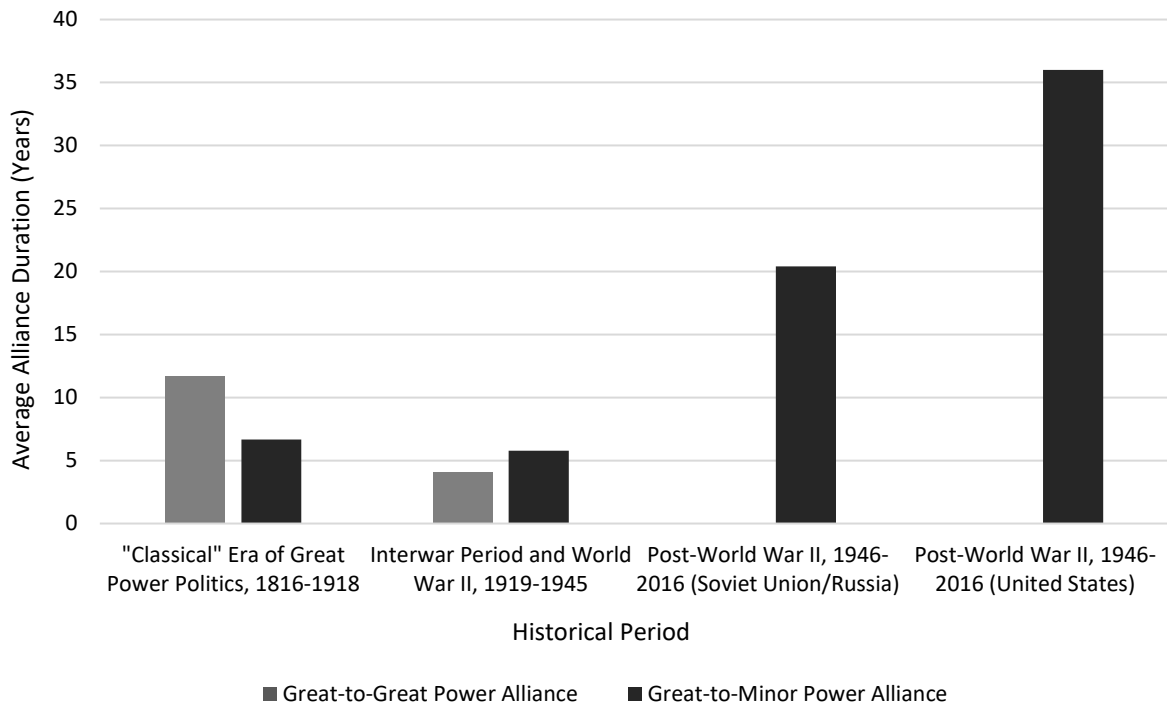
¹² John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 5.

¹³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 170.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

its policies to meet the great power’s strategic demands.¹⁵

Figure 2.1: Average Duration of Great Power Alliances, 1816-2016



Sources: Brett Ashley Leeds et al., “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944,” *International Interactions* 28, no. 3 (2002): 237-260; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1987).

Note: Durations reflect active years of alliances that involved explicit military commitments. I follow Paul Kennedy’s discussion to identify great powers in each era. The Soviet Union/Russia ceased being a great power in 1991, but some of its alliances persisted and are included in the post-Cold War tally.

The volatility of strategic coherence in great-to-great power alliances implies that, as realist scholars have long observed, great powers should only rarely form alliances among themselves, regarding them as “temporary marriages of convenience”¹⁶ or “act[s] of desperation by states in

¹⁵ This is the core logic of the classic “autonomy-security trade-off model” introduced in James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 904-933.

¹⁶ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 33.

extremis.”¹⁷ An overview of modern alliances lends credence to this implication. As visualized in Figure 2.1, great-to-great power alliances lasted 11.73 years on average during the “classical” era of great power diplomacy (1816-1918) and 4.11 years during the interwar period and World War II (1919-1945). By contrast, beginning in the Cold War, when great-to-great power alliances disappeared altogether from the international system, “standing alliances” became the norm.¹⁸ Alliances led by the Soviet Union/Russia lasted 20.4 years on average. Postwar U.S. alliances have had an average lifespan of more than 36 years, with many long-standing pacts still in effect today.

Therefore, although strategic coherence is a general problem of military alliances, this project focuses on its determinants in the context of alliances between great powers and considerably weaker states, that is, the principal form of alliances in the modern era. As made clear in the preceding chapter, strategic coherence has often proven elusive even for alliances led by ostensibly “dominant” great powers. Existing insights in International Relations (IR) are much less clear on why weaker, “dependent” states might resist the strategic demands of the alliance leader than why equals or near-equals might. Thus, a theory that illuminates this special class of alliance dysfunction should suggest a potent explanation for the general phenomenon of incoherence.¹⁹ Below I discuss how the dominant theory in the existing literature does a poor job of addressing this puzzle.

The Conventional Wisdom: Alliance Security as a Collective Good

Much of the existing research on strategic incoherence comes from those who contend that the

¹⁷ Joseph M. Parent and Sebastian Rosato, “Balancing in Neorealism,” *International Security* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 57.

¹⁸ Brett Ashley Leeds and Michaela Mattes, “Alliance Politics during the Cold War: Aberration, New World Order, or Continuation of History?” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 3 (2007): 183-199.

¹⁹ I later explain how my theory, while taking asymmetric alliances as its primary backdrop, also subsumes a model of strategic incoherence in great-to-great power alliances.

behavior of the leading alliance power determines the military policies of its allies. A common assumption underlying this scholarship is that military security in alliance relationships can be treated as a public or collective good: once the desired security benefit is produced, alliance members cannot feasibly be excluded from it, and one member's consumption of the benefit does not significantly diminish its supply for others. These twin properties are commonly referred to as "nonexcludability" and "nonrivalry."²⁰ In this section, I describe how this assumption animates the prevailing wisdom on strategic incoherence, elaborate the enormous influence it has had on both scholarly research and policy debates, and identify initial reasons to doubt its usefulness.

The Logic of Collective Goods Theory

Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser expounded the collective-goods approach to alliance politics in their 1966 article, "An Economic Theory of Alliances."²¹ Taking the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a case in point, they argued that the underproduction of forces by the smaller members of the Atlantic alliance and the attendant tendency of the United States to bear a disproportionate share of its military burden were endemic to the alliance's asymmetric structure. Given this structure, as long as "[d]eterring aggression against any one of the members is supposed to be in the interest of all[.]" NATO's weaker allies would "find that they have little or no incentive to provide adequate amounts of the collective good once the larger members have provided the amounts they want for themselves."²²

Since the publication of the seminal 1966 article, IR scholars have used the basic logic of

²⁰ For the classical definition of collective goods, see John G. Head, "Public Goods and Public Policy," *Public Finance* 17, no. 3 (1962): 197-219. See also Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (1965; repr., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

²¹ Mancur Olson, Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266-279.

²² *Ibid.*, 267; 278.

collective goods theory to make influential claims about the relationship between the strategic behavior of great powers and the military efforts of their allies. These works offer two major arguments about strategic incoherence. First, incoherence mainly results from the sheer strength of the leading power's security commitments and the moral hazard this creates for its allies. "[O]nce an alliance treaty has been signed," Olson and Zeckhauser argued, "the larger powers are immediately deprived of their strongest bargaining weapon—the threat that they will not help to defend the recalcitrant smaller powers[.]"²³ Following this logic, Posen claims that "[t]he United States is a good ally. Aside from the massive capabilities it can bring to any problem, U.S. leaders have been obsessed with the credibility of their commitments...Many U.S. allies take advantage of this U.S. propensity."²⁴ How so? To begin with, the leading power's overcommitment of military resources incentivizes smaller allies to avoid making costly enhancements to their own capabilities and instead "free ride" on the alliance leader's security guarantees.²⁵ It is sometimes also said to incentivize "reckless driving," that is, overzealous military postures that threaten to entangle the leading power in costly military or diplomatic confrontations against its own interests.²⁶ By extension, the leading power can motivate its partners to reconcile their military policies with its strategic aims by dialing back its own efforts to check the common adversary.²⁷

Second, all else equal, the leading power will find it easier to achieve strategic coherence

²³ Ibid., 273.

²⁴ Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), 33.

²⁵ Ibid., 35-44.

²⁶ Ibid., 44-50. Glenn Snyder's "alliance security dilemma" reflects this line of reasoning. In his framework, the "strategy of strong commitment to an ally reduces the risk of abandonment by reducing his fear of abandonment...But this very support may encourage him to excessive boldness in disputes or crises with the adversary, thus exposing one to the risk of a war that one would not wish to fight." Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 467 (emphasis in original). See also Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), ch. 6; and David M. Edelstein and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "It's a Trap! Security Commitments and the Risks of Entrapment," in *U.S. Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: The Case for Restraint*, eds. A. Trevor Thrall and Benjamin H. Friedman (New York: Routledge, 2018), ch. 2.

²⁷ Olson and Zeckhauser, "Economic Theory of Alliances," 272.

with allies that are more severely threatened. As Olson and Zeckhauser wrote, “[i]f two countries in an alliance had equal national incomes, but one was more concerned about the common enemy for geographic, ideological, historical, or other reasons, the more concerned nation would not only put a higher valuation on the alliance’s military capacity, but would bear a share of the total costs that was even greater than its share of the total benefits.”²⁸ The implication is that lackluster military responses to the adversary indicate that allies do not, as of yet, perceive it to be sufficiently threatening. Zhen Han and T.V. Paul thus argue that China’s neighbors have not formed “hard-balancing coalitions” against its rise because “China’s security strategy and military doctrines are yet to be perceived as existentially threatening to other states.”²⁹ By the same token, John Mearsheimer argues that as China’s military capabilities continue to grow, it will only be a matter of time before “[m]ost of China’s neighbors...join with the United States to contain China’s power.”³⁰

The Impact of Collective Goods Theory

Collective goods theory looms large in modern debates on alliance politics. As noted in the introductory chapter, U.S. leaders have complained for many decades that America’s overactive security commitments abroad are disincentivizing allies from pulling their own weight against threatening powers. To be sure, skeptics might point out that their public-facing statements could have been designed to justify policies pursued for other reasons rather than indicating a sincere

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Zhen Han and T.V. Paul, “China’s Rise and Balance of Power Politics,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 7.

³⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to U.S. Power in Asia,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 382. Note that such claims still implicitly depend on the leading power’s behavior toward its allies: *if* the leading power’s military outlays remain constant while the threat posed by the adversary increases, *then* allies will perceive greater private benefits to undertaking costly adjustments to their capabilities.

belief in the theory's logic. For example, some members of President Donald J. Trump's staff suspected that his statements about America's security commitments were primarily geared toward mobilizing domestic support rather than reflecting a strong attachment to any substantive foreign policy vision. "He's an antagonist...not a nationalist," said former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci, "he knows when that ball hits into the establishment, it galvanizes his base and he instinctively knows it will turn out more voters for him[.]"³¹

But declassified primary documents suggest that policymakers also turn to collective goods theory in more intimate decision-making settings. During policy deliberations of the early Cold War, senior U.S. officials regularly advocated threatening European allies with the prospect of retreating to a "peripheral strategy"—that is, "a defense based on Spain, Turkey, and various islands"—in lieu of a "continental defense" strategy in the event that they failed to align their security policies with Washington's strategic vision. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles once explained to General Omar Bradley, the idea was to "create pressures on [the French and the West Germans] which would not exist if they think we are so committed that we must carry the entire load in the area."³² Likewise, reporting on the maverick security policies pursued by South Korean president Syngman Rhee in 1954, U.S. Ambassador to Korea Ellis O. Briggs argued that Rhee's refusal to toe the U.S. line was attributable to the fact that Washington had been too forthcoming in its support for South Korea. "While I do not wish to underestimate [the] importance [of] Korean matters to [the] U.S. Government," Briggs wrote to the State Department, "[but] Rhee should not be encouraged in his conviction he can continue to play 'hard to get' practically at will in his

³¹ Quoted in William Cummings, "'I am a Nationalist': Trump's Embrace of Controversial Label Sparks Upwar," *USA Today*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/10/24/trump-says-hes-nationalist-what-means-why-its-controversial/1748521002/>.

³² "Memorandum of Discussion of State-Mutual Security Agency-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting," January 28, 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 712-713.

dealings with us.”³³ Similar examples abound, as detailed in my empirical investigations.

If collective goods theory resonates among policymakers, it enjoys an even larger following in academia. Realist scholars, in particular, have maintained that Washington’s overactive military commitments in the post-Cold War era have dampened allied incentives to do their fair share in counterbalancing the rise of potential great power rivals. This, in turn, has inhibited the realization of what should be considered America’s optimal grand strategy, variously identified as “restraint” or “offshore balancing.”³⁴ As Eugene Gholz, Daryl Press, and Harvey Sapolsky argue in an influential article, “America’s alliances reduce the strategic risks that its allies face and, therefore, eliminate their need to engage in internal balancing...On the rare occasions that America’s allies do act alone, they act with less caution than they ought to, an example of the classic problem of ‘moral hazard.’”³⁵

Collective goods reasoning also undergirds the policy prescriptions offered by these scholars, which often emphasize the need to scale back U.S. global security commitments. Christopher Layne argues that although the United States and its distant allies share a vital interest in preventing the rise of a Eurasian hegemon, “it’s money in the bank that some of them will step up to the plate and balance against a powerful, expansionist state in their own neighborhood” if

³³ “The Ambassador in Korea (Briggs) to the Department of State,” June 23, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 15, pt. 2, 1813.

³⁴ Examples include Posen, *Restraint*; Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 5-48; Christopher Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America’s Future Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 86-124; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); John J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *National Interest*, no. 111 (January-February 2011): 16-34; John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); and Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009). In fact, even during the Cold War, a sizable number of American realists endorsed a foreign policy of “neo-isolationism” with a similar reasoning. See, for instance, Stephen D. Krasner, “Realist Praxis: Neo-isolationism and Structural Change,” *Journal of International Affairs* 43, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 1989): 143-160.

³⁵ Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America,” 16.

the U.S. disengages much of its military forces from their region.³⁶ Others disagree, but usually not because they reject the basic collective goods logic that informs the realists' claims. Rather, they argue that the uninspiring military efforts of U.S. allies are an acceptable byproduct of an otherwise successful strategy of "deep engagement," which has helped America sustain its preponderant power position vis-à-vis potential rivals as well as its ability to profit from the global economy and international institutions.³⁷

Collective goods theory is especially attractive to scholars because it promises a "master explanation" that ties together many other explanations of strategic incoherence. Allies want capabilities that deviate from the leading power's preferences for myriad reasons, its proponents argue, but these reasons only become salient insofar as the leading power oversupplies security, giving allies the luxury of indulging secondary concerns. Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky argue that "[i]n a low-threat environment [enabled by U.S. security commitments], bureaucratic politics and domestic political coalitions can replace rational calculation[.]"³⁸ Thus, as Hugo Meijer and Stephen Brooks summarize, "scholars arguing for a U.S. pullout [from Europe]...[believe that] a U.S. withdrawal would result in heightened European threat perceptions of Russia and thereby lead Europeans to bolster their defense investments[.]"³⁹ In the same vein, Mearsheimer and Walt suggest that Israeli politicians often entertain domestic hawkish sentiments calling for disproportionate responses to external provocations partly because the United States "offer[s] them

³⁶ Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, 181.

³⁷ See Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/13): 7-51; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011); and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

³⁸ Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, "Come Home, America," 16.

³⁹ Hugo Meijer and Stephen G. Brooks, "Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for its Security if the United States Pulls Back," *International Security* 45, no. 4 (Spring 2021): 33.

unconditional support[,]” effectively sparing them from the destabilizing consequences of their reckless behavior.⁴⁰

Collective goods theory also appeals to scholars who highlight the leading power’s domestic politics. A common theme in American IR discourse is that the United States is exceptionally bad at shaping the military policies of its allies due to the nature of its domestic institutions. Stephen Krasner argued in 1977 that “[t]he central feature of American politics is the fragmentation and dispersion of power and authority,” the result of which is that “[p]olitical leaders have relatively little command of material resources...that can be used to offer incentives or to make threats.”⁴¹ Following collective goods logic, many scholars claim that this “internal weakness” prevents the United States from unilaterally moderating its security commitments abroad, putting it at a disadvantage when bargaining with allies that enjoy more coherent decision-making processes.⁴² In Posen’s words, not only is U.S. foreign policy crafted by “a hugely self-confident, globally ambitious, and persistently self-replicating national security elite” but “[a] consensus on an assertive foreign and security policy spans the Republican and Democratic Parties.”⁴³ Thus it is that U.S. allies expect to continue receiving security on the cheap; “their progress toward true independence will be slow, and perhaps nonexistent.”⁴⁴ Patrick Porter likewise argues that the parochial interests of the bureaucrats and pundits that comprise

⁴⁰ Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*, 307. See also Posen, *Restraint*, 44-48.

⁴¹ Stephen D. Krasner, “U.S. Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unravelling the Paradox of External Strength and Internal Weakness,” *International Organization* 31, no. 4 (Autumn 1977): 645.

⁴² For example, see Posen, *Restraint*; Ikenberry, *After Victory*; Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*; Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert O. Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies,” *Foreign Policy* no. 2 (Spring 1971): 161-192; Evan N. Resnick, “Strange Bedfellows: U.S. Bargaining Behavior with Allies of Convenience,” *International Security* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2010/2011): 144-184; and Patrick Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy has not Changed: Power and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment,” *International Security* 42, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 9-46.

⁴³ Posen, *Restraint*, 173.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

Washington’s foreign policy establishment—i.e., the “Blob”—tend to ensure an “essential continuity” in U.S. security commitments abroad even when central decision-makers perceive good reason to reevaluate them. He adds that “[a]llies of the United States will encourage and reinforce the [Blob’s] reigning ideology.”⁴⁵

Finally, collective goods theory informs structural realist arguments about strategic incoherence. Scholars who adopt this approach have traditionally maintained that conditions favoring strategic incoherence should be least prevalent in a bipolar international system, that is, a system that features two great powers. Inspired in part by Olson’s insights, Waltz argued that “alliance leaders [under bipolarity] need worry little about the faithfulness of their followers” because the latter “have little choice anyway[.]”⁴⁶ The knowledge that great powers have limited use for allies under bipolarity, coupled with the dearth of alternative partners, should incentivize allies to cater their military policies to the alliance leader’s demands; strategic coherence should be the norm. By extension, incoherence should be most prevalent under multipolarity since allies have more outside options and the leading power cannot easily threaten abandonment to bring them into line. Unipolarity is arguably indeterminate. On the one hand, the unipole’s material preponderance should reduce its concern about any given ally’s security; allies should thus have more incentives to meet its demands. On the other hand, the unipole’s drive to forestall the rise of great powers may reify the need for allies.⁴⁷ Additionally, its preponderant position may tempt the unipole to take on even more expansive commitments, this time infused with the ideological desire to remake the globe in its own image. This should be conducive to incoherence.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy has not Changed,” 18-19.

⁴⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 168-169. For a similar reasoning, see Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ On these points, see Edelstein and Shiffrin, “It’s a Trap!”

⁴⁸ See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018).

In sum, whether they realize it or not, policymakers and scholars rely heavily on collective goods theory to make sense of strategic incoherence. But is the theory valid? Does it provide a logically sound account for why allies sometimes adopt military capabilities that are at odds with the strategic demands of a significantly stronger—perhaps even “dominant”—leading power? And how does the theory fare against the empirical record?

Logical and Empirical Challenges to Collective Goods Theory

Despite its enormous influence, there are several reasons to question the ability of collective goods theory to explain strategic incoherence. First, it is unclear that the military security provided by an ally satisfies the definition of a collective good. Consider nonexcludability. As Avery Goldstein has pointed out, the fact that abandonment risks are endemic to the anarchic structure of the international system suggests that “alliance security is a benefit that *necessarily* fails the key test of excludability.”⁴⁹ Supporting this observation, recent studies find that great powers typically exercise a fair amount of discretion in honoring their alliance commitments.⁵⁰ Even when the present commonality of interests imbues a collective-goods character to the leading power’s military commitments, allies should fear that interests may diverge—i.e., that “exclusion” might take place—ten or twenty years down the road.

Also consider nonrivalry. In 1995, Goldstein worried that “as deep cuts are made in the existing nuclear arsenals [in the aftermath of the Cold War]...the unavoidable fear of exclusion

⁴⁹ Avery Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride: Alliances and Security in the Postwar World,” *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 41 (emphasis added). See also Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 21-25.

⁵⁰ See Michael Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 7-48; and Tongfi Kim, “Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 350-377.

from the benefits of an extended deterrent” felt by U.S. allies “may be compounded with concerns about rivalry in consumption.”⁵¹ Arguably, however, the allies had good reasons to doubt the nonrivalrous character of their leading ally’s commitments even before such cuts were made. During the Cold War, for example, U.S. war plans tended to privilege the destruction of Soviet *long-range* nuclear delivery systems even if this meant that millions of European lives would be sacrificed to Moscow’s medium-range nuclear weapons in the event of all-out war.⁵² In such instances, the leading state’s consumption of the security afforded by its military power clearly diminishes the supply available to allies. It stands to reason, then, that states mindful of self-preservation should generally avoid treating alliance security as a collective good.

Second, empirical patterns of strategic coherence sometimes flout the predictions of collective goods theory. Its proponents typically ignore these confounding patterns or resolve them with *ad hoc* arguments. For example, Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky favorably contrast Israel’s military posture with that adopted by other U.S. allies. “For decades America has been a close friend of Israel,” the authors write, but “[s]urrounded by enemies, Israel has always fought its own battles, never requiring American troops to protect its borders...Israeli security makes no demands on American force structure and in no way justifies American military engagement.”⁵³ The implication is that something distinctive about Israel is driving it to adopt a more independent and assertive military posture than the European and Asian allies, and that this is conducive to America’s grand strategic interests in the Middle East. “Israel’s determination to defend itself without American troops,” the authors continue, “should embarrass America’s allies in Europe

⁵¹ Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride,” 71.

⁵² Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 110. See also “Memorandum for General Taylor: Strategic Air Planning and Berlin,” September 7, 1961, Digital National Security Archives (DNSA), <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB56/BerlinC2.pdf>.

⁵³ Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America,” 29.

and Asia.”⁵⁴ This might be true. But assuming that the United States is no less committed to the security of Israel than it is to that of its allies elsewhere,⁵⁵ its behavior embarrasses collective goods theory as well. To highlight the contrast between Israel’s military posture and that of comparably situated U.S. allies is to quietly admit the indeterminacy of collective goods theory.

Finally, even if we accept that the security commitments of the leading power shape the military behaviors of its allies, collective goods theory leaves unclear the causal mechanisms that produce different forms of strategic coherence and incoherence. As noted earlier, scholars who adopt its logic claim that the leading power’s commitments may variously lead to free-riding *or* reckless-driving on the part of its allies. To the extent that such behaviors undermine the strategic aims of the United States, both can be counted as instantiations of strategic incoherence. But a theory that attributes both incoherence due to excessive allied timidity *and* incoherence due to allied overzealousness to the leading power’s security commitments is surely underspecified.

Among frameworks that offer explanations for strategic incoherence, collective goods theory is the most prominent. It thus represents the central theoretical prior my dissertation seeks to dismantle. In the final analysis, collective goods theory falls short because it places a unique explanatory burden on the leading power’s behavior without unpacking how its effects on strategic coherence are conditioned by the heterogeneous incentive structures faced by the allies—that is, the “demand-side” of alliance politics.. The new theory described below corrects this shortcoming.

A Demand-side Theory of Strategic Incoherence

I develop a theoretical framework centered on two independent variables—the *grand strategy* of the leading great power and the *military vulnerability* of its allies. Three main actors interact in the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁵ This assumption is easily defensible. See Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*, ch. 1.

theory.⁵⁶ First, I assume the presence of an “adversary,” that is, a hostile great power that has an interest, at minimum, in derailing efforts to contain or roll back its capabilities, and at maximum expanding its relative power and influence.⁵⁷ Second, the “leading power” is a great power that holds a vital interest in checking the adversary’s expansion. Third, the “ally” is a state that is threatened by the adversary and allied with the leading power.

Independent Variable 1: The Leading Power’s Grand Strategy

In my discussion, grand strategy refers to a preconceived strategic design that the leading power *tries* to implement in order to ensure its security interests abroad. Defined as such, grand strategy is “understood in terms of what it *should* accomplish” rather than the broad patterns of behavior displayed by a state.⁵⁸ Put differently, grand strategy is a matter of strategic *preferences* as opposed to strategic *outcomes*.⁵⁹ Although some studies of grand strategy use the term in the latter sense, it is essential not to conflate the two. As I elaborate in later chapters, one of the key contributions of this study is to demonstrate that great powers sometimes end up pursuing “grand behaviors” far removed from their original preferences in order to resolve the problem of strategic incoherence.⁶⁰ I argue that a great power confronting a powerful competitor in a given region of the globe can pursue one of two different grand strategies: *outsourcing* and *insourcing*.⁶¹

⁵⁶ On the general “strategic choice” approach to theory-building, see David A. Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 45.

⁵⁸ Martel, *Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice*, 31 (emphasis in original). A given state might thus have, on the one hand, an “operative” grand strategy reflecting the preferences of its central decision-makers and, on the other hand, a “realized” grand strategy—the grand strategy it ends up practicing in the long run. It is essential not to conflate these conceptualizations. Indeed, as I discuss in the concluding chapter, one of my key contributions is to demonstrate that great powers sometimes end up pursuing grand strategies far removed from their original preferences in order to resolve the problem of strategic incoherence.

⁵⁹ On this distinction, see Jeffrey A. Frieden, “Actors and Preferences in International Relations,” in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ch. 2.

⁶⁰ On conceptualizations of grand strategy as “grand behavior,” see Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword,” 43-45.

⁶¹ As Nuno Monteiro points out, great powers may vary their grand strategies depending on the region of reference. See Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ch. 3.

THE OUTSOURCING STRATEGY. The grand strategy of outsourcing assumes that the leading power has a vital interest in preventing the adversary from acquiring a dangerous share of world power, and further holds that the best way to do so is to rely on and support the counterbalancing efforts of its allies while limiting its own direct encounters with the rival. Outsourcing is the grand strategy of choice for many great powers. If successfully implemented, it not only alleviates the immediate burden of confronting the adversary but may even allow substantial gains in relative power while other states “bleed each other white” from costly security competition.⁶² This does not mean that an outsourcing power should disengage from the alliance in the near term; to the contrary, it is likely in its interest to offer direct protection to the allies for the time being, lest their military and socio-economic resources fall under the domination of the rival.⁶³ Rather, the distinguishing feature of the outsourcing strategy is that it directs the leading power to devolve military assets and decision-making capacities to the ally, facilitating its growth in power over time. The goal is to eventually turn allied territory—rather than its own—into the primary locus of the alliance’s military efforts.

The outsourcing strategy yields two main prescriptions for allied military capabilities. First, the allies should build larger and deadlier armed forces. Toward this end, the leading power should not only support the buildup of its allies’ conventional military assets but also adopt an

⁶² Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 160. See also Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, “The Effects of Wars on Neutral Countries: Why it Doesn’t Pay to Preserve the Peace,” *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (2001): 1-57.

⁶³ More generally, realist scholars have long argued that preventing the consolidation of the world’s major economic and demographic resources under a rival power is a vital strategic concern for great powers like the United States. See Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, with an Introduction by Frederick Sherwood Dunn, ed. Helen R. Nicholl (1944; repr., Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969); Stephen Van Evera, “Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn’t: American Grand Strategy after the Cold War,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990): 1-51; and Sebastian Rosato and John Schuessler, “A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States,” *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 4 (December 2011): 803-819.

encouraging or at least permissive attitude should they try to acquire nuclear weapons.⁶⁴ Second, the leading power should urge its allies to adopt decision-making procedures and doctrines that enable them to employ these forces effectively without the alliance leader's direct involvement. Cooperative arrangements that unduly encumber the initiative and mobility of each member state's warfighting forces are unacceptable. In this vein, even if the leading power forward-deploys forces in the ally's territory, they will be authorized to tailor their operations primarily to local military requirements rather than the political considerations of the home government. Taken together, these devolutionary policies are designed to groom allies into independent poles of power arrayed against the potential rival.

Outsourcing is clearly an alluring strategy for leading powers. Yet it does carry an inherent trade-off: the leading power can offload the burden of checking the adversary onto its allies over time, but at the cost of reduced influence over the details of their military policies.⁶⁵ This is a natural consequence of the fact that outsourcing depends on the existence of allies that are willing and able to wield independent military power. Loss of influence may be worrisome because, when left to their own devices, states seeking to optimize the use of relatively meager military resources against formidable adversaries tend to adopt highly aggressive postures.⁶⁶ For example, states relying on a small nuclear arsenal to deter potentially overwhelming adversaries often opt for a posture of "asymmetric escalation," that is, one that threatens nuclear first-use upon the outbreak of conventional conflict.⁶⁷ Such policies may embroil the alliance leader in unwanted escalatory

⁶⁴ Posen, *Restraint*, 132.

⁶⁵ Brendan Rittenhouse Green, "Two Concepts of Liberty: U.S. Cold War Grand Strategies and the Liberal Tradition," *International Security* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 11.

⁶⁶ Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 69-71.

⁶⁷ Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), ch. 2.

spirals or conflict.⁶⁸ For advocates of outsourcing, however, the best way to mitigate the potential dangers of this trade-off is to devolve military wherewithal and responsibilities to the allies as much as possible, and as quickly as possible, so that the leading power can “sit back and relax” on the sidelines even if such escalation does take place.⁶⁹ Somewhat paradoxically, then, a leading power that pursues the outsourcing strategy achieves strategic coherence when its allies acquire sufficient capabilities to say “no” to both the adversary and itself.⁷⁰

THE INSOURCING STRATEGY. Unlike an outsourcer, a leading power that adopts insourcing as its favored grand strategy embraces primary responsibility for meeting the adversary’s threat. An important aspect of this effort involves what the IR literature has traditionally referred to as “balancing.” States balance mainly by mobilizing their own military resources (i.e., “internal balancing”) and supplement this effort as necessary with allied cooperation (i.e., “external balancing”).⁷¹ However, the insourcing strategy encompasses an additional concern that is relatively neglected in the balancing literature: the leading power must assume as much control as possible over the scale and scope of military competition. As Posen observes, “[t]he use of force and the threat of force are necessary expedients... Yet they are never without danger or cost. Wars seem to take on a life of their own.”⁷² Therefore, once the leading power has decided to commit the full weight of its power resources to the task of checking the rival, it must go to great lengths

⁶⁸ Snyder, “Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics.”

⁶⁹ As Gholz and co-authors write, “It may be that America’s allies, left to their own devices, will not choose the policies that would have been preferred by an engaged United States... [But a]s long as no outcome can threaten the core American interests of security and prosperity, the United States can afford to accept the solutions of powers whose interests are directly engaged.” Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America,” 16-17.

⁷⁰ On this point, see “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Hickerson),” January 21, 1948, *FRUS 1948*, vol. 3, 11.

⁷¹ See Parent and Rosato, “Balancing in Neorealism”; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118; and Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 157-159.

⁷² Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 25.

to subject the ensuing military competition “to the minimal discipline of political goals.”⁷³ This consideration is paramount in the modern era, in which the collective impact of nationalism, industrialization, and nuclear weapons make the potential costs of unmeasured escalation frighteningly high.⁷⁴

It follows that the prescriptions of the insourcing strategy for allied military capabilities are the obverse of those yielded by the outsourcing strategy. First, the leading power should impose limits on the type and quantity of armaments acquired by its allies. The diffusion of armaments that enable independent military action vis-à-vis the adversary—thereby potentially undermining the alliance leader’s ability to shape events—should be discouraged. Allied acquisition of nuclear weapons is especially problematic in this regard.⁷⁵ Second, the leading power should promote doctrines and cooperative arrangements that render the military forces of allies as appendages to its own capabilities. Decisions to use force or threaten the use of force against the adversary should be the prerogative of the leading power, who now seeks to function as the “executive agent” of the entire alliance.⁷⁶ Unlike the devolutionary aims of the outsourcing strategy, then, the policies that insourcing prescribes for allies are intended to monopolize the alliance’s core military assets and decision-making authorities in the hands of the leading power.

If successfully implemented, the insourcing strategy prevents the adversary’s gains in

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Clausewitz, *On War*, bk. 8, ch. 3; David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007); Lars-Erik Cederman, T. Chamber Warren, and Didier Sornette, “Testing Clausewitz: Nationalism, Mass Mobilization, and the Severity of War,” *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (October 2011): 605-638; and Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019), ch. 3.

⁷⁵ On the adverse consequences of allied nuclear acquisition, see Francis J. Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition: U.S. Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 9-46; and Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 16-34.

⁷⁶ For the “executive agent” concept, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 304, n. 70.

relative power while ensuring the leading power's unique discretion over the pace and intensity of the military measures taken against it. Its obvious downside is the enormous costs that the leading power must bear in order to dominate the alliance's military efforts. Thus, in the long-term, a fundamental trade-off exists between the costs of defense commitments, on the one hand, and the benefits of control over allies on the other.⁷⁷ This trade-off has loomed large in the grand strategic thinking of modern great powers. President John F. Kennedy, who pursued a strategy of insourcing toward Western Europe, articulated this trade-off to senior French officials when he stated his intolerance for "[a] Europe beyond our influence—yet counting on us—in which we should have to bear the burden of defense without the power to affect events[.]"⁷⁸ His predecessor Dwight D. Eisenhower, who favored outsourcing, reasoned that if Western Europe grew into a "third great power bloc" against the Soviet Union, then "the United States would be permitted to sit back and relax somewhat."⁷⁹ He added, however, that "if responsibility for defending the world is to be imposed upon us, then perhaps we had better rule the world[.]"⁸⁰

In sum, the grand strategies of outsourcing and insourcing agree on the threat posed by the adversary but offer opposing prescriptions for how that threat should be checked. An insourcing power puts a premium on controlling allied military capabilities in the standoff against the adversary, which is essential if it expects to be deeply engaged in the standoff against the adversary for the long haul. An outsourcing power is more interested in unleashing its ally's military potential with the ultimate goal of primarily relying on allied capabilities to contain the adversary.⁸¹ Figure

⁷⁷ Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 8-11.

⁷⁸ "Memorandum of Meeting," May 11, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. 8, 696.

⁷⁹ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council," November 21, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. 19, 150-151.

⁸⁰ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 424th Meeting of the National Security Council," November 12, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1959*, Vol. 8, pt. 1, 509.

⁸¹ This framework has clear analogues in the economic logic of insourcing and outsourcing. As Ronald Coase noted in his foundational discussion, individuals operating in the market can choose to rely primarily on natural supply-

2.2 illustrates the key elements of these grand strategies.

Figure 2.2.: Leading Power Grand Strategies and Military Prescriptions for the Ally

Grand Strategy	Outsourcing	Insourcing
Objective	Indirectly check adversary’s growth in power by relying on ally’s counterbalancing efforts	Directly check adversary’s growth in power while controlling scale and scope of military competition
Prescriptions for Ally’s Military Capabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt maximum military capabilities 2. Independently use/threaten force against adversary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt limited military capabilities 2. Tether use/threat of force to leading power decisions
Policies toward Ally	Devolutionary Policies	Monopolizing Policies
<i>Ally’s Force Development:</i>	Support military buildup; permit/facilitate nuclear weapons acquisition	Limit military buildup; inhibit nuclear weapons acquisition
<i>Ally’s Force Employment:</i>	Encourage independent military decision-making procedures and doctrines	Impose centralized military decision-making procedures and doctrines
<i>Guidance to Troops Deployed in Ally’s Region:</i>	Tailor operations to local military requirements	Tailor operations to central political considerations

Independent Variable 2: The Ally’s Military Vulnerability

In principle, the leading power’s allies have incentives to maximize their military competitiveness

and demand dynamics to obtain goods and services, contracting out the required tasks as needed. One of the benefits of this arrangement is that it preserves—and indeed, capitalizes on—the natural inclination of all parties to “b[e] one’s own master.” However, one economic actor may seek to gain direct control over another’s productive functions to avoid the transaction costs of relying on the open market. In particular, “owing to the difficulty of forecasting, the longer the period of the contract is for the supply of the commodity or service, the less possible, and indeed, the less desirable it is for the person purchasing to specify what the other contracting part is expected to do...[T]he purchaser will not know which of...several courses he will want the supplier to take. Therefore, [the purchaser seeks to establish] limits to what the persons supplying the commodity or service is expected to do.” See R.H. Coase, “The Nature of the Firm,” *Economica* 4, no. 16 (November 1937): 390-392. In a similar vein, a leading power that is committed to directly containing the adversary over the long term has the incentive to establish centralized authority over the alliance’s military capabilities in order to reduce the “transaction costs” of coordinating efforts against the adversary.

vis-à-vis the adversary. They understand that, all else equal, the best way to ensure long-term survival is to become independently powerful relative to other states.⁸² However, unlike the leading great power, who can contemplate a serious fight against any state in the international system,⁸³ allies must often worry a great deal about the risks that attend their militarization efforts. An ally's evaluation of these risks turns on its degree of military vulnerability, defined by its probability of incurring costly military predation.

The ally's fear of predation manifests in two forms. The first involves the likelihood of triggering an arms race that it may well lose. Given the large gap in "latent power" that often exists between them and their great-power adversary, this could be a virtual certainty for many members of the class of states under examination.⁸⁴ To see why, one needs only to consider that most investments made by the typical regional power towards narrowing the military imbalance can logically be nullified by a great power with a much smaller amount of effort. As Joanne Gowa and Kristopher Ramsey have shown, given some sufficiently large advantage in *ex ante* military stocks held by a preponderant state, additional spending on arms by would-be-challengers quickly become subject to diminishing marginal returns.⁸⁵ The problem also afflicts the pursuit of qualitative force enhancements. "In a perverse sense," one RAND study quipped in 1971, "it is rather comforting to be [grossly] outnumbered...because then there is no point in making the effort to deploy your forces in the right place, or to ensure that your forces are ready, or to insist on proper training standards."⁸⁶ The extraordinary level of effort required to meaningfully challenge

⁸² Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 32-36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁴ Latent power refers to the economic and human ingredients of military power. See *ibid.*, 60-67.

⁸⁵ Joanne Gowa and Kristopher W. Ramsey, "Gulliver Untied: Entry Deterrence under Unipolarity," *International Organization* 71, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 459-490.

⁸⁶ Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969* (1971, repr., Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 141.

the powerful adversary, in short, should be enough to make the average state think twice before directly engaging it in military competition.

More importantly in modern times, the ally's efforts to gain military advantages can stoke the adversary's incentives for preventive aggression.⁸⁷ An adversary made more insecure by the military policies of its rivals might be encouraged to use force preventively in order to seize "secure borders, strategic depth, or control of resources that are valuable for building military capabilities; and it will see war as more valuable when fighting can disproportionately destroy the adversary's power/resources."⁸⁸ Following Alexandre Debs and Nuno Monteiro's formulation, the fundamental problem for the ally is the "nonnegligible period of time between the decision to invest [in additional military capabilities] and the moment these capabilities become available."⁸⁹ During this time, the adversary is likely to seriously contemplate using force to arrest moves by its neighbors to bolster their military capabilities. Such preventive responses may include limited military actions designed to incite escalatory fears, as well as full-scale invasions aimed at controlling the neighbor's territory or replacing its regime.⁹⁰

Two main factors shape the ally's level of vulnerability to these risks. The first is the local

⁸⁷ I emphasize the special relevance of this concern because some types of major military innovations in the modern era are not as linearly susceptible to the material constraints that afflict traditional arms racing. As a case in point, a regional power that successfully acquires nuclear weapons would effectively experience a *discontinuous* enhancement of its deterrent posture vis-à-vis a nearby great power—one that cannot be easily nullified by the latter's countervailing efforts. See Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War," *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (January 2014): 1-31. Aside from nuclear weapons, a state that successfully adopts what Stephen Biddle calls the "modern system" of conventional force employment would substantially reduce the value of the larger forces that would otherwise grant the conventionally superior adversary a decisive advantage on the battlefield. See Biddle, *Military Power*.

⁸⁸ Glaser, *Rational Theory*, 62.

⁸⁹ Debs and Monteiro, "Known Unknowns," 6.

⁹⁰ As Debs and Monteiro argue, there is reason to suspect that even the effectiveness of "soft" preventive measures (e.g., shows of force, economic sanctions) ultimately "[depend] on the underlying credibility of threats to use military force[.]" Secondary states understand that being unresponsive to softer coercive attempts can have drastic repercussions when the adversary can feasibly entertain military options as the next step in the campaign for prevention. Alexandre Debs and Nuno Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics: The Strategic Causes of Proliferation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38-39.

balance of power. The greater the qualitative and quantitative advantage in power resources the adversary enjoys in the anticipated theater of war, the more likely it will be able to present the ally with the prospect of a losing arms race or preventive aggression. By contrast, when the imbalance of available power resources is not overwhelming, the ally can be reasonably confident about standing its ground even if the adversary escalates its military buildup or contemplates the preventive use of force. This is particularly true since, equipped with a robust military strategy, even a state that is significantly inferior to the adversary in terms of raw material power can still hope to deter its aggression by denying its prospects of a quick, decisive victory.⁹¹ In fact, such a state should arguably expect to suffer *greater* losses in terms of relative security than its weaker peers if it fails to vigorously balance against the adversary. It is, after all, states that are currently able to undertake the most intensive and wide-ranging forms of military competition that are likely to find their relative capabilities most drastically reduced should the adversary's expansion go unchecked.

The second factor is geography. All else equal, the fear of inviting a devastating preventive attack—or sparking a crisis that might culminate in such a disaster—is especially acute for allies located in close geographic proximity to the adversary. In order to see why, it is necessary to delve into the nature of military power and threat in the modern era. As Mearsheimer argues, phenomenal advances in technology notwithstanding, land power remains the principal tool of coercion and warfare in international politics, since armies are the only military instrument suited for the tasks of conquering territory and delivering quick, decisive victory in war.⁹² The primacy of land power suggests, on the one hand, that the adversary should be extremely sensitive to the adverse

⁹¹ See John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 58-60.

⁹² Naval and air forces, by contrast, pose lesser threats even against considerably weaker states due to their limited value in achieving rapid territorial conquest. See Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, ch. 4.

implications of a geographically proximate neighbor's militarization.⁹³ On the other hand, the same proximity also increases the likelihood that the adversary's preventive strike will succeed. Not only does the adversary then encounter fewer physical barriers to aggression, but it can also more easily deploy capabilities that blunt the leading power's ability to militarily intervene on behalf of its ally.⁹⁴ Therefore, even when they enjoy the formal protection of a great power, some weak states cannot rule out the possibility that their hostile neighbor might attempt a swift, decisive attack in the hope of presenting their patron with a *fait accompli*.⁹⁵ By contrast, even materially weak states may conclude that they possess sufficient wherewithal to compete effectively against the adversary when they are relatively insulated from its land power by a robust territorial or maritime buffer.

In sum, the ally's military vulnerability shapes the level of risk it incurs by pursuing military capability enhancements at the adversary's expense. Specifically, allies that find themselves in a position of severe military vulnerability—due to some unfortunate combination of meager power resources and geographical proximity to the adversary—are most likely to find the risks of competitive militarization prohibitive. Efforts by such states to improve their military lot against the rising power can usually do little good, and potentially much harm. It is not the case that these states lack the *willingness* to improve their military capabilities; to the contrary, given

⁹³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, ch. 4.

⁹⁴ The debate on China's growing "Anti-access/Area-denial (A2/AD)" capabilities is instructive in this regard. See, for example, Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 78-119; Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Sea," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7-48; and Andrew S. Erickson, et al., "Correspondence: How Good are China's Antiaccess/Area Denial Capabilities?," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 202-213. Relatedly, evidence shows that great-power troop deployments to allied territory—i.e., "tripwire forces"—do not deter aggression unless the contingent is substantial enough to alter the local balance of power. See Dan Reiter and Paul Poast, "The Truth about Tripwires: Why Small Force Deployments do not Deter Aggression," *Texas National Security Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 33-53.

⁹⁵ On *faits accompli*, see Ahmer Tarar, "A Strategic Logic of the Military *Fait Accompli*," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (December 2016): 746-752; and Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 536-540.

their extreme vulnerability, it is arguably they who would profit most handsomely from powerful new armaments or innovative warfighting doctrines. However, the very weakness that makes such capabilities so attractive effectively denies these states the *opportunity* to adopt them; their militarization efforts will be nullified by an overwhelming arms race or preventive attack before the new capabilities have become robust enough to do any good.

The calculus turns on its head for allies that are relatively invulnerable to the adversary's predation: they must pursue sustained enhancements to their military capabilities in order to keep windows of vulnerability from opening in the future.⁹⁶ These states are strong enough to hold their own in the near term but cannot be assured that the balance of power will not swing more prominently in the adversary's favor over time. Following Mearsheimer, "it is often difficult to predict the direction and scope of change in the balance of power," and thus "[o]nly a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to [acquire more capabilities vis-à-vis its rivals] because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive."⁹⁷ In short, the uncertainty endemic to international politics drives relatively invulnerable states to eagerly expand their military capabilities lest they be deprived of their privileged position.

Causal Pathways to Strategic Incoherence

I now consolidate the implications of my two variables into a general model of strategic incoherence. Resolving incoherence would be a relatively simple matter if allies uniformly adjust their military capabilities based on cues provided by the leading power's security commitments. Unfortunately for the leading power, this is not the case. My model specifies distinct causal

⁹⁶ On windows of vulnerability, see Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), ch. 4.

⁹⁷ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 35.

pathways to strategic coherence and incoherence based on the interaction between the leading power’s grand strategy and the level of military vulnerability experienced by its allies. Table 2.1 summarizes its main predictions.

Table 2.1: Determinants of Strategic Coherence in Military Alliances

		Ally’s Military Vulnerability	
		Low	High
Leading Power’s Grand Strategy	Outsourcing	<u>Strategic Coherence</u> : Outsourcing accommodated by ally seeking to maximize military capabilities	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Outsourcing triggers ally’s risks of incurring military predation
	Insourcing	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Insourcing collides with ally’s efforts to maximize military capabilities	<u>Strategic Coherence</u> : Insourcing accommodated by ally seeking to avoid military predation

STRATEGIC COHERENCE UNDER OUTSOURCING. When the leading power adopts outsourcing as its grand strategy, strategic coherence will obtain in relations with allies that face relatively low levels of military vulnerability. In this case, the causal pathway to coherence conjoins the following elements.

- The leading power’s efforts to devolve military assets and responsibilities to the ally, and
- The ally’s efforts to maximize its military capabilities.

On the one hand, allies that are less immediately vulnerable to predation can be reasonably confident about their ability to compete effectively even if the adversary escalates its military buildup or contemplates the preventive use of force. On the other hand, given the adversary’s sheer capabilities and uncertainty over the future trajectory of its power and intentions, the ally risks

being deprived of its currently privileged situation without making determined efforts to reinforce its capabilities. Consequently, the ally has strong incentives to maximize its military capabilities, which dovetails with the leading power's efforts to devolve the burden of counterbalancing the adversary.

As I elaborate in the next chapter, a prime example of strategic coherence under outsourcing is found in the U.S.-France alliance relationship of the late 1950s. U.S. strategic guidance during this period demanded that its European allies field state-of-the-art national military forces with nuclear weapons under their own control. As President Eisenhower explained, the ultimate aim was to have “friends and allies... supply the means for local defense on the ground” with the United States “com[ing] into the act with air and naval forces alone” when needed.⁹⁸ This meshed well with France's military ambitions; in General Charles de Gaulle's words, France should “provide the main armies” for checking Soviet aggression while the U.S. provided something akin to a strategic reserve force.⁹⁹ With this mutual understanding, the United States worked to transfer effective physical control of its nuclear weapons to French military forces under the NATO nuclear stockpile plan of December 1957. Moreover, at least initially, it adopted a relaxed attitude when France pushed ahead with its indigenous nuclear weapons program. Before Washington shifted its grand strategy to insourcing in the early 1960s, France came closest to realizing U.S. strategic vision in its military posture.¹⁰⁰

STRATEGIC INCOHERENCE UNDER OUTSOURCING. Under the outsourcing strategy, strategic incoherence will result with allies that face relatively high levels of military vulnerability.

⁹⁸ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 314th Meeting of the National Security Council,” February 28, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 19, 429.

⁹⁹ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 224, n. 98.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 5-6.

The pathway to incoherence here conjoins two elements:

- The leading power's efforts to devolve military assets and responsibilities to the ally, and
- The ally's incentives to avoid triggering military predation.

In this case, incoherence prevails because the leading power's devolutionary efforts trigger the ally's risk of incurring predation. Vulnerable allies will often be reluctant to accommodate the new capabilities prescribed by the leading power, understanding that directly engaging the adversary in military competition is likely to end with them being outmatched in an arms race or devastated by a preventive attack. But even if the ally does attempt to shore up its capabilities, perhaps because it initially overestimates its ability to circumvent predation,¹⁰¹ it is likely to curb its behavior once the adversary demonstrates the will and ability to crush its militarization efforts. In short, whether it internalizes the risk of costly countermeasures from the beginning or ends up "learning it the hard way," the vulnerable ally will fail to generate the capabilities demanded by the leading power.

This logic helps explain why West Germany, unlike France, was unable to develop independent nuclear capabilities in the late 1950s under the auspices of U.S. nuclear sharing policies. As detailed in chapter 3, the Soviet Union applied considerable military pressure to halt the progress of Bonn's nuclearization, eventually forcing Washington to rethink its outsourcing strategy toward Germany and Western Europe. "[We] have in mind above all[,]" Soviet policymakers explained, "the equipment of the [West German army by the United States] with atomic and rocket weapons and the establishment of a network of rocket-launching sites on West

¹⁰¹ In theory, if the ally can operationalize its new capabilities before being detected by the adversary, the mechanisms leading to incoherence here would cease to apply. Muhammet A. Bas and Andrew J. Coe, "Arms Diffusion and War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (August 2012): 651-674. However, modern surveillance and detection systems make surreptitious militarization exceedingly difficult. On this point, see Debs and Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics*, 44-45.

German soil.”¹⁰² The West Germans would thereby “be[come] stronger...with the help of the United States” and eventually “speak in a different tone.”¹⁰³ West Germany failed to realize its military ambitions, however, because relative weakness and geography made it much more vulnerable to military predation than France.¹⁰⁴

STRATEGIC COHERENCE UNDER INSOURCING. When insourcing is the leading power’s grand strategy, strategic coherence will be achieved with allies that face relatively high levels of military vulnerability. In this case, the causal pathway to coherence conjoins the following elements:

- The leading power’s efforts to monopolize the alliance’s military assets and decision-making authorities, and
- The ally’s incentives to avoid triggering military predation.

Strategic coherence here results from the complementarity that exists between the leading power’s efforts to arrogate the alliance’s warfighting potential and the ally’s incentives to evade the risks of militarization. As noted above, allies that find themselves in highly vulnerable positions have the incentive to eschew capability enhancements that risk provoking the adversary’s ire. This is precisely the kind of ally desired by a leading power committed to insourcing; its main concern is not so much to have allies spearhead the alliance’s military efforts but rather to ensure that they follow the alliance leader’s script on the use and threat of force.

¹⁰² Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, May 1959, quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 173.

¹⁰³ Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan, in “Memorandum of Conversation,” January 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 273.

¹⁰⁴ See Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, ch. 5.

U.S.-West German relations during the Cold War is again illustrative. U.S. grand strategy toward Europe shifted to insourcing in the early 1960s, placing a new premium on “unity of planning, concentration of executive authority, and central direction.”¹⁰⁵ As a senior State Department official observed, “to any European [such ideas were mere] euphemism[s] for absolute American control.”¹⁰⁶ Under this new strategy, Washington was able to effectively suppress West Germany’s latent nuclear ambitions with threats of abandonment. As U.S. Special Ambassador Lucius Clay reminded West German officials, losing American military support would likely lead to “the end of Berlin.”¹⁰⁷

STRATEGIC INCOHERENCE UNDER INSOURCING. Finally, strategic incoherence will obtain if the leading power adopts insourcing as its grand strategy and the ally boasts relatively low military vulnerability. The causal pathway conjoins two elements:

- The leading power’s efforts to monopolize the alliance’s military assets and decision-making authorities, and
- The ally’s efforts to maximize its military capabilities.

In this case, incoherence ensues because the ally’s pursuit of a maximalist military posture collides with the leading power’s monopolizing aims. A leading power committed to insourcing has little patience for maverick allies. The problem is that insofar as the ally can reap the benefits of a

¹⁰⁵ Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, University of Michigan Commencement Address, June 9, 1962, <https://www.atomicarchive.com/resources/documents/deterrence/no-cities-speech.html>.

¹⁰⁶ “Paper Prepared by the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant (Bohlen),” July 2, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 430.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 375. See also Gene Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 91-129.

stronger posture without incurring predatory repercussions, it will not conform its military policies to a strategic vision that reduces its forces to mere appendages of the leading power's capabilities. This is especially true since the leading power is unlikely to take the ally's core security interests as seriously as it does its own. Moreover, even if the leading power offers reliable security guarantees for now, it is impossible to know for certain to how the situation will change ten or twenty years down the road. To avoid creating unnecessary deficiencies in their military readiness and to ensure long-term security, relatively invulnerable allies should reject the dictates of the leading power's insourcing strategy and help themselves to the strongest possible capabilities.

Note further that, unlike in dealings with highly vulnerable allies, the leading power's threats of abandonment will have little leverage here because the allies can hold their own against the adversary in any event. Thus, contrary to the West German case, U.S. policymakers failed to curb France's moves toward an independent military posture in the 1960s. While the United States could "exert considerable pressure on the Germans[.]" President Kennedy admitted, "there [was] not much [it] can do against France."¹⁰⁸ In fact, the leading power's attempts at coercion are likely to further whet these allies' incentives to pursue military independence, as epitomized in France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command in 1966. When a leading power committed to insourcing interacts with a relatively invulnerable ally, then, it essentially has two choices with regard to strategic incoherence: coping with the fact that the ally will not heed its strategic guidance or shifting its grand strategy to outsourcing.

Taking stock, contrary to the model implied in collective goods theory, I maintain that strategic coherence is not merely a function of the leading power's security commitments. In order to predict whether coherence will be achieved under a given grand strategy, details on the kinds of

¹⁰⁸ "Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 38 (Part II)," January 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 489.

capabilities it demands from the allies and what adopting such capabilities imply for their net security are of utmost importance. In my model, strategic coherence obtains only under two relatively stringent conditions: the leading power adopts an outsourcing strategy while its ally's military vulnerability is relatively low, or the leading power adopts an insourcing strategy while its ally is highly vulnerable. Incoherence should prevail otherwise.

Addenda

Several points of clarification are in order. First, critics may charge that the leading power might craft its grand strategy toward a given region with an eye toward the military vulnerability of its local ally and its implications for strategic coherence, which would raise concerns about endogeneity. I am skeptical that the military situations of individual allies are an overriding consideration in the grand strategic choices of leading powers, for three main reasons. To begin with, a large literature on the determinants of grand strategy “indicates a strong focus on unit-level factors[.]”¹⁰⁹ The broad agreement that leading power grand strategies are primarily shaped by the proclivities of individual leaders or domestic considerations is consistent with the realist recognition that “[v]ery powerful states escape some of the consequences of the inherently anarchic nature of the international system[.]” at least in the near term, which fuels “attempt[s] to impose their vision on other countries and the global system.”¹¹⁰

Moreover, compounding the problem is the fact that there are often genuine ambiguities in

¹⁰⁹ Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword,” 31, fn. 19. For example, Green’s explanation for the origins of the United States’ “buck-passing” and “balancing” grand strategies toward Western Europe during the Cold War—respectively analogous to my outsourcing and insourcing strategies—focuses on Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy’s commitments to divergent strands of liberal political ideology. Green, “Two Concepts of Liberty.”

¹¹⁰ Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 340.

the extent to which a given ally is vulnerable to military predation,¹¹¹ further tempting the leading power to push ahead with its pre-selected grand strategy. Although a “learning effect” might indeed take place over the longer term, leading powers at least initially tend to make decisions about grand strategy separately from how it might interact with the military vulnerabilities of individual allies.

Finally, it will become clear in my case studies that even if a leading power adjusts its grand strategy partly with an eye toward achieving coherence vis-à-vis one of its allies, the problem of incoherence will not go away insofar as other allies in the same region are confronting different levels of military vulnerability. In the 1960s, for example, the United States settled on a grand strategy of insourcing in Western Europe. The strategy was heavily informed by the recognition that independent nuclear weapons in the hands of the West Germans “might be considered *casus belli* by the Soviets[.]”¹¹² This grand strategy was bound to entail strategic incoherence with the relatively invulnerable France. However, U.S. policymakers recognized that “[w]hile it would be possible to devise a U.S. policy which could bring about an accommodation with” France’s military posture, “this would require abandonment or modification of major U.S. objectives. Such a price is far too high to pay[.]”¹¹³ Washington thus pushed ahead with its chosen grand strategy despite realizing that it would undermine strategic coherence in its relations with one of its major European allies. In such ways, more often than not, at least some of the leading power’s allies are bound to experience its grand strategy as an *independent* variable determined with minimum regard for the requirements of their individual security situation.

¹¹¹ This ambiguity partly stems from the adversary’s incentives to misrepresent its power and resolve. See James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 390-401.

¹¹² “Memorandum of Conversation,” February 7, 1962, Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), 3.

¹¹³ “Circular Telegram from the Department of State to the Posts in the NATO Capitals,” March 2, 1966, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. 8, 320.

Second, some may wonder whether the leading power can help its ally revise its military situation to implement its preferred grand strategy. In particular, can a leading power committed to an outsourcing strategy protect a highly vulnerable ally while it augments its capabilities, thereby allowing it to circumvent the risks of militarization? While leading powers have sometimes tried to shield vulnerable allies from the adversary's punishment in this way, such attempts rarely succeed. The key problem is that the vulnerable ally's sheer exposure to the adversary's countermeasures often undermines the leading power's ability to reliably protect it. For example, China's growing "Anti-Access, Area Denial (A2/AD)" capabilities in the Western Pacific today are concerning largely because they may render U.S. military intervention in the region prohibitively costly, particularly when it comes to small allies situated closer to the Chinese mainland.¹¹⁴ The adversary's ability to punish its vulnerable neighbor's militarization attempt before the leading power can intervene on its behalf imparts a relative fixity to the ally's basic military situation. By implication, temporal variation in patterns of strategic coherence within a given alliance relationship will usually come from changes in the leading power's grand strategy.

The Consequences of Strategic Incoherence

By now it should be clear that strategic coherence is a property of a single state's grand strategy; the leading power achieves coherence in its alliance relationships when its allies tailor their military capabilities its strategic vision. That said, coherence has nontrivial implications for broader alliance-level outcomes as well. The scholarly insights reviewed earlier suggest that

¹¹⁴ See Biddle and Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific." Note also the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)'s assessment of Finland's military situation in 1949: "The vulnerability of Finland to Soviet pressure...might be expected to discourage any possible Finnish hope of rescue from the West[.]" "The Possibility of Direct Soviet Military Action during 1949," April 21, 1949, in *CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union, 1947-1991*, eds. Gerald K. Haines and Robert E. Leggett (Washington, D.C.: Government Reprints Press, 2001), 32.

strategic incoherence should be detrimental to an alliance's military performance and political durability. My theory of strategic incoherence offers more concrete predictions for these quantities of interest.

Alliance Performance

Strategic incoherence makes alliances underperform as instruments of security production. But existing works do not fully specify the conditions under which this effect is likely to be most pronounced or dangerous. A case in point is Patricia Weitsman's 2004 book, *Dangerous Alliances*. While it represents the most rigorous investigation of the performance dimension of alliances to date, her study intermixes the concept of alliance performance with that of "alliance cohesion." For Weitsman, cohesion at once refers to "the extent to which the member states are in agreement over the overriding goals of the alliance and the ideas of how to attain those objectives,"¹¹⁵ which hints at my concept of strategic coherence, and "how effective an alliance will be with respect to its external goals,"¹¹⁶ that is, its performance. By treating performance as an *attribute* of alliance cohesion (i.e., coherence) rather than a separate quantity potentially associated with it, Weitsman makes it impossible to develop meaningful hypotheses about the relationship between the two.¹¹⁷

I take a different approach, positing that the effect of strategic incoherence on an alliance's military performance is conditional on the kind of causal pathway that led to incoherence in the

¹¹⁵ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 35.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 24. See also Patricia A. Weitsman, "Intimate Enemies: The Politics of Peacetime Alliances," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 156-192.

¹¹⁷ This represents an instance in which an empirical relationship has been hardwired into a concept, which "makes it difficult to test hypotheses down the road and often will raise problems when gathering data." Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 66. Weitsman's conceptual move follows the sociological literature on the battlefield cohesion of infantry units, which also tends to equate cohesion with various aspects of military performance. For a discussion, see Anthony King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 2.

first place. Assuming that an alliance's overarching goal is to maximize security for its members, my theory implies that performance in this regard will suffer most severely when the leading power tries to implement an outsourcing strategy vis-à-vis a militarily vulnerable ally. Recall that incoherence results here because the ally is too susceptible to predatory responses from the adversary to fully accommodate the new capabilities demanded by the leading power's grand strategy. Put differently, should the leading power try to move forward with its outsourcing efforts despite its ally's vulnerability, the ally—and by extension, the alliance—is likely to be targeted with an arms race or preventive aggression of a magnitude it is ill-equipped to prevail against. We should thus expect general deterrence failures and military setbacks to be more common when incoherence occurs under the outsourcing strategy. For example, I show in the subsequent chapters that U.S. moves to devolve nuclear capabilities to the highly vulnerable West Germany in the late 1950s precipitated the second Berlin crisis (1958-1962). Soviet efforts to militarize Cuba likewise prompted the United States to initiate a preventively motivated crisis in 1962.

The problem is less severe when the pathway to incoherence conjoins the leading power's insourcing strategy and the ally's military invulnerability. Incoherence obtains in this case because the ally rejects the leading power's efforts to circumscribe its military capabilities. While this type of incoherence is still undesirable for the leading power, its association with military underperformance should be more modest. The reason is that the ally is well-equipped to compete militarily against the adversary on its own, having "entered" the competition in a relatively privileged position. Such allies are less likely to be targeted with costly arms races or military crises by external adversaries, regardless of what their behavior implies for the alliance's internal dynamics. I thus show in chapter 4 that, although incoherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance became

“irredeemable” by the early 1960s,¹¹⁸ the United States did not use or threaten to use force to arrest China’s large and rapid military growth. The reason was that China’s already “formidable war machine” ensured that the costs of U.S. military action would be prohibitively high.¹¹⁹

Alliance Durability

Strategic incoherence can undermine the political value of military alliances and, by extension, their durability. Again, my theory offers further insights on this relationship. In contrast to the military performance dimension, the impact of strategic incoherence on alliance durability should be most severe when it is caused by the interplay between the leading power’s insourcing strategy and its ally’s relative invulnerability. The same invulnerability that enables the ally to pursue stronger military capabilities in defiance of the leading power also implies that it can afford to lose the leading power as a strategic partner. As long as the leading power insists on pursuing the insourcing strategy, the political value of retaining the alliance will diminish for both sides. With both parties experiencing strong temptations to abandon the alliance, incoherence is more likely to entail alliance decay and fragmentation. France’s decision to abandon NATO’s integrated command structure in 1966 and the “Sino-Soviet split” of the early 1960s exemplify this outcome.

Implications for alliance durability are less acute when incoherence is caused by the interplay between the leading power’s outsourcing strategy and the ally’s high military vulnerability. Although the ally is situationally barred from adopting the military capabilities prescribed by the leading power, the benefits of maintaining the alliance relationship still outweigh its costs. Its vulnerability to the adversary’s predation means that it is “dependent” on the leading

¹¹⁸ Odd Arne Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 3.

¹¹⁹ “Paper Prepared by Robert McClintock of the Policy Planning Staff,” December 31, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 3, 665.

power in the truest sense.

Table 2.2: Strategic Incoherence and Alliance-level Consequences

		Ally's Military Vulnerability	
		Low	High
Leading Power's Grand Strategy	Outsourcing	<u>Strategic Coherence</u> : Outsourcing accommodated by ally seeking to maximize military capabilities	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Outsourcing triggers ally's risks of incurring military predation
		<u>Alliance Performance</u> : Good performance in general deterrence and arms competition	<u>Alliance Performance</u> : Poor performance due to increased adversary predation on the ally
		<u>Alliance Durability</u> : Highly durable due to complementarity of security interests	<u>Alliance Durability</u> : Fairly durable due to ally's security dependence on leading power
		<u>Examples</u> : Franco-U.S. alliance (1956-1960); Sino-Soviet alliance (1949-1957)	<u>Examples</u> : West Germany-U.S. alliance (1958-1960); Cuba-Soviet alliance (1959-1962)
	Insourcing	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Insourcing collides with ally's efforts to maximize military capabilities	<u>Strategic Coherence</u> : Insourcing accommodated by ally seeking to avoid military predation
		<u>Alliance Performance</u> : Fair performance due to ally's relative invulnerability	<u>Alliance Performance</u> : Good performance in general deterrence and arms competition
		<u>Alliance Durability</u> : Fragmentation likely due to diminished political value for both parties	<u>Alliance Durability</u> : Highly durable due to complementarity of security interests
		<u>Examples</u> : Franco-U.S. alliance (1961-1966); Sino-Soviet alliance (1958-1969)	<u>Examples</u> : West Germany-U.S. alliance (1961-1989); Cuba-Soviet alliance (1963-1990)

Thus, unless the leading power decides to unilaterally abandon the ally, the alliance is likely to persist despite strategic incoherence. As I explain in later chapters, this is why incoherence in the West Germany-U.S. alliance from 1958 to 1960 and the Cuba-Soviet alliance from 1959 to 1962

did not lead to the dissolution of the relationship.

Table 2.2 outlines the expected associations between strategic incoherence and key alliance-level outcomes. Regardless of one's theory of the origins of alliances, my framework suggests that strategic coherence matters a great deal for their ability to function as effective "capability aggregators" against external threats. The causal process by which this incoherence arises helps explain variation in the military performance and political longevity of alliances.

Strategic Coherence in Alliances among Great Powers

Although I have thus far premised my discussion on an asymmetric relationship between a leading power and its weaker ally, my framework provides insights for alliances between great powers as well. As noted earlier, great-to-great power alliances have historically been rarer and shorter-lived than great-to-minor power alliances. This is unsurprising from the lens of my theory. Possessing "sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight" against any rival in the international system, great powers are relatively invulnerable by definition.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, great powers rarely have the incentive to aid each other's growth in relative capabilities, as required by the outsourcing strategy. They instead strive to amass as much power and influence for themselves at the expense of other great powers who, after all, already represent significant potential threats by virtue of the formidable power resources at their disposal.¹²¹ As World War II neared its end, for example, some Western leaders advocated sending American and British occupation forces to Eastern Europe even though their Soviet ally was militarily well-positioned to stabilize the area.¹²² Their shared

¹²⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 5.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 32-36.

¹²² John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Reappraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (1982, repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was especially vociferous on this matter. See David Dilks, *Churchill and Company: Allies and Rivals in War and Peace* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), ch. 7.

struggle against Nazi Germany notwithstanding, U.S. strategists understood early on that “[a] Russian state from the Urals to the North Sea [was] no great improvement over a German state from the North Sea to the Urals.”¹²³ In short, great powers adopt insourcing as their default grand strategy when allied with other great powers. Given the latter’s relative invulnerability, this is a recipe for strategic incoherence.

That said, great powers can and do achieve strategic coherence with other great powers under a narrow range of circumstances. The most common of these involves a great power that has the incentive to facilitate the growth in capabilities of a peer in a distant region in order to help ensure a favorable balance of power there. This is most likely when the region in question features a potential hegemon, that is, “a great power with so much actual military capability and so much potential power that it stands a good chance of dominating and controlling all other great powers in its region of the world.”¹²⁴ In principle, the primacy of land power in international politics means that great powers can only pose limited threats to competitors outside their own neighborhood, particularly when they are preoccupied with local rivalries.¹²⁵ However, great powers that achieve regional hegemony are essentially free to roam the globe and seriously undermine the interests of great powers in other regions. Extraregional great powers thus have powerful incentives to prevent this outcome. Insofar as they can muster the resources to intervene in security affairs outside their own neighborhood, they may help weaker peers in other regions acquire the capabilities needed to contain the expansion of a potential hegemon.¹²⁶ For example, as detailed in my penultimate

¹²³ Nicholas J. Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power*, with a New Introduction by Francis P. Sempa (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), 460.

¹²⁴ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 44-45.

¹²⁵ See Colin Elman, “Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America’s Rise to Regional Hegemony,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (November 2004): 563-578; and Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, “Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?” *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 7-43.

¹²⁶ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 40-42.

chapter, Great Britain in the early 20th century outsourced military capabilities to a faraway great power ally—Japan—in order to check Russia’s bid for dominance in the East Asian region, which would then have enabled Saint Petersburg to commit more resources to challenging British territorial interests in Central and South Asia. Under such circumstances, the interplay of the extraregional great power’s outsourcing strategy and the local great power’s low military vulnerability will result in strategic coherence.

For similar reasons, even if a great power technically inhabits the same region as its great power ally, it may still engage in outsourcing if the latter is comfortably separated from it by a geographic buffer and more closely located to a potential hegemon. In this setting, the ally is less likely to become “the geopolitical equivalent of Frankenstein’s monster[,]” inadvertently groomed into an unmanageably powerful state that can turn on its sponsors in the future.¹²⁷ At the same time, supporting the ally’s capability growth promises greater returns for security when it is geographically well-positioned to challenge the adversary. “[T]he closer [the great power ally] is to other great powers,” Joshua Shiffrin points out, “the more likely it can help...against other competitors by threatening other states with war, engaging them in political disputes, or serving as a staging area for [partner states’] forces.”¹²⁸ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, France and Russia maintained an alliance in which both parties sought to patronize the other’s military development in order to exploit it in their respective rivalries against the rapidly rising Germany.¹²⁹ Particularly after 1905, French political and financial support was instrumental in enabling “both Russia’s rapid recovery from military and domestic revolution...and its surge

¹²⁷ Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 28.

¹²⁸ Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018), 25-26.

¹²⁹ On the motivations behind the Franco-Russian alliance, see Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy: 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 260-262.

ahead in the arms race on land in the years before 1914.”¹³⁰

Table 2.3: Strategic Incoherence in Great-to-Great Power Alliances

		Presence of Potential Hegemon in Great Power B’s Region	
		Yes	No
Great Power A is Geographically Insulated from Great Power B	Yes	<u>Strategic Coherence</u> : Great power A incentivized to adopt an outsourcing strategy	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Great power A adopts the default grand strategy of insourcing
	No	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Great power A adopts the default grand strategy of insourcing	<u>Strategic Incoherence</u> : Great power A adopts the default grand strategy of insourcing

Taking stock, strategic coherence in a great-to-great power alliance depends critically on whether one of the two powers (great power A) has the incentive to adopt a grand strategy of outsourcing toward its great-power ally (great power B). As summarized in Table 2.3, this is only likely when great power B’s region features a potential hegemon that stands a good chance of dominating all of its local rivals *and* great power A is insulated from great power B’s capabilities by a substantial geographic barrier. When these two conditions are present, great power A can reap security benefits from facilitating great power B’s growth in capabilities with less fear that it will itself become the target of such capabilities. In all other circumstances, it will fall back on the default grand strategy great powers adopt toward approximate equals, that is, insourcing. Given great power B’s lower military vulnerability, this will result in strategic incoherence.

Additional Implications

¹³⁰ Patrick J. McDonald, “Complicating Commitment: Free Resources, Power Shifts, and the Fiscal Politics of Preventive War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (December 2011): 1095-1120.

The previous sections laid out demand-side theory's core expectations about the conditions under which leading great powers achieve or fail to achieve strategic coherence in their military alliances, as well as those of its chief rival, that is, collective goods theory. In this section, I derive additional implications from the two theories that can be comparatively evaluated with historical evidence. The first set of implications focuses on the private decision-making processes of key actors. The remaining two sets have to do with how the two frameworks interact with variables highlighted by other important theories of international politics.

Foreign Policy Decision-making Processes

Collective goods theory holds that the ally will calibrate its military capabilities largely based on beliefs about the leading power's commitment to its security. It expects the ally's political leadership to pay close attention to signals of this commitment and cite them in deliberating choices related to military capability development. When the leading power's commitment is perceived to be strong, leaders will express logics indicative of moral hazard. Particularly in private decision-making settings, they might justify military policies that defy the leading power's strategic preferences with the idea that its military outlays sufficiently meet their country's security needs, and that they are unlikely to be excluded from this guarantee in the foreseeable future. Conversely, when the leading power's commitment is perceived to be weak, leaders will advocate military policies that are more conducive to strategic coherence with reference to the security risks of losing external military support.

By contrast, my demand-side theory posits that that the ally's central decision-makers will deliberate military capabilities primarily with an eye toward their country's security situation in relation to the adversary, rather than the leading power. They will carefully assess the likelihood

of triggering a losing arms race or preventive aggression and prioritize this assessment in justifying their policy choices. When their country's vulnerability to such predation is assessed to be low, leaders should express confidence in their country's ability to afford the risks of pursuing stronger military capabilities while highlighting the broader benefits of doing so. When vulnerability is assessed to be high, by contrast, fears of predation should be more salient in the ally's policy deliberations. But importantly, my theory expects the ally's leaders to be skeptical of the leading power's commitments by default. Mindful of the self-help imperative under anarchy, their baseline preference is to become as independently competitive as possible vis-à-vis the adversary in terms of military capabilities. The leaders of vulnerable states are likely to express this preference even as they accommodate the leading power's insourcing strategy. For example, in private discussions, they may acknowledge that they had to grudgingly settle for a modest military posture because the risks of pursuing stronger capabilities were prohibitive.

Finally, indirect evidence for my theory's causal mechanisms can be found in the *adversary's* decision-making processes. In broad terms, my theory expects the hostile great power to be sensitive to the ally's military capability growth. Observing the adversary's political leadership contemplating measures to derail the ally's militarization via an overwhelming arms race or preventive military measures would be especially suggestive. Indeed, if decision-makers in hostile great powers are rarely tempted to aggressively nip the ally's military development in the bud, one would wonder why allies should ever worry about the security risks of pursuing stronger capabilities; the causal processes envisioned by my theory would then be called into question. Whether the adversary's leadership decides to translate such temptations into action will be informed by their assessment of the ally's relative military vulnerability. There should be evidence of policymakers in the adversary's capital weighing the expected benefits of arresting the

ally's military growth against the expected costs of forceful countermeasures.

Domestic Politics

The two theories also make competing predictions for when and how domestic political institutions or ideologies affect strategic coherence. As noted earlier, collective goods theory expects the ally's domestic politics to increase in importance as the leading power's commitment to their security becomes more reliable; the permissive threat environment created by the leading power's guarantees affords the luxury of indulging domestic concerns, which might demand military policies that are underactive or overactive from the lens of the leading power's grand strategy. The theory is thus corroborated if there is evidence that domestic political considerations become more influential in the ally's military policymaking when the leading power's commitment is perceived to be strong and less salient when it is perceived to be weak.

Collective goods theory makes even stronger claims on how the leading power's domestic politics affect strategic coherence outcomes. It holds that domestic interests or ideologies often make it difficult for the leading power to decisively dial back security commitments to its allies, exacerbating the moral hazard problems that lead to strategic incoherence. Pluralist democracies like the United States are especially susceptible to this pathology due to the "internal weakness" of their policymaking apparatus, which allows expansionist interest groups or ideologies to penetrate foreign-policy decision-making and perpetuate external commitments. By implication, leading powers that enjoy more centralized decision-making procedures should be able to wield the threat of reduced commitments much more effectively to bring their allies into line. Another implication is that even leading powers with pluralistic political systems might be able to effectively threaten abandonment if domestic constituencies—influential interest groups or the

public in general—are strongly supportive of limiting security commitments abroad.¹³¹

Broadly speaking, my theory discounts domestic politics as a determinant of strategic coherence. Policymakers in the ally’s capital will rarely allow national security policy to be shaped hither and thither by domestic considerations when confronting a powerful adversary, even if a leading great power extends security assurances in the strongest possible terms. Instead, as Waltz wrote, every state’s default preference “is to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so.”¹³² Moreover, even if central decision-makers are tempted to national security policy with particular societal interests or ideological visions, “most of them quickly change their ways” once reminded that failure to adopt policies appropriate to their situation vis-à-vis the adversary may result in their own destruction.¹³³ Thus, in a relatively invulnerable state, I expect those who come to power intending to pursue modest military capabilities for domestic political or social reasons to quickly realize that doing so could open dangerous windows of vulnerability in the future and subsequently adopt a more assertive posture. Likewise, policymakers in highly vulnerable states with lofty military ambitions will quickly moderate their plans once their risks become clear.

In the same vein, my theory does not explain key patterns of strategic coherence with direct reference to the leading power’s domestic politics.¹³⁴ Following J.P. Nettl, I assume that the state’s “international function is an invariant,” and that “countries with a low degree of ‘stateness’ in the

¹³¹ Barbara Elias and Alex Weisiger make this argument in the context of U.S. relations with local allies in counterinsurgency interventions. Barbara Elias and Alex Weisiger, “Influence through Absence in U.S. Counterinsurgency Interventions? Coercing Local Allies through Threats to Withdraw,” *Civil Wars* 22, no. 4 (2020): 512-542. The basic logic is grounded in Robert Putnam’s famous two-level game model. See Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460.

¹³² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 107.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹³⁴ As noted above, however, the leading power’s domestic politics may be one of the factors that shape its choice of grand strategy. My framework thus arguably leaves room for domestic politics to *indirectly* influence strategic coherence outcomes, although specifying this influence is beyond the scope of this study.

intrasocietal field...make special differentiated provisions” in the realm of security policy.¹³⁵ I thus expect no significant variation in patterns of strategic coherence to stem from the leading great power’s domestic political institutions. Regardless of whether the leading power is an “internally weak” pluralist democracy (e.g., the United States) or an authoritarian state with a more centralized political apparatus (e.g., the Soviet Union), strategic coherence will mainly be a function of the interplay between its grand strategy and the ally’s military situation.

Polarity

Finally, recall that collective goods theory suggests important hypotheses about the relationship between the number of great powers in the international system—that is, “polarity”—and strategic coherence. Leading great powers should find it easier to achieve coherence in a bipolar international system, where threatened allies lack alternative alignment options and great powers mostly rely on their own resources to achieve security. This lopsided structure of dependence gives junior allies strong incentives to cater their military policies to the leading power’s demands. Under multipolarity, by contrast, allies enjoy more alignment options and great powers must rely more heavily on alliances to maintain a favorable balance of power. Strategic incoherence is therefore more common. Finally, unipolarity should exhibit cross-cutting tendencies. The unipole’s preponderant power position limits the importance of allies, reducing moral hazard and promoting coherence. At the same time, the leading power’s desire to suppress the rise of new great powers and to shape the international system according to a universalist ideology may drive it toward overcommitment, fueling strategic incoherence.

Demand-side theory dismisses international polarity as an explanatory variable. Strategic

¹³⁵ J.P. Nettl, “The State as a Conceptual Variable,” *World Politics* 20, no. 4 (July 1968): 564. See also Krasner, *Defending the National Interest*, ch. 3.

coherence in any given alliance is determined by how the leading power's strategic demands interact with the demands of the ally's *local* security environment, rather than the *global* distribution of power. In stark contrast to collective goods theory, then, my theory expects little variation in patterns of strategic coherence across historical periods characterized by different configurations of polarity. Instead, there should be much more variation within the same historical period depending on shifts in grand strategy and regional military situations. Furthermore, even within the same geographic region, markedly different patterns of strategic coherence may obtain with individual allies depending on their specific military situation vis-à-vis the adversary.

Research Design

Table 2.4 summarizes the observable implications derived from the two theories of strategic incoherence. The bulk of this dissertation is devoted to evaluating these predictions with historical evidence. The basic empirical strategy I adopt is that of the “structured, focused comparison,” a case study design that is “‘structured’ in the sense that the researcher writes general questions...asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection,” and “‘focused’ in that it deals only with certain [theoretically relevant] aspects of the historical cases examined.” The goal, as George and Bennett state, is to weave “the explanations of each case of a particular phenomenon into a broader, more complex theory.”¹³⁶ The success of this approach hinges on two critical research design tasks: (1) selecting inferentially valuable cases and (2) devising standardized criteria to guide the operationalization of key variables.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

¹³⁷ For an expanded list of research design tasks, see *ibid.*, ch. 4.

Table 2.4: Summary of Observable Implications

	Demand-side Theory	Collective Goods Theory
Main hypotheses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic incoherence will be more likely if the leading power pursues an outsourcing grand strategy vis-à-vis a relatively vulnerable ally. 2. Strategic incoherence will be more likely if the leading power pursues an insourcing grand strategy vis-à-vis a relatively invulnerable ally. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic incoherence will be more likely if the leading power overcommits military resources to the ally's security. 2. Strategic incoherence will be more likely if the ally is less threatened by the adversary.
Additional implications		
<i>Foreign policy decision-making processes</i>	Allied policymakers will deliberate military capabilities primarily with reference to their country's military vulnerability vis-à-vis the adversary.	Allied policymakers will deliberate military capabilities primarily with reference to the leading power's security commitments.
<i>Domestic politics</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allied leaders will moderate their ideologies or domestic political agenda if they collide with the incentives generated by their military vulnerability. 2. The leading power's domestic politics will not significantly affect patterns of strategic coherence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ally's domestic politics will matter more for strategic coherence if the leading power's commitment to its security is perceived to be strong. 2. Allies will be less willing to accommodate the grand strategies of leading powers with "internally weak" political systems or expansionist domestic constituencies.
<i>Polarity</i>	The ally's local security environment will determine patterns of strategic coherence, rather than the global distribution of power.	Strategic incoherence will be least likely under bipolarity and most likely under multipolarity.

Selecting and Using Cases

I rely on two important tools of qualitative causal inference—congruence analysis and process-tracing—to examine whether data from historical alliances are consistent with the implications of my theory.¹³⁸ The strength of these methods depends to a great extent on the selection of inferentially valuable cases; at the broadest level, I aim to select cases that, as a group, offer what

¹³⁸ Congruence analysis looks for consistencies between the values of hypothesized causes and observed outcomes within a given case. Process-tracing constructs a systematically sequenced narrative to identify whether the causal process by which an outcome arose was consistent with theoretically postulated mechanisms. See *ibid.*, chs. 9-10.

Slater and Ziblatt call “representative variation” in the dependent variable. In their words, comparative case studies “are most likely to generate externally valid findings when the variation in the sample broadly mirrors variation in some broader and explicitly defined population of cases.”¹³⁹ This criterion leads me to look for distinct *pairs* of states that, while allied to the same leading power and threatened by the same adversary, adopted military capabilities that had markedly different implications for strategic coherence. Whenever possible, I also try to exploit within-case variation in strategic coherence, which enables me to compare the effects of changes in my independent variables while holding many attributes of the leading power-ally relationship constant.

Taking representative variation as the first guiding principle, I look for three additional attributes to identify useful cases. First, I look for data-rich cases. Using process-tracing to test my theory requires a great deal of data on the calculus of individuals who shaped security policy decisions relevant to strategic coherence; as Andrew Bennett argues, the method depends critically on being able to map out “who knew what, when, and what they did in response.”¹⁴⁰ This criterion leads me to place U.S. and Soviet alliance relationships during the Cold War at the center of my empirical investigation, as explained further in subsequent chapters.

Second, I try to select cases that promise a tough test for demand-side theory. These are cases that feature a relative abundance of “countervailing conditions” that “[decrease] the probability the researcher will observe the outcome posited by the theory being tested.”¹⁴¹ This

¹³⁹ Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” *Comparative Political Studies* 20, no. 10 (2013): 11-12.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Bennett, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 209.

¹⁴¹ Aaron Rapport, “Hard Thinking about Hard and Easy Cases in Security Studies,” *Security Studies* 24, no. 3 (2015): 434. See also Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in *Handbook of Political Science, vol. 7: Strategies of Inquiry*, eds. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 117-120; and Timothy J. McKeown, “Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview: Review of King, Keohane, and Verba’s

means that I should look for cases in which collective goods theory offers clear, specific expectations about strategic coherence that diverge from those of demand-side theory. In particular, my earlier review suggests that collective goods theory should easily predict strategic coherence when (1) key domestic constituents in the leading power support limiting or reducing international security commitments, (2) the leading power enjoys a highly centralized and coherent decision-making apparatus, or (3) the alliance relationship unfolds in a bipolar international system. Evidence that levels of strategic coherence nonetheless varied substantially under such conditions in ways consistent with demand-side theory would be highly suggestive for its validity across a wide range of regional and historical settings. As I detail in later chapters, U.S. alliance relationships in NATO in the 1949-1954 period and the Soviet Union's alliance relationships with China and Cuba fit this criterion.

Finally, I look for cases that are intrinsically important for theory and policy. Theories asserting broad explanatory power should illuminate cases that hold "special normative interest because of a past or current major role in domestic or international politics." James Mahoney and Gary Goertz thus point out that scholars of American politics would "have serious doubts about a theory of American elections that failed miserably for California and New York even if it worked well for some smaller states."¹⁴² In the same vein, Paul Poast argues that a theory that claims to explain alliance treaty formation should presumably be able to explain key aspects of NATO's origins: "scholars are right to question a theory's utility if it cannot shed insights into this case."¹⁴³ Political relevance, then, is part and parcel to a case's overall inferential value. Thus, in chapter 5,

Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research," *International Organization* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 161-190.

¹⁴² James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research," *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 242.

¹⁴³ Poast, *Arguing about Alliances*, 138.

I briefly examine the sources of strategic incoherence in Great Britain's security relationship with the Japan in the early 20th century. It is not unreasonable to demand that my theory should be able to travel beyond the Cold War to shed light on such cases, given the outsized role both powers played in shaping the international politics of that era. In the same chapter, I also apply my theory to the United States' alliances with Japan and South Korea, as well as China's alliance with North Korea, in contemporary times. I thereby demonstrate my theory's relevance for grand strategy and alliance politics in the 21st century.

Measuring Key Variables

In addition to case selection, another critical research design task is to develop a substantively satisfying approach to gathering data on the key variables identified by my new theory. To code the leading power's grand strategy as either outsourcing or insourcing, I examine the strategic objectives advocated by its central decision-makers and the military capabilities they demanded from allies based on these objectives. Expressions of the leading power's strategic vision should be available in the private and public statements of its leaders, as well as key security policy documents.¹⁴⁴ For example, as I elaborate in chapter 3, the concept of American national security that President Dwight Eisenhower articulated fits the logic of outsourcing *par excellence*. Throughout the 1950s, he emphasized over and over again that the task of counterbalancing Soviet power could not depend "materially upon the existence, in Europe, of strong American units." The U.S. had to instead "assist [the Europeans to] regain their confidence and get on their own military

¹⁴⁴ In Nina Silove's terms, I am looking for the leading power's grand strategy in the form of both "grand plans" and "grand principles." See Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword," 34-42.

feet.”¹⁴⁵ U.S. obsession with maximizing the military capabilities of its European allies, in turn, was reflected in NATO’s December 1954 guidance for its military forces. The document not only demanded that national forces under NATO had to exert maximum initiative and mobility, but also implied that the Europeans had to be equipped with nuclear weapons under their own control.¹⁴⁶ Contrast this with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s emphasis in June 1962 on the “unity of planning, concentration of executive authority, and central direction...[The U.S. would] find it intolerable to contemplate having only a part of the [alliance’s] strategic force launched in isolation from our main striking power.”¹⁴⁷ Clearly, by this time the United States had transitioned to a grand strategy of insourcing.

As regards the ally’s military vulnerability, I rely on two main indicators. First, to obtain a first-cut summary of vulnerability, I use a distance-adjusted ratio of the widely used Composite Index of National Capability (CINC), adapting a formula introduced by Bruce Bueno De Mesquita.¹⁴⁸ This ratio holds an advantage over standard quantitative indicators because it captures, however crudely, the influence of both material assets and geography on military vulnerability. Second, and more importantly, I use context-specific information on military vulnerability found

¹⁴⁵ Eisenhower’s letter to Edward J. Bermingham, February 28, 1951, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, Vols. 12 and 13: NATO and the Campaign of 1952*, eds. Louis Galambos et al. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): 76-77.

¹⁴⁶ For details, see ch. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Robert McNamara, University of Michigan Commencement Address, June 9, 1962, <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Deterrence/Nocities.shtml>.

¹⁴⁸ The ratio is calculated using the formula $Adversary\ CINC_t^{\log\left(\frac{Intercity\ Distance}{Miles\ per\ day}\right) + (10 - e)}$: *Ally CINC*. See Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1981), 103-107. I adjust Bueno de Mesquita’s original formula in two ways. First, instead of using the distance between the ally’s capital city and that of its adversary, I use the capital of the nearest country to which the adversary has permanent troop deployments as the reference point. Thus, instead of taking the distance between Washington and Beijing to calculate the ratio for the U.S.-China dyad, I use the distance between Seoul and Beijing as the input for “intercity distance” in the formula. Second, rather than defining the “daily transit range” of military forces as 250 miles per day, as Bueno de Mesquita does, I define it as 50 miles per day. I thank Do Young Lee for pointing me to these important adjustments. On CINC, see J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985,” *International Interactions* 14 (1987): 115-132.

in net assessments, intelligence reports, and the judgments of individual policymakers.¹⁴⁹ Due to the multiplicity of variables that affect a state's security situation, decision-makers' assessments of their country's military vulnerability may diverge considerably from those suggested by even the most useful summary statistics. It is thus important to examine detailed context-specific indicators in order to obtain an accurate picture of how militarily vulnerable a state was at a given moment in time.

I follow a two-step procedure to code my dependent variable, that is, the level of strategic coherence that achieved within a military alliance. First, I gather core prescriptions for allied military capabilities revealed in the leading power's strategic statements and military plans. Second, I examine the extent to which the military capabilities adopted by a given ally fit those prescriptions. For example, recall that U.S. strategic guidance during the 1950s demanded that the major European allies—France and West Germany—develop autonomous forces-in-being with effective control over their own nuclear weapons. Did France and West Germany acquire such forces? Later, U.S. grand strategy transitioned to insourcing, emphasizing that the alliance's major escalation decisions should be subjected to “full planning coordination” at all times.¹⁵⁰ Did France and West Germany adapt their postures accordingly?

Note that this procedure is analytically much more valuable for assessing the degree of coherence than mere evidence of acrimony among allies over strategy. Built on a structural logic of actor behavior, my theory explains the *choices* that individual states make and the *outcome* for strategic coherence these choices engender; it does not make strong predictions about the

¹⁴⁹ Net assessment uses available data on opposing military forces to estimate the possible range of outcomes in conflict scenarios. See Keir A. Lieber, “Mission Impossible: Measuring the Offense-Defense Balance with Military Net Assessment,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 451-459; and Paul Bracken, “Net Assessment: A Practical Guide,” *Parameters* 36 (Spring 2006): 90-100.

¹⁵⁰ NATO Military Committee, “Overall Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area,” MC 14/3, January 16, 1968, in *NATO Strategy Documents*, 358.

enthusiasm with which such choices are made. It may well be that allies choose to match their military capabilities to the leading power's grand strategic aims but do so half-heartedly and grudgingly. Conversely, both the leading power and the ally may resign themselves to the reality of strategic incoherence while maintaining outwardly cordial relations. Mine is therefore primarily a theory about the strategic equilibria that emerge in alliance relationships under different conditions.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed a new theory of strategic incoherence that focuses on the “demand-side” of alliance politics. I argue that leading powers need their allies to acquire specific constellations of military capabilities to enact their preferred grand strategies, but the allies often encounter prohibitive risks to following these prescriptions. A militarily vulnerable ally might trigger a costly arms race or preventive military action by pursuing bold enhancements to its military capabilities. The interaction between the leading power's outsourcing grand strategy—which calls for devolving military assets and responsibilities to the ally—and such severe vulnerability is a recipe for strategic incoherence. The leading power must embrace a grand strategy of insourcing, which depends on limiting allied capabilities, in order to achieve strategic coherence with such an ally. If the ally is relatively invulnerable, the opposite patterns will arise: leading power outsourcing will be associated with strategic coherence, and insourcing with incoherence. The logic and predictions of this theory contrast markedly with the reigning conventional wisdom—collective goods theory—which explains strategic incoherence mainly as a function of the leading power's security commitments and the perverse incentives they create for its allies.

In the following chapters, I anchor these theories in history. Chapters 3 and 4 examine U.S. relations with France and West Germany during the inaugural decades of the North Atlantic alliance (1949-1966). Chapter 5 delves into the Soviet Union's alliances with the People's Republic of China (1949-1968) and Cuba (1959-1968). Finally, chapter 6 features briefer case studies of Britain's alliance with Japan (1902-1923), the United States' 21st-century alliances with South Korea and Japan, and China's alliance with North Korea. I scrutinize each case for evidence that helps adjudicate the contrasting predictions of demand-side theory and collective goods theory. If there are alternative explanations besides the two general theories that have strongly influenced widespread views of a particular case, I consider them in my investigations as well. To avoid "straw-manning," I evaluate my theory's relative explanatory power against arguments that previous scholars have explicitly made about the cases in question whenever possible.

Chapter 3

Strategic Incoherence in the Atlantic Alliance, Part 1: U.S. Outsourcing and the European Army Debacle (1949-1954)

The United States' Cold War relationships with its Western European allies are some of the most extensively analyzed and debated cases in the alliance politics literature.¹ However, existing theories offer limited guidance on empirical puzzles related to the sources of strategic incoherence in these alliances—particularly U.S. relations with its two crucial continental allies, France and West Germany. In this chapter and the next, I use demand-side theory to shed light on such puzzles, including:

- During the first decade of the Cold War, why did the two continental allies consider but ultimately reject U.S.-led initiatives to create an integrated European army centered on West Germany's large-scale rearmament, even though both agreed that this represented a powerful antidote to the shared threat of Soviet domination?
- From 1955 to 1960, why did France make headway toward acquiring nuclear weapons under the auspices of Washington's "nuclear sharing" policy, while West Germany failed to do so?
- In the 1960s, why did West Germany reconcile its military capabilities with Washington's

¹ The laundry list of International Relations (IR) monographs that foreground these cases is telling. A sample from just the past two decades includes Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Seth G. Jones, *The Rise of European Security Cooperation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011); Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking from Above, Peace from Below: Ending Conflict Between Regional Rivals* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016); Alexander Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance: The Alliance Politics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018); and Paul Poast, *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in Military-Pact Negotiations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019).

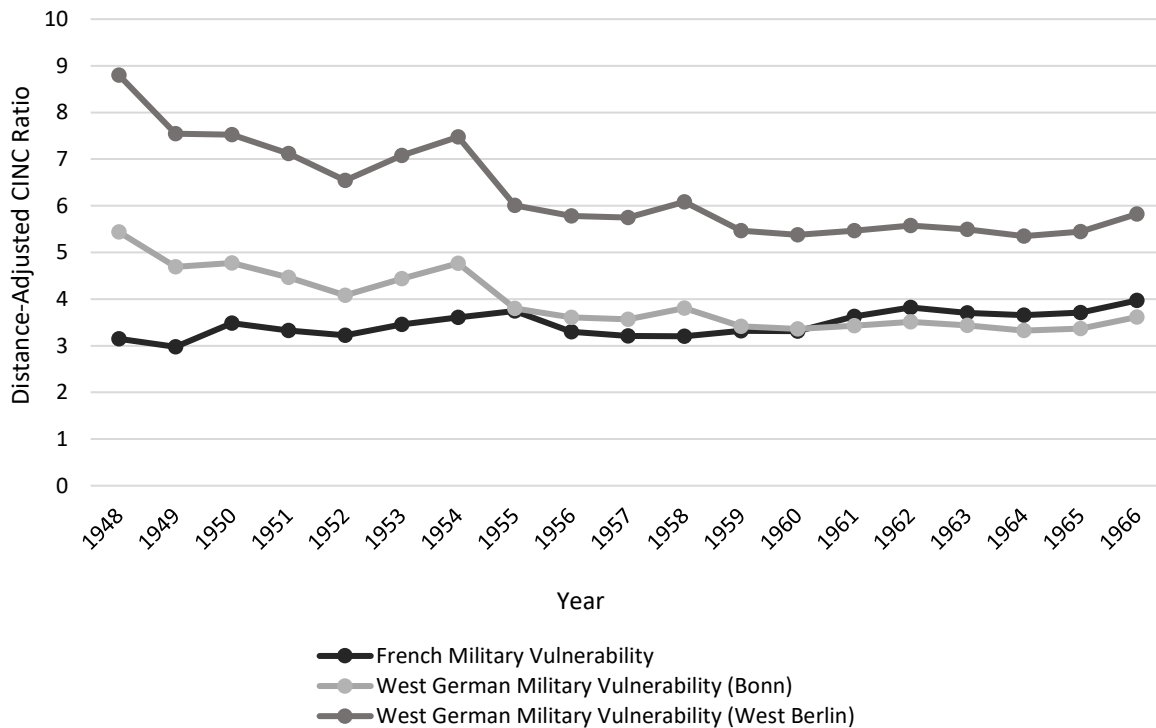
“flexible response” strategy, while France defied its strategy and eventually withdrew its forces from NATO’s integrated military command?

My central argument is that these patterns were products of the interplay between U.S. grand strategy and the military circumstances faced by its two major allies. The United States pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing in Western Europe during the first fifteen years of the Cold War, initially aiming to build up an integrated European army capable of checking Soviet expansion without U.S. involvement and, when this effort floundered, attempting to supply the European allies with nuclear weapons under their own control via its “nuclear sharing” policies. Then, in 1961, the United States shifted its grand strategy to insourcing, asserting centralized control over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s critical military assets and decision-making capacities with the goal of arrogating discretion over the scope and pace of conflict.

These grand strategies had starkly different implications for strategic coherence in U.S. relations with France and West Germany, owing to their disparate levels of vulnerability to Soviet military predation. Figure 3.1 proxies this difference with distance-adjusted ratios of the Soviet Union’s Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) scores vis-à-vis the two allies. Following this measure, the Soviet Union was 5.45 times stronger than West Germany in 1948, the eve of NATO’s birth. France, by contrast, was outmatched by a ratio of 3.12. Although this overall disparity subsided over the following decades, the geographic location of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)—and particularly the all-important frontline city of West Berlin—rendered it much more vulnerable to Soviet aggression than France throughout the Cold War.² Figure 3.1 shows that when West Berlin is used as the reference point for distance, the Soviet Union was on average 6.29 times stronger than West Germany throughout the period examined.

² I use the country names FRG and West Germany interchangeably in my discussion.

Figure 3.1: French and West German Military Vulnerability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, 1946-1966



Sources: Ratios are calculated using CINC scores and intercity distance data respectively found in J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985,” *International Interactions* 14 (1987): 115-132; and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1981).

Note: The Correlates of War (COW) project does not report figures for West Germany from 1946 to 1954. The CINC scores for West Germany during those years are thus calculated with data from the same sources used by the COW project. I thank Paul Avey for sharing his calculations.

I show that a grand strategy of outsourcing was associated with strategic incoherence in U.S. relations with the vulnerable West Germans and strategic coherence in relations with the less vulnerable French. When the U.S. transitioned to an insourcing strategy, the opposite patterns prevailed. Contrary to popular accounts, which highlight the Europeans’ incentives to gain security on the cheap via the American military commitment, allied policymakers opposed the U.S. drive to rapidly reconstitute West Germany’s military forces primarily due to concerns about the FRG’s

extreme vulnerability to Soviet preventive aggression. Later, U.S. efforts to devolve nuclear capabilities to West Germany was thwarted by Soviet preventive threats, although the same strategy facilitated France's emergence as a regional nuclear power. Finally, when the United States shifted its grand strategy to insourcing in the 1960s, strategic coherence was achieved in relations with West Germany. France, however, refused to comply with Washington's intrusive demands and eventually parted ways with the U.S.-dominated NATO in 1966.

In terms of the case-selection criteria laid out in the previous chapter, the United States' Cold War alliances with France and West Germany are inferentially valuable for several reasons. First, these cases are substantively important. As noted above, the Atlantic alliance has commanded a disproportionate share of attention in the IR literature. In Paul Poast's words, "NATO's role in deterring major war in Europe during the Cold War, its mission to stabilize and support newly democratic states following the Cold War, and its early-twenty-first-century role in combatting such nontraditional threats as terrorism make it arguably the most significant post-1945 military alliance."³ The recent flurry of works that revisit NATO's security interactions with the Soviet Union and its successor states attest to its enduring importance for students of grand strategy and alliance politics.⁴ I cannot claim to have properly evaluated my new theory of strategic incoherence before establishing its plausibility in this all-important set of alliances.

Another reason to examine these cases is the abundance of historical data. Over the past three decades, a substantial historiography has sought to reassess France and West Germany's

³ Poast, *Arguing about Alliances*, 138.

⁴ Key examples include Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to 'Bribe the Soviets Out' and Move NATO In," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 110-137; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016): 7-14; Sean I. Kay, "Realist Foreign Policy and Transatlantic Security Institutions," *Security Studies* 29, no. 3 (2020): 493-514; Andres Kasekamp, "An Uncertain Journey to the Promised Land: The Baltic States' Road to NATO Membership," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 6-7 (2020): 869-896; and Marc Trachtenberg, "The United States and the NATO Non-extension Assurances of 1990: New Light on an Old Problem?" *International Security* 45, no. 3 (Winter 2020-2021): 162-203.

postwar security policies with archival materials declassified on both sides of the Atlantic. The result, as historians Michael Creswell and Marc Trachtenberg point out, is that these states' approaches to critical defense policy dilemmas during the Cold War now appear "more understandable, more effective, and more rational than people formerly realized."⁵ In addition to consulting this detailed literature, I have engaged extensively with collections of primary documents that offer glimpses into the thoughts of contemporary policymakers and intelligence analysts. These include the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)'s "25-year program" archive,⁶ and the *Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO)* series, among others.⁷ Taken together, such resources allow me to construct highly credible causal accounts of U.S. alliance relations with its two key allies.

Finally, U.S. relations with its continental European allies during the first half-decade of NATO's existence (1949-1954) portend a remarkably difficult test for the predictions of demand-

⁵ See Michael Creswell and Marc Trachtenberg, "France and the German Question, 1945-1955," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 27. Important works in this literature include John W. Young, *France, the Cold War, and the Western Alliance, 1944-49: French Foreign Policy and Post-war Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Thomas Alan Schwartz, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution, and Reconstruction, vol. 2: The Statesman, 1952-1967*, trans. Geoffrey Penny (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997); Ronald J. Granieri, *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949-1966* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); William I. Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944-1954* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael Creswell, *A Question of Balance: How France and the United States Created Cold War Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); James McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943-1954* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002); Jeffrey Glen Giauque, *Grand Designs and Visions of Unity: The Atlantic Powers and the Reorganization of Western Europe, 1955-1963* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina press, 2002); Mark S. Sheetz, "Continental Drift: Franco-German Relations and the Shifting Premises of European Security" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002); and David Mark Thompson, "Delusions of Grandeur: French Global Ambitions and the Problem of the Revival of Military Power, 1950-1954" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2007).

⁶ Documents declassified via this program are available through the "CIA Records Search Tool (CREST)" system.

⁷ I examine British archival documents in addition to American material because, as the subsequent analysis will make clear, French and West German policymakers engaged in extraordinarily candid discussions of their countries' security policies with their British counterparts, often in ways that were not replicated in interactions with officials from the more distant and powerful United States.

side theory. I observed in the previous chapter that collective goods theory should easily predict strategic coherence in alliance relationships that unfold in a bipolar international system, and when the leading power's domestic political constituents are likely to support limiting or reducing security commitments to allies. As I elaborate below, NATO's early years featured these characteristics in abundance. Not only did the emergence of bipolarity leave U.S. allies with no reliable outside options to ensure security against the Soviet threat, but domestic political sentiment in the United States was overwhelmingly in favor of shedding foreign security commitments over time. By the logic of collective goods theory, such conditions should have empowered Washington to effectively wield abandonment threats to get its allies' military capabilities into line with its grand strategic preferences. The same conditions do not bode well for demand-side theory, which predicts significant variation in allied military responses to U.S. grand strategy depending on differential levels of military vulnerability. Given such unfavorable conditions, evidence that patterns of strategic coherence varied substantially in ways consistent with my predictions would provide strong grounds for adjusting our confidence in favor of the new theory.

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze the first phase of the U.S. outsourcing grand strategy in Western Europe during the Cold War. From 1949 to 1954, the United States mounted a forceful campaign to revitalize West Germany's military strength within the framework of an integrated European army. I show that West Germany's extreme vulnerability to Soviet military predation profoundly informed European responses to this grand strategic initiative. After laying out the evidence, I turn to collective goods theory and other rival arguments, finding that each of them falls short of explaining crucial patterns of strategic incoherence during this period.

U.S. Outsourcing and the Problem of West German Rearmament, 1949-1954

U.S. policymakers originally envisioned NATO as a stopgap measure to buy time for the Western Europeans to build up their own defenses against the Soviet threat. Toward this end, Washington tried to sponsor the creation of an integrated European army that would provide the institutional basis for the rapid reconstitution of Western Europe's military forces, and West German forces in particular. European concerns about West Germany's vulnerability to Soviet countermeasures played a key role in undermining this strategic vision.

U.S. Outsourcing and the Push for West German Rearmament

The United States' early grand strategy in Western Europe was an archetype of the outsourcing strategy. To be sure, there was widespread agreement among central decision-makers that preventing the Soviet domination of Europe was vital to U.S. national security. As historian Melvyn Leffler writes, the "omnipresent theme behind all conceptions of American national security in the immediate postwar years" was the idea that a Soviet Union that had arrogated the industrial and demographic resources of Western Europe would be too powerful a foe for the United States to effectively compete against.⁸ "Of the nations that were previously able to deploy" significant power resources, the CIA observed in 1949, "[i]t is only Western Europe as a group of nations that can now be considered capable of [re]attaining this status within a reasonable amount

⁸ Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984): 374. As President Harry S. Truman explained to Congress in January 1951, "[i]f Western Europe were to fall to Soviet Russia it would double the Soviet supply of coal and triple the Soviet supply of steel...and Soviet command of the manpower of the free nations...would confront us with military forces which we could never hope to equal...[T]hen we would be isolated from our sources of supply and detached from our friends. Then we would have to take defense measures which might really bankrupt our economy, and change our way of life so that we couldn't recognize it as American any longer." Quoted in Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 12-13. Leffler's works remain the most important references on U.S. strategic thinking during this period. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Reappraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (1982, repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), chs. 2-4.

of time.”⁹ The basic problem confronted by U.S. policymakers was thus one “of keeping the still widely dispersed power resources of Europe...from being drawn together into a single Soviet power structure[.]”¹⁰

At the same time, virtually every leader in Washington took for granted that the United States should not directly involve itself in Europe’s balance of power for long. Instead, the overarching objective of U.S. foreign policy was to accelerate the economic and military recovery of the allies to enable a “European solution” to the Soviet menace, the realization of which would obviate the need for a permanent American military presence on the continent.¹¹ It is difficult to overstate how single-minded senior U.S. officials were in pursuing this strategic vision. George F. Kennan, the State Department’s Director of Policy Planning, wrote in his memoirs that

[My objective was] to get us as soon as possible out of the position of abnormal political-military responsibility in Western Europe which the war had forced upon us...That we could not retire into a nineteenth-century isolation was clear; but it was also clear that we were not fitted, either institutionally or temperamentally, to be an imperial power in the grand manner, and particularly not one holding the great peoples of Western Europe indefinitely in some sort of paternal tutelage...[The basis of Western European security] would have to yield to something more natural—something that did more justice to the true strength and interests of the intermediate European peoples themselves.¹²

⁹ “Review of the World Situation,” January 19, 1949, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP67-00059A000500080014-3.pdf>, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 114. This point is largely uncontroversial today among students of America’s Cold War strategy in Western Europe. As historian Marc Trachtenberg puts it, “the intensity and persistence of America’s desire to pull out as soon as she reasonably could [from Europe]...comes through with unmistakable clarity in the *Foreign Relations* documents.” Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 167. See also McAllister, *No Exit*; Mark S. Sheetz, “Exit Strategies: American Grand Designs for Postwar European Security,” *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 1-43; Michael Creswell, “Between the Bear and the Phoenix: The United States and the European Defense Community, 1950-54,” *Security Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 89-124; and Michael Creswell, “With a Little Help from Our Friends: How France Secured an Anglo-American Continental Commitment, 1945-54,” *Cold War History* 3, no. 1 (October 2002): 1-28. As far as I am aware, only one serious scholar has tried to challenge this consensus among specialists. Christopher Layne argues that the United States pursued “extraregional hegemony” in Europe beginning in the Second World War, and that U.S. leaders “had zero intention of allowing Western Europe to become a truly autonomous pole of power in the international system” as maintained by the “exit strategy school historians.” See Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 196-197. Layne stands virtually alone in this position.

¹² George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1967), 464.

Other leaders agreed. Already in 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had told his British counterpart that “[i]n as much as the United States is approximately 3,500 miles removed from Europe, it is not its natural task to bear the postwar burden of reconstituting [the European powers]...The United States will be only too glad to retire all its military forces from Europe as soon as this is feasible.”¹³ And in April 1949, when asked by a Senator whether the creation of NATO meant that the United States was “expected to send substantial numbers of troops [to Western Europe] as a more or less permanent contribution,” Secretary of State Dean Acheson replied that “[t]he answer to that question...is a clear and absolute ‘No.’”¹⁴

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 lowered domestic resistance against increased defense spending and foreign security commitments,¹⁵ but did not lead to a change in Washington’s basic outsourcing aims. If anything, the war accelerated the U.S. drive to militarize Western Europe and extricate its forces from the continent. The chief rationale for the 1951 decision to deploy four additional U.S. divisions to the European theater, for example, was to grant the allies widened leeway to build up their own defenses.¹⁶ Indeed, for leaders like Dwight D. Eisenhower, this was the fundamental purpose of NATO itself. In February 1951, while serving as the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), he wrote that “[w]e cannot be a modern Rome guarding the far frontiers with our legions if for no other reason that because these are *not*, politically, *our* frontiers. What we must do is to assist these people [to] regain their

¹³ “The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant),” *FRUS 1944*, vol. 1, 184.

¹⁴ Quoted in “Senate Consideration of the North Atlantic Treaty and Subsequent Accessions: Historical Overview,” Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19971208_97-1041_464c8034c93f87a58bd9be3989734f33c59bca6d.pdf, 3.

¹⁵ Robert Jervis, “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, no. 4 (December 1980): 563-592.

¹⁶ On the background to this deployment, see U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, *Assignment of Ground Forces of the United States to Duty in the European Area, Eighty-Second Congress, Hearings, First Session, February 1951* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951).

confidence and get on their own military feet...If in ten years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defense purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole [NATO] project will have failed.”¹⁷

Washington’s commitment to an outsourcing grand strategy yielded specific prescriptions for allied military capabilities. First and most obviously, the allies had to acquire powerful armed forces in the shortest possible time. MC 3 (i.e., “The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area”), the first unified strategy document approved by NATO’s Military Committee, not only stated that each member state should “develop its military strength to the maximum extent” but also stressed that the “hard core” of the alliance’s battlefield forces would have to “come from the European nations[.]”¹⁸ Cultivating “elements of independent power” in Western Europe accordingly became the “cardinal point” of U.S. foreign policy during this period; for Kennan, the “chief beauty” of major initiatives like the Marshall Plan was that they “outstandingly [had] this effect.”¹⁹

That said, military planners also recognized that it would take “many years” for the European allies to develop forces on par with those commanded by the Soviet Union, which was assumed to have “maintained, if not increased, her technical, military, and economic capabilities” after the war. For the foreseeable future, then, “[s]pecial emphasis” would have to be placed on “methods to compensate for numerical inferiority.”²⁰ It soon became clear that the only viable

¹⁷ Letter to Edward John Bermingham, February 28, 1951, in *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: NATO and the Campaign of 1952*, vol. 16, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 77 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸ NATO Military Committee, “Revised Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area,” MC 3/2, November 28, 1949, in *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, ed. Gregory W. Pedlow (Brussels: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, 1997), 44; 47.

¹⁹ Quoted in David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 132.

²⁰ NATO Military Committee, “Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning,” MC 14, March 28, 1950, in *NATO Strategy Documents*, 90.

method was to ensure that the Western armies would fight under conditions of sufficient strategic depth while exerting maximum initiative and mobility, since fixed positions would be quickly overrun by a Soviet blitzkrieg.²¹ In practice, this meant that the NATO area would have to be defended “as far to the east” as possible, that is, on West German territory.²² As Marc Trachtenberg notes, the basic case for this “forward defense” concept was supported by a host of more specific military arguments: “arguments about the importance of avoiding the loss to the Soviet Union of western Europe with its great human and economic resources, which might be decisive in a long military conflict; arguments about the need to provide defense in some minimal depth for the U.S. medium bombers based in England; arguments about how essential it was to maintain a foothold on the continent, since a repeat of the Normandy invasion would obviously be impossible if the USSR possessed any nuclear weapons at all.”²³

The realization that a forward defense represented the only “acceptable and realistic” plan for Western defense had a very important implication: in order to devolve the task of European defense to the Europeans, the United States had to harness West Germany’s latent military capabilities. As the NATO Military Committee observed in December 1950, to say that the alliance’s defenses had to be built “as close to the Iron Curtain as possible” was equivalent to saying that West Germany, however odious its recent offenses, had to be rearmed and admitted into NATO. Not only was it unimaginable that war could be waged effectively on German soil without “active and willing German participation,” but NATO’s original European member states

²¹ On the disadvantages of “static defense,” see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 48.

²² North Atlantic Defense Committee, “North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medium Term Plan,” DC 13, April 1, 1950, in *NATO Strategy Documents*, 167.

²³ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 101. For details on the origins of the forward strategy, see Jeffrey H. Michaels, “Visions of the Next War or Reliving the Last One? Early Alliance Views of War with the Soviet Bloc,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 6-7 (2020): 990-1013.

were in any case “not likely to be able to afford to build up and maintain in peace the forces required” to secure this expanded area of operations.²⁴ At the same time, U.S. analysts estimated that “[i]f no restrictions were imposed on the size of West German armed forces....a peacetime force of about a million men could be supported by the present manpower and financial resources of the country *without causing serious economic dislocation*.”²⁵

In short, a consensus quickly arose among U.S. policymakers that realizing their outsourcing vision would, for all intents and purposes, require building up West Germany’s military capabilities.²⁶ As early as 1949, a mere four years after Hitler’s downfall, strategists as distinguished as Kennan were routinely arguing that “a program for the defense of the continent which attempts to leave out of account the military experience and skills and energies of the Germans is not a sound one.”²⁷ And by January 1951, Eisenhower was declaring before reporters that he was determined to “[let] by-gones be by-gones” and have German soldiers “line up with the rest of the free world.”²⁸

Europe’s Military Vulnerability: The Risks of Soviet Preventive Action against West Germany

NATO’s early years were frightening times for Western Europe. From the immediate aftermath of

²⁴ “Report by the North Atlantic Military Committee,” December 12, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 539.

²⁵ “The Outlook in West Germany,” July 14, 1953, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01012A002700030001-0.pdf>, 7, emphasis added. This report further noted the abundant supply of former German officers who could “form the nucleus of a future defense ministry,” and “that within five years the over-all scientific capabilities of West Germany will surpass those of all Western European states except the UK” (8). Germany’s industrial and demographic potential was such that James McAllister has argued for viewing the early Cold War international system as a ‘latent tripolar system’ as opposed to a strictly bipolar one. In his words, “[t]he belief that Germany represented a potential third power whose defection or allegiance would determine the overall balance of power, as well as the closely related belief that a united Western Europe could eventually emerge as a third center of power, exerted a dominant influence on American foreign policy after it became clear that there would be no cooperative settlement of the German problem.” McAllister, *No Exit*, 11. For a contemporary assessment along these lines, see “Review of the World Situation,” May 17, 1949, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP67-00059A000500080009-9.pdf>, 5, 8.

²⁶ For further documentation, see Large, *Germans to the Front*, ch. 2.

²⁷ Kennan’s letter to Charles E. Bohlen, October 12, 1949, quoted in McAllister, *No Exit*, 177, n. 21.

²⁸ Quoted in Large, *Germans to the Front*, 114.

World War II to 1949, Western policymakers believed that the Soviet Union's conventional military superiority was such that it could conquer most of Europe in a matter of months, and that the "terrific and immediate retaliatory power" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal was the main factor keeping it at bay.²⁹ Even this margin of safety was shattered by the Soviet nuclear weapons test of August 1949, and the sense that NATO had entered a period of dangerous military inferiority gripped Washington and European governments.³⁰ The communist invasion of South Korea in June 1950 seemed to confirm the view that the Soviets were aware of—and emboldened by—their favorable military position.³¹ The CIA argued in August 1950 that "[c]oncurrently with its preparations for the Korean attack, the Soviet Orbit has carried out preparations for other local operations," which had "materially improved Soviet capabilities for conducting and supporting military operations on a sufficient scale to secure virtually all of continental Europe...and to harass

²⁹ Dean Acheson in "United States Minutes of the Second Meeting between President Truman and Prime Minister Pleven," January 30, 1951, *FRUS 1951*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 318. For examples of early estimates of Soviet military capabilities, see "Report on 'Soviet Intentions' Prepared by the Joint Intelligence Committee, American Embassy, Moscow, USSR," April 1, 1948, *FRUS 1948*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 551-557; and "Note by the Secretaries to the Standing Group on the Preparation of the NATO Short Term Plan," SG 27/5, June 29, 1950, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/preparation-of-nato-short-term-plan-5>. In an influential 1983 article, Matthew Evangelista argued that Western policymakers deliberately exaggerated Soviet conventional capabilities during the early Cold War period to justify expansive security policies. Matthew A. Evangelista, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised," *International Security* 7, no. 3 (Winter 1982-1983): 110-138. Similar suggestions are found in John S. Duffield, "The Soviet Military Threat to Western Europe: U.S. Estimates in the 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 15 (June 1992): 208-227; and Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1977). Analysis based on subsequently declassified sources, however, has dispelled such claims. As Karber and Combs write, these documents make clear that "American and NATO leaders were generally able to construct an accurate estimate of Soviet capabilities oriented toward Western Europe and of the policy options available to them." In particular, they "recognized that the Soviets were increasing their conventional capabilities in Europe after 1948 and correctly judged that available NATO forces in Western Europe were incapable of defending against a Soviet invasion of Europe without a major conventional buildup or early use of nuclear weapons." See Phillip A. Karber and Jerald A. Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe: Military Estimates and Policy Options, 1945-1963," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 402.

³⁰ "Memorandum by the Counselor (Bohlen)," September 21, 1951, *FRUS 1951*, vol. 1, 172. On the widespread sense that the U.S. and its allies had entered a "danger zone" with the loss of the American nuclear monopoly, see Marc Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954," *International Security* 13, no. 3 (Winter 1988-1989): 11-18.

³¹ U.S. policymakers at the time took it for granted that Stalin had greenlighted the North Korean attack. Documents made available in the post-Cold War era confirm this view. See Kathryn Weathersby, *Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from the Russian Archives*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper no. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993).

and endanger defense preparations in the U.K. and U.S.”³²

To be sure, this did not mean so much that Soviet leaders were aching to initiate major hostilities with NATO as that “in choosing among the possible courses of action, they will not necessarily reject such courses as carry the risk of armed conflict.”³³ After all, as a National Security Council report observed, with the United States “being forced to commit ever greater increments of [its] forces-in-being in Korea” it was probably in Moscow’s interest to delay “the outbreak of general hostilities since the USSR would be increasing its own capabilities as those of the U.S. diminished.”³⁴ The report continued, however, that “[t]his could change” if Moscow perceived “that further passage of time leading to the material strengthening of the relative position and military posture of the United States [and its allies] would not work to Soviet advantage.”³⁵ Thus a key problem for Western policymakers, Charles Bohlen of the National Security Council argued, was to navigate this period of danger “in such a fashion as to minimize rather than intensify the danger of a general war resulting from a Soviet response to what they might regard as an increasing threat to their existence.”³⁶

Crucially, many policymakers worried that West German rearmament might just be the factor that “tip[s] the balance” for Moscow to launch a preventive attack.³⁷ Mainstream scholarship still underestimates how heavily this concern weighed in the minds of early Cold War decision-makers.³⁸ In private deliberations, European officials articulated over and over again their fear of

³² CIA Intelligence Memorandum no. 323-SRC, “Soviet Preparations for Major Hostilities in 1950,” August 25, 1950, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA), 3.

³³ “Soviet Capabilities and Intentions,” November 15, 1950, CREST, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000269240.pdf, 7.

³⁴ “Report by the Security Council,” August 25, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 378-379.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 379.

³⁶ “Memorandum by the Counselor (Bohlen),” September 21, 1951, *FRUS 1951*, vol. 1, 172.

³⁷ 194th Meeting of the British Chiefs of Staff, cited in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 111, n. 54.

³⁸ A small number of historians have attempted to shed light on the importance of this problem. See, in particular, Creswell, *Question of Balance*; Creswell and Trachtenberg, “France and the German Question”; and Marc

provoking the Soviets into taking forceful action against what they quite reasonably perceived as the military revival of a deadly adversary. France, dreading the prospect of facing the “Russians on the Rhine” if West Germany was conquered, was the most vocal.³⁹ A central question for “every thoughtful Frenchman,” Prime Minister René Pleven told President Harry S. Truman and other U.S. leaders in January 1951, was “why the Russians, who are fully informed on the military build-up in the West, [would] not attack in Europe before this program is completed[,]” adding that the Soviets would presumably have “a real fear of a Germany once again able to inflict terrible damage on the Soviet Union similar to that done during the last war.”⁴⁰ Foreign Minister Robert Schuman likewise felt that NATO’s military strength was not “such that we could stop any moves which the Russians might take should we discuss the German units question.”⁴¹

The salience of the German front in NATO’s military assumptions gave French policymakers good reason to avoid incentivizing Soviet aggression against West Germany. Western planners during this period believed that a Soviet attack, once initiated, would not stop with the conquest of Germany. Instead, once Western Germany was overrun, it was likely that “[t]he Soviet Union will deem it necessary to advance to the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean coast in order to cut off retreating French forces, secure the Spanish frontier, and to seize ports in

Trachtenberg and Christopher Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament, August-September 1950,” *Journal of European Integration History* 6, no. 2 (2000): 9-36.

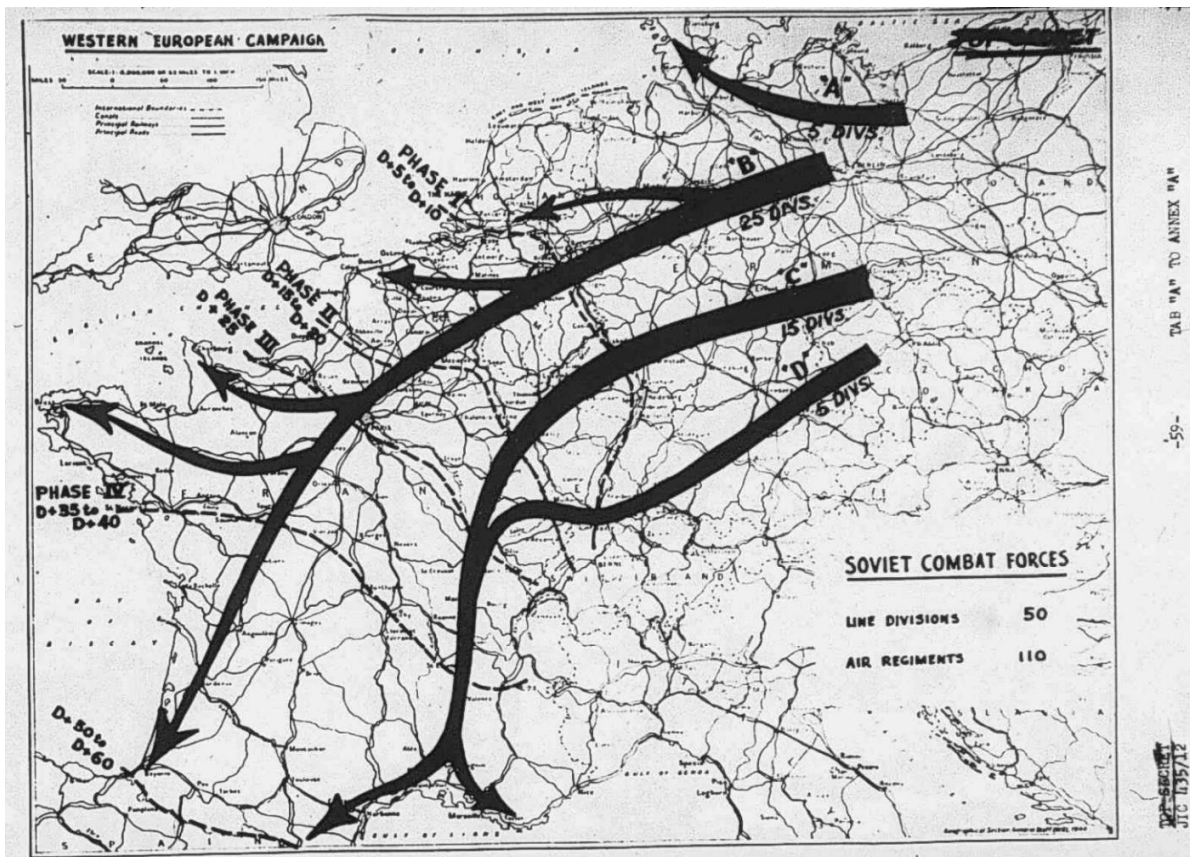
³⁹ Dietmar Hüser, cited in Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament,” 12.

⁴⁰ “Second Meeting between Truman and Pleven,” 318; 326. In the same meeting, Pleven appeared to question the U.S. ability to defend its allies from Soviet military action, citing reports “that the predominance of United States atomic power over that of the Soviet Union is not as great as is generally believed” (318).

⁴¹ “Minutes of a Private Conference of the French, British, and United States Foreign Ministers and their High Commissioners for Germany,” September 14, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 296. The French had been concerned about Soviet preventive motives even before the German rearmament question rose to the top of the political agenda. When French President Vincent Auriol was briefed by Foreign Minister Georges Bidault on the military organization envisioned by the Treaty of Brussels, signed between France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in March 1948 as a prelude to the North Atlantic Treaty, he cautioned the minister to refrain as much as possible from agitating Moscow: “Precipitate nothing; it would be a disaster.” Quoted in Young, *France, the Cold War, and the Western Alliance*, 183.

Southern France.”⁴² Specifically, as visualized in the 1948 U.S. Joint Intelligence Committee report “Soviet Intentions and Capabilities” (Figure 3.2), a Soviet invasion of western Germany was thought to represent Phase I of its Western European campaign.

Figure 3.2: Hypothetical Soviet Western European Campaign, 1949



Source: Joint Intelligence Committee, “Soviet Intentions and Capabilities 1949, 1956/7,” Tab A to Annex A, 59.

Once the occupying forces had “consolidate[d] west of the Rhine from D plus 5 to D plus 10[.]” Phases II to IV would involve thrusts aimed at conquering France, reaching the Pyrenees 50 to 60

⁴² Joint Intelligence Committee, “Soviet Intentions and Capabilities 1949, 1956/7,” December 2, 1948, in *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Pt. II: 1946-1953, The Soviet Union*, ed. Paul Kesaris (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1979), Reel 3, Slides 14–105, Annex A, 40.

days after the outbreak of hostilities.⁴³ In short, since it was assumed that a series of quick defeats across continental Europe would follow the collapse of the German front, the prospect of triggering a Soviet attack against West Germany was not to be taken lightly; the fates of France and the FRG were inextricably linked.

The FRG was initially granted only limited input on Western rearmament discussions.⁴⁴ However, West German leaders made clear through various channels that they were mindful of their own vulnerability as well. In a discussion with French statesman Jean Monnet in August 1950, senior diplomat Herbert Blankenhorn argued that without strengthening deterrence along the inner-German border the allies may “not be able to undertake even the limited rearmament that had been planned,” since “[p]reventive measures by the Soviet Union could not then be ruled out.”⁴⁵ U.S. High Commissioner for Germany John McCloy reported widespread fears in West Germany that a rearmament “decision might provoke [an] all-out Soviet attack, at [a] time when Western military forces [are] still insufficiently developed in general and [the Federal Republic is] inadequately defended.”⁴⁶ A 1951 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) found that “[t]he first and currently most important factor influencing the West German people against rearmament is their belief that it may provoke the USSR to war, and that the ruin of Germany would be completed by war. The West Germans are acutely conscious of their weak and exposed position and of the present inability

⁴³ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁴ As his biographer Hans-Peter Schwarz writes, West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer himself was initially “almost completely excluded from the decision-making process. He had to be content with such information as the High Commissioners and their senior officials were prepared to give him...Otherwise, he and his staff were forced to rely on the newspapers for their information.” Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution and Reconstruction, vol. 1: From the German Empire to the Federal Republic, 1876-1952* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), 520.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 536.

⁴⁶ “The United States High Commissioner for Germany (McCloy) to the Secretary of State,” January 5, 1951, *FRUS 1951*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 1320. See also French Deputy High Commissioner for Germany Armand Bérard’s October 17, 1950 note to the Foreign Ministry, cited in Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament,” 13.

of the Western Powers to defend them against Soviet invasion.”⁴⁷

Numerous U.S. analysts agreed that West Germany was highly vulnerable to Soviet preventive aggression. McCloy wrote to Acheson in June 1950 that German rearmament “would undoubtedly speed up any Soviet schedule for any possible future action in Germany and would, no doubt, be regarded by them as sufficiently provocative to warrant extreme countermeasures.”⁴⁸

The CIA concurred in a dedicated analysis of the problem:

It is unlikely that the Soviets believe that a program of Western German rearmament, once well under way, will stop short of complete remilitarization. They will have faith neither in the ability nor the desire of the western powers to limit Germany to purely defensive forces...If the methods of diplomacy and propaganda...prove insufficient to halt the rearmament of Western Germany, the Soviets will probably adopt more drastic measures, involving if necessary progressively greater risks of war.⁴⁹

The report went on to state that the Soviets had a range of military options available to them. In addition to “[m]ilitary and para-military demonstrations” designed to convey “the seriousness with which the USSR views the problem[,]” Moscow might employ “[i]ntensified harassing tactics in Berlin, designed to make the allied position difficult or untenable.” Beyond this, the USSR was likely to “seriously consider going to war whenever it becomes convinced that progress toward complete Western German rearmament...has reached the point where it cannot be arrested by other methods.”⁵⁰ The assessment also outlined specific escalatory measures the Soviets could adopt with regard to West Berlin, including “(A) Partial or complete denial to the Western Powers of

⁴⁷ “German Attitudes on Rearmament,” NIE-24, May 15, 1951, Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), 2-3.

⁴⁸ June 13, 1950, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 111.

⁴⁹ “Probable Soviet Reactions to a Remilitarization of Western Germany,” December 27, 1950, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01012A000400020001-3.pdf>, 1-2. British intelligence likewise concluded that “the re-arming of Germany is one of the developments which might provoke the Soviet Government to start a preventive war.” “Foreign Office to Sir J. Le Rougetel (Brussels),” December 18, 1950, *DBPO*, sr. 2, vol. 3, German Rearmament, September-December 1950 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1989), 380.

⁵⁰ “Probable Soviet Reactions,” 2.

access to Berlin; (B) Direct attack on West Berlin by German Democratic Republic forces; (C) Direct attack on West Berlin by Soviet forces.”⁵¹ In view of such dangers, a State Department memo prepared for Acheson in December 1950 recommended that the U.S. remain committed to “assist[ing] our NATO allies in continental Western Europe to carry out their roles” in its strategic vision, but at the same time “handle with the greatest care our efforts to organize and train Western German military units.”⁵²

Finally, available evidence on Soviet outlooks at the time suggest that Western fears were not unfounded. As historian Vladislav Zubok writes, there was a consensus in Moscow “that the USSR should remain an unchallenged land power in Europe, without even a shadow of countervailing power represented by another state or a group of smaller states.”⁵³ While Stalin himself privately believed that it was too early for the Soviet Union to initiate a major confrontation in Europe,⁵⁴ Moscow nonetheless went to great lengths to stoke anxieties about a Soviet preventive strike against West Germany’s remilitarization.⁵⁵ On October 19, 1950, it issued a note addressed to the American, British, and French governments declaring that the Soviet Union would “not acquiesce in such measures...aimed at reviving the German Regular Army in Western

⁵¹ Ibid., 4. U.S. Army Intelligence (G-2) added its view that, if confronted with the choice between “adjust[ing] itself to the restoration of” West German capabilities or taking “military action to prevent it[,]” the Soviets would likely “resort to military action rather than make the required adjustment.” See “Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany,” February 1, 1951, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP98-00979R000100120001-7.pdf>, 2-3.

⁵² “Memorandum Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff,” December 9, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 465.

⁵³ Vladislav Zubok, “The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev,” *Journal of European Integration History* 2, no. 1 (1996): 85.

⁵⁴ Vojtech Mastny, *NATO in the Beholder’s Eye: Soviet Perceptions and Policies, 1949-56*, CWIHP Working Paper no. 35 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002), 35-36. See also Kathryn Weathersby, “Should We Fear This?” *Stalin and the Danger of War with America*, CWIHP Working Paper no. 39 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002).

⁵⁵ On Soviet concerns about West Germany’s latent power, see Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev (An Analysis Based on New Archival Evidence, Memoirs, and Interviews)*, 2nd ed. (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2016), 109-116.

Germany.”⁵⁶ Also in late 1950, a Soviet diplomat told a Swiss counterpart in London that the decision to rearm the FRG would be regarded as “equivalent to the crossing of the Thirty-eighth Parallel by U.N. forces[,]” which had precipitated Chinese intervention in the Korean conflict.⁵⁷ Clearly, then, all relevant parties were conscious of West Germany’s military vulnerability.

The EDC Debacle and the Origins of the “Atlantic, not the European” Security Framework

In the first half-decade following NATO’s birth, Western Europe’s military vulnerability—defined in large part by West Germany’s sheer exposure to Soviet aggression—played a key role in undermining the coherence of Washington’s initial outsourcing vision. This is not to say that U.S. efforts at outsourcing had no appreciable effect on European military capabilities. France, along with other European allies relatively insulated from Soviet power by virtue of their geography, took significant strides toward revamping its armed forces under the auspices of American grand strategy. As Chief of the Defense Staff General Charles Léchères put it, France would “accelerate armament and put its forces back on their feet” with the goal of becoming “the mainspring [*cheville ouvrière*] of the ground action” in the event of a Soviet attack.⁵⁸

Thus, as U.S. Ambassador France David Bruce wrote, when most of Europe was still reeling from the devastation of war, France “increasingly channel[ed] her energies from reconstruction to rearmament.”⁵⁹ In August 1950, responding to Acheson’s request for the Europeans to share their prospective defense efforts, France committed to a massive three-year

⁵⁶ “Soviet Reply to the United States Note of 23 May 1950 Regarding the German Police in the Soviet Zone,” October 19, 1950, in *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*, eds. Beate Ruhm von Oppen (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 521.

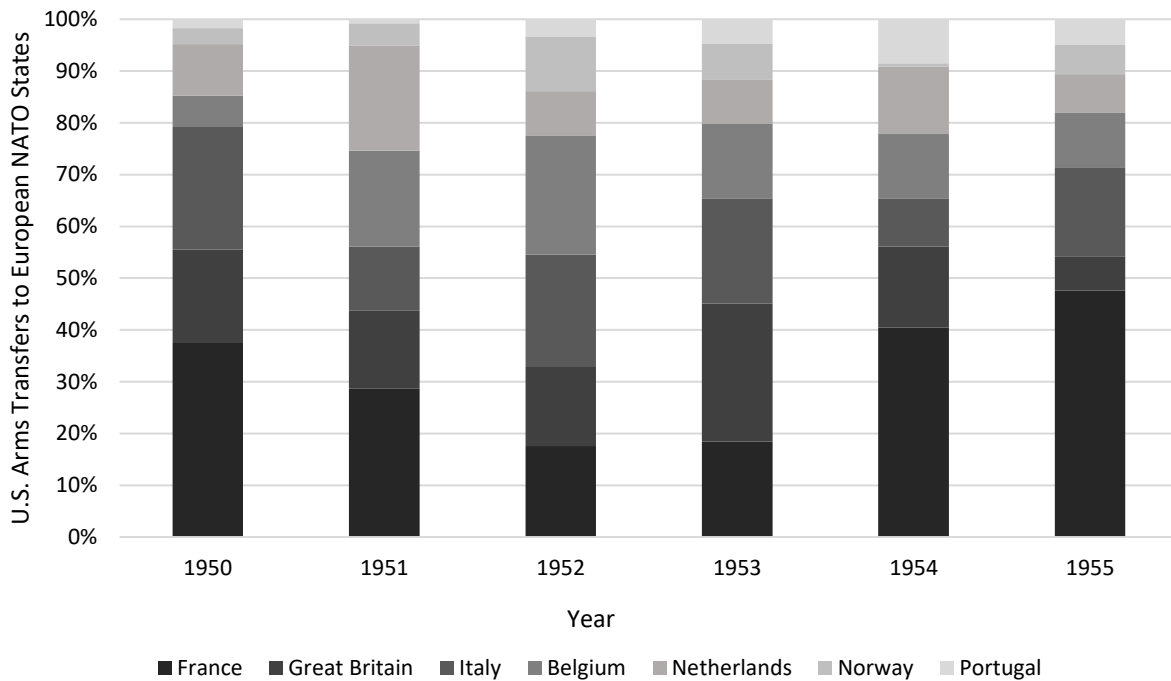
⁵⁷ French diplomat René Massigli to the Foreign Ministry, December 18, 1950, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 112, n. 56.

⁵⁸ Circa July 1950, quoted in Thompson, “Delusions of *Grandeur*,” 92.

⁵⁹ “The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State,” July 18, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 1381. Acheson was clearly pleased with French efforts “to build up [the] morale, strength, organization and equip[ment]” of its armed forces. See “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” June 22, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 1378.

rearmament plan to quadruple its army divisions on the European continent (from five to twenty) by the end of 1953.⁶⁰ French policymakers also made effort to gain privileged access to American military assistance, turning France into the single largest recipient of U.S. arms transfers in the early 1950s (see Figure 3.3).⁶¹

Figure 3.3: U.S. Arms Transfers to NATO Allies in Europe, 1950-1955



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

But France’s best efforts did not obviate the reality that, in order to realize America’s grand strategic vision, the Atlantic Alliance would have to take the key political step of revitalizing West German military capabilities. As General Omar Bradley observed, “sufficient ground strength in western Europe [could] be realized only [with] the German contribution[,] and thus “[t]he simple

⁶⁰ See Thompson, “Delusions of *Grandeur*,” 96. For Acheson’s request, see “The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Offices,” July 22, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 139-141.

⁶¹ For details on France’s efforts to become America’s favored military partner in the early 1950s, see *ibid.*, ch. 2.

military fact of the matter is that a strong, defensible western Europe needs both France and Germany.”⁶² Supporting this view were a host of assessments reaching pessimistic conclusions about the NATO-Soviet bloc military balance. For example, as indicated in Figure 3.4, U.S. analysts in 1952 estimated that the number of trained military personnel at the disposal of the continental NATO powers was only about 78 percent that of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites.⁶³ Corresponding figures for artillery pieces and armored combat vehicles was around 10 percent and 30 percent, respectively. Concerns about military shortfalls intensified as France’s military buildup appeared to approach the limits of what its economy could sustain.⁶⁴ All this is to reiterate the point that, if Western Europe was to generate the capabilities required by Washington’s grand strategic vision, there was truly no alternative to rearming West Germany on a large-scale basis.

Top U.S. decision-makers therefore insisted on pushing ahead even though many were aware the risks of Soviet retaliation. Characteristically, Secretary of State Acheson was an “uncompromising hawk” on the matter.⁶⁵ During a discussion with Schuman, he agreed that the allies “must be careful” regarding the question of German rearmament and, in particular, that they should not “give the USSR cause to do something they would not otherwise do.”⁶⁶

⁶² General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, “Is Russia Winning the Battle for Europe?” March 6, 1954, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01731R000400490002-7.pdf>, 4-4a.

⁶³ It was believed that this figure, if anything, underestimated the “marked advantage” enjoyed by the Soviet Union and its satellites since “the system for rapid mobilization of trained manpower is more highly developed in the Soviet Bloc, particularly in the USSR itself, than in the West.” See CIA, “Comparison of Selected Items in U.S. and USSR Military Strength and Industrial Production,” May 29, 1952, DDRS.

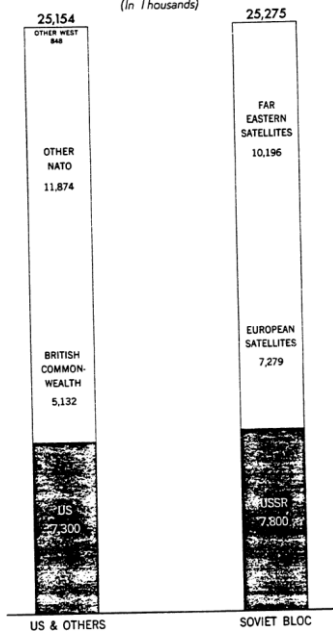
⁶⁴ For a contemporary analysis, see “The Deteriorating Position of France,” June 1, 1953, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP91T01172R000200310002-5.pdf>.

⁶⁵ The description is from Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 519.

⁶⁶ “Minutes of a Private Conference,” 297.

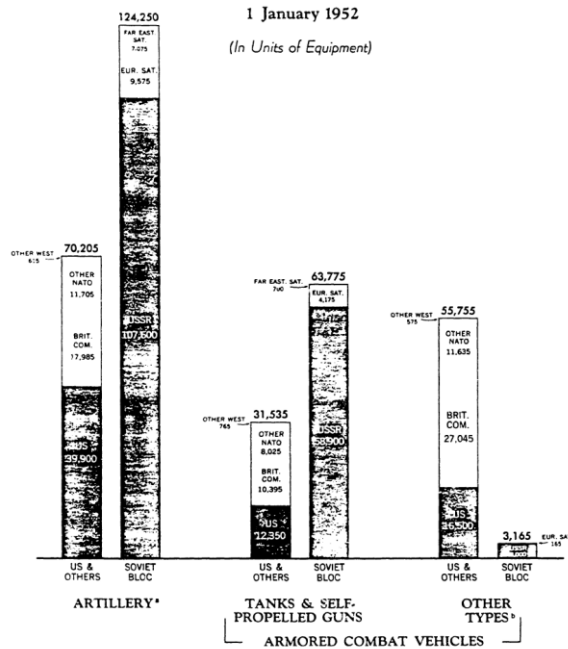
Figure 3.4: Comparisons of NATO and Soviet Bloc Capabilities in the Early 1950s

GROUND FORCES - TRAINED MANPOWER*
1 January 1952
(In Thousands)

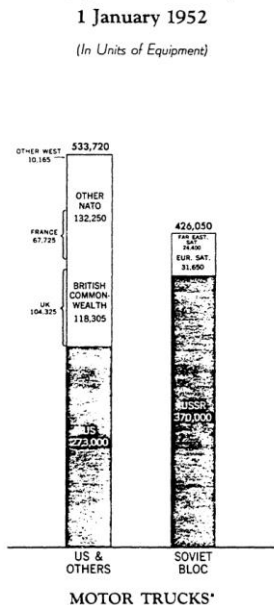


*Includes personnel in active service, reserve, and trained but not in active service or reserve.

GROUND FORCES - WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT
1 January 1952
(In Units of Equipment)



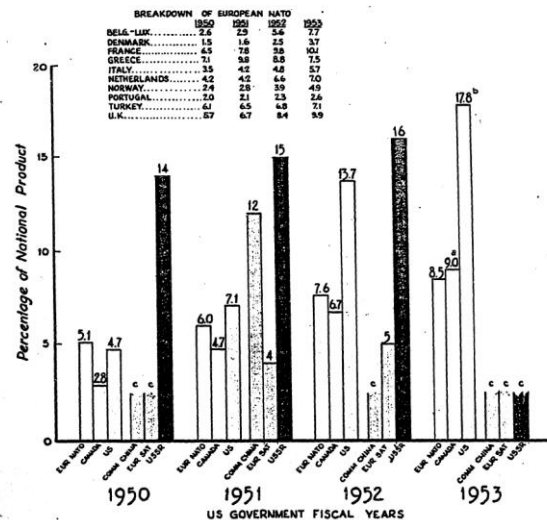
GROUND FORCES - WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT (cont'd)
1 January 1952
(In Units of Equipment)



**Motor Trucks* include all types of trucks, 4-ton and above. It does not include buses, sedans, ambulances, staff cars, and similar motor vehicles.

DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AS A PERCENT OF GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT

(The figures are necessarily crude approximations, especially the Soviet ones. The latter are not fully comparable to those for the NATO states because, among other reasons, there are relatively larger defense expenditures of an indirect form in the Soviet states, and these are not included. The very definition of defense expenditures is a difficult one, and is probably not consistent here.)



Sources: Ground forces figures from CIA, "Comparison of Selected Items in U.S. and USSR Military Strength and Industrial Production," May 29, 1952, DDRS, charts 11-13. Defense expenditures figure from National Security Council Report to the President, "Defense Expenditures of Soviet and NATO States as a Percent of Their Respective Gross National Products," September 5, 1952, DDRS, 3.

However, he downplayed the concern about “the USSR starting a preventive war” with the claim that the Soviets would be deterred “by the fear of atomic bombing” and that “[i]t does not matter to the Russians whether we are building up strength by the creation of a German army or by other means.”⁶⁷ Acheson was even more brazen during an internal State Department meeting:

It has been suggested that doing something along this line might provoke the Russians to military action which they might not otherwise take...If there should be an attack, I presume it would come from Russian fear that we were gaining strength...[But c]ertainly that is not going to deter us. We are not going to stay weak because if we get strong enough to resist attack we may bring it on. That is a chance we have to run.⁶⁸

Internalizing this basic attitude, other high-ranking officials in the State Department were similarly dismissive of European fears. “[T]he Soviets will doubtless move in any case whenever it best suits their timetable, resources, and their judgment as to the defense power of the West[,]” McCloy opined in a telegram to Acheson, “[the] proposed program [of rearming West Germany] might affect that judgment but that risk is inherent in any effective effort to improve the West European defense position.”⁶⁹ U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Alan Kirk likewise wrote that “[a]s for the fear that the Kremlin would react to these moves by immediate aggression...we cannot predicate our preparations on the hope that a soft answer turneth away wrath.”⁷⁰ Paul Nitze, Acheson’s director of policy planning and one of his closest confidantes, later recalled that the guiding idea in his State Department was to “accelerate the program” of NATO’s massive

⁶⁷ Ibid., 298. Acheson’s reasoning here was almost certainly wrong. Historical evidence suggests that deterring conventional attacks with the threat of nuclear retaliation is not nearly as simple as his comment implies. See Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2020), ch. 4.

⁶⁸ “The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State,” September 17, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 320.

⁶⁹ “The United States High Commissioner for Germany (McCloy) to the Secretary of State,” August 3, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 181.

⁷⁰ “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State,” August 9, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 193.

rearmament to achieve “a satisfactory solution of our relations with the U.S.S.R. while her stockpile of atomic weapons was still small”—the U.S. was willing to accept “increased risks of general war” toward this end.⁷¹

Then, from 1953 onwards, the driving force behind U.S. outsourcing efforts was the determination of President Eisenhower himself. Already in 1951, he had advocated the creation of a “United States of Europe[,]” which would of course include a rearmed West Germany. “I believe that such a step should be taken by Europe’s political leaders in a single plunge,” he added, “I get exceedingly weary of this talk about a step-by-step gradual, cautious approach. The United States...could afford to do almost anything to support and make successful such a venture, because by this act, our entire objectives in this region could be almost instantaneously achieved.”⁷² In his personal diary, he wrote that “*inspired* leaders” were needed to push through his strategic vision, “[b]ut everyone” in Europe was “too cautious, too fearful[.]” The reluctance of European leaders to construct a powerful Western European security bloc was the key problem to overcome. “With this one problem solved[,]” Eisenhower went on, “all lesser ones could soon disappear. I could write a *volum*e on the subject.”⁷³ In short, as French Ambassador to the United States Henri Bonnet observed in a cable to Schuman, the U.S. was so fiercely bent on rearming West Germany, building an independent European counterweight to Soviet power, and bringing its troops home that its policymakers clearly felt that the “risk [of a Soviet military response] would be worth running.”⁷⁴

Empowered by this consensus at the highest levels of U.S. government, Acheson proposed at a September 1950 foreign ministers meeting that the United States would (for the time being)

⁷¹ September 15, 1954, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 112, n. 41.

⁷² Letter to William Averell Harriman, June 30, 1951, in *Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 398.

⁷³ Eisenhower Diary Entry, June 11, 1951, in *ibid.*, 341, italics and underline in original.

⁷⁴ Bonnet to Schuman, July 27, 1950, quoted in Christopher Gehrz, “Dean Acheson, the JCS, and the ‘Single Package’: American Policy on German Rearmament, 1950,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 1 (March 2001): 143.

strengthen its troop presence in Europe and appoint an American general as the supreme commander of an “integrated and centrally directed” NATO force, but only if the Europeans agreed to the participation of West German units in this integrated force.⁷⁵ French policymakers were utterly dismayed, and henceforth began an arduous campaign to obstruct and delay West German rearmament. It was not so much that France was opposed to the very principle of a West German military contribution, Defense Minister Jules Moch explained to the North Atlantic Defense Committee, but rather that “the creation of these units [should] be not or tend not to become a risk which might be mortal to the democracies.”⁷⁶ He stressed that NATO had to “be careful not to place on the same level or plane those countries which are unfortunate enough to have a common front with the Soviet Union, those countries which are near the Soviet Union, and those countries which are further away. We must act prudently and do nothing which can be interpreted as an act of aggression[.]”⁷⁷ Schuman likewise argued that “[t]he French Government by no means has the intention of definitively opposing” West Germany’s rearmament. The NATO powers, however, could not be oblivious to the fact that “our necessarily spectacular decision would cause new dangers” in the eyes of the Soviets and their Eastern European satellites. The French position therefore was that “Germany must some day join her effort to ours, but...only when we can be certain that this German contribution, instead of strengthening our security, will not compromise it instead.”⁷⁸

At the same time, France also recognized that it could not present itself as a mere “spoiler”

⁷⁵ “Minutes of a Private Conference,” 296. On the origins of this “single package” proposal, see Gehrz, “Dean Acheson, the JCS, and the ‘Single Package.’”

⁷⁶ “North Atlantic Defense Committee Meeting Held at 1000, Saturday, 28 October 1950,” Record-DC-004, October 28, 1950, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/record-of-meeting-of-north-atlantic-defence-committee-held-on-28-31-october-1950>, 36.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁸ “Statement made by M. Schuman before the North Atlantic Council,” September 16, 1950, C/5-VR/3, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/third-meeting-verbatim-troisieme-reunion-proces-verbal>, 4; 6.

in the Western European militarization effort for long.⁷⁹ Acheson and Eisenhower were clearly not afraid to deal with allies in “the hard way”⁸⁰ and frustrated murmurs in Washington were indicating that U.S. patience with French obstructionism was wearing thin. Already in April 1950, policymakers like McCloy were arguing that, “however painful to some non-Germans [i.e., France],” Western strategic efforts would have to “decisively exhibit the trend towards full [FRG] membership in NATO[.]”⁸¹ Acheson himself maintained that “[t]here isn’t much time to hesitate about [German rearmament]...with that thought I am through.”⁸² There was thus a serious possibility that the Americans might decide to bypass the French and unilaterally rearm the Germans. Armand Bérard, France’s Deputy High Commissioner for Germany, thus asserted that “[it is] of the utmost urgency for us to come up with our own solution to this problem while the Americans are still open to suggestion.”⁸³

Rather than acquiesce outright to U.S. strategic demands, however, France settled on a strategy of miring the rearmament agenda in protracted negotiations. This was the motivation behind the Pleven Plan—France’s October 1950 proposal for the creation of an integrated European army.⁸⁴ The original French proposal for what came to be known as the European Defense Community (EDC) required all West German troops to be organized at smallest possible level (i.e., battalions) and placed under the strict oversight of a supranational Council of Ministers. All other member states, by contrast, would be allowed to maintain independent defense ministries and forces outside of the supranational framework.⁸⁵ This undoubtedly amounted to “military and

⁷⁹ The term is used by Hitchcock, *France Restored*, 127.

⁸⁰ British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, quoted in Gehrz, “Dean Acheson, the JCS and the ‘Single Package’,” 135.

⁸¹ “The United States High Commissioner for Germany (McCloy) to the Secretary of State,” April 25, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 4, 635.

⁸² “Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State,” 320.

⁸³ Quoted in Sheetz, “Continental Drift,” 136.

⁸⁴ The plan derived its name from René Pleven, then France’s Minister of Defense.

⁸⁵ See Large, *Germans to the Front*, 91-95.

political nonsense[,]" given the restrictions it portended for West Germany's substantive capabilities.⁸⁶ To obtain the battlefield mobility and initiative needed for the Western alliance to stand a chance against the Soviets, a North Atlantic Military Committee report had observed in December 1950, it was essential to field "national elements...[i]n which the fighting arms, supporting arms and administrative services are welded into a single fighting formation capable of fighting a sustained major action with its own resources; it should be able to fight so independently that the soldier can be inspired by...his compatriots' fighting powers."⁸⁷ This meant, in General Bradley's words, "that an international army, if it is to be efficient, must be broken by nationalities into units no smaller than a division. Differences of language, temperament, procedure, habit and training would otherwise produce only wild disorder."⁸⁸

The French, however, had proposed the plan fully aware of its deficiencies. As the British Joint Staff Mission (BJSJ) in Washington observed, although the Pleven Plan "apparently implied acceptance by the French of the principle of German rearmament[,]" it was obvious that their real aim was "to play for time" on the issue.⁸⁹ Indeed, when the Americans were not present, many French officials proved quite willing to confide to their British counterparts that the Pleven plan was "a '*canard*' to deflect [the] Americans from [the] immediate rearmament of Germany[,]" that there was "[n]othing sacrosanct about [the] plan[,]" and that France "[h]ope[d] Britain will not insist too much on the obvious inherent difficulties of [the] plan but will regard it as [a] long term plan which might ultimately have useful features." The "[h]eart of the matter" thus seemed to be that a West German army would materialize "in a comparatively short time" if the Americans had

⁸⁶ Comment by French Embassy official, in "Calendar to No. 84," October 25, 1950, *DBPO*, sr. 2, vol. 3, 220.

⁸⁷ "Report by the North Atlantic Military Committee," 540-542.

⁸⁸ Bradley, "Is Russia Winning," 7.

⁸⁹ "B.J.S.M. (Washington) to Ministry of Defence," October 28, 1950, *DBPO*, sr. 2, vol. 3, 227.

their way, while the French sought to prolong the process as much as possible.⁹⁰ Senior policymakers like Moch also acknowledged years later that “the plan was a subterfuge concocted for the sole purpose of preventing German rearmament.”⁹¹

Remarkably, despite initial misgivings in Washington, a modified version of the French proposal was accepted by the Western powers in December 1950. This revised plan limited West Germany’s contributions to the future EDC to 12 divisions, and prohibited Bonn from manufacturing nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons; any type of guided missile beyond the short-range variety; and aircraft for its 85,000-man air force.⁹² The fact that the United States accepted this plan—known as the “Spofford compromise”—was again indicative of how adamant its policymakers were about promoting Europe’s growth into an independent power mass and pulling their forces out of Europe in the near future. As Trachtenberg notes, U.S. leaders during this period often proved willing to support “whatever pointed in that general direction.”⁹³

Around the same time as the Spofford compromise was reached, however, the West Germans stepped up their own delaying tactics. FRG Chancellor Konrad Adenauer now demanded that the postwar occupation regime for West Germany be replaced by “a system of contractual relations” in exchange for its military contribution to the EDC.⁹⁴ While the Germans might have been content to move gradually toward a more equal political status in the past, Adenauer argued, “something more impressive” had to happen if they were being asked to put soldiers on the line for Western defense.⁹⁵ These new demands embroiled the German rearmament agenda in another

⁹⁰ “Calendar to No. 84,” 220.

⁹¹ Quoted in Victor Gavin, “Were the Interests Really Parallel? The United States, Western Europe and the Early Years of the European Integration Project,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 36.

⁹² Creswell, *A Question of Balance*, 91.

⁹³ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 114.

⁹⁴ “The United States High Commissioner for Germany (McCloy) to the Secretary of State,” November 17, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 4, 781.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 40.

lengthy series of complicated negotiations. The key obstacle to America's strategic vision was no longer French recalcitrance. "The Germans are the crux" now, Eisenhower lamented, "[i]f we are going to fight east of the Rhine and if the Germans do not want to fight, this is an extremely bad situation."⁹⁶

Why did West Germany suddenly decide to slow down the progress toward its own rearmament? The key reason was that, even more so than the French, the Adenauer government was sensitive to West Germany's vulnerable situation and sought to avoid measures that might trigger harsh reactions from the Soviets. The EDC was certainly preferable to independent West German forces in this respect; as Adenauer remarked in 1954, he was "fully convinced that [a] German national army...will become a great danger for Germany and Europe[.]"⁹⁷ And yet even the qualified rearmament envisioned by the EDC plan seemed much too soon, and much too dangerous. Instead, Adenauer believed that the pressing task for the moment was to lay the basis for "a strong Atlantic [i.e., American] Army in Europe" rather than prematurely reconstituting West German military power, which he feared might give "encouragement to the Russians[.]"⁹⁸ This view accorded well with those held by French policymakers. After a private conversation with Herbert Blankenhorn, Adenauer's top foreign policy advisor, Bérard reported "a certain parallelism between the position of France and that of West Germany with regard to the defense of the West." Both countries were "concerned above all with making sure that they are not invaded and that their territory does not serve as a battleground." By extension, both felt "very strongly that the West should hold back from provoking the Soviets, before a Western force, worthy of the

⁹⁶ "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, by Miss Barbara Evans, Personal Assistant to the Secretary of State," December 15, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 578. See also Creswell, *Question of Balance*, 35-39.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Konrad Kellen, "Adenauer at 90," *Foreign Affairs* 44, no. 2 (January 1966): 288.

⁹⁸ "Sir O. Harvey (Paris) to Mr. Bevin," October 25, 1950, *DBPO*, sr. 2, vol. 3, 210, n. 5.

name, has been set up[.]”⁹⁹

The new array of complications introduced by West Germany ensured that the EDC talks would drag out for several more years. In the meantime, the United States agreed to deploy a substantial contingent of additional troops to the continent, along with an American general to head NATO’s integrated command system. These arrangements were originally made conditional on West Germany’s early rearmament, but policymakers like Acheson had become convinced that the U.S. “had gone too far in thinking we should insist on this.”¹⁰⁰ Adenauer’s new demands suggested that the potential consequences of West German militarization were not solely feared by the French. The West Germans also had little faith that “they have a chance to survive[.]” and this meant that rearmament would have to be put “on ice for a little while.”¹⁰¹

Despite this concession, U.S. policymakers believed that the EDC still represented the only hope to build up the allied military capabilities necessary for the success of their outsourcing grand strategy. The United States accordingly exerted all manner of pressure on the Europeans over the subsequent four years to bring the EDC to life. In an episode that highlights Washington’s sheer determination towards this end, Acheson’s successor John Foster Dulles berated Livingston Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, for suggesting that it might be prudent to think ahead about alternatives to the EDC in view of European reservations:

This is just the sort of defeatism which the Eisenhower administration is not going to tolerate in any of its representatives in any position of responsibility for foreign affairs at home or abroad. Livy, put out of your mind any concept that there is an alternative or that we’re considering one to the EDC. The EDC is going to go into effect, and it will do so by the utilization of the full influence and power of persuasion of the United States government under President Eisenhower and myself.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ October 17, 1950, quoted in Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe and German Rearmament,” 13.

¹⁰⁰ “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation,” 579.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Quoted in McAllister, *No Exit*, 225.

U.S. officials thus regularly and explicitly threatened their European allies with the prospect of retreating to a “peripheral strategy”—that is, “a defense based on Spain, Turkey, and various islands”—in the event that they failed to ratify the EDC treaty. As Dulles once explained to General Bradley, “the French and Germans [had] to see that [this] military position would be tolerable for us...that would create pressures on them which would not exist if they think we are so committed that we must carry the entire load in the area.”¹⁰³ In one infamous case of allied arm-twisting, Dulles publicly declared that America would be forced to conduct an “agonizing reappraisal” of its strategy towards Europe if France and West Germany refused to embrace the EDC and “move onward to more complete and organic forms of union.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, in July 1953, he persuaded Congress to declare that the delivery of U.S. military equipment and material to the European allies would be postponed until the EDC treaty was ratified.¹⁰⁵

The European Army concept nonetheless met its demise in August 30, 1954, when the French National Assembly declined to ratify the EDC treaty by a vote of 319 to 264.¹⁰⁶ U.S. policymakers were outraged, and briefly considered cutting off all military assistance to France.¹⁰⁷ However, realizing that a robust defense of the Western European region was impracticable without participation from both continental allies,¹⁰⁸ they resigned themselves to an alternative to

¹⁰³ “Memorandum of Discussion of State-Mutual Security Agency-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting,” January 28, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 712-713.

¹⁰⁴ December 14, 1953, quoted in McAllister, 237.

¹⁰⁵ On this so-called “Richards Amendment” to the EDC treaty, see “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” July 13, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 797; and “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” July 15, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 797-798.

¹⁰⁶ On the role that the Soviet threat played in bringing about this outcome, see Pierre Guillen, “The Role of the Soviet Union as a Factor in the French Debates on the European Defense Community,” *Journal of European Integration History* 2, no. 1 (1996): 71-84.

¹⁰⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant),” August 30, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 2, 1118.

¹⁰⁸ Dulles admitted that, despite their intransigence, the French remained “essential to an effective continental defense system.” “The Secretary of State to Prime Minister Churchill,” August 20, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 1051.

the EDC suggested by France's Pierre Mendès-France government: West Germany would be rearmed within a NATO system dominated by American power.¹⁰⁹ Thus the FRG entered NATO as a contributing member in May 1955, but its allies retained rights to intervene in its domestic and foreign affairs and the powers of the American SACUER were strengthened to limit the nascent *Bundeswehr*'s freedom of action. Moreover, significant restrictions were placed on the size of the West German armed forces and the kinds of armaments they could build.¹¹⁰ Crucially, the Federal Republic voluntarily pledged to not produce atomic, biological, or chemical (ABC) weapons on its territory.¹¹¹ This so-called "no nukes" commitment would figure importantly in subsequent Western European security deliberations, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Rearming West Germany under the NATO framework was more acceptable to the Europeans than the EDC plan in large part because it was more acceptable to the Soviet Union. As seen in a December 1952 report by the Kremlin's Committee of Information ("KI"), the USSR's overriding fear in the early 1950s was that a military establishment of "an openly nationalist and revanchist kind" might once again "come to the forefront in West German political life."¹¹² In this setting, the fact that West Germany would be rearmed within a defense system explicitly centered on American (rather than European) capabilities mattered a great deal for Moscow's security calculus. Historian Caroline Kennedy-Pipe's explanation is worth quoting at length:

¹⁰⁹ British foreign secretary Anthony Eden credited himself with proposing this alternative arrangement. See Large, *Germans to the Front*, 215-217. However, Mendès-France had already suggested the NATO solution to British leaders on August 23, 1954, before allowing the EDC treaty to die in the French National Assembly. He let the British formally present the plan "as though it were entirely their own" because "this would make it more palatable to the Americans" who were still livid at what they perceived as France's betrayal on the EDC treaty. See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 124.

¹¹⁰ For details, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 125-128; and "Protocols to the Brussels Treaty," October 22, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 2, 1443-1456.

¹¹¹ Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 82.

¹¹² December 13, 1952, quoted in Vladislav Zubok, "Soviet Intelligence and the Cold War: The 'Small' Committee of Information, 1952-53," *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 458.

[T]he Soviet leadership differentiated in this period between purely European defense institutions and NATO ...[A]s a solely European body, [the EDC] would be dominated by the most economically powerful European state, West Germany. In the Soviet view, as a military organization it could only engender German revanchism...[But NATO meant that] American troops were installed in continental Europe in a system which would ensure that they would remain there...The remnant of the German threat, the Federal Republic, was occupied by United States forces and could not be expected to demonstrate any aggression beyond that which Washington might itself display.¹¹³

In short, Soviet policymakers were vehemently opposed to any Western European security scheme that depended on the full-fledged revitalization of the FRG's military strength, but NATO was an arrangement they could tolerate. Soviet Ambassador to the United States Georgy Zarubin articulated this point to his U.S. counterpart Charles Bohlen in July 1955. Stressing that "the Soviet Government did not take lightly the re-creation of German militarism[,]" he argued that Washington and Moscow had to "recognize certain 'realities' and agree what could be done in the light of these realities to prevent the development of tension and friction between the military organizations in Europe." Particularly important was "some sort of *modus vivendi* in Europe based on the status quo"—that is, one with the two great powers firmly at the helm of their respective alliance systems. "[A] complete departure of U.S. forces from Europe" had to be regarded as "a very long term proposition[.]"¹¹⁴ Leaders in Paris and Bonn intuitively understood this sentiment, which was why they colluded to derail U.S. efforts to rapidly rearm West Germany. As a note drafted by high-ranking French diplomats in 1953 argued, the U.S. strategic vision notwithstanding, Western European security had to be built "in the Atlantic, not the European, framework[.]"¹¹⁵

Summary of the Evidence

¹¹³ Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943 to 1956* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1995), 178.

¹¹⁴ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Geneva," July 19, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 5, 387; 386.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Creswell, *Question of Balance*, 106.

Table 3.1 summarizes my findings from U.S. alliance relations with France and West Germany in the 1949-1954 period. American leaders during the early Cold War were fiercely committed to a grand strategy of outsourcing in Western Europe. While recognizing that Soviet military expansion had to be contained one way or another, their intent was to achieve this by encouraging the development of autonomous military capabilities among key European allies and to retire U.S. forces from the continent as soon as this buildup was complete. As my theory predicts, the extent to which the two allies accommodated the prescriptions of this strategy in their military posture varied markedly as a result of their differential military vulnerabilities. The relatively invulnerable France embraced the U.S. strategic vision for its capabilities, accelerating its defense efforts “to create a powerful French force in the shortest possible time[,]” as one senior foreign ministry official wrote.¹¹⁶

Table 3.1: Summary of Evidence from the Atlantic Alliance (1949-1954)

Alliance Relationship	Leading Power’s Grand Strategy	Ally’s Military Vulnerability	Outcome for Leading Power’s Grand Strategy
U.S.-France	<i>Outsourcing:</i> U.S. plans to eventually withdraw from continental Europe; allies asked to build the “hard core” of military forces needed to contain Soviet threat	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> Geographically insulated from Soviet land power	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> France pursues ambitious arms buildup to become “mainspring of the ground action” in Europe
U.S.-West Germany		<i>High vulnerability:</i> Directly exposed to Soviet land power; “inadequately defended”	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> West German rearmament delayed until U.S.-centric alliance structure is set up

On the other hand, European fears of West Germany’s vulnerability to Soviet preventive aggression motivated a concerted effort to frustrate American plans to rapidly reconstitute the

¹¹⁶ Roland de Margerie, French Foreign Ministry Deputy Director for Political Affairs, September 28, 1950, quoted in Sheetz, “Continental Drift,” 149.

frontline state's armed forces. France led the charge while Bonn's voice in European security negotiations was limited. Indeed, a remarkable aspect of this case is that West Germany's military vulnerability was assessed to be so serious that another regional power was driven to oppose measures that might trigger the risks inherent in its situation. France did this with the understanding that the conquest of West Germany would bring Soviet power to its own doorsteps. Then, when the United States accepted France's disingenuous proposal to rearm the FRG within the framework of a European army, West Germany took up the mantle of obstructionism. Jointly sensitive to the implications of the frontline ally's vulnerability, France and West Germany had effectively collaborated to deny the United States the military capabilities required to realize its grand strategic vision.

Alternative Explanations

I now evaluate collective goods theory and other prominent approaches that suggest explanations for this case. The evidence indicates that none of the alternative theories, on their own, offer a better account for patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence during the early years of U.S. grand strategy in Cold War Europe than my demand-side theory.

Collective Goods Theory

NATO in its early years should have become the benchmark case of strategic coherence for collective goods theory. Perhaps more so than any other time in its postwar history, the United States was dedicated to offloading the burden of European defense to the Europeans and had no qualms about making naked threats of abandonment toward that end. Secretary of State Acheson, one of the chief architects of American foreign policy in the early Cold War, was especially prone

to dealing with the allies “with the gloves off[,]” telling them outright that the U.S. military commitment to Europe would be contingent on West Germany’s rapid rearmament.¹¹⁷ Acheson’s willingness to go rough on the allies was sometimes off-putting even to his supporters. “Y’ve got the right idea, me lad,” British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin reportedly told him after one foreign ministers meeting, “but you do go about it the hard way.”¹¹⁸ Generally speaking, U.S. policymakers during this period were willing to suspend any pretense of “run[ning] the Western alliance as a democracy” and resort to “bribing and bullying tactics” in order to get the Europeans to build up the capabilities befitting the outsourcing strategy.¹¹⁹

Also important was the fact that U.S. domestic sentiment was conducive to a foreign policy that envisioned withdrawing American troops from Europe as soon as feasible. To be sure, the American public in the early Cold War was not “isolationist” in the strict sense.¹²⁰ However, it was also highly suspicious of foreign policy schemes that smacked of permanent U.S. leadership in distant regions and its attendant implications of higher taxes and deficit-driven inflation.¹²¹ Contrary to popular belief, even the outbreak of the Korean War did not do away with this suspicion. As Aaron Friedberg observes, “[w]ithin a matter of months [following the North Korean invasion], opposition to financial extraction began to mount, and by the end of 1951, military planners had been forced to revise downward their expectations of the kinds of forces they could

¹¹⁷ “The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State,” September 15, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 1229.

¹¹⁸ Gehrz, “Dean Acheson, the JCS and the ‘Single Package,’” 135.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155. The U.S. approach to handling the allies during this period subverts the traditional, idealized picture of transatlantic relations during the Cold War in which a powerful but empathetic United States engaged respectfully with European concerns within a “community” of liberal democracies. For an example of this conventional narrative, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ See Elmo Roper et al., “American Attitudes on World Organization,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1953-1954): 405-442.

¹²¹ See Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 39-49; and Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America’s Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), chs. 2-4.

expect to maintain on a permanent basis once the fighting had ended.”¹²² Thus when seeking approval for the deployment of additional U.S. ground troops to Europe in 1951, administration officials bent over backwards to reassure Congress that the deployment did not mean “we would not within 10 or 20 or 30 years be able to withdraw from Europe[,]” since the allies “would certainly have had time, with their populations and their arms production, to build up their own defense long before that.”¹²³ That the domestic political climate was highly conducive to Washington’s abandonment threats is also indicated in the remarkable Congressional declaration of July 1953, which stipulated that the United States would help the EDC member states procure military equipment and materials “but delivery of the assistance shall not take place until the organization is formed.”¹²⁴ In short, neither the average American citizen nor the median legislator would have been terribly disappointed to see U.S. troops in Europe come home.

All this is to say that the conditions of early Cold War Europe were ripe for the United States to wield the specter of withdrawal to successfully promote strategic coherence in its alliance relationships, as prescribed by collective goods theory. Indeed, as hinted earlier, there is evidence that the Europeans took U.S. abandonment threats seriously. The French, for one, proposed the original European army plan out of fear that the United States might unilaterally build up West Germany’s power in its haste to withdraw from Europe. The U.S. also had some success in pressuring France into accepting the Spofford compromise. “What we don’t want is the Wehrmacht,” Foreign Minister Bidault told then-Defense Minister Pleven while urging him to accept the U.S.-modified European army concept, “but what we do want is to be defended.”¹²⁵ For

¹²² Friedberg, *Shadow of the Garrison State*, 115.

¹²³ Eisenhower quoted in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, *Assignment of Ground Forces*, 19.

¹²⁴ “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” July 13, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 797.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Hitchcock, *France Restored*, 146.

a long time, based on such evidence, scholars of the early Cold War tended to interpret the birth of the West German army within the NATO framework as a victory for U.S. foreign policy. Frank Costigliola neatly states the traditional view when he writes that “[a]lthough challenged by the French, U.S. hegemony still prevailed: however fitful...and however recalcitrant, France could not block the rearmament of West Germany.”¹²⁶ Frank Ninkovich likewise argues that the obstructionist France caved to American pressures for West Germany’s entry into NATO lest it become “totally isolated in Europe.” Thus it was that “the end result of French policy was acceptance of what it had originally set out to avoid[,]” that is, German rearmament.¹²⁷

The problem with this common narrative is that it misspecifies both what U.S. grand strategy set out to achieve in Europe during the early Cold War and what the European allies wanted for their own continent. Recall that Washington pushed hard for West German rearmament within the framework of a European army with the ultimate goal of withdrawing its forces from Europe. The reason why America had “to get [the] EDC ratified and the German contingents in place[,]” U.S. leaders agreed in a December 1953 National Security Council meeting, was to “prepare the way” for this “redeployment,” as military withdrawal was euphemistically referred to at the time.¹²⁸ A European security arrangement upheld by an indefinite U.S. military presence on the continent and in which an American SACEUR oversaw the alliance’s forces in “some sort of paternal tutelage” was close to the last thing U.S. leaders wanted.¹²⁹ On the other hand, France and West Germany favored a security arrangement centered on U.S. military power. Both recognized

¹²⁶ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 91.

¹²⁷ Frank A. Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945*, updated ed. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 105.

¹²⁸ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 174th Meeting of the National Security Council, December 10, 1953,” December 11, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 450.

¹²⁹ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 464.

that a grand strategic vision of containing the Soviet threat primarily with indigenous European capabilities could be realized only by disproportionately relying on West Germany's military forces. And while both allies were unopposed, in principle, to a West German military contribution, they feared that any security architecture that relied so heavily on the FRG's capabilities would provoke the Soviets into launching an overwhelming preventive response against the vulnerable West Germany.

Seen in this light, U.S. efforts to achieve strategic coherence during NATO's early years culminated in dismal failure for collective goods theory. At its core, the story of the EDC affair and West Germany's entrance into NATO is one in which France and West Germany—fearing that precipitously rearming the FRG might trigger costly military predation by the Soviet Union—undermined the coherence of America's outsourcing grand strategy through foot-dragging and obstructionism. This is certainly the view that prevailed in Washington at the time. Upon learning of the death of the EDC in the French parliament, Eisenhower exclaimed: “Those damn French! What do they think they're trying to do? This could really upset the apple cart in Europe[,]” lamenting that the whole situation was “an awful mess” and that “we are going to have to keep bases and troops on the continent of Europe for a long time.”¹³⁰ Five years later, the president was still regretting that that the U.S. had allowed itself to be “maneuvered” by the allies “into a greater position of responsibility than necessary[.]”¹³¹ Dulles was also deeply embittered by the NATO compromise. “The great loss” inflicted by this substitute to the EDC, he argued, was that “the long-range integration of Europe will be slower[,]” which in turn meant that the U.S. would have to

¹³⁰ “Diary Entry by the President's Press Secretary (Hagerty),” December 24, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 2, 1520; 1522.

¹³¹ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 424th Meeting of the National Security Council,” November 12, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 509.

postpone its retrenchment from the continent.¹³² Leaders in France and West Germany, by contrast, were quite pleased with the same outcome. French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France's assessment was that France "came out rather well" from the EDC affair.¹³³ Adenauer likewise remarked to his party leadership that "For us Germans, the present solution is on the whole better than the EDC."¹³⁴

In the final analysis, the European army debacle of the early 1950s embarrasses collective goods theory. It also suggests a lesson in humility for the United States. Although the European allies did pay attention to U.S. abandonment threats, they did not formulate their military policies primarily based on their assessment of what they thought Washington would or would not do for them. Instead, the local security environment—shaped in large part by the threat of Soviet preventive aggression vis-à-vis West Germany—was the foremost consideration. Dulles thus learned from the EDC episode that "we cannot always force people to do things they don't want to do[.]"¹³⁵ Another takeaway, underscoring the limits of collective goods theory, was that "[c]ertain of the pre-suppositions which the Administration had inherited seemed not to have been valid. This was particularly true of the pre-supposition of dependence of our allies on the United States. This had turned out to be not so great as had been thought[.]"¹³⁶

Domestic Politics

Another cluster of alternative explanations focuses on domestic politics. Norrin Ripsman argues

¹³² "Memorandum of Discussion at the 216th Meeting of the National Security Council," October 6, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 2, 1382.

¹³³ April 1, 1969, quoted in Creswell and Trachtenberg, "France and the German Question," 26.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 84.

¹³⁵ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 216th Meeting of the National Security Council," 1382.

¹³⁶ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 204th Meeting of the National Security Council," June 24, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 694.

that France obstructed the European army negotiations because its leaders were vulnerable to punishment by a French public that was unwilling to countenance West German rearmament. Among the Western democracies, French decision-makers were uniquely beholden to a “multiplicity of weak, undisciplined political parties” and “the norm of legislative interference in matters of foreign affairs.”¹³⁷ Therefore, while concurring with the need for a German military contribution, they found their hands tied by a public staunchly opposed to any kind of German rearmament; losing its support would “threaten the survival of the fragile governing coalition.”¹³⁸ Historian Michael Creswell also finds some evidence for the importance of public opinion, not only in France but also in West Germany. “Four years under the yoke of German occupation[.]” he writes, “left the French public understandably wary of any revival of German power and independence.”¹³⁹ A December 1950 poll indicated that nearly 70 percent of the West German public was opposed to rearmament as well.¹⁴⁰

An explanation centered on public sentiment suffers from two key limitations. Most importantly, evidence suggests that European policymakers resisted U.S. plans to rapidly rearm West Germany primarily based on strategic considerations rather than “bottom-up” pressures from their constituencies.¹⁴¹ Indeed, a close reading of Ripsman’s analysis supports the conclusion that France tried to spoil Washington’s outsourcing efforts largely out of strategic concerns, such as the fear that “German rearmament might provoke the USSR and spark a war for which the West was ill-prepared[.]” Public hostility to the initiative mattered to the extent that it provided French

¹³⁷ Norrin M. Ripsman, “The Curious Case of German Rearmament: Democracy, Structural Autonomy, and Foreign Security Policy,” *Security Studies* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2000/2001): 21. See also Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies: The Effect of State Autonomy on the Post-World War Settlements* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.)

¹³⁸ Ripsman, “The Curious Case of German Rearmament,” 29.

¹³⁹ Creswell, *A Question of Balance*, 35.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴¹ See Ripsman, *Peacemaking from Above, Peace from Below*, ch. 2.

policymakers with yet another powerful argument to deploy at the bargaining table.¹⁴² The same was true of West Germany, which played the decisive role in derailing the progress of the EDC negotiations in late 1950. As Trachtenberg writes, Adenauer “felt it was important not to provoke the Soviets at a time when the West was so weak...And the way to slow things down was to stress his very real domestic political problems, and to insist that a defense contribution would be politically possible only if the Federal Republic were treated as more of an equal.”¹⁴³

Moreover, arguments centered on the preferences of domestic constituencies are often unclear as to which domestic actors will prevail over others. In France, for example, influential interest groups such as the military and industrial leadership strongly supported German rearmament. Policymakers arguably had incentives to accommodate their preferences to avoid civil-military ruptures and to secure dividends for the French armaments industry.¹⁴⁴ Explanations that focus on competing domestic preferences thus offer indeterminate predictions for strategic incoherence in this case unless joined by an account of the regional threat environment that shaped the direction in which decision-makers sought to accommodate (and exploit) these preferences.

Another strand of reasoning highlights the vicissitudes of domestic political coalitions. Helen Milner argues that changes in the composition of the French governing majority from 1952 from 1954 was decisive in sinking the European army plan. An especially important development was that the progenitors of the EDC concept—leaders like Schuman of the MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, or Popular Republican Movement) Party—progressively lost allies within government and had themselves been ejected from the ruling coalition by 1954. Milner thus holds

¹⁴² Ripsman, “The Curious Case of German Rearmament,” 28. Ripsman’s intuition here is based on Putnam’s classic logic of two-level games. See Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460.

¹⁴³ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 112-113.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6. See also Michael H. Creswell and Dieter H. Kollmer, “Power, Preferences, or Ideas? Explaining West Germany’s Armaments Strategy, 1955-1972,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 55-103.

that while the EDC treaty could have reasonably been “ratified in 1952 and perhaps even in 1953[,]” by the time it was submitted for vote by Mendès-France “[i]ncreasing divisions in government and lack of endorsement prevented cooperation in this area.”¹⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Benjamin Martill writes that the centrist politicians of the MRP were ideologically committed to containing the Soviet Union and broached the EDC plan to “move France in a more pro-European and pro-Atlantic direction.”¹⁴⁶ However, their efforts were torpedoed by the rise of an “anti-EDC platform in the latter months of 1953” held together by politicians like Mendès-France who favored “disengaging” from superpower competition and opposed the crystallization of the Western military alliance.¹⁴⁷

These accounts betray several confusions about what the EDC represented for French policymakers in the context of the European security debate. The first is the degree of sincerity with which leaders like Schuman pursued the European Army concept. Milner portrays Schuman’s MRP as having been “internally united in favor of the EDC” in the early 1950s,¹⁴⁸ but I have shown above that French leaders proposed the original European Army plan not as a genuine alternative for European defense but as “a ‘*canard*’ to deflect [the] Americans from [the] immediate rearmament of Germany.”¹⁴⁹ Of course, they did agree to the U.S.-modified version of the European Army plan (i.e., the Spofford compromise) in December 1950. However, as Trachtenberg observes, it was only “because they had learned that the Germans would not go along with the plan that the French in the final analysis had been willing to accept it.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Helen V. Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 195; 200.

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin Martill, “Center of Gravity: Domestic Institutions and the Victory of Liberal Strategy in Cold War Europe,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 135.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴⁸ Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information*, 194.

¹⁴⁹ “Calendar to No. 84,” 220.

¹⁵⁰ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 112. Drawing on German and French primary sources, Norrin Ripsman also argues that French decision-makers were able to accept the Spofford compromise because “Adenauer informed the

A second confusion lies in overstating the extent to which the defeat of the EDC represented a victory for the political factions that opposed strong alignment with the U.S.-led Atlantic alliance. Martill argues that Mendès-France was a “notable EDC skeptic” and that “French strategy would have experienced a turn toward disengagement” from NATO had he stayed in power after 1954.¹⁵¹ It is certainly true that Mendès-France deliberately killed the EDC treaty in the National Assembly.¹⁵² However, he was simply following through on a policy of obstruction maintained by “successive French prime ministers” since the very beginning of the European army negotiations.¹⁵³ As with his predecessors, Mendès-France’s intent was not to undermine the birth of a Western military coalition involving the FRG but instead to ensure that the coalition would be firmly centered on American, rather than West German, power. Indeed, if Mendès-France wanted wholesale “disengagement” from the West, it is unclear why he proposed the NATO solution as an alternative to the EDC to the allies in August 1954 before anyone else did.¹⁵⁴ French policymakers in this period clearly differentiated between a “European” security arrangement like the EDC, in which West German military power would be all-important, and an “Atlantic” one predominated by the United States. Mendès-France’s intent, consistent with that of his predecessors, was to maneuver a reluctant Washington into compromising on its outsourcing grand strategy and accepting a leading role in European defense.

French Fears of West Germany

French Government in advance that the Germans could never accept the plan since it would never allow the Federal Republic the equality of rights that it demanded; therefore, there was no danger that...agreement would lead to any German military units in the foreseeable future.” Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*, 201.

¹⁵¹ Martill, “Center of Gravity,” 146-147.

¹⁵² See Clay, *Germans to the Front*, 212.

¹⁵³ Guillen, “Role of the Soviet Union,” 83.

¹⁵⁴ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 124.

A third alternative possibility is that France obstructed U.S. grand strategy due to its fears of West Germany's strategic expansion. Historian James McAllister argues that French policymakers worried about "how powerful Germany would be ten or twenty years later."¹⁵⁵ Thus, although the EDC was touted "as a mechanism to alleviate fears of German power and advance the cause of unity," it ended up having "exactly the opposite effect because it focused attention on the fact that even a truncated West Germany would still be the strongest power in the region."¹⁵⁶ Mark Sheetz similarly writes that "relative gains [were] a major concern" in France's approach to West Germany. Its leaders were especially concerned about Bonn's potential for "irredentism, revanchism, and militarism[.]"¹⁵⁷ I elaborate the theoretical and empirical groundwork of this perspective in my own earlier work, arguing that France sought to obstruct West Germany's rehabilitation in the Western security architecture out of fear that the materially-superior FRG, once rearmed, would soon come to wield disproportionate capabilities at the expense of France.¹⁵⁸ As Acheson wrote Truman in May 1952, French reluctance regarding the EDC boiled down to "their fear of being quickly outdistanced by their German neighbors...[T]heir inferiority complex relative to the German birth rate and industriousness is increased by such things as their burden in Indochina, which haunts them as distracting too much of their resources in all fields from the European theater where the Germans can concentrate their all."¹⁵⁹

As alternatives to the account provided by demand-side theory go, this argument is the strongest. There is evidence that even French leaders who were most clear-eyed about the primacy

¹⁵⁵ McAllister, *No Exit*, 75.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹⁵⁷ Sheetz, "Continental Drift," 199.

¹⁵⁸ Joshua Byun, "Regional Security Cooperation against Hegemonic Threats: Theory and Evidence from France and West Germany (1945-1965)," *European Journal of International Security* 7, no. 2 (May 2022): 143-163.

¹⁵⁹ "The Secretary of State to the President," May 26, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 682. For an extended discussion of how France's Indochina commitment influenced its approach to the German question, see Thompson, "Delusions of *Grandeur*."

of the Soviet threat still feared that the traditional German menace might be revived at some point in the future as well. Schuman himself appeared to equivocate between the two threats in an October 1950 cabinet meeting: “To accept the restoration of German units...is to run the risk of seeing the danger from across the Rhine reborn for certain, whereas the Russian threat which we wish to counter may not loom as large over time and, in any case, it is better not to add one peril to another.”¹⁶⁰ And even if the rearmed West Germany refrained from aggressing against its allies, as was likely given the shared Soviet threat, it might try to use its increased bargaining leverage to push and prod them into doing its bidding. A particularly serious concern was the possibility that the West Germans, giddy with their enhanced stature within the European coalition after rearmament, might drag their partners into a costly diplomatic or military confrontation with the Soviets in an effort to recover their eastern territories. Oliver Harvey, the British ambassador to France, recounted this fear to his government after conversing with one Quai d’Orsay official in October 1950: “Whatever was said now as to the number of German divisions, he was sure that in two years Germany would have the largest army in Europe and would be in a position to dictate to us once more...[they] might seek to detach themselves and threaten to go over to the East if we did not support them, or alternatively, they would push us into an aggressive war for the restitution of the lost provinces.”¹⁶¹

In the final analysis, however, the prospect of Soviet preventive aggression against West Germany was the dominant concern that shaped French—and West German—responses to U.S. grand strategy. There are at least three reasons to believe this. First, French policymakers tended to publicly exaggerate their concerns about German military resurgence for instrumental purposes.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Sheetz, “Continental Drift,” 150.

¹⁶¹ “Sir O. Harvey (Paris) to Foreign Office,” October 1, 1950, *DBPO*, sr. 2, vol. 3, Microfilm Supplement, Calendar 54i.

At a time when the Atlantic alliance was woefully underprepared to meet the Soviet threat head-on, it made sense to portray its collective defense efforts as being aimed at—in significant measure—containing a potential German threat rather than the Soviet one. Foreign Minister Bidault, who was adamantly opposed to any kind of German rearmament in public, thus characterized the idea of a renewed military threat from Germany as a “useful myth” that could help the European powers avoid unnecessarily antagonizing the Soviets.¹⁶² As Bidault told U.S. Ambassador to France David Bruce in April 1950, the real concern was “that a rearmament of Germany at present would provoke the Russians to war.” Barring this possibility, “one of his strongest desires” was “that Germany should become a member of the Council of Europe and play her full part therein[.]”¹⁶³ In fact, French policymakers sometimes admitted to a different kind of relative-gains concern during private interactions. They believed “[i]t would be ridiculous” in the longer term, Bruce reported after a conversation with senior French diplomat Hervé Alphand, “for the other European nations to make substantial, additional military efforts and to cut back normal production and consumption while Germany was permitted to manufacture on a ‘peace time basis’ for its internal consumption and for markets abroad.”¹⁶⁴ In short, as Creswell and Trachtenberg write, France’s official line about Germany during this time is “not necessarily to be taken at face value. A gap often existed between what is said in public and the real thinking of the political leadership.”¹⁶⁵

Second, France’s concern about the future bargaining leverage the rearmed West Germany

¹⁶² Quoted in Creswell, *Question of Balance*, 10.

¹⁶³ “The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State,” April 22, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 62.

¹⁶⁴ “The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State,” July 28, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Creswell and Trachtenberg, “France and the German Question,” 9. This is not to say that French policymakers did not also express genuine fears about a future German threat in private deliberations. See Mark S. Sheetz, “France and the German Question: Avant-garde or Rearguard: Comment on Creswell and Trachtenberg,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 37-45.

might be able to wield against its allies was inextricably linked to the larger fear of provoking aggressive reactions from the Soviets. French policymakers did frequently cite the possibility that the Federal Republic would “be tempted to draw the Allies into adventurism” in a quest to recover its eastern territories.¹⁶⁶ The fundamental fear, however, seems to have been that the Soviets would make this same inference and attempt to nip the possibility in the bud. President Vincent Auriol articulated this connection to Prime Minister Plevin in August 1951, stressing that West German rearmament would be *casus belli* for Moscow since the Germans would then have a pretext to involve the allies in its claim to the lost territories. The Soviets would have ample reason to “accelerate the course of events” before this outcome materialized.¹⁶⁷ In a lengthy letter to Acheson in January 1952, Schuman likewise expressed concern about how the rearmed FRG’s enhanced stature vis-à-vis its allies would be perceived by outside actors. Given “the demographic superiority of Western Germany, the rapid recovery of the Ruhr industries and of the German economy as a whole[.]” it was likely that “a serious problem of balance will arise within the future European community.”¹⁶⁸ Having a disproportionately powerful FRG join the allies as a full-fledged military contributor would then signal “a radical alteration in the very character of the alliance.” “When the [Atlantic] pact was signed,” Schuman reminded Acheson, “the statesmen of all the participating countries, beginning with those of the U.S., solemnly affirmed that the new alliance, brought about by a manifest threat, presented a strictly defensive character. C[ou]ld we renew this affirmation with the same persuasive force if there were to be included in the Atlantic Council a power which—in contrast with all the other members—would be led by its very structure

¹⁶⁶ Memo from French Deputy High Commissioner for Germany Armand Bérard, circa September 4, 1950, quoted in Sheetz, “Continental Drift,” 142.

¹⁶⁷ Note by Auriol to Plevin, August 27, 1951, quoted in Guillen, “Role of the Soviet Union,” 74.

¹⁶⁸ “Foreign Minister Schuman to the Secretary of State,” *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 9.

to advance territorial claims?”¹⁶⁹ In short, although France was genuinely afraid of West Germany’s relative clout in a future European alliance, this fear cannot be isolated from the broader fear of triggering Soviet aggression.

Finally, my argument that West Germany’s vulnerability to Soviet preventive aggression was the decisive factor that undermined America’s grand strategic vision during this period is reinforced by the behavior of West Germany itself. Recall that it was Adenauer and not Schuman who played the key role in thwarting the European army plan after the Spofford compromise of December 1950. A theory centered on the relative-gains problem between France and West Germany has difficulty explaining why Bonn decided to throw a wrench into the process of its own rearmament. The same behavior makes sense, however, when one recognizes the “parallelism” that existed “between the position of France and that of West Germany with regard to the defense of the West.” As Bérard reported after his conversation with Adenauer’s top advisor in October 1950, both governments felt “very strongly that the West should hold back from provoking the Soviets” by setting up a European army centered around West German military power.¹⁷⁰ Adenauer’s own words to his colleagues in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) was that “we Germans...should be careful not to lift a finger, lest it be smashed...[We] should understand that we really do not matter much in world history these days.”¹⁷¹

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used demand-side theory to shed light on U.S. grand strategy in the Atlantic Alliance and its outcomes during the first decade of the Cold War. American leaders in the Truman

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷⁰ October 17, 1950, quoted in Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament,” 13.

¹⁷¹ May 22, 1953, quoted in Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 74.

and Eisenhower administrations consistently pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing in Europe. While agreeing on the need to contain Soviet expansion, they aimed to achieve this by fostering autonomous military capabilities among the European allies and to extricate American forces from the continent once this buildup was complete. France and West Germany's military forces had to be reconstituted as soon as possible for this grand strategic vision to be realized. Thus, from 1950 onwards, establishing a "European army led by French and German ground forces" became "the projected backbone of U.S. national security policy for Western Europe."¹⁷² As my theory predicts, the extent to which France and West Germany ended up building the military capabilities commensurate with this objective—that is, the extent to which the United States achieved strategic coherence in its two critical alliance relationships—was determined by their military vulnerability. Relatively insulated from the Soviet threat by virtue of its geography, France pursued an ambitious military modernization program consistent with the U.S. strategic vision. However, the two allies worked in tandem to obstruct the formation of autonomous West German military forces during the same period, fearing that such a move would trigger Soviet preventive aggression against the highly vulnerable frontline state. Thus by late 1954, Washington temporarily resigned itself to taking on a much more central role in Europe's military defense than its grand strategy called for; "four years of American planning and diplomatic maneuvering had come to naught."¹⁷³

In addition to supporting my framework, the evidence presented in this chapter undermines collective goods theory's narrative of U.S.-European alliance politics during the early Cold War. Despite the high credibility of American abandonment threats, the allies did not cater their military policies to the strategic demands of the leading power that they were ostensibly so dependent on. Instead, strategic coherence and incoherence was a function of what U.S. grand strategy asked of

¹⁷² Creswell, "Between the Bear and the Phoenix," 89.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

the allies militarily and how this interacted with their particular security situations. Since the alternative was to risk inviting awful reprisal from the Soviet Union, both Bonn and Paris were willing to severely disappoint the leading power, whose grand strategic ambition for its allies was that they would grow into an independent mass of military capabilities that could check Soviet expansion in Europe without U.S. support. Historian William Hitchcock neatly summarizes the alliance politics of this period when he writes “that the United States, though the dominant or ‘ascendant’ power within the Western Alliance, did not always succeed in getting its way, but found itself constantly obliged to compromise with...much weaker, even dependent,” allies.¹⁷⁴ Other explanations centered on domestic politics or inter-allied strategic considerations are also found wanting.

¹⁷⁴ Hitchcock, *France Restored*, 204.

Chapter 4

Strategic Incoherence in the Atlantic Alliance, Part 2: From Nuclear Sharing to Nuclear Monopoly (1955-1966)

This chapter completes the analysis of strategic incoherence in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the first two decades of the Cold War. The first section examines the Eisenhower administration's post-1954 grand strategy of outsourcing in the context of alliance politics. While disappointed by the European army debacle, leaders like Dwight Eisenhower continued to hope that Western Europe would grow into a "third great power bloc," whereupon "the United States would be permitted to sit back and relax somewhat" despite the Soviet threat.¹ The 1955-1960 period thus saw U.S. efforts to help the Europeans equip their armed forces with the "most modern weapons" of the era, including nuclear weapons.² The second section focuses on the U.S. transition to an insourcing grand strategy in the 1960s and its aftermath. In stark contrast to the earlier administrations, John F. Kennedy and his successors pursued a grand strategy of insourcing, placing a premium on minimizing the risks of unintended escalation by monopolizing the alliance's key warfighting assets and decision-making powers.

I exploit this temporal shift in the leading power's grand strategy to further validate my theory's expectations about strategic incoherence. As in the earlier period, America's two key

¹ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council," November 21, 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1955-1957*, vol. 19, 150-151.

² Quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 184.

allies in Western Europe were confronted with radically different levels of military vulnerability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union (see Figure 3.1). My theory thus expects U.S. grand strategy to have diametrically opposing implications for strategic coherence within the two alliance relationships. U.S. outsourcing should be associated with coherence in Franco-U.S. relations and incoherence in West German-U.S. relations. Once U.S. grand strategy transitions to insourcing in 1961, the opposite should be true. Focusing on developments before and after the early 1960s allows me to trace shifts in the key quantities of interest—e.g., grand strategy and degrees of strategic coherence—while holding relatively constant larger structural factors that might otherwise affect the causal process. This design also throws into relief a key implication of my theory: to the extent local allies confront heterogeneous levels of military vulnerability, the leading power's grand strategy will be attended by starkly different patterns of strategic coherence even within the span of a single region. A certain level of strategic incoherence will be inevitable regardless of which grand strategy the leading power adopts.

Admittedly, it is difficult to maintain that this case presents an especially tough test for my claims. The events I focus on unfolded in a bipolar international system, which should be conducive to strategic coherence according to collective goods theory. However, the leading power in this instance was the United States—a state whose decision-making procedures have been traditionally described as exceptionally fragmented and decentralized even when compared to other democracies.³ Importantly, unlike in the period examined in the previous chapter, there are reasons to believe that influential domestic political groups in the United States had warmed to the idea of high defense budgets and large-scale involvement in European security by this time. By the logic of collective goods theory, this should be conducive to strategic incoherence in U.S.

³ For a discussion, see Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 55-70.

alliances. Given such antecedent conditions, the predictions of collective goods theory are not “precise enough that...only one outcome can be consistent with [the] theory’s expectations in [the] given case[s].”⁴ This means that observed patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence may be easier to reconcile with both my theory and its major alternative on a post hoc basis, making it more difficult to adjudicate between the two.

That said, even a cursory survey of scholarly perspectives suggests that this case is no “easy” test for my theory either. It has long been common for International Relations (IR) scholars to compare America’s Cold War relations with its NATO allies favorably to those in other regions and periods. Thomas Risse-Kappen, for instance, argues that the Atlantic alliance was formed as “an institutionalized pluralistic security community of liberal democracies...The enactment of [democratic] norms and rules strengthen[ed] the sense of community and the collective identity of the actors.”⁵ The claim here is that NATO member states worked together relatively seamlessly in the pursuit of common security goals because “collective identity” replaced “realist bargaining” as the basis of cooperation.⁶ For their part, many scholars who emphasize “realist bargaining” have suggested that strategic coherence prevailed in the Atlantic alliance due to a gross asymmetry of bargaining power. “Enjoying a position of predominance,” Kenneth Waltz wrote in 1979, “the United States could continue to focus its attention on the major adversary while disciplining its allies. The ability of the United States, and the inability of Germany, to pay a price measured in intra-alliance terms is striking.”⁷ In short, there is an unmistakable tendency in the IR literature “to

⁴ Aaron Rapport, “Hard Thinking about Hard and Easy Cases in Security Studies,” *Security Studies* 24, no. 3 (2015): 435.

⁵ Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 397.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 399. For a similar argument, see Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why is There No NATO in Asia?” *Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism*, *International Organization* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 575-607.

⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 169.

idealize U.S.-European relations during the Cold War period.”⁸ I directly pit my theory against this prevailing narrative by documenting and explaining episodes of strategic incoherence during this crucial era of NATO’s history.

I show that differential military vulnerabilities profoundly affected the extent to which France and West Germany harmonized their military capabilities with U.S. grand strategy between 1955 and 1966. The relatively invulnerable France enthusiastically accommodated the prescriptions of America’s outsourcing grand strategy in its military posture, developing nuclear capabilities in accordance with the Eisenhower administration’s “nuclear sharing” policies. Although the highly vulnerable West Germany tried to do the same, its military ambitions were thwarted by Soviet preventive threats. But when the United States transitioned to a grand strategy of insourcing, the opposite patterns of strategic coherence prevailed. France refused to accommodate America’s new interest in circumscribing the military capabilities of its allies. It acquired independent nuclear assets and doctrines in defiance of Washington’s strategic demands, eventually withdrawing from the U.S.-dominated integrated command structure of NATO in 1966. West Germany, by contrast, settled on a low-profile military posture consistent with the U.S. insourcing strategy. After laying out the evidence in detail, I compare my theory’s validity against prominent rival arguments in the final two sections.

U.S. Outsourcing and the Perils of Nuclear Sharing in Europe, 1955-1960

The United States did not give up on outsourcing after the defeat of the European army plan. In the second half of the 1950s, the United States attempted to realize its grand strategic vision by giving allied armed forces nuclear capabilities of their own. In this section, I show that uneven

⁸ Marc Trachtenberg and Christopher Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament, August-September 1950,” *Journal of European Integration History* 6, no. 2 (December 2000): 34.

military vulnerabilities in Europe again determined patterns of strategic coherence. Owing to its relative invulnerability to Soviet military predation, France made steady progress toward acquiring its own nuclear arsenal with the blessing of U.S. strategy. By contrast, West Germany's steps toward becoming a nuclear power unraveled under the weight of Soviet preventive countermeasures.

U.S. Outsourcing and Nuclear Sharing in Europe

Having grudgingly accepted the NATO compromise, U.S. policymakers began to pursue a new phase of grand strategic outsourcing in Western Europe. “[T]he U.S. had maneuvered itself into a greater position of responsibility than necessary” against its better instincts, Eisenhower explained, but the Europeans had to be “reoriented and made more realistic” about their proper weight in the alliance “before the NATO situation is crystallized[.]”⁹ John Foster Dulles agreed. The United States would maintain the ability to “do the ‘big stuff’ (large-scale retaliatory [nuclear] attack)[.]” he argued, but the notion that U.S. forces should be necessary “as a deterrent to local acts of aggression by the Soviet Union ran contrary to the entire basic strategy of the United States.”¹⁰ Instead, the goal of U.S. grand strategy was that the European allies should become strong enough to bear the brunt of counterbalancing the Soviet threat; in Eisenhower's words, the United States would then simply be “the central keep behind the forward forces.”¹¹

⁹ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 424th Meeting of the National Security Council,” November 12, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 509. See also “Memorandum of Discussion at the 400th Meeting of the National Security Council,” March 26, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 442-447.

¹⁰ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 314th Meeting of the National Security Council,” February 28, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 19, 429. This basic idea was reflected in major U.S. military planning documents of the period. In particular, see Joint Chiefs of Staff report to the Secretary of Defense, August 8, 1953, quoted at length in Robert J. Watson, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vol. 5: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1953-1954* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998), 17-21. See also “Memorandum of Discussion at the 160th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 27, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 443-455.

¹¹ Eisenhower, in “Memorandum for Record: Conference of Joint Chiefs of Staff with the President,” February 10, 1956, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA), 3.

The question, then, was how to sufficiently strengthen the allies' military capabilities. The collapse of the European Defense Community (EDC) plan had forced U.S. policymakers to grapple more squarely with the Europeans' perceptions of their own weakness. Part of the problem, as they saw it, was that allied governments were not fully convinced in the presumptive security dividends of investing in independent military capabilities. In particular, as long as the most consequential type of modern weaponry—that is, nuclear weapons—was concentrated in the hands of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Europeans were justified in wondering whether they might end up incurring the economic and political costs of conventional militarization without collecting any tangible rewards. “I gather he has the impression[.]” Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) deputy director Charles P. Cabell recounted after a conversation with Konrad Adenauer in August 1956, “that while he [is] risking his reputation in pressing for rearmament, those who dispose of nuclear power will alone make [the] decision affecting his country's fate and that he will be playing with marbles.”¹²

U.S. leaders were sympathetic to this basic point. “[I]t was as if we had been fighting wars with bows and arrows and then acquired pistols[.]” Eisenhower mused, and “[t]hen we refused to give pistols to the people who were our allies even though the common enemy already had them.”¹³ In the same vein, Dulles doubted “whether [the United States] had been giving [the allies] the right

¹² “Memorandum from the Acting Director of Central Intelligence (Cabell) to the Secretary of State,” August 28, 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 26, 148. West German skepticism about a conventional buildup was heightened by the so-called “Carte Blanche crisis” of summer 1955, in which a NATO air maneuver exercise in Central Europe resulted in 1.7 million simulated West German deaths. See Catherine McArdle Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 35-43. Compounding the issue was the fact that, try as they might, the NATO powers would probably have enormous difficulty matching the Soviets in terms of conventional military strength in any case. General Alfred Gruenther thus argued in June 1954 that “it would be a major mistake for the West to adopt a type of strategy which substitutes human beings for atomic weapons.” Quoted in Robert A. Wampler, “Ambiguous Legacy: The United States, Great Britain, and the Foundations of NATO Strategy, 1948-1957” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1991), 611.

¹³ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 417th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 18, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 251.

kind of military assistance.” With the nuclear dimension of the superpower arms race becoming more and more salient, the Europeans would not be able to harbor “the illusion that they have some kind of defensive capability against the Soviets other than the United States using a pushbutton to start a global nuclear war” unless their military capabilities underwent a more decisive “modernization[.]”¹⁴ They had to be brought into “the missile business” (i.e., the nuclear business) to avoid being “mere cannon fodder.”¹⁵

The implication was clear: the United States had to devolve nuclear capabilities to its allies. The idea of “nuclear sharing” critically informed U.S. strategy toward Europe from 1955 onwards, manifesting in three key policy moves. First, Washington gave the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) ample advance authority to employ nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet attack.¹⁶ Nuclear pre-delegation was implicit in NATO document MC 48 (i.e., “The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years”), approved in December 1954 as the basic strategic guidance for NATO’s military forces. MC 48 was predicated on the assumption that NATO could reliably “prevent a rapid overrunning of Europe[,]” but if and only if “the ability to make immediate use of atomic weapons is ensured...Any delay in their use—even measured in hours—could be fatal.”¹⁷ This heavy emphasis on rapid escalation meant, in turn, that the theater commander had to be given maximal discretion over the use of nuclear weapons from

¹⁴ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 364th Meeting of the National Security Council,” May 1, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 3, 88. As the discussion below makes clear, terms like “modern” weapons or “advanced” weapons were often used as euphemisms for nuclear armaments by Western policymakers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The National Security Council Operations Coordinating Board (OCB)’s report in September 1958 explicitly acknowledges this equivalency. See “Paper Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board,” September 3, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 4, 652.

¹⁵ Dulles, November 6, 1957, quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 155.

¹⁶ As Julian Schofield notes, nuclear pre-delegation and the forward-deployment of nuclear assets should be properly included in the taxonomy of nuclear sharing because their practical effects are often “indistinguishable from other forms of nuclear sharing.” Julian Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 17.

¹⁷ NATO Military Committee, “The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years,” MC 48, November 22, 1954, in *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, ed. Gregory W. Pedlow (Brussels: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, 1997), 242, underline in original.

the very outset of local hostilities. The directive issued to the SACEUR during this period thus stipulated that he should seek political guidance from national authorities “when appropriate” before launching nuclear weapons, with the understanding that he would have full discretion over what constituted “appropriateness.”¹⁸ Given such extraordinary warmaking latitude, SACEUR was expected to use “the inherent right of a commander to defend his forces” to ensure the security of Western Europe; he would be the military representative of NATO in its entirety rather than just another American general.¹⁹ Indeed, Eisenhower took for granted that the U.S. would hand over the position of SACUER to a European general in the near future.²⁰

Second, and more importantly, top American decision-makers aimed to gradually give allied military forces effective control over U.S.-made nuclear weapons.²¹ That the United States should be so generous in this regard again followed directly from the MC 48 strategy, which called for the Western alliance to “[d]evelop ‘forces in being’ in Europe” with “an integrated atomic capability...immediately ready to fight with maximum intensity on D-Day and in the early phases

¹⁸ British Chiefs of Staff Briefs for the 14th Session of the NATO Military Committee, October 11, 1956, quoted in Wampler, “Ambiguous Legacy,” 629. For a detailed discussion of nuclear pre-delegation during this period, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 158-173. See also “Directive to the NATO Military Authorities from the North Atlantic Council,” December 13, 1956, in *NATO Strategy Documents*, 269-276.

¹⁹ “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” March 12, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 436.

²⁰ See, for example, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” October 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 4, 70; and “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” September 27, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 421. See also Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 214-215.

²¹ Schofield refers to such arrangements as “loaning.” See Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*, 17. Influential U.S. strategists had been thinking along these lines even before the collapse of the EDC. General Omar Bradley, for example, argued in March 1954 that “[i]nformation on what the bomb is, how to use it, how to get the best results from it, is necessary so our allies can incorporate the bomb in their military plans. Once our allies have the benefit of all the atomic information their ground commanders and their air commanders need, the next logical step would be to make tactical atomic weapons available to our allies or at least to pledge their instant availability in the event of war.” General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, “Is Russia Winning the Battle for Europe?” March 6, 1954, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01731R000400490002-7.pdf>, 13. Even earlier, Dulles argued that it was in the U.S. interest to make sure that its NATO allies “not be obliged to fight with obsolete equipment[,]” and that “atomic and new weapons [should] be ‘meshed in’ with conventional armaments” toward this end. “Telegraphic Summary, by the United States Delegation,” December 6, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 5, pt. 2, 1790. For an excellent discussion and collection of documents on U.S. nuclear sharing during this period, see William Burr, ed., “The U.S. Nuclear Presence in Western Europe, 1954-1962, Part I,” National Security Archive Briefing Book no. 714, July 21, 2020, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2020-07-21/us-nuclear-presence-western-europe-1954-1962>.

[of war].”²² If the U.S. was serious about supporting the development of such forces, it could not afford to be tight-fisted about nuclear weapons; as Dulles acknowledged, MC 48 clearly implied “that *everyone* should have an atomic capability.”²³ Thus, under the “NATO atomic stockpile” plan of December 1957, the United States pledged to “furnish nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a billion dollars for modern weapons—mainly aircraft and missiles—for the forces of our NATO allies”; to train allied military personnel “in the maintenance, operation, and employment of these weapons systems”; and “to assure that atomic warheads for these aircraft and missiles will be available to NATO forces in the event of hostilities.”²⁴ And as detailed further below, from 1956 to 1959 U.S. policymakers worked methodically to “give, to all intents and purposes, control of [American nuclear] weapons” to the European allies. In Eisenhower’s words, the idea was for the U.S. to “retain titular possession only.”²⁵

Finally, the United States adopted a supportive attitude toward European initiatives for indigenous nuclear capabilities. For example, it enthusiastically backed the creation of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) in March 1957. The official goal of the organization was to coordinate the supply and distribution of nuclear energy among the European nations. However, U.S. leaders hoped that Euratom’s ambitions would expand over time. When Admiral Lewis Strauss, Chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), stated that the Commission would cooperate with State Department efforts to promote Europe’s “atomic energy independence” within “the legal limit[,]” Dulles responded that he wanted to “exceed those limits

²² NATO Military Committee, “The Most Effective Pattern,” 237; 241.

²³ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” December 11, 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 7, 125, emphasis added.

²⁴ “December Ministerial Meeting: Working Papers submitted by Delegations,” RDC/57/428 (Final), December 13, 1957, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/december-ministerial-meeting-2>, 35-36. See also “Summary Record of a Meeting of the Council held at the Palais de Chaillot,” C-R(57)82, December 16, 1957, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/record-of-meeting-1026>.

²⁵ “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” June 9, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 462.

and consider all possibilities[.]”²⁶ In fact, the basic position of Washington’s central decision-makers was that the United States should “respond promptly, concretely, and favorably to an initiative coming out of Europe” in the nuclear arena with the full understanding that “peaceful uses of atomic energy cannot, for technical reasons, be dissociated from potential possession of atomic power for military purposes.”²⁷ For Eisenhower and Dulles, the possibility that European “atomic energy independence” might end up becoming a stepping-stone for European nuclear weapons was all the more reason to support it. By the same token, U.S. policymakers were remarkably open-minded about the prospect of the European countries developing purely national nuclear arsenals. As Dulles told France’s General Charles de Gaulle in July 1958, pursuing “an independent nuclear effort...was a matter for France itself to decide.” What mattered for him, at the end of the day, was to enable the European allies to use nuclear weapons “without having to depend on a United States political decision[.]”²⁸

In sum, the U.S. outsourcing strategy in Europe took a turn toward nuclear sharing in the second half of the 1950s. As in the previous period, the goal was “to wean [the] allies from overdependence” and get them to take on the leading role in confronting the Soviet threat.²⁹ First, however, the United States had to help them acquire capabilities befitting military competition in the nuclear age. “For God’s sake let us not be stingy with an ally[.]” Eisenhower exclaimed, “[w]e should...give our NATO allies the chance to use some of our modern weapons.”³⁰ By granting

²⁶ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” January 25, 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 4, 393; 395.

²⁷ “Memorandum Prepared in the Office of European Regional Affairs,” December 6, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 4, 356-357.

²⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 5, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 56.

²⁹ Eisenhower, in “Memorandum of Conversation,” December 12, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 371.

³⁰ “267th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 151. Eisenhower was not shy about this position. At a press conference of February 3, 1960, he was asked to clarify his view on the “impression that you might lean toward favoring changing the law so that you could provide allies with custody of weapons that Russia has or knows how to make.” The president responded “I have always been of the belief that we should not deny to our allies what our potential enemy already has. We do want allies to be treated as partners and allies, and not as junior members of a

SACEUR the decision-making authorities necessary to act in the interest of NATO (rather than those of the United States per se), directly equipping allied forces with U.S.-made nuclear weapons, and supporting their indigenous nuclear development efforts, American leaders hoped that the allies would finally emerge as a “pool of power to balance the U.S.S.R.” and “remove the burden of Europe from the back of the United States[.]”³¹

West Germany’s Lingering Vulnerability

At a first glance, France and West Germany’s military vulnerabilities converged appreciably in the second half of the 1950s, concomitant with the beginnings of the latter’s rearmament (see Figure 3.1). However, in the eyes of Western policymakers, the military situation remained volatile. West Germany was again the crux of the problem. Bonn’s sense of vulnerability came to the fore once again in July 1956, when the *New York Times* alleged that Admiral Arthur Radford, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, intended to reduce overall force levels by 800,000 and withdraw troops from Germany once the United States began fielding new high-yield nuclear weapons.³² The so-called “Radford plan” roused a great deal of unrest in West Germany, although U.S. officials tried to convince their counterparts that the report was no more than “newspaper talk without foundation.”³³ For Adenauer, the episode confirmed yet again that the FRG “should not rest on a false sense of security” despite the achievements of recent years; “[t]he ground upon which [West Germany] stood was very thin.”³⁴

firm who are to be seen but not heard.” See “The President’s News Conference,” February 3, 1960, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-228>.

³¹ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” January 25, 1956, 391.

³² “Radford Terms New Arms Vital to Service Cuts,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1956.

³³ Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Robert D. Murphy to West German Ambassador Heinz L. Krekeler, in “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State,” July 17, 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 26, 132.

³⁴ Quoted in Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 88. For details on the “Radford crisis” and West German reactions, see Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 43-49.

Prevailing military assessments corroborated this pessimism. As a CIA brief to the National Security Council observed, the Soviets understood that West Germany's admittance into NATO did not itself constitute rearmament and that there would "be 2-3 years between [NATO entry] and any substantial German military force in being."³⁵ That said, Moscow remained willing and able to take forceful action to prevent the materialization of an advanced West German force within NATO.³⁶ In particular, another report pointed out in December 1957, West Berlin, which "[t]he Western Powers [were] publicly committed to defend[,]" was "isolated behind the Iron Curtain and exposed to constant Communist pressures and harassment."³⁷ In addition to "direct military attack," the Soviet Union had "the capability of making the Western position in Berlin untenable by restricting Western access to the city."³⁸ "If either side miscalculates" during the ensuing crisis, the report continued, "the situation could grow into war, even though neither side desires it."³⁹ And while U.S. analysts believed that the Soviet Union would "try to avoid courses of action" that would "clearly involve substantial risk of general war[,]" this did not mean that Moscow would hesitate to take "counteraction against a Western action which it considered an imminent threat to Soviet security."⁴⁰

Above all, many analysts suspected that Moscow would go to great lengths to prevent "the rearmament of Germany in close alliance with the West." If political maneuvers proved insufficient, the Soviets could "turn to more rigorous policies" such as "more threatening courses

³⁵ "NSC Briefing: Soviet Reactions to German Rearmament," December 21, 1954, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01443R000300180002-9.pdf>, 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ "National Security Council Report," December 13, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 26, 334.

³⁸ "U.S. Policy toward Germany," NSC 5757, December 13, 1957, Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), 15. See also U.S. Department of State, "Communist Intentions and Capabilities in Berlin," February 1956, DDRS, 11.

³⁹ "Statement of Policy on U.S. Policy on Berlin," Supplement I to NSC 5727, December 13, 1957, DDRS, 3.

⁴⁰ "Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through 1960," May 17, 1955, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80B01083A000100080069-2.pdf>, 4.

of action against Berlin...with the purpose of arousing fear of nuclear war in the West and causing Western peoples to demand that their governments pursue a cautious policy.”⁴¹ The danger of confrontation would increase as Moscow’s nuclear arsenal continued to catch up with that of the United States, leading to the belief that “superior [Soviet] Bloc military capabilities in certain local areas can be exercised without substantial risk of provoking general war.”⁴² Accordingly, NATO planning documents became increasingly sensitive to the possibility of “hostile local actions,” initiated by Soviet leaders betting on a “quick thrust and NATO’s reluctance...to restore the situation by force and thereby to broaden the scope of the incident.”⁴³

Evidence from the Soviet side corroborates these views. As early as October 1956, a Soviet note to the FRG government expressed apprehension over “[t]he nature, speed of production, and quantity of the armaments of the Federal Republic of Germany[,]” which it claimed were being developed “as an integral part of the Armed Forces of the tightly-knit military *bloc* of the Western Powers directed against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and peace-loving States friendly to it.”⁴⁴ Particularly concerning were indications that the West Germans intended to “possess nuclear weapons, and have started to carry out the appropriate practical measures.”⁴⁵ Another note in April 1957 alleged that American policies of nuclear sharing—“[t]he concentration...of various

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4. Complicating matters further, if West German leaders became convinced that the United States “was unable to protect [its] present forward positions...in the forward exposed areas along the border and above all in Berlin[,]” they might be tempted to pursue some kind of settlement with the Soviet Union at the expense of NATO. “Letter from the Ambassador in Germany (Conant) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant),” December 5, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 26, 404. See also “Germany and the Western Alliance,” September 8, 1959, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01012A014700050016-9.pdf>.

⁴³ “The Minimum Essential Force Requirements, 1958-1963,” IPT 197/27 (Draft), January 16, 1958, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/minimum-essential-force-requirements-1958-89>, 3. See also “The Soviet Bloc Strength and Capabilities,” SG 151/11 (Final Decision), May 1, 1958, NATO Archives, <https://archives.nato.int/soviet-bloc-strength-and-capabilities-1966>, 23-28.

⁴⁴ “Memorandum from the Soviet Union to the Federal Republic of Germany Proposing Rapprochement with the German Democratic Republic as the First Step toward German Reunification,” October 22, 1956, in U.S. Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 488, emphasis in original.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 489.

types of nuclear weapons in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany and the preparations for the equipment of the West German Army with atomic weapons”—were “lead[ing] to the conversion of the Federal Republic of Germany into the main European springboard and chief NATO shock force for atomic warfare in Europe.” “[F]ar from strengthening the security of the Federal Republic of Germany,” such policies would “expose the Federal Republic and its population to a terrible danger which cannot be compared with any calamities ever experienced by the German people.”⁴⁶

Table 4.1: U.S. and Soviet Nuclear Stockpiles (1955-1963)

		1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
Strategic Weapons	US	1,755	2,123	2,460	2,610	2,496	3,127	3,153	3,451	4,050
	USSR	-	84	102	186	283	354	423	481	589
Tactical Weapons	US	667	1,569	3,083	4,735	9,802	15,511	19,076	23,947	25,750
	USSR	200	316	548	714	767	1,346	2,027	2,619	3,411

Source: “Estimated U.S. and Soviet/Russian Nuclear Stockpiles, 1945-94,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 50, no. 6 (1994): 58-59.

By late 1958, changes to the military situation further whetted Moscow’s incentives to act upon these threats. While strategic parity with the United States was still a few years away, steady progress in Soviet nuclear capabilities meant that U.S. leaders could no longer take the safety of American cities for granted in the event of all-out hostilities (see Table 4.1).⁴⁷ Soviet leader Nikita

⁴⁶ “Note from the Soviet Union to the Federal Republic of Germany Alleging the Conversion of West Germany ‘Into a NATO Atomic Base,’” April 27, 1957, in U.S. Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 496-497. See also the ensuing exchange between Adenauer and the Soviet Ambassador to the FRG (501-502).

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance in the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 84-94. A 1957 CIA assessment observed that “Soviet leaders are probably confident that their own growing nuclear capabilities, added to their already great conventional strength, have reached the point where the U.S. and its allies will be deterred, except under extreme provocation...from reacting militarily in any local situation in a manner which would gravely risk broadening such a conflict into general war.” “Comments on Various Military Factors Affecting

Khrushchev himself believed that Soviet capabilities had matured enough to deter forceful NATO responses against a wide array of actions vis-à-vis West Germany. “Missiles are not cucumbers,” he quipped, “one cannot eat them and one does not require more than a certain number in order to ward off an attack.”⁴⁸ Khrushchev’s confidence received a further boost with the success of “Operation Atom” in November 1958, which involved the secret deployment of R-5M medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) to East Germany. By bringing key military bases and population centers across Western Europe—including Paris and London—within range of a surprise nuclear attack, this development increased the likelihood that Soviet leaders would be able to blunt NATO’s military options and exert greater pressure in the event of a crisis over Berlin.⁴⁹ In short, although large-scale Soviet aggression against NATO was implausible, West Germany’s military vulnerability remained—and worsened in certain respects—throughout the late 1950s.

Nuclear Sharing and the Second Berlin Crisis

In the second half of the 1950s, France and West Germany’s core military policy decisions were essentially crafted as responses to the nuclear sharing component of Washington’s outsourcing grand strategy. France, relatively insulated from Soviet power behind the German buffer, once again had the most success in catering its capabilities to America’s strategy. In fact, there was a remarkable affinity between Washington’s strategic vision, in which the United States’ “friends and allies” would “supply the means for local defense on the ground and...the United States

Soviet Capabilities and Intentions over the Next Five Years,” October 22, 1957, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R00904A000400010010-8.pdf>, 4.

⁴⁸ May 29, 1960, quoted in Matthew Evangelista, “*Why Keep Such an Army?*” *Khrushchev’s Troop Reductions*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper no. 19 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1997), 38.

⁴⁹ See Matthias Uhl and Vladimir I. Ivkin, “‘Operation Atom’: The Soviet Union’s Stationing of Nuclear Missiles in the German Democratic Republic, 1959,” *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 12/13 (Winter-Spring 2001): 299-307; and Alexander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 194-195.

[would] come into the act with air and naval forces alone[,]” and France’s aspirations for its own role in European security.⁵⁰ Charles de Gaulle, who served as Prime Minister of France in 1958 and became its president in 1959, believed that France should provide “the main [d]efense” for NATO, with the West German and American forces respectively acting as “the advance guard” and “the grand reserve.”⁵¹ And to serve as the “main defense” against an adversary as formidable as the Soviet Union, the French forces would have to be equipped with nuclear weapons. The French government had recognized as early as 1954 that, in the nuclear age, “[a]rmed forces which do not possess them [would] lose all effectiveness in the face of an adversary who has...them[.]” while “the threat of destruction embodied by such arms must suffice to discourage an aggressor, even one who is much stronger.”⁵²

Thus, between 1955 and the beginning of 1959, France adapted its military capabilities and doctrines in accordance with the core demands of U.S. nuclear sharing. Its policymakers enthusiastically supported MC 48, and particularly its emphasis on the nuclear defense of Western Europe and the strengthening of local military actors. In fact, some military leaders in France saw themselves as largely responsible for the strategic concepts embodied in the plan.⁵³ And by 1959, consistent with MC 48’s implications, France’s frontline forces were being equipped and trained with a variety of U.S.-made nuclear delivery systems such as F-84 and F-100D fighter-bombers, Matador cruise missiles, and Nike and Honest John missile systems.⁵⁴ Remarkably, the French

⁵⁰ Eisenhower in “Memorandum of Discussion at the 314th Meeting of the National Security Council,” February 28, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 19, 429.

⁵¹ Quoted in British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s diary entry, March 13, 1960, in Harold MacMillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-1961* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 182.

⁵² Quoted in Beatrice Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France, and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 98.

⁵³ See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 175, n. 109.

⁵⁴ For documents on U.S. assistance to French nuclear-capable weapons acquisitions efforts, see “Letter from the Chargé in France (Yost) to the French Ministry of National Defense (Bourgès-Maunoury),” March 13, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 27, 115-118; “National Security Council Report,” October 19, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 27, 183-200; and “Memorandum from Secretary of State Herter to President Eisenhower,” July 1, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*,

forces operating these systems were typically given de facto custody over American nuclear warheads. As Dean Acheson remarked, U.S. control over nuclear weapons in allied hands was merely “theoretical” in many instances: “sometimes the control amounted to nothing more than a United States sergeant who was supposed to see that the weapons were not released without authority.”⁵⁵ A later Congressional investigation accordingly found that by privileging “immediate combat readiness” above all else, traditional notions of “U.S. possession, custody and control” over nuclear weapons had been “stretched beyond recognition.”⁵⁶

On top of all this, France made steady progress toward developing an independent nuclear capability. To be sure, the United States went to great lengths to assure the French that its custody over NATO’s nuclear weapons was purely nominal. For example, although the intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) based in Europe were ostensibly controlled by a “dual-key” system that enabled launch only after simultaneously applying keys held by American and host-country officers, the system would afford only “illusory precaution” since French forces could “always arrange to seize control of the key” should “a real emergency” arise.⁵⁷ However, French leaders believed that even such arrangements did not go far enough. From the inception of its nuclear development effort in 1954, French defense planning was guided by the assumption that “those who have nuclear arms will [have them] above all to serve their own interest[.]” and that the most important distinction in modern international politics was that between “states which have the atomic bomb” and “states which do not have the atomic bomb...[whose territory] will be the

vol. 7, pt. 2, 235-236. In fact, the NATO atomic stockpile plan, which provided the basis for these arrangements, originated from a 1957 French proposal calling for an “integrated NATO atomic capability.” See C. Burke Elbrick and Gerard C. Smith to Dulles, “NATO Atomic Stockpile,” July 1, 1957, DNSA, 1.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 195, n. 190.

⁵⁶ Representative Chet Holifield to President John F. Kennedy, February 15, 1961, National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/documents/us-nuclear-presence-western-europe-1954-1962-part-ii/05.pdf?pdf=722-05>, 35.

⁵⁷ Eisenhower to De Gaulle, December 20, 1959, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 209.

nuclear battlefields.”⁵⁸ As noted earlier, the Eisenhower administration was genuinely sympathetic to this view. “[W]e would react very much as De Gaulle does if the shoe were on the other foot[.]” Eisenhower told SACEUR General Lauris Norstad.⁵⁹ France’s nuclear development thus proceeded apace with America’s tacit consent. In 1957, U.S. analysts observed that France would have the capacity to support “an annual production rate of three nominal-size [nuclear] bombs in 1958[.]”⁶⁰ and that “[i]t seems unlikely in the extreme that any other ‘fourth country’ would be able to produce nuclear weapons in advance of the French.”⁶¹ Three years later, France would detonate its first nuclear device.

West Germany’s military development met an entirely different fate, but not because leaders in Bonn harbored fewer ambitions for its capabilities. In fact, West Germany tried to take gradual steps toward reorienting its military posture around the effective control and employment of nuclear weapons during this period. The standard-bearer for this movement was Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss. Appointed by Adenauer in October 1957, Strauss worked tirelessly to equip the Bundeswehr with “the whole spectrum of modern weapons,” without which he

⁵⁸ General Georges Catroux at the French Defense Council, September 10, 1954, quoted in Heuser, *Nuclear Strategies and Forces*, 93.

⁵⁹ “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” June 9, 1959, 462. Indeed, Washington’s top leaders during this period blamed most of the problems that they had with France in the nuclear realm on the legal impediments the U.S. Congress had imposed on the executive branch with regard to the sharing of nuclear information and technologies, such as those specified in the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (i.e., McMahon Act). Eisenhower believed that such laws “[ran] counter to common sense[.]” as he told de Gaulle. “Memorandum of Conversation,” September 2, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 262. Similarly, in May 1959, Eisenhower told Secretary of State Herter “that we are handcuffed when the Congress places senseless limitations on the Executive. We depend heavily on an ally like France, if for no other reason than for their important geographical position in Europe. Therefore, if we cannot share secrets freely with the French, we are placed in an extremely awkward position.” “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 204.

⁶⁰ “National Intelligence Estimate,” August 13, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 27, 161.

⁶¹ “OIR Contribution to NIE 100-6-57: Nuclear Weapons Production by Fourth Countries—Likelihood and Consequences,” May 31, 1957, National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=2830701-Document-1>, p. 2.

believed West Germany could hardly become militarily competitive against the Soviet threat.⁶² This meant that Stauss “[took] for granted that Bonn must have a nuclear weapons capability,” a CIA report noted, quoting him as stating “that he had no intention of providing German ‘foot-sloggers for the American atomic cavalry.’”⁶³ Adenauer was usually content to let Strauss lead the charge and keep his own views on the nuclear issue ambiguous.⁶⁴ However, the weight of evidence available today indicates that the Chancellor secretly shared Strauss’s nuclear ambitions. While the FRG had made a “no nukes” pledge in order to gain entry into NATO in 1955, Adenauer saw the commitment only as an expedient to temper external opposition and expected the restriction to wither away with time.⁶⁵ Indeed, only a year later, Adenauer asserted to his cabinet that “Germany cannot remain a nuclear protectorate” and that it would eventually obtain the bomb “in the normal way”—that is, in the form of an independent arsenal.⁶⁶ Then, in March 1958, he formally “ask[ed] the Bundestag to approve the equipment of the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons.”⁶⁷ The request was approved on March 27.⁶⁸

As such, in the second half of the 1950s, it was clear to any informed observer that West Germany was inching its way toward significant nuclear capabilities. As the U.S. National Security Council summarized in December 1957,

⁶² May 13, 1961, quoted in Pertti Ahonen, “Franz-Josef Strauss and the German Nuclear Question, 1956-1962,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 1995): 38. See also Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 64-74.

⁶³ CIA, “Current Intelligence Weekly Summary: West German Defense Minister Strauss,” July 6, 1961, DDRS, 2.

⁶⁴ For examples of American confusion regarding the Adenauer government’s intentions regarding nuclear weapons, see Letter from J. Robert Schaetzel to the U.S. Embassy in Bonn, March 29, 1957, DNSA; and “West German Attitudes toward Nuclear Weapons,” Department of State Intelligence Report, July 2, 1957, DDRS.

⁶⁵ Adenauer’s attitude was evident as early as October 1954, when West Germany made its famous “no-nukes” pledge to the allies. When U.S. Secretary of State congratulated Adenauer for the decision, the Chancellor responded via his translator: “Tell Mr. Dulles: first let me have my twelve divisions. Then we can discuss these other things further.” Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 83.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution and Reconstruction, vol. 2: The Statesman, 1952-1967* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 239-240.

⁶⁷ William R. Tyler, Counselor for Political Affairs in the U.S. Embassy in Germany, June 2, 1958, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 191.

⁶⁸ On the background to this approval, see Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 324-354.

Defense Minister Strauss has reoriented defense planning toward smaller, combat ready forces equipped with the “most modern weapons.” Both he and the Chancellor have made their position clear that...West German forces must in due course have tactical atomic weapons. Meanwhile, West German military plans are for forces which can be readily adapted to such weapons. Equipment to form three NIKE battalions has been purchased from the U.S., and cadre personnel for future NIKE units have been sent to the U.S. for training. An “Honest John” experimental and training battery is being activated and equipped, and will be trained in West Germany by U.S. Army instructors.⁶⁹

As hinted in this paragraph, the United States was basically supportive of the overall military trend. After all, the same report reaffirmed that the core objective of U.S. military assistance to West Germany was to aid “the development of forces capable of effective integrated action generally in consonance with the strategic concept for the defense of the NATO area.”⁷⁰ As discussed earlier, the U.S. strategic concept for the NATO area during this time prescribed nuclear capabilities to all allied forces in Europe. Thus when General Norstad was asked by a German reporter in February 1958 about the FRG’s future role in European defense, he replied that “defensive atomic weapons are absolutely indispensable for the strengthening of the defensive power of the Bundeswehr...[I]t is wholly unthinkable that these forces should be condemned to a secondary role, to a second class function in which they would be practically useless in defense.”⁷¹

Accordingly, as summarized on Table 4.2, most of the advanced weapons authorized for transfer to the FRG by the United States in the 1956-1960 period were “dual-use” delivery systems designed to employ both conventional and nuclear munitions. And although it was initially assumed that nuclear warheads for such vehicles would only be handed over to the Bundeswehr in wartime, Strauss requested in late 1958 that a German fighter-bomber unit—trained to conduct

⁶⁹ “Military Annex to NSC 5727,” December 13, 1957, DDRS, 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷¹ Quoted in Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 94.

nuclear operations by the United States—be given effective custody over nuclear munitions during peacetime as well.⁷² Dulles remarked in a secret memo to U.S. ambassadors in Europe that “[t]he military desirability of implementing this” so-called “Wagon Train” project “and of the achievement of German atomic capability is clear. An indefinite stalling...with respect to the nuclear capabilities of German forces with the consequent continued dependence of the Germans on atomic capable forces of other NATO allies...will create a highly unsatisfactory situation with respect to Germany’s role in NATO.”⁷³

Table 4.2: Advanced Weapons Procurements by West Germany (1956-1960)

Type	Capability	Source	Outcome by 1960
Air Defense Missiles			
Nike-Hercules	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Hawk	Conventional	U.S.	Authorized
Sidewinder	Conventional	U.S.	Authorized
Seacat	Conventional	U.K.	Authorized
Short-range Weapons			
203mm Howitzer	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Honest John Missile	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Sergeant Missile	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Davy Crockett Cannon	Dual-use	U.S.	Planned
Long-range Weapons			
Mace Missile	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Pershing Missile	Dual-use	U.S.	Planned
Polaris Missile	Dual-use	U.S.	Under Consideration
Aircraft			
Starfighter	Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized
Fiat G-91	Potentially Dual-use	U.S.	Authorized

Source: Procurement information based on Table 2 in Catherine McArdle Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 99.

⁷² See Ahonen, “Franz-Josef Strauss,” 34-35; and Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 191. On the training of the West German fighter-bomber unit, see Memo by Brigadier General Frank K. Everest, Jr. to General Norstad, October 13, 1958, DDRS.

⁷³ Dulles to the Embassy in Bonn, December 19, 1958, DDRS, 2-3. Given this sheer willpower on the U.S. side, it was not surprising that one of the arguments the Adenauer government deployed against domestic opponents of nuclear armament was that the Americans had “made being armed with nuclear weapons a condition of their remaining” in the alliance. Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 341.

Ambassador Amory Houghton reported to Dulles in December 1958 that the project had been “successfully completed[.]”⁷⁴ If allowed to run their course, these developments would almost certainly have ended with West German nuclear acquisition under the auspices of U.S. grand strategy.⁷⁵

However, West Germany’s road to nuclear weapons was rudely interrupted by the Soviet Union. In November 1958, just as the United States and West Germany were finalizing their cooperation on the Wagon Train project,⁷⁶ Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union would sign a unilateral peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic (GDR; East Germany) whereupon the United States, Britain, and France would have six months to evacuate their forces from the city. Should the West refuse to heed Soviet demands and try to defend their rights in Berlin with military force, Moscow would “regard this as an attack on the Soviet Union” and “rise in defence of the German Democratic Republic[.]”⁷⁷ In justifying the ultimatum that touched off the Second Berlin Crisis (1958-1962), Khrushchev cited Western violations of the 1945 Potsdam agreement’s provisions on the demilitarization of Germany. Among other things, he argued, “the German militarists—with the blessing of the western powers, and primarily the United States—

⁷⁴ Houghton to Dulles, December 20, 1958, DDRS, 1.

⁷⁵ As Trachtenberg argues, it is probable that American nuclear sharing plans during the 1950s, if allowed to develop to their logical conclusion, “would have led eventually to a system of national nuclear forces in Europe. A pooling of military power implied a common foreign policy; but in the long run the gap between German national aspirations and what West Germany’s partners would risk going to war over was probably too great for such arrangements to really work for an indefinite period...How would the decision to use them [the nuclear weapons] be made? By whom, and in what way?...The control issue was bound to exert a corrosive influence on any collective Western European military system, especially if the international political situation was tense, and the different nations felt that their lives were quite literally on the line. And if, as a result of the control problem, a multinational system broke down, an independent West German nuclear capability would by no means be an unlikely result.” See Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 190-191.

⁷⁶ Recall that November 1958 was also when the Soviets had completed their aforementioned deployment of MRBMs to East Germany.

⁷⁷ “Address by Premier Khrushchev at a Soviet-Polish Meeting, on Germany and Berlin, November 10, 1958 [Extract],” in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1961* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 342.

are receiving nuclear weapons. The Federal Republic already has American rockets which can be fitted with nuclear warheads.”⁷⁸

Declassified documents make clear that the Second Berlin Crisis was initiated in significant part as a preventive military measure designed to arrest this development.⁷⁹ As Soviet Deputy

⁷⁸ Ibid., 341. Soviet assessments of the implications of U.S.-West German nuclear sharing during this period are remarkable in several ways. First, the fact that nuclear warheads officially remained in U.S. custody appears to have hardly mattered. “In the communications between Soviet officials in East and West Germany and the center in Moscow[.]” Hannes Adomeit concludes based on a thorough review of relevant archival documents, “essentially no distinction was drawn between equipping the German armed forces with delivery vehicles and the ‘dual key’ system for their use (i.e. the U.S. would always have to agree), on the one hand, and independent West German access to nuclear weapons, on the other.” Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev (An Analysis Based on New Archival Evidence, Memoirs, and Interviews)*, 2nd ed. (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2016), 130, fn. 246. In this vein, Soviet leaders clearly perceived the actual intent behind U.S. nuclear sharing schemes in Europe. The fact that U.S. nuclear sharing with the FRG primarily involved tactical nuclear weapons also did not matter much. As Moscow indicated in the aforementioned October 1956 note to Bonn, they could not “disregard the fact that the use of so-called tactical atomic weapons would inevitably lead to the use of all other types of nuclear weapons with their tremendous destructive force. The talk about ‘tactical’ atomic weapons has the obvious purpose of spreading illusion among the population for atomic war and of creating the impression among the population of Western Germany that the atomic arming of the Federal Republic of Germany is inevitable and an all but natural process.” “Memorandum from the Soviet Union,” October 22, 1956, in U.S. Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 499.

⁷⁹ This interpretation of the Second Berlin Crisis has been advanced most forcefully by the historian Marc Trachtenberg, whose works on the subject strongly informs my analysis. See Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, ch. 5; and Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, ch. 7. Preludes to the thesis that Soviet fears of West German nuclearization motivated the Second Berlin Crisis are found in Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1967* (New York: Praeger, 1968); and Jack Schick, *The Berlin Crisis: 1958-1962* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971). In his original 1991 statement, Trachtenberg inferred his conclusions exclusively from Western documents. Since then, studies based on new evidence from the Soviet archives have reassessed—and sometimes challenged—the Trachtenberg thesis. The most important among these is Hope M. Harrison’s pathbreaking history of Soviet-East German relations. Harrison highlights Moscow’s desire to bolster the relative economic and military position of the East German regime as “Khrushchev’s number-one priority” in initiating the Berlin crisis. Nonetheless, even Harrison acknowledges fears of West German nuclear acquisition as an important “secondary factor[.]” Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 114-115. In my view, differences between the two accounts tend to be overstated. Harrison, for example, writes that “[t]he refugee exodus to West Berlin, the hostile groups based in West Berlin, and the indications that West Germany might gain control over the nuclear weapons on its territory all led Khrushchev to believe that the GDR was being threatened and that he needed to take extraordinary measures to shore it up.” Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 115. The FRG’s nuclearization would have allowed it to gain a decisive advantage over the flagging GDR and exert stronger politico-military pressures that might well prove fatal for its communist regime. As Zubok argues, then, Khrushchev’s German policy was by necessity “two-pronged: propping up the East German regime and containing the FRG...Fears of nuclearization of the West German Bundeswehr were part of this general concern.” Vladislav M. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, CWIHP Working Paper no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993), 7. See also Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 181-186; and Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America’s Atomic Age* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), ch. 3. In short, as Fursenko and Naftali summarize, “despite not having Soviet materials to work with, Trachtenberg ably captured Khrushchev’s anxieties over the rise in strength of the West German Army, especially Adenauer’s efforts to acquire nuclear weapons.” Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 572-573, n. 4.

Premier Anastas Mikoyan told U.S. officials in January 1959, Adenauer's government was intent on "atomic rearmament[,]" and it was only a matter of time "until West Germany became stronger and when with the help of the United States, he could speak in a different tone."⁸⁰ Likewise, at a meeting of foreign ministers that took place in May of that year, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei challenged his French counterpart's remark that no power intended "to disturb the balance of power which exists at present." "I have in mind above all[,]" he explained, "measures for the remilitarization of Western Germany, for the equipment of the Bundeswehr with atomic and rocket weapons and the establishment of a network of rocket-launching sites on West German soil."⁸¹ In an October 1958 interview with American journalist Walter Lippmann, Khrushchev himself warned that the "Americans seem not to realize the dangers which their present politics [toward West Germany] may well bring them[,]" adding that the United States and its allies might end up "pay[ing] with [their] blood for having encouraged such people."⁸²

Internal documents from the communist side confirm that these were more than mere talking points. Fears of West German nuclearization were genuine and widespread in the Kremlin, as well as the view that the situation could be rectified through forceful action. As early as November 1956, Soviet diplomat Valentin Falin worried that, if left unchecked, West Germany's military buildup would soon enable it to apply stronger pressures in its disputes with the Soviet Union's Eastern European satellites. If this should lead to "a settlement of disputed issues between the FRG and Poland," for example, Warsaw might "no longer be interested in hosting Soviet troops on Polish territory." And if such developments continued, the Soviet Union might end up having

⁸⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation," January 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 272-273.

⁸¹ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 173.

⁸² October 24, 1958, quoted in Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 12.

to withdraw its troops not only “to the Oder-Neusse [*sic*] line, but within her state borders.”⁸³ Soviet fears reached unprecedented heights in the fall of 1958. In October, Andrey Smirnov, Soviet Ambassador to West Germany, told East German leader Walter Ulbricht that “since April...the situation in West Germany seriously deteriorated and took an unwelcome direction[,]” noting that “atomic armament is now legalized” in the country. Something had to be done to put “a braking influence on the [nuclear armament] of the Bundeswehr”—stalling the development for even “two to three years...would be a serious gain for our mutual cause.”⁸⁴ Smirnov thus stressed the need for some sort of “counteroffensive” to arrest West Germany’s military buildup.⁸⁵

If the Soviet Union’s motive in initiating the Berlin Crisis was to throw a wrench into West Germany’s militarization process, the move unmistakably succeeded. To be sure, the Eisenhower administration refused to budge on his basic commitment to an outsourcing grand strategy in Europe despite acknowledging “the real fear” the Soviets would have “of a reunited, armed Germany.”⁸⁶ Responding to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s concern about West Germany’s “effective military build-up” and the potential problems that might be created by the

⁸³ “Calculations and Plans of the Ruling Circles of the FRG on the German Problem with Regard to the Events in Poland and Hungary,” November 29, 1956, quoted in Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 8.

⁸⁴ October 5, 1958, quoted in *ibid.*, 9. During Mikoyan’s visit to Bonn in April 1958, Adenauer had told the Soviet Deputy Premier that “the decision of the Bundestag [to legalize the Bundeswehr’s nuclear armament] is of preliminary character...for the realization of the Bundestag’s decision we need at least two years and if there is an agreement on disarmament in that period, then the atomic arming of the FRG will not be carried out.” The notion that delaying West German nuclearization for even two or three years could be significant appears to have been based on this exchange. See Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 276, n. 87.

⁸⁵ October 5, 1958, quoted in Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 9.

⁸⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” March 28, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 4, 258. Interestingly, Eisenhower seems to have grasped the basic implications of attempting to militarize a highly vulnerable ally. During a private conversation about the possibility of deploying IRBMs to Greece on June 16, 1959, the president stated that “[i]f Mexico or Cuba had been penetrated by the Communists, and then began getting arms and missiles from them...it would be imperative for us to take positive action, even offensive military action...He wondered if we were not simply being provocative, since Eastern Europe is an area of dispute in a political sense.” The next day, he again remarked that “when it comes to the ‘flank’ or advanced areas such as Greece, the matter seems very questionable. He reverted to his analogy—if Cuba or Mexico were to become Communist inclined, and the Soviets were to send arms and equipment, what would we feel we had to do then. He thought we would feel that we would have to intervene, militarily if necessary.” Conversations with Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 203. Eisenhower’s determination to strengthen the European allies and withdraw U.S. forces from Europe seems to have prevented him from applying the same reasoning to West Germany.

fact that the Germans seemed to “like playing soldier again[,]” the President responded “flatly that he would take a strong Germany[.]”⁸⁷ Eisenhower’s determination for a “strong Germany” was such that he seemed willing to risk war with the Soviets toward that end. As he told Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter upon the outbreak of the Berlin Crisis in November 1958, his “instinct was...that if the Russians want war over the Berlin issue, they can have it.”⁸⁸ Secretary of State Dulles likewise argued that the “test of nerve and will” that the Soviets had initiated in Berlin made it all the more necessary to push ahead with “increased military preparedness in Europe” and to “have atomic weapons moved into Germany as promptly as possible.”⁸⁹

Regardless, the mere fact that the United States and its allies were forced to contend with the specter of catastrophic escalation in Berlin was enough to break the momentum of West Germany’s military buildup. The truth was that it did not make sense for NATO to push ahead forcefully against every hostile “incident” in Berlin.⁹⁰ Rather, Dulles argued, the alliance had to carefully deliberate each response “before we took a position that might lead to shooting.”⁹¹ Eisenhower agreed. For all his determination, he admitted that in the “low level business” of the sort the Soviets were concocting in Berlin the United States “would have to go along if we were going to keep things straightened out[.]”⁹² The implication was clear: for the time being, the United

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 260-261.

⁸⁸ “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Acting Secretary of State Herter,” November 22, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 114.

⁸⁹ Dulles’s meeting with Livingston Merchant, February 27, 1959, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 281-282, n. 152. See also U.S. State Department, “Memorandum for the President (NATO Atomic Stockpile in Germany),” December 24, 1958, DDRS, which summarizes the State Department’s view that “[t]he development of an atomic capability by German forces...is essential if NATO defenses are to keep pace with the offensive capabilities of the Soviets, and will be an indication of the West’s firmness and resolve, particularly with respect to the Berlin situation” (1-2).

⁹⁰ One of the first such incidents occurred on November 14, 1958, when the Soviet forces detained a U.S. military convoy and demanded that they be allowed to search the trucks for contrabands. See “Message from R.L. Thurston,” November 16, 1958, DDRS.

⁹¹ “Memorandum of Conversation between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles,” November 18, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 84.

⁹² “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles,” November 24, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 119.

States and its allies had to hold off on measures that might lead to dangerous escalation in Berlin. Instead, they had to bargain with the Soviets to resolve the crisis. In February 1959, U.S. Ambassador to Germany David Bruce articulated the emerging consensus:

[I]n Germany, and above all in Berlin, we are on the defensive. It is not we who can probe, embarrass, irritate...In [the] Soviet political calendar [the] next two or three years are no longer and no safer than [the] time which elapsed between 1930 and 1933...[The] Soviet Union can marshal [a] powerful argument...[that] nuclear equipment "in German hands" vastly increases [the] danger that if, one day, German policy rests in [the] hands of a "revanchist" madman (i.e.: type of German in whose role Soviet Union has cast Strauss), Germany will be in [a] position [to] create [an] incident, independently of [the] will of [the] Western Powers, which may prove uncontrollable...[The] Soviet attitude toward the problem of Germany contains [a] sufficient degree [of] sincerity to justify most careful examination of [the] possibility [of] mutual concessions leading to [the] stabilization [of] the] situation [in] Central Europe[.]⁹³

Likewise, Dulles wrote in a letter to Adenauer that "[b]y pressing on the West's militarily exposed nerve in Berlin, the Soviets have in fact raised in urgent form the closely related, more general problems of a European settlement...This, I think, means moving towards a conference with the Soviets...[W]e cannot merely reject the Soviet proposal and expect them to come up with a more acceptable one. I do not think this would be either realistically or tactically sound."⁹⁴ And although he was officially opposed to the idea of talks involving the East Germans and the Soviets, particularly those that contemplated concessions with regard to "the armament of the Bundeswehr[.]"⁹⁵ Adenauer himself understood that engaging Moscow's concerns was better than the potential alternative. When Dulles told him in early 1959 that NATO would have to use nuclear

⁹³ "Telegram from the Embassy in Germany to the Department of State," February 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 362; 365. Indeed, by this time, U.S. policymakers had begun to develop a notable empathy for Soviet security concerns. As Acting Secretary of State Robert Murphy wrote in April 1959, "One might take the view...that the recent Soviet moves in Germany have been an attempt to maintain the status quo in the face of Western attempts to change it." April 17, 1959, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 192.

⁹⁴ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Germany," January 29, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 297-298.

⁹⁵ Remarks by the German ambassador in Moscow, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 281.

weapons if the Berlin problem escalated to a major conflict, the chancellor is said to have exclaimed “[f]or God’s sake, not for Berlin!”⁹⁶

In sum, the nuclear-sharing phase of the United States’ outsourcing grand strategy in Europe had diametrically opposing implications for strategic coherence in its relations with France and West Germany. Relatively invulnerable to Soviet punishment, France successfully adopted the capabilities necessary to perform an assertive and independent military role in Europe. Although its penchant and ability to act alone soon became a source of routine annoyance for the Americans, this was precisely the end state that had been envisioned by U.S. grand strategy from the beginning of the Cold War—allies groomed into “a third force” in international politics, “strong enough to say ‘no’ both to the Soviet Union and to the United States[.]”⁹⁷ West Germany, by contrast, was too vulnerable to accommodate the capabilities prescribed by the U.S. outsourcing strategy. Bonn’s efforts to equip its armed forces with the most “advanced” weapons were effectively nipped in the bud by Soviet preventive threats. Strategic incoherence prevailed.

U.S. Insourcing and the Problem of French Nuclear Weapons, 1961-1966

The Second Berlin Crisis forced the United States to delay its plans to arm the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons, and instead engage in a delicate bargaining act with the Soviets for the better part of three years. During this time, the U.S. strategic design for Europe underwent a transition toward one that explicitly depended on limiting and controlling allied military capabilities. In this section, I show that the new grand strategy of insourcing championed by the John F. Kennedy

⁹⁶ David Klein, interpreter at the Dulles-Adenauer meeting, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 198. See also Ambassador Bruce’s report: [E]ven so stout a friend as the Chancellor has revealed decided hesitation over [the] awful prospect of recourse to total war.” “Telegram from the Embassy in Germany to the Department of State,” March 2, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 405.

⁹⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Hickerson),” January 21, 1948, *FRUS 1948*, vol. 3, 11.

administration and its successors was met with reversed patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence in Europe. Relatively invulnerable to Soviet predation, France refused to cater its military posture to the intrusive demands of Washington's insourcing strategy, eventually parting ways with the U.S.-dominated command structure of NATO in 1966. By contrast, Washington successfully subordinated the vulnerable West Germany's capabilities to its new grand strategy.

U.S. Insourcing, "Flexible Response," and the Drive for Nuclear Monopoly in NATO

The inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in January 1961 marked the beginnings of America's insourcing grand strategy in Europe. Unlike Eisenhower, who sought to unload the United States' military burdens onto its allies as quickly as possible and was willing to countenance the nuclear armament of France and West Germany toward that end, the new administration's overriding concern was to find a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union that allowed for an acceptable balance of power in Europe while simultaneously minimizing the likelihood of catastrophic nuclear escalation. Walt Rostow, the State Department's Director of Policy Planning, observed in a lengthy statement of the administration's "Basic National Security Policy (BNSP)" that the "nature and consequences of nuclear war conducted with present and foreseeable delivery vehicles call for a military policy which can accomplish [U.S. security objectives] with a minimum risk of escalation toward general nuclear war."⁹⁸ Toward this end, the United States had to "work out...tacit understandings with the USSR as to the ground rules governing our competition."⁹⁹ At minimum, as Kennedy told Khrushchev in a June 1961 meeting, the two great powers had to each do their part to avoid dangerous disruptions to the balance of power or attempting "serious blow[s]"

⁹⁸ Walt W. Rostow, "Basic National Security Policy (Short Version)," August 2, 1962, National Security Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (JFKL), <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/294/JFKNSF-294-003>, 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

that either side would find fundamentally unacceptable.¹⁰⁰

The premium that the United States' new strategic orientation—publicly referred to as “Flexible Response”—placed on carefully deliberating and controlling the intensity of superpower competition implied a fundamentally revised military role for allies.¹⁰¹ As Kennedy remarked in April 1961, this strategy was based on the idea that the alliance's “military forces [should] operate at all times under continuous, responsible command and control from the highest authorities... We believe in maintaining effective deterrent strength, but we also believe in making it do what we wish, neither more nor less.”¹⁰² Rostow clarified what was meant by “highest authorities” in the BNSP. Enforcing “greater stability in the international military environment[.]” he argued, required “the [U.S.] president or authorities predesignated by him [to] review in advance and choose” the level of violence at which they would meet a given act of hostility. Core military instruments had to be “susceptible of discriminating and controlled use, under centralized military command, in accordance with such high-level decisions.”¹⁰³ This, in turn, meant that Washington had to “[prevent] situations arising in which...an American ally may try to inflame a given situation[.]”¹⁰⁴ Allied military capabilities had to be limited and strictly subordinated to U.S. strategic discretion. Particularly in the realm of nuclear weapons, Secretary of Defense Robert

¹⁰⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation” (Kennedy-Khrushchev), June 4, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 90. On the Kennedy administration's basic understanding of the logic of “Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD),” see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Reappraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (1982, repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 212-231. Aside from the awareness of an emerging U.S.-Soviet nuclear stalemate, the turn toward a grand strategy of insourcing was also informed by John F. Kennedy's commitment to a “positive” variant of liberal ideology. See Brendan Rittenhouse Green, “Two Concepts of Liberty: U.S. Cold War Grand Strategies and the Liberal Tradition,” *International Security* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 9-43.

¹⁰¹ The term “flexible response” was borrowed from General Maxwell Taylor's book *The Uncertain Trumpet*, which concluded that the previous administration's strategy in Europe would present the United States with two stark choices upon the outbreak of major conflict: accepting conventional defeat or using nuclear weapons. See Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 213.

¹⁰² “Remarks at the Opening Session of the Meeting of the Military Committee of NATO,” April 10, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, January 20 to December 31, 1961* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 255.

¹⁰³ Rostow, “Basic National Security Policy,” 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

McNamara stated in a top-secret speech before the May 1962 NATO ministerial meeting, the alliance's overall posture had to be adjusted so as to ensure the "indivisibility of control" over nuclear capabilities. The United States now found "it intolerable to contemplate having only a part of the [alliance's] striking force launched in isolation from our main striking power."¹⁰⁵ As Charles Bohlen of the State Department pointed out, "any European" would recognize such words as mere "euphuism[s] for absolute American control."¹⁰⁶ This is indeed what American policymakers had in mind. The United States did not "need to coordinate with our allies[,]" Acheson emphasized—*"We need to tell them."*¹⁰⁷

Beginning in the early 1960s, then, the United States made determined efforts to *monopolize* NATO's most important military assets and decision-making powers. These manifested in three key policy moves. First, Washington withdrew most of the nuclear authorities it had pre-delegated to SACEUR during the 1950s. Recall that SACEUR under Eisenhower was given so much advance authority over nuclear weapons that he could effectively function as an independent military actor during times of crisis. This was done with the understanding that the position would eventually be handed over to a European general; as Eisenhower made clear, "the U.S. [did] not want command in Europe" under his strategic vision.¹⁰⁸ Kennedy's insourcing grand strategy demanded the opposite, which meant that SACEUR's military role had to be downgraded. As Kennedy's Secretary of State Dean Rusk remarked, SACEUR was not to have a "NATO policy" but "speak as an American" at the end of the day, understanding that "[t]here is only one American

¹⁰⁵ McNamara's Statement at the NATO Ministerial Meeting in Athens, May 5, 1962, National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB159/usukconsult-16c.pdf>, 6.

¹⁰⁶ "Paper Prepared by the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Bohlen)," July 2, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 430.

¹⁰⁷ "Memorandum of Meeting," October 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 519 (emphasis in original). Acheson had retired from government service in 1953, but continued to play an important role in shaping the Kennedy administration's foreign policies as an unofficial advisor.

¹⁰⁸ "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter," August 10, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 2, 404.

policy.”¹⁰⁹ General Norstad, who had held the position of SACEUR since November 1956, was now directed to “spell out” how his warfighting plans would support a “sequence of graduated responses” to aggression orchestrated by civilian leaders in Washington.¹¹⁰ Norstad’s proposal for the deployment of an MRBM force in Europe under SACEUR’s direct control—which would, in his view, allow NATO to become a “fourth nuclear power”—was rejected.¹¹¹ When Norstad resisted the new administration’s strategic directives, he was forced into early retirement.¹¹²

Second, the Kennedy administration took steps to undermine the previous administration’s nuclear sharing arrangements and to instead establish monopolistic control over nuclear capabilities within NATO. America now sought to function as the “executive agent” of the entire alliance in military matters.¹¹³ Toward this end, Acheson wrote, it was “most important to the U.S. that use of nuclear weapons by the forces of other powers in Europe should be subject to U.S. veto and control.”¹¹⁴ This reasoning informed Washington’s decision to scrap the previous administration’s plan to deploy land-based MRBMs to Europe. Such missiles were especially susceptible to unauthorized use by allies, since “[a] nation that had reached the stage of desperation in which it contemplated national use of nuclear weapons would hardly boggle at revoking a paper

¹⁰⁹ July 24, 1962, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 302.

¹¹⁰ “Letter from President Kennedy to the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers Europe (Norstad),” *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 19, 520.

¹¹¹ On the “fourth nuclear power” idea, see “SACEUR’s Comments on ‘The North Atlantic Nations: Tasks for the 1960s,’” n.d. (circa 1959), DDRS. For a contemporary analysis of the MRBM proposal by the State Department, see Roger Hilsman to Mr. Kohler, “European Attitudes on Independent Nuclear Capability,” Research Memorandum REU-25, January 31, 1962, Wilson Center History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134046>. On Washington’s rejection of the idea, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 310-314.

¹¹² See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 302; and Gregory W. Pedlow, “Three Hats for Berlin: General Lauris Norstad and the Second Berlin Crisis, 1958-62,” in *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances*, eds. John Gearson and Kori Schake (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 191.

¹¹³ Rusk in “Memorandum of Conversation,” August 6, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 300. See also “Report by Dean Acheson,” undated (circa July 1961), *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, where Acheson argues that NATO’s “political command structure” should be one that “delegate[s] the executive command to the President of the United States, who would communicate to the Supreme Commander through his Chiefs of Staff” (255).

¹¹⁴ “Policy Directive,” April 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 287.

commitment to SACEUR or seizing a key from the U.S. technician.”¹¹⁵ In order to placate allied grievances over such backpedaling, the Kennedy administration floated the idea of a seaborne nuclear force operated by a multinational NATO crew—i.e., the Multilateral Force (MLF)—as an alternative. Although still couched in the language of nuclear sharing, the main intent of the MLF was to provide window-dressing for a U.S.-dominated arrangement and “reduce pressures” among allies “to compensate for the present U.S. atomic monopoly by developing national strategic nuclear capabilities.”¹¹⁶ Washington then decided to fit all American nuclear weapons in Europe with Permissive Action Links (PALs) in mid-1962. These security devices would ensure that the U.S. president would retain “positive control” over foreign-deployed nuclear weapons during a crisis.¹¹⁷ The introduction of the PAL spelled the end of substantive nuclear sharing in NATO.¹¹⁸ Although subsequent consultative arrangements centered on the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) were sometimes described as a continuation of nuclear sharing, these served as forums “for discussing, debating, and educating the allies about what is, fundamentally, *U.S. nuclear policy*.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ State Department Director of Policy Planning Gerard Smith to Rusk, January 17, 1961, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 310-311.

¹¹⁶ “Letter from Secretary of State Rusk to Secretary of Defense McNamara,” October 29, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 334. Note also Kennedy’s remark that the MLF was “not a real force but merely a façade.” “Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 41,” February 12, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 499. The Europeans, of course, harbored no illusions over the true intent of the MLF, which led to the proposal being abandoned for good in the mid-1960s.

¹¹⁷ See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 309-310; and Peter Douglas Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 183-198.

¹¹⁸ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 228-229. A key advantage of the PAL was that it enabled the United States to retain some of the formal institutions of nuclear sharing in Europe while vitiating its substance. Henry Kissinger, already an influential consultant for the National Security Council in the early 1960s, hinted at this advantage while briefing McGeorge Bundy on his talk with Strauss in May 1961. During this conversation, Strauss continued to advocate the dual-key or “double-veto system” of nuclear control established during the Eisenhower era, which Kissinger noted was “undoubtedly based on *arrière pensée* that in any crisis serious enough for the Federal Republic to consider independent action, he would just take [the] weapons.” Kissinger opined that “[t]his issue should not be pressed theoretically. Rather we should fix our weapons and stockpiles in such a way that it becomes physically impossible to take them or to use them without our consent. Since Strauss is publicly committed to the double-veto system, he could not possibly object to this action on our part.” Henry A. Kissinger, “Meeting with Minister of Defense Franz Josef Strauss,” May 10, 1961, National Security Files, JFKL, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/320/JFKNSF-320-018>, 5.

¹¹⁹ Timothy Andrews Sayle, “A Nuclear Education: The Origins of NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 6-7 (2020): 953 (emphasis added).

Finally, inhibiting nuclear proliferation among allies became a core objective of U.S. foreign policy.¹²⁰ If the “European powers acquire a nuclear capability[.]” Kennedy observed, “they would be in a position to be entirely independent and we might be on the outside looking in.”¹²¹ Now that the U.S. was committed to managing the alliance’s military affairs over the long term, this was unacceptable. Not only would Washington oppose the development of national nuclear capabilities, but even those who had already obtained nuclear forces with American support would now be encouraged “to phase out of the nuclear deterrent business.”¹²² Support for allied nuclear acquisition had been furnished “at a time when thinking on these matters was very different from what it is now[.]” National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy explained to French political scientist Raymond Aron, adding that if the United States “had it to do over again today,” it would not have aided the progress of “national deterrents in the hands of powers of the second rank[.]”¹²³ Although there was little the U.S. could do to deprive countries like France of their nuclear arsenal, Kennedy wrote in 1962, it was “fundamentally wrong to assist them” further.¹²⁴ As for West Germany, the verdict was even more obvious. “[T]he Russians have an overriding fear the Germans will somehow manage to obtain control of nuclear weapons which they can fire on their own decision[.]”¹²⁵ Secretary of State Rusk observed; the materialization of West German

¹²⁰ It was only in the early 1960s, then, that U.S. policies on nuclear proliferation took a decisive turn toward the “strategies of inhibition” described by Francis Gavin. See Francis J. Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition: U.S. Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 9-46.

¹²¹ “Record of the 508th Meeting of the National Security Council,” January 22, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 460. This new concern was articulated most forcefully in the so-called “Gilpatric Committee report” of 1965, which observed that “[n]ew nuclear capabilities, however primitive and regardless of whether they are held by nations currently friendly to the United States, will add complexity and instability to the deterrent balance between the United States and the Soviet Union...our diplomatic and military influence would wane[.]” See “Report by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation,” January 21, 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 6, 173-174.

¹²² “Policy Directive,” 289.

¹²³ Bundy to Aron, May 24, 1962, National Security Files, JFKL, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/226/JFKNSF-226-002>, 2; 1.

¹²⁴ President Kennedy to U.S. Ambassador to France James M. Gavin, n.d. (circa 1962), President’s Office Files, JFKL, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/116/JFKPOF-116-010>.

¹²⁵ “NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 41,” 497.

nuclear weapons “might be considered casus belli by the Soviets[.]”¹²⁶ Therefore, it was essential to “prevent nuclear weapons from coming into the hands of the Germans” for the new U.S. grand strategy to succeed.¹²⁷

In sum, U.S. grand strategy underwent a sea change in the early 1960s in the direction of insourcing. Rather than shedding military burdens, American policymakers became much more concerned about managing the capabilities of allies so as to avoid unnecessary escalation and conflict with the Soviet Union. This was necessary if the U.S. expected to commit the full weight of its power resources to confronting the Soviet threat over the long term. As Bundy wrote, under the new grand strategy the U.S. policymakers could “not be pushed around by German or French or British propaganda...and we must be careful to frame our policies in terms of American interest and American leadership. We are bound to pay the price of leadership—we may as well have some of its advantages.”¹²⁸ With this overarching goal, Washington sought to establish monopolistic control over the alliance’s most significant warmaking capabilities.

Uneven Vulnerabilities Persist

Western Europe’s basic postwar pattern of military vulnerabilities persisted throughout the 1960s. Once again, France was relatively invulnerable to Soviet military predation, primarily by virtue of

¹²⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” February 7, 1962, DDRS, 3. By the early 1960s, it was widely recognized in U.S. policymaking circles that the Soviets had a quite rational fear of West Germany’s latent power. A lengthy report by the U.S. Defense Department’s Weapons Systems Evaluation Group (WSEG), for example, assessed that “the crux of the explosive ‘German problem’...is the growing military power of West Germany (whose development these forces are making possible), and the potential implications of German military power for the unsettled situation in Eastern Europe...[I]f these problems cannot be settled soon, the Soviets may well feel that a showdown had better be had now rather than several years from now when West Germany may be stronger, under different and more ambitious leadership, and possibly the possessor of a nuclear weapons capability.” WSEG Staff Study no. 83, “U.S. Strategic Objectives and Military Deployments in NATO, as Related to the Problem of Arms Control,” August 30, 1961, DNSA, 61-62.

¹²⁷ Kennedy to British Prime Minister MacMillan, April 28, 1962, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 321.

¹²⁸ McGeorge Bundy, “Outline for Kennedy’s Talk to NSC 1/18/62 on Basic Foreign Policy Positions,” January 16, 1962, DDRS, 2.

its geography. Its position behind the frontline state of West Germany made it largely immune to Soviet military pressures. The strides that France made in core dimensions of material power during the late 1950s and early 1960s further entrenched its basic invulnerability. France's raw military manpower had increased from 802,000 in 1955 to over one million in 1960.¹²⁹ Then, in February 1960, France secured its membership in the nuclear club by detonating a 70-kiloton device over an Algerian desert. "Everybody knows that we now have the means of providing ourselves with nuclear weapons[.]" De Gaulle was declaring as early as October 1958, "France will [no longer] accept a position of chronic and overwhelming inferiority."¹³⁰

By contrast, West Germany's military situation remained dire. As a joint FRG Defense Ministry-Foreign Office memorandum assessed in June 1962, "the present and—probably long term [*sic*]—conventional inferiority of NATO in Europe" meant that "a superior Soviet attack with classical weapons will gain space very quickly."¹³¹ The brute fact of geography made it inevitable that "[p]recious territory of the Federal Republic would be lost. At the same time we would lose the capability of switching to a nuclear conduct of the war [as the enemy would overtake forward-based systems]."¹³² Particularly in Berlin, U.S. intelligence analysts observed, the Soviets were "capable of acting without much preparation and without giving warning signals to the West."¹³³ Measures by the United States and its allies to shore up West Germany's exposed territory "would quickly fail if the Soviets chose to use their full conventional capability, thus facing us very quickly with the choice between defeat and escalation."¹³⁴ A lengthy U.S. Defense Department study was

¹²⁹ On military personnel counts, see Singer, "Correlates of War Dataset."

¹³⁰ Quoted in Wilfred L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 15.

¹³¹ June 15, 1962, quoted in Heuser, *Nuclear Strategies and Forces*, 143.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Office of National Estimates, "Memorandum for the Director: A Survey of Possible Soviet Actions," June 7, 1963, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R00904A001000010034-5.pdf>, 2.

¹³⁴ "Letter from President Kennedy to His Special Representative in Berlin (Clay)," October 8, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 485.

thus unequivocal in its assessment: “West Berlin is, per se, indefensible.”¹³⁵

More broadly, the same study observed that “a major Soviet conventional attack against West Germany” taking the form of a *fait accompli* was “a possibility which U.S. strategy must seriously contemplate.” Although the threat of all-out nuclear war was widely thought to discourage such a move, “if the Soviets became convinced that the Western powers would be unwilling to convert a limited war into an all-out war, it [was] possible that they might gamble on a sudden thrust at West Germany with a view to humiliating NATO and demonstrating the weakness of the U.S. guarantee.” The report went on to state that “[a] particular variant of this threat might be a Soviet drive into the northern sector of West Germany, where there are no U.S. forces stationed and where a NATO counterattack dependent largely on U.S. forces would be required to recover the lost territory and to assist the other NATO forces already engaged.”¹³⁶ Unlike in the French case, West Germany’s continuing vulnerability to Soviet military predation left it with “no acceptable alternative to its fundamental dependence on the West [i.e., the United States and NATO].”¹³⁷

Flexible Response and the Franco-U.S. Fallout

The U.S. shift to a grand strategy of insourcing in the early 1960s reversed the previous patterns of strategic coherence in Western Europe. France, whose commitment to an independent and assertive military posture had been broadly consistent with the Eisenhower administration’s strategic vision, now became the chief source of stress for America’s grand strategy in the region. As the presidential committee on nuclear nonproliferation (i.e., the “Gilpatric Committee”)

¹³⁵ WSEG Staff Study no. 83, “U.S. Strategic Objectives and Military Deployments in NATO,” 46.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁷ “The Outlook for West Germany,” July 25, 1962, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP98-00204R000100050004-1.pdf>, 7.

observed in 1965, U.S. strategy demanded “mak[ing] it clear to France that her insistence upon the development of an independent nuclear-strategic capability and upon atmospheric testing are unacceptable.”¹³⁸ De Gaulle, however, refused to budge. When NATO was formed in 1949, he remarked during Kennedy’s 1961 visit to Paris, France “could not live by herself either in war or even in peace.” Although “[t]his still applies to a large extent to Germany[,]” de Gaulle went on, for France “the situation had greatly changed...[T]he fact is that she has gained some strength in the economic field and in the political field. She even has some means of defense.”¹³⁹ France also had “ambition as a nation[,]” which had implications “[i]n regard to French national defense” in the context of NATO. Specifically, de Gaulle correctly pointed out that under Kennedy’s grand strategic vision for Europe “[t]here is no national defense in Europe...but only integrated defense under U.S. command.” De Gaulle was adamant that “[t]his is not acceptable to France.”¹⁴⁰

Indeed, France not only continued to develop its national nuclear arsenal but insisted on maintaining an independent nuclear doctrine oriented around rapid, unilateral escalation to the nuclear level upon the outbreak of conflict.¹⁴¹ The French concept of the role of nuclear weapons in war approximated American ideas of “massive retaliation” during the 1950s. As de Gaulle declared in 1964, for any adversary, the mere “fact of attacking France would be equivalent to undergoing frightful destruction himself.”¹⁴² True to this concept, France made steady progress toward acquiring a wide array of delivery systems during the 1960s including Mirage IV supersonic bombers, land-based IRBMs, and a submarine-launched missile force.¹⁴³ It also

¹³⁸ “Committee on Nuclear Proliferation,” 179.

¹³⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” June 1, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 310-311.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹⁴¹ Vipin Narang terms this the “asymmetric escalation” nuclear posture. See Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), ch. 6.

¹⁴² Quoted in Heuser, *Nuclear Strategies and Forces*, 96.

¹⁴³ See “The French Nuclear Strike Force Program,” May 31, 1963, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00927A004000110002-6.pdf>; and “Proliferation of Missile

adopted a command-and-control structure that liberally delegated authority over theater nuclear forces to military commanders.¹⁴⁴ All this was patently inimical to U.S. grand strategy. As U.S. Undersecretary of State George Ball summarized for Kennedy,

[De Gaulle] has made it crystal clear that he regards a nuclear weapons system not as something to be placed at the service of the West but as an instrument of specifically national interest. He does not think of a French national deterrent as a supplemental force to be used alongside the American force; he sees it rather as a force he can employ in the event that the United States chooses not to use its force when he thinks French interests require it...In other words, he desires an independent force primarily for the purpose of being able to frustrate American policy when he chooses to do so.¹⁴⁵

Since the new U.S. grand strategy depended on Washington exercising centralized deliberation and control over the alliance's nuclear forces, it was clearly "against [the American] national interest for De Gaulle to have an independent deterrent[.]" Ball concluded that "there are compelling reasons for us not to hasten the day of De Gaulle's becoming even a minor nuclear power."¹⁴⁶

The United States thus made significant effort to impede France's growth as an independent nuclear power and, more generally, make it "toe the line" set by American policy.¹⁴⁷ "[T]he Europeans [i.e., France] do not really understand what nuclear war means[.]" an exasperated Rusk mused, and the French had to be made to understand that "de Gaulle's use of nuclear weapons would result in the total destruction of France."¹⁴⁸ At one point, in a fit of rage,

Delivery Systems for Nuclear Weapons," September 25, 1969, CREST, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005577296.pdf.

¹⁴⁴ Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 157-160.

¹⁴⁵ George Ball to President Kennedy, "Proposed Nuclear Offer to De Gaulle," July 22, 1963, JFKL, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/226/JFKNSF-226-006>, 7 (underline in original).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁴⁷ Rusk meeting with British Foreign Secretary Lord Alec Douglas-Home, September 15, 1961, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 303.

¹⁴⁸ "NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 41," 499.

Rusk threatened France with an American nuclear attack. If “smaller allies” insisted on “us[ing] or threaten[ing] to use nuclear weapons” on their own against the Soviet Union, he told French defense minister Pierre Messmer in late 1961, “they had better think of supplying themselves with inter-continental missiles directed across the Atlantic.”¹⁴⁹

Apart from angry outbursts, the most obvious instrument of allied coercion was the threat of American withdrawal from Europe. The problem, as Kennedy saw it, was that “de Gaulle did not question our support of Europe...He relies on our power to protect him while he launches his policies based solely on the self-interest of France.”¹⁵⁰ In this situation, the president believed that the United States should present France with “a cold, hard attitude[.]” It is “we [who] can take care of ourselves[.]” he stated, “and are not dependent upon European support.” If de Gaulle insisted on pursuing his own course in national security, the U.S. had “to be in a position to march out.” Several courses of action were considered, including “pulling our tactical fighters out of France[.]” “drastically reducing our logistical base in France[.]” and relocating NATO’s headquarters out of Paris.¹⁵¹ The bottom line was that the United States could not tolerate “[a] Europe beyond our influence—yet counting on us—in which we should have to bear the burden of defense without the power to affect events[.]” If the allies insisted on acting alone, Kennedy told French Cultural Affairs Minister André Malreaux, “the United States would like nothing better than to leave Europe.”¹⁵²

However, U.S. policymakers soon recognized that France could not be forced to

¹⁴⁹ Rusk’s account during a conversation with Lord Home, December 10, 1961, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 338, fn. 193.

¹⁵⁰ “Remarks of President Kennedy to the National Security Council Meeting,” January 22, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 485.

¹⁵¹ “Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 38 (Part II),” January 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 490.

¹⁵² “Memorandum of Meeting,” May 11, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 696; 699.

fundamentally reorient its military posture. The same invulnerability that enabled France to pursue advanced military capabilities against the Soviet Union also made it immune to American efforts at arm-twisting. “It is a fact of geography that a threat to deprive France of our protection [against Soviet attack] is at best barely credible and at worst, just plain silly[.]” Deputy National Security Advisor Francis Bator observed in 1966, “[i]t is like threatening to abandon Kentucky in the face of a land attack by Canada.”¹⁵³ Indeed, de Gaulle seemed to welcome a reduced U.S. presence in Europe. During a conversation with U.S. ambassador James Gavin in May 1962, he argued that the “U.S. should not be mixed up in Western European difficulties and should keep itself apart[,] only bringing its weight to bear in case of necessity.”¹⁵⁴ Under France’s military leadership, he elaborated, the continent would become a “European Europe” rather than a “colossal Atlantic community dependent on America and under American control[.]”¹⁵⁵

Of course, a Europe free from American control was unacceptable for a United States committed to an insourcing grand strategy. With Washington unwilling to adjust its basic strategic priorities for the sake of France and France unwilling to compromise on its drive to become an independently powerful military actor, strategic incoherence was irresolvable. As early as 1962, U.S. leaders were beginning to resign themselves to the idea that France would pave its own path in national security policy regardless of Washington’s preferences. The U.S. simply had to cope with the repercussions of this reality. Kennedy grudgingly admitted during a conversation with British policymakers that there might be “more logic in the present arrangements”—that is, several NATO members wielding independent nuclear forces—“than in a multilateral [i.e., American-

¹⁵³ “Memorandum from the President’s Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bator) to President Johnson,” March 7, 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 8, 327.

¹⁵⁴ “Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State,” May 16, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 702. Gavin reported being taken aback by the “cold harshness of [t]his unqualified statement” (703).

¹⁵⁵ De Gaulle press conference, January 14, 1963, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 369.

dominated] force.”¹⁵⁶ And regardless of what the U.S. believed, a British participant in the meeting pointed out, “France was going ahead anyway.”¹⁵⁷

By the mid-1960s, the quiet consensus in Washington was that the best the United States could hope for was to maintain a cordial relationship with a militarily independent France. As France prepared to withdraw its forces from NATO’s integrated military command in the spring of 1966, Rusk wrote to U.S. ambassadors in Europe that “[w]hile it would be possible to devise a U.S. policy which could bring about an accommodation with President De Gaulle, this would require abandonment or modification of major U.S. objectives. Such a price is far too high to pay[.]” That said, Rusk admonished American officials to “lean over backward to be polite and friendly to France, to President De Gaulle personally, and to all French government officials. Backbiting, recriminations, attempts to downgrade the importance of France as a nation, or attempts at reprisals should be avoided no matter what the temptation.”¹⁵⁸ The idea was that while tending to “the continuation of the NATO organization without France[.]” the U.S. would “work to preserve this basic friendship despite any annoyance with President De Gaulle or his government.”¹⁵⁹

De Gaulle’s government communicated its formal withdrawal from NATO’s integrated command on March 11, 1966, pointing out that “France is equipped with an atomic armament the very nature of which excludes that it be integrated.”¹⁶⁰ A half-decade of strategic incoherence in U.S.-France alliance relations had culminated in France’s exit from NATO’s most critical military institution, although it retained its formal membership in the alliance. Although U.S. policymakers

¹⁵⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” December 19, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 1097. As indicated in the “Multilateral Force” concept discussed earlier, the term “multilateral” was often used as a euphemism for U.S.-dominated military arrangements during this period.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1096.

¹⁵⁸ “Circular Telegram from the Department of State to the Posts in the NATO Capitals,” March 2, 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 8, 320.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁶⁰ “Aide-Mémoire from the French Government to the U.S. Government,” March 11, 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 8, 333.

were not pleased by this outcome, they were hardly surprised. As long as the United States was committed to a grand strategy of insourcing while France was relatively invulnerable to Soviet military predation (and by extension, U.S. coercive pressures), it was unlikely that the latter would cater its military capabilities to Washington's restrictive demands. U.S. Ambassador to France Charles Bohlen thus concluded that "there is not the slightest validity to the statements...to the effect that if differently handled we might have produced certain modifications of the organization which would have kept France in. What De Gaulle wanted, and finally achieved, was his total withdrawal from all multilateral [i.e, U.S.-dominated] aspects of NATO organization[.]"¹⁶¹

The U.S. experience with West Germany could not have been more different. As with France, the goal here was to suppress the development of the FRG's independent military capabilities. In particular, in order to promote stability in great-power relations with regard to flashpoints like Berlin, it was essential "not to facilitate German national ownership or custody of nuclear warheads[.]"¹⁶² Although Adenauer's government was opposed to any arrangement that denied West Germany access to nuclear weapons, U.S. leaders believed early on that the Chancellor would ultimately prove "quite forthcoming on" the matter.¹⁶³ The central reason for optimism was West Germany's military vulnerability. Given the FRG's exposed geographic position, General Lucius D. Clay reported to Kennedy from Berlin, there was "little evidence in

¹⁶¹ "Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State," March 31, 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 8, 351. One silver lining for U.S. leaders was that the French exit provided the leeway to enshrine America's post-1950s grand strategic priorities into a formal NATO strategy document, the progress of which had been held up by French opposition. Not surprisingly, the new strategic plan (MC 14/3) placed a premium on "defend[ing against] aggression by deliberately raising but where possible controlling, the scope and intensity of combat, making the cost and the risk disproportionate to the aggressor's objectives and the threat of nuclear response progressively more imminent." "Overall Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area," MC 14/3 (Final), January 1, 1968, in *NATO Strategy Documents*, 358-359.

¹⁶² Department of State, "Possibilities in European Security," August 25, 1961, DDRS, 2.

¹⁶³ "Letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Macmillan," November 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 633.

West Germany of the will to fight and” many of its leaders were “beginning to face the facts.”¹⁶⁴ In Rusk’s words, the FRG’s vulnerability and the U.S. interest in constraining Bonn’s military capabilities implied that its leaders “were going to have to swallow a lot of things that they had hitherto maintained were entirely unacceptable to them.”¹⁶⁵

These predictions materialized over the course of the 1960s. As one senior West German official acknowledged, the Adenauer government recognized “that Germany would have to make sacrifices to avoid the very real danger of war and to save the freedom of West Berlin.”¹⁶⁶ As early as 1961, Kennedy observed “hesitation and delay” in military matters “on the part of some who talk as if they were firm and resolute.”¹⁶⁷ In May 1963, following U.S. pressure, Bonn pledged to abstain from pursuing nuclear cooperation with France and reaffirmed its commitment to a NATO under U.S. leadership. Three months later, it also signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty—an implicit superpower bargain wherein the Soviet Union agreed to respect the status quo in Berlin in exchange for a U.S. agreement to keep West Germany non-nuclear.¹⁶⁸ As Adrian Fisher of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency wrote, the treaty signified a commitment to the Soviets “that there would be no additional nuclear powers in our camp.”¹⁶⁹ Although the West Germans intermittently displayed interest in nuclear weapons throughout the decade, its days as a serious candidate for nuclear armament were finished after the Limited Test Ban Treaty. The FRG’s non-nuclear status was further sealed with Bonn’s signing of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)

¹⁶⁴ “Letter from the President’s Special Representative in Berlin (Clay) to President Kennedy,” October 18, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 512.

¹⁶⁵ Rusk meeting with Lord Home, August 5, 1961, quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 304.

¹⁶⁶ West German Ambassador to the Soviet Union Hans Kroll, September 5, 1961, quoted in *ibid.*, 330, fn. 160.

¹⁶⁷ “Letter from President Kennedy,” October 8, 1961, 484.

¹⁶⁸ On these events, see Gene Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 91-129, and esp. 115-117.

¹⁶⁹ “Paper by the Deputy Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Fisher),” June 20, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 7, 732.

in November 1969.¹⁷⁰

Many West German leaders—especially those who succeeded Adenauer—came to sincerely believe that a European security arrangement in which the FRG remained a military dependency of the United States was in line with West Germany’s basic national interests.¹⁷¹ But American threats of abandonment played a significant role in guiding the West Germans toward this understanding. With latent pressures for nuclear armament still evident in Bonn, U.S. policymakers believed it was imperative to “keep [the West Germans] nervous about our relations with them” to ensure their military policies fell into line with American strategic demands.¹⁷² Although there was “not much we can do against France,” Kennedy observed, the FRG’s military vulnerability meant that Washington “can exert considerable pressure on the Germans.”¹⁷³

U.S. policymakers often wielded this leverage in truly brazen ways. General Clay, Kennedy’s special representative in Berlin, told West German officials that pursuing nuclear cooperation with France outside of the NATO framework would mean “the end of Berlin.”¹⁷⁴ Kennedy himself warned Adenauer that there were those in the United States “who feel that \$45 billion and 16 years of continuous economic and military assistance have earned us nothing but the hostility of certain European leaders” and ready to “take out their resentment by pressing for a return to restrictive, isolationist concepts[.]” “I intend to do everything in my power to prevent this trend[.]” Kennedy told the chancellor, but he hoped to “be aided in these efforts by a visibly constructive response in Europe[.]”¹⁷⁵ As historian Hans-Peter Schwarz observes, this was

¹⁷⁰ Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion,” 121-124.

¹⁷¹ On this point, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 394-398.

¹⁷² U.S. Ambassador to West Germany Walter C. Dowling, in “Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 40,” February 5, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 175.

¹⁷³ “Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 38 (Part II),” January 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 489.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 375.

¹⁷⁵ “Letter from President Kennedy to Chancellor Adenauer,” February 1, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 164.

recognized as a “barely veiled threat” in Bonn.¹⁷⁶ And unlike in the French case, such blackmail deeply affected the calculus of West German policymakers. As one official wrote in response to a critical letter by a constituent, “We are also not pleased with some things about our allies, but [we] should not forget that we are dependent on them, for better or for worse.”¹⁷⁷

The FRG did made visible strides in the non-nuclear dimensions of military capability during this period—by 1967, the Bundeswehr had grown to comprise approximately 325,000 soldiers and was already one of the largest, best-trained, and best-equipped conventional armies in Europe.¹⁷⁸ However, this development obscured harsh realities. To begin with, as large and sophisticated as the Bundeswehr became, it could not keep the 2-million strong Soviet army from achieving quick victories along the central European front on its own. Western military analysts agreed throughout the 1960s that NATO could plausibly contain a Soviet blitzkrieg, but if and only if U.S. military forces were included in the conventional balance.¹⁷⁹

More importantly, the fact remained that NATO’s defense strategy in the 1960s continued to overwhelmingly rely on nuclear weapons; at the end of the day, conventional forces were an afterthought.¹⁸⁰ Kennedy acknowledged in private that, given the Soviet conventional superiority, “if the Russians started a mass attack against Europe, we almost would be forced to use nuclear

¹⁷⁶ Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 674.

¹⁷⁷ Hermann Höcherl, Chair of the CSU Landesgruppe, September 11, 1961, quoted in Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*, 137.

¹⁷⁸ On the FRG’s military strength, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, vol. 67 (London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1967). At least from the late 1960s onward, a broad agreement emerged among military experts that the *Bundeswehr* had become “perhaps [the] world’s best army” when measured in terms of training and conventional equipment. The phrase is from John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 220.

¹⁷⁹ Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 162.

¹⁸⁰ This is a key point overlooked in Brian Blankenship’s analysis of “burden-sharing” between the United States and West Germany during the Cold War. Brian Blankenship, “The Price of Protection: Explaining Success and Failure of U.S. Alliance Burden-Sharing Pressure,” *Security Studies* 30, no. 5 (2021): 691-724.

weapons against the first Russian who came across the line.”¹⁸¹ In the same vein, a detailed analysis prepared for the State Department concluded that “a total reduction in NATO Central Region M-Day army manpower of 75,000-150,000 would not seriously weaken” NATO’s defense posture, since it was the “threat of nuclear response” that “provided and will continue to provide a highly effective deterrent against massive Soviet non-nuclear attack.”¹⁸² Therefore, contrary to popular understanding, U.S. strategy during this period did not actually emphasize conventional military instruments at the expense of nuclear weapons.¹⁸³ U.S. policymakers at the highest levels harbored no illusion that nuclear weapons would ultimately be decisive in Europe; what they wanted was for this decisive instrument to be concentrated in American hands and to force allies out of the “nuclear business[.]”¹⁸⁴ In this crucial respect, the United States was able to bring West Germany’s capabilities into line with its insourcing strategy. Strategic coherence prevailed.

Summary of the Evidence

Table 4.3 summarizes my findings from the Atlantic Alliance in the second decade of the Cold War. U.S. policymakers in the Eisenhower administration continued to pursue a grand strategy of outsourcing in Western Europe after 1954. Upon the defeat of the European army plan, the Eisenhower administration tried to groom Western Europe into an autonomous counterweight to Soviet power by devolving nuclear capabilities to the allies. As my theory predicts, the relatively invulnerable France incorporated the basic prescriptions of this grand strategy into its military

¹⁸¹ “Memorandum from William Y. Smith to the President’s Military Representative (Taylor),” August 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 15, 268.

¹⁸² “The Threat: Warsaw Pact Capabilities in the Central Region,” circa 1966-1967, quoted in Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 49.

¹⁸³ Francis Gavin dispels this and other popular myths associated with the idea of “flexible response” in *Nuclear Statecraft*, ch. 2.

¹⁸⁴ “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Johnson,” *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 8, 105.

posture, equipping its frontline forces with American nuclear weapons under NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements and testing its own nuclear device in 1960. In line with U.S. strategic demands, France built its capabilities with an eye toward having its armed forces become the “main [d]efense” of the NATO area with U.S. forces serving as the “grand reserve.”¹⁸⁵

Table 4.3: Summary of Evidence from the Atlantic Alliance (1955-1966)

Alliance Relationship	Period	Leading Power’s Grand Strategy	Ally’s Military Vulnerability	Outcome for Leading Power’s Grand Strategy
U.S.-France	1955-1960	<i>Outsourcing:</i> U.S. plans to eventually withdraw from continental Europe; pursues nuclear sharing policies to wean allies of security dependence on United States	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> Geographically insulated from Soviet land power	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> France equips frontline forces with U.S.-made nuclear weapons and tests indigenous nuclear bomb
U.S.-West Germany			<i>High vulnerability:</i> Directly exposed to Soviet land power	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> West Germany’s progress toward nuclear armament derailed by Soviet-initiated crisis
U.S.-France	1961-1966	<i>Insourcing:</i> U.S. prioritizes controlling scale and scope of great-power competition; aims to monopolize alliance’s key military assets and decision-making capacity	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> Geographically insulated from Soviet land power	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> France develops independent nuclear arsenal and doctrine in defiance of U.S. strategic demands
U.S.-West Germany			<i>High vulnerability:</i> Directly exposed to Soviet land power	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> West Germany becomes a nuclear dependency of the United States

West Germany, by contrast, failed to adopt the military capabilities prescribed by U.S. grand strategy. Although Bonn was well on its way toward equipping its armed forces with U.S.-made nuclear warheads and delivery systems by 1958, its efforts were interrupted by Moscow’s aggressive behavior in Berlin. As suggested by my theory’s causal logic, the Soviet Union initiated the Second Berlin Crisis largely due to preventive considerations. Policymakers in the Kremlin

¹⁸⁵ Macmillan diary entry, March 13, 1960, in MacMillan, *Pointing the Way*, 182.

widely feared that West Germany's nuclearization would soon enable it to "speak in a different tone" in disputes with the Soviet Union and threaten its Eastern European satellites.¹⁸⁶ By late 1958, some kind of "counteroffensive" was deemed necessary to stall military developments within West Germany.¹⁸⁷ West Germany's lingering vulnerability underscored the attractiveness of bold military action.

U.S. grand strategy transitioned to insourcing in the early 1960s. For the first time in the post-World War II period, U.S. policymakers began to consciously prioritize their ability to control the scale and scope of great-power competition in faraway regions at the expense of shedding defense responsibilities over the long term. This implied that they should jealously guard the assets and decision-making capacities needed to take significant military action against the Soviet Union. The resulting policies of nuclear monopoly reversed earlier patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence in the Atlantic Alliance. Relatively invulnerable to Soviet reprisals and, by extension, American threats of abandonment, France refused to circumscribe its military capabilities as demanded by the new U.S. strategy and acquired a highly independent nuclear posture. The disjuncture between U.S. grand strategy and France's military capabilities played a key role in motivating the latter's exit from NATO's integrated military command in 1966. In stark contrast, the same vulnerability that rendered West Germany incapable of accommodating the prescriptions of America's outsourcing strategy in the previous period now made it more amenable to the dictates of the insourcing strategy. While West German leaders were not at all happy to see their country reduced to the status of a second-class military power (which was the logical implication of America's grand strategy of insourcing), they had no choice but to swallow this bitter pill when the alternative was to risk losing American support in the face of the Soviet threat.

¹⁸⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," January 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 8, 273.

¹⁸⁷ October 5, 1958, quoted in Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 9.

Alternative Explanations

I now turn to alternative explanations for strategic incoherence in the Atlantic alliance in the 1955-1966 period. In addition to collective goods theory, perspectives based on shared democratic norms and European domestic politics have attempted to explain some of the strategic dynamics described above. Each of them falls short of providing a satisfactory account.

Collective Goods Theory

Collective goods theory yields mixed predictions about strategic incoherence in NATO in the 1955-1966 period. On the one hand, the fact that the international system remained bipolar should be broadly conducive to strategic coherence. Waltz was largely writing with U.S.-European relations in mind when he wrote in 1979 that “[r]igidity of alignment in a two-power world makes for flexibility of strategy and the enlargement of freedom of decision.”¹⁸⁸ By itself, the idea that the United States could, when push comes to shove, afford to abandon its allies while they have no comparable source of support against the Soviet behemoth should have incentivized France and West Germany to cater their military capabilities to the leading power’s preferences.

On the other hand, several strategic developments of this period suggest a different expectation. The apparent consolidation of the U.S. military commitment to Western Europe after the demise of the EDC plan should have increased moral hazard on the part of the allies. Trachtenberg writes that Washington’s formal adoption of a forward-oriented nuclear posture in Europe in 1954, complete with the large-scale deployment of nuclear assets to the continent under the command of a powerful American SACEUR, created the impression “that the Americans, who

¹⁸⁸ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 170.

controlled the most important forces and who in effect operated the strategy, would have to stay in Europe for a very considerable period of time[.]”¹⁸⁹ Of course, as detailed earlier, this was precisely the opposite of what U.S. grand strategy envisioned during the Eisenhower period, and American policymakers went to great lengths until the 1960s to create a situation wherein the Europeans held effective control over “the most important forces” of the alliance and could “operate the strategy” in a meaningful way. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suspect that post-1954 strategic developments made it easier for the Europeans to “take the American presence for granted[.]”¹⁹⁰

Perhaps more importantly, there were some indications that key political groups within the United States had warmed to the idea of indefinitely maintaining high levels of defense spending and extensive security commitments around the globe. This evolution of political sentiments was evinced, for example, in the “Gaither Committee report” of 1957. Officially titled “Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age,” this study observed that “[t]he singleness of purpose with which [the Soviets] have pressed their military-centered industrial development ha[d] led to spectacular progress” and that the United States had to commit \$44 billion in additional defense spending over the next five years to bolster its defenses against possible Soviet nuclear attack.¹⁹¹ “The reduction of the vulnerability of the United States and its population[.]” in turn, had to “be made part of a broad program to improve the security and political position of the Free World as a whole[.]” Otherwise, “any substantial program to reduce the vulnerability of the United States might be widely interpreted as signaling a retreat to ‘Fortress America.’ The USSR would be sure to fully

¹⁸⁹ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 163. On the deployment of nuclear weapons to Europe, see Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 1954-2004,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 60, no. 6 (November-December 2004): 76-77.

¹⁹⁰ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 166.

¹⁹¹ “National Security Council Report” (NSC 5724), November 7, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 19, 641; 647.

exploit the resulting uncertainties.”¹⁹² The report added optimistically that these “defense measures are well within our economic capabilities[,]” especially since “[t]he American people have always been ready to shoulder heavy costs for their defense when convinced of their necessity.”¹⁹³ Of course, top officials in the Eisenhower administration were “decidedly lukewarm” about these conclusions.¹⁹⁴ However, the Gaither Committee report enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress upon public release. Its recommendations drew endorsement from military leaders as well. As John Lewis Gaddis notes, “the Army, Navy, and Air Force had all been clamoring for a share in the strategic deterrence mission” and [t]he Gaither Committee report offered something for everyone...[T]he service chiefs did not hesitate to use the forum provided them by Congressional hearings to make their support for its recommendations known.”¹⁹⁵

Compared to the pre-1955 period, then, European allies in the second decade of the Cold War may have had stronger reasons to believe that they could afford to defy U.S. strategic demands in developing their military capabilities. Not surprisingly, U.S. policymakers in this period frequently attributed strategic incoherence in NATO to America’s excessively generous security commitments. Eisenhower lamented that “because we have had our troops there, the Europeans ha[ve] not done their share. They won’t make the sacrifices to provide the soldiers for their own defense.”¹⁹⁶ By the same token, he also expressed discomfort about taking an overly “strong anti-Communist line” in foreign relations, since this might incentivize allies “to make demands on us, and claim that they are fighting our fight for us.”¹⁹⁷ And although the demands of his preferred grand strategy for allied military capabilities were radically different from those of Eisenhower’s,

¹⁹² Ibid., 647.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 648.

¹⁹⁴ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 183.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ August 22, 1961, quoted in Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 166.

¹⁹⁷ March 13, 1956, quoted in *ibid.*, 167.

Kennedy also believed that allied failures to accommodate U.S. strategic priorities in their military policies had much to do with the moral hazard created by American largesse. This was his explanation for France’s intransigence in nuclear policy: “[D]e Gaulle did not question our support of Europe...He relies on our power to protect him while he launches his policies based solely on the self-interest of France.”¹⁹⁸

Adherents of collective goods theory may thus believe—as did many contemporary U.S. leaders—that the Europeans’ perceptions of a steadfast U.S. commitment to their security accounted for the lack of consistency between the military capabilities they ended up adopting and those prescribed by U.S. grand strategy. Indeed, this has long been the standard interpretation of America’s alliance troubles during the Cold War. Robert Endicott Osgood argues in his classic work on the subject that “the basic difficulty” facing the United States in the Atlantic alliance was that it found itself playing the role of “primary counterbalancer” among allies that had a “natural reluctance...to rearm in peacetime.” The “practical preference” of the allies in this situation was to rely “upon America’s atomic deterrent” rather than pursue military self-help “at the sacrifice of domestic economic and social objectives[.]”¹⁹⁹ Osgood adds that this tendency became even more salient once NATO strategy began to foreground nuclear weapons after 1954. “The general disposition of Western European governments” from this point on was “to discount the threat of overt aggression and to let the United States worry about the details of defending the continent[.]”²⁰⁰

But regardless of which of the theory’s predictions one chooses to highlight, evidence from

¹⁹⁸ “Remarks of President Kennedy to the National Security Council Meeting,” January 22, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 13, 485.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Endicott Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 64.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 146. Olson and Zeckhauser’s foundational application of collective goods theory to alliance politics was also largely produced with this period in mind. Mancur Olson, Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266-279.

this case undermines collective goods theory. The first and most obvious reason has to do with the striking variation I document in both cross-national and cross-temporal patterns of strategic incoherence. Since Washington's policies toward individual European allies were formulated under the umbrella of its basic NATO strategy, France and West Germany were subjected to broadly similar levels of U.S. security commitment. Nonetheless, the two countries ended up adopting military capabilities that had contrasting implications for the coherence of American grand strategy. France made steady progress acquiring the "advanced" capabilities prescribed by the U.S. outsourcing strategy in the 1955-1960 period, while West Germany's efforts to do the same were frustrated by Soviet preventive pressures. The patterns were reversed in the following period: France rejected the prescriptions of the U.S. insourcing strategy by continuing to develop independent nuclear capabilities and doctrines, while West Germany proved much more amenable. Such marked variation across allies and across periods are difficult to understand from the lens of collective goods theory, which predicts relatively uniform patterns of strategic incoherence when similar conditions prevail on the "supply-side," that is, the leading power's commitment to its allies' security. Nor can the difference in strategic coherence outcomes be attributed to France and West Germany's divergent threat environments. West Germany was consistently more threatened during this period than France. However, it failed to adapt its military capabilities to the U.S. grand strategic vision in the pre-Kennedy era. At the same time, France's relatively permissive threat environment did not keep it from accommodating U.S. demands for its capabilities until the grand strategic shift of the early 1960s.

This significant variance in outcomes would be less embarrassing if there was evidence that the two allies calibrated their military capabilities based their *perceived* strength of America's security commitments. Unfortunately for collective goods theory, there is no evidence that shifting

patterns of strategic incoherence were produced by corresponding shifts in such perceptions. To the contrary, there is ample evidence that leaders in both Paris and Bonn were perennially distrustful of the U.S. security guarantee toward Western Europe; at no point did they rest assured in the idea that the security provided by the leading power approximated a nonexcludable and nonrivalrous collective good. No matter how strong the U.S. security commitment appeared to be at any given moment, the allies understood that this situation may radically shift at some point in the future. “Exclusion” was an ever-present possibility in an anarchic international system. “[O]ne is never sure what the Americans will do at any given moment or any given place in matters of strategy or policy[.]” de Gaulle told Adenauer in January 1963, “[they] may perhaps not come to the immediate defense of our continent...we must draw the consequences.”²⁰¹ Adenauer concurred, arguing that the U.S. security commitment to Europe was susceptible to “sporadic changes in the strategic and perhaps even political concepts of the Americans.”²⁰² This explains why both France and West Germany sought to acquire nuclear independence from the United States if at all possible. Of the two allies, West Germany failed to achieve this goal. However, the FRG did not “remain a nuclear protectorate” of the United States because it bought into the logic of collective goods theory.²⁰³ Instead, Bonn’s abandonment of its nuclear ambitions in the 1960s reflected a grudging acquiescence to the implications of its military vulnerability; nuclear self-help was highly desirable, but West Germany was too weak to achieve this goal. The simple fact that military self-help appears to be the baseline preference of “dependent” allies should be regarded as a serious blow to the premise of the conventional wisdom.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ January 21, 1963, quoted in Sheetz, “Continental Drift,” 363-364.

²⁰² January 21, 1963, quoted in *ibid.*, 363.

²⁰³ Adenauer, September 19, 1956, quoted in Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 239.

²⁰⁴ This is the central takeaway of Avery Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride: Alliances and Security in the Postwar World,” *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 39-71.

The “Democratic Community”

A second alternative explanation for patterns of strategic coherence in 1955-1966 NATO focuses on the norms and institutions shared among liberal democratic allies. Thomas Risse-Kappen argues that liberal democracies externalize their domestic political values in their relations with each other. As he writes, “the North Atlantic Alliance represents an institutionalization of the security community among democracies[,]” and “is explicitly built around norms of democratic decision-making, that is, nonhierarchy, frequent consultation implying co-determination, and consensus-building.”²⁰⁵ The resultant emphasis on “persuasion and socialization” should mean that “smaller states [can] influence the alliance leader by putting them on a more equal footing.”²⁰⁶ The “democratic community” thesis thus suggests that strategic incoherence in the Atlantic Alliance was never as inevitable or deep-rooted as predicted by my theory. Norms of democratic consultation and consensus-building should have kept strategic coherence at relatively high levels across time and across allied dyads, particularly when compared to non-democratic alliances. As evidence, Risse-Kappen points out that the Kennedy administration tried to secure France’s cooperation with the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 by offering assistance for its nuclear program rather than relying on coercive pressure, and that the West German government was able to persuade Washington to forswear recognizing East German sovereignty or signing an official nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union in exchange for its acquiescence to the treaty.²⁰⁷ Risse-

²⁰⁵ Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 32; 36.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 37. In a similar vein, Ikenberry argues that “[t]he openness and decentralization of democratic states...provides opportunities for other states to consult and make representations directly...The multiple points of access allow other states to make direct assessments of policy commitments and to lobby on behalf of their interests.” G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 77.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 134-140.

Kappen also stresses that MC 14/3, the 1967 NATO strategic document that codified the U.S. nuclear doctrine of flexible response, “left important details [about the conditions under which the United States would use nuclear weapons in Europe] deliberately vague” as a result of European input.²⁰⁸

This argument contains several flaws. First, as in the case of collective goods theory, the democratic community thesis has difficulty making sense of the remarkable variation in the extent to which the United States managed to obtain strategic coherence in its NATO relations. The norms of consultation and consensus-building shared within the democratic community are presumably a relative constant across periods and across different alliance relationships. Furthermore, adherence to these norms should presumably go both ways: the European allies should have been as committed to strategic coordination with Washington as it was with them. However, I have identified clear differences in patterns of strategic coherence that prevailed in the United States’ relations with France and West Germany. Risse-Kappen acknowledges this phenomenon to some extent. For example, he writes that de Gaulle not only refused to participate in the U.S.-led Limited Test Ban Treaty negotiations but also rejected Franco-U.S. cooperation on nuclear matters altogether because this “would have jeopardized France’s quest for independence.”²⁰⁹ West Germany ultimately embraced the same policies because it would otherwise “have raised suspicions that it was prepared to go nuclear.”²¹⁰ Such contrasts are obviously inexplicable for the democratic community thesis without resort to *ad hoc* variables. Why was France able to successfully pursue nuclear independence at the expense of coordination with the United States? And unlike France, why did West Germany have to be especially careful not to so much as raise

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 186-187.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 138.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 140.

“suspicions” that it was going nuclear? Despite their importance for explaining patterns of strategic coherence in NATO during this period, the democratic community thesis cannot answer such questions.

Second, there is little evidence that the United States “did not simply insist on running the show” in NATO, nor that it instinctively crafted its grand strategy toward Western Europe “not through coercion, but through persuasion and compromise.”²¹¹ Such notions were regarded as fanciful by the leaders crafting American policy. Paradoxically, this is most apparent in the records of the Kennedy period, during which Washington began to heavily emphasize “multilateral” coordination within NATO—perhaps more heavily than at any other previous point in U.S. diplomatic history. Dean Acheson, a key advisor to the Kennedy White House, argued that substantively consulting with the allies was a waste of time. Key strategic questions were essentially questions “of U.S. will, and we had to make up our minds and begin to act regardless of the opinions of our allies.”²¹² As far as he was concerned, the United States was “the greatest imperial power the world has ever seen...[It was] the locomotive at the head of mankind, and the rest of the world [was] the caboose.”²¹³ Kennedy himself had no qualms about dealing roughly with the allies. He argued that the United States had to take “actions to squeeze Europe” to get its way on nuclear policy.²¹⁴ While it is true that Kennedy considered offering nuclear assistance to France in order to secure its support on broader policy aims like the Limited Test Ban Treaty, this was only after he determined that “there is not much we can do against France” in the way of

²¹¹ Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament,” 34.

²¹² “Record of Meeting of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Berlin Contingency Planning,” June 16, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, 119.

²¹³ Quoted in Trachtenberg and Gehrz, “America, Europe, and German Rearmament,” 32.

²¹⁴ “Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting no. 38 (Part II),” January 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 8, 489.

coercive pressure.²¹⁵ Overall, as Daryl Press observes, America’s approach to critical strategic questions during this period “is shocking in its total departure from the image of friendly democratic allies cooperating together in a spirit of community.”²¹⁶

Finally, there is no evidence that the liberal democratic NATO featured higher levels of strategic coherence than its authoritarian competitors. Proponents of the democratic community thesis may charge that, even if the aforementioned discrepancies are real, what matters for their theory is whether the United States and its NATO allies generally found it easier to achieve strategic coherence compared to alliances between authoritarian powers. As Risse-Kappen writes, “cooperation among nondemocracies is likely to emerge out of self-interests narrowly defined and to remain fragile” because “[t]here is nothing in their values that would prescribe mutual sympathy, trust, and consideration.”²¹⁷ As I illustrate in the next chapter, this presumption is mistaken. The Soviet Union’s alliance relationships during the Cold War displayed high levels of strategic coherence—comparable to NATO’s—when Moscow pursued grand strategies that were consistent with the military incentives of its allies. When strategic incoherence did arise, it was not due to an inherent deficiency of sympathy, trust, or consideration. Rather, as in NATO, strategic coherence in Soviet alliances rose and fell as a function of what the leading power’s grand strategy demanded of allies and how these demands interacted with their military vulnerabilities.

French Nationalism and West German Antimilitarism

A final set of arguments focuses on the domestic political cultures or ideologies of individual allies. It has long been commonplace among historians and IR scholars to explain France’s defiant

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Press, *Calculating Credibility*, 110.

²¹⁷ Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies*, 31.

behavior toward the United States in the 1960s with reference to the Charles de Gaulle government's nationalistic fixation on securing a self-sufficient, major-power status for France. As Benjamin Martill writes, “[d]e Gaulle believed it was the nation, not the individual, which comprised the principal referent of political concern[,]” and that “[i]n terms of Cold War strategy, Gaullist ideology articulated a more independent, French-led European position as a bulwark against perceived American dominance of the Western world[.]”²¹⁸ Philip Gordon likewise argues that France's latent aspirations for “resistance to American hegemony” and “claims to a share of the leadership of the Atlantic Alliance...were translated into a coherent overall policy” under de Gaulle's leadership.²¹⁹ A logical implication of his nationalistic worldview was that France had to build a national nuclear force and doctrine “freeing it from the chains of dependence[,]” even if this meant settling on a less powerful deterrent than that promised by the United States and sowing discord within NATO.²²⁰ From this traditional perspective, strategic incoherence in the U.S.-France alliance relationship from the early 1960s onward can be attributed to France's ideological emphasis on an independent security posture.

An explanation focused on French nationalism fails to account for temporal variation in strategic coherence within the U.S.-France alliance relationship. Most informed analysts acknowledge that there was much more continuity between de Gaulle's foreign policy orientation and that of the previous Fourth Republic than typically presumed. Importantly, as Beatrice Heuser points out, the “key themes of French nuclear policy”—including the emphasis on doctrinal independence—were put in place as soon as the Pierre Mendès-France government initiated a

²¹⁸ Benjamin Martill, “Center of Gravity: Domestic Institutions and the Victory of Liberal Strategy in Cold War Europe,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 21.

²¹⁹ Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.

²²⁰ Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, 44. See also Scott D. Sagan, “Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997): 78-79.

nuclear weapons program in December 1954.²²¹ However, as my case study demonstrates, there was no serious rift between American grand strategy and French military designs prior to the early 1960s. Indeed, leaders like Eisenhower would have been more than happy to see allies like France develop independent military capabilities—including nuclear capabilities—to the fullest extent so that they could take the lead role in balancing Soviet power in Europe. Strategic incoherence in the 1960s was thus not predetermined by France’s nationalistic drive for military independence, which is a rational imperative under anarchy in any case. Instead, the key change that took place in the early 1960s was the United States’ adoption of an insourcing grand strategy, whose prescriptions the relatively invulnerable France could not deign to accommodate.

Just as France is said to have been ideologically inclined to pursue an assertive military posture, West Germany is sometimes said to have restrained its military capability development as a result of a postwar “culture of antimilitarism” grounded in a collective “disillusionment with dreams of national grandeur and its burning desire to find a new national identity that absolved it of the sins of its past and promised a more stable and prosperous future.”²²² Thomas Berger argues that the “domestic political pressures generated by” this culture “inclined the [government] of West Germany...toward low-key approaches to defense and national security” and dependence on “its NATO partners to provide it with additional military reinforcement and a nuclear deterrent.”²²³

²²¹ Heuser, *Nuclear Strategies and Forces*, 96. Philip Gordon admits that “[t]he policies developed in France in the 1960s, now so readily identified as ‘Gaullist,’ in fact have roots that were clearly planted in the years that preceded the General’s return to power.” In particular, “the decisions taken toward the creation of a national nuclear program and strategic nuclear force were all areas in which France refused to accept lightly the developing status quo as directed by Washington...[T]he impression that French leaders during these years...were...happily indentured to the United States and NATO is no more than a rather superficial, and sometimes convenient, myth.” Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, 4-5.

²²² Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 86. See also Thomas U. Berger, “The Past in the Present: Historical Memory and German National Security Policy,” *German Politics* 6, no. 1 (April 1997): 39-59; and John S. Duffield, “Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism,” *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 765-803.

²²³ Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, 85.

The “new culture of antimilitarism became firmly ensconced both in the West German national psyche and in its policymaking process” to the point of significantly narrowing the range of military policy options Bonn could pursue despite changes in its strategic circumstances.²²⁴ For example, although some West German leaders were tempted to explore alternative security arrangements in response to Kennedy’s insourcing strategy, domestic political opposition prevented them from challenging the primacy of NATO in any meaningful way.²²⁵

In accordance with this argument, by the 1970s a myth had arisen among both policymakers and scholars that the West German government had never actually wanted nuclear weapons.²²⁶ However, this view has been decidedly rejected “at least among specialists in the field” ever since Hans-Peter Schwarz published the second volume of his biography of Adenauer in 1991. As Marc Trachtenberg writes, “the evidence that Schwarz presented was so compelling that the earlier view”—that is, the view that Bonn never harbored serious nuclear aspirations in the late 1950s and early 1960s—“was simply no longer tenable.”²²⁷ There is incontrovertible evidence today that West German leaders were in no way held back by a culture of antimilitarism when it came to determining the country’s basic security policies. As noted earlier, Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss pursued the nuclear armament of the Bundeswehr “with the knowledge and approval of the Chancellor[.]”²²⁸ Much like de Gaulle, Adenauer could not willingly resign himself to a situation wherein “only two powers in the world have nuclear weapons and so determine the fate of the world.” He further believed that the West Germans could not become like “colonial

²²⁴ Berger, “Past in the Present,” 42.

²²⁵ Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, 88-91.

²²⁶ Scholarly accounts that gave credence to this official line was Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*; and Jeffrey Boutwell, *The German Nuclear Dilemma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

²²⁷ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, Appendix 6, available at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/appendices/appendixVI.html>.

²²⁸ Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 264-265.

people...who must fight the conventional battles” while its allies wielded the most advanced weapons of the day.²²⁹ Schwarz thus observes that “Adenauer’s determination to build up the *Bundeswehr*, equipped with the most modern weapons” was arguably “one of the few constants in his otherwise confusing tactics in foreign affairs.”²³⁰ While it is true that there was political opposition to such initiatives within West Germany, leaders like Adenauer and Strauss were clearly able to bring key domestic actors along when they felt the need. This is evinced, for example, in the Bundestag’s majority approval of Adenauer’s resolution to arm the West German forces with nuclear weapons in March 1958.²³¹ West Germany’s militarization efforts were thwarted in the end, but not by any “cultural” aversion to deadly military capabilities on the part of its leaders or society at large.

This conclusion becomes even stronger when one considers that Bonn had a purer antimilitarist option it never picked up. Security policies informed by pacifist ideology would have gradually led the FRG to eschew any significant military buildup and drift toward neutralism in the hostile standoff between East-West alliance blocs. Indeed, this approximated the solution favored by the West German political left in the early Cold War period. The leaders of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) criticized military reconstitution from the beginning, fearing that it would calcify the division of Germany.²³² Influential pundits and intellectuals supported this position. Gustav Heinemann, known for his wartime membership in the famous anti-Nazi “Confessing Church,” argued that “Christian politicians” should ask themselves whether it was in “God’s will for Germans to take up arms again so soon after He had struck them from

²²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 264.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 341.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 347.

²³² See David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 69-74.

their hands,” stressing that unarmed neutrality offered the most promising pathway toward unifying Germany.²³³ Lutheran theologian Martin Niemöller, another prominent opinion leader, likewise called for forging a “third way” between the rival alliance blocs, adding that the country “would be better off accepting Communism than joining in a superpower conflict that would pit Germans against Germans.”²³⁴ Empowered by such voices, the SPD led a nationwide campaign for “anti-nuclear destruction” and NATO withdrawal during the West German nuclear armament debates of the late 1950s.²³⁵ All this is to say that there was a true antimilitarist alternative that was articulated by influential political groups in the FRG but was never seriously pursued.²³⁶ In the final analysis, whatever moderation West Germany did practice in its military posture was forced upon it by its position of extreme vulnerability.

Conclusion

This chapter, paired with chapter 2, has shown that key patterns of strategic coherence in Cold War NATO were determined by the interaction between American grand strategy and the military vulnerabilities of its continental allies. The Eisenhower administration’s grand strategy of outsourcing envisioned building up France and West Germany into an independent “power mass” that could counterbalance the Soviet Union with minimal U.S. involvement.²³⁷ This implied that French and West German forces had to be equipped with the most “modern” and “advanced”

²³³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 76. Himself a devout Roman Catholic, Adenauer’s response to such arguments was that “one must give up everything for religion, but not give up religion itself, as would have to be done if we were left at the mercy of the Russians. I have...tried to understand the train of thought of these people, but I can’t. It is simply impossible, and what people say is simply wrong, completely wrong.” Quoted in Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 342.

²³⁴ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 80.

²³⁵ Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 341-342.

²³⁶ Jennifer Lind makes a similar point about Japan, another country traditionally said to harbor antimilitarist norms. See Jennifer M. Lind, “Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy,” *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 119-120.

²³⁷ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 146.

military instruments of the day, that is, nuclear weapons. As demand-side theory predicts, U.S. nuclear sharing policies in NATO in the late 1950s were met with starkly different outcomes in France and West Germany. Geographically insulated from Soviet military power, France successfully laid the basis for independent nuclear capabilities with the tacit blessing of American grand strategy. Similar efforts by West Germany to nuclearize its armed forces, however, were brought to a grinding halt by the threat of Soviet preventive action. In short, when the United States pursued an outsourcing grand strategy in NATO through its policies of nuclear sharing, strategic coherence obtained in relations with France while strategic incoherence was the outcome in relations with West Germany.

When the United States transitioned to a grand strategy of insourcing in the early 1960s, the opposite patterns appeared. Strategic incoherence ensued in relations with France, whose decision-makers refused to put up with Washington's efforts to monopolize nuclear capabilities within NATO. In this case, the divergence between the United States' grand strategic vision and France's military needs was so fundamental that the latter ultimately extricated itself from the alliance's central institution; strategic incoherence led to decay in alliance relations. West Germany, by contrast, accommodated the leading power's monopolizing efforts. Its leaders, in principle, understood the value of independent nuclear capabilities in a dangerous international environment; they would have preferred to pursue such capabilities in defiance of U.S. strategic demands, much like the French did. However, they were unable to do so because of the hurdle imposed on their self-help efforts by their country's military vulnerability. The result was strategic coherence.

Overall, patterns of strategic coherence in the Atlantic alliance during the first two decades of the Cold War offers powerful support to my central thesis. Only a theory that specifies how the

grand strategy of a leading power interacts with the military situations of individual allies can explain why the United States successfully integrated France's military capabilities into its grand strategic vision for Europe in the late 1950s and failed to do the same with West Germany, only to have these patterns reversed in the 1960s. Alternative theories that stress the generosity of the leading power's security commitments, consultative norms within democratic alliances, or the political cultures of individual allies cannot explain these variations.

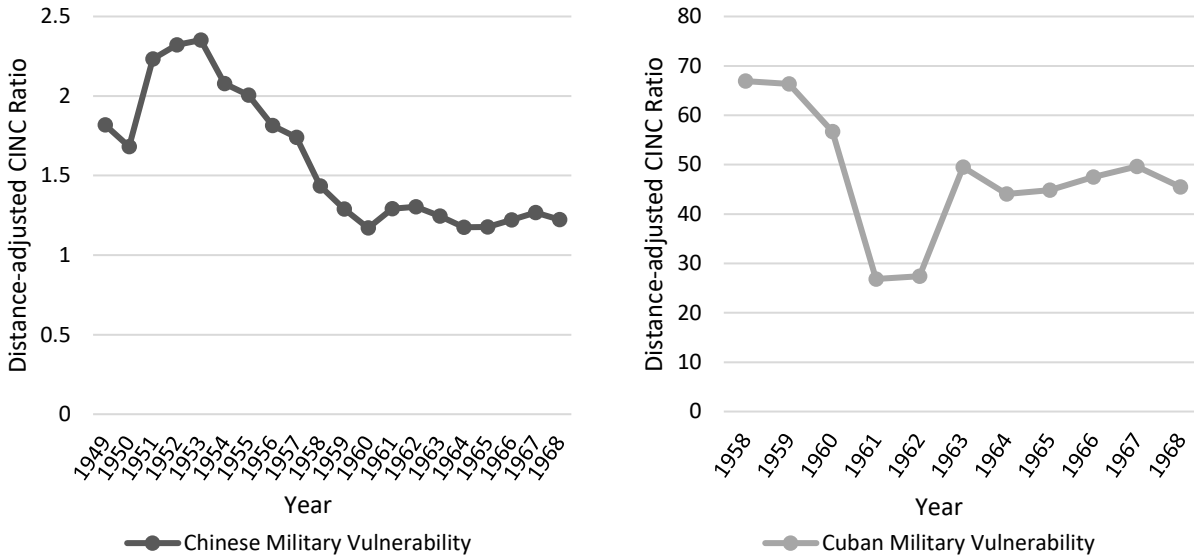
Chapter 5

Strategic Incoherence in Soviet Alliances (1949-1968)

In this chapter, I further substantiate my theory by examining patterns of strategic coherence in two additional Cold War alliance relationships: the Soviet Union's alliances with China and Cuba. The Soviet Union initially pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing in both East Asia (1947-1957) and the Caribbean (1959-1962), providing extensive support for Chinese and Cuban military growth with the goal of contesting U.S. power via its allies' capabilities. At a certain point, however, Moscow shifted its grand strategy to insourcing—in East Asia beginning around 1958 and in the Caribbean in late 1962.

Importantly for my purposes, the two allies were confronted with radically different levels of military vulnerability vis-à-vis their main adversary, that is, the United States. Figure 5.1 visualizes this difference with difference-adjusted ratios of the United States' Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) scores vis-à-vis China and Cuba. By this measure, the U.S. was only 2.35 times stronger than China in 1953—the peak of their relative power imbalance during the period examined. By contrast, even at its strongest, Cuba was outmatched by a ratio of 26.84. Given such disparities in vulnerability, my theory expects Soviet grand strategy to have diametrically opposing implications for strategic coherence within the two alliances. Moscow's outsourcing should be associated with strategic coherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance and incoherence in the Cuba-Soviet alliance. Once Moscow transitions to insourcing, the reverse should be true.

Figure 5.1: Chinese and Cuban Military Vulnerability vis-à-vis the United States, 1949-1968



Sources: Ratios are calculated using CINC scores and intercity distance data respectively found in J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985,” *International Interactions* 14 (1987): 115-132; and Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1981).

These cases promise strong inferential leverage for several reasons. First, the chief alternative argument—collective goods theory—should easily predict strategic coherence in these alliances; by implication, my theory is presented with tough tests. The previous two chapters supported my theory’s predictions and mechanisms with detailed process-tracing evidence from U.S. alliance relationships in the Atlantic alliance. However, proponents of collective goods theory may still charge that Washington’s failures to achieve strategic coherence in those alliances should mainly be blamed on a domestic political system that inhibits decisive threats of abandonment. By the same token, the Soviet Union’s centralized decision-making apparatus should have enabled its leaders to wield the threat of reduced commitments much more effectively to bring its allies into line. In 1959, when President Kennedy tried to explain to his Soviet counterpart Nikita Khrushchev

why he had to spend so much time negotiating foreign policy decisions with various governmental actors, the Soviet leader responded, “[w]ell, why don’t you switch to our system?”¹ Following collective goods logic, the ally’s knowledge that the leading power can retract its security commitments at whim should incentivize it to tailor its military capabilities to the leading power’s demands. Evidence that levels of strategic coherence nonetheless varied substantially in ways consistent with my predictions would provide strong grounds for adjusting our confidence in favor of demand-side theory.

Second, the Sino-Soviet and Cuba-Soviet cases are highly amenable to causal inference via the process-tracing method. English-language primary data on Soviet grand strategy and alliance politics are certainly not as abundant as they are for the U.S.-centric cases. Over the past three decades, however, a substantial historiography has sought to reassess the foreign policies of the Soviet Union and its allies with declassified materials from former communist archives. The result, as historians Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov note, is that “the major thoughts and objectives of the [communist bloc countries’] leadership in the Cold War are definitely clearer now.”² I am thus able to draw on this detailed literature and translated collections of primary

¹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” June 3, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1961-1963*, vol. 24, 226.

² Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), xiii. See also Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). Important monographs on Chinese military affairs and the Sino-Soviet alliance include Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China’s Military Strategy since 1949* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019). On Cuba-Soviet relations, see Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *“One Hell of a Gamble”: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Sergo Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012); Tomás Diez Acosta, *October 1962: The “Missile” Crisis as Seen from Cuba* (New York: Pathfinder, 2002); and Serhii Plokhyy, *Nuclear Folly: A History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021).

documents³ in order to construct a highly credible causal account of Soviet alliance politics.

Finally, these two Soviet alliances are worth examining because they are intrinsically important. As noted in the introductory chapter, grand strategy research has traditionally been fixated on U.S.-centric cases. As Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich observe, the “conflation of grand strategy as American grand strategy, *sui generis*, leaves it open to criticism as arrogant, parochial, nongeneralizable, and (ironically) irrelevant beyond the Washington beltway.”⁴ In line with this critique, few International Relations (IR) scholars have attempted to construct theories of grand strategy with an eye toward explaining critical episodes in Soviet alliance politics, such as the so-called “Sino-Soviet split” or the decisions surrounding the Cuban missile crisis. Claims to generalizability are unquestionable at best when theoretical inquiries are largely “based on, or at least colored by, the historical experiences of more frequently studied countries.”⁵ By substantiating my claims with evidence from Soviet alliances, I show that a theory built on standard realist foundations can offer strong explanatory purchase on important “non-standard” cases. In doing so, I push the grand strategy research program beyond its self-imposed boundaries.

In the remainder of this chapter, I show that demand-side theory offers strong explanatory purchase on key developments that took place within the Sino-Soviet and Cuba-Soviet alliances. When the Soviet Union tried to implement an outsourcing grand strategy, strategic coherence

³ Invaluable here are the document collections provided by the Wilson Center’s Cold War International History Project’s Digital Archive (hereafter CWIHP), available at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/>.

⁴ Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich, “Is Grand Strategy a Research Program? A Review Essay,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 80. Important exceptions to the U.S.-centrism of the grand strategy literature include Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Eliza Gheorghe, “Balance of Power Redux: Nuclear Alliances and the Logic of Extended Deterrence,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 87-109.

⁵ Matthew Charles Wilson and Carl Henrik Knutsen, “Geographical Coverage in Political Science Research,” *Perspectives on Politics* (2020), 1.

ensued in relations with the relatively invulnerable China while strategic incoherence arose in relations with Cuba due to its vulnerability to U.S. preventive threats. The patterns were reversed when Moscow shifted to an insourcing grand strategy: China refused to swallow the restrictive demands that the leading power's new strategy made on its military capabilities, while Cuba had no choice but to accommodate them. Collective goods theory and other rival arguments offer weak explanations for the same patterns.

Strategic Incoherence in the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1968

The Soviet Union's alliance relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) can be analytically distinguished into two periods. Soviet outsourcing in the first period (1949-1957) was conducive to strategic coherence in the alliance, while its later insourcing (1958-1968) was associated with incoherence. China's relative invulnerability to military predation by the United States had much to do with these outcomes.

The First Period: Soviet Outsourcing in East Asia and Strategic Coherence, 1949-1957

During the early Cold War, Soviet leaders predicated their foreign policy on the assumption that a violent showdown with the U.S.-led West was likely within a few decades, and that the Soviet Union needed time to build up its arms and alliances to enter this confrontation from a position of strength.⁶ This led Moscow to pursue a grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia. As historians Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai observe, "spheres of influence there were still unsettled" in contrast to Europe, and "the rise of Communist China presented the opportunity for

⁶ On this point, see Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, chs. 1-2; and Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 55-61.

[political-military gains against the U.S.] that need not involve the Soviet Union directly.”⁷ The Soviets thus encouraged China to become a major regional power. When Liu Shaoqi, Mao Zedong’s envoy to Moscow in July 1949, asked Stalin his thoughts on whether China should join the Soviet-dominated Cominform, Stalin suggested it instead aim to organize a new “Union of East Asian Communist Parties” under its dominance.⁸ The understanding that China would take the lead in challenging U.S. power in Asia also meant that the Soviets should support the growth of its independent military capabilities. As Stalin told Chinese foreign minister Zhou Enlai in 1952, China was to grow into “the [military] flagship of Asia.” Informed by Zhou that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) planned to create a 102-division army with 3.2 million troops, Stalin argued that this should be considered the “minimum” number. Zhou’s projection of “150 air regiments with 13,000 flight personnel likewise underwhelmed Stalin: “That’s too few...You should have 200 air regiments.”⁹

China regarded the United States as its main geopolitical adversary until the late 1960s.¹⁰ But crucially, from its inception as a sovereign state, the PRC’s defense planning proceeded on the assumption that it was relatively invulnerable to U.S. military predation. Underlying this assumption was the confidence that China could reliably turn a conflict with the United States into a protracted war of attrition. As Liu summarized in a memo to Stalin prior to his July 1949 visit, Chinese leaders believed that a “broad intervention” by the U.S. against the mainland was unlikely; a large-scale attack “would put the imperialists in a quite difficult position.”¹¹ The Central Military

⁷ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 72.

⁸ “Stalin’s Remarks to Liu Shaoqi,” July 1949, reproduced in *ibid.*, 232-233.

⁹ “Minutes of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai,” September 3, 1952, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111242>, 6.

¹⁰ On Chinese threat perceptions during the early Cold War, see Wooseon Choi, “Structure and Perceptions: Explaining American Policy toward China (1949-50),” *Security Studies* 16, no. 4 (2007): 555-582.

¹¹ “Report from the Head of the Delegation of the CC of the Chinese Communist Party, ‘The Current State of the Chinese Revolution,’” July 4, 1949, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134156>, 3.

Commission's 1956 strategic guideline, which distilled the outlook of the CCP's early military leadership, was similarly premised on the idea that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would be able to "smash the enemy's plan for rapid attack and victory, and compel the enemy to engage in protracted operations with our military so that we can gradually strip them of their strategic initiative[.]"¹²

Contemporary American assessments validate China's military confidence. As a lengthy National Security Council report observed in November 1953, Chinese capabilities were "sufficient to make [the] invasion of China very costly." Such an undertaking would involve

- (1) Full U.S. mobilization.
- (2) Heavy casualties.
- (3) The deployment of a major proportion of U.S. armed forces to the China theater.
- (4) Possible use of a significant proportion of the U.S. atomic stockpile and employment of a major proportion of its atomic carriers.
- (5) Almost certainly a split of the U.S.-led coalition.
- (6) Probability of military intervention by the USSR and a very high risk of global war.¹³

"In the absence of further Chinese Communist aggression or a basic change in the situation," the report concluded, any policy that risked such outcomes was "unacceptable to the United States."¹⁴ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agreed. Particularly after the Korean War, in which Washington had shown itself willing to accept a haphazard armistice rather than continue a costly war on the Asian mainland, Chinese leaders would be justified in believing "that they have a wide area of maneuver open to them...without incurring unacceptable U.S. counteraction."¹⁵

¹² Marshal Peng Dehuai, quoted in Fravel, *Active Defense*, 74-75.

¹³ "No. 149: Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," November 6, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 14, pt. 1, 279-281.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 280.

¹⁵ "Communist Courses of Action in Asia through 1957," November 23, 1954, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/0001166758>, 7

The Sino-Soviet alliance was characterized by a high degree of strategic coherence during much of its inaugural decade, owing to the mutual complementarity of the Soviet Union's grand strategy toward East Asia and its ally's relatively permissive security environment. Moscow's outsourcing grand strategy called on China to become a major military power in East Asia. As Stalin told Mao in December 1952, China had to consistently build up its capabilities with the assumption that it could "count on the worst and proceed from the probability of an attack by the Americans."¹⁶ True to its outsourcing aims, Moscow provided extensive support for China's military development, supplying equipment for 60 infantry divisions, machinery and technical assistance for defense industries, and nearly 600 military advisors throughout the 1950s.¹⁷ Moscow also supported China's nuclear weapons program beginning in 1954, aiding the construction of its first nuclear reactor, sharing technologies related to bomb and missile manufacturing, and in October 1957, promising to transfer a prototype atomic bomb with blueprints.¹⁸

China, for its part, leaned into the forceful military role assigned to it by Moscow's grand strategy. As M. Taylor Fravel has shown, China's defense policies throughout the 1950s evinced a determination to directly counterbalance U.S. power with modern military capabilities.¹⁹ It constructed an indigenous defense industry with Soviet support, adopted a doctrine of "wag[ing] decisive battles" against U.S. forces in their main avenue of approach,²⁰ and laid the technological

¹⁶ "Telegram from Stalin to Mao Zedong," December 27, 1952, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110021>, 2.

¹⁷ Fravel, *Active Defense*, 96-97. Soviet assistance to China from 1954 to 1959 has been dubbed the "Soviet Union's Marshall Plan" by one historian, approximating seven percent of the USSR's national income for those years. See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 69.

¹⁸ On Sino-Soviet nuclear cooperation, see Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *Between Aid and Restriction: Changing Soviet Policies toward China's Nuclear Weapons Program, 1954-1960*, Nuclear Proliferation and International History Project Working Paper no. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012).

¹⁹ See Fravel, *Active Defense*, ch. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

and infrastructural groundwork for nuclear armament.²¹ By 1957, U.S. policymakers recognized that the PRC's "formidable war machine" had given rise to "an effective and continuing military balance of power as between the United States and Mainland China in the Western Pacific[.]"²²

The Second Period: Soviet Insourcing in East Asia and Strategic Incoherence, 1958-1968

In the late 1950s, Soviet grand strategy in East Asia veered to insourcing. This reflected Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's preoccupation with avoiding the outbreak of all-out thermonuclear war between the great powers. It might still be "necessary to conduct an aggressive policy" at times, Khrushchev explained to the Presidium, "but we need to advance rationally, not to resemble a gambler, in this game, who bets whatever is left in his pocket and then grabs a pistol and shoots himself."²³ The new emphasis on deliberation and "peaceful coexistence" in great power relations pushed the Soviets to pursue a revised strategic understanding with their principal collaborator. From 1958 onwards, Soviet leaders began to openly insist that China moderate its aspirations as a military power. Khrushchev reportedly told Mao in August 1958 that "with the atomic bomb, the number of troops on each side makes practically no difference to the alignment of real power and the outcome of war. The more troops on a side, the more bomb fodder."²⁴ The implication was clear: China had to suppress its military capabilities to avoid triggering dangerous spirals of confrontation between the East-West alliance blocs that might end with nuclear annihilation for both sides. As PLA Marshal Nie Rongzhen observed, Moscow's new goal was "to maintain a considerable gap between China and the Soviet Union...on the development of new types of

²¹ See Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*.

²² "Paper Prepared by Robert McClintock of the Policy Planning Staff," December 31, 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. 3, 665.

²³ January 8, 1962, quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 415.

²⁴ Strobe Talbott ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), 469-470.

weapons and military equipment.”²⁵

China’s military vulnerability vis-à-vis the United States remained low and continued to decrease during this second period. Already the largest military force in East Asia in 1958, the PLA’s capabilities were further augmented in the 1960s through vigorous reorganization efforts and, after 1964, the steady maturation of its nuclear deterrent.²⁶ Thus a six-week long review of military readiness in 1965 concluded that China was not in “imminent danger or in a desperate situation.”²⁷ Mao concurred when briefed on the meeting’s results, stating that history had shown the U.S. to be “not that adventurous” when it came to military action in Asia.²⁸

Again, contemporary American estimates support China’s optimism about its military situation. One top-secret interagency study observed that a “showdown” with China would not produce “desired change in Chinese policy, but would lead to a war which would impose on us uncertain, but probably large, costs in blood, treasure, and prestige for highly uncertain gains.”²⁹ Pessimism about military options carried the day even when temptations to use force were high. For example, both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations considered taking violent action against China’s budding nuclear facilities in the early 1960s but backed away after concluding that the potential costs far outweighed the benefits.³⁰

Given these circumstances, Soviet efforts to practice insourcing in East Asia bred incoherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance. Determined to become a major military power in its own right, China challenged Moscow’s new strategic priorities as being “designed to bring China under

²⁵ Quoted in Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 72.

²⁶ On China’s military growth in the 1960s, see Fravel, *Active Defense*, ch. 4. On its nuclear weapons and delivery systems, see Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 119-136.

²⁷ Quoted in Fravel, *Active Defense*, 131.

²⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 132.

²⁹ “Study Prepared by the Special State-Defense Study Group,” June 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 30, 333.

³⁰ See William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/2001): 54-99.

Soviet military control.”³¹ The first sign of serious friction emerged in summer 1958, when the Soviets proposed creating a “joint submarine flotilla” between the two allies. Mao was indignant in a July 22 meeting with Soviet ambassador Pavel Yudin:

Well, if [you] want joint ownership and operation, how about have them all—let us turn into joint ownership and operation our army, navy, air force, industry, agriculture, culture, education. Can we do this? Or, [you] may have all of China’s more than ten thousand kilometers of coastline and let us only maintain a guerrilla force. With a few atomic bombs, you think you are in a position to control us...[W]e will not get mixed up with you [in this manner]...[W]e will in the end build our own flotilla[.]³²

The joint flotilla issue subsided only after Khrushchev painstakingly disavowed the concept in his first summit meeting with Mao.³³ But other disputes were harder to quell. One involved the USSR’s attempts to assert influence over China’s posture in its territorial disputes. On August 23, 1958, the PLA began a month-long artillery campaign against the Taiwan-controlled offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu, triggering a dangerous standoff with the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Although the Soviets had expressed full solidarity during such crises in the past (e.g., the First Offshore Islands Crisis of 1954), this time they were aggrieved that the Chinese had “tak[en] serious military-political action” without consulting the Soviet government.³⁴ Moscow tried to chasten China by reminding its leaders of the “great calamity” that would ensue “if, when atomic bombs have begun to fall on the Chinese People’s Republic and China has begun to pay with the life of its sons and daughters, the Soviet Union, possessing terrible weapons which could not only

³¹ “The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves,” *Renmin Ribao*, September 6, 1963, quoted in Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 70.

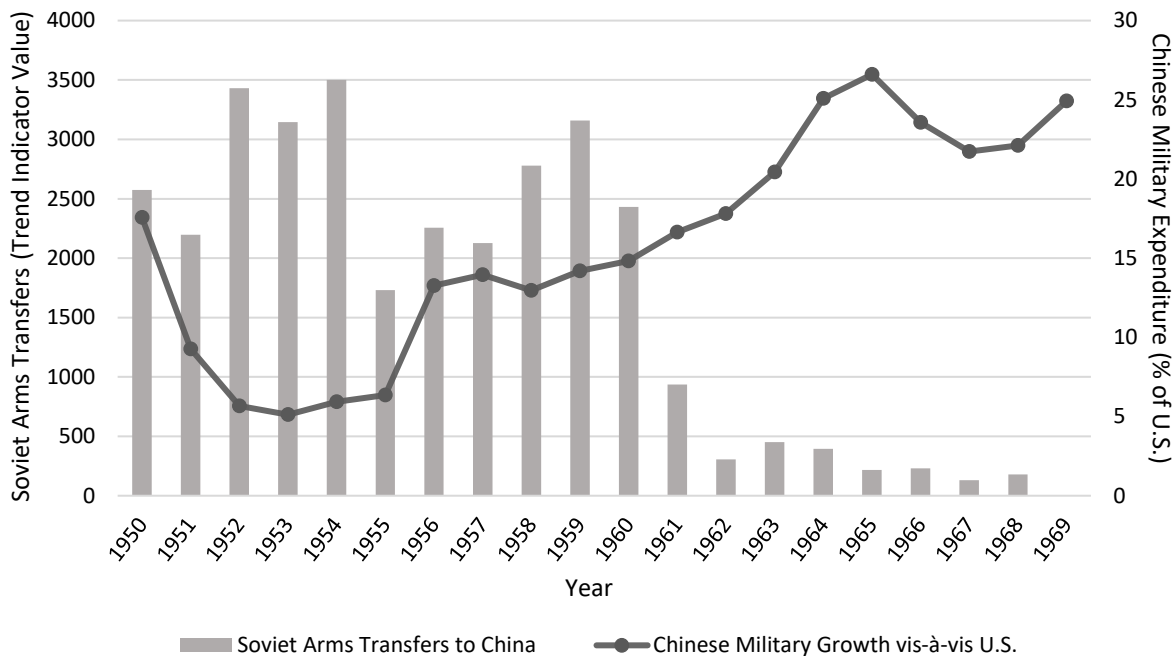
³² “Minutes of Conversation, Mao Zedong and Ambassador Yudin,” July 22, 1958, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116982>, 2, 5.

³³ See “First Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong, Hall of Huaizhentan [Beijing],” July 31, 1958, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112080>.

³⁴ Soviet Embassy report, quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 223.

stop but could also devastate our common enemy, would allow itself not to come to your assistance.”³⁵ However, Beijing retorted that it was fully aware of the possibility of escalation and had initiated the crisis “ready to take all the hard blows[.]”³⁶ Similarly tense exchanges followed China’s border clashes with India.³⁷

Figure 5.2: Soviet Arms Transfers and Chinese Military Growth, 1950-1969



Sources: Trend Indicator Values (TIV; in millions) of Soviet arms transfers are obtained from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>. Military expenditure percentages are calculated using figures from the Correlates of War (COW) project. See J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985,” *International Interactions* 14 (1987): 115-132.

The USSR subsequently made good on its veiled threats by drastically reducing its military support

³⁵ “Letter, Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Chinese Communist Party, on the Soviet Union’s Readiness to Provide Assistance to China in the Event of an Attack,” September 27, 1958, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117028>, 2.

³⁶ Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 225.

³⁷ See “Discussion between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong,” October 2, 1959, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112088>.

for China. By late 1959, Chinese officials had an “ominous premonition...[that the Soviets were about to] tear up unilaterally all Sino-Soviet accords.”³⁸ Soviet arms transfers to China indeed dropped by 90 percent from 1959 to 1962 (see Figure 5.2). Moscow also backed out of its agreement to provide China with a prototype atomic bomb in 1959 and recalled all Soviet military experts from China in summer 1960.³⁹ Khrushchev’s view was that the Soviets could not be reduced to “docile slaves” upholding Sino-Soviet agreements while Beijing blatantly disregarded Moscow’s interests.⁴⁰ “I’m no Jesus Christ,” he later explained, “and I didn’t have to turn the other cheek.”⁴¹

But Soviet efforts to monopolize the alliance’s warmaking potential came to no avail. This is the larger pattern captured in Figure 5.2: while the USSR scaled down its support for Chinese military development beginning in the 1960s, China’s military growth proceeded untrammelled. Not only did China’s overall military capacity—proxied with military expenditure as a percentage of the United States’—increase nearly 70 percent over the decade, but Beijing also conducted at least ten known nuclear weapons tests during the same period and made steady progress in acquiring strategic delivery systems.⁴² Accordingly, the CIA observed in 1967 that neither the breakdown of cooperation with the Soviets nor domestic political turmoil seemed to have undermined “Chinese capabilities or military production programs in any significant way.”⁴³

In sum, consistent with my theory, the PRC’s military capabilities grew out of step with the Soviet Union’s strategic goals once Moscow shifted its grand strategy to insourcing. Given

³⁸ PLA Marshal Nie Rongzhen, quoted in Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 72.

³⁹ For details, see Shen and Xia, *Between Aid and Restriction*.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 228.

⁴¹ Quoted in Talbott ed., *Khrushchev Remembers*, 464.

⁴² See “Appendix B” in *ibid.*; and Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security*, 119-129.

⁴³ “Communist China’s Military Policy and its General Purpose and Air Defense Forces,” March 4, 1967, CREST, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001095910.pdf, 1.

that its low military vulnerability enabled it to continually expand its capabilities without inviting overwhelming responses from the United States, Beijing had few incentives to accede to Moscow's efforts to circumscribe its security policies. Strategic incoherence in this case was followed by political estrangement. In 1969, Soviet and Chinese forces fought a major bloody engagement along the Sino-Soviet border.⁴⁴ Two years later, China signaled its geopolitical realignment in earnest by inviting U.S. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to Beijing.

Strategic Incoherence in the Cuba-Soviet Alliance, 1959-1968

I again analyze two periods of Soviet alliance relations with Cuba. The direction of change here contrasts markedly with that observed in the Sino-Soviet alliance: the Soviets attempted to outsource military capabilities to Cuba during the early period, but Cuba could not accommodate these capabilities before the alliance was forced to come to terms with the risk of incurring a devastating preventive attack by the United States. Unlike China, Cuba's military vulnerability meant that the Cuba-Soviet alliance could only achieve strategic coherence if the USSR adopted an insourcing grand strategy toward the Caribbean, which it did after November 1962.

The First Period: Soviet Outsourcing in the Caribbean and Strategic Incoherence, 1959-1962

The USSR began an alliance relationship with Cuba in 1959, when Khrushchev dispatched military advisors and approved the sale of Warsaw Pact weapons to Fidel Castro's revolutionary government.⁴⁵ Although initially motivated by cautious ideological sympathy, Soviet support for Cuba quickly became more ambitious as U.S.-Cuba relations deteriorated and Moscow perceived

⁴⁴ See M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 201-217.

⁴⁵ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 296.

an opportunity to shore up an anti-American “bridgehead (*avanpost*)” in the Western hemisphere.⁴⁶ Thus, while emphasizing deliberation and stability in its foreign policies elsewhere, the USSR adopted a grand strategy of outsourcing toward the Caribbean during the early years of the alliance. The Soviets became Cuba’s principal supplier of arms in mid-1960 and transferred over \$250 million worth of military equipment over the subsequent two years.⁴⁷ Then in April 1962, Moscow accelerated Cuba’s militarization by sending, among other things, SA-2 air defense systems and IL-28 medium-range bombers, the latter capable of being fitted with tactical nuclear warheads.⁴⁸ Finally, in May of that year, Khrushchev broached the idea of establishing a nuclear force in Cuba. Contrary to popular accounts, this plan was not primarily motivated by the desire to rectify the U.S.-Soviet strategic imbalance but was rather the culmination of Moscow’s “crash program” to bolster Cuba’s military position against the U.S. threat.⁴⁹ As Soviet leaders told the commander of the Soviet forces on the island, Cuba was to be “turned into an impenetrable fortress.”⁵⁰

The problem was that Cuba was extremely vulnerable to U.S. military predation. Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan recounted a high-level planning meeting in mid-1962 as follows:

Khrushchev asked [Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky] about the time frame for [a U.S. invasion of Cuba], provided that it was launched near [its] coastline. Malinovsky answered that it would take about three to four days, or a week at the most. In other words, an island of that size could be taken over in a short period of time, even in case of serious resistance

⁴⁶ *Avanpost* was Cuba’s KGB codename after August 1960. Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 206. Although the nuclear balance did factor into the decision, policymakers in both Moscow and Washington understood by 1962 that strategic stalemate already prevailed between the superpowers. In fact, Khrushchev appears to have believed as early as 1958 that Soviet nuclear capabilities had matured enough to credibly threaten American cities in the event of all-out hostilities. See Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 243-244. Accordingly, the internal meeting in which Khrushchev broached his nuclear deployment plan clearly framed it “as one about saving Cuba rather than addressing the lack of parity in the Soviet and American nuclear arsenals and missile capabilities.” Plokhy, *Nuclear Folly*, 58-59.

⁵⁰ “Memorandum, Malinovsky and Zakharov to Commander of Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba,” September 8, 1962, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111539>, 1.

by the army and the local population.⁵¹

The Soviet assessment accorded remarkably well with the outlook in Washington. Only a week after the disastrous landing attempt at the Bay of Pigs, the Joint Chiefs of Staff briefed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara on an “outline plan” for military action against Cuba. The plan anticipated four days of intensive combat and U.S. control of Havana attained between D+6 and D+8.⁵² Indeed, the prevailing belief in Washington was that a determined U.S. invasion, unlike an indirect attack spearheaded by Cuban dissidents, as in the Bay of Pigs, would ensure the “quick overthrow of the Castro government.”⁵³ Although such action would incite international controversy, “all nations would, even while criticizing, accept a *fait accompli*, especially since they recognize the inherent danger to the basic security of a nation posed by a hostile regime located in close proximity.”⁵⁴

American leaders’ temptation to forcibly resolve the Cuban problem intensified as more Soviet capabilities streamed into the Caribbean. On the night of April 19, 1961, when it had become clear that the Bay of Pigs operation had failed, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy’s brother and closest advisor, reminded the president why the attempt had been made and why they should immediately plan for a second try: “Cuba...[is] swiftly becoming a major military arsenal for all of the activities of the Communist Bloc in the Western Hemisphere...The time has come for a showdown for in a year or two years the situation will be vastly worse.”⁵⁵ A top-secret report in August 1962 likewise stated that “the urgency of the requirement to remove

⁵¹ Quoted in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 96.

⁵² See “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of State McNamara,” April 26, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 10, 372-383.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 372. See also McNamara’s comments in “Memorandum from Secretary of Defense McNamara to the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” May 1, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 10, 405-406.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁵⁵ Robert Kennedy’s Memo to the President, April 19, 1961, President’s Office Files (POF), John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (JFKL), <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/114a/JFKPOF-114a-008, 1; 4>.

the Communist government from Cuba is made apparent by Castro's constantly increasing capabilities."⁵⁶

It is worth noting that neither Soviet nor Cuban leaders were oblivious to the risks of stoking U.S. preventive incentives. According to Alexander Alexeyev, the first Soviet official to establish contact with Castro's regime, Castro cited this fear during their very first meeting in October 1959 to explain why he was reluctant to accept direct arms transfers from the USSR. At this time, Castro appeared to doubt the Soviet Union's ability to protect Cuba: "For Nasser it made sense," he explained, "American imperialism was far from him, and you are next door to Egypt. But us? We are so far."⁵⁷ In May 1962, some Soviet leaders opposed deploying nuclear weapons to Cuba for the same reason. Mikoyan reportedly told Khrushchev that "with this approach we risk provoking an attack on them and losing everything."⁵⁸

Given the risks, why did Moscow and Havana move forward with the nuclear deployment plan (i.e., Operation "Anadyr")? Two factors were important. First, Soviet leaders were initially optimistic that the operation would go undetected by the United States until it was too late. In retrospect, this optimism was unwarranted; one military official in Cuba warned Khrushchev in June 1962 that the island offered "no place to hide a chicken, let alone a missile" from U.S. intelligence assets.⁵⁹ Through secrecy and deception, however, Khrushchev believed that he might be able to sufficiently delay U.S. detection.⁶⁰ Second, both states underestimated Washington's willingness to use force in the near-term. Khrushchev, in particular, was convinced that Kennedy would try to avoid a major international confrontation before the congressional elections scheduled

⁵⁶ "Memorandum from the Department of Defense Operations Officer for Operation Mongoose (Craig) to the Special Group (Augmented)," August 8, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 10, 919.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 296.

⁵⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 435. See also Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 94-103.

⁵⁹ Major General A.A. Dementiev, quoted in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 104.

⁶⁰ On Soviet efforts at secrecy and deception, see *ibid.*, 103-107.

for November.⁶¹ “[T]here will be no big reaction from the U.S.,” the Soviet leader told Cuban officials in late August, “if there is a problem, we will send the Baltic fleet.”⁶² Castro, on the other hand, expected that the interval “between the actual agreement and the final deployment of the weapons” would be “a dangerous period[.]”⁶³ However, as historians James Blight, Bruce Allyn, and David Welch conclude, he was tempted to cooperate with Khrushchev’s plan because the massive influx of Soviet capabilities would “at one stroke bring to an end a long epoch of Cuban vulnerability[.]”⁶⁴ Toward that end, Cuban leaders took a chance on the Soviet claim that it would be able to deter “a strike or an invasion against Cuba in the middle of the operation that was being mounted.”⁶⁵

Of course, Khrushchev and Castro were mistaken on both counts. First detecting signs of the military buildup in August 1962, the U.S. gradually raised the degree of military tension until a full-fledged crisis erupted in mid-October.⁶⁶ Washington’s preventive efforts reflected larger concerns than just the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance. Although Soviet missiles in Cuba did pose a “direct threat” to some extent, American leaders understood that both sides already possessed enough nuclear forces for assured retaliation *before* the deployment; as Kennedy observed, “What difference does it make? They’ve got enough to blow us up now anyway.”⁶⁷

Instead, while still underappreciated among scholars, the arguably more important fear was the possibility that, at some point in the future, *Cuba* might come to wield the new capabilities at

⁶¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 196.

⁶² Quoted in James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (1993; repr., Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 351.

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 82.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁶⁵ Castro, quoted in *ibid.*, 87. On Cuba’s overestimation of Soviet capabilities, see Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 211-213.

⁶⁶ For details, see Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, chs. 11-14.

⁶⁷ “Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba,” October 16, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 11, 62.

the expense of vital U.S. interests.⁶⁸ U.S. policymakers invoked this fear again and again at key junctures. In September 4, Robert Kennedy told Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that

The U.S. government [views] with growing anxiety the increase in Soviet military supplies to Cuba and the appearance there of Soviet military specialists...How do we put such supplies to Cuba in perspective, following the line of logic? Won't more powerful weapons that could reach the territory of the United States appear? Could these not ultimately carry nuclear warheads? The United States...cannot allow its security to depend on this or that decision of the current government of Cuba.⁶⁹

The same concern was articulated during the “Ex Comm” discussions of October. Supporting his brother’s argument that nuclear capabilities in Cuba might dangerously constrain U.S. freedom of action in the Western hemisphere, Robert Kennedy raised a grim hypothetical: “[Let’s say] in South America a year from now...[you have] these things in the hands of Cubans...[then] some problem arises in Venezuela [and] you’ve got Castro saying, [y]ou move troops down into that part of Venezuela, we’re going to fire these missiles.”⁷⁰ At the height of the crisis, American policymakers were ready to risk an all-out war in order to prevent such scenarios from materializing.⁷¹

U.S. fears of Cuba were not unfounded. Declassified Soviet records clearly show that Moscow intended to devolve significant nuclear capabilities to Cuba—its policies toward the island during this period could be properly described as nuclear sharing *par excellence*. Although the strategic missiles, the R-12s and R-14s, were reserved for use by direct orders from Moscow,

⁶⁸ Marc Trachtenberg was perhaps the first to make this observation. See Marc Trachtenberg, “The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Security* 10, no. 1 (Summer 1985): 155.

⁶⁹ Dobrynin diary entry, quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 453.

⁷⁰ “Off the Record Meeting,” 61-62.

⁷¹ See Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, chs. 13-14. It is well known that the United States succeeded in getting the Soviet nuclear forces out of Cuba in exchange for a “no-invasion” pledge toward the island and a secret deal to remove U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey. However, as one scholar observes, “[h]ad Khrushchev turned down the deal and played for time—as he was expected to do—then military strikes against Cuba would have begun early the next week.” Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 205.

discretion over tactical nuclear weapons was effectively pre-delegated to Soviet field commanders.⁷² More broadly, much like the American Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) in the 1950s, the original guidance issued to these commanders indicates that they were expected to cater their actions primarily to local military developments rather than to central directives.⁷³ The orders further stipulated that the large-scale deployment of Soviet personnel in Cuba was “temporary” in nature, and that they were to train Cuban forces in using the new weapons systems.⁷⁴ In Khrushchev’s words, deterrence could be enhanced by ensuring that “all the equipment is Cuban” in the event of a U.S. attack on the island.⁷⁵ Indeed, once it became evident that Moscow would have to withdraw its strategic missiles, the Soviets immediately planned to transfer the remaining weapons—complete with nearly 100 tactical nuclear warheads—to the Cuban army.⁷⁶ Cuba was to become a Caribbean nuclear power. “[T]his way we will strengthen Cuba,” Khrushchev explained, “[w]ithin several years it will be harder [for the Americans] to deal with [it].”⁷⁷

However, in accordance with my theory, the Soviets failed to realize their grand design for Cuba. As summarized in Table 5.1, the specter of U.S. invasion forced Moscow to retract all

⁷² See “Memorandum from Malinovsky and Zakharov,” September 8, 1962, reproduced in *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*, eds. Anatoli I. Gribkov and William Y. Smith (Chicago: Edition q, 1994), 183. Although Defense Minister Malinovsky never signed this memorandum, Soviet commanders later revealed that they were orally authorized to use tactical nuclear weapons in case of U.S. invasion. See Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Anna Melyakova, “Last Nuclear Weapons Left Cuba in December 1962,” National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 449, December 11, 2013, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB449/>.

⁷³ See “Memorandum, Malinovsky and Zakharov to Commander of Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba.” On comparable arrangements for U.S. forces in Western Europe during the Eisenhower period, see previous chapter.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 2-3.

⁷⁵ “Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Presidium Protocol 60,” October 23, 1962, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115076>, 2. Some leaders—particularly Mikoyan—opposed this notion from the beginning, fearing an extreme U.S. response should it “[find] out that the missiles belonged to the masters of the island[.]” Quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 472.

⁷⁶ See “Telegram from A.I. Mikoyan to the CC CPSU, and Gromyko’s Response,” November 8-9, 1962, reproduced in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 355-356.

⁷⁷ Presidium Protocol No. 61, October 25, 1962, CWIHP, Doc. 115136, 2.

nuclear assets capable of striking the continental United States—the R-14s, R-12s, and IL-28s—before they became operational. “[American forces would otherwise have] come down on Cuba with all of their might,” Mikoyan later mused, “[t]here would be nothing left of the people, island, or our troops. Our efforts would have been nothing more than a cruel joke.”⁷⁸

Table 5.1: Soviet Nuclear Deployments to Cuba

Planned Asset	Capability	Force Employment	Deployment Outcome
R-14 IRBM (24 warheads)	Range of 2,800 miles; enabled nuclear strikes on targets in much of the contiguous United States and Central / South America	Reserved for decision by Moscow	Failure: Warheads remain at port and missiles recalled in transit; warheads withdrawn on November 3
R-12 MRBM (36 warheads)	Range of 1,200 miles; enabled nuclear strikes on targets in Southeastern United States and Central America	Reserved for decision by Moscow	Failure: 6-8 operationalized; withdrawn on November 3
IL-28 Medium-range Bomber (6 tactical warheads)	Range of 600 miles; enabled nuclear strikes on targets in Florida	Effectively pre-delegated to local Soviet commander; planned eventual transfer to Cuban control	Failure: Bombers remain in crates; withdrawal decided on November 12
FKR-1 Land-based Missile (80 tactical warheads)	Range of 111 miles; enabled nuclear strikes on invasion forces / Guantanamo naval base	Effectively pre-delegated to local Soviet commander; planned eventual transfer to Cuban control	Success: Operational by early October
Luna Short-Range Artillery (12 tactical warheads)	Range of 31 miles; enabled nuclear strikes on invasion forces	Effectively pre-delegated to local Soviet commander; planned eventual transfer to Cuban control	Success: Operational by early October

Sources: Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, “The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Nuclear Order of Battle, October and November 1962,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 68, no. 6 (2012): 85-91; and Savranskaya, Blanton, and Melyakova, “Last Nuclear Weapons.”

⁷⁸ Quoted in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 148.

While two types of tactical nuclear assets—the FKR-1 cruise missile and Luna short-range artillery—were successfully operationalized, they were unreliable deterrents by themselves. Not only did they have insufficient range to reach the U.S. mainland, but American air superiority meant that they would probably be neutralized by pre-invasion airstrikes.⁷⁹ Moreover, should U.S. leaders learn that local actors were in control of such weapons, it was not unthinkable that they might launch an outright nuclear attack on the island.⁸⁰ This possibility worried Moscow enough that it issued new orders to Soviet field commanders on October 22 to refrain from employing tactical nuclear weapons even if the American invasion began.⁸¹ And as explained anon, the Soviets would soon decide to withdraw these weapons as well.

In sum, from 1959 to late 1962, Moscow tried “to intimidate and restrain the USA” in its own backyard by outsourcing military capabilities to Cuba.⁸² The result was strategic incoherence: Cuba failed to accommodate the military means necessary to sustain the Soviet Union’s grand strategy because it was much too vulnerable to American military predation. The fact of the matter was that Cuba needed the *complete* package of capabilities envisioned by Operation Anadyr to become militarily competitive vis-à-vis the United States. But insofar as the U.S. got wind of the operation before the capabilities became fully available, piecemeal augmentations paradoxically served to further jeopardize Cuba rather than increase its security. As Mikoyan explained to Castro,

⁷⁹ U.S. policymakers were well apprised of the Luna and cruise missile sites in 1962. See, for example, “Supplement 7 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba,” October 27, 1962, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78t05449a000200110001-9>. Although they were unsure whether tactical nuclear warheads had been furnished for these dual-use assets, the possibility did not blunt enthusiasm for military action. General Curtis Lemay, for one, believed that the post-airstrike phase of the attack would be a “walk-in.” “Notes taken from Transcripts of Meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” November 7, 1962, National Security Archive, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/621000%20Notes%20Taken%20from%20Transcripts.pdf, 28.

⁸⁰ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 473.

⁸¹ “Telegram from Trostnik (Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky) to Pavlov (General Isa Pliev),” October 22, 1962, CWHHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117316>, 2. Unlike for the strategic missiles, however, Moscow never held “positive” technical control over the tactical nuclear weapons. Had Soviet field commanders perceived that the survival of their units was on the line, it is very likely that they would have employed the tactical assets. On this point, see Savranskaya, Blanton, and Melyakova, “Last Nuclear Weapons.”

⁸² “Presidium Protocol 60,” 2.

the Soviets had tried to strengthen his defense posture under the assumption that their efforts would be “readily camouflaged in the palm forests of Cuba”; once this assumption unraveled, an embarrassing retreat was the only viable course of action.⁸³ Castro regretted having accepted the Soviet proposal at all.⁸⁴

The Second Period: Soviet Insourcing in the Caribbean and Strategic Coherence, Late 1962-1968

The experiences of October and November 1962 prompted the Soviet Union to rethink its grand strategy in the Western hemisphere. At various points during the crisis, Castro’s government had perturbed Soviet policymakers by suggesting that they attack the United States preemptively with nuclear weapons in the event of an invasion,⁸⁵ ordering Cuban antiaircraft units to fire upon U.S. reconnaissance flights,⁸⁶ carelessly informing its United Nations (UN) delegate that Cuba possessed tactical nuclear weapons and intended to keep them,⁸⁷ and generally threatening to derail the delicate compromise Moscow was trying to reach with Washington. In addition, the broad leeway granted to local military authority in determining courses of action had precipitated one of the most dangerous moments of the crisis: on October 27, a Soviet air defense regiment shot down an American spy plane, mistakenly believing that the intelligence it gathered would be used to facilitate an imminent attack.⁸⁸ Unnerved by such episodes, Soviet leaders overhauled their grand

⁸³ “Memorandum of Conversation between Castro and Mikoyan,” November 4, 1962, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110961>, 7.

⁸⁴ “Memorandum of A.I. Mikoyan’s Conversation with Comrades F. Castro, O. Dorticós, E. Guevara, E. Aragonés, and C.R. Rodriguez,” November 22, 1962, reproduced in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 485.

⁸⁵ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 272-273.

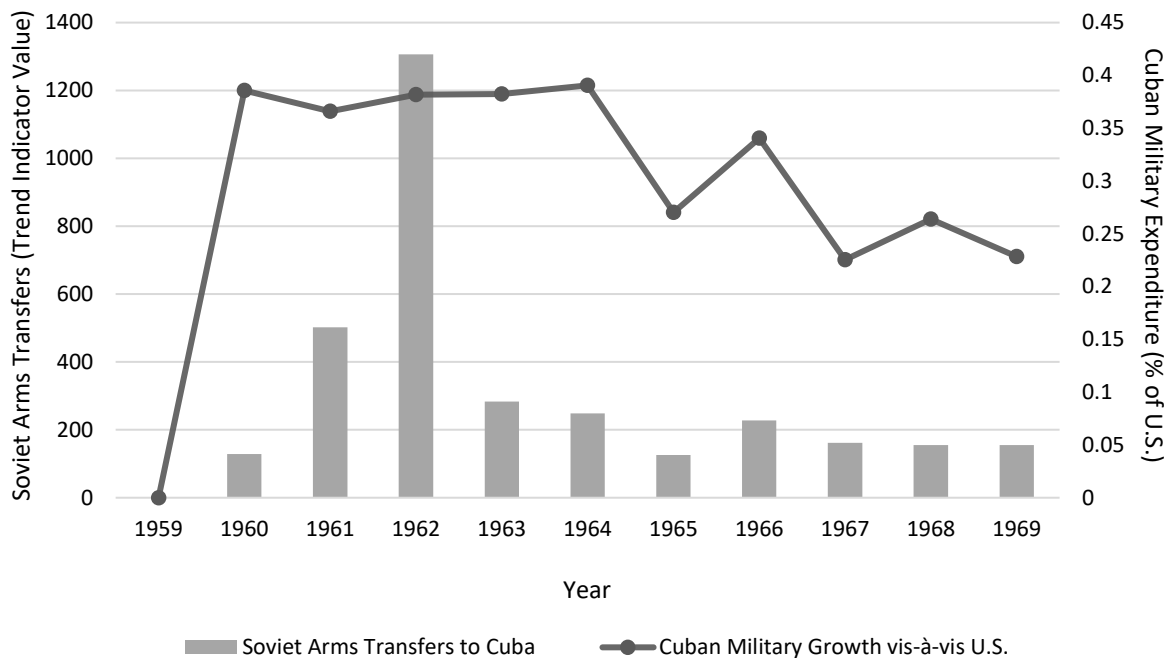
⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁸⁷ Soviet policymakers were infuriated upon learning of this memo, fearing that the UN delegate might inadvertently expose the weapons’ presence to American espionage. See “Telegram from A.I. Mikoyan to the CC CPSU,” November 22, 1962, and “Additional Instructions to Comrade A.I. Mikoyan on the Cuban Issue,” November 22, 1962, reproduced in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 478-480.

⁸⁸ For details, see Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 236-237.

strategy in favor of insourcing beginning in mid-November 1962. As Khrushchev stressed to Mikoyan, who was then his top envoy in Havana, the new priority was to assert full control over the operations of the alliance as to avoid being “drag[ged]...by a leash, and pull[ed] into a war with America by [Cuba’s] actions.”⁸⁹

Figure 5.3: Soviet Arms Transfers and Cuban Military Growth, 1959-1969



Sources: TIV (in millions) of Soviet arms transfers data are obtained from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Military expenditure percentages are calculated using figures from the COW project. See Singer, “Correlates of War Dataset.”

Thus, while maintaining a basic commitment to Cuban security, the Soviets took steps to ensure that the means required for the alliance to take significant military action would henceforth rest in Moscow’s hands alone. Writing from Cuba in November 22, 1962, Mikoyan requested—and was

⁸⁹ “Excerpt from Protocol No. 66 of Session of CC CPSU Presidium, ‘Instructions to Comrade A.I. Mikoyan,’” November 16, 1962, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117335>, 4.

subsequently granted—approval to remove tactical nuclear weapons from Cuba. Although these weapons had originally been promised to the Cuban forces, the crisis had convinced Mikoyan that “nuclear weapons of any kind” should not be “transferred to third parties.”⁹⁰ The Soviets also scaled back the quantity and quality of conventional weapons supplied to Cuba. For example, in spring 1963 Cuba was informed that it would be receiving 80 World War II era tanks instead of the 120 top-of-the-line tanks it had requested. Support for its anti-aircraft capabilities were reduced as well.⁹¹ Overall, Soviet arms transfers to Cuba decreased by approximately 78 percent from 1962 to 1963 and remained at relatively low levels thereafter (see Figure 5.3).

Soviet efforts to relegate Cuba to a minimalist military posture were facilitated by Cuba’s vulnerability. “[A]ny incautious step, any tension in our relations [with the United States] could cause a variety of problems,” Khrushchev reminded Castro in January 1963, “[w]e cannot underestimate the aggressive imperialist forces prepared for an attack on your republic.”⁹² On occasion, the Soviets brandished the prospect of abandonment to chasten the Cubans. As Khrushchev instructed Mikoyan, “we have to raise the issue with [the Cubans] that we would be forced to remove from ourselves all responsibility for the consequences to which their steps might lead them.”⁹³ Unlike in relations with China, such pressures were effective. Cuba’s extreme vulnerability to U.S. power meant that it had no choice but to go along with Soviet efforts to arrogate the alliance’s warfighting potential. The last nuclear weapons thus left Cuba on December 1, 1962.⁹⁴ More broadly, as Figure 5.3 illustrates, Cuba’s military growth vis-à-vis the United States stagnated over subsequent years in tandem with dwindling Soviet arms transfers. Cuba

⁹⁰ “Mikoyan to the CC CPSU,” in *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 478.

⁹¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 334.

⁹² “Letter from Khrushchev to Fidel Castro,” January 31, 1963, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114507>, 7.

⁹³ “Excerpt from Protocol No. 66,” 4.

⁹⁴ See Savranskaya, Blanton, and Melyakova, “Last Nuclear Weapons.”

remained a dependency of the Soviet Union until the end of the Cold War.⁹⁵

Summary of the Evidence

Table 5.2 summarizes my findings from the Sino-Soviet and Cuba-Soviet alliances. The Soviet Union pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing at the outset of both alliance relationships. Soviet leaders initially sought to build China into a major regional power, harnessing its ally’s military potential to indirectly counterbalance the United States in East Asia while the USSR gained power on the sidelines. Relatively invulnerable to costly counteraction by the United States, China was willing and able to tailor its military capabilities to the leading power’s grand strategy.

Table 5.2: Summary of Evidence from Soviet Alliances (1949-1968)

Alliance Relationship	Leading Power’s Grand Strategy	Ally’s Military Vulnerability	Outcome for Leading Power’s Grand Strategy
USSR-China	<i>Outsourcing</i> (1949-1957): USSR aims to build China into “military flagship of Asia”	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> “Unacceptable U.S. counteraction” against China unlikely	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> China builds “formidable war machine” with Soviet support
	<i>Insourcing</i> (1958-1968): USSR aims to constrain China’s military development		<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> China rejects Soviet strategic priorities; Chinese military growth proceeds untrammelled
USSR-Cuba	<i>Outsourcing</i> (1959-1962): USSR pursues “crash program” to bolster Cuba’s military position	<i>High vulnerability:</i> Cuba susceptible to quick and decisive U.S. invasion	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> U.S. preventive threats frustrate Soviet-sponsored military buildup
	<i>Insourcing</i> (Nov. 1962 onwards): USSR seeks to avoid being “dragged by a leash...by Cuba’s actions”		<i>Strategic coherence:</i> Cuba remains a Soviet military dependency

Strategic coherence thus prevailed in the Sino-Soviet alliance during much of its first decade.

⁹⁵ See Mark N. Katz, “The Soviet-Cuba Connection,” *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983): 88-112.

Moscow encouraged and supported China's military growth, going so far as to aiding its ally's nascent nuclear program. China responded by building a "formidable war machine" capable of matching U.S. military power in the Western Pacific.⁹⁶ The Soviet Union tried to implement a comparable strategic design in the Caribbean from 1959 to late 1962, perceiving an opportunity to build up an ally that could challenge the United States in its own backyard. Unlike in East Asia, however, Soviet outsourcing resulted in strategic incoherence in the Caribbean because the Soviet ally there was too vulnerable to acquire the military capabilities needed to sustain the strategy.

This cross-regional pattern was reversed when the Soviets transitioned to a grand strategy of insourcing. The premium that Soviet grand strategy placed on subjecting great-power competition to deliberation and control beginning around 1958 implied that it had to curb China's potential to bring the alliance into confrontation with the United States. But when the Soviets tried to press Beijing into reflecting its new strategic priorities in its military efforts, the Chinese proved recalcitrant. Confident in its ability to deter overwhelming U.S. countermeasures, China continued to build up its independent military capabilities to the dismay of Moscow. The ensuing strategic incoherence became the key structural driver of the Sino-Soviet split. By contrast, the insourcing grand strategy that the Soviets practiced in the Caribbean beginning in late 1962 resulted in strategic coherence in relations with Cuba. As much as Castro's government would have liked to free itself from military dependency on the Soviets, Cuba's vulnerability to American military predation meant that its leaders could not afford to pursue self-help capabilities in defiance of Moscow's strategic preferences.

Alternative Explanations

⁹⁶ "Paper prepared by Robert McClintock," 665.

To what extent do alternative theories help make sense of the above findings? In this section, I consider how three prominent explanations—those suggested by collective goods theory as well as frameworks that emphasize the internal norms of authoritarian alliances and ideological disagreements—fare in light of the evidence from the Sino-Soviet and Cuba-Soviet cases. I find that none of these, on their own, offer a strong account of the variations I have documented.

Collective Goods Theory

As noted earlier, the Soviet Union's alliances with China and Cuba should arguably be model cases for collective goods theory. Moscow's interactions with its allies unfolded in a bipolar international system, wherein the United States posed an unambiguous threat to both China and Cuba. Moreover, the nature of the Soviet Union's domestic political system was such that its leaders could exercise remarkable latitude in foreign policy decision-making compared to their U.S. counterparts. As historian Sergo Mikoyan notes, the prevailing belief in the Kremlin was that individuals "would risk a great deal if they dared to...question any of the supreme leader's decisions."⁹⁷ From the perspective of collective goods theory, it is clearly "better to have a strong state than a weak one" since a weak state's effort to pursue general interest may be frustrated by particular societal actors," which themselves might be influenced hither and yon by attachments to foreign states.⁹⁸ The implication is that Soviet leaders were especially capable of mobilizing their state's "material resources...to offer incentives or to make threats" to their allies.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁷ Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 103.

⁹⁸ Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 69. On the ability of allies to take advantage of "open" political systems, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 268-269; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 77; and John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

⁹⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, "U.S. Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unravelling the Paradox of External Strength and Internal Weakness," *International Organization* 31, no. 4 (Autumn 1977): 645.

knowledge that the leading power's commitment to their security was conditional on good behavior should have incentivized allies to conform their military policies to Soviet grand strategy; strategic coherence should have been the norm in Soviet alliances.

Despite these *prima facie* advantages, collective goods theory performs poorly in these cases. There is simply too much variation in strategic coherence—both within and across the two cases—to accept that the allies were adjusting their military capabilities primarily with reference to the reliability of Soviet security commitments (or the lack thereof). Closer examination reveals further difficulties. First, strategic coherence did not necessarily decline with stronger leading power security commitments. In the Sino-Soviet alliance, coherence was achieved during the early period, when concerned parties had no doubt that the Soviet security guarantee to China was ironclad. “[T]he Sino-Soviet relationship may be compared to that between Great Britain and the U.S.,” American policymakers noted in 1954, “[c]ompelling considerations of military security cement the alliance of the two countries.”¹⁰⁰ In the later period, the Soviet Union downgraded and ultimately relinquished its commitments to China. However, this did not prompt China to reorient its military posture to fit Moscow's insourcing strategy; its leaders would rather lose the Soviet Union as an ally than forego opportunities to expand their own capabilities.

The opposite tendencies prevailed in the Cuba-Soviet alliance. Here incoherence did follow the deepening of Soviet involvement in Cuban security. And although Moscow's basic policy of ensuring Havana's survival endured after 1962, abandonment threats did incentivize the Cubans to adopt an unassuming military posture consistent with the Soviet Union's new strategic priorities. The reason was that, in contrast to China, Cuba's extreme vulnerability to U.S. predation meant that it was “dependent” on the Soviet Union in the truest sense. Thus, even as the Soviets

¹⁰⁰ “Background Paper Prepared in the Department of State for the United States Delegation to the Geneva Conference,” April 6, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 14, pt. 1, 401.

humiliated Cuba by effectively colluding with the Americans to limit its capabilities, Castro found himself begging Moscow to retain a minimal military presence on the island: “I would like to repeat it—we are asking you to not to rush with the troop withdrawal...our troops only cannot be counted upon as a deterrent.”¹⁰¹ Overall, it is impossible to discern a straightforward correlation between the strength of Soviet security commitments and the degree of strategic coherence it achieved in its alliances.

Second, strategic coherence did not reliably improve with the severity of the ally’s threat environment. Of the two Soviet allies, Cuba was arguably the more threatened. With the United States’ sheer determination and capabilities for regime change reducing Havana’s moral hazard, collective goods theory would expect strategic coherence to be achieved relatively easily in the Cuba-Soviet alliance. The problem, however, was that Cuba’s military vulnerability denied it the *opportunity* to meet the requirements of the Soviet outsourcing strategy: the risks of triggering U.S. invasion prevented Cuba from decisively altering its military posture despite shared ambitions in Moscow and Havana. China’s privileged military position, on the other hand, did not keep it from being “definitively absorbed into the Soviet global design” during the early years of their alliance.¹⁰² It was only when Moscow’s strategic design transitioned to one based on inhibiting its ally’s military growth that China’s military policies decisively parted ways with Soviet demands. In essence, Cuba was too vulnerable to accommodate the prescriptions of the Soviet outsourcing strategy while China was too invulnerable to put up with those of its insourcing strategy.

As in the earlier chapters, these empirical challenges underscore a deeper, logical flaw in the conventional theory: military security in interstate alliances is not a collective good. As Avery Goldstein argued nearly two decades ago, the fact that abandonment risks are endemic to

¹⁰¹ “Memorandum of A.I. Mikoyan’s Conversation,” in *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 488-489.

¹⁰² Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 73.

international anarchy means that “alliance security is a benefit that *necessarily* fails the key test of nonexcludability.”¹⁰³ In line with this observation, neither China nor Cuba were ever content to free-ride on the Soviet Union’s military outlays. Even if the commonality of interests imbued a collective-goods character to the leading power’s commitments for the moment, the allies feared that interests may diverge—i.e., that “exclusion” might take place—at some point in the future. “Though [the Soviets] promised to continue their support,” Castro’s top lieutenant Ernesto “Che” Guevarra remarked after the missile crisis, “only the naïve would keep buying their empty words.”¹⁰⁴ In Castro’s own words, the Soviets could abandon Cuba like “[a] zero on the left, a dirty rag” whenever they saw fit.¹⁰⁵

Nor does the security extended by a leading power meet the nonrivalry criterion. In a wide array of circumstances, the leading power’s consumption of the security provided by its military power assuredly diminishes the security available to its allies.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of how determined Moscow was to protect its allies, it could never muster the capabilities and resolve needed to treat, say, China’s core interests in the Taiwan Strait as seriously as its own. China therefore could not allow its forces to merely “execute orders in accordance with the Soviet army ordinances[,]” Mao observed, “what is of primary importance is self-help.”¹⁰⁷ This also explains why Cuba was tempted to cooperate with the Soviet Union’s outsourcing strategy in the 1959-1962 period despite the fact that Moscow had publicly extended its nuclear umbrella over the island along with “tripwire” force deployments.¹⁰⁸ The Cubans took cold comfort in the idea that such commitments

¹⁰³ Avery Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride: Alliances and Security in the Postwar World,” *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 41 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation Between Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara and Chinese Ambassador Shen Jian, Havana,” December 1, 1962, CWIHP, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115075>, 3.

¹⁰⁵ “Memorandum of A.I. Mikoyan’s Conversation,” in *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 485.

¹⁰⁶ Goldstein, “Discounting the Free Ride,” 71.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 71.

¹⁰⁸ Previous studies suggest that declaratory nuclear guarantees are perhaps the strongest form of extended deterrence commitment that a leading power can extend to its smaller allies. See, in particular, Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S.

would sufficiently meet its security needs and hoped to eventually acquire the capabilities needed to become an independent military power. Cuba (and by extension, the Soviets) failed in this endeavor, but not because it happily embraced the logic of collective goods theory. No state in its right mind regards alliance security as a genuine collective good.

Authoritarian Norms

A second alternative theory focuses on the norms that characterize alliances between authoritarian states. As early as 1968, George Liska argued that autocratic alliances are held together “by the lust for material [gains]” rather than deeper feelings of community and friendship. Externalizing norms of dictatorial rule onto its foreign relations, an authoritarian leading power has few qualms about unilaterally imposing its preferences in the alliance and crafting its alliance policies the basis of naked self-interest.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in terms of my framework, an authoritarian leading power is especially likely to deal with its allies in a heavy-handed manner and favor a grand strategy that ensures allied obedience to its injunctions. For example, as Eliza Gheorghe points out, a theory that focuses on authoritarian norms would expect the leading power to try to put its allies in a “nuclear straitjacket,” which allows it to dole out military protection as it sees fit without heeding

Sechser, “Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence,” *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (October 2014): 919-935. Khrushchev made a public nuclear guarantee to Cuba as early as July 9, 1960, stating that “[f]iguratively speaking, if need be, Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire should the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to start intervention against Cuba. And the Pentagon could be well advised not to forget that, as shown in the latest tests, we have rockets which can land precisely in a preset square target 13,000 kilometers away. This, if you want, is a warning to those who would like to solve international problems by force and not by reason.” Quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 52. Apart from nuclear umbrellas, tripwire force deployments are often regarded as the strongest kinds of commitment extended by a leading power to its ally. See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (1966; repr., New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 47. On why small tripwire forces typically fail to deter aggression, see Dan Reiter and Paul Poast, “The Truth about Tripwires: Why Small Force Deployments do not Deter Aggression,” *Texas National Security Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 33-53.

¹⁰⁹ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 62. See also Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 31.

its allies' preferences.¹¹⁰ Marrying this view with my framework, strategic incoherence in Soviet alliances might be rooted in the leading power's rigid adherence to a grand strategy of insourcing.

This perspective is wrongheaded in a number of ways. To begin with, I have shown that Soviet grand strategy was by no means consistently oriented around exerting maximum domination over its allies' military policies. To the contrary, Moscow's initial preference in its relationships with both China and Cuba was to facilitate the growth of its allies' military capabilities with the goal of enabling them to independently challenge U.S. power in their respective regions. In China's case, this grand strategy was highly successful while it lasted. Borrowing Elizabeth Stanley's words, a China strong and independent enough to do Moscow's "dirty work" in East Asia furthered Soviet interests by, among other things, tying down American forces and fueling costly hostilities that sapped U.S. strength while the Soviet Union gained power on the sidelines.¹¹¹ Soviet grand strategy in the Caribbean had a broadly similar goal at the outset of the Cuba-Soviet alliance; as Khrushchev explained on the eve of Operation Anadyr, the "one purpose" behind Soviet military efforts there was to sufficiently strengthen Cuba to "scare [the United States], to restrain them...to give them back some of their own medicine."¹¹² Toward this end, the Soviets were willing to devolve advanced military capabilities to Cuba, up to and including nuclear weapons.¹¹³ While the Soviets did transition to a grand strategy of insourcing in later periods, this clearly was not the only strategy on their menu as the authoritarian norms thesis implies.

¹¹⁰ Gheorghe, "Balance of Power Redux."

¹¹¹ Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Paths to Peace: Domestic Coalition Shifts, War Termination, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 104-105.

¹¹² May 27, 1962, quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, "*One Hell of a Gamble*," 182.

¹¹³ As historian Sergo Mikoyan notes, if the Soviet intent was to reduce Cuba to a military dependency from the beginning, "the cheaper, more effective, and less dangerous choice" might have been to deploy "a large Soviet military unit, a division for instance," rather than the assortment of capabilities featured in Operation Anadyr. See Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 98.

More broadly, there is little evidence that authoritarian norms predetermined strategic incoherence in Soviet alliances, any more than democratic norms predetermined strategic coherence in the Atlantic alliance. As Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue write, during the early years of the Sino-Soviet alliance Stalin sought to mobilize China as a “knight in his counter-encirclement game” against the United States while Mao “exploited China’s strategic value to Stalin in order to build toward a position of equality...From Mao’s point of view, his alliance with the Soviet Union would only be a first step toward establishing China’s rightful position in the world.”¹¹⁴ Given the complementarity that existed between Soviet grand strategy and China’s military ambitions, “the Soviets and Chinese who carried out the bilateral accords functioned as if they were in fact equals. The bureaucrats of the respective international liaison departments of the two central committees, the military and intelligence staffs, and the ministry-level personnel served together remarkably well” in a spirit of genuine partnership.¹¹⁵ It was only when a new leadership took helm in Moscow—along with a new grand strategy that implied a radically different vision for their Chinese ally’s military capabilities—“that the chemistry between the two Politburos” dissipated.¹¹⁶

In a similar vein, the testimonies of the policymakers who steered the alliance between Moscow and Havana during its early years suggest a picture of camaraderie based on shared threat perceptions and ideological affinity.¹¹⁷ Strategic incoherence arose *in spite of* such camaraderie, rather than due to its absence. This is not to say that the Soviet Union’s relations with its allies—even at their best—were not beset by real disagreements, but only that these were not inherently more intractable and debilitating for strategic coherence than in alliances between liberal

¹¹⁴ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 206-207.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, ch. 3.

democracies. The deep cause of strategic incoherence in Soviet alliances was the same as that in U.S. relations with its democratic allies: a disjuncture between the kinds of capabilities the leading power asked its allies to acquire and how these demands interacted with the latter's military circumstances.

Clashing Ideologies

A third influential strand of reasoning focuses on ideological clashes between Soviet and allied leaders. Historian Lorenz Lüthi, whose work is perhaps the most important contribution on this score for the Chinese case, argues that ideology played the most crucial disruptive role in the events leading up to the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s. Specifically, Khrushchev's commitment to more pragmatic policies in both the domestic and international realms coincided with a "sharp left turn in Chinese politics in the summer of 1957" that was fueled by CCP Chairman Mao Zedong's ideological radicalization.¹¹⁸ Mao's newly radical ideas manifested in the catastrophic "Great Leap Forward" campaign of 1958-1962, and this "embrace of socioeconomic policies resembling Revolutionary Stalinism led to the adoption of an anti-Soviet political tone that spread into other policy areas."¹¹⁹ Relatedly, Mao's confrontational approach to dealing with "imperialism" in East Asia collided with Moscow's newfound interest in peaceful coexistence.¹²⁰ Overall, this narrative puts the blame for strategic incoherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance—as well as the broader political estrangement that it engendered—squarely on Mao. In a counterfactual where "Mao had died early or had been removed from power between 1956 and 1966[,]" Lüthi argues, "Sino-Soviet disagreements may have been much less confrontational" and "[i]t would have been unlikely... for

¹¹⁸ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 47.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

the alliance to degenerate into outright hostility.”¹²¹

I do not purport to provide a comprehensive explanation of the Sino-Soviet split with my case study; it is easy enough to accept that disagreements over the proper interpretation and application of Marxist-Leninist ideology was a significant driver of this multi-faceted event. That said, it is worth pointing out that, in matters of international relations, it was arguably the Soviet Union that pursued a more radical shift in orientation in the late 1950s and the Chinese who were responding to their leading-power ally’s overhauled grand strategy. Recall that the Soviet Union’s initial grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia sought to facilitate China’s growth into an independent military power. The Soviet ambition for China, Stalin implied during a conversation with Zhou Enlai, was for it to become strong enough to be “the hegemon of the Asian revolutionary process” and “fend off a regional imperialist offensive” on its own while the USSR “save[d] itself for an ultimate battle with the forces of imperialism[.]”¹²² Khrushchev’s grand strategy of insourcing prescribed exactly the opposite for China, demanding that it curb its military development so as to avoid disturbing the delicate equilibrium the Soviets were trying to maintain with the Americans in the shadow of nuclear annihilation. Thus, as Austin Jersild writes, Chinese leaders felt an understandable “disappointment with...perceived compromises of [the Soviet] bloc[’s] foreign policy[.]” which now treated “[a] Chinese role originally condoned and even encouraged by the Soviet Union” as excessive and dangerous.¹²³

Although China’s post-1957 policies did have a strong ideological cast, then, they were largely intended to accelerate the PRC’s capability buildup that had been ongoing since 1949 but whose prospects had become more uncertain as the Soviets sought to assert greater control over

¹²¹ Ibid., 351.

¹²² Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 68.

¹²³ Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, 160-161.

the dynamics of superpower competition by circumscribing their ally's growth as a military power. Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Wentian explained to his colleagues in June 1958 that

Generally speaking, [the Soviet Union is] somewhat afraid of the United States. Khrushchev says not to fear, but in [his] actions [he] expresses that he is somewhat afraid [*you xie pa*], afraid of the United States, afraid of West Germany...In the past, out of consideration of the Soviet Union, we did not discuss the Chairman's [Mao's] thinking very clearly in our propaganda. Now we need to give a greater role (*jiayi fahui*) to the Chairman's thinking. In international relations and foreign policy we need to openly set our direction as an example (*gongkai de shuli qi women de fangxiang*).¹²⁴

China's ideologically charged policies look quite different when seen in this light. As Thomas Christensen argues in a masterful analysis, the radicalism of the Great Leap Forward cannot be fully understood without reference to Beijing's well-founded fear that the Soviets under Khrushchev's new grand strategy "were less likely to support China and more likely to treat China like a weak satellite."¹²⁵ Ever-committed to joining the ranks of the world's major powers, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward with an eye toward accumulating the capital needed to develop a self-sufficient basis for industrial and arms production. In the words of one Chinese historian, in the late 1950s "all Chinese communist party leaders urgently felt that only by raising economic performance and closing the gap with America in military science and technology could [China] establish forces effective in expelling American imperialists, and [avoid] falling under the control of the great power chauvinism of the Soviet leadership."¹²⁶ The manner in which China went about pursuing this goal was woefully misguided and counterproductive, but the motive itself reflected straightforward security imperatives as opposed to blind ideological fervor.¹²⁷ Similarly, Fravel

¹²⁴ Quoted in Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 150.

¹²⁵ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 207.

¹²⁶ Xu Yan, quoted in *ibid.*, 211.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 211-213.

has shown that episodes of overt Chinese aggression toward U.S. “imperialism” during this period were largely driven by clear-eyed strategic assessments—such as the incentive to arrest negative shifts in bargaining power over disputed territories such as Taiwan—rather than ideological delusion.¹²⁸ All this is to say that a general theory that focuses on the interaction between a leading alliance power’s grand strategy and its ally’s military situation goes a long way toward illuminating the sources of strategic incoherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance; taking ideological friction into account certainly enriches the narrative, but it is not strictly necessary.

Some scholars have also interpreted Cuba’s behavior in the events surrounding the Cuban missile crisis through the lens of ideology. Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba as a fierce nationalist and Marxist revolutionary, although clearly more the former than the latter.¹²⁹ His commitment to resisting “imperialism” of all kinds not only informed his hostile relations with the United States but also his dealings with the Soviet Union. In particular, Castro’s government put a premium on avoiding security arrangements with the Soviets that implied Cuban acquiescence to great-power domination. Castro only accepted Moscow’s nuclear deployment plan, for example, after repeatedly claiming that Cuba was accepting “the risk of taking this step” as a measure to “help the Soviet bloc” rather than to desperately fend off a U.S. attack with yet another great power’s assistance.¹³⁰ And as noted above, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet leaders were

¹²⁸ In Fravel’s words, “when compared with other countries, China is not an outlier whose behavior [in confronting its adversaries in territorial disputes] requires a special explanation.” Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 40.

¹²⁹ As Fursenko and Naftali write, Castro “was no Marxist ideologue.” Rather, he “believed himself to be the embodiment of the Cuban nation and the inheritor of the mantle of Simón Bolívar. His challenge was to find a course of action that guaranteed him continued control over the revolution and the destiny of his people.” Soon after he took helm in Cuba, however, he became convinced “that the future prospects of his regime and his movement depended on creating a much closer relationship with Moscow and Beijing.” See Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 19.

¹³⁰ “Interview with Alexander Alekseyev by Sherry Jones, “Cuban Missile Crisis: What the World didn’t Know,” produced by Sherry Jones for Peter Jennings Reporting, ABC News (Washington Media Associates, 1992), <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB400/>, 5. Decades after the Cuban missile crisis, Castro maintained that “we didn’t really like the missiles. If it had been a matter only of our own defense, we would not have accepted the deployment of the missiles. But not because we were afraid of the dangers that might follow the deployment of the missiles here; rather, it was because this would damage the image of the revolution, and we were very zealous in protecting the image of the revolution in the rest of Latin America. The presence of the missiles would in fact turn us

often taken aback by Castro's insistence on aggressively confronting the United States at all costs. Castro told Khrushchev at one point that "Cuban and Soviet men...were willing to die with supreme dignity" rather than cave to Washington's threats.¹³¹ Cuban accounts suggest that Castro was genuinely livid at what he perceived as a Soviet willingness to collude with the United States to restrict Cuba's rights as a sovereign nation.¹³²

Castro's commitment to a vision of national independence inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideals of anti-imperialism supplements my explanation of Cuba's responses to Soviet grand strategy in the early 1960s, albeit only to a point. My theory holds that a leading power's outsourcing strategy will result in strategic incoherence when implemented vis-à-vis a militarily vulnerable ally, either because the ally (1) recognizes the implications of its own vulnerability and rejects the leading power's demands or (2) tries to adopt the capabilities demanded by the leading power, only to invite costly countermeasures that forces it to curb its militarization efforts. The theory is not specific enough to predict which of the two pathways to strategic incoherence will be taken in a given case. In the Cuba-Soviet alliance, ideology help explain why Cuba ended up triggering a dangerous confrontation with the United States rather than anticipating this outcome from the beginning and moderating its behavior accordingly. In the words of historians Blight, Allyn, and Welch, "[g]iven the intensity of their revolutionary passions and the strength of their anti-American feelings in 1962, it would indeed be surprising if the proposed deployment had not conjured up powerful emotions...To use a precise if inelegant locution, acquiring nuclear missiles

into a Soviet military base, and that entailed a high political cost for the image of our country, an image we so highly valued...But indeed, we regarded the deployment of the missiles as something that would strengthen the socialist camp—something that, to a certain extent, would help to improve the so-called balance of power." Castro, 1992, quoted in Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 198-199.

¹³¹ "Castro's Letter to Khrushchev," October 31, 1962, reproduced in *ibid.*, 517.

¹³² See Acosta, *October 1962*, ch. 8.

would have enabled Cuba to say to the United States once and for all: ‘In your face.’”¹³³

However, the fact remains that Cuba’s leaders—like many “[c]hiliastic rulers” in history—ultimately compromised on their ideology when the alternative was to court national destruction.¹³⁴ An ideological commitment to challenging “imperialism” at least partly informed their decision to cooperate with the Soviet Union’s outsourcing grand strategy. But when the potential costs of continuing down this path became apparent, they accepted what they must when the Soviets unilaterally decided that Cuba should be relegated to a state of military dependency. Intriguingly, Marxist ideology supplied a language to justify this reverse-course. By late November 1962, Castro was asking the Soviets for a military assistance treaty and a permanent troop presence on Cuba. Even though such options had been abhorrent to him in the past, Castro cited Soviet military bases in other socialist countries to remind the Soviets of their “responsibility” to defend Cuba against imperialist aggression.¹³⁵ Ideological solidarity was also invoked to justify Cuba’s acquiescence to Soviet demands for military moderation. “We tried not to do anything that could harm our common cause[,]” Castro told Mikoyan—“Of course, we defended our point of view. But we always, when there was an opportunity, tried to do everything in our power to make it easier for the Soviet Union.”¹³⁶ In short, although Castro was no less committed to challenging American imperialism than Mao, the constraints of his country’s military situation led him to interpret his ideology in a way favorable to the Soviet Union’s insourcing strategy.

Overall, my theoretical account is not necessarily orthogonal to an ideological

¹³³ Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 346. This also explains why the Cubans insisted on explaining their decision to accept the Soviet proposal in terms of socialist solidarity rather than their desire to outgrow their state of extreme vulnerability: “Cuba’s pride is better served by a reconstruction of events that emphasizes the mutuality of the deployment than one which highlights Cuba’s vulnerability to the United States, and its dependence upon the Soviet Union.” Ibid.

¹³⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 128.

¹³⁵ “Memorandum of A.I. Mikoyan’s Conversation,” in Mikoyan, *Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 489.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 491.

interpretation of strategic incoherence in Soviet alliances. In China's case, ideology explains many details about the manner in which Mao's regime went about pursuing their ambition to turn China into a major power in its own right. In Cuba's case, ideology played a role in tempting Cuban leaders to try to accommodate the Soviet Union's outsourcing grand strategy despite the dangers associated with such a policy. However, ideology also helped Cuba justify the abandonment of its military ambitions when the Soviets transitioned to an insourcing strategy. As sociologist Ann Swidler writes, then, it is necessary to ask "larger explanatory questions about why an ideology develops in particular directions, why certain groups adopt it, and why those groups ultimately succeed or fail" in order to properly understand its causal significance. Ideologies are always "in active competition with other cultural frameworks—at the least in competition with common sense and usually with alternative traditions and ideologies as well."¹³⁷ To explain the outcome of this competition, one must look beyond the ideology itself to the historical-structural conditions that incentivize actors to privilege certain interpretations of the ideology over others, along with the patterns of action they mandate.¹³⁸ In highlighting the interaction between the grand strategies of leading powers and their ally's military situation, my theory identifies the factors that shape those conditions.

Conclusion

This chapter has evaluated demand-side theory with evidence from the Sino-Soviet and Cuba-Soviet alliances. Consistent with my findings from the Atlantic Alliance, the kind of grand strategy adopted by the leading power and its allies' military vulnerabilities were the most important

¹³⁷ Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 102.

¹³⁸ Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (April 1986): 280.

determinants of strategic coherence in these alliances. When the Soviet Union pursued an outsourcing strategy designed to build up its ally's independent military capabilities, strategic coherence obtained in relations with the relatively invulnerable China while incoherence prevailed with the highly vulnerable Cuba. However, when the Soviet Union transitioned to an insourcing strategy designed to circumscribe allied capabilities, these patterns reversed themselves. China did not deign to accept the vision of permanent military inferiority assigned to it by Soviet grand strategy, nor did it have to, given that it could continue to pursue increased capabilities "without incurring unacceptable U.S. counteraction."¹³⁹ Self-help was not an option for the vulnerable Cuba, however, which was why it ended up toeing the restrictive line laid out for it by Moscow's insourcing strategy.

In addition to corroborating my argument, these cases provide especially damning evidence against collective goods theory. As shown in the later period of the Cuba-Soviet alliance, threats of reduced commitments improve strategic coherence only under relatively exacting conditions—namely, when a leading power committed to a grand strategy of insourcing tries to reign in the behavior of a militarily vulnerable ally. In other circumstances, the same pressure is likely to fail and even backfire. This is seen in Moscow's alliance relations with China after 1957 when, despite "successfully" retracting its security commitments, the Soviet Union failed to subordinate China's military posture under its grand strategic vision of insourcing. In the final analysis, no amount of manipulation on the "supply-side" of alliance politics can bring about strategic coherence when the prescriptions of the leading power's grand strategy collide with the implications of the ally's security environment. Arguments that highlight authoritarian norms and ideological friction likewise fall short.

¹³⁹ "Communist Courses of Action in Asia through 1957," 7

Chapter 6

Beyond the Cold War: Strategic Incoherence in East Asia across the Centuries

The purpose of this chapter is to show that my theory can explain patterns of strategic coherence in military alliances outside the Cold War context, which has provided the empirical backdrop for my discussion thus far. Toward this end, I present briefer case studies of Great Britain's alliance relationship with Japan in the early 20th century and the United States and China's 21st-century alliance relationships in East Asia. While presented in less detail than the previous case studies, the evidence below shows that the interaction between the grand strategy of leading powers and the military vulnerability of their allies has consistently influenced patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence throughout the modern era. Great Britain's outsourcing grand strategy in early 20th-century East Asia underpinned strategic coherence in its relations with Japan, which had become a great power in its own right by the time the alliance was formed. However, when British grand strategy transitioned to insourcing after 1907, strategic incoherence set in. In contemporary East Asia, U.S. grand strategy to confront the rise of Chinese power has increasingly veered toward outsourcing, leading to strategic coherence in U.S. relations with the relatively invulnerable Japan but incoherence with the more vulnerable South Korea. Finally, China's efforts to practice a grand strategy of insourcing has been met with strategic incoherence in its alliance relationship with North Korea.

The main reason to examine these alliances is their substantive importance. It is widely recognized among historians that the Anglo-Japanese alliance played a key role in shaping the major political events of early 20th-century great-power diplomacy, such as the manner in which the great powers pursued their territorial and economic interests in China during the final years of the Qing dynasty,¹ the frustration of Russia's expansionist ambitions in East Asia and its subsequent redirection toward the West,² and the origins of political antagonism between Imperial Japan and the United States.³ In a similar vein, U.S.-Japanese and U.S.-South Korean alliances are focal points for American grand strategy in 21st-century East Asia.⁴ Finally, with scholars and policymakers taking increased interest in China's emerging grand strategy, understanding the sources of strategic incoherence in its only formal alliance relationship is clearly important for a broad-based analysis of today's great power alliance politics.⁵ In short, these cases merit exploration by virtue of their intrinsic significance, notwithstanding the relative dearth of primary material and historiography that could limit analytical depth when compared to the investigations in previous chapters.⁶

¹ Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907* (London: Athlone Press, 1966), ch. 6.

² Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy: 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992), 390.

³ Malcolm D. Kennedy, *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 56.

⁴ See Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* 189 (November 2011): 56-63; and Nina Silove, "The Pivot before the Pivot: U.S. Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016): 45-88.

⁵ Important works that examine China's 21st-century grand strategy include Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 41-72; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); Avery Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance," *International Security* 45, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 164-201; and Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁶ In my case studies of the U.S.-South Korea and U.S.-Japan alliances, I mitigate the challenge posed by the relative lack of primary and secondary material with data gathered from original interviews with current and former policymakers.

Strategic Incoherence in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1923

Demand-side theory predicts that strategic coherence should be exceedingly rare in alliances between great powers, given that they are relatively invulnerable by definition and seek to constrain each other's growth in power by default. However, there is a narrow range of circumstances that could incentivize a great power to adopt a grand strategy of outsourcing toward its peer, which would enable strategic coherence. First, the rise of a potentially hegemonic adversary can make outsourcing look more attractive. When the adversary seems poised to amass more power in its region than any combination of rivals, a great power can be tempted to whet the military capabilities of a peer ally to check this growing threat despite its previous apprehensions. Second, the incentive for outsourcing magnifies when the "leading" great power is comfortably insulated from its peer ally by sheer geographic distance or a substantial land or water barrier. Then the great power can contemplate harnessing the ally's military capabilities with relatively little fear that the same capabilities might be used against it in the future. In short, the combination of hegemonic threat and geographic insularity can drive a leading power to adopt an outsourcing strategy in the context of a great-to-great power alliance, which in turn can produce strategic coherence (see chapter 2).

These were the conditions that led Great Britain to pursue a grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia during the early years of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The decade roughly extending from the end of the Sino-Japanese War to the Russo-Japanese War (1895-1905) was "[t]he great period of Russian expansion in East Asia[.]"⁷ Russia's capacity to project power into China steadily increased following events such as its acquisition of a warm-water port in the Pacific in 1898, along with its occupation of Manchuria in late 1900 and the establishment of military

⁷ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy*, 328.

installations in Korea during the same period.⁸ From London's perspective, such moves would not only enable Russia to oust British influence from China but also grant it the added resources and political leeway needed to seriously threaten British territorial holdings in Central and South Asia. As the British Admiralty observed in September 1901, Great Britain "could not afford to see [its] Chinese trade disappear, or to see Hong Kong and Singapore fall, particularly not at a moment when a military struggle with Russia might be in progress on the confines of India."⁹

Perhaps most alarmingly, Britain no longer possessed the clear-cut naval superiority that might have allowed it to counteract Russia's advances in the past. Although nominally retaining its traditional status as the first-ranking sea power in the international system, at the dawn of the 20th century British leaders were fearing that their country's naval capabilities in East Asia might be "crushed out of existence" as those of its rivals grew in leaps and bounds.¹⁰ By late 1901, Russia had concentrated five battleships in the Pacific vis-à-vis Britain's four and was expected to reinforce these figures with three more within a few months.¹¹ Add to this the one battleship that France—Russia's ally since 1894—was maintaining in Asian waters, and Britain would soon be met with "the odds of nine battleships to four" in the region.¹² Given the across-the-board decline that the British Empire was undergoing at this time, London could not reinforce its fleet in East Asia without finding itself "with little or nothing more than a bare equality of strength in [the English] Channel and Mediterranean." In fact, some of the vessels London had deployed to East

⁸ For good summaries of Russia's military advances in East Asia after 1895, see *ibid.*, 318-315; and Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 102-116.

⁹ Lord Selborne, "Balance of Naval Power in the Far East," September 4, 1901, excerpt reproduced in Zara S. Steiner, "Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," *Journal of Modern History* 31, no. 1 (March 1959): 30. For details on Russia's threat to British territories in Central and South Asia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), ch. 5.

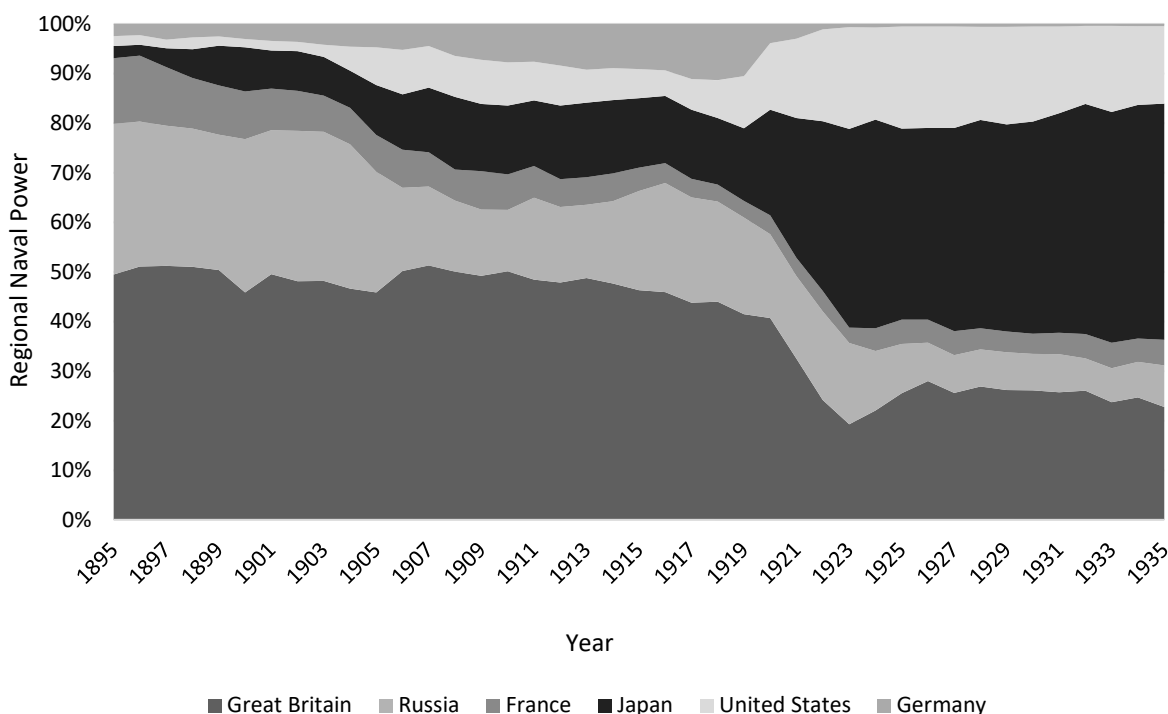
¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, 176.

¹² Lord Selborne, "Balance of Naval Power," 30.

Asia were “badly needed elsewhere” as matters stood.¹³ Figure 6.1 proxies the balance of naval power among the great powers active in East Asia during this period with distance-adjusted naval tonnage ratios.¹⁴

Figure 6.1: The Balance of Naval Power in East Asia, 1895-1935



Source: Distance-adjusted naval power scores are calculated using tonnage proportions, CINC scores, and intercity distance data respectively found in Crisher and Souva, “Power at Sea”; J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985,” *International Interactions* 14 (1987): 115-132; and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1981).

¹³ Ibid. On Britain’s general decline during this period, see Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*. On its decline as a sea power, see Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (1976; repr., London: Penguin Books, 2001), ch. 8.

¹⁴ Figure 6.1 compares rough estimates of the ability of the great powers to project naval capabilities to East Asia. I begin with the formula adapted from Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, substituting the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score with naval tonnage proportions found in Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, “Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1895-2011,” *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (2014): 602-629. Furthermore, I use the distance between the great power’s capital and a single geographic location—the capital of Korea—to produce a uniform reference point for distance in the formula. In essence, then, the figure discounts the relative naval capabilities of the great powers by the distance of their homeland to one plausible theater of operations in East Asia.

Such were the circumstances under which the Anglo-Japanese alliance was formed. As stated unequivocally by Ian Nish, the alliance's foremost historian, the Anglo-Japanese treaty of January 1902 was at heart aimed at erecting "an anti-Russian front in Asia."¹⁵ Below I survey how Britain's grand strategy in East Asia evolved throughout the duration of the alliance and how this impacted strategic coherence. Given Japan's basic invulnerability as an insular great power, strategic coherence prevailed during the "anti-Russian phase" of the alliance (1902-1907) when Britain pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing.¹⁶ Incoherence arose when British grand strategy transitioned to insourcing in the subsequent phase (1908-1923).

The First Period: British Outsourcing in East Asia and Strategic Coherence, 1902-1907

British leaders pursued the alliance with Japan primarily with an eye toward checking Russian expansion in East Asia on the cheap—in Nish's words, "Britain derived from the alliance security with economy."¹⁷ In view of this goal, London's grand strategy was designed to facilitate the growth of Japan's military clout while gradually redirecting its own capabilities to other regions; as one member of parliament stated in 1905, Japan's naval forces represented "the only possible means by which we could secure retrenchment and efficiency with safety to the Empire."¹⁸ In addition to the alliance treaty that committed its signatories to mutual military assistance in the event that one ally should become involved in hostilities with two or more great powers, the Anglo-

¹⁵ Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 1. My case study below relies heavily on Nish's classic two-volume history. In addition to *ibid.*, see Ian H. Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-23* (London: Athlone Press, 1972).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 45.

¹⁸ Claude Lowther, quoted in Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance.*, 303. Kyle Haynes argues that Britain's primary motive in pursuing the alliance with Japan was to devolve its military commitments in East Asia to a regional successor and redeploy its declining naval capabilities to the North Sea. See Kyle Haynes, "Decline and Devolution: The Sources of Strategic Military Retrenchment," *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 2015): 490-502, and esp. 496-497.

Japanese negotiations of 1902 concluded with the exchange of secret notes that committed the allies to “maintaining in the Extreme East a naval force superior in strength to that of any other Power” and providing “mutual facilities...for the docking and coaling of vessels of war of one country in the ports of the other, as well as other advantages conducive to the welfare and efficiency of the respective navies of the two Powers.”¹⁹ Importantly, although there was some concern that the generous military support and political latitude the alliance promised to Japan might have the effect of encouraging Tokyo “to take without our permission measures...which we might regard as provocative[,]” especially in places like Korea, British leaders accepted Japan’s argument that “disorders” on the Asian mainland “always break out suddenly; and speedy measures are needed to quell them.”²⁰ Thus Britain dropped its initial proposal that the two parties should engage in consultations before using force to assert their interests in the region. Instead, the final draft of the treaty recognized the “special interests” Japan possessed in Korea and that “it will be admissible for either [party] to take such measures as may be indispensable in order to safeguard those interests if threatened either by the aggressive action of any other Power, or by disturbances arising in China or Corea, and necessitating the intervention of either of the High Contracting Parties for the protection of the lives or property of its subjects.”²¹ All this followed naturally from the fact that, as Nish points out, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was an arrangement “whose success in military terms ultimately depended on expanding Japan’s naval power.”²²

Japan was a formidable great power in East Asia by the time the Anglo-Japanese alliance

¹⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 218; 217.

²⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 212.

²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 216.

²² *Ibid.*, 364. In the words of an authoritative Japanese work, “in return for acting as the watchdog for British interests in the east, the watchdog itself was permitted to behave according to its own lights.” Nihon kokusaiseiji gakkai [Japanese Association of International Relations] ed., *Taiheiyō sensō e no michi* [Road to the Pacific War] (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1963), translation quoted in Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 394.

was formed. While “militarily impotent in World Power terms” as late as 1890, at the dawn of the new century “[n]o one could do anything significant in the Far East without considering its response[.]”²³ Although the Japanese navy remained smaller than those of the traditional great powers, it was able to concentrate the bulk of its fleet in East Asian waters unlike its rivals. By the estimate of senior Japanese and British officials, Japan’s aggregate naval displacement in East Asia approximated 200,000 tons in December 1901, compared to 170,000 for Great Britain, 120,000 for Russia, and 80,000 for France.²⁴ Lord Lansdowne, Britain’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, thus summarized a common view in 1902 in arguing that Japan “might very fairly expect to hold her own in a single-handed encounter with any other Power.”²⁵ Indeed, it was largely the prospect of outmatching Russia and France’s nine battleships with the combined strength of Britain’s four and Japan’s six that had made the alliance with Japan attractive for British leaders in the first place.²⁶ Although there were some analysts in London who viewed Japan as a “new competitor in the field,”²⁷ Japan’s geographical distance from British territorial interests and the severity of the shared Russian threat served to mitigate concerns that its capabilities could be turned against Britain anytime soon..²⁸

As my theory predicts, the Anglo-Japanese alliance saw a high degree of strategic coherence during the years 1902-1907, during which the imperative of thwarting Russia’s

²³ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 206; 209.

²⁴ “The Marguess of Lansdowne to Sir C. MacDonald,” December 16, 1901, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, Vol. 2: The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Franco-British Entente*, eds. G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1927), 103.

²⁵ Quoted in Chung-Fu Chang, “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1929), 105.

²⁶ Lord Selborne, “Balance of Naval Power in the Far East,” 30.

²⁷ Lord Brassey, quoted in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 166.

²⁸ If anything, many British leaders were initially displeased that Japan’s capabilities would be used to aid British interests only within the confines of East Asia under the terms of the 1902 treaty and wanted to expand the geographical scope of the alliance to Southeast Asia and India. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 235. The two parties agreed on the extension of the alliance’s geographical scope to India when the alliance was renewed in 1905, although the provision was never put to use. See *ibid.*, ch. 15.

hegemonic ambitions led Great Britain to implement a grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia. Britain encouraged the growth of Japan's military ambitions, seeing its regional expansion as a necessary counteraction against Russia's hegemonic designs. For example, British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour wrote that Japan's encroachments against Korean sovereignty were not only "indispensable from the Japanese point of view" but also that there was "no reason why we should not welcome it"; if Japan did not act, Korea's weakness would soon invite Russian domination.²⁹ Britain also extended generous material and political support for Japan's military development. Most of Japan's advanced battleships in the period leading up to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) were built in British shipyards and its officers were trained by British instructors.³⁰ Additionally, Britain served as Japan's major trading partner and supplied the bulk of the loans needed to accelerate Japan's naval buildup as it prepared for its showdown with Russia.³¹ More broadly, Britain's promise to intervene on behalf of Japan should it become involved in a war with two or more powers effectively "allowed it to fight on its home ground without interference from third powers"—namely, France.³²

Japan, for its part, fully embraced the role assigned to it by Britain's grand strategy. It aggressively built up its military capabilities with British sponsorship and, in 1905, decisively defeated Russia to become the preponderant naval power in East Asia. With Russia forced to accept the "indefinite abandonment of her aspirations to sea power" at the hands of the Japanese, Britain was essentially "freed from the perpetual menace which the expansion of the Russian fleet

²⁹ Quoted in Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 321.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 8; and David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 60.

³¹ Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 8, 287-289.

³² Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 209. When the alliance was renewed in 1905, this provision was modified so that each ally would be obliged to intervene on behalf of the other even if it was attacked by a single power. See Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 332.

has constituted.”³³ Britain subsequently redeployed all of its battleships in East Asia to European waters.³⁴ As the First Lord of the Admiralty explained in 1906, this was only possible due to the assurance that Japan’s navy would be “an element of our strength on the seas for ten years to come.”³⁵ Britain’s grand strategy of outsourcing had come to fruition on the basis of Japanese military power.

The Second Period: British Insourcing in East Asia and Strategic Incoherence, 1908-1923

Residual fears of Russian power continued to animate a British grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia until 1907. In the summer of that year, Tokyo secured agreements with Russia and its ally, France, that recognized Japan’s sphere of influence in Korea, Manchuria, and southeastern China.³⁶ Additionally, an Anglo-Russian convention in August concluded with Russia renouncing its territorial ambitions over southern Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet, quelling British fears about the security of its frontiers in India.³⁷ As Nish writes, the collective impact of these developments was that “the period when the far east was front-page news had ended...[I]t was possible, and indeed essential, for [London] to concentrate on European affairs.”³⁸ Indeed, it was now “Japan who was more likely to alter the balance of power in the far east than Russia[.]”³⁹

With the Russian threat no longer salient, the continued growth of Japan’s military capabilities—especially its naval capabilities—became a source of stress for Britain’s major interests. The first and most important of these had to do with the United States. Britain hoped to

³³ Royal Navy Director of Naval Intelligence Charles Ottley, May 9, 1905, quoted in Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 313.

³⁴ Haynes, “Decline and Devolution,” 497.

³⁵ Lord Tweedmouth, quoted in Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 353.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 359-361.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 361.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 363.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 372.

maintain U.S. goodwill to shore up its position as a declining power in Europe and elsewhere, and Washington had expressed resentment at Japan's military buildup as early as 1905.⁴⁰ British leaders thus lost enthusiasm for the unbridled military expansion of their ally, fearing that this may bring both powers into a collision course with the United States in the Pacific.⁴¹ Compounding this discomfort was the growing sense that Japan's newfound naval supremacy might end up threatening the security of Britain's Pacific dominions. As Nish observes, with the Russian threat gone, "the general conclusion" of systematic defense assessments that took place from 1909 to 1911 was that "apart from Japan, there was no likelihood of effective external attack" against places like Australia, New Zealand, or Hong Kong. If Japan's naval power was left unchecked, Britain might sooner or later "have to choose between her empire and her alliance."⁴²

Thus, after 1907, British grand strategy in the context of the Anglo-Japanese alliance shifted to insourcing—the default grand strategy practiced by great powers toward one another. When the alliance was renewed for a third time in 1911, British policymakers unequivocally communicated to their Japanese counterparts that Britain would not be assisting Japan should it become involved in a war with the United States.⁴³ More broadly, British policy in East Asia began to place a premium on restraining Japan's military expansion. As far as the Foreign Office was concerned, the alliance's new purpose was to avoid a situation where "Japan will have her hands free to act in the Far East without restraint or control by us."⁴⁴ And although they had enthusiastically supported Japan's naval development in the past, British officials now turned a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 363-364.

⁴¹ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 22-27.

⁴² Ibid., 51. See also Robert Joseph Gowen, "British Legerdemain at the 1911 Imperial Conference: The Dominions, Defense Planning, and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 3 (September 1980): 385-413.

⁴³ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁴ Minutes of Foreign Office meeting, June 13, 1910, quoted in *ibid.*, 51.

cold shoulder to proposals for enhanced cooperation. When Japan broached the possibility of combined naval signaling exercises in 1909, First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKeena argued that accepting the proposal would lead to requests “of a more ambitious kind, embracing probably fleet tactics and exercises in gunnery and torpedo work.” The Japanese were “very much behind Great Britain in their knowledge of these subjects” for the moment, and it was in Britain’s interest to keep it that way.⁴⁵

Britain’s transition to a grand strategy of insourcing led to the onset of strategic incoherence in the Anglo-Japanese alliance; in Nish’s words, the years extending from 1907 to the termination of the alliance in 1923 “can appropriately be described as the period of ‘the alliance in decline’, a period of attrition from the high hopes of 1902.”⁴⁶ Already the preeminent naval power in East Asia, Japan was determined to counterbalance American naval expansion in the Pacific regardless of its distant ally’s attempts to constrain its capabilities (see Figure 6.1). In other words, a fundamental mismatch had arisen between Britain’s grand strategic preferences and the military position Japan sought for itself. Tensions between the two allies reached an apex from 1919 onwards, when American policymakers stepped up their efforts to show their British counterparts how unhappy they were with the alliance as the U.S.-Japan naval rivalry intensified.⁴⁷ The alliance was effectively terminated at the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922, which replaced the Anglo-Japanese agreement with a Four-Power Treaty wherein the United States, Great Britain, Japan, and France agreed to maintain the status quo in the Pacific for ten years.⁴⁸ While the treaty helped maintain relative peace in East Asia for a brief period, Japan was once

⁴⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 376-377. Although Japan signed the treaty on its own accord, it was left feeling victimized by “something in the nature of an Anglo-American conspiracy” to limit its aspirations as a great power in East Asia. *Ibid.*, 382.

again aggressively pursuing regional hegemony by the early 1930s.⁴⁹

Strategic Incoherence in America's East Asian Alliances in the 21st Century

The United States traditionally practiced a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia. As Victor Cha argues, Washington's overarching goal in its East Asian alliance relationships throughout the Cold War was not only to deter communist aggression but also to keep local allies "from provoking conflicts...that might embroil the United States in a larger unwanted war on the Asian mainland when the primary theater of concern for U.S. national security was Western Europe."⁵⁰ In the case of the Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea), this led the United States to "double down" on its security involvement after the Korean War, assuming primary responsibility for South Korean defense while exercising tight control over how Seoul developed and used its military capabilities.⁵¹ American policies toward Japan likewise prioritized control over all else. Fearing that the reemergence of Japan as an autonomous military power would trigger dangerous spirals of instability in the region, the United States essentially practiced a strategy of maintaining "a light hand on Japan's carotid artery, which, if the need arose, could increase its pressure and cause Japan to faint."⁵² As National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger assured Chinese leaders during his historic visit, Japan would not become a "runaway horse" under the U.S. watch.⁵³ Washington did occasionally toy with notions of devolving Asian security to the Asian allies. However, pessimistic

⁴⁹ Some of the best works on Japanese expansionism during this period include Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); and James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966).

⁵⁰ Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

⁵² Shiraishi Takashi, quoted in Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), 39. See also Cha, *Powerplay*, ch. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 44.

assessments of allied vulnerability ultimately kept the United States wedded to insourcing; periodic initiatives for a grand strategic transition fell through after meeting resistance both within Washington and from allied governments.⁵⁴

As China's rise alters the East Asian political landscape, the United States is rethinking this traditional grand strategy. Although the key elements of this new strategic orientation are still in development, available evidence indicates that U.S. policymakers are increasingly steering their East Asian grand strategy in a direction that can properly be described as outsourcing. Accordingly, my discussion below proceeds under the assumption that recent trends in U.S. grand strategy toward "encourage[ing] allies and partners to assume a greater role in handling shared security challenges" in East Asia will continue.⁵⁵ Coupled with the phenomenal growth of Chinese power, this gradual shift in U.S. grand strategy presents American allies like Japan and South Korea with critical choices related to the kinds and amounts of military capabilities they acquire. As I demonstrate below, there are signs that their choices are leading to outcomes broadly consistent with the predictions of my theory: strategic coherence prevails in America's relations with the

⁵⁴ A case in point was the Jimmy Carter administration's efforts to move U.S. strategy in East Asia toward "an offshore military posture which avoids automatic involvement in regional hostilities[.]" National Security Council, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC-10," February 18, 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/presidential_memoranda, 32. To implement this revised strategic orientation, Carter planned to withdraw of all U.S. ground troops from South Korea in a phased manner, progressively devolving the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK)'s major military functions to the South Korean armed forces. The plan was reversed after new intelligence reports concluded that South Korea was unlikely to withstand a major communist onslaught "even with timely U.S. air, naval, and logistical support[.]" Policy Review Committee (PRC) meeting, June 7, 1979, quoted in Do Young Lee, "Tailoring Extended Deterrence: How States Provide a Security Umbrella" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2020), 168. For detailed analysis, see *ibid.*, 150-170; and Yong-Jick Kim, "The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum, 1974-1979," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), ch. 16. In a broadly similar vein, U.S. efforts to enlarge Japan's regional military role during the Cold War were often frustrated by foot-dragging on the part of Japan's leaders, driven in part by the sense that Japan could invite devastating aggression by the Soviet Union or China should it move toward a more assertive military posture. On this point, see Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "Explaining Japanese Antimilitarism: Normative and Realist Constraints on Japan's Security Policy," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 123-160; and Samuels, *Securing Japan*, ch. 2.

⁵⁵ Elbridge A. Colby, "The Role of Allies and Partners in U.S. Military Strategy and Operations," Testimony Before the House Armed Services Committee, September 23, 2020, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20200923/110884/HHRG-116-AS00-Wstate-ColbyE-20200923.pdf>, 7.

relatively invulnerable Japan, while South Korean military capabilities are increasingly out of tune with those demanded by a U.S. grand strategy of outsourcing. This divergence in outcomes is already common knowledge among specialists, so the details of the two countries' military postures only require brief review. That said, I draw on original interviews with senior policymakers in the region—both current and former—to show that uneven military vulnerabilities have motivated differences in the extent to which the two regional powers have accommodated the prescriptions of America's emerging outsourcing strategy.

China's Rise and America's Emerging Grand Strategy of Outsourcing

As Nina Silove has documented in detail, the gradual strategic reorientation that Washington has pursued in response to China's military and economic rise since the early 2000s comprises an "internal balancing" component mainly involving the reinforcement of naval and air capabilities in the Asia Pacific and an "external balancing" component involving efforts to enhance the military capabilities of U.S. allies and partners.⁵⁶ Taken together, such moves are indicative of an emerging U.S. grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia. Indeed, over the years, increasing numbers of American policymakers have articulated a preference for a strategy that devolves military responsibilities to regional allies as much as possible while limiting security burdens and risks for the United States. As a case in point, at the 2012 Shangri-La Dialogue, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta not only announced that the United States would be "rebalancing" toward Asia but also emphasized "the reality of budget constraints" and laid out a plan for regional force reallocations centered on naval and air capabilities. As for ground forces, Panetta stated that U.S. strategy would aim "not at establishing new permanent bases, but rather at building stronger allies and partners

⁵⁶ See Silove, "Pivot before the Pivot," esp. 66-79.

through a greater rotational presence.”⁵⁷ In practice, this meant that the United States would gradually reduce the overall number of troops stationed in South Korean and Japanese territories with the assumption that these allies will expand their own capabilities accordingly.⁵⁸ The implication has not been lost among regional security officials. Admiral (Ret.) Yoon-hee Choi, South Korea’s former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, observes that the United States increasingly feels “overburdened” by the task of counteracting Chinese power in the Asia Pacific and hopes that its regional allies will take on most of the “de facto responsibilities.” In his view, it is already “difficult to expect the United States to commit large-scale ground troops in the event of a conflict on the Korean peninsula.”⁵⁹ Lieutenant General (Ret.) Wonsik Shin, former Chief Director of Joint Operations (J3) at the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, likewise argues that U.S. leaders will face growing temptations to dispense with “on-shore forces” in East Asia and offload its traditional military burdens to regional allies.⁶⁰

As its grand strategy veers toward outsourcing, Washington has made increasing demands on the kinds and amounts of military capabilities adopted by its East Asian allies. The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy stresses that allies must “modernize, acquire necessary capabilities, improve readiness, expand the size of their forces, and affirm the political will to win.”⁶¹ More specifically, successive administrations have envisioned an East Asian security architecture

⁵⁷ Leon E. Panetta, “America’s Pacific Rebalance,” Project Syndicate, December 31, 2012, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/renewing-the-us-commitment-to-the-asia-pacific-region-by-leon-e-panetta?barrier=accesspay>.

⁵⁸ See “Statement of Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, USN, Commander, United States Pacific Command,” in *The Global Posture Review of the United States Military Forces Stationed Overseas: Hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 108th Cong., 2nd Sess., September 23, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005), 26-28.

⁵⁹ Interview with Admiral (Ret.) Yoon-hee Choi, former ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 12, 2019.

⁶⁰ Interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) Wonsik Shin, former Director of Joint Operations, ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 24, 2019.

⁶¹ The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” December 2017, available at <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/NSS2017.pdf?ver=CnFwURrw09pJ0q5EogFpwg%3d%3d>, 28.

wherein the U.S. contribution in a regional contingency mainly consists of naval and air support and major combat operations are “outsourced” to regional allies.⁶² Toward this end, they have pushed allies like South Korea and Japan to build the capabilities needed to conduct military operations on a regional (as opposed to strictly local) scale.⁶³ In the same vein, allies have been urged to develop the decision-making capacities and political leeway required to play a leading role in regional military operations. Cases in point are ongoing efforts by the United States to transfer wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea, which has been the official prerogative of the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander since 1950, and to encourage the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to outgrow its historically narrowly-defined area of operations to take on regionwide expeditionary roles.

Uneven Vulnerabilities among U.S. Allies

Japan and South Korea confront the emerging Chinese threat with significantly disparate levels of vulnerability. Figure 6.2 proxies this disparity with distance-adjusted ratios of China’s Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) scores vis-à-vis those of the two U.S. allies. Following this rough measure, South Korea has been roughly two to three times as vulnerable to Chinese military predation than Japan throughout the post-Cold War period.

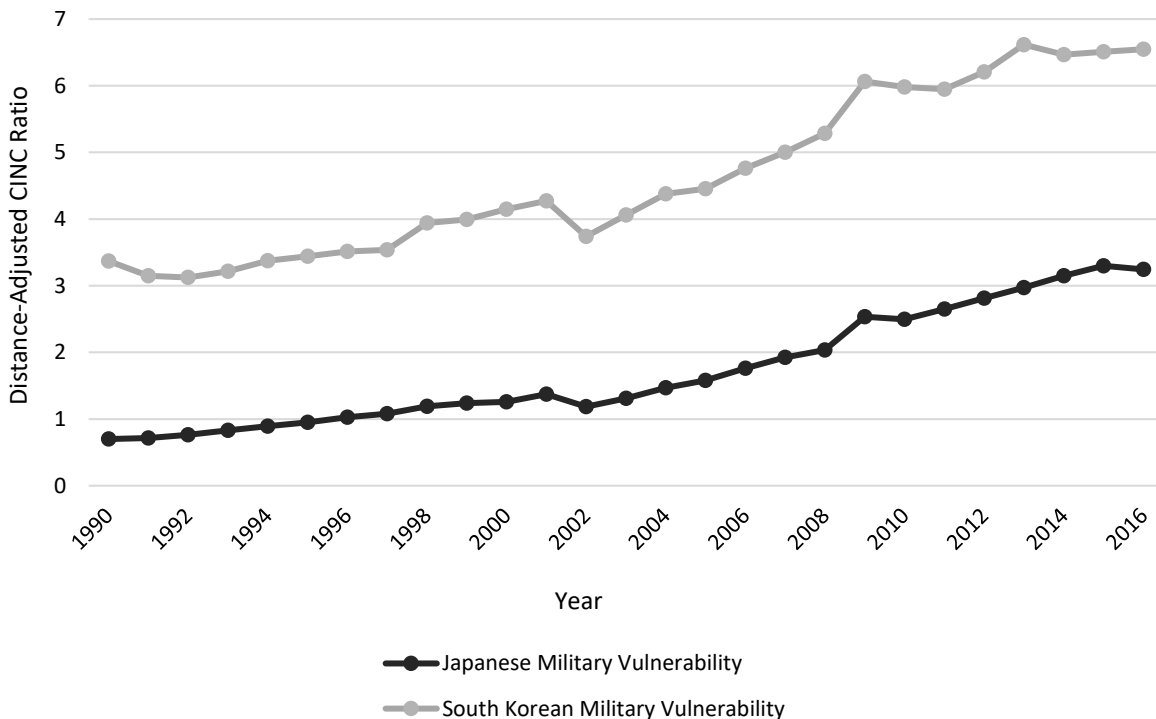
A sense of uneven vulnerabilities is confirmed by qualitative assessments and regional perceptions. Growing concerns in Tokyo notwithstanding, Japan faces China’s rise from a relatively invulnerable vantage point. In the first place, Japan retains one of the world’s largest and most technologically sophisticated economies. Although its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was

⁶² Dong Sun Lee, “America’s International Leadership in Transition: From Global Hegemony towards Offshore Leadership,” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 24, no. 1 (June 2017): 11.

⁶³ See “Statement of Hon. Donald H. Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense,” in *Global Posture Review*, 9-10; and Silove, “Pivot before the Pivot,” 76.

surpassed by that of China in 2010,⁶⁴ the significant material resources at Tokyo’s disposal still empower its leaders to devise military responses to China with relative confidence. Chinese policymakers have long understood “that Japan can easily do much more militarily than it does[,]” Thomas Christensen noted in an early analysis, and “that Japan could easily become a great military power” within the course of a few decades.⁶⁵

Figure 6.2: Japanese and South Korean Military Vulnerability vis-à-vis China, 1990-2016



Source: Ratios are calculated using CINC scores and intercity distance data respectively found in Singer, “Correlates of War Dataset”; and Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*.

Second, Japan’s physical separation from the Asian mainland, coupled with its already formidable

⁶⁴ David Barboza, “China Passes Japan as Second-Largest Economy,” *New York Times*, August 15, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

⁶⁵ Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 55.

naval and air forces, insulates its territory from the brunt of China's rising capabilities. As Christopher Twomey observes, China's military superiority "is only relevant if Chinese ground forces face Japanese ground forces...[but] China can no more invade Japan than it could credibly threaten to do so against Taiwan in April 1996, a much less powerful adversary."⁶⁶ In short, the U.S. security commitment to Japan, while very useful, ultimately serves to bolster what is already an enviably strong position.

A combination of meager material power and exposed geography makes South Korea much more vulnerable to Chinese predation than Japan. For one, South Korea's economy and population are dwarfed by those of China, which translates into a gross mismatch in terms of actual and potential military power. To provide some perspective, even if Seoul were to realize implausible *fourfold* and *threefold* increases in its already substantial defense budget and troop levels, respectively, the ROK Armed Forces would still be outspent and outmanned by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).⁶⁷ To make matters worse, South Korea's continental location gives China a formidable capacity to project its military power towards Seoul. Large numbers of PLA ground forces remain deployed in China's northern and northeastern regions, ready to intervene in the Korean peninsula at the expense of ROK interests should Beijing deem it necessary.⁶⁸ South Korea is also more heavily affected by China's growing Anti-Access, Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities

⁶⁶ Christopher P. Twomey, "Japan, a Circumscribed Balancer: Building on Defensive Realism to make Predictions about East Asian Security," *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 190. Due to a misguided focus on defense spending as a percentage of GDP, analysts have traditionally understated Japan's military might. In fact, as Jennifer Lind shows, a comprehensive assessment of Japan's capabilities, particularly those deployed on air and sea, reveals it to be one of the world's leading military powers. Jennifer M. Lind, "Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 92-121.

⁶⁷ These calculations are derived from 2021 figures found in International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2022* (London: Routledge, 2022), 255; 283. Actual disparities are likely even higher, since it is widely believed that Beijing's official defense statistics vastly understate its true investments. See Adam P. Liff and Andrew S. Erikson, "Demystifying China's Defense Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate," *The China Quarterly* 216 (December 2013): 805-830.

⁶⁸ Taeho Kim, "Korean Perspectives on PLA Modernization and the Future East Asian Security Environment," in *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development*, eds. Jonathan D. Pollack and Richard H. Yang (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1998), 55.

than Japan.⁶⁹ As early as 2006, Robert Ross observed that South Korea's vulnerability has deepened to the point where Beijing could plausibly "challenge U.S. ability to protect Seoul from the costs of war."⁷⁰

Japan Accommodates, South Korea Hesitates

Consistent with the predictions of demand-side theory, Japan has behaved more and more like a major military power in recent years in accordance with Washington's emerging grand strategy of outsourcing. First, it has implemented wide-ranging internal measures to enhance the capabilities of the SDF. In its 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines, Tokyo's Ministry of Defense (formerly the Defense Agency) officially abandoned the concept of the Basic Defense Force (BDF), which had aimed at "ensuring deterrence through the existence of defense forces per se," and replaced it with the concept of the Dynamic Defense Force (DDF). As one analyst summarizes, the overarching goal of this new concept is to "[shift] Japan's military weight toward the southwestern maritime region [near China] in an obvious attempt to counterbalance Chinese military power in that area."⁷¹ Japan has substantially upgraded its air, naval, and amphibious capabilities in line with this new military priority. Its 2022 defense budget plan, for example, comprises a "Defense-Strengthening Acceleration Package" that provides for multi-dimensional

⁶⁹ Over the coming years, South Korea is likely to find itself in a "contested battlespace covering much of the South and East China Seas" where neither China nor its rivals possess full naval or air maneuverability. See Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 12.

⁷⁰ Robert S. Ross, "Balance of Power Politics and the Rise of China: Accommodation and Balancing in East Asia," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 371.

⁷¹ Bjørn Elias Mikalsen Grønning, "Japan's Shifting Military Priorities: Counterbalancing China's Rise," *Asian Security* 10, no. 1 (2014): 4. Since 2010, Japan's official defense policy documents have emphasized the need for a "defense posture buildup" in the southwestern regions. See, for example, Ministry of Defense (Japan), "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2011 and Beyond" (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2010); and "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and Beyond" (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2013), both available at https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/d_policy/national.html.

force enhancements—including the procurement of F-35 fighter aircraft and advanced troop transport vessels, as well as the development of a “hyper velocity gliding projectile”—collectively meant to ensure an effective “stand-off defense capability” against attacks on “remote islands.”⁷² Moreover, the plan allocates separate expenses for Japan’s new “rapid deployment division/brigade” and “amphibious rapid deployment brigade,” that is, joint assault forces that Japan has fielded since 2018 to counteract threats in the East Sea.⁷³ Tellingly, beginning in the mid-2000s, when Foreign Minister Taro Aso publicly referred to China’s military spending increases as a “considerable threat,” the Japanese government has been unafraid to specify China as the reason behind its accelerating military efforts.⁷⁴

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Japan’s recent militarization, however, is Tokyo’s efforts to cultivate domestic political and legal arrangements conducive to the assertive employment of military force. As U.S. analysts have noted, Japanese leaders have “shown a willingness to push for changes to Japan’s security posture—at times with significant political risk—that U.S. officials have encouraged privately for decades[,]” with the result that they have taken remarkable strides toward acquiring “the political space to advance...[the] long-standing agenda of increasing the flexibility and capabilities of” the SDF.⁷⁵ In April 2015, Japan and the United States agreed to revise their Guidelines for Defense Cooperation for the first time since 1997, outlining a range of initiatives that allow Japan to commit its military forces to “U.S. military

⁷² Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense Programs and Budget of Japan (Defense-Strengthening Acceleration Package): Overview of FY2022 Budget (Including FY2021 Supplementary Budget)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2021), 16, available at https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/d_budget/.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19. See also “Japan’s New Marine Unit in East China Sea Upsets Beijing,” *Asia Times*, April 9, 2018, <https://asiatimes.com/2018/04/japans-new-marine-unit-east-china-sea-upsets-beijing/>.

⁷⁴ See the public statements cited in Evan S. Medeiros et al., *Pacific Currents: The Responses of US Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China’s Rise* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2008), 50.

⁷⁵ Emma Chanlett-Avery, Caitlin Campbell, and Joshua A. Williams, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance*, Updated June 13, 2019 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 7.

priorities” beyond a narrowly-defined defense of its home islands.⁷⁶ The following September, a landmark security legislation package was approved by the Japanese Diet, lifting Japan’s previous self-imposed ban on “collective self-defense.”⁷⁷ Coupled with Japan’s acquisition of new offensive military capabilities,⁷⁸ such defense reforms point to an emerging shift in “[t]he traditional division of labor” in the U.S.-Japan alliance, which assumed the United States would wield the “spear” (i.e., offensive operations) while Japan concentrates on the “shield” (defensive operations restricted to the home islands).⁷⁹ Japan’s 2021 Defense White Paper accordingly lays out a range of major military tasks—including “operations to defend airspace”; “operations to defend maritime areas”; and “operations to counter ground attacks”—where the SDF would exercise “primary responsibility” and the job of the U.S. Armed Forces would be to “[c]onduct operations to support and supplement SDF operations.”⁸⁰ In such ways, at Washington’s behest Japan has gradually adopted a more muscular military role in East Asia despite the consternation this has provoked among both domestic audiences and neighboring states, not least of which is China itself.

Again consistent with my theory, the relatively vulnerable South Korea’s military policy response to China’s rise has been “surprisingly quiet” and “surprisingly inactive,” as described by its former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Sung-han Kim during an interview with the author.⁸¹ While it is widely understood that South Korean military planners pay close attention to the possibility of “third-party” (i.e., Chinese) intervention in major security crises on the Korean

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Offensive capabilities are often euphemistically referred to as “counterstrike” capabilities by Japanese policymakers. See *ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense of Japan 2021* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2021), 305-306.

⁸¹ Interview with Sung-han Kim, former ROK Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, July 23, 2019. Sung-han Kim subsequently became the Chief of the Presidential Office of National Security (U.S. National Security Advisor equivalent) in the Yoon Seok-young administration.

peninsula, particularly those involving North Korea,⁸² the ROK armed forces' concrete capability-building efforts remain overwhelmingly focused on maintaining readiness against the North Korean threat and coping with the constraints imposed by recent domestic political trends, such as reduced birth rates and increased welfare demands.⁸³ Moreover, unlike in Japan, it is almost impossible to find explicit descriptions of China as a pressing security concern or threat in official ROK policy statements, although ambiguous references to “newly emerging major powers,” “accelerating arms races,” “ongoing international structural changes,” and “deepening strategic competition between the U.S. and China” abound.⁸⁴

In stark contrast to a Japan that has been moving toward what Audrye Wong calls “a new militarized normal,”⁸⁵ then, South Korea's enthusiasm for cooperation with Washington's East Asia strategy has been significantly curtailed when it comes to military initiatives that are ill-received in Beijing due to their provocative or threatening nature. The fear of rousing Chinese sensitivities was evident throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s when the ROK government

⁸² On the challenges that Chinese intervention could pose to South Korean national interests in the event of a major contingency on the peninsula, see Paul B. Stares and Joel S. Wit, *Preparing for Sudden Change in North Korea*, Council Special Report, no. 42 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2009), 16-21; and Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, “The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements,” *International Security* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 97-100.

⁸³ See, for example, Ministry of National Defense (ROK), *Gukbang Gaehyuk Gibon Gyehwek 2.0* [Base plan for defense reform 2.0] (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2018), available at https://reform.mnd.go.kr/mbs/home/mbs/reform/subview.jsp?id=reform_010100000000. One important study argues that some of the advanced conventional capabilities recently being developed by South Korea—such as its indigenous missile defense system and the offensive assets included in its so-called “Kill Chain” and “Korean Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR)” strategy—“likely are intended to deter other regional actors, most notably China.” That said, the authors of this study acknowledge that Seoul's primary target remains North Korea, and that the new capabilities may at best “deter Beijing from escalating a low-stakes conflict or crisis for fear of incurring costs disproportionate to possible gains.” Ian Bowers and Henrik Stålhane Hiim, “Conventional Counterforce Dilemmas: South Korea's Defense Strategy and Stability on the Korean Peninsula,” *International Security* 45, no. 3 (Winter 2020/2021): 119. Importantly, none of the senior policymakers I spoke to saw South Korea's advanced conventional capabilities as part of an anti-China military posture.

⁸⁴ See South Korea's biannual defense white papers, available at https://www.mnd.go.kr/cop/pblicitn/selectPublicationsUser.do?siteId=mnd&componentId=14&categoryId=15&pageIndex=1&id=mnd_040501000000&searchWrd=.

⁸⁵ Audrye Y. Wong, “Comparing Japanese and South Korean Strategies toward China and the United States: All Politics is Local,” *Asian Survey* 55, no. 6 (November/December 2015): 1258.

declined to take part in the U.S.-led Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system. Although TMD may have offered at least an imperfect shield against North Korean ballistic missiles, the attraction of this benefit was outweighed in the minds of ROK policymakers by the risks of triggering friction with China. This was especially so since Beijing had stated its unambiguous opposition to the system, reflecting persistent fears of being encircled by a regional missile defense network that could undermine its deterrent capabilities.⁸⁶ South Korea's approach contrasted markedly to that of Japan, which intensified its missile defense cooperation with the United States as Chinese assertiveness became more pronounced.⁸⁷

Seoul's reluctance again came to the fore after June 2014, when USFK Commander General Curtis M. Scaparrotti publicly called for the deployment of a U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile battery to South Korea. While the weapons system was nominally intended to defend ROK territory against North Korean missiles, Seoul vacillated for nearly two years in the face of Chinese hostility toward the deployment, only agreeing to initiate official discussions after North Korea's fourth nuclear test in March 2016.⁸⁸ And when Seoul finally approved the deployment in July, China lashed out against South Korea with economic sanctions and cyberattacks. As in the case of TMD, Beijing viewed the THAAD deployment as part of a broader attempt by the United States and its allies to weaken its deterrent capabilities. Wang Qun, Director General of Arms Control in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thus insinuated that China's response might not be limited to non-military countermeasures,

⁸⁶ Tae-hyung Kim, "South Korea's Missile Defense Policy: Dilemma and Opportunity for a Medium State," *Asian Politics and Policy* 1, no. 3 (September 2009): 383.

⁸⁷ Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 90-91.

⁸⁸ See Ju-min Park, "U.S. Troop Leader in South Korea wants Deployment of New Missile Defense against the North," *Reuters*, June 2, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-southkorea-missile/u-s-troop-leader-in-south-korea-wants-deployment-of-new-missile-defense-against-north-idUSKBN0EE09120140603>; and ; and Yong-in Lee, "S. Korea and the US Agree in Principle to Deploy THAAD System," *Hankyoreh*, March 24, 2016, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/736668.html.

arguing that a “regional arms race” and the “escalat[ion] of military confrontation” might be forthcoming.⁸⁹ Indeed, shortly following the completion of the deployment, South Korean media reported that China had fielded new intermediate-range ballistic missiles targeting the THAAD installation in Korea.⁹⁰ A crisis atmosphere persisted until South Korea’s Foreign Minister reaffirmed Seoul’s adherence to the so-called “Three No’s” policy in late 2017: (1) No additional THAAD deployments, (2) No participation in the U.S.-led missile defense system, and (3) No participation in a formal U.S.-South Korea-Japan trilateral military alliance.⁹¹

Aside from its lukewarm approach to capability-building measures that could potentially arouse Chinese ire, Seoul has also dragged its foot on ROK-U.S. initiatives designed to grant South Korea a leading role in its own defense. A case in point here is its attitude toward the wartime OPCON transition plan. The ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) has been the alliance’s main warfighting headquarters since 1978. Much like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the CFC is an integrated command system headed by an American general who would exercise operational control over both U.S. and South Korean military forces in the event the alliance becomes involved in a war. In 2003, the South Korean government requested the “return” of wartime operational control, essentially calling for the dissolution of the CFC and the adoption

⁸⁹ October 10, 2016, quoted in Ethan Meick and Nargiza Salidjanova, “China’s Response to U.S.-South Korean Missile Defense System Deployment and Its Implications,” U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 26, 2017, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report_China%27s%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf.

⁹⁰ Juho Jung, “Joonguk, seongju thaad gijido tagyeok ganeung ‘dongfeng-26’ baechi hwakin [China confirms deployment of the ‘Dongfeng-26,’ capable of striking the Seongju THAAD Base],” *Yeonhap News*, April 27, 2018, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180427057700089>.

⁹¹ Ji-young Lee, “The Geopolitics of South Korea-China Relations: Implications for U.S. Policy in the Indo-Pacific,” RAND Corporation, November 2020, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PEA500/PEA524-1/RAND_PEA524-1.pdf, 11. Knowledgeable individuals attested during my interviews that the THAAD installation in South Korea has not been operating at full capacity since the crisis, reflecting Seoul’s desire to avoid reigniting China’s anger. Interview with Tae-hyo Kim, former Director General, Presidential Office of National Security, August 15, 2019; and interview with former senior ROK defense ministry official, August 13, 2019.

of “self-reliant national defense (*jajugukbang*)” on the part of South Korea.⁹² The request—motivated by the progressive Roh Moo-hyun government’s nationalist fervor—was welcomed by U.S. leaders, who expected the initiative to bolster South Korea’s autonomy in military affairs and help reduce Washington’s defense burdens abroad.⁹³ But although successive South Korean governments have expressed commitment to executing “wartime OPCON transition” in principle, they have also made strenuous efforts to postpone its timing. The latest bilateral agreement states that the transition would take place at an unspecified, “appropriate date,” pending the acquisition of “critical ROK and Alliance military capabilities” and a “security environment on the Korean Peninsula and in the region...conducive to a stable OPCON transition.”⁹⁴ As a result of “excuses” on the part of South Korean policymakers, knowledgeable analysts have observed that “a mutually agreed upon OPCON transfer date will seemingly be forever mired in political and military quagmire.”⁹⁵ Much to the frustration of U.S. officials, then, South Korea has strived to retain the decision-making arrangements that accord the United States a heavy-lifting military role in the alliance.⁹⁶

South Korea’s policymaking elite attribute Seoul’s reluctance to meet Washington’s strategic demands to a deep sense of vulnerability. Tae-hyo Kim, who served as Director General of the Presidential Office of National Security under the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-

⁹² On the background to this initiative, See Dong Sun Lee, “Democratization and the U.S.-South Korean Alliance,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7, no. 3 (September-December 2007): 469-499.

⁹³ Accordingly, the originally agreed-upon date of the transition—April 2012—was considerably later than the period that the George W. Bush administration had initially preferred. During the early phases of bilateral consultations, both the White House and the Pentagon are said to have wanted the handover of wartime OPCON to take place no later than 2009. See Jae-chul Kim, “Junshi-jakjeon tongjaegwon junhwan jungchekui byungyungyo-in bunsukgwa daeahn: hanmi-ui guikga ee-ikul joongshimuro” [Analysis of changes in the wartime OPCON transition policy and its alternatives: A study of ROK and U.S. national interests], *Dongbukah nonchong* 69 (2013): 183-204.

⁹⁴ See Department of Defense (U.S.), “Joint Communiqué: The 46th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting,” October 23, 2014, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/46th_SCM_Joint_Communique.pdf.

⁹⁵ Christopher Lee, “Time for U.S. Forces to Leave South Korea,” *War on the Rocks*, July 24, 2014, <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>.

⁹⁶ Note the similarities with French and West German efforts in the early 1950s to institutionalize a central American military role within NATO (see ch. 3).

2013), puts the matter clearly: “South Korea has never pursued an explicit strategy or national defense preparations with an eye towards countering China’s rise. To the best of my knowledge, not once has there been an attempt to, say, evaluate weapons systems acquisitions or major revisions to security policy guidelines with China as the presumed adversary.”⁹⁷ However, this does not mean that Seoul’s decision-makers are unconcerned about China as a security threat, as some U.S. scholars have suggested.⁹⁸ The officials I spoke with were uniformly adamant that the opposite is the case. The former Director General’s assessment was that “South Korea finds itself almost directly bordering China with very few national capabilities [when compared to countries like Japan or the United States]... Thus it has tended to accept China’s military economic rise as an inevitable *fait accompli*.”⁹⁹ Similarly, when asked whether a lack of fear underlies South Korea’s “surprisingly inactive” security policy response to China’s rise, former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Sung-han Kim maintained that “quite to the contrary, the correct view would be that fear prevails. ‘China-phobia’ prevails... As time goes by, [policymakers] are coming to believe that China is an adversary that we [South Korea] cannot stand up to directly.”¹⁰⁰

Experiences like the THAAD crisis seem to have convinced South Korean officials that Seoul would not be decisively revamping its military posture vis-à-vis China anytime soon. “The THAAD deployment merely concerned an individual weapons system, but China opposed it aggressively and our politics were thrown into chaos because of that[,]” former Vice Minister Kim observed, adding that “If we pursue force enhancements of a greater magnitude [e.g., nuclear

⁹⁷ Interview with Tae-hyo Kim, August 15, 2019. Tae-hyo Kim subsequently became the First Deputy Chief of the Presidential Office of National Security (Deputy National Security Advisor equivalent) in the Yoon Seok-youll administration.

⁹⁸ See, in particular, David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. ch. 5.

⁹⁹ Interview with Tae-hyo Kim, August 15, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Sung-han Kim, July 23, 2019.

development, ROK-U.S. nuclear sharing], it would probably be difficult for us to withstand China's blatant attempts at coercion... In the worst case, it might lead to a serious situation in which we simultaneously lose American support *and* find ourselves on the receiving end of China's wrath."¹⁰¹ A former senior defense ministry official was similarly skeptical that South Korea would ever be able to bolster its military capabilities through decisive measures like nuclear sharing with the United States, citing the probability of "extreme Chinese opposition."¹⁰²

In sum, uneven perceptions of vulnerability vis-à-vis China have led to significant differences in the extent to which Japan and South Korea have accommodated their leading power ally's emerging grand strategy of outsourcing in their military postures. It is useful to speculate as to how these patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence might shift if the United States reverts to its traditional grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia. Should Washington circle back to a grand strategy designed to circumscribe and control allied military capabilities, my theory predicts that opposite patterns will arise over time. As the threat posed by China continues to grow, the relatively invulnerable Japan will find it difficult to swallow the intrusive prescriptions of the insourcing strategy. Given the recognition in Tokyo that the United States may not always be willing or able to satisfy its core security needs and the corresponding sense that Japan must "rediscover the ability to make its own decisions" in the security realm,¹⁰³ U.S. efforts to implement a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia is likely to be a recipe for strategic incoherence in the U.S.-Japan alliance. South Korea, on the other hand, would find that the prescriptions of a U.S. insourcing strategy largely align with the kinds of military capabilities it

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Interview with former senior ROK defense ministry official, August 13, 2019.

¹⁰³ Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century, *The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium* (Tokyo: Office of the Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century, 2000), 5.

would have settled on anyway. The bottom line is that the United States will have to grapple with difficult grand strategic trade-offs in 21st century East Asia; strategic coherence will not be achieved naturally or painlessly.

Strategic Incoherence in the China-North Korea Alliance in the 21st Century

This final case study examines the grand strategy of East Asia's new great power, China, and the sources of strategic incoherence in its alliance relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea). China has consistently pursued a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia as it rose to great-power status in the aftermath of the Cold War. As expected by my theory, North Korea's relative invulnerability to U.S. military predation meant that Pyongyang has had little incentive to tailor its military capabilities—and particularly its emerging nuclear capabilities—to the demands of China's insourcing strategy. The result has been strategic incoherence in the China-North Korea alliance: despite its ever-growing regional clout, China has had little success circumscribing the military development efforts of its only formal ally.

China's Grand Strategy of Insourcing in post-Cold War East Asia

China's contemporary grand strategy in East Asia could properly be described as insourcing. Although their approach to dealing with the world at large has evolved significantly over time,¹⁰⁴ leaders in Beijing have consistently sought to exercise as much control as possible over security developments in China's immediate vicinity, known as the "periphery" in Chinese diplomatic parlance.¹⁰⁵ In Robert Sutter's words, Chinese leaders have "recognized the fundamental

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed survey of the evolution of China's grand strategy in the post-Cold War era, see Doshi, *The Long Game*. See also Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy."

¹⁰⁵ On China's "peripheral diplomacy," see *ibid.*, 168-174.

prerequisite of establishing a relatively stable strategic environment...around China's periphery in Asia[,]” given that “[t]he alternative would be a highly disruptive situation requiring much greater Chinese expenditures on national defense and posing greater danger to domestic order and tranquility.”¹⁰⁶ Chinese scholars Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping likewise point out that “with more than fifteen countries bordering China,” Beijing sees a core grand strategic interest in avoiding encirclement by “a counterbalancing alliance of China's neighbors and a distant power (the United States).” To this end, Chinese leaders seek to subject the pace and intensity of regional security competition to political discipline, mitigating the incentives of neighboring countries to adopt “polic[ies] of hard containment” against China.¹⁰⁷

China's commitment to a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia implies that it must assert influence over the military policies of its regional ally, North Korea. Although popular perception sees the two communist states as joined at the hip in terms of their strategic outlook, the reality is that North Korea's continued military development could potentially derail China's efforts to stabilize its East Asian “periphery.” In particular, a North Korea that has become a full-fledged nuclear power would be less susceptible to Chinese influence and much more capable of engaging in independent military behavior that could drag China into costly spirals of hostility involving the United States and its allies.¹⁰⁸ China has thus become “more concerned that nuclear proliferation could constrain its own power” to shape events in East Asia and, accordingly, has

¹⁰⁶ Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 61.

¹⁰⁷ Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, “China's Regional Strategy, in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David L. Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 50. Zhen Han and T.V. Paul similarly argue that China's grand strategy in East Asia is “that of relying on a slow expansion without evoking too hostile a reaction” from neighboring states.” Zhen Han and T.V. Paul, “China's Rise and Balance of Power Politics,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 23.

¹⁰⁸ See Dong Sun Lee, Iordanka Alexandrova, and Yihei Zhao, “The Chinese Failure to Disarm North Korea: Geographical Proximity, U.S. Unipolarity, and Alliance Restraint,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 41, no. 4 (2020): 588-589; and Yoichi Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), ch. 9.

been willing to cooperate with a wide range of U.S. nonproliferation efforts toward North Korea.¹⁰⁹ As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly testified to the House Foreign Relations Committee in June 2004, the North Korean nuclear issue is an area where “China has proven that where its interests coincide with [those of the U.S.], it can be extraordinarily helpful in enhancing regional stability.”¹¹⁰ In short, China’s grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia prescribes that North Korea should limit its ambitions as a regional military power and, in particular, curb its ongoing nuclear development efforts.

North Korea’s Relative Invulnerability

The problem for China is that North Korea is remarkably invulnerable to military punishment by the United States. Crucially, even before the materialization of its nuclear deterrent, North Korea’s conventional military power virtually ensured that decisive military action against the DPRK by the United States or South Korea would result in an exceedingly costly war of attrition. As Dong Sun Lee shows in a dedicated analysis, the obstacle-ridden geography of the northern half of the Korean peninsula and the dense defense-in-depth that Pyongyang has erected along major attack corridors effectively denies the United States and South Korea a military strategy that would bring decisive victory at an acceptable cost. Experts put the estimated costs of major military operations against North Korea at around one million to three million casualties (including 52,000-100,000 U.S. casualties). Compare this, for example, with the U.S.-led war in Iraq, which had already become a political nightmare for the George W. Bush administration by March 2005 when it had claimed around 1,500 American lives.¹¹¹ North Korea’s ability to impose unacceptable costs on

¹⁰⁹ Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 150.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question*, 313.

¹¹¹ Dong Sun Lee, “U.S. Preventive War against North Korea,” *Asian Security* 2, no. 1 (2006): 6-8.

the United States and its allies played a key role in sparing it from U.S. preventive war temptations throughout the 1990s and 2000s as it made its way toward acquiring a nuclear arsenal.¹¹² As former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry wrote in a 1999 review of U.S. policy toward North Korea, policymakers in Pyongyang “know that the prospect of...a destructive war is a powerful deterrent to precipitous U.S. or allied action.”¹¹³

China’s Failure to Constrain North Korea’s Military Growth

Given China’s commitment to a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia and North Korea’s relative military invulnerability, the China-North Korea alliance relationship in the 21st century has been marked by a deepening strategic incoherence. China has consistently worked to curb the growth of North Korea’s independent military capabilities, playing an active role in multilateral diplomatic efforts to contain Pyongyang, attempting to limit the DPRK’s access to critical nuclear technologies by participating in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and joining the United States and its allies in imposing economic sanctions to arrest North Korea’s nuclear development.¹¹⁴ However, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. North Korea has not only acquired an independent nuclear arsenal but also steadily made its way toward a more assertive nuclear posture. Specifically, flouting early speculations that Pyongyang’s goal was to develop a limited nuclear

¹¹² In an important sense, as Alexandre Debs and Nuno Monteiro note, the substantive military implications of North Korea’s nuclear development are “relatively small, given the limited range of policy options available to the United States even vis-à-vis a nonnuclear North Korea.” Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, “Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War,” *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (January 2014): 21. See also Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark, *All Options on the Table: Leaders, Preventive War, and Nuclear Proliferation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2021), ch. 4.

¹¹³ William J. Perry, “Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations,” Office of the North Korea Policy Coordinator, United States Department of State, October 12, 1999, <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/1997%20NKPR.pdf>, 3.

¹¹⁴ Lee, Alexandrova, and Zhao, “Chinese Failure to Disarm North Korea,” 588-589.

posture meant to “catalyze” Chinese intervention on its behalf in the event of conflict,¹¹⁵ North Korea has pursued a diverse and sophisticated range of nuclear forces and delivery systems needed to ensure “assured retaliation” against a U.S. nuclear attack. These include high-yield thermonuclear warheads, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), multiple reentry vehicle technologies designed to overcome U.S. missile defense systems, and an expanding network of transporter erector launchers (TELs) designed to enhance force survivability.¹¹⁶ More recent evidence suggests that Pyongyang may be on the verge of adopting an even more aggressive “asymmetric escalation” posture, that is, one that envisions thwarting a conventional attack by the United States or South Korea with tactical nuclear weapons.¹¹⁷

The growing gap between China’s grand strategic preferences for its ally’s military capabilities and the actual forces and doctrines being acquired by North Korea has been accompanied by emerging signs of political estrangement. China has been increasingly willing to condemn its ally’s unilateral military actions in recent decades, particularly after North Korea’s first successful nuclear test in October 2006.¹¹⁸ North Korea, for its part, has lashed out against China’s efforts to curb its nuclear weapons development, accusing Beijing of “chopping down the pillar of the DPRK-China relations,” “violat[ing] the independent and legitimate rights, dignity and supreme interests” of its ally, and displaying “big-power chauvinism.”¹¹⁹ Pyongyang has also

¹¹⁵ Vipin Narang, “Nuclear Strategies of Emerging Nuclear Powers: North Korea and Iran,” *Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2015): 73-91.

¹¹⁶ See Dong Sun Lee and Iordanka Alexandrova, “North Korean Nuclear Strategy: Envisioning Assured Retaliation,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 21, no. 3 (September 2021): 371-400, esp. 382-385.

¹¹⁷ Ankit Panda, “A Call to Arms: Kim Jong Un and the Tactical Bomb,” *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2021): 7-24.

¹¹⁸ See Jeehye Kim and Jiyoung Ko, “To Condone, Condemn, or ‘No Comment’? Explaining a Patron’s Reaction to a Client’s Unilateral Provocations,” *Journal of Peace Research* 57, no. 3 (2020): 452-465.

¹¹⁹ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), quoted in “North Korean Media Issues Rare Criticism of China over Nuclear Warnings,” *Reuters*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-china/north-korean-media-issues-rare-criticism-of-china-over-nuclear-warnings-idUSKBN17Z1TA>.

rejected the notion that it could substitute its own nuclear deterrent with the security protection afforded by China. For example, pointing to events like the U.S. invasion of Iraq, North Korean state media has argued that countries “which styled themselves big powers” have often “failed to check the serious infringement on independence of a sovereign country and the life and security of the people by imperialist forces[.]”¹²⁰ and that “[t]he DPRK will never beg for the maintenance of friendship with China[.]”¹²¹ As Jae Ho Chung and Myung-hae Choi observe, then, just as China pursued “self-reliant nuclearization” to the dismay of its Soviet ally in the 1960s, North Korea has pressed on with its independent militarization efforts at the cost of alienating Beijing.¹²² In fact, North Korea seems to relish bucking China’s “dominationism[.]”¹²³ with one official expressing a desire to “keep at a distance” neighbors who have “victimized” Korea “from Qing times on.”¹²⁴ As long as it remains committed to a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia, no effort on the part of China is likely to fundamentally reverse this gradual decay in alliance relations.

Summary and Conclusion

Table 6.1 summarizes the findings from the case studies in this chapter. While only examined briefly compared to the Cold War cases, the available evidence is broadly consistent with the predictions of demand-side theory. In the early 20th century, strategic coherence prevailed in the Anglo-Japanese alliance when Great Britain adopted a grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia

¹²⁰ KCNA, quoted in Lee, Alexandrova, and Zhao, “Chinese Failure to Disarm North Korea,” 595.

¹²¹ KCNA, quoted in “North Korean Media.” China and North Korea’s growing willingness to adopt harsh rhetoric toward one another could be indicative of an emergent political antagonism between the two countries. On geopolitical relationships and rhetorical pressure, see Rochelle Terman and Joshua Byun, “Punishment and Politicization in the International Human Rights Regime,” *American Political Science Review* 116, no. 2 (May 2022): 385-402.

¹²² Quoted in Jae Ho Chung and Myung-hae Choi, “Uncertain Allies or Uncomfortable Neighbors? Making Sense of China-North Korea Relations, 1949-2010,” *Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013): 254.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹²⁴ North Korean official, quoted in Robert Carlin and John W. Lewis, *Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007* (Stanford, Calif.: Center for International Security and Cooperation, 2008), 3.

to check Russia’s bid for hegemony. When Britain transitioned to an insourcing grand strategy after Russia’s defeat at the hands of the Japanese, however, strategic incoherence followed. As a great power in its own right, Japan would rather lose the only major ally it had than circumscribe its military capabilities and ambitions.

Table 6.1: Summary of Evidence from Early 20th and 21st Century East Asian Alliances

Alliance Relationship	Period	Leading Power’s Grand Strategy	Ally’s Military Vulnerability	Outcome for Leading Power’s Grand Strategy
Great Britain-Japan	1902-1923	<i>Outsourcing</i> (1902-1907): Britain aims to check Russian expansion by supporting Japan’s military growth	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> Japan considered strong enough to “hold her own in a single-handed encounter with any other Power”	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> Japan thwarts Russian regional expansion with British military support
		<i>Insourcing</i> (1907-1923): Britain seeks to restrict and control Japan’s military capabilities		<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> Japan pursues naval hegemony in East Asia in defiance of British preferences
U.S.-Japan	Early 2000s-Present	<i>Outsourcing:</i> U.S. grand strategy “encourages allies and partners to assume a greater role” in counterbalancing China’s rise	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> Materially competitive and geographically insulated from Chinese power	<i>Strategic coherence:</i> Japan’s SDF gradually assumes “primary responsibility” over major military missions
U.S.-South Korea			<i>High vulnerability:</i> Less materially competitive and geographically exposed to Chinese power	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> South Korea’s military response to China’s rise considered “surprisingly inactive”
China-North Korea	Early 2000s-Present	<i>Insourcing:</i> China tries to assert influence over North Korea’s military policies in order to maintain stable regional security environment	<i>Low vulnerability:</i> North Korea able to impose unacceptable costs in response to U.S. military action	<i>Strategic incoherence:</i> North Korea adopts increasingly assertive military posture in defiance of Chinese preferences

Similar patterns are observed in 21st-century East Asian alliances. As the United States aims to

outsource major military tasks to local allies in the effort to counterbalance China's rise, the relatively invulnerable Japan has proven able and willing to move beyond its traditionally low-profile security posture to take on a more muscular military role in the region. South Korea's military response to China's rise, on the other hand, has been much more muted, reflecting a deep sense of vulnerability felt toward China among its foreign policy decision-makers. Finally, China's pursuit of an insourcing grand strategy in East Asia has been met with defiance on the part of its regional ally, North Korea. Capable of deterring acts of major military aggression by its adversaries, the DPRK has continued to pursue a more robust array of capabilities directed against the United States and South Korea even at the risk of compromising its alliance relationship with China. In conclusion, my theory appears to travel fairly well outside the Cold War context.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The success of grand strategy depends on harmonizing the state's foreign policy vision with available military capabilities. And in modern times, great powers rely on external allies as much as their own military establishments to bring forth the capabilities needed to sustain their grand strategic aims. Perhaps more so than even the most recalcitrant domestic armed forces, however, allied nations do not readily conform their military postures to the demands of the leading power's grand strategy. They sometimes acquire insufficient capabilities when the leading power demands that they maximize their ability to inflict harm on the adversary. At other times, allied capability buildups far exceed the state's strategic preferences, fueling concerns about unintended escalation or conflict with the adversary.

This dissertation set out to elucidate the sources of discord between the grand strategies pursued by leading powers and the military capabilities put forth by their allies—that is, *strategic incoherence* in military alliances. My findings make clear that patterns of strategic incoherence across different alliance relationships cannot be apprehended by solely looking at the leading power's behavior toward its allies, as many existing works tend to do. Rather, specifying the type of grand strategy adopted by the leading power and how its military prescriptions interact with the security environment of individual allies is of utmost analytical importance. If the leading power adopts an *outsourcing* grand strategy that aims to devolve advanced military assets and responsibilities to the allies, strategic coherence will obtain with relatively invulnerable allies who

have incentive to compete vigorously against the threatening power. However, strategic incoherence will follow in relations with relatively vulnerable allies whose militarization efforts tend are likely to stoke the adversary's incentives to engage in an overwhelmingly costly arms race or preventive aggression. By contrast, if the leading power adopts an *insourcing* grand strategy that aims to arrogate the alliance's core military capabilities, the opposite patterns will prevail: the vulnerable allies will accommodate the insourcing strategy's restrictive prescriptions for their military posture, while relatively invulnerable allies will defy the same prescriptions and continue to help themselves to the strongest possible capabilities.

This final chapter proceeds as follows. First, I review the evidence I have presented to support these arguments. Then, in the following two sections, I elaborate the implications of my findings for the broader scholarship on grand strategy and alliance politics and highlight several directions for future research. I conclude by discussing takeaways for U.S. grand strategy suggested by my study.

Summary of Findings

I relied on detailed historical case studies to test my theory against its major alternatives. As described in chapter 2, the main cases were selected with an eye toward securing representative variation in the dependent variable, both across different states and different periods. I also sought out cases that feature a rich array of historical data from primary and secondary sources in order to maximize the inferential leverage of process-tracing, cases that promise tough tests for my theory due to an abundance of countervailing conditions identified by alternative theories, and cases that are of special normative interest due to their outsized impact on historical or current international affairs. Given these criteria, the bulk of my empirical efforts were focused on

assessing the sources of strategic incoherence in U.S. and Soviet alliances during the Cold War. In addition to featuring remarkable within- and across-case variation, these alliances are rich in historical data and played key roles in shaping the international strategic environment of their time, with their political impact arguably reverberating to the contemporary era. Moreover, the chief rival framework—the collective goods theory of alliance politics—often makes clear predictions about strategic coherence in these cases that cut against those of my demand-side theory.

While the detailed evidence I gathered from these cases tended to flout collective goods theory and other alternative explanations, it generally supported the mechanisms and predictions posited by demand-side theory. In chapter 3, I showed that the United States tried to implement a grand strategy of outsourcing in Western Europe during the first five years of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s existence (1949-1954), aiming to build up the conventional armies of France and West Germany as a counterweight to Soviet power. The ultimate intent was to make the allies independently powerful enough to enable the extrication of American forces from continental Europe. The extent to which the allies met the requirements of this grand strategy hinged on their level of military vulnerability. Relatively invulnerable to Soviet military predation by virtue of its geographic position behind the German buffer, France aggressively expanded its military forces with Washington's sponsorship. But recognizing that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)'s efforts to do the same might invite a disastrous Soviet preventive attack, Paris and Bonn colluded to derail American plans to quickly reconstitute West Germany's military capabilities within the framework of an integrated European army. The first phase of U.S. outsourcing in Western Europe thus ended with the United States grudgingly taking on "a greater position of responsibility" in European security than its leaders had ever hoped for.¹

¹ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 424th Meeting of the National Security Council," November 12, 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1958-1960*, vol. 7, pt. 1, 509.

Chapter 4 explored the next phase of the U.S. outsourcing strategy in Cold War Europe (1955-1960) as well as the results of the subsequent insourcing strategy (1961-1966). With its plan to build up a European army centered on West German military power in tatters, the United States attempted to realize its outsourcing vision by equipping its allies with nuclear weapons under their own control. As expected by my theory, the relatively invulnerable France fully accommodated the prescriptions of this grand strategy in its military posture, equipping its frontline forces with U.S.-made nuclear assets and testing an independent nuclear bomb by 1960. However, West Germany's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons under Washington's "nuclear sharing" policies was thwarted by Soviet preventive threats. In essence, the Soviet-launched Second Berlin Crisis (1958-1962) presented West German leaders and their American sponsors with the choice of continuing down the path of promoting the Bundeswehr's nuclear armament at the risk of catastrophic escalation in Berlin or holding off on such efforts to reach an understanding with the Soviets. West Germany's vulnerability left them with no choice but to accept the latter. Beginning in 1961, however, when the United States transitioned to an insourcing grand strategy in Europe, the opposite patterns of strategic coherence prevailed. France adopted an independent and assertive nuclear posture in defiance of U.S. efforts to monopolize NATO's nuclear capabilities. In this case, the political friction caused by strategic incoherence became so severe that France withdrew its forces from NATO's integrated military command. By contrast, West Germany settled on a low-profile military posture in line with the demands of the U.S. insourcing strategy.

In chapter 5, I used my theory to explain divergent patterns of strategic incoherence in the Soviet Union's alliances with China and Cuba. Moscow pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing in East Asia at the outset of the Sino-Soviet alliance (1947-1956), aiming to facilitate China's growth as an independent military power with an eye toward counteracting U.S. power in East

Asia without the Soviet Union's direct involvement. Relatively invulnerable to major military countermeasures by the United States, China leaned into the assertive military role envisioned for it by Soviet grand strategy and, more broadly, was "definitively absorbed into the Soviet global design" during the early years of the alliance.² However, when the Soviet Union transitioned its grand strategy in East Asia to insourcing from 1957 onwards, strategic incoherence arose due to China's same military invulnerability. Committed to contesting U.S. power on its own terms, China had no reason to subordinate its military posture to Moscow's newly intrusive demands. The growth of its military capabilities continued apace in defiance of the Soviet Union's new grand strategic priorities. In this case, strategic incoherence became one of the factors that contributed to the dramatic "Sino-Soviet split" of the mid-1960s. The opposite patterns are observed in Soviet relations with Cuba. The Soviet Union pursued a grand strategy of outsourcing toward the Caribbean from 1959 to late 1962, implementing a "crash program" to decisively boost Cuba's military capabilities vis-à-vis the United States.³ The strategy failed to adequately strengthen Cuba, however, because the island was too vulnerable to an overwhelming preventive strike by the U.S. adversary. But when the Soviets began to pursue a grand strategy of insourcing in late 1962, placing a premium on controlling and limiting the level of confrontation with the United States, strategic coherence ensued: Cuba accepted the minimalist military posture demanded by the Soviet insourcing strategy.

Finally, chapter 6 briefly examined a number of important cases from East Asia in the early 20th and 21st centuries to show that my theory can offer plausible explanations for patterns of strategic incoherence outside the Cold War context. Britain's effort to check the threat of Russian

² Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 73.

³ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 206.

hegemony in East Asia on the cheap by facilitating Japan's military expansion was met with strategic coherence. Already capable of "hold[ing] her own in a single-handed encounter with any other Power" by the time the alliance was formed in 1902,⁴ Japan enthusiastically provided the military means to check Russian encroachments in East Asia, thereby enabling Britain to achieve its strategic goal of redeploying its naval capabilities from the region. However, when Britain's strategic priorities shifted to militarily restraining Japan, strategic incoherence ensued. Japan continued to pursue naval hegemony in East Asia at the expense of British interests, and the alliance gradually frayed before finally being terminated in 1923. Turning to the 21st century, the United States has been gradually shifting to a grand strategic orientation of outsourcing in East Asia since the early 2000s to meet the security challenge posed by China's rise. Japan, relatively invulnerable to Chinese predation by virtue of its substantial material power and insular geography, has responded by steadily revamping its capabilities to take on "primary responsibility" for a wide range of regional military tasks.⁵ South Korea's military buildup has been much more muted in comparison, reflecting a deep sense of vulnerability among its policymakers vis-à-vis China. Finally, China's efforts to practice a grand strategy of insourcing in East Asia have been complicated by North Korea's continued moves toward a more assertive military posture. North Korea's invulnerability to decisive military countermeasures by the United States or South Korea ensures that it can defy China's strategic demands with relative impunity.

Simply put, my empirical investigation yields ample support for the demand-side theory of strategic incoherence. Across a wide range of important alliance relationships in the modern era, strategic coherence was a function of the interaction between what the leading great power's grand

⁴ British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Lansdowne, quoted in Chung-Fu Chang, "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1929), 105

⁵ See Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense of Japan 2021* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2021), 305-306.

strategy demanded militarily from its allies and how these interacted with the incentives presented by their local security environment. The dominant, “collective goods theory” of alliance security fares much more poorly in comparison. Across the cases, no straightforward correlation is observed between the degree of security commitments that leading powers like the United States and the Soviet Union offer to their allies and the extent to which the allies are willing to fit their military postures to the leading power’s strategic goals. Nor are allies uniformly more likely to cater to the leading power’s strategic demands when they occupy more dire threat environments. Instead, allies that face relatively permissive environments in terms of their military vulnerability might prove more amenable to the leading power’s strategic prescriptions, just as allies that face extremely constraining security environments might fail to do so precisely because of the prohibitive costs implied by their vulnerability. Case-specific explanations that highlight factors such as domestic political coalitions, intra-regional alliance dynamics, or ideology sometimes prove more illuminating and usefully supplement the narrative provided by demand-side theory. However, like collective goods theory, they fall short of providing a general model of strategic incoherence.

Contributions to Scholarship on Grand Strategy and Alliance Politics

This dissertation makes three important contributions to the International Relations (IR) scholarship on grand strategy and alliance politics. First, I have introduced a theory and conceptual language that explicitly integrates the study of grand strategy with the alliance-politics context it is implemented in. As Nina Silove observes, grand strategy has generated considerable “buzz” among security scholars in the post-Cold War era, with it now being “unusual for a security studies

program not to have at least one course with grand strategy in its title.”⁶ The alliance politics literature also enjoys a distinguished position in IR, reflecting the long-held recognition that “alliances are *the* central feature of international political life.”⁷ By and large, however, scholars have not attempted to weave insights from these important strands of research into a coherent theoretical framework. The result is that our understanding of how grand strategy “works” in the context of military alliances has been limited. The literature on U.S. grand strategy, in particular, tends to treat allies as passive recipients of the strategic incentives supplied by the leading great power. On the one hand, advocates of a more restrained grand strategy assume that U.S. allies will begin pulling their proper military weight once Washington stops coddling them with its security guarantees.⁸ Advocates of a more “deeply engaged” grand strategy, on the other hand, seem to believe that most small allies readily submit to leading-power efforts to manage regional security dynamics and control allied behaviors.⁹

My new theory suggests that both perspectives oversimplify. It is impossible to know whether leading powers like the United States will end up with a coherent or incoherent grand strategy in any given alliance relationship without appreciating the kinds of incentives the allies are facing based on their local security situation. In general, the role that allies play in advancing or compromising the grand strategies of great powers must be investigated much more explicitly than is the norm in the current literature. My project has taken a step in this direction.

⁶ Nina Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of ‘Grand Strategy,’” *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 27.

⁷ Julian R. Friedman, quoted in Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 1, fn. 1 (emphasis added).

⁸ For example, see Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014); Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security* 21 no. 4 (Spring 1997): 5-48; and Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁹ The key statement of this position is Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States’ Global Role in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Second, my theory clarifies the conditions under which alliances serve as effective force-multipliers or “capability aggregators” for great powers. As Nora Bensahel notes, much of the traditional alliance literature “simply assumes that alliance members can transform a verbal or written alliance agreement into a militarily effective fighting force.”¹⁰ Intuitively, this assumption seems especially unproblematic for alliances between great powers and secondary states. As long as the leading power properly disciplines its smaller allies with the specter of abandonment, the reasoning goes, they will scramble to heed its directives for their military capabilities due to the lopsided structure of dependency that prevails in such relationships.¹¹ Waltz’s view was that “[i]n alliances among unequals, alliance leaders worry little about the faithfulness of their followers, who usually have little choice anyway...The ability of the United States, and the inability of Germany, to pay a price measured in intra-alliance terms is striking.”¹²

In fact, however, leading powers have historically worried a great deal about whether their weaker allies will faithfully reflect their strategic interests in their military posture. They are right to do so, since the likelihood that a given ally will accommodate the military prescriptions of a leading power’s grand strategy is largely determined by its level of vulnerability vis-à-vis the adversary, which is inherently resistant to change (see chapter 2). Therefore, leading powers must often resign themselves to the fact that at least some of their allies will adopt military postures that are suboptimal for the implementation of their grand strategy. Alternatively, they could abandon their preferred grand strategy in favor of one that is more conducive to the ally’s military incentives. The bottom line is that strategic coherence—a prerequisite for successful “capability

¹⁰ Nora Bensahel, “International Alliances and Military Effectiveness: Fighting Alongside Allies and Partners,” in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, eds. Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 188.

¹¹ The most systematic statement of this reasoning is found in Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), ch. 6.

¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 168-169.

aggregation”—tends to be achieved under remarkably narrow conditions. Moreover, even when leading powers achieve strategic coherence, the costs they end up incurring in terms of grand strategic adjustment may be considerable. And even then, coherence is unlikely to arise uniformly across their alliance relationships.

Third, my study examines grand strategy and its outcomes from a genuinely comparative perspective. This is an important advancement in and of itself given the extremely U.S.-centric orientation of the existing grand strategic literature.¹³ The insularity of the grand strategy research program is evident in the very terminology used in its major debates. Ideal-typical grand strategies like “offshore balancing” and “deep engagement,” for example, imply a singular focus on an “offshore” great power—i.e., the United States—trying to calibrate the extent of its military engagement in distant lands.¹⁴ While useful in the narrow settings they were designed to address, such concepts inhibit the potential for comparison with other leading powers that confronted broadly similar problems in grand strategy and alliance politics—e.g., the Soviet Union during the Cold War and contemporary China. Moreover, they leave mainstream grand strategy research “open to criticism as arrogant, parochial, nongeneralizable, and (ironically) irrelevant beyond the Washington beltway.”¹⁵ My study represents an effort to overcome the self-imposed insularity of the grand strategy research program. By employing a theoretical framework and case-study methodology that puts critical issues in the United States’ grand strategy into direct conversation with those of other historical great powers, I show that this important literature can join the ranks of mature social scientific research programs.

¹³ See Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich, “Is Grand Strategy a Research Program? A Review Essay,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 77-80; and Rebecca Friedman Lissner, “What is Grand Strategy? Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 70-71.

¹⁴ See, for example, Christopher Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America’s Future Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 86-124; and Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad*.

¹⁵ Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich, “Is Grand Strategy a Research Program?” 80.

Directions for Future Research

Several limitations in the scope of my investigation suggest fruitful avenues for future research; here I highlight four especially promising candidates. First, future studies can theorize the multi-dimensional nature of allied “vulnerability,” which plays a crucial role in my theory of strategic incoherence. Although I have chosen to focus exclusively on the military aspect of this variable as a first cut, some of my own evidence hints at the potential usefulness of a more expansive conceptualization. A case in point is 21st-century South Korea, which I characterized in chapter 6 as being highly vulnerable to Chinese military predation when compared to the neighboring Japan, which I argued in turn explains differences in the two countries’ propensity to accommodate Washington’s emerging grand strategy of outsourcing in their military postures. While my story about South Korea’s deepening vulnerability is supported by some previous research as well as findings from my interviews with members of its policymaking establishment, several scholars who have engaged in careful net analysis have suggested that the country may not be “objectively” vulnerable from a military standpoint.¹⁶ Instead, a plausible case can be made that Seoul’s sense of vulnerability is mostly grounded in domestic political sensitivities or susceptibility to Chinese economic coercion.¹⁷ Previous studies have investigated how such factors may influence state

¹⁶ Michael Beckley, for example, concludes that Taiwan—arguably the weakest among U.S. allies and partners in East Asia—is likely to be able to thwart major Chinese aggression even in the absence of U.S. intervention. The implication is that other allies who clearly occupy stronger positions should be more than capable of doing so as well. See Michael Beckley, “The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China’s Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion,” *International Security* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 78-119. Biddle and Oelrich similarly write that “Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines are all either mostly or entirely beyond the likely reach of” China’s new military capabilities. See Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia,” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 13.

¹⁷ Experts attune to the region’s developments often highlight such factors in explaining South Korea’s behavior toward China’s rise. See, for example, Darren J. Lim and Victor A. Ferguson, “Informal Economic Sanctions: The Political Economy of Chinese Coercion during the THAAD Dispute,” *Review of International Political Economy* (2021); and Richard Fontaine, Kristine Lee, and Hannah Suh, “Can South Korea and America Find a Common

responses to external threats.¹⁸ Future works can incorporate them into a broader concept of vulnerability to increase the predictive power of my framework.¹⁹

Second, future research should examine the relationship between strategic incoherence and grand strategic change. “As a general matter,” Rebecca Lissner observes, “the field [of IR] assumes states reorient their grand strategies only rarely.”²⁰ My theory embodies this assumption as well, taking cue from previous studies in arguing that, at least in the near to intermediate terms, leading powers determine their grand strategies based on unit-level factors such as the preferences of individual leaders rather than their anticipated interaction effects with the military situations of allies (see chapter 2). Indeed, it is this assumption that allows me to treat grand strategy as an “independent” variable rather than a quantity that is endogenous to the outcome of interest, that is, strategic coherence. My case studies corroborate the idea that a leading power’s grand strategy is often remarkably unresponsive to information about the ally’s military vulnerability and its implications. Recall, for instance, that U.S. leaders persisted in their efforts to militarize the highly vulnerable West Germany until the early 1960s, insisting that “we cannot predicate our [military] preparations on the hope that a soft answer turneth away wrath.”²¹ Likewise, the Kremlin also initially pushed ahead with its plan to radically bolster Cuba’s military capabilities despite acknowledgement among some of its policymakers that their outsourcing strategy was likely to

Position on China?” War on the Rocks, July 16, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/can-south-korea-and-america-find-a-common-position-on-china/>.

¹⁸ In particular, see Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Ketian Zhang, “Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing’s Use of Coercion in the South China Sea,” *International Security* 44, no. 1 (Summer 2019): 117-159.

¹⁹ Bringing in domestic political factors or perceptual variables may also help explain why some states in my case studies anticipated the implications of their vulnerability and adjusted their military behaviors accordingly, often at the expense of U.S. grand strategy (e.g., pre-1955 West Germany) while others appeared to initially resist the implications of their obvious vulnerability before “learning it the hard way” (e.g., West Germany, 1955-1960; Cuba, 1959-1962).

²⁰ Rebecca Lissner, *Wars of Revelation: The Transformative Effects of Military Intervention on Grand Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 3.

²¹ “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State,” August 9, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 3, 193.

fail in the face of U.S. preventive threats.²²

That said, over the longer term, it is possible that leading powers do adjust their grand strategies in response to the costs or risks implied in strategic incoherence. For example, although President Dwight D. Eisenhower maintained that “he would take a strong Germany” any day rather than moderate his nuclear sharing policies in response to Soviet preventive war threats, there is nonetheless some evidence that the experiences of the Second Berlin Crisis influenced the way U.S. policymakers thought about their grand strategy in Western Europe.²³ Marc Trachtenberg writes that the “shifting attitudes” that informed the subsequent John F. Kennedy administration’s grand strategic transition “do not appear to have been a direct consequence of the Berlin Crisis[.]” That said, the crisis did play a role in “making issues of nuclear strategy less abstract, and of greater immediate concern, than they would otherwise have been; and this in turn led to the idea that if nuclear weapons had to be used, it was important that they be used in a controlled and discriminate way. This implied in turn that use should be governed by a single, central authority.”²⁴ In short, there is some reason to believe that leading powers can learn from the observed consequences of their initially preferred grand strategy and revise their strategy accordingly, although this learning process seems less straightforward or reliable than might be the case for an ideal-typical “expected utility maximizing” state.²⁵ Future studies should thus elaborate the conditions under which strategic incoherence may become a source of grand strategic change.

Third, scholars can investigate the extent to which the logic of my theory can explain strategic dynamics in informal patron-client relationships or “emergent” alliances. Although my

²² Sergo Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012), 94-103.

²³ “Memorandum of Conversation,” March 28, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. 4, 260.

²⁴ Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 229, fn. 220.

²⁵ On the limits of the expected utility maximization model of state behavior, see John J. Mearsheimer and Sebastian Rosato, *Homo Theoreticus: Rationality in International Politics* (Unpublished book manuscript, 2022).

theoretical discussion takes the prior existence of formalized security cooperation for granted, the mechanisms it identifies may help illuminate grand strategic outcomes in more tacit relationships as well. A possible conjecture is that the disparate outcomes my theory predicts for militarily vulnerable versus invulnerable allies will be accentuated in such situations. When it comes to alliance relationships that are “written down,” relevant parties—including the adversary—can better grasp the grand strategy the leading power is seeking to implement through the alliance by observing the formalized acts of policy and military coordination that occur among the member states.²⁶ When dealing with less formal relationships, however, the adversary faces greater uncertainty over the kind of strategy the leading power is contemplating or will contemplate vis-à-vis its de facto security partner. This could create incentives on its part to adopt especially harsh military countermeasures to arrest the further development of the security relationship, which may end up radically strengthening a smaller rival in its vicinity and dangerously altering the local balance of power.²⁷ This may explain, among other cases, the communist bloc’s decision to invade South Korea in June 1950,²⁸ the Chinese decision to initiate the First Taiwan Straits Crisis of

²⁶ This signaling function partly explains why states bother enshrining military cooperation in formal agreements to begin with. See James D. Morrow, “Alliances: Why Write Them Down?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (June 2000): 63-83.

²⁷ Brett V. Benson and Bradley C. Smith, “Commitment Problems in Alliance Formation,” *American Journal of Political Science* (2022): 1-14.

²⁸ Historical works based on new documentary evidence suggest that Stalin’s decision to greenlight Kim Il Sung’s invasion of South Korea was motivated by preventive considerations, given suspicions that U.S. military engagement in East Asia might grow over the long term. See, for example, Kim Donggil, “Stalin’s Korean U-Turn: The USSR’s Evolving Security Strategy and the Origins of the Korean War,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 24, no. 1 (June 2011): 89-114; and James I. Matray, “Dean Acheson’s Press Club Speech Reexamined,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2002), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/366/578>. Some IR scholars have picked up on this finding. In particular, see Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 272-276; and Dan Reiter and Paul Poast, “The Truth about Tripwires: Why Small Force Deployments do not Deter Aggression,” *Texas National Security Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 44-46.

1954,²⁹ and Russian aggression against Georgia and Ukraine in more recent times.³⁰ But of course, if the smaller partner is sufficiently invulnerable to military aggression *ex ante*, such dire outcomes will not transpire. And even when the partner is highly vulnerable, my theory suggests that strategic disasters may be averted if the leading power could find a way to convince the adversary that it is committed to a grand strategy of insourcing over the long term. My sense, however, is that this is very difficult under conditions of fluid, informal security cooperation.³¹ Future studies should explore these intriguing possibilities.

A fourth promising line of research involves explaining patterns of strategic coherence in alliances between great power patrons and non-state actors in civil war settings, such as militant groups or local regimes that “do not have complete sovereignty in a traditional sense.”³² As Fotini Cristia points out, some of the insights of neorealist theorizing—which forms the basis of my arguments—may arguably be “better suited to the study of multiparty civil war than it is to the study of international politics.”³³ In particular, the assumption of quasi-Darwinian selection effects, an anarchic environment characterized by existential threats, and the primacy of security motivations may often hold more reliably for internal conflict settings than interstate relations.³⁴

²⁹ M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 233-241.

³⁰ See John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 77-84; and Benson and Smith, “Commitment Problems in Alliance Formation,” 10-11.

³¹ As Benson and Smith argue, prospective allies in these circumstances may “be better off limiting the scope of an alliance's military benefits or the speed of its implementation to avoid provoking an enemy.” Benson and Smith, “Commitment Problems in Alliance Formation,” 2.

³² Barbara Elias, *Why Allies Rebel: Defiant Local Partners in Counterinsurgency Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 8.

³³ Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52. My theory is broadly neorealist in that it treats the material power position states (in my case, allies) occupy relative to their rivals as a core determinant of political outcomes, relegating domestic and individual-level factors to secondary roles. The canonical works of neorealism are Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979; repr., Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2010) and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

Moreover, recent innovations in civil war studies highlight the interaction between intervening states and militant groups. Barbara Elias, for example, asks why small counterinsurgent groups comply with or defy the policy requests of their state patrons, arguing that patterns of defiance is shaped by the interplay between the political interests of the local partner and intervening power, as well as the degree to which the latter is dependent on the former to implement its desired policy.³⁵ Kaitlyn Robinson shows that states often *create* new armed groups in order to secure better compliance with their strategic interests in civil wars.³⁶ To the extent intervening great powers often find their own military capabilities wanting in irregular warfare,³⁷ the problem of strategic incoherence is bound to afflict the grand strategies they implement toward conflict-ridden regions. In some circumstances, an intervening power may adopt a grand strategy that envisions strengthening local partners to devolve major military responsibilities to them over the long term. At other times, the state may want to assert as much control as possible over the actions of local armed groups to limit escalation dynamics. Under what conditions will the partners acquire the capabilities demanded of them? There is much more to be learned in this area.

Lessons for U.S. Grand Strategy

My study also offers important lessons for individuals tasked with crafting American security policy. With both the highly revisionist grand strategy of “primacy” and the radically withdrawn

³⁵ Elias, *Why Allies Rebel*. Note that Elias’s arguments are deeply informed by the classic collective goods theory of alliance politics. This is made more explicit in Barbara Elias, “The Likelihood of Local Allies Free-Riding: Testing Economic Theories of Alliances in U.S. Counterinsurgency Interventions,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 3 (September 2017): 309-331; and Barbara Elias and Alex Weisiger, “Influence through Absence in U.S. Counterinsurgency Interventions? Coercing Local Allies through Threats to Withdraw,” *Civil Wars* 22, no. 4 (2020): 512-542.

³⁶ Kaitlyn Robinson, “Foreign Foundations: How External States Create Violent Armed Groups,” Paper Presented at the Emerging Scholars in Grand Strategy Conference, Notre Dame International Security Center, May 27, 2022.

³⁷ Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, “Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars,” *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 67-106.

grand strategy of “isolationism” largely discredited over the past decade, much of the contemporary debate on the future of U.S. grand strategy has converged around two broad camps.³⁸ On the one hand, support for the traditional U.S. grand strategy of “deep engagement” remains strong among Washington’s policymaking elite and their intellectual sponsors.³⁹ This strategy rests on the idea that U.S. security is best served by maintaining a forward-oriented military presence in key global regions—that is, Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. In terms of alliance politics, America’s security commitments abroad are held to ensure a robust leadership capacity for the United States, dampening “incentives to generate military capabilities” among U.S. allies and giving Washington “the leverage to restrain partners from taking provocative action” that could produce dangerous spirals of instability.⁴⁰ U.S. security commitments are instrumental for exercising such leverage, the supporters of deep engagement argue, since the fear of possibly being excluded from the massive benefits of U.S. patronage will lead allies to adjust their policies in ways favorable to U.S. interests. “This does not mean that the United States always wins” in its disagreements with allies in distant locations, Stephen Brooks and his co-authors argue, “but its leverage is greater than it would be if the United States were purely an offshore great power without institutionalized security ties to the region.”⁴¹

On the other hand, a smaller but influential group of experts argue that the United States should move toward a grand strategy of “restraint” or “offshore balancing.”⁴² While these analysts

³⁸ On the infeasibility of the grand strategic extremes of primacy and isolationism in a world of great-power competition, see Brendan Rittenhouse Green, “Two Concepts of Liberty: U.S. Cold War Grand Strategies and the Liberal Tradition,” *International Security* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 10-11. It has become difficult to find serious advocates of either grand strategy in today’s U.S. foreign policy debate.

³⁹ Patrick Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy has not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment,” *International Security* 42, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 9-46.

⁴⁰ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment,” *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012-2013): 21; 34.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴² Strictly speaking, restraint and offshore balancing are two different grand strategies, distinguished mainly by their advocates’ disagreement over the extent to which a potential hegemon in Europe, East Asia, or the Middle East would

agree that the United States has a vital interest in preventing a hostile great power from achieving political and military dominance in the key regions of Eurasia, they believe that it should strive to do so primarily by relying on the natural proclivities of local powers to provide for their own security. This will become feasible in most (if not all) regions, they argue, if the United States takes bold steps to “place the responsibility for the security of major and minor U.S. allies squarely on their shoulders[.]”⁴³ This could be achieved by means such as encouraging intraregional defense cooperation and facilitating the diffusion of advanced military capabilities—potentially including nuclear capabilities—among key U.S. allies.⁴⁴ Most importantly, Washington has to make sure the allies understand that they will not be able to rely for long on U.S. military largesse to ensure their security against formidable adversaries in their neighborhood. Indeed, advocates of grand strategic restraint argue that it is precisely because a “consensus on an assertive foreign and security policy spans the Republican and Democratic Parties” that the allies are not already pulling their own weight in the military realm, since they can “console themselves with the knowledge that the United States” will be indefinitely present in their region.⁴⁵

The findings of this dissertation do not settle the debate between these grand strategic visions. However, they do put the potential consequences of adopting either approach for America’s alliances into sharper relief. Expectations about allied military behavior featured in current discussions of both the deep engagement strategy and restraint strategy betray a subtle

be *inherently* dangerous for the United States. See, for example, the contrasting views presented in Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America,” 46-48; and John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July/August 2016): 70-83. In practice, however, the two grand strategies are often grouped together in juxtaposition to deep engagement, which calls for a significantly more activist posture abroad than either offshore balancing or restraint. See Paul C. Avey, Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon, “Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 28-51.

⁴³ Posen, *Restraint*, 70.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 69-134; and Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America,” 17-30.

⁴⁵ Posen, *Restraint*, 173-174.

optimism: whether it stems from allies underproducing military capabilities or acquiring more than their prescribed share, resolving strategic incoherence would be relatively simple if only the leading power can muster the political will to issue credible threats of abandonment. While a belief in the collective goods theory of alliance politics is most clearly observed among the proponents of grand strategic restraint, it is also latent in the writings of deep engagement advocates. The notion that the security commitment provided by a leading power like the United States reduces allied incentives for military self-help by “dampen[ing] the baleful effects of anarchy” or that Washington can exercise great leverage over the kinds of military postures its allies adopt because it can “exclude any state it wants” from its security umbrella is entirely consistent with the postulates of collective goods theory.⁴⁶ The bottom line is that the contemporary grand strategy debate tends to treat allies as passive recipients of the security incentives supplied by the leading alliance power; once the leading power stops coddling the allies, so the reasoning goes, they will willingly fit their military capabilities to the prescriptions of its grand strategy. Therein lies the subtle optimism about alliance politics—grounded in the “supply-side logic” of collective goods theory—that infuses the contemporary U.S. grand strategy debate.

This optimism is unwarranted. The core problems implicated in the debate between deep engagement and restraint—including the fundamental question of whether the United States should adopt an indefinitely committed, “leading” military role in its alliances or seek to gradually devolve its military responsibilities to the allies and adopt a distant “supporting” posture—are not entirely new. The leaders of great powers as varied as the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain confronted similar questions when dealing with their historical alliance relationships. And in each instance, getting the allies to fit their military postures to the leading power’s grand

⁴⁶ Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America,” 34; 28.

strategic requirements was not a simple matter of jolting them into compliance with the specter of abandonment. For example, despite being staunchly committed to weaning the allies of military dependence on the United States and thereby ending U.S. involvement in European security, the Eisenhower administration could not get the vulnerable West Germany into adopting the independently powerful military posture required to achieve this grand strategic objective. Likewise, despite “successfully” retracting its security commitments, the Soviet Union failed to bring China’s military capabilities into line with its grand strategic preferences in the post-1957 period. Its pressures rather only whetted Beijing’s appetite to revamp its capabilities at the expense of strategic coherence. This is not to say that strategic incoherence was overdetermined. My analysis suggests that Moscow could probably have maintained strategic coherence in the Sino-Soviet alliance after 1957, but only by reverting to a grand strategy of outsourcing. In other words, the leading power could either remain wedded to its grand strategy of choice *or* pursue strategic coherence in its alliance with China; it could not have both.

Now consider U.S. alliances in the 21st century. The theory laid out in this study yields concrete predictions about patterns of strategic coherence that are likely to obtain depending on the kind of grand strategic orientation the United States adopts vis-à-vis its allies in key global regions. Assume, for example, that China will continue growing over the coming years as a formidable threat for a large swath of East Asian countries and the United States continues to shift its grand strategy in the direction of outsourcing, that is, attempting to devolve key military responsibilities to regional allies. As discussed in chapter 6, given the region-wide variation in military vulnerability vis-à-vis China, the United States is likely to see divergent patterns of strategic coherence in its East Asian alliance relationships. On the one hand, weaker states located in close geographical proximity to China—e.g., South Korea and Taiwan—will find it increasingly

difficult to adopt the independent capabilities prescribed by the U.S. outsourcing strategy. On the other hand, less vulnerable allies—foremost of which is Japan—will enthusiastically revamp their military postures in accordance with U.S. strategic demands. But should the United States revert to a grand strategy of insourcing, that is, one designed maximize U.S. control and influence over the alliance’s military affairs while circumscribing allied capabilities, the opposite patterns of strategic coherence and incoherence will arise over time.

Beyond broad patterns, my theory also helps assess the potential consequences of specific alliance policy proposals. In recent years, the option of erecting *nuclear sharing* arrangements to shore up America’s East Asian allies against the growing Chinese threat has received serious attention among foreign policy experts in both Washington and East Asian capitals.⁴⁷ Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Brad Roberts, for example, argues that a “NATO-like nuclear umbrella...could be replicated” in alliances with countries like “South Korea with U.S. nuclear weapons permanently deployed there along with dual-capable fighter-bombers that would be flown by pilots from both countries.”⁴⁸ Others argue that the largely symbolic variant of nuclear sharing practiced in today’s NATO would not meaningfully bolster the military position of America’s East Asian allies. As political scientists Jennifer Lind and Daryl Press correctly point out, “[nuclear] weapons would still be firmly in the control of American leaders” under contemporary NATO-like sharing arrangements “and hence no more credible [for deterrence] than other elements of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.”⁴⁹ They assert that the United States should instead aim

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis, see Joshua Byun and Do Young Lee, “The Case Against Nuclear Sharing in East Asia,” *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 67-87.

⁴⁸ Brad Roberts, “Living with a Nuclear-Arming North Korea: Deterrence Decisions in a Deteriorating Threat Environment,” 38 *North*, November 2020, <https://www.38north.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/38-North-SR-2011-Brad-Roberts-Nuclear-North-Korea-Deterrence.pdf>, 17, 14. See also Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, “Vulnerable U.S. Alliances in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Implications,” *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 157-175.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press, “Should South Korea Build its Own Nuclear Bomb?” *Washington Post*, October 7, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/should-south-korea-go-nuclear/2021/10/07/a40bb400-2628-11ec->

to facilitate South Korea’s eventual acquisition of an independent nuclear arsenal.⁵⁰ As seen in chapter 4, such a policy follows naturally when the idea of nuclear sharing is pushed to its logical conclusion.⁵¹ Indeed, prominent analysts have advocated a similar approach in recent years. Barry Posen writes that “if China grows as much as is currently predicted” and embarks on an expansionist foreign policy in East Asia, the United States should “stop guarding against nuclear proliferation in the region and...support independent national nuclear deterrents.”⁵² Christopher Layne similarly argues that “[t]he United States should relax its nonproliferation policy and help” countries like Japan, Germany, and South Korea “acquire the technology to build survival forces, and to maintain secure command and control over their nuclear arsenals.”⁵³

As seen in chapters 4 and 5, devolving nuclear capabilities to faraway allies is a quintessential instrument of the outsourcing grand strategy. It is worth considering the implications of such a policy for America’s East Asian alliances in light of the insights offered by my findings. If the United States tries to implement substantive nuclear sharing policies—that is, policies that grant local military actors (i.e., U.S. field commanders and allied forces) significant discretion over the employment of nuclear weapons in the event of conflict—in East Asia, outcomes for strategic coherence will vary markedly depending on the degree of military vulnerability individual U.S. allies face vis-à-vis China. As in the case of France in the late 1950s, relatively invulnerable allies like Japan will have little trouble accommodating the assets and decision-making capacities

8d53-67cfb452aa60_story.html. See also Duyeon Kim, “How to Keep South Korea from Going Nuclear,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76, no. 2 (2020): 73.

⁵⁰ See Lind and Press, “Should South Korea Build its Own Nuclear Bomb?”, and Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press, “Five Futures for a Troubled Alliance,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 33, no. 3 (September 2021): 357-380.

⁵¹ As Trachtenberg argues, there is good reason to think that U.S. nuclear sharing policies in the late 1950s would have eventually produced “a system of national nuclear forces in Europe” if allowed to run their course. See Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 190. For this reason, analysts in the heyday of nuclear sharing in NATO—that is, the late 1950s and early 1960s—tended to equate nuclear sharing policies with de facto proliferation. See Albert Wohlstetter, “Nuclear Sharing: NATO and the N+1 Country,” *Foreign Affairs* 39, no. 3 (April 1961): 355-387.

⁵² Posen, *Restraint*, 106.

⁵³ Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, 190.

required to make nuclear sharing work. Should Washington sincerely broach nuclear sharing as a measure to counteract the intensifying military threat from China, nuclear sharing will likely be embraced by such allies as a significant security boon and perhaps a useful stepping-stone to acquiring independent nuclear capabilities in the long term.⁵⁴ By contrast, attempts to implement nuclear sharing with more vulnerable allies like Taiwan or South Korea are likely to trigger costly countermeasures from China. Substantive nuclear sharing policies take time to materialize, as allies arrange the transportation and storage of warheads, the acquisition of new delivery platforms, specialized training for personnel, new command and control systems, and other elements of a robust “supporting infrastructure.”⁵⁵ During this time, the adversary expecting to become more insecure by the militarization of a proximate rival will be strongly tempted to use forceful countermeasures to arrest this development. And when push comes to shove, many vulnerable allies will opt to curb their militarization rather than risk suffering its overwhelming costs. Nuclear sharing thus carries an inherent paradox: it tends to backfire when extended to vulnerable allies that ostensibly stand to gain most from it.

Of course, the other side of the coin is that policies of *nuclear monopoly*—in which the leading power aims to arrogate the alliance’s nuclear assets and decision-making authorities—will have the opposite effects for strategic coherence. Highly vulnerable allies will moderate their military postures accordingly, whereas relatively invulnerable allies will be tempted to defy the leading power’s strategic preferences and make their way toward independent nuclear capabilities as the threat posed by the adversary intensifies. While nuclear sharing is unlikely to be the “game-

⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, mainstream political leaders in Japan have increasingly eyed a nuclear sharing arrangement with the United States as a potential countermeasure to the Chinese threat in recent years. See Ryuto Imao and Miki Nose, “Abe Reiterates Nuclear-Sharing Discussion is Necessary,” *Nikkei Asia*, March 3, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Abe-reiterates-nuclear-sharing-discussion-is-necessary>.

⁵⁵ Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, “Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence,” *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (October 2014): 924.

changing” security boon for America’s East Asian alliances as maintained by its proponents,⁵⁶ then, the obverse approach of nuclear monopoly does not promise across-the-board strategic coherence either. In short, the United States is unlikely to find a silver bullet for grand strategizing with its allies in the 21st century; difficult choices lie ahead.

The bottom line is that making grand strategy work in the context of alliance politics is very difficult. As long as allies around the world confront heterogeneous military situations, the United States will have to either live with a certain degree of strategic incoherence in its alliances or adjust its grand strategy—often in costly ways—to better suit the incentives of its allies. Strategic incoherence in military alliances is thus a quintessential “wicked” problem that by nature can never be definitely “solved,” but at best “only re-solved—over and over again.”⁵⁷ The best U.S. policymakers can do in most cases is to *cope with* and *manage* the trade-offs presented by strategic incoherence rather than do away with the problem altogether. At minimum, they should pause before advancing one-size-fits-all proposals to put America’s alliances in order, such as those recommended by collective goods theory. The security situations confronted by individual allies often make it exceedingly difficult for them to tailor their military capabilities to the requirements of the leading power’s strategic preferences; the leading power’s attempts to jolt them into compliance with threats of abandonment will not do much good when its strategic demands fundamentally collide with the incentives provided by the ally’s local security environment. Indeed, trying to force-fit allied military postures to U.S. grand strategy is not only likely to fail but may also spark dangerous backlash from rivals and undermine valuable political

⁵⁶ Sang-cheol Choo, “Hong Jun-pyo ‘Mi suldeukhae haekgongyu’ ... Yoo Seung-min ‘Ohraen sinyeomb’ hwanyoung [Hong Jun-pyo Calls for ‘Pressing the U.S. for a Nuclear Sharing Agreement,’ Yoo Seung-min Welcomes Proposal as his ‘Long-held Belief],” *Newsis*, June 30, 2021, <https://newsis.com/view/?id=NISX202107100001508060>.

⁵⁷ Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 160.

relationships. Hard choices are therefore unavoidable in matters of grand strategy. Even the most powerful states cannot always get what they want—even from their friends.

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