Alliances

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on alliances. It discusses the classical scholarship dealing with the formation of alliances and their impact on the international system, but also assesses trending debates on the relationship between alliances and, on the one hand, the maintenance of international order, and on the other, the nature of multinational military interventions. The study of alliances has traditionally focused on states and war, with alliances being a tool with which the former could manage the latter. In recent years, the field has widened, taking into account alliances' evolving and contested relationship to both broader collective security institutions and narrower and supposedly more effective coalitions. As they change in character, alliances will continuously define the frontier between cooperation and conflict and be of central concern to security studies scholars.

Keywords: alliances, coalitions, multinational military interventions, security cooperation, collective security, international order, NATO

44.1 Introduction

ALLIANCES have an intuitive conceptual feel to them that all too easily breaks down upon closer scrutiny. The first difficulty concerns the nature of security arrangements among states where alliances are only one form of cooperation next to coalitions, concerts, and ententes, while the next difficulty concerns the variety of alliance formats where sub-categories—such as military alliances, tacit alliances, de facto alliances, wartime alliances, etc.—have been created to capture distinct realities.

In his seminal book on the origins of alliances, Stephen Walt (1987: 1) defines an alliance as "a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states." This definition is concise but problematic in two distinct respects (Duffield 2009). First, it is so large that it can encompass virtually all security arrangements be-

tween states. Analytically speaking, the definition blurs the fundamental distinction between an alliance, on the one hand, and a collective security arrangement, on the other. An alliance is primarily, if not exclusively, outwardly oriented, intended to enhance the security of its members vis-à-vis external parties. In contrast, a collective security arrangement is designed to enhance the security of its participants vis-à-vis each other. The definition thus confuses policies designed to control and manage external threats and policies designed to enable and coordinate security governance.

The other problem with the definition is the conflation of various forms of security cooperation. The definition embraces all manners of security cooperation, including instances of security cooperation limited to supportive diplomacy or economic aid. Traditionally, alliances have distinguished themselves from other security arrangements by the emphasis they place on military assistance, especially the use of force.

Our purpose in this article is not to generate consensus on a certain definition of alliances but rather to provide an overview of main trends, historical and current. Still, in light of the slippery nature of the concept itself, it might be useful to sketch the definition of alliances that we have employed here as a tool for sorting out the literature. We (p. 654) understand alliances as entailing *a formal or informal association of states for the (threat of) use of military force, in specified circumstances, against actors external to the alliance*. This definition emphasizes the military aspect of alliances, highlights the distinction between alliances and collective security agreements, and encompasses both permanent and institutionalized alliances (such as NATO) and non-institutionalized collective military activities (such as various US-led coalitions in the Middle East).

With this in mind we turn to the alliance literature. Our ambition is to create an overview of the classical alliance literature but also and more importantly to assess trending debates on the relationship between alliances and, on the one hand, the maintenance of international order and, on the other, the nature of multinational military interventions.

44.2 Classical Research on Alliances

Because of their strong impact on the organization and structure of the international system, alliances have generated an important literature in security studies. The two main areas of focus concern the formation of alliances and the impact of alliances on war (do alliances make war more or less likely?). This literature has already been expertly summarized elsewhere (Sprecher and Krause 2006; Weitsman 2010), so the presentation below must be considered as a general roadmap and needs to be completed with more granular overviews. However, this is a deliberate choice that follows from our preference for concentrating on the evolution of contemporary alliances and coalitions in Sections 44.3 and 44.4 of this chapter.

44.2.1 Alliance Formation and Management

Several explanations exist regarding alliance formation, which grant more or less weight to the importance of an external threat. Essentially, states face a dilemma when there is a change in the distribution of power in the international system: should they balance the emerging threat, or bandwagon in order to accommodate it?

The first motivation concerns a state's willingness to reduce the gap between its military capabilities and those of a potential adversary, thus its desire for allies to augment its military power against an external threat. This mechanism is called *balancing*. The literature has discussed whether states were balancing power or perceived threats (Walt 1987), but the mechanism is the same: an alliance is an institutional mechanism facilitating the aggregation of military capabilities to deter potential adversaries and/or maximize the chances of victory in cases of conflicts. In multipolar systems in which states face a common threat and defensive military strategies are perceived as superior, states will tend to adopt buck-passing behaviors and let other states deal with the threat—simply because passing the buck is less costly than balancing. In contrast, in bipolar systems in which offensive military strategies are perceived as superior, the weaker states (p. 655) will tend to strongly tie themselves to alliances they hope will guarantee their survival. In such situations, and depending on the alliance's internal management, moderate states can be rendered more bellicose, or aggressive states can be constrained by their allies (Tierney 2011). Allies' reputation is also important in the process of alliance formation (Crescenzi et al. 2012).

The second motivation to join an alliance is *bandwagoning*. In this situation, instead of countering a threat, states join the threatening state in order to ensure their survival, or, less frequently argued, to secure a profit from the spoils of victory. Bandwagoning for survival is typically observed among small states geographically close to the threatening states and willing to secure strategic gains despite their material disadvantage. Bandwagoning seems to occur less frequently than balancing (Schweller 1998), but bandwagoning is nonetheless implicit in many foreign policy speeches and decision making processes. For example, the metaphor of the "domino theory," most famously pushed forward to justify the US intervention in Vietnam, but which regularly comes back in the American public debate, is in fact based on an implicit bandwagoning argument.

Finally, the third motivation is called *tethering*. As counterintuitive as it sounds, an alliance can be formed in order to manage the adversarial relationships between states. From this perspective, an alliance functions like other international institutions, improving the exchange of information between states and raising the costs of defection, thus making cooperation more attractive, and more likely. Despite their adversarial relationship, Turkey and Greece are both NATO members. As such, their membership to the NATO alliance does not formally augment their theoretical potential power, since their adversary is also a member of the same alliance. Nevertheless, being an "adversary-ally" within NATO grants them institutional advantages, in particular in terms of mutual transparency on their defense budgets and as a framework for conflict management.

In terms of alliance management, the main issue that states have to solve is the alliance security dilemma. In essence it is the dilemma between small states fearing abandonment, and large states fearing entrapment (Snyder 1998): small states fear that the large states would not honor their defense commitments if they enter a conflict, and large states do not want to join a conflict initiated by small states that they would be forced to join. Mitigating this dilemma is a common problem for alliance relationships.

44.2.2 Alliances and War

The academic literature on alliances has long tackled the issue of whether alliances make war more or less likely in the international system.

Several important works argue that alliances are rather useful to maintain peace (Levy 1981). The traditional realist literature argues that alliance creation is a balancing act, which forms the theoretical foundation for arguing that alliances are means of deterrence and systemic stability (Waltz 1979). Divergences do emerge regarding the (p. 656) mechanism through which alliances maintain peace. To both classical realists and neorealists, alliances maintain peace by balancing power and deterring aggression, which is an external effect, but recent works have emphasized an internal effect, namely alliances as a constraint on adventurous allies (Gelpi 1999; Pressman 2008; Tierney 2011). For this strand of research, internal constraint is a side effect of the alliance, and not the reason why it was created in the first place.

Other works argue that military alliances create a more dangerous world. The main argument is that alliances reinforce the security dilemma and culminate in the formation of counter-alliances, increased polarization, widespread misperception, hostility, and war. An alliance paradox follows: the more effective an alliance is at maintaining peace and cohesion within, the more it raises the level of systemic insecurity by way of its apparent impressive capabilities (Weitsman 2004). As the security dilemma intensifies, moreover, cohesion maintenance supersedes the urge to peacefully resolve conflicts with adversarial alliances. Such "rigidity" of alliances enables allies to drag their fellow allies into wars they would have otherwise wished to avoid. This makes alliances dangerous: allied nations intervene far more in wars than non-allied nations, and wars become bloodier since they involve more states (Levy 1981; Oren 1990).

Most of this strand of research is based on large-n quantitative analyses lumping together all forms of alliances regardless of the historical context of their formation, and types of management. As such, these results appear somehow disconnected from the evolving relationship between coalitions, alliances, and security institutions that emerged after the Cold War, on which we will now focusing.

44.3 Alliances and International Order

Alliances have increasingly become tied into the management of International Relations and partnerships. Naturally, alliances and global organization coexisted through much of the twentieth century, but with the end of the Cold War, the increased pace of globalization, and the emerging pluralization of power, the need to manage alliances in concert with global networks has qualitatively increased. Where the United States could once focus on running its bi- and multilateral alliances and then the structuring of debates in the United Nations Security Council, it must now comprehensively integrate the two. The United States military strategy of 2015 defines three National Military Objectives in support of national interests, one of which is the ability to "strengthen our global network of allies and partners" (Department of Defense 2015: 5). This emphasis on "networks" of both allies and partners likewise figures prominently in the US Navy's Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower where "allies and partners" brought together in "formal and informal networks" form a "global network of navies" with a "robust capacity" to face new and emerging challenges (US Navy 2015: 1–2). This (p. 657) connectivity is driven not only by broad processes of globalization but also changes in warfare. We begin with the latter and move toward the former, ending with an assessment of future implications.

44.3.1 Changing Character of War

War is at the heart of alliances because they form, essentially, to prevent or win wars. As war changes in character, therefore, so will the role and shape of alliances.

A big trend in recent decades has been the growth in small wars whose center of gravity is not the armed forces of the adversary but the loyalty of the population. In these small wars—or wars among the people—the ultimate objective is to capture the will of the people, something which industrial-sized and organized military organizations, including alliances, are poorly equipped to grasp (Smith 2006). The extended argument is that wars have changed in a qualitative way, feeding successive "generations" of warfare that bring with them an enhanced emphasis on psychology, communication, social organization extending into globalized crime and illicit networks, and various hybrid versions hereof (Hammes 2004; Hoffman 2007).

The importance of this shift is up for debate, though. Other scholars continue to emphasize the structuring impact of prospective great power war—rare and perhaps even unlikely, but sobering in its potential effect. States and their alliances are therefore pushed to engage with transformative technologies and organization and to integrate these into their grand strategies (Dombrowski 2015).

In either case the effect on alliances is considerable. One considerable effect is to open up alliances. To cope with either small wars or transformative preparations for big war, alliances must move beyond their cloak and dagger past and embrace societal actors around them to secure support, import ideas, and create partnerships by generating new ways of managing emerging challenges. In terms of small wars, the challenge comes un-

der the heading of "comprehensive approach" (CA), lately also stabilization, which signifies the coordination of security, governance, and development efforts. The lineages of such comprehensive approaches can be traced back into the history of counter insurgency, the "defense and diplomacy" turn of the 1970s, as well as humanitarian interventions in the 1990s, but its modern version was crafted inside NATO in response to the challenge of stabilizing Afghanistan. With the CA, NATO insisted that it could not solve Afghanistan by its own efforts and invited the whole international community to join in. In terms of major war, opening implies an engagement with the most innovative sectors of the economy, especially the IT sector with its fast pace of innovation both in terms of products and networked organizations. When new IT and new organization come together in the manufacturing of new arms—from missiles to cyber—new ways of war become possible.

For alliances, the pace and scope of innovation, both in terms of CA outreach and transformative warfare, harden the challenge of sharing burdens and distributing benefits. Transformative warfare aggravates the asymmetry linked to budgets and adaptive (p. 658) organizations, while CA engagement aggravates the politics of linking or limiting the political presence and impact of an alliance.

44.3.2 Global Organization

The drive to open alliances and institutionalize partnerships in support of comprehensive approaches has rekindled questions of global governance and regional alliances. The United Nations Charter foresees the integration of such alliances under the authority of the UNSC, something that the Cold War prevented but which has become both more likely and more contentious in the new era of small wars and crisis management.

Some scholars argue that global governance must be strengthened. The key argument is that if a war effort is just a small piece in a more comprehensive puzzle, then it is the wider political process that must gain precedence. This political process ultimately takes us to the UNSC and its authority to mandate the use of armed force. The strengthening of the UN was on the agenda in the early 1990s when UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali suggested in his *Agenda for Peace* report ways to more firmly embed nations in a strengthened collective security system, including by "special arrangements" whereby member states make armed forces available to the UNSC. More broadly, the theory of security governance suggested that a more fluid system of specialized and "structurally neutral" coalitions of states and non-state actors take the place of fixed and antagonistic alliances (Krahmann 2005).

Alliances are a collective defense in nature, however, and the underlying schism between security and defense was not resolved. Rather, it caused the end of Boutros-Ghali's tenure at the UN helm, just as it caused the sidelining of the UN in Bosnia and the concomitant rise of NATO in the business of peacemaking and -keeping. In a globalizing context NATO had both more adaptable general institutional assets (Wallander 2000) and greater political purpose (Rynning 2005). Revealingly, when NATO intervened in Kosovo in 1999 to es-

tablish peace, it did so without a legal UN mandate but, it argued, with the legitimate purpose of providing for "human security and development"—an agenda that once had been UN anchored (Commission on Global Governance 1995) but now had become appropriated by an alliance that wished to labor in favor of certain global norms while retaining its collective defense character.

44.3.3 Concert of Power

If the relationship between alliances and global organization can be difficult, the dynamic solution is to exploit various intermediary formats for concerting power. Concerts are not new, of course, and have been likened to "central coalitions" (Rosecrance 1992) that supersede the balance of power. Typically they do so in the aftermath of systemic wars when the desire for stability is overwhelming (Jervis 1985), and they last only as long as the shock of war is felt. In time, alliances and the balance of power revive.

(p. 659) However, a new mechanism has emerged whereby concerts form to reinforce alliances. Concerts have thus become instrumental to alliance management and a tool rather than a replacement of the balance of power. Such concerts come in the shape of "contact groups" that an alliance can form on top of or in parallel to its operational mission and in order to garner support for it. In Bosnia, NATO allies established a contact group with five principal allies and then Russia. This instance of concerted power had limited success, and practice evolved into a two-phase approach by the time of the Libya campaign in 2011 when NATO allies first formed a contact group of like-minded partners to garner legitimacy and support and then, once the mission was firmly on track, broadened the contact group into a wider "friends of Libya" group that included China and Russia (Rynning 2013).

Interestingly, by instrumentalizing concerts in this way, alliances borrow a diplomatic mechanism from the UN system that had grown dramatically in use since the end of the Cold War, namely the use of groups of Friends to support UN peacekeeping and crisis management (Whitfield 2007). Though alliances can claim to build bridges between the world of collective defense where allies and like-minded partners operate and then the world of collective security and diverse groups of Friends, in reality alliances are tipping the scales in favor of collective defense.

A similar phenomenon is taking place in the heart of Asia where China, Russia, and a host of other mostly Central Asian countries take part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which from 2001 has existed as a hybrid between an alliance (to keep the United States out of the region), a collective security arrangement (to engender peaceful coexistence within its membership), and a concert of power (led notably by China and Russia). The concert is the most prevalent facet of the SCO whereby the two big powers draw in diverse groups of Friends to manage this geopolitical domain, most recently with the inclusion of rivals India and Pakistan, traditionally aligned with Russia and China, respectively. Russia has since 1992 sought to build up a Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) for the post-Soviet space, and while the CSTO is in effect, it is a clear-cut

case of Russian-led alliance-building with junior and former vassal states which is nowhere near the SCO in terms of the complexity of its underlying concert of power.

44.3.4 The Future of Alliances and International Order

In this rivalry between collective defense and collective security orders, the defining element will likely be the role of political belief systems that historically have tended to be local or regional (as in nationalism or Atlanticism) but which may—or may not—be fusing into a global consciousness (as in cosmopolitanism). If belief systems are stubborn and remain national or regional, the world will be pluralist, and collective defense systems will follow. If, on the other hand, global governance generates a considerable global layer of beliefs, then the world could become one, at least sufficiently to allow for a type of rational or legalistic collective security system. In short, collective consciousness (p. 660) enables strategic obligations among multiple actors, and the key question is whether consciousness will predominantly form regionally or globally (Kissinger 2014). The trend in the post-Cold War decades, which appears likely to continue, is for continued pluralism though with a significant element of cosmopolitan thinking. Alliances—collective defense arrangements—have thus remained bedrocks of international relations. NATO has with some difficulty, but ultimately successfully, adapted to the cosmopolitan condition by appropriating tools in the collective security toolbox. Key questions for the future include whether China's (and also Russia's) engagement in the SCO and other regional organizations will similarly adapt to the cosmopolitan agenda or inversely reject it as a Western phenomenon, and whether the alliances of these great powers will enable a degree of concerted power or rather, by way of their competition, engender new ways of covert or overt warfare.

44.4 Alliances, Coalitions, and the Challenges of Multinational Military Interventions

Alliances can be large and unwieldy, even if politically useful, and a high operational tempo or prolonged or particularly difficult campaign thus tends to shift the balance in favour of more informal "strike" coalitions of dedicated countries. These coalitions are still multinational or multilateral, and they can form intimate links with established alliances, but they are by nature more pragmatic and improvised, and also less durable. Western states have since the end of the Cold War sought to combine these two multinational formats—coalitions and alliances—which have posed a number of specific challenges.

44.4.1 The Military Challenges of Coalition Warfare

After the Kosovo intervention in 1999, US policy-makers and analysts debated and often criticized NATO's cumbersome warmaking procedures in contrast to the alleged flexibility of "coalitions of the willing," effectively paving the way for coalition-based intervention in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Patricia Weitsman (2013) theorizes this insight by making a conceptual distinction between coalition and alliances, a coalition being formed

in order to counter a specific threat only (being an ad hoc institution), whereas an alliance has political weight it can translate from peace to wartime conditions. Weitsman then argues that the institutional design of the former makes them more militarily effective than the latter: basically, states in coalition focus principally on operational effectiveness, while states in alliances are primarily concerned with political effectiveness.

(p. 661) Yet, while the idea of a difference in nature between wartime alliances and coalitions is interesting, it is also highly disputable. Weitsman creates ideal-types of coalitions and alliances, while in reality the distinction is not that clear-cut. During the Gulf War the effectiveness of the ad hoc coalition probably benefited from the fact that some of its core members were part of NATO and shared a history of military cooperation. And regarding operations in Afghanistan, it seems difficult to oppose the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) as a case of coalition warfare while the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would be a case of wartime alliance. Both faced the same type of problems, and the difference between the two is one of degree, not kind. As such, it is probably more appropriate to talk about a multinational military intervention (MMI), which may or may not use the planning and execution facilities offered by a standing alliance such as NATO.

An enduring question to which Weitsman alerts us concerns the military effectiveness of multinational military interventions. This question must be appreciated via an underlying dilemma between rival military and political logics inherent in MMIs. On the one hand, the logic of military effectiveness and less friction push for the integration of all armed forces under a single chain of command. On the other, the logic of sovereignty makes states reluctant to relinquish control over their troops, as they ultimately are politically accountable for their actions and may have interests diverging from those of coalition partners. This tension between (military) integration and (political) autonomy is at the heart of the contemporary challenges of coalition warfare and explain multiple phenomena such as the existence of parallel chains of command, uneven burden sharing, or caveats (Auerswald and Saideman 2014).

Those few studies that do examine this topic identify a trade-off between the political benefits for the United States of operating with allies and the military constraints these allies impose on the conduct of operations. The most powerful state leading a coalition (in this case the United States) has to accept a degree of operational ineffectiveness in order to gain political benefits from the participation of junior partners in a multinational military intervention (Bensahel 2007).

The trade-off between military effectiveness and political value and legitimacy ties in with what "any officer knows intuitively," according to a military analysis, namely that "interoperability of equipment and compatibility of doctrine and operational procedures pose significant challenges in any coalition" (Scales 1998: 4). Accepting a loss of a degree of military effectiveness would thus seem to be premised on a plan for acquiring a political gain that can offset the military setback. Yet we know little about how this trade-off actually works—about the level of political benefits that might compensate for potential or ac-

tual military ineffectiveness, or whether the "trade-off" in some cases might be annulled by, say, the combined political and military contributions junior partners can make.

Schmitt (2018) has questioned the practical reach of the trade-off. He argues that the utility of a junior partner's contribution depends on whether this junior partner has a high degree of standing in the international system, or on its military contribution which can be both integrated (a large number of troops deployed and the willingness to (p. 662) use them) and of a superior technological quality. Contrary to what the trade-off perspective suggests, cases of countries with high standing but no real military integration and quality are rare and limited to very peculiar geostrategic contexts, such as Syria's participation in the 1991 Gulf War. Instead, junior partners tend to be both militarily and politically effective, or they tend to be militarily effective but with little political weight. In both instances the trade-off does not apply.

44.4.2 The Quest for Legitimacy

In the post-Cold War era, multilateralism has become a key factor legitimizing military interventions. We refer here to multilateralism not as an ambitious set of procedures shared by all the great powers, which it could be, but less dramatically as a shared understanding among multiple states cooperating militarily, and this regardless of the specific decision mechanisms and arrangements between them. Thus, as Martha Finnemore (2003: 82) notes, "multilateralism legitimizes action by signaling broad support for the actor's goals. Interveners use it to demonstrate that their purpose is not merely self-serving and particularistic but is joined in some way to community interests that other states share." In other words, the current international normative context regarding the use of force encourages multilateralism and incentivizes states to build international coalitions in order to signal support for their cause.

States employing military force sometimes struggle to meet this expectation. In 2003, when unable to secure a formal UN Security Council resolution for the Iraq intervention, the United States attempted to replace multilateralism by multinationalism, making the sheer number of participants in the intervention a value in itself. In effect, mass became a substitute for principled legitimacy. However, judging by the record, it is a poor substitute. In the Iraq intervention, which lacked a UN mandate, the United States struggled to mobilize support even from close allies, such as Turkey; in Afghanistan, where the campaign was consistently anchored in UNSC resolutions, operations and logistics were comparatively easy to organize in widespread networks of allies and partners (Mattox and Grenier 2015).

The attempt to establish "legitimacy by mass" in order to compensate for the absence of principled multilateral legitimacy is thus problematic. Coalition-building strategies based on an alleged "legitimacy-aggregation model" should therefore be subjected to scrutiny, as they likely promise more operational effectiveness and impact than they can deliver. Schmitt (2018) shows that no relationship (positive or negative) between the international public support (consistently under 30 percent) and the number of states participating

in Afghanistan or Iraq interventions can be identified: in other words, the "legitimacy-aggregation" strategy that drove the make-up of large coalitions had no observable effect on the perceptions of the interventions by international audiences. Revealingly, Stefano Recchia (2015) demonstrates that US military officers are usually more inclined than their civilian counterparts to operate within a multilateral framework in spite of the operational challenges involved, given their awareness of (p. 663) the operational impact of legitimacy. Military officers may thus be inclined to consider the diplomatic-strategic dimension of the deployment one of several preconditions for operational success, a point which suggests that coalitions' comparative advantage in terms of military effectiveness—discussed in the previous section—should be appreciated in a wider context. In fact, durable alliances and other multilateral frameworks based on principles in addition to the pragmatics that inform coalitions, have competitive advantages that pull coalitions back into their fold. The outcome is not the dominance of one institutional form over the other but rather a difficult and contested relationship between coalitions and alliances, each of which have distinct but incomplete advantages.

44.4.3 The Future

Ultimately, and as previously noted, military cooperation is shaped by the expectation of war and the desire to prevent it or prevail in it. As the character of war changes, the format and shape of military cooperation will change alongside it. Several trends in contemporary warfare are likely to have an impact on future multinational military interventions.

First, it seems that the rise of what has been called "compound warfare" will continue as a major battlefield phenomenon. This type of fighting implies technologically superior forces enabling and supporting local combatants through airpower, limited ground forces, naval power, or other capabilities (cyber, intelligence, etc.). This model refers to the NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011, the French-led intervention in the Sahel since 2013, the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria since 2014 in support of the Iraqi armed forces and rebel groups, the Russian intervention in support of rebels in Ukraine's Donbass region, and the Russian intervention in Syria since 2015 in support of the Assad regime.

Compound warfare is less costly than the large ground deployments of Afghanistan and Iraq and on the face of it offers the distinct advantage of political gain at less cost. However, this type of warfare also intensifies the traditional challenges of coalition warfare. For instance, in the relationship between local forces and the technologically superior power, the latter will become politically responsible for the former's behavior. In a sense, this is a new version of the "alliance security dilemma" of entrapment and abandonment: the outside great power will want to orient the intervention's strategy in a certain direction but risks entrapment by local maneuvers and strategizing; conversely, the local troops can only go so far in pulling the great power's string because they risk its severing and thus their own abandonment on the battlefield. All these considerations are compounded by the technical challenges of coordinating and integrating distinctively different levels of organizational and technical skill into a cohesive military force. There is a risk that great powers will be overtly focused on form, which local forces will mimic, at

the expense of operational impact along local lines and traditions. Thus, it is thought provoking that Russia has had more success coordinating with the Syrian regime than (p. 664) NATO had coordinating with rebels in Libya, and there seem to be two main reasons for this. First, the imbalance of military skill between Russia and the Syrian regime is less pronounced than between NATO and the Libyan rebels, which makes operational coordination easier and more effective. Second, political alignment between two actors is smoother than between an alliance of 28 member states and a plurality of rebel movements. Indeed, the record suggests that compound warfare will inherently put alliances' cohesion under stress.

Another important aspect for alliances and coalitions to consider in the future is their capability to create cohesive strategic narratives aimed at external parties and also their own publics. Strategic narratives are an important way for political entities to shape their environment by justifying and implementing their preferred policies (Miskimmon et al. 2013). Yet, the coordination of strategic narratives is challenging for an alliance that has to balance cohesiveness toward external audiences with member states' attention to their own public opinion. In the Afghan campaign, NATO allies upheld multiple and sometimes competing strategic narratives, which inevitably impacted negatively on public opinion (De Graaf et al. 2015). Considering the new media ecology (De Franco 2012) and the growth of connectivity (Betz 2015), the necessity to establish cohesive narratives in order to maximize strategic effect is here to stay, which is to say that potential political disagreements among alliance members will develop under a magnifying glass.

Third, multinational military exercises (MMEs) are becoming increasingly important in the establishment and maintenance of strategic partnerships, and have become a diplomatic tool in their own right. Data compiled by the *Military Balance* since the end of the Cold War show a constant rise in the number, and variety, of multinational military exercises, in particular in Europe and in Asia. Such exercises fulfill a number of important functions. They may first of all, and in quite traditional fashion function as a deterrent tool as they signal resolve and readiness. Moreover, they may serve as track-two diplomacy between military powers that are strategic rivals. For instance, China and the United States train together once a year (alongside many other countries) during the RIMPAC exercise. MMEs also benefit the individual domains of great powers, as they facilitate the establishment of security networks with partner countries not ready for formal alliance commitments. Such partnerships typically evolve around the adoption and maintenance of common procedures and ways of war. MMEs also facilitate defense exports as the great power can demonstrate defense know-how and partner countries can demonstrate allegiance by buying into the patron's defense equipment.

Future research on alliances should therefore pay careful attention to MMEs as vehicles for both alliance formation—even if informal—as well as international security governance. If MMEs fulfill their potential, they can help stabilize both patron–patron and patron–client relations. However, MMEs are as vulnerable to the dynamics of the security

dilemma as other forms of security cooperation and should be studied within this broad context.

Finally, trends in warfare will change the dynamics of intra-alliance diplomacy. Traditionally, such diplomacy has evolved around questions of burden sharing, which has been measured in terms of shares of GDP or manpower and fighting power amassed **(p. 665)** for defensive postures or military operations. New technologies—or, emerging security challenges in NATO-speak—offer new opportunities for alliance diplomats, in particular in regards to cyber and information warfare, though opportunities also emerge from broader issues of societal resilience and hybrid warfare. Resilience can refer to energy security, border security, or even the inclusion of social minorities in the constitutional order. This range of emerging security challenges offers allies a broader menu for choice in terms of their alliance contribution but also makes the political task of striking a "fair" burden sharing deal more complex. Such complexity in turn tempts populist leadership, which promises to rigorously sort out affairs, but which in effect should be considered another facet of the intricacy of intra-alliance management.

This broader context of alliance diplomacy should thus be part of the research agenda. The central question concerns the ability of "reluctant" allies to argue for broad measures of collective defense and the inverse ability of "spearhead" allies to narrow the strategic agenda to suit their key interests, and how this relationship is upended by new technologies and security challenges.

44.5 Conclusion

The study of alliances has traditionally focused on states and war, with alliances being a tool with which the former could manage the latter. In recent years, the field has widened, taking into account alliances' evolving and contested relationship to both broader collective security institutions and narrower and supposedly more effective coalitions. In this chapter we have emphasized this evolution of the study of alliances, beginning with traditions and moving on to collective security and coalitions.

Alliances have advantages in both directions. Compared to collective security institutions, they offer a sharper combination of capacity and purpose, something that led NATO to appropriate some of the collective security thinking of the 1990s without giving up its collective defense character. Compared to coalitions, alliances have staying power and thus political weight, just as they confer a greater degree of legitimacy to military operations. With these advantages, it is unlikely that we will see any weakening of alliances as a phenomenon in international relations.

The politics of alliances, their character and impact should be carefully scrutinized, though. Their changing boundaries vis-à-vis collective security institutions could well weaken the UNSC concert of power and thus intensify great power rivalry. Likewise, informal alliances will as a type of networked coalition pretend to offer security governance but will simultaneously be tied to spheres of great power influence that are contested and

must be diplomatically managed. And finally, widened scope for internal alliance diplomacy suggests new opportunities for building cohesion but inversely also enhanced space for recriminations of free riding and unfair burden sharing. As they thus change in character, alliances will continuously define the frontier between cooperation and conflict and be of central concern to security studies scholars.

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