

Summaries

7–48

The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts

Michael Beckley, Tufts University

A large literature assumes that alliances entangle the United States in military conflicts that it might otherwise avoid. Since 1945, however, there have been only five cases of what might be characterized as U.S. entanglement—the 1954 and 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crises, the Vietnam War, and the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s—and even these cases are far from clear-cut. U.S. entanglement is rare because the United States, as a superpower with many allies, is capable of exploiting loopholes in alliance agreements, side-stepping commitments that seriously imperil U.S. interests, playing the demands of various allies off of each other, and using alliances to deter adversaries and allies from initiating or escalating conflicts.

49–90

A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation

Charles L. Glaser, George Washington University

Despite the intense focus on China's rise, the United States has yet to confront the most challenging question posed by this power shift: Should it pursue a strategy of limited geopolitical accommodation to avoid conflict? U.S. policy continues to focus almost entirely on preserving the geopolitical status quo in Northeast Asia. Given the shifting power balance in Asia, however, there are strong theoretical rationales for considering whether significant changes to the status quo could increase U.S. security. A possibility designed to provide the benefits of accommodation while reducing its risks is a grand bargain in which the United States ends its commitment to defend Taiwan and, in turn, China peacefully resolves its maritime disputes in the South China and East China Seas and officially accepts the United States' long-term military security role in East Asia. In broad terms, the United States has three other options—unilateral accommodation, a concert of Asian powers, and the current U.S. rebalance to Asia. Unilateral accommodation and the rebalance have advantages that make the choice a close call, but all things considered, a grand bargain is currently the United States' best bet.

91–129

Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions

Gene Gerzhoy, Harvard University

When does a nuclear-armed state's provision of security guarantees to a militarily threatened ally inhibit the ally's nuclear weapons ambitions? Although the established security model of nuclear proliferation posits that clients will prefer to depend on a patron's extended nuclear deterrent, this proposition overlooks how military threats and doubts about the patron's intentions encourage clients to seek nuclear weapons of their own. To resolve this indeterminacy in the security model's explanation of nuclear restraint, it is necessary to account for the patron's use of alliance coercion, a strategy consisting of conditional threats of military abandonment to obtain compliance with the patron's demands. This strategy succeeds when the client is militarily dependent on the patron and when the patron provides assurances that threats of abandonment are conditional on the client's nuclear choices. Historical evidence from West Germany's nuclear decisionmaking provides a test of this logic. Contrary to the common belief among nonproliferation scholars, German leaders persistently doubted the credibility and durability of U.S. security guarantees and sought to acquire an independent nuclear deterrent. Rather than preferring to renounce nuclear armament, Germany was compelled to do so by U.S. threats of military abandonment, contradicting the established logic of the security model and affirming the logic of alliance coercion.

130–169

The Showdown That Wasn't: U.S.-Israeli Relations and American Domestic Politics, 1973–75

Galen Jackson, University of California, Los Angeles

How influential are domestic politics on U.S. foreign affairs? With regard to Middle East policy, how important a role do ethnic lobbies, Congress, and public opinion play in influencing U.S. strategy? Answering these questions requires the use of archival records and other primary documents, which provide an undistorted view of U.S. policymakers' motivations. The Ford administration's 1975 reassessment of its approach to Arab-Israeli statecraft offers an excellent case for the examination of these issues in light of this type of historical evidence. President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger decided, in large part because of the looming 1976 presidential election, to avoid

a confrontation with Israel in the spring and summer of 1975 by choosing to negotiate a second disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel rather than a comprehensive settlement. Nevertheless, domestic constraints on the White House's freedom of action were not insurmountable and, had they had no other option, Ford and Kissinger would have been willing to engage in a showdown with Israel over the Middle East conflict's most fundamental aspects. The administration's concern that a major clash with Israel might stoke an outbreak of anti-Semitism in the United States likely contributed to its decision to back down.

170–207

Concessions or Coercion? How Governments Respond to Restive Ethnic Minorities

Arman Grigoryan, Lehigh University

Destabilized multiethnic states and empires are environments that are highly susceptible to violent ethnonationalist conflict. Conflicts between states built on the ruins of such empires and their minorities are especially common. James Fearon has famously argued that these conflicts are the result of minorities' rational incentives to rebel, which in turn are the result of newly independent states' inability to guarantee that these minorities will not be discriminated against if they acquiesce to citizenship, as well as expectations that over time the balance of power will shift against minorities as states consolidate their institutions. States can, however, take steps to reassure their minorities. The puzzle is why they often fail to do so. In fact, states often adopt policies that confirm minorities' worst fears, pushing them toward rebellion. Such action may be precipitated by a state's belief that a minority is motivated by a separatist agenda rather than by the desire to have its concerns and grievances satisfactorily addressed. If secession is a minority's primary objective, then concessions intended to demobilize the minority will only make the state more vulnerable to future demands and separatist bids. The existence of third parties with incentives to support minority separatism exacerbates the problem. The violent and nonviolent minority disputes in post-Soviet Georgia illustrate these findings.

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