Classical alliances and their evolution in the contemporary security environment

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolving global landscape over the past two decades, emphasizing the imperative for alliances, particularly NATO, to earnestly reevaluate their objectives. The absence of a unified purpose is identified as a hindrance to alliances in delineating suitable policies, structures, and capabilities essential for goal attainment. The paper underscores the resilience of NATO as an alliance that remains pertinent amidst shifting security paradigms, acting as a deterrent to Russia and a values-centric framework for addressing challenges posed by China. Emphasizing the critical need for trust among alliance members, the paper explores potential risks, including eroding political will and accusations of transactionalism. Furthermore, it discusses NATO's significance in preserving the security of Western democracies and highlights ongoing changes spurred by the conflict in Ukraine, leading to a renewed focus on alliance cohesion and expansion. The abstract concludes by noting the announcement of a forthcoming Strategic Concept to guide NATO's activities in the next decade.

Keywords: *alliance, international system, security, cooperation*

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Introduction

The historical context of alliance formation, deeply ingrained in strategic thought, underscores the significance of alliances in warfare and conflict. Sun Tzu emphasizes the strategic advantage gained by dismantling adversaries' alliances, cautioning against the pitfalls of neutrality. Thucydides highlights the enduring role of alliances throughout history, criticizing neutrality for its false hope. Machiavelli reinforces the need for decisive positions and active engagement. Alliances, fundamentally collaborative endeavors, provide nations with enhanced capabilities to achieve shared objectives. Membership in alliances alleviates burdens and amplifies benefits, often intertwined with security concerns and the establishment of international order. In the realm of International Relations, alliances emerge from interactions between sovereign entities driven by motives to dominate, secure, or balance power.

In the contemporary international system, states remain defining entities, shaping their environment through collaborative relationships. States strategically form alliances to bolster survival prospects, even at the expense of autonomy. Major powers, seeking increased influence or balancing power, engage in alliances broadly, leading to cooperative relationships. Defined as formal agreements between parties working together to advance common interests, alliances, as per the USA's doctrine, play a crucial role in achieving shared objectives, particularly in mutual military defense. Alliances, encompassing various domains, are examined here within the security context.

States forge alliances to protect against threats posed by other states, with powerful states engaging to enhance global influence. The core objective of alliances is to combine capacities for mutual benefit, characterized by cooperation, formality, and a focus on security. Alliance variations encompass formation circumstances, engagement typology, internal cooperation, and operating sector, along with factors like ideology, objectives, size, influence, capabilities, and leadership.

The overarching goal of alliances is to bolster member capabilities collectively, exerting greater influence on the international stage. For smaller states, alliances are pivotal for strength, while larger states shape the global power balance through alliance structures. Most alliances arise in response to existing or anticipated threats, offering alternatives to rebalance forces against emerging challenges. Internal cohesion strengthens when national and alliance interests align, and institutionalized cooperation fosters routine collaboration. The dynamic nature of alliances acknowledges their dissolution or reformulation based on evolving circumstances or exhausted issues over time.

Understanding the Alliance

The Creation of Alliances

In a complex world, small states engage in ongoing alliance formation to improve their prospects for survival. Aligning with a 'greater' power is viewed as the optimal strategy for survival, even if it involves partial concessions of independence or sovereignty. Conversely, major powers, aiming to amplify their influence globally or counter a formidable adversary effectively, establish alliances not only with states considered great but also with a broader array of partners.

In most current dictionaries, an alliance is defined as a formal agreement or treaty between two or more states to cooperate for specific purposes. While in international relations, the concept of alliance is understood as: "a formal agreement between two or more states for mutual support in case of war. Contemporary alliances foresee combined actions... and are generally of a defensive nature, obliging allies to unite forces if one or more of them are attacked by another state or coalition. Although alliances can be informal, they are usually formalized by a treaty of alliance" (Britanica.com/History & Society/Alliance).

Alliances come in various types, with this paper specifically concentrating on security alliances. All definitions in contention acknowledge the involvement of a minimum of two actors. Debates center around the number of actors and whether they are exclusively state actors. Ideally, the rules established in such organizations should encompass as many actors as possible to exert influence on international relations. These actors may include not only state but also non-state entities. The definition above specifies that cooperation is voluntary, prompting questions about the obligatory nature of accepted rules, applicable to both great powers and small states. We presume that the majority, if not all actors, make choices when deciding to participate in multilateral cooperation, irrespective of existential issues related to power dynamics in international relations.

On the necessity of forming alliances, Waltz (1979) argues; believing that the international system is anarchic and that each state must independently seek its own survival, weaker states try to find a balance with their rivals and form an alliance with a stronger state to obtain security assurance against offensive action from an adversary state. On the other hand, Mearsheimer (2014) and other realists argue that anarchy encourages all states to always increase their power.

According to Waltz (1979), since the world does not have a common government, thus is "anarchic," survival is the main motivation of states. States are not reliable for the intentions of other states and consequently try to maximize

their security, resulting in the situation a security dilemma. States tend toward interests to dominate, secure, or balance power. According to Snyder (1991), under a security dilemma, there are two reasons why alliances will form.

- First, a state that is dissatisfied with the amount of security it has forms an Alliance to increase its security.
- Second, a state doubts the reliability of existing allies who may assist it and thus decides to establish another alliance or ally. The fact that states can never be sure of the intentions of other states. Considering this fear, which can never be eliminated, states accept that the more powerful they are in relation to their rivals, the greater their chances of survival.

Along with alliances, we often encounter the term coalition. A coalition is a temporary alliance for combined action, of interest groups or individuals engaged to achieve a common outcome. Through political mobilization, you create a group that has some sense of common purposes and/or a sense of related interests. A coalition is an alliance for joint action. In short, a coalition is an alliance to achieve a specific goal. Both terms are closely related and even interchangeable in many cases. However, both words focus on different things. An alliance has more to do with mutual interests or benefits, while a coalition has more to do with performing certain actions. The use of both terms is not limited to the political context only. They can be used in other contexts: military, financial, commercial, technological, etc. An alliance is looser than a coalition. A coalition is a group identified with the same action. Alliances are more for protection, while a coalition is more for joint attack.

Typology of the Alliance

Alliances have been a fact of international political life since antiquity. They perform various functions for states, often simultaneously, making categorization challenging. However, their primary function is military, and the three main classifications used in academic literature affirm this:

- Defense pacts, obliging signatories to militarily intervene on behalf of any treaty partner attacked militarily;
- Neutrality and non-aggression pacts, which require signatories to remain militarily neutral if a co-signatory is attacked (non-aggression pacts are usually more specific than neutrality pacts); and
- Agreements where signatories agree to consult with each other and potentially cooperate in a crisis, including an armed attack (Small and Singer, 1969, p.5)

The common features of all three types of alliances lead to a definition like that proposed by Stephen Walt (1997): alliances are formal or informal commitments to security cooperation between two or more states. "Although the precise agreements embodied in different alliances vary extraordinarily, the defining feature of any alliance is a commitment to mutual military support against certain external actors under certain circumstances." (p.157).

Alliances, viewed broadly, can take the form of either formal, written treaties or informal, unwritten agreements grounded in tacit understandings or verbal guarantees. Despite the formalities, written treaties may not necessarily reflect the actual commitment of the parties involved. The primary purpose of alliances is to collectively advance the interests of their members by leveraging diverse capabilities—industrial, financial, and military—for military and political success. The combinations of these abilities can vary, as indicated by academic classifications. The institutionalization of alliances varies, with many throughout history being loose and often ad hoc arrangements. Notably, European alliances, like those against Napoleon (Moore, 1999), were typically of this nature. These loose coalitions persisted until the participants realized that enduring unity was essential for lasting freedom from conflict, outweighing short-term gains through individual deals.

Ad-hoc alliances often contain strange bedfellows. Britain, a constitutional monarchy with laws passed by Parliament, joined forces with autocratic Russia to defeat Napoleon. Similarly, in World War II, the Anglo-American democracies found it necessary, to defeat Nazi Germany, to ally with Stalin's totalitarian state, who had been and would again be their enemy. Throughout the conflict, each side was suspicious that the other might make a separate deal with the German dictator, and the desire to ensure that neither side did so, supported the alliance as much as military capabilities. In fact, as Robert Osgood argues, "near to aggregation, the most prominent function of alliances has been the restraint and control of allies" (1968, p.22).

The Theoretical Aspect and Origin of Alliances

The origin of alliances is a highly debated topic in International Relations theory, with numerous studies seeking to explain why states form alliances, when they become allies, and the conditions under which specific alliances are likely to emerge. Regarding the first question—why alliances are formed—the prevailing speculation revolves around the collective security of national interests. In essence, nations primarily create alliances in response to perceived threats to their national security. The diverse sources of threats, whether external or internal, give rise to two broad categories that reflect different perspectives on alliance formation. The first,

focusing on external security, aligns with realism, which grounds itself in relations among great powers. The second, concentrating on internal security, examines how smaller states, particularly developing countries, form alliances. In addition to these main approaches, some scholars have presented alternative explanations, highlighted the significance of social, cultural, and political similarities, or considered alliances as tools that shape and constrain state behavior.

Approaches Based on External Security

Alliance theories have traditionally been dominated by realist and neorealist schools of thought. According to this tradition, systemic structure, structural polarity, and systemic anarchy determine the formation of alliances. Specifically, the characteristic anarchy of the international system compels states to prioritize their security. As Martin Wight notes, the function of an alliance is to "reinforce the security of the allies or promote their interests in the outside world" (in Piccoli, 1999). States unable to unilaterally confront a stronger enemy decide to cooperate with other states in the same situation to enhance their security by pooling their capabilities against a common enemy.

Essentially, this is what is commonly referred to as the "power aggregation model," (Piccoli, 1999) the most recognized explanation for the origin of alliances. This model assumes that allies value each other for the military assistance they can provide to each other to deter a common threat. In other words, facing external threats, states seek alliances primarily to increase their effective military capabilities through combination with others. Therefore, military power, security interests, and external threats, not internal factors, determine the alliance behavior of states.

In this context, the relationship between the theory of balance of power and alliance theory must be emphasized: alliances, from this perspective, are how states maintain an approximately equal distribution of power among themselves, according to Morgenthau's (1948) words, "a necessary function of the balance of power that operates in a multi-state system" (in Piccoli, 1999). According to his view, within the struggle for power that characterizes international politics, each state can unilaterally increase its power with internal means, aggregate its power in that of other states, or prevent other states from aggregating their power with the enemy. The first choice implies an arms race, while the second and third options lead to the formation of alliances.

Recently, Stephen Walt has developed a deep analysis of alliance formation, in which the concept of "external threat" is central in his "balance of threat theory." Walt criticizes the classical theory of structural balance of power for its overemphasis on the concept of power (defined as general capabilities). According to him, states seek allies not to balance power, but to balance threats. The extent

to which a state threatens others is not determined exclusively by its material capabilities (population, economic, industrial, and military resources), as suggested by the power balance approach, but is also influenced by its geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.

The debate over alliance formation is also focused on the issue of how states choose sides in a conflict, in short, the dichotomy between balancing and *bandwagoning*. The term "*bandwagoning*" as a description of international alliance behavior first appeared in Kenneth Waltz's (1979) Theory of International Politics (in Piccoli, 1999). In his structural model of the balance of power theory, Waltz uses "*bandwagoning*" to serve as the opposite of balancing: *bandwagoning* refers to joining the stronger coalition, while balancing means allying with the weaker side.

The dichotomy between balancing and bandwagoning, which represents two distinct hypotheses regarding how states choose their alliance partners in the face of an increasing threat, is not only supported but also further developed by Walt (1997). He clarifies that his use of the terms balancing and bandwagoning aligns with Kenneth Waltz's (1979) definitions; however, he redefines bandwagoning as "approaching the source of danger." In his balance of threat theory, Walt argues that the inclination to bandwagon can be driven by defensive motives (to placate the dominant power), offensive motives (to benefit from the dominant power's victory) directly or indirectly, or a combination of both. Walt strongly asserts that, empirically, balancing is the prevalent response to external threats, while bandwagoning is typically observed in weak and isolated states. However, he warns that relying on bandwagoning is perilous, as it involves trust and amplifies the resources available to the threatening power; an ally today could become an adversary tomorrow. Opting for the weaker side (balancing) helps prevent the emergence of hegemony that could jeopardize the independence of all states.

Despite Walt's (1997) "neorealist" orientation, his analysis surprisingly downplays the role of the system structure variable. He overlooks the significance of structural differences by assuming that his generalizations are equally applicable to multipolar and bipolar systems. A compelling argument can be made that bandwagoning is logically more probable in a multipolar system than in a bipolar one. In a multipolar system, the ambiguity of identifying the greatest threat state can impede balancing. The notion of bandwagoning gains traction due to the belief that there are alternative objectives for an aggressor's energies and other potential allies that a state can turn to if its ally-turned-aggressor becomes a threat. Additionally, in multipolarity, effective balancing faces obstacles due to concerns about collective goods and the expectation that someone else will take charge—a phenomenon known as "free-riding." States may choose to stand aside in the hope that another state will confront the aggressor, leading to inefficient balancing and providing the aggressor an opportunity to upset the balance through partial aggression. Another

issue affecting balancing in multipolarity is "chain-ganging." In a multipolar system characterized by an anarchic environment and relative equality among alliance partners, each state perceives its security as intricately linked to that of its allies. Consequently, chain-ganging occurs when nations are drawn into a war to protect vulnerable allies, fearing that the fall of these allies would significantly impact the security of all. States unconditionally aligning with immature allies pose a threat to system stability by risking an unlimited war that jeopardizes the survival of major powers in the system. In contrast, in a bipolar system, bandwagoning is less likely due to the virtual certainty that the superpower's defender will continue to balance the threat, and the threat itself is less ambiguous (in Piccoli, 1999).

Some scholars critique Walt's study space for its limited scope, attributing this constraint to the defensive one-sidedness that characterizes his perspective. Walt views all alliances as responses to "threat," and his scheme lacks consideration for offensive alliances. Schweller (1994) highlights this gap, pointing out that "alliances are responses not only to threats but also to opportunities." Interestingly, despite the common realist distinctions between "imperialist and status-quo power," "satisfied or dissatisfied powers," or "revolutionary and status-quo states," both realism and neorealism exhibit a status-quo bias in interpreting alliance policies.

Randall Schweller (1994) is one of the scholars who base his analysis on the distinction between status-quo powers and revisionist states, arguing that "generally, revisionist powers are the main drivers of alliance behavior; status-quo states are reactors." According to Schweller, the main problem with the criticisms raised about Walt's arguments is the acceptance of his assumptions that:

- Alliances result from a perceived threat, whether internal or external.
- Bandwagoning is commonly viewed as capitulation. However, Schweller contends that bandwagoning should be understood not merely as a response to a threatening state but as an alignment with the stronger one. Furthermore, states may be motivated by the promise of rewards rather than the threat of punishment. Schweller acknowledges that the pursuit of gains is not the sole explanation for bandwagoning behavior, often observed at the conclusion of wars when states join the victorious side to secure a share of the spoils, driven by fear.

Schweller (1994) argues that *"the most important determinant of outreach is the compatibility of political goals, not the balance of power or threat."* Therefore, if a state is satisfied with the status quo, it will join the coalition by protecting the systemic equilibrium, even if it is the strongest. On the other hand, a revisionist state that aims for "profit" and not security will align itself with a rising expansionist state or a coalition seeking to overthrow the status quo. In short, according to Schweller, a

state's alliance behavior is not necessarily determined by the presence of an external threat, but by opportunities for profit and gain.

This theory is able, according to its author, to explain alliance formations both at the state level and at the systemic level. The former refers to "the costs a state is willing to pay to protect its value compared to the costs a state is willing to pay to expand its values." In this way, Schweller (1994) distinguishes between four different types of states:

1. "Lions," status-quo satisfied states that are willing to pay a high price to protect what they own;
2. "Wolves," who consider their situation intolerable and, consequently, are willing to pay a high price to overturn the status quo;
3. "Jackals," dissatisfied free riders willing to follow the "Wolves" or "Lions" who are on the verge of victory;
4. "Lambs," willing to pay low costs for their defense or expansion, which are usually suspected of fear.

At the systemic level, the theory of the balance of interests suggests that the distribution of capabilities, in itself, does not determine the stability of the system. More important are the objectives and means for which those capabilities or influence are used.

Schweller's (1994) systemic conclusions diverge from a key aspect of structural realism, emphasizing that international politics' broad outcomes are more influenced by the state system's structural constraints than by individual behaviors. Unlike Schweller, Waltz (1959) contends that interactions among key actors, determined by the number of poles, shape states' behavior within the system. Waltz asserts that certain international behaviors are rewarded or punished, influencing the foreign policies states adopt. Schweller's focus on state motivations overlooks systemic effects, particularly stability, which Waltz attributes to interactions between units and systemic factors. In summary, Schweller associates bandwagoning with states having more to gain than lose and balancing with the opposite. These behaviors, linked to opposite systemic conditions, are crucial factors in system stability or flux.

In examining Waltz's balance of threat theory and Schweller's balance of interests' theory, a crucial question emerges: how is the causal link guiding state alliance policies articulated? Walt's theory, centered on the concept of threat, explores how a state can form alliances against or with the state posing the threat. The challenge lies in understanding how the same cause can result in such different outcomes. Is state strength and ally availability the sole determinant of alliance choices, as Walt suggests? On the contrary, Schweller asserts that positive sanctions (gains) are the

most effective motivators for bandwagoning, yet he also acknowledges that fear can expedite the decision to align with the stronger party. Thus, the fundamental question remains: what truly drives state alliance policies, gain, or fear?

Alliance with a threatening state can also be motivated by phenomena different from those shown by Walt and Schweller: states may choose to ally with adversaries to contain the threats arising from each other. Patricia Weitsman (2004) labels this dynamic linkage (tethering) and distinguishes it from balancing because:

1. it implies a compromise from a position of strength and not from surrender or appeasement; and
2. it involves reciprocal threats and not asymmetric threats, as is the case with balancing.

In conclusion, it's crucial to highlight that the balancing/bandwagoning distinction, advocated by Walt and to a lesser extent by Schweller, oversimplifies the spectrum of choices in alliance dynamics, hindering a nuanced analysis. Beyond the binary options of allying with or against a threatening state, various alternatives exist. These include declaring formal or informal neutrality, improving relations with other states without forming alliances, seeking isolation, and pursuing reconciliation and compromise with the threatening state without complete capitulation. Schroeder (1976) suggests that these externally oriented conciliatory strategies may coexist with internal balancing efforts such as armament. The complexity of diplomatic history reveals numerous combinations of balancing and conciliation strategies.

Internal Security-Based Alignment

Deborah Larson (2002) proposes shifting the focus from the systemic level to the domestic context to better comprehend when states form alliances, using an institutionalist approach. Analyzing the behavior of small powers in Central and Eastern Europe toward Germany in the 1930s, Larson argues that weak regimes align with potential hegemons to maintain authority and address internal challenges. Her emphasis on the internal structure raises questions about different political regimes in the region during that period. Larson's assertion that band wagoning is linked to weak states aligns with threat balancing theory, predicting that weaker states are more likely to accept threats than balance against them. However, her analysis lacks a clear connection between weak internal positions of elites and the choice to ally with a threatening state, leaving questions about leaders' decision-making processes and why guarantees are sought from an aggressive state (Piccoli, 1999).

Steven David (1991) explores the alignment decisions of elites in Third World countries, focusing on their internal weakness. Leaders in these countries prioritize political and physical survival, particularly against internal threats. David argues that what may seem like *band wagoning* is, in fact, a form of balancing. Leaders adopt a conciliatory stance toward external threats, especially those supporting subversive groups, to preserve forces for immediate use against more pressing internal threats. This aligns with David's theory of "omnibalancing," which expands realism to consider internal threats and emphasizes state leadership as the unit of analysis. Michael Barnett (2009) and Jack Levy (2009) further complement this theory, highlighting the role of state-society relations in shaping security policies. They suggest that states facing external threats may prefer alliance policies to secure resources for internal threats when internal mobilization is challenging.

In this way, the alliance policy pursued is not simply a function of the presence or absence of external threats (a systemic variable) but is also linked to "the internal objectives of state actors and the social, economic, and political constraints that limit the availability of resources in society and the access of governments to those resources at acceptable costs..."

States may opt for external alliances due to several factors (Piccoli, 1999): (1) resource constraints hindering the support for an armament program; (2) the recognition that extracting internal resources may jeopardize long-term economic power and, consequently, state security; (3) the acknowledgment that substantial military expenditures can impact the distribution of resources within government partners, potentially undermining the narrow political support base for ruling elites; and (4) the imperative to address internal threats to political stability, compelling leaders to seek material resources through alliances to quell or suppress disturbances.

The relationship between alliances and armament as two distinct strategies to counter an external threat has been extensively discussed by several authors. On the one hand, there are authors who empirically deny the existence of a link between internal balancing (armament) and external balancing (alliance). On the other hand, others have developed microeconomic interpretive schemes that aim to explain why, in some cases, states choose to undertake an armament program and in other cases decide to form an alliance. According to these models, the choice is made based on the cost-benefit balance of each option; thus, states will decide in favor of the alternative that offers additional security at a lower internal cost.

James Morrow (2014) posits that while systemic factors, such as the magnitude of external threats, play a role, the selection of security strategies is contingent on both internal costs and external benefits. The effectiveness of a policy, according to Morrow, hinges not only on its ability to enhance security but also on the costs associated with overcoming internal resistance. States weigh the internal political

costs and external benefits of options like armament and alliances, selecting a combination that minimizes costs and maximizes benefits. In reality, a state's external options are limited, particularly in alliance formation where finding a willing partner is crucial. Morrow's cautionary note underscores the significance of internal factors in alliance formation, but it does not present an alternative theory that seamlessly integrates domestic and international policy considerations.

Other Resources of Alliances

Liska proposes that alliances fulfill two additional roles: maintaining global stability by restraining an excessively powerful ally ("the function of interconnected control") and legitimizing or fortifying a regime through international recognition. Notably, Liska doesn't differentiate between larger and smaller powers in illustrating these alliance functions. Similarly, Robert Rothstein (1968) categorizes alliances into military alliances (aligned with power aggregation) and political alliances. The latter aims to influence and somewhat constrain a concerned ally, arising from the perception of a situation rather than an unmanageable threat that could be addressed through an alliance.

Paul Schroeder challenges the prevalent view of alliances as "power weapons" and suggests an alternative perspective of alliances as "management tools." Analyzing alliances from 1815 to 1945, Schroeder argues that all alliances function as *pacta de contrahendo*, limiting and controlling ally actions. Despite the cooperative appearance, he emphasizes continuous competition within alliances, aligning with realist principles. While security is often associated with physical survival, it may also involve defending political principles. The alignment of ideologically similar states could be considered "natural," with a shared community of values and principles serving as a rationale for alignment. However, realist and neo-realist studies tend to downplay the role of ideology in alliance choices, a criticism articulated by Walt. In his analysis of alliance formation in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, Walt contends that ideology plays a minor role, with states easily abandoning ideological alignment in the face of significant threats. Only already "secure" states are more likely to pursue ideological preferences in their alliance choices. The influence of ideology becomes more pronounced in a bipolar world, especially when the defensive capabilities of states surpass their offensive potential. However, if defense predominates over attack, the question arises: why should states seek allies? Solely due to ideological solidarity?

Paradoxically, Michael Barnett (1967) employs Walt's theoretical framework and observations of alliance models in the Middle East to argue that state identity provides theoretical leverage on the issues of threat construction and the choice of alliance partner. According to Barnett, in Walt's analysis, "ideology," especially

Arabism, plays a significant role. Arguing that Arabism shapes the identity and policies of Arab leaders, Barnett concludes that it leaves a lasting impact on the dynamics of inter-Arab security and alliance politics. Specifically, he highlights that identity explains and influences alliance dynamics in two distinct ways.

1. it provides theoretical leverage on threat construction (a common identity is likely to generate a common definition of threat);
2. it offers control over who is considered a desirable alliance partner (identity makes some partners more attractive than others). While Barnett's theoretical argument is well-formulated, the historical evidence he presented to support his thesis ironically gives more credit to Walt's conclusions than to the argument that identity provides important insights into the dynamics of security cooperation and alliance politics in the Middle East. The case of the Baghdad Pact, chosen by Barnett as a historical case that confirms his thesis, clearly illustrates how states—Iraq, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and (informally) the United States—with different ideological preferences formed an alliance to protect Western interests against the Soviet threat and allow some of its members (i.e., Iraq and the United Kingdom) to maintain their influence in the region.

Finally, regarding U.S.-Israel relations—the recent historical case examined—Barnett argues that "U.S.-Israeli relations depend on Israel having a unique identity," a claim that oversimplifies the highly strategic cooperation between the two countries. The uniqueness of relations between the United States and Israel is well illustrated by the fact that the two states have never signed a military alliance: due to shared interests, there has never been a question that the U.S. would offer military assistance to Israel in a crisis.

In summary, according to Barnett (1967), his approach does not constitute an alternative perspective for understanding security policy and security cooperation but rather a complementary approach that highlights one of the "distinct" interests of states (i.e., identity), reducing the uncertainty characterizing the process of alliance formation in a multipolar system. As indicated by Snyder, the security dilemma creates a general impetus to form alliances with some states or others, but theoretically, it is impossible to predict who will align with whom. This uncertainty is reduced by the existing model of conflicts and commonalities—resulting from ideological, ethnic, or economic values—among states, influencing the negotiation process and predisposing the system toward certain alliances against others. Earlier, Morgenthau (1948) had suggested a similar argument, stating that *"the ideological factor, when it overrides an actual community of interests, can give strength to an alliance by uniting moral convictions and emotional preferences in its support."*

Challenges of Divergent Interests in NATO: An Academic Overview

The challenge of divergent interests is not a novel issue for NATO. A significant instance of divergent interests occurred between 1959 and 1966 when France withdrew from NATO's military structure, citing perceived disrespect from the United States and NATO's failure to intervene in the Algerian uprising (Lantier, 19 Mar 2009). Divergent interests can lead a nation to perceive another nation's threat differently. For example, the division among allies regarding NATO's policy towards Russia reflects varying perspectives on Russia's potential aggression, access to its natural gas, and considerations of national interest, including the United States viewing dependence on Russian fossil fuels as tantamount to hostage-taking.

In a multipolar world, alliance security is interconnected, and a decision by one ally to engage in conflict triggers the alliance's collective response, known as the chain reaction. If a partner does not fully participate in the conflict, it jeopardizes the security of its ally. Historical examples, such as the alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany in World War I, illustrate the complex dynamics. The interdependence of alliances creates a cyclical and precarious balance, as the dissolution or defection of a major ally would disrupt the alliance, affecting the balance for each partner.

Leaders understand that entering a war entails unpredictable and uncontrollable events. Even with indications of a swift victory, hesitation arises due to uncertainties. Battlefields often yield unexpected results, and powerful states can suffer from dissatisfaction with war conduct, mobilization challenges, and ideological clashes. The diverse interests within NATO are evident in the current geopolitical landscape. Member states near the Balkans perceive instability in Bosnia and Kosovo as the most significant threat, while the U.S. prioritizes countering Islamic extremist terrorism. Others, amidst a global economic crisis, prioritize economic challenges as their top security concern, surpassing other defense issues.

A glance at the other corners of the Alliance reveals a variety of different interests. Member countries located in or near the Balkans "see the instability in Bosnia and Kosovo as the biggest threat to their security." [2]Those who understand the U.S. perspective on national security know that it prioritizes the threat of Islamic extremist terrorism at the top of its defense priorities. And yet, other countries rank the latest global economic crisis as their number one security challenge, thus surpassing all other defense issues.

Today, perhaps there is no more vivid manifestation of the challenges caused by 'different interests' than the rise of the European Union as a competing alliance of

[2] Meetings with European Governments leaders, Brussels: 2007-2009.

collective security. This competition exists because the EU (mainly led by France and Germany) wants to end the hegemony of the United States on the European continent for the last 60 years. And while the European Union currently focuses most of its efforts on unifying and building Europe's collective diplomatic and economic powers, it is simultaneously trying to take over the responsibilities of collective security from the U.S.-led NATO alliance. The last three actions of the European Union prove this point.

The first involved the EU's effort to serve as an arbitrator between Russia and the Republic of Georgia during their conflict in August 2008. While the negotiations led by the French president (and, at that time, the President of the EU) Nicholas Sarkozy for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops were flawed, the EU overshadowed NATO, proving that it could serve a greater role in European collective security.

NATO has the dominance in military capabilities necessary to carry out anti-piracy operations, but the EU prides itself on having the economic, diplomatic, and judicial qualities necessary to capture and prosecute pirates. Even considering these synergistic capabilities, the EU rejected NATO's requests for cooperation, "apparently to strengthen its image as a security organization different from NATO" (Seibert, 30 Mar 2009).

Recently, and most notably, the European Union's Lisbon Treaty of 2008 established the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which "codifies its roles in collective security and multilateral military alliances." (Whiteman, 2008). However, it is important to note that their treaty does not fully commit to joint defense, as some of its members maintain a status of national neutrality.

Morgenthau wrote that, "A nation will avoid alliances if it believes that it is strong enough to sustain itself without aid or if the burden of commitments resulting from the alliance is likely to outweigh the expected benefits." (p.181-182). His statement underscores that nations will avoid the constraints of alliance consensus a) when their national interests differ from those of the alliance, and b) when they have the capacity to achieve their national agendas without the support of an alliance. This helps explain why the current phenomenon of 'diverse interests' is so erosive to NATO.

Despite these points of divergence, there are still many common interests within the Alliance. NATO's engagements in numerous operations and partnership programs over the last 20 years highlight many new and shared interests in the challenges of the 21st century, although to varying degrees among members. As we have seen, NATO was busier conducting security activities across three continents in the last 20 years than in its first 40 years of existence. While individually these activities were not vital to the overall security of NATO members, collectively they helped curb the spread of tyranny and chaos and the advanced conditions that

promote the rule of law, human rights, and better welfare. Again, it is useful to note that these security activities are primarily the competence of multilateral alliances.

At this point, it is very difficult to determine whether the divergence of national interests within NATO overshadows the converging issues, leaving this reasoning for the future dissolution of the Alliance inconclusive. However, both divergent and convergent interests have grown over the last 20 years, demonstrating the dichotomy in NATO's focus. Its activities show that the Alliance is currently more interested in its ideological goals than others. Recognizing this shift, NATO must be aware of the subtle effects caused by the diverse interests that are today encouraged by the high pace of globalization.

Military Alliances

Military alliances are formal agreements between states that emphasize their military objectives. The formation of these alliances has occurred in various historical periods, as we will mention later. Such alliances are formed among two or more members to confront a common threat. Their goal can be to undertake military action against an aggressor or another alliance posing a real threat or engaging in military actions, as seen in the alliances during the world wars, or they may be created to counter a potential risk or threat, such as the NATO alliance.

Classification and Types of Security Alliances

Alliances, which can have economic, political, ideological, or specific field characteristics, will be focused on security alliances. Studying such alliances reveals several classification methods:

1. *By Power:* Alliances may have two members, which is more common, three to four members, or many members that emerged after the ideological divide post-WWII.
2. *By Duration:* Classic division is between permanent alliances (long-term) and temporary (or occasional) alliances.
3. *Other Classifications:* These include effectiveness, goals toward third states, military integration, geopolitical position, power relations, purpose (defensive and offensive), etc.

Analyzing alliances from their creation shows they may consist of different states regarding their national or military power. According to their power, alliances can be composed of actors with equal or not significantly different power, termed

symmetrical alliances. Responsibilities and "gains" during and after the alliance's existence are balanced in symmetrical alliances. In cases where the alliance consists of actors with differences in their power, the alliance is termed asymmetrical. In this case, engagement and termination of the alliance's actions exhibit a dichotomy compared to symmetrical alliances. The role of the leading state, the one with greater power, is felt throughout the alliance's phases.

Besides these two types of alliances, based on the goal of alliance creation, there can be another variation. Generally, if alliance members share a common interest or perceive their adversary as common to all, it is a homogeneous alliance. When this is not possible due to diverse circumstances, we have a heterogeneous alliance. When various combinations between the above alliances occur, there is a range of alliance combinations with their specifications. Most alliances are, to some extent, asymmetrical. Concerning commitments, one signatory may expect less military commitment from the other. For example, the 1839 Treaty of London, where Britain guaranteed Belgium's neutrality, although not a military alliance, "was necessarily a unilateral commitment by Britain to come to Belgium's aid if she were invaded, a commitment Britain respected in 1914" (Barry, 2022).

Regarding capabilities, alliance members can provide vastly different contributions. Britain's contribution to defeating Napoleon was mainly financial and naval; "aside from Arthur Wellesley's campaign in Spain and the victory at Waterloo, few British troops were involved" (Moore, 2022). It was a classic demonstration of how naval powers achieve their victories. In World War II, despite the intensity of battles on the Eastern Front and the Normandy beaches, "the war in Europe was won by the Anglo-American air and naval power, which crippled Germany's ability to prosecute war" (Payson, 2015). Perhaps the Red Army would not have prevailed over the Wehrmacht, given the combined offensive of British bombers and convoys fighting to deliver American war materials. Despite the bombings and Stalin's demands for a second front, he was perhaps aware of this truth.

Peace and War Alliances

The theorist of alliances, Hans Morgenthau (1948), wrote, "... alliances in peacetime tend to be limited to a part of the interests and total objectives of the signatories..." His comment suggests that when there is no common enemy/threat to encourage mutually beneficial security activities, alliance members will instinctively seek to secure resources only for activities they perceive as nationally beneficial. From this argument, we would expect nations, over time, to choose new allies and partners with more shared interests.

Great powers often form alliances with smaller states referred to as client states. During the Cold War, each superpower covered its allies under its security

umbrella. Similarly, Germany did the same with Austria-Hungary during World War I, or with Italy in World War II, and the United States with Western European countries during the Cold War. The tendency to act based on alliances on a global or regional scale, created for various and specific fields, has been the functional trend. However, in some cases, this alliance does not function, raising questions about the organization's existence. Comprehensive decisions face even greater pressure, especially when it comes to security-related decisions that fundamentally affect the international order's continuity and the future state relations or the concerned state with the organization.

Political sentiments of organization leaders or leaders of major states have led them not to "test" the lack of unanimity but to use other forms. For this reason, they extensively use alliances or coalitions.

The most concentrated expression, where security policy is central, are security alliances, which have shaped the landscape of the international system in many cases. Factors culminating in the formation of alliances for the threat or use of military force are generally obligatory to the international system and allow changing the fundamental context of international relations. The importance of political alliances is well understood in international relations.

The military sphere is an area where institutions have a significant approach but have not matured fully. Consensual action in terms of alliance in the field of military operations is the decision-making process. For example, the decision-making in the politico-military organization NATO is specified as, "if necessary, efforts are made to reconcile the differences (positions of member countries), aiming to support joint actions with the full force of the decisions of all member governments" (OTAV, 1994, p.27). Every multinational operation requires coordination in command and control, mutual interaction in ideas and actions.

Looking back at cases where armed intervention has been evident in the post-WWII situation, studying the involvement curve of other states, armed conflicts in modern times are followed not by a single state but by a significant effort, which can be called multilateral effort. For the resolution of a crisis or a specific conflict, concrete actions can be taken by international or regional organizations, by peace alliances, by coalitions that can be created, or by possible ad hoc coalitions.

Alliances can be of different natures and can be created both in peacetime and wartime. In some cases, a peace alliance is against the development of war, and in some other cases, war is inevitable. Before such a fact, states join in an ad hoc coalition designed to express the intention of combat and to offer and distribute responsibilities for this action. Existing alliances benefit from the existence of decision-making structures and thus facilitate the coordination for the latter. In this way, coalitions benefit from the fact that they are adapted to express the purpose of why they are created.

In terms of the effectiveness of military capabilities to perform humanitarian intervention or the operation, military alliances have the advantage of possibilities for joint planning of military operations (as is the existence of a clear structure of NATO or the EU). These organizations have established the core of command direction, thus having more significant opportunities for the rise of an effective command. They have established decision-making structures as well as determined the appropriate steps for undertaking such actions. Even in the process of carrying out the operation, these organizations have built an information network that permanently distributes information. All these factors can make the coordination of actions during peacetime more straightforward than the coalition created for the development of the operation.

However, because alliances operating in war are usually created in peacetime, the transition is not as easy. This is because the joint decision of decision-making structures that supports and encourages cohesion in peacetime creates procedures that are not easy and not suitable quickly, and the decision is taken during war because not all partners of the alliance will feel threatened in the same way.

Alliances and coalitions in wartime are two substructures of multinational operations that may include other forms of cooperation, such as peacekeeping missions. Coalitions are in the sense of multilateral ad hoc imitations to undertake a specific mission and disperse immediately after fulfilling that mission. They are not entirely analytically distinguishable from alliances in wartime, although the latter may have a more institutionalized level and may have previously specified a specific wartime operation. There is a range of commitments that the alliance can offer, such as: "a promise to maintain neutrality in case of war; a promise to be consulted in case of military conflicts and thus implying appropriate assistance; a promise of military assistance and other assistance in times of war but unilateral and unprepared; an unconditional promise of mutual aid, common force planning, and an unconditional promise of mutual assistance in the event of a possible attack with a prepared plan, command, control, and integration of forces and strategies" (Weitsman, 2004, p.35).

Coalitions formed to combat a specific threat manifest in various forms. Contemporary coalitions, such as those formed by the United States in the First Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan, share commonalities but also exhibit differences. The advantage of creating such coalitions lies in their adaptability to the specific mission requirements they engage in. Some coalitions, like the one in the First Gulf War, are ideologically driven, reflecting the coalition's genuine desire to address the international community's aspirations. In other cases, as in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, coalitions form because of strategic consensus, serving the objectives and interests of a single nation, even if the coalition ultimately does not serve the interests of a specific state.

Up to now, large-scale coalitions often diminish the effectiveness of combat by introducing additional complexities in decision-making, interaction, and equitable burden-sharing among participants. This is evidenced by cases where the U.S. has shouldered the coalition's burden. The specific characteristic of these coalitions is that they are often established more to legitimize the operation than to distribute its burden. In some cases, they fail to ensure the participants' proper effectiveness. The effectiveness of multinational forces in combat requires a clear chain of command, decision-making, interaction, equitable burden-sharing, technology, human power, and resources. The larger the coalitions, the more challenging it becomes to maintain effectiveness across these dimensions. Additionally, as the number of participating forces (coalition member states) increases, managing differences in engagement rules becomes more challenging. For instance, during the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, 14 Australian pilots defied orders from American commanding officers, independently ceasing 40 bombing missions at the last minute (Walker, 14 Mar 2004). None of the pilots were reprimanded, as they acted in accordance with their country's rules of engagement.

Contemporary coalitions of war differ from their historical counterparts formed after World War II and post-September 11, a period in which the American coalition includes a significant number of its allies. Due to NATO's experience in the former Yugoslavia, revealing that the decision-making structure was incompatible with the immediate need for decisive action during war, the U.S. opted to reconstruct the coalition for the success of the operation with its early allies. The U.S. concluded bilateral agreements to use NATO's previous framework. This strategy has the advantage of fighting with experienced allies, with shared training and extensive interactions, and now flexibility in decision-making arrangements through this coalition. However, this strategy is not without its potential costs, as the alliance may be undermined by a mission failure.

Military alliances are often formed to enhance the security of their countries in various ways. Security can be expanded through guaranteed provisions in the alliance treaty (Article 5 of NATO and Article 42 of the EU), through targeted or implied conclusions to maintain peace among allies or through the perspective of restraining an adversary or anyone else who may threaten a vital interest. During peacetime, alliances are generally created to prevent war, prevent wars among alliance members, or even prevent wars within the alliance itself with external adversaries. Regardless of the above reasons, sometimes war has occurred, and the alliance has not been involved, a situation that has fundamentally changed the alliance's functioning.

In the 19th century, European Great Powers resulted in the existence of a complex network of political and military alliances. These began in 1815, with the Holy Alliance between Prussia, Russia, and Austria. In October 1873, German

Chancellor Bismarck negotiated the Three Emperors' League between Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. This agreement failed, leaving Germany and Austria-Hungary in an alliance formed in 1879, called the Dual Alliance. In 1882, this alliance expanded to include Italy in what became the Triple Alliance. Two years later, the Franco-Russian Alliance was signed to combat the power of the Triple Alliance. In 1904, the United Kingdom signed a series of agreements with France, known as the Entente Cordiale, and in 1907, the United Kingdom and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Convention.

Peacetime alliances change significantly in the degree to which states coordinate their military strategies, in other words, the extent to which they prepare for joint conflicts. For example, despite the anticipation of the League of Islands and Bridges, "the pre-war joint planning of the Central Powers was minimal. The Entente Powers, on the other hand, had coordinated their military planning much better before the war" (Weitsman, 2003/12, p.79).

Contemporary military strategists have best understood the importance of close consultation and coordination. As a result, NATO has become the most institutionalized alliance in history. For 50 years before its first active mission, NATO countries consulted under a command structure, developing detailed integrated military plans in case of war. Despite this detailed planning, when NATO began its first wartime mission in the former Yugoslavia, its decision-making structure realized that it was more suitable for peacetime than its wartime functioning. "Its decision-making structure was not suitable for quick and necessary action during the war, especially since it was not the same nature of war that NATO had planned for" (Bensahel, 2003, p.16).

Because alliance dynamics are so different in peacetime than in wartime, the benefits of cohesion are just as significant. During peacetime, cohesion would be the result of different threat levels, both within and outside the alliance. During wartime, cohesion is more complicated. Threats during wartime cannot align with those of peacetime, and the most evident case comes from L.II.B with the U.S.-UK-Soviet Union coalition.

After the war, significant issues arise. An acceptable external threat in peacetime cannot last as long in wartime. When states face external threats in peacetime, alliance cohesion is easy to encourage and maintain, while during wartime, the source of the threat is crucial. The table below describes alliance relationships in peacetime and wartime, as well as the threat source.

Moreover, asymmetric possibilities within alliances during peacetime may induce less cohesion than they might during wartime. While the distribution of the burden of effects influences cohesion both in peacetime and wartime, during wartime, this burden is much larger in both the life and financial value aspects.

As emphasized above, due to their long existence, alliances are institutionalized during peacetime, and wartime operations can be problematic. These alliances have generally strong structures but are unsuitable for effective functioning in wartime. Furthermore, the demands of member countries for the integration of forces are high, creating a natural tension between this demand and the member countries' desire to maintain national control of their troops. For this reason, old military alliances will have less cohesion in wartime than ad hoc coalitions.

Also, during wartime, power asymmetries within alliances will become more acute than in coalitions. Since ad hoc coalitions are driven by an immediate threat, this will stimulate cohesion, make internal power inequalities less important than in alliances built earlier, and function with structures built in peacetime. Alliances in peacetime and functioning in wartime will face threats in more diverse and extensive ways than ad hoc coalitions. This will damage their effectiveness in wartime.

Reasons for the Dissolution of Military Alliances

With an understanding of the historical sustainability of the three types of military alliances, the next step is to identify the repeated causes of alliance dissolution and relate these causes to the current path of NATO. For this purpose, history has shown that, in most cases, the realization of one or a combination of components from the following four criteria is necessary to trigger the dissolution of an alliance (Warren, 2010, p.21). These reasons include:

1. Loss of a partner.
2. Change in the interests of partners.
3. Elimination of the threat.
4. Non-compliance with the agreement by partners.

Loss of a Partner

When one of the partners within an alliance is no longer viable or otherwise ceases to exist under its unity conditions, an alliance is often modified or annulled. This reasoning is the primary cause for the dissolution of an alliance. The fall of the Axis Powers in World War II, resulting from Germany's defeat, illustrates this phenomenon. Furthermore, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 identifies how the fall of a nation (in this case, the Soviet Union) can signal the end of an alliance, even when no shots are fired (Warren, 2010, p.21).

Change in Interests of Partners

The second most common reason for alliances to dissolve is when the interests of alliance members change to the extent that the activities of one member cannot be tolerated by others. Pakistan's withdrawal from SEATO in 1973 due to its divergent interests with India illustrates this point. Similarly, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) disbanded in 1977 as Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan deserted due to disagreements over U.S. policies (Warren, 2010, p.22).

Elimination of the Threat

Perhaps the most well-known reason for the termination of a security alliance is when the threat supporting its formation disappears. This form of dissolution is characterized by the defeat of the Axis Powers in World War II, which caused the dissolution of the 'World War II Allies.' (Warren, 2010, p.22).

Non-Compliance with the Agreement by Partners

Finally, when a partner in an alliance fails to respect the principles or spirit of their agreement, partners tend to terminate the alliance. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and Russia's attack on Finland in 1939 directly violated the principles of the League of Nations and signaled the League's ultimate downfall.

The table below describes the main reasons for the dissolution of the three types of military alliances (Warren, 2010, p.23):

TABLE 1: Main reasons leading to the dissolution of military alliances in the last 500 years.

Dissolution Reason / Alliance Type	Collective Defense	Collective Security	Multilateral
Possible Partner Loss	17	2	4
Interests Divergence	9	2	6
Lost Threat	12	1	0
Non-Compliance with Treaty Principles	2	2	1
Total	40	7	11

From these data, several trends are observed (Warren, 2010, p.23):

1. Firstly, collective defense alliances primarily dissolve due to their loss or the loss of their enemy. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the existence of a threat is essential for the sustainability of collective defense alliances. Alliance

scholar George Liska supports this observation when suggesting, "alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something."

2. Secondly, and conversely, the existence of a threat is not crucial for the longevity of collective security or multilateral alliances. Intuitively, this observation assumes further trust, considering that collective security alliances tend to focus internally on the actions of their members, and multilateral alliances, by definition, do not focus on matters of reciprocal defense.
3. Thirdly, collective security alliances are just as sensitive to various dissolution causes.
4. Fourthly, multilateral alliances are more sensitive to dissolution due to challenges arising from the divergence of national interests of their members.
5. Fifthly, military alliances tend to dissolve when their original purpose is no longer valid. This implies that alliances do not continue without a purpose to achieve.

Alliances after the bipolar world

Changes after the Cold War

Two trends characterize the period since the fall of the Soviet Union:

- NATO expansion and the search for a new reason for existence.
- Preference for "coalitions of the willing."

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 triggered a wave of popular uprisings, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Even before the final collapse, NATO's Eastern counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, had dissolved at a ministerial meeting held in Budapest in February 1991.

Historically, when a threat disappears, a military alliance formed to counter it often loses momentum and dissolves. Instead, and almost instinctively, all NATO member governments believed that the alliance should continue without necessarily, as Sloan puts it, being "entirely sure for the reason" (2003, p.88). Some officials argued that it was more than a military alliance: it was a value community transcending any specific military threat. Others were more specific, suggesting that although the Soviet Union was undergoing its death throes and the emerging Russia seemed to be approaching the West, this could change, and Russia might adopt a threatening stance in the future. Lastly, and more broadly, NATO was a source of stability. The investment made in physical infrastructure and the

accumulation of organizational and collaborative experience was a sound policy against future threats to European security.

However, events in the 1990s disrupted alliance relations. The first event was NATO's Initial Strategic Concept after the Cold War. Released in 1991, it emphasized a broader approach to security. In fact, the alliance now needed to manage not one but two core missions: collective defense and "out-of-area" security tasks, ranging from crisis response to non-military engagement, which together were more militarily complex and politically diverse than its previous sole focus on the Cold War.

Secondly, the expansion of the alliance by admitting former Warsaw Pact powers was an early source of debate. The U.S. was concerned that it "would strengthen nationalist factions in Russia that were already dubious about Western motives" (U.S. Department of State). These concerns would be validated when Russia annexed Crimea and Ukraine in 2014. Additionally, populations in Central and Eastern Europe, having direct experience with communist and Russian rule, vehemently opposed the idea that Russia had the right to absorb them into a sphere of influence just to appease its historical sense of insecurity and the right of great power.

Thirdly, it was the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo that introduced the term "ethnic cleansing" to the world as Croats and especially Serbs used violence to break up ethnically mixed communities to create ethnically homogeneous and contiguous zones. Although both conflicts were precisely the kind NATO's new strategy aimed to mitigate, failures in the alliance's on-the-ground performance—especially its inability to prevent the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995—prompted the U.S. to carry out a bombing campaign that pushed warring factions "to sign the Dayton Agreement by the end of the year" (Sloan, 2003, p.93-97).

Differences between Europeans and Americans, especially regarding the Balkan wars, became so pronounced that Kaplan suggests, "the parties drifted apart as much as they had been during the crises of the 1956 Suez-Hungarian Uprising" (Kaplan, 1999, p.189). The only thing that kept them together was their representation in the Contact Group, a diplomatic tool completely separated from NATO, originally created to give Russia a voice in recognizing its traditional role as an ally of Serbia. These divisions effectively paved the way for the U.S. to adopt the so-called coalitions of volunteers in the early years of the 21st century.

Duality within an Alliance: NATO until the Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Regarding the operational approach of alliances, it is noteworthy to address the almost contradictory stance within NATO's influential members, the United States and Germany. After World War II, the U.S. played a crucial role in establishing West

Germany as a liberal democracy, creating democratic institutions, and a free press. The U.S. further ensured security during the Cold War, allowing West Germany to coexist with communist East Germany. Historian Ruth Hatlapa explains, "The U.S. defeated Germany in World War II and, later as an occupying power, was part of restructuring German society."

There was a pro-Americanism in West German society supporting deeper ties but also dissatisfaction, particularly regarding Germany's security dependence on the U.S., creating a "contradictory relationship." Relations saw their lows during the Vietnam War as Germany rejected American calls for military involvement. Instead, it initiated a humanitarian mission, sending a hospital ship to the war zone in 1966, coordinated and staffed by the German Red Cross.

Another blow to the American image in Germany came in 2003. Despite U.S. President George W. Bush urging the German government to participate in the Iraq War, then-Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer adhered to his legendary phrase: "I am not convinced." Doubts about the justification of the Iraq invasion were based on German intelligence counterfindings. According to August Hanning, former president of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND), "Colin Powell's reasons presented before the UN Security Council were not accurate, contradicted his narrative, and turned out to be false." (Newsweek, 15 Jan 2006). Terrorism and security analyst Rolf Tophoven states that mistakes made by the U.S. still have an effect today: the Sunni-Shiite conflict, the rise of terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and ISIS and political instability" (NATO, 2 July 2012).

The situation is delicate concerning Afghanistan. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban taking Kabul, and desperate Afghans flooding the airport to escape raised concerns for outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel: "Developments are bitter, dramatic, and terrifying." (DW, 16 Aug 2021). For Germany, which spent nearly 20 years in Afghanistan, the human and financial cost has been significant. The German military, entering Afghanistan to support the U.S., faced one of the largest and longest military deployments outside the country. German diplomacy speaks of a hit to transatlantic relations. Germans did not expect the U.S., without fully involving allies, to implement Trump's withdrawal order from Afghanistan one by one. Political analyst Stephan Bierling from the University of Regensburg says, "It's a significant loss of trust, especially in America's military competence. After four catastrophic years under Trump, we had a very positive view of Joe Biden. Now, this spiritual state is changing."

NATO with Increased Cohesion after February 2022

After a month of war in Ukraine, on March 24, 2022, European and American leaders decided in Brussels: "Increase forces in the East, more weapons for

Ukraine." (NATO, 24 Mar 2022). In a rare gesture of unity, NATO, G7, and the EU held meetings, showing the world a united Western front for the war in Ukraine.

NATO leaders gathered at the extraordinary summit in Brussels with a clear goal: to discuss the short-term and long-term response of the North Atlantic Alliance to the Russian attack on Ukraine. NATO leaders decided to deploy armed forces in the East on the day marking one month since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of the neighboring country. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, after the extraordinary summit, stated that an agreement was reached to assist Ukraine with ammunition and other weapons. This aid has continued and continues uninterrupted into June 2023.

By severing energy ties with Russia, the EU needed to differentiate and strengthen other relations, including those with the U.S. 30 presidents and prime ministers of the alliance agreed in the meeting that more assistance was needed for Ukraine and new troop deployments in Eastern Europe.

The most robust reaction came from the "leading" NATO country, the U.S. President Joe Biden threatened, "We will respond if Russia uses nuclear weapons" (The Guardian, 07 Oct 2022). The U.S. imposed new sanctions on 400 individuals and entities, including 300 members of the Russian Duma, the parliament of Russia, as well as oligarchs and companies allegedly fueling Russia's war machine. He added that Putin miscalculated in his decision to invade Ukraine, and NATO is now more united than ever.

After the NATO leaders' meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron said that Russia is increasingly isolated globally. Macron stated that it is essential to avoid escalation of the conflict, considering it as the reason NATO decided to support Ukraine without declaring war on Russia. In a joint statement, G7 leaders warned Russia against using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons in the invasion of Ukraine. "We warn against any threat of the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons or similar materials," (The Economic Times, 25 Mar 2022) the leaders said in a joint statement. They emphasized that such actions would have severe consequences.

A significant point of discussion was the responsibility of NATO to defend Ukraine, a non-member state. According to NATO, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine posed a direct threat to other allies. NATO's decision to support Ukraine militarily marked a significant shift in the alliance's posture, recognizing the broader implications of the conflict on Euro-Atlantic security.

In conclusion, the developments in NATO's stance from the withdrawal from Afghanistan to the response to the war in Ukraine highlight the complexities within the alliance, influenced by historical relationships, strategic considerations, and the evolving geopolitical landscape. The alliance faced challenges in maintaining cohesion and trust, particularly in the aftermath of the Afghanistan withdrawal.

However, the invasion of Ukraine acted as a catalyst for increased unity and a renewed commitment to collective defense among NATO members. The ongoing conflict continues to shape the alliance's role and responses in the face of evolving security threats.

G-7, Strengthening Relations to Address Current Crises

The G7 summit in Hiroshima underscored the heightened unity of the G7 nations, emphasizing solidarity for Ukraine, China, economic security, the development of clean energy economies, nuclear disarmament, and the collective response to global challenges such as the worldwide climate crisis.

The G7 demonstrated unprecedented unity, particularly in support of Ukraine. During the gathering of the world's most powerful nations, the President of Ukraine was invited to speak and received assurances of support against Russian aggression. G7 leaders presented a robust declaration of strength and unity in response to Russia's aggressive war. They communicated a series of specific actions to enhance G7 diplomatic, financial, humanitarian, and security support for Ukraine, to escalate costs for Russia and its backers, and to continue opposing the negative impacts of Russia's war on vulnerable populations worldwide.

G7 leaders announced new measures to economically isolate Russia and weaken its capacity to wage war. They disclosed new efforts to further impede Russia's ability to gather data for its war, close loopholes in evasion, further diminish dependence on Russian energy, limit its future export capabilities, and squeeze Russia's access to the international financial system. G7 leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to freeze Russia's sovereign assets until Russia compensates for the damage it has caused. To implement these commitments, the Departments of the Treasury, State, and Trade issued new sanction packages, including the expansion of broad restrictions, the suspension of over 70 companies from Russia and other countries from receiving exports from the U.S., and the sanctioning of over 300 individuals, entities, vessels, and aircraft globally.

Peace discussions with a diverse range of partners. G7 leaders met with heads of Ukraine, Australia, Brazil, the Cook Islands, Comoros, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Vietnam to discuss international peace and security. Leaders issued a Food Security Action Plan emphasizing, "Especially in light of its impact on food security and the humanitarian situation worldwide, we support a just and sustainable peace based on the respect for international law, the principles of the UN Charter, and the integrity and territorial sovereignty." (The White House, 20 May 2023).

Conclusions

The global environment has undergone significant changes in the last 20 years, necessitating a serious reassessment of alliance objectives, a task that should not be avoided. Without a harmonized purpose, alliances cannot appropriately define the policies, structures, and capabilities needed to achieve their goals. Large and bureaucratized alliances do not disintegrate; they erode over time as threat assessments change, and political will weakens. This is the risk if NATO continues its current path of "burden-sharing" amid ongoing accusations of American "transactionalism."

NATO stands out as the best example of an alliance that remains relevant in the security environment, adapting over time to new risks and challenges. Preserving NATO is crucial for both Americans and Europeans because the alliance continues to serve as a deterrent to Russia and as a values-based framework through which the West can confront China. NATO provides the best existing format for collective defense and effectively ensures that the North Atlantic remains the internal waterway for Western democracies. Without essential actions, alliances will continue to suffer from a loss of trust among their members.

The lack of defense readiness and the 'will' to reconcile Russia's status and the status of other 21st-century threats, the lack of equal support for current operations, and the lack of confidence that the U.S. will lead the Alliance in operations that matter for the remaining part, constitute the basis for this insecurity. The Alliance and the lack of trust in the Alliance's ability to prevail in Afghanistan form the basis for this insecurity. If this lack of trust among members persists and decisions continue to be postponed, history tells us that NATO will break apart. However, on the other hand, the war in Ukraine is bringing about significant changes in the NATO alliance, not only in cohesion but also in expansion. Russia is accelerating its current expansion. The Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, have remained unaffiliated with NATO at least since World War II.

Both countries joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program since 1994. They have contributed to NATO-led missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, or Iraq. As non-member states, Helsinki and Stockholm do not have NATO's guarantee that an attack on an ally would mean an attack on all. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they have initiated the NATO accession procedures. At the July 2023 meeting, it was announced that a new Strategic Concept would be developed to guide NATO's activities in the coming decade.

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