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Overview

Seeking Alliances and Partnerships: The Long Road to Confederationism in U.S. Grand Strategy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter reviews how the U.S. came to treat alliances and partnerships as essential instruments of its quest for hegemony over time, what tasks U.S. alliances performed in the past, and how their functions promise to mutate in the future.

MAIN ARGUMENT:
Despite frequent references to the U.S.'s early isolationist past, the country has consistently rejected both isolationism and multilateralism as instruments for meeting its highest strategic ambitions, instead utilizing a dialectical relationship between confederationism and unilateralism to achieve hegemony. U.S. power, no matter how formidable, benefits from the presence of partners, thanks to both their capacity to supplement American resources and their ability to bestow legitimacy to various U.S. policies. Even when these are not at issue, however, the company of confederates is undoubtedly valuable because it enhances the freedom that the U.S. enjoys to undertake unilateral actions whenever these are demanded by its global interests.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
- Confederationism, as a constituent element of U.S. grand strategy, is here to stay. As Washington focuses on national rejuvenation, it does not have the luxury of jettisoning its alliances because no matter what their infirmities currently may be, they are essential to preserving U.S. global hegemony.
- In an environment characterized by both deepening interdependence and rising Chinese power, Washington's quest for partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region is eased by the fact that a large number of nations therein value the U.S. and its protective presence because of the positive externalities accruing to them.
- The cohesion between the U.S. and its many partners is likely to be greatest when U.S. power is at its most durable and resolute. The ultimate value of confederationism as an anchor of grand strategy, thus, hinges fundamentally on the vitality of U.S. power.

Overview

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Although it is widely believed that the United States pursued an isolationist foreign policy for much of its early political life, the truth of the matter is more complex. The argument that the United States should remain isolationist—shunning alliances on grounds of both principle and pragmatism—certainly did not lack for advocates, as Thomas Paine's celebrated pamphlet *Common Sense* illustrated. And isolationism's appeal was certainly enhanced by the ostensible exhortations of the United States' founding fathers. George Washington, the nation's first president, for example, would in his oft-quoted farewell address urge his fellow citizens to remember that "the great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible."[1] The third president, Thomas Jefferson, would reinforce this theme in his inaugural address by admonishing the polity to pursue "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."[2]

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[1] George Washington, "Washington's Farewell Address," 1796, Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.

[2] Thomas Jefferson, "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801, American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25803.

This chapter reviews how the United States came to treat alliances and partnerships as essential instruments of its quest for hegemony over time. It thus complements the rest of the volume, which focuses on how key nations in the Indo-Pacific region view their association with U.S. policy as serving their own particular national security interests. Toward that end, this chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section examines the logic of the founding fathers' injunction against "entangling alliances." The second section reviews why the United States was compelled to return to confederationism in the early twentieth century and how collective defense served the nation's strategic aims until the end of the Cold War. The third section assesses how the logic of alliances has changed as a result of the transformations witnessed in international politics in the post–Cold War era. The fourth section previews how the various Asian countries examined in this edition of *Strategic Asia* approach the question of affiliating with the United States. Finally, the brief conclusion emphasizes the paradoxical insight that the United States' alliances and partnerships are most effective when U.S. power is indeed robust.

The Misunderstood Founders on Alliances

If early U.S. foreign policy were to be described solely by the literal content of the founders' remonstrations against alliances, it would be profoundly misleading. For even as Washington was beseeching his countrymen in 1796 (at the end of his second term in office) to have "as little political connection as possible" with Europe, he—more than most Americans—had every reason to remember that the birth of his country was owed greatly to the alliance that the infant United States had forged with France in the war of independence against Great Britain. In fact, not only French but also Spanish and Dutch contributions were critical to American success: beyond the supplies, weapons, and ammunition offered, the land and sea power mustered by these European allies was vital to enabling the Continental Army's victories both through their local warfighting contributions and by tying down British power outside North America.[3]

If Washington's accomplishments were thus aided by the partnerships forged with various European powers—the purported variance with his later advice to eschew political connections notwithstanding—Jefferson's great successes a few decades later, in fact soon after his famous inaugural address decrying entangling alliances, suggest that the absence of such confederations was actually a key factor this time around in producing territorial gains

[3] Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 1–29.

for the United States. The termination of the alliance with France after the Revolutionary War and the conclusion of John Jay's Treaty with Great Britain, which secured the withdrawal of British military units from the Northwest Territory of the United States, found the country engaged with the two major European powers but without any formal affiliation with either.

This fact, materializing against the backdrop of renewed conflict between Britain and France in Europe, soon provided Jefferson with the golden opportunity to consummate the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, a diplomatic feat that instantaneously doubled the size of the then United States. This achievement, which counts among Jefferson's greatest contributions to the consolidation of U.S. power on the continent, became possible because the United States, having no pact with either of the European rivals, could play one off against the other. By accentuating French fears that the United States might make up with Great Britain at a time when Napoleon was preparing to invade the British Isles, while at the same time keeping the English guessing as to whether negotiations for a rapprochement might occur, Jefferson skillfully induced the cash-strapped French dictator to sell a vast territory to the United States at a fire-sale price.[4]

Although the differences in Washington's and Jefferson's actions might seem dramatic—the former nurturing strategic partnerships, the latter avoiding them, even as they both uniformly decried geopolitical alliances—the convergence is far greater than is apparent: both statesmen approached the issue of confederating with other nations entirely instrumentally. Binding affiliations with foreign countries were thus acceptable when pressed by necessity, but then only if they helped to advance some fundamental national aims. This approach to international engagement would become the leitmotif that defined U.S. strategic policy at the time of the nation's founding, and the residues of this approach survive today. Because an alliance with France was essential for attaining success during the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress grudgingly accepted such a partnership when it became apparent that independence could not be achieved without it and other, lesser partnerships with countries such as Spain and the Dutch Republic.

Once the aim of independence was achieved, however, the United States slowly jettisoned the Treaty of Alliance with France, using the uncertainties created subsequently by the French Revolution to assert neutrality and thereby escape the military obligations of that accord. When Washington in his farewell address a few years later warned his citizens to maintain "as little political connection as possible" with other nations, he could therefore do so without the slightest fear of inconsistency, because confederations

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[4] Charles Cerami, *Jefferson's Great Gamble: The Remarkable Story of Jefferson, Napoleon and the Men behind the Louisiana Purchase* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2004).

with others were valuable only to the degree that they enabled the United States to better achieve its own geopolitical objectives. What served the country's interests well in securing liberty from Great Britain thus became a handicap afterward because continued strategic partnerships with the fractious European countries threatened to undermine the fundamental post-independence objective of the United States: the westward conquest and expansion of national territory to its natural limits at a time when the young nation was opposed by indigenous inhabitants as well as European great powers that often supported the natives in their struggles against the new American settlers.[5]

Because avoiding the diversion of American energies from this new task was critical, the United States consciously chose to turn its back on its wider strategic rear—the European promontory—in the hope that escaping the geopolitical quarrels in the Old World would enable it to singularly focus on, as Washington phrased it, "laying the foundation of a great Empire" in the New World.[6] After all, Washington had astutely perceived that maintaining an appropriate distance from Europe's relentless struggle for power would be good for the United States:

> Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.[7]

The ability of the United States to create for itself the great territorial and commercial empire envisaged by its first president—initially in North America and eventually even beyond—would depend, however, on its capacity to first secure local hegemony: that is, to acquire and maintain preeminent power over the many rivals in its immediate surroundings. This aim was undoubtedly ambitious in 1776, but it ultimately proved viable because, for all of the United States' limitations, its immediate adversaries—both American Indians and the European colonial outposts—were weaker than the fledgling country. Moreover, the European powers were consumed, as Washington and others of his generation rightly perceived, in internecine wars that distracted them from the growing upstart across the Atlantic. And,

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[5] Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

[6] George Washington, "General Orders to John Stark," April 18, 1783, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources*, vol. 26, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 335.

[7] Washington, "Washington's Farewell Address."

finally, the North American continent itself was huge, with great strategic depth, and surrounded by oceans on both sides, which prevented even the major European powers of the day from being able to project overwhelming force against or across it.[8]

Under these circumstances, the counsel of the founding fathers to refrain from entangling alliances was indeed wise insofar as it freed the young republic to concentrate on amassing the hegemony that would be required for the success of its empire-building in North America. But the advice to avoid alliances was not a directive to become isolationist. Isolationism, in the ordinary meaning of the word, connotes either disengagement from international politics or abdication from commercial intercourse, or both. The United States was never isolationist in this sense. On the contrary, from the moment of the country's founding, American leaders, realizing the importance of actively participating in foreign diplomacy, maintained strong links with the outside world and were constantly attuned to how developments abroad affected their imperial enterprise at home (if for no other reason than to mitigate the deleterious consequences of any external events on their interests). As George C. Herring succinctly summarized it, "the enduring idea of an isolationist America is a myth often conveniently used to safeguard the nation's self-image of its innocence."[9]

As part of this active involvement with the world, John Adams's "plan of treaties" soon came to define how the new union conceived of its relations with other governments: an open trading system was central and it was to be fostered because such a system was vital for the material prosperity of the American nation.[10] Animated by this "spirit of commerce," as Montesquieu phrased it in his great work *The Spirit of the Laws*, the United States in fact constantly sought access to European markets for the export of cotton, rice, and tobacco. Moreover, to bolster its domestic economy, the United States articulated a doctrine of free trade that actually ran counter to the mercantilist fashion of the times. As Eliga H. Gould described it, Adams's "Model Treaty, as the plan came to be known, stipulated that any agreement be fully reciprocal, with trade on the freest possible terms in peacetime and a liberal definition of the goods that American ships could carry in times of war."[11] Although it

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[8] Peter Maslowski, "To the Edge of Greatness: the United States 1783–1865," in *The Making of Strategy: Rules States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, and MacGregor Knox (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207.

[9] George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

[10] John E. Hill, *Democracy, Equality, and Justice: John Adams, Adam Smith, and Political Economy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 198–204.

[11] Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1.

would be a long time before this vision materialized in practice, it nonetheless demonstrates that the United States never viewed its hesitation about alliances as deriving from any conventional form of isolationism.

If the choices facing the United States since its birth are thus arrayed across a spectrum defined by the alternatives of isolationism, unilateralism, confederationism, and multilateralism—where isolationism implies a hermetic distance from other states or the international system; unilateralism, the readiness to act alone in pursuit of certain strategic goals; confederationism, the willingness to seek or accept international allies when required; and multilateralism, the acceptance of "international governance of the 'many'" through formal institutions as a means of securing critical interests—the country has consistently rejected both isolationism and multilateralism as instruments for meeting its highest strategic ambitions.[12] Neither of these two approaches has been seen to accord with either the United States' objective circumstances or its exceptional sense of self. Isolationism prevented the United States from prospering materially, while simultaneously denying it the opportunity to prevent the wider world from undermining U.S. interests close to home. Multilateralism, similarly, represented an abdication of responsibility: it relied on international collective action to protect U.S. equities and, in the process, created opportunities for bruising disputes over burden-sharing, reciprocity, and the division of benefits, all of which could produce either inaction or misdirected initiatives that harm the nation.[13]

In contrast, unilateralism and confederationism invariably proved far more attractive for U.S. leaders, with the choice between them being dictated largely by circumstances. Of the two, unilateralism was always to be preferred. It protected the United States' freedom to secure its interests in whatever way it pleased, without having to worry about making the compromises that are always necessary to sustain alliances in international politics. As long as the republic's attention was focused mainly on expanding its own territory within North America, the disparities in power between itself and its local rivals implied that few partners, if any, were necessary for the success of that objective.

The great accomplishments of Manifest Destiny and, later on, the victory of the Union in the U.S. Civil War finally created a state that

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[12] Miles Kahler, "Multilateralism with Small and Large Numbers," *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (1992): 681.

[13] Bradley F. Podliska, *Acting Alone: A Scientific Study of American Hegemony and Unilateral Use-of-Force Decision Making* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010). For an excellent systematic treatment of how U.S. choices between unilateralist and confederationist solutions hinged on the character of the economics of joint security production, the expected costs of opportunism, and the relative burdens of governance, see David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

was not only powerful vis-à-vis its own society but also superior to all its immediate neighbors on the continent. These conditions, accordingly, made the unilateralist approach to strategy and foreign policy not only effective but also incredibly rational. After the end of the Civil War in 1865, this unilateralism, which had succeeded in creating a vast empire in North America from the United States' humble origins in thirteen small colonies along the east coast, would only incur further gains. By driving the nation to its westward limit, the United States would soon enjoy control of land from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This process of political consolidation resulted in the reorganization of the vast U.S. territories lying between the Mississippi and California into new states.[14]

The Long and Hard Road to Collective Defense

The United States' success in achieving dominance and creating a stable hegemony within North America only opened the door to realizing the founders' old dream of conclusively eliminating all rival geopolitical influences in and around the continent for good. Dramatic industrialization, which began in the early 1800s and continued through the Civil War, had made the United States the world's largest economy by 1900, thus enabling it to pursue the next stage of its hegemonic ascendancy—the closure of the Western Hemisphere—again through unilateralist strategies.[15] If protecting the American political experiment required the domination of the North American heartland for its success, shielding the unified nation that emerged after its continental consolidation required the isolation of the Western Hemisphere from all pernicious extraregional influences. Whether the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine promulgated toward this end was necessitated by the demands of security or merely remained an expression of imperialism is beside the point: what is pertinent is that preserving the unique position of the United States as the predominant power without any rival in its geographic theater marked the evolutionary culmination of the country's success in attaining hegemony within North America. As Jay Sexton concludes, "the [doctrine] proclaimed American opposition to European colonialism, but within it lurked the imperial ambitions of the expansionist United States."[16]

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[14] Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[15] Angus Maddison, "Historical Statistics of the World Economy: 1–2008 A.D.," 2008, http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/Historical_Statistics/horizontal-file_02-2010.xls.

[16] Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2012), 3.

This achievement of continental hegemony was realized entirely through unilateralist strategies, except for the initial phase, which required a global confederacy to produce American independence. Since that time, however, the superiority of U.S. capabilities relative to both the country's rivals and the strategic tasks at hand ensured that unilateralism would suffice to produce the local primacy that would ensure durable security for the United States. The continued expansion of this material power into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries further ensured that when the United States finally sought to eject the last remnants of the European empires in the Western Hemisphere—through the Spanish-American War of 1898, for example—it would still be able to enforce hemispheric closure entirely by unilateral means rather than by seeking the help of other nations.

The desire to sanitize the Western Hemisphere of all European military presence was anchored in the recognition that no local entity was powerful enough to challenge the hegemony of the United States unless it was aided by confederates from the Old World. Such assistance, at least in any meaningful terms, was unlikely to be forthcoming as long as the European continent was riven by internal struggles for mastery. As long as no local European state was powerful enough to control the entire resources of its continent, the United States' imperial enterprise in its own hemisphere would be safe from the depredations of any external interlopers. In such circumstances, the United States could afford to ignore Europe, which functioned as its strategic rear when it was expanding westward and as its strategic flank when it was enforcing hemispheric closure. Washington's recommendation that his country maintain "as little political connection as possible" with Europe "in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities,"[17] thus made sense, but only when there was little danger that the Old World might be subjugated either by one of its own constituents or by some other foreign power. In other words, the United States could afford to be indifferent to the reality of European rivalries but not to their outcome—especially one that portended continental domination by a single power.

As long as this hazard was remote—as it was in the early phase of U.S. history—the notion of avoiding alliances with European partners was eminently sensible. But by the time the United States had successfully crowned its continental hegemony with hemispheric dominance, its luck had run its course. For now at the center of Europe, a newly unified nation, Germany, appeared to be on the cusp of amassing sufficient capabilities so as to be able to dominate not only its own surroundings but lands much

[17] Washington, "Washington's Farewell Address."

farther afield—in time acquiring the capacity "to look across the sea for conquest without fear of being menaced at the center of its power, that is, in Europe itself."[18] Although the United States had generally eschewed foreign partnerships so long as there were no stark dangers to its own power—a clear reflection of its unilateralist preferences—it was, by the same token, always sensitive to perturbations in the larger balance of power, especially insofar as these affected its own hegemony. This was a trenchant confirmation of its more fundamental rejection of isolationism.

Not surprisingly, then, U.S. diplomacy, even when remaining distant from entangling alliances, continually pursued policies aimed at maintaining a local balance of power in Europe. Hans J. Morgenthau succinctly summarized this point:

> [American statecraft] opposed whatever European nation—be it Great Britain, France, Germany, or Russia—seemed to be likely to gain that ascendancy over its European competitors which would have jeopardized the hemispheric predominance and eventually the very independence of the United States. Conversely, it has supported whatever European nation seemed to be most likely to restore the balance of power by offering successful resistance to the would-be conqueror. While it is hard to imagine a greater contrast in the way of thinking about matters political than that which separates Alexander Hamilton from Woodrow Wilson, in this concern for the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe—for whatever different reasons—they are one. It is by virtue of this concern that the United States has intervened in both World Wars on the side of the initially weaker coalition and that its European policies have… invariably pursued one single objective in Europe: the maintenance of the [regional] balance of power.[19]

It is entirely possible that American hegemony might have had to cope with expanding German power unilaterally if circumstances had warranted it, but the vicissitudes of history ensured that the United States did so as part of a confederacy in both world wars. By the time of the first global conflict, however, the previously instrumental rejection of alliances advocated by the founding fathers had unfortunately congealed into something resembling a substantive opposition to them, leading the United States to enter the Great War as an "associated power" rather than as a formal ally of the Triple Entente. World War II eliminated this fiction entirely, but the legacy of avoiding entangling alliances died hard. Despite the recognition of farsighted leaders, such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, that the United States' entry into the war as part of an Allied coalition was essential for the preservation of American primacy in its own hemisphere, if not globally,

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[18] Hans Morgenthau, "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions," *American Political Science Review* 44, no. 4 (1950): 835.

[19] Ibid.

the country was able to intervene only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor conclusively forced its hand.

Although a decisive victory in World War II was eventually procured after many years of carnage, this grinding conflict highlighted a reality that the United States did not have to confront when it was preoccupied with either continental or hemispheric hegemony: despite its wartime triumph and its material superiority, maintaining global primacy would require sturdy allies who, while not substituting for unilateralism, were nonetheless essential for preserving an international order that protected U.S. interests and thereby economized on the need for independent action continuously. The culmination of the worldwide struggle in 1945 had thus brought U.S. strategy full circle: a nation that was born through the activity of a confederation would now be able to preserve its position at the universal apex only through an alliance. The coming Cold War era would in fact corroborate the proposition that although American power was indeed formidable—compared both with previous hegemonies and with the past demands imposed by continental and hemispheric domination—it was still insufficient by itself to assure global supremacy under all circumstances.

In part this was because the United States now confronted, for the first time since its founding, a genuine peer competitor. Unlike its European rivals of the past, the Soviet Union was a large, continental-sized entity, with vast natural resources, a high level of technological capability, a battle-hardened military, and, thanks to its revolutionary Communist ideology, a willingness to confront the United States in a global struggle for power and influence. Although Soviet Russia fell short of being a comprehensive equal—mainly because its own ideology prevented it from nurturing the market economy that might have made it an even bigger threat than it finally was—it nonetheless proved to be a formidable opponent of the United States for many decades, largely because it continually assembled deadly military capabilities and demonstrated a willingness to use these around the world in support of its political ambitions.[20]

Although the Soviet challenge was manifested most strongly by its military threats to the United States, to nations lying within the European and Asian "shatter belts," and occasionally to countries farther afield, Washington feared encompassing dangers that prompted it to embark on an ambitious strategy called "containment." As Melvyn P. Leffler succinctly describes the approach, "the key goals of containment were to limit the spread of Soviet power and Communist ideology. Yet containment was

[20] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

never a defensive strategy; it was conceived as an instrument to achieve victory in the Cold War."[21]

Consistent with the older American tradition of preserving security through hegemony, the United States now pursued "a preponderance of power,"[22] anchoring its containment policy through the instrument about which it had historically felt most ambivalent: alliances. Integrating elements of the coalition it had inherited from World War II, as well as defeated adversaries who were now threatened by Soviet power, the United States returned to confederationism with a vengeance, building up a network of partnerships that extended well beyond Western Europe and East Asia to span new, far-flung areas of the world. The willingness to entertain alliances as part of the strategy for confronting Moscow proved that the traditional U.S. opposition to this mechanism was more instrumental than it often appears. When faced with catalyzing threats and the realization that U.S. power alone was insufficient for victory, American statecraft could be adroit enough to not only orchestrate effective confederations but also integrate new and quite diverse elements of policy aimed at humbling its adversary.

Toward this end, the United States first promoted several, and sometimes overlapping, mutual security agreements and formal alliances, such as the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, the Western European Union, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Additionally, in Asia the United States forged a hub-and-spoke system of discrete pacts with the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan, and the Philippines, all united by the objective of resisting Soviet power through coordinated actions between Washington and the allied capitals.[23]

Second, Washington led the development of collective defense strategies through military institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe and the combined forces commands in key Asian states. In some instances, extended deterrence guarantees substituted for the absence of formal combined commands. All these instruments were developed to apportion the combat capabilities available to the United States and its partners in order to defeat Communist expansion. These aims, in turn, spawned a vast global network of military bases that supported U.S. forward-deployed or forward-operating forces, whose mission was to execute

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[21] Melvyn P. Leffler, "Containment," in *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*, ed. Silvio Pons and Robert Service (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 236.

[22] Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[23] For a comprehensive list of all the agreements entered into by the United States, see U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Collective Defense Treaties, with Maps, Texts of Treaties, a Chronology, Status of Forces Agreements, and Comparative Chart* (Washington, D.C., 1967).

the warfighting plans developed in concert with the allies under the protective cover of strategic nuclear deterrence.[24]

Third, the United States and its partners made special efforts to deliberately limit Soviet economic connectivity with the major centers of power, thus ensuring that the critical engines of growth internationally were tied only to the United States and to one another. This policy of encouraging deep economic integration among the Western partners but limiting commercial intercourse with the Soviet bloc was aided initially by Moscow's own opposition to the liberal international economic order fostered by the United States. Later on, however, the policy acquired a life and logic of its own and was consciously intended to constrain access to capital, technology, and markets as a way of enervating and eventually defeating Soviet Russia decisively.[25]

Fourth, the United States redoubled its efforts to preserve the scientific and industrial supremacy that it had so painstakingly established during World War II. The nation maintained an unswerving commitment to preserving a free-market economy domestically, while also avoiding the creation of a garrison state. Nonetheless, it incorporated sufficient state direction—through federal policies and fiscal subventions—to sustain the economic growth and technological innovation required to maintain the requisite combat capabilities in various strategic locales, sustain a globe-girding military infrastructure, and underwrite an open international economic system where trade and aid would combine to reinvigorate the capabilities of its war-torn allies.[26]

Fifth, and finally, the United States complemented these material elements of the containment strategy with a vigorous worldwide ideological campaign aimed at delegitimizing the Soviet state, its worldview, its occupation of Eastern Europe, its efforts at spreading Communism worldwide, and its opposition to free markets, liberal democracy, and religious freedom. This crusade involved huge democracy-promotion efforts, vast foreign-aid programs, and lengthy public-diplomacy campaigns, all intended to bolster public resolve at home, strengthen liberal forces globally (with the battleground states of the Cold

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[24] A broad overview can be found in Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 471–541.

[25] The logic of restricting trade during the Cold War is perceptively examined in Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[26] See Audra J. Wolfe, *Competing with the Soviets: Science, Technology, and the State in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); and Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

War receiving the most attention), and constrain the Soviet Union's ability to project influence beyond its borders.[27]

Although there are still disagreements about whether concerted containment in the form described above comported with George Kennan's original conception, just as there were persistent debates throughout the Cold War about how it was to be operationalized at any given point in time, the strategy nonetheless proved extraordinarily fruitful insofar as it contributed toward the bloodless defeat of Soviet power and the peaceful disintegration of the Warsaw Pact as an opposing bloc. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States had indeed secured global primacy in a universally perceptible form for the first time in its history—even though it had already acquired the world's largest economy almost a hundred years earlier and had maintained greater comprehensive power than its rival throughout the Cold War.

The Cold War victory, which accrued from containment through alliances, gave confederationism a unique cast that in time came to constitute a desirable template for how the United States ought to conduct itself in the international system. Its alliances never deprived Washington of the ability to prosecute unilateral actions. To the contrary, they only enhanced it by conveying unity of purpose, providing additive contributions to U.S. power and strengthening the legitimacy of U.S. actions internationally. These alliances thus came to be seen as the indispensable accoutrements of U.S. hegemony in the postwar order. Three characteristics of the Cold War alliance system made them especially so.

To begin, the strength and robustness of the alliances nurtured by the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union derived their bonding glue from the intensity and the singularity of the threat perceived by the participating states.[28] Although, as noted earlier, Washington created a global network of anti-Communist confederations, not all survived successfully; the ones that did, such as the Western European Union, NATO, and the East Asian pacts with South Korea and Japan, thrived because the intense military dangers emanating from the Soviet Union, its proxies, or other local challengers created powerful incentives for the partners to stay united.

The persistence of external threats (and sometimes internal perils that fed off external sources of support) thus made for very tight alliances with a high degree of reciprocity internally and conspicuous levels of self-sufficiency externally. Although in every instance the United States remained the superior

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[27] See Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[28] For a conceptual overview of this issue, see Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Collapse or Endure," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (1997): 156–79.

partner, the common commitment to collective defense (meaning the recognition that a threat to any one would evoke a response by all) and the functional benefits of strong economic interdependence within the alliance (thereby implying autarky with respect to adversaries) became the attributes by which the worth of all confederations would be judged, even though these principles in their fullness were enshrined in NATO alone.[29]

Further, the commitments required by U.S. alliances—the extended security guarantees offered by Washington in exchange for either explicit or implicit pledges by the protectees to contribute to their own defense, if not actually to aid the United States reciprocally—did not in any way abridge the United States' freedom to undertake unilateral action when its interests so demanded. The alliances, in fact, liberated Washington to pursue independent policies in many areas and on many issues that did not implicate its partners' equities directly.

The postwar coalitions underwritten by U.S. power, therefore, were emphatically not partnerships of equals. They were instruments of hegemonic power that served multiple objectives simultaneously. Beyond protecting U.S. allies and partners, they helped dampen intra-alliance security competition that might have otherwise become distracting. To the degree that they served as expressions of political solidarity, these coalitions legitimated the United States' exercise of power globally, even when its allies might not have been directly involved. And by pooling national resources to deal with the direct threats to their security, they augmented U.S. power while simultaneously emancipating the United States to advance its wider interests globally.

Finally, the United States' superiority in wealth and power relative to both its own allies and even its adversaries created a favorable strategic environment that enabled U.S. confederations to function very effectively. Given the disparity in resources between the United States and the rest of the world, Washington was able, throughout the Cold War, to play the role of the "privileged" provider who bore the costs of supplying global public goods precisely because of the disproportionate benefits accruing specifically to U.S. interests. Thus, for example, the United States invested heavily in securing nuclear deterrence at every level of conflict, protecting the global commons, and creating an institutional regime that enabled orderly trade and commerce, first among its friends and eventually globally. The United States did this not out of altruism but because these investments reinforced its hegemony and thereby buttressed its security.

Although the allies undoubtedly supplemented these efforts, their contributions paled in significance because, in comparison, the United States'

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[29] Kenneth A. Myers, *NATO, the Next Thirty Years: The Changing Political, Economic, and Military Setting* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981).

resources were larger, its private interests more dominant, and its ability to disregard the costs far more significant. As a result, the U.S. alliances during the Cold War came to represent the components of a hegemonic strategy that, though first manifested in the desire for continental control, had now reached its apotheosis in global involvement.

The Challenges to Confederationism in the Post–Cold War Era

The virtuous interaction between unilateralism and confederationism that reached its high point during the Cold War—a dynamic that was evident at the beginning of the republic, went into remission during the United States' continental and hemispheric expansion, but made a comeback as the struggle for mastery in Europe resolved itself into the potential rise of local threats that could eventually endanger the United States—could have persisted in this unique form to further entrench American hegemony well into the distant future were it not for three developments that the United States struggles with to this day.

First, the demise of the Soviet Union as a singular threat has removed the glue that kept the United States' most successful alliances, such as NATO, functioning as cohesive entities. Those alliances that did not feel the brunt of Soviet dangers as vividly—CENTO and SEATO being good examples—atrophied much earlier. The broad realist insight that the weaker the threat, the more infirm the alliance, therefore, seems to have been borne out. Not surprisingly, then, NATO has struggled since the end of the Cold War to find a mission that could substitute for its previous raison d'être.[30] It has attempted to find new meaning by focusing on managing everything from challenges on its periphery to becoming a provider of collective security, even as its principal underwriter, the United States, has slowly shifted its gaze from Europe to new security demands in Asia. Whether the recent Russian political resurgence under Vladimir Putin will reanimate NATO's sense of purpose remains to be seen. But what seems clear in the interim is that the absence of riveting geopolitical dangers has weakened the unity of purpose and the vitality of what was once the United States' most successful multilateral coalition.

Other U.S. compacts, such as the ones with South Korea and Japan, have proved more durable because the absence of the Soviet Union has, unfortunately, been substituted by newer dangers in Asia: North Korea for

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[30] For further discussion, see Mark Webber, James Sperling, and Martin A. Smith, *NATO's Post–Cold War Trajectory: Decline or Regeneration?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

starters, but increasingly China over the longer term. Many traditional U.S. alliances have thus survived partly out of institutional inertia, but often at the cost of losing their original momentum. They continue to serve a variety of important purposes, often demonstrating their greatest utility where cooperative intelligence collection, diplomatic consultation and coordination, and the pooling of military resources in crises are concerned. Many of these functions are of special benefit to the United States' weaker partners insofar as the legacy alliances provide them with the advantages of bandwagoning that might have otherwise been lost. But the singular preeminence of these partnerships has undoubtedly diminished in the absence of a common overarching strategic threat.[31]

Moreover, all of the United States' core alliances are now hobbled by a problem that was previously suppressed: the disappearance of an absorbing global danger has prompted populations in allied countries (and in the United States as well) to refocus on domestic issues, thus weakening support for strong defense budgets and extended military involvements abroad. As a result, Washington has had to allocate resources for supporting alliance capabilities (particularly in NATO) from its own diminishing defense spending in greater measure than might otherwise have been necessary. Compensating for these deficits is something Washington has done with equanimity thus far, but that does not alter the fact that the combined military power available to the United States is still smaller than it could have been if domestic pressures had not constrained allied defense budgets.[32] At any rate, the continued U.S. subventions for collective defense only prove that Washington still values all of its alliances and partnerships immensely, if for no other reason than the legitimacy they provide through collaboration; yet the challenges of preserving both allied capabilities and allied cohesion have undoubtedly increased in ways that were not the case during the high tide of the Soviet threat.

Second, although new challengers to U.S. power have emerged since the ending of the Cold War, these rivals are for the most part regional entities who do not, at least for the moment, pose a worldwide threat to both the United States and its partners uniformly. The tight reciprocity and coordination that U.S. alliances previously produced, accordingly, become harder to achieve,

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[31] For more on this issue in the Asian context, see Carl W. Baker and Brad Glosserman, eds., "Doing More and Expecting Less: The Future of U.S. Alliances in the Asia Pacific," Pacific Forum CSIS, Issues & Insights, January 2013.

[32] For specific trends in declining U.S. defense budgets, see Dinah Walker, "Trends in U.S. Military Spending," Council on Foreign Relations, July 2014. For analysis on declining NATO and U.S. defense budgets, see Nora Bensahel and Jacob Stokes, "The U.S. Defense Budget and the Future of Alliance Burden-Sharing," German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Security Task Force Series, November 2013.

even though they may be entirely desirable. To complicate matters further, China, the one country that holds the potential of becoming a dangerous global rival, is already deeply entwined economically with the United States as well as with the economies of all U.S. allies—including those who are otherwise Beijing's natural rivals. This fundamental transformation of the situation prevailing during the Cold War—when economic integration characterized intra-allied relations but did not extend to rivals—complicates the maintenance of future American hegemony immensely.[33]

International interdependence has undoubtedly been among the most significant fruits of U.S. primacy. But its fecundity and depth imply that the United States and its allies today contribute toward enhancing the prosperity and the material capabilities of countries that will one day become their rivals. Because Washington and its partners also profit from such economic intercourse, they end up in the awkward situation where their quest for absolute gains (the benefits each derives from trade) collides with the problem of relative gains (the reality that some of their cohort, especially competitors like China, have gained more from trade than they have). This tension is made all the more acute due to the disproportionate costs borne by Washington in upholding the liberal order, while rivals such as Beijing not only free ride en route to harvesting incommensurate benefits from this regime but also use these gains to develop military capabilities that are intended to threaten the guardian of the system, the United States itself.[34]

Because interdependence has now engendered "global codependency" on a massive scale, neither the United States and its allies nor its competitors appear eager to limit their trading relations. This is the case even though Washington and its partners are well aware that Beijing's assertiveness, which leaves them all vulnerable, is underwritten substantially by the larger web of cooperative economic activities. What complicates matters fundamentally, however, is that the dangers posed by China's ambitions do not affect the United States and its allies symmetrically. Rather, the differences in the intensity of the threat perceptions enable Beijing to exploit the benefits of interdependence by deepening its economic and technological ties with those alliance members less threatened by China in order to accumulate the very capabilities necessary to intimidate other, more vulnerable partners.

Because China is not yet viewed as the Soviet Union previously was—as a clear and present danger to all—the tight reciprocity and cohesion that underwrote the alliance denial regimes of yesteryear do not exist where

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[33] Ashley J. Tellis, "Power Shift: How the West Can Adapt and Thrive in an Asian Century," German Marshall Fund of the United States, Asian Paper Series, January 2010.

[34] Ashley J. Tellis, "Balancing without Containment: An American Strategy for Managing China," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014.

Beijing is concerned. In such a situation, China cannot only exploit the pervasiveness of economic interdependence to grow even more rapidly, but it can also play alliance members against each another. Thanks to their common desire for uninterrupted absolute gains, partners are often inclined to trade strategic technologies with China for fear of losing out to other states (including those outside the alliance) who might be less reticent. The net result of this competition is to make both the United States and its allies more complicit in aiding the growth of Chinese power at exactly the time when Beijing promises to become at least Washington's principal competitor, if not that of others eventually. There is no easy exit from this conundrum, but that makes the task of maintaining American hegemony, both through the U.S. alliance network and unilaterally, all the more challenging.

Third, the liberal international order created by the United States against the backdrop of its conflict with the Soviet Union contributed greatly to resuscitating its war-devastated allies—a vital necessity in the effort to defeat Soviet expansionism—but in the process accelerated the relative decline of U.S. power as well. So long as Washington's own allies were being strengthened, however, U.S. relative decline had little geopolitical significance. But the crucial decisions made by the United States during the last years of the Cold War and after, decisions that included integrating potential rivals such as China into the world trading system, have hastened its decline in relative power compared with where it stood in 1945.[35]

To be sure, that standing was in some ways artificial and would have eroded inevitably as the European and Asian states destroyed by World War II slowly made a comeback. But the shift in the center of gravity to Asia occurring thanks to the new economic integration of countries that are not U.S. allies—the paradoxical result of the success of American internationalism—implies that the United States' relative power could decline even further, and perhaps more consequentially, in the years ahead. This contraction in comparative capabilities does not necessarily have momentous strategic implications right now, because the United States will still remain the most powerful nation globally for some time to come. But if competitors, such as China, continue to successfully accumulate national power, while the capacity of the United States to protect its hegemony weakens, relative decline, which is but a statistical artifact today, could well become politically fateful.[36]

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[35] Ashley J. Tellis, "U.S.-China Relations in a Realist World," in *Tangled Titans: The United States and China*, ed. David Shambaugh (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 75–100.

[36] For a useful discussion, see Geir Lundestad, *The Rise and Decline of the American "Empire"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Stuart S. Brown, *The Future of U.S. Global Power: Delusions of Decline* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

These concerns have grown in importance because the global financial crisis of 2007–8 exacted a greater toll on the U.S. economy than it did on rivals like China. Even more problematically, it ruptured the United States' self-confidence and sense of exceptionalism, a development that in recent years has been manifested in profound geopolitical diffidence and diminished U.S. contributions to the production of global public goods, such as international stability and order. The economic recession resulting from the crisis also exacerbated the problems of U.S. public finance and has led to dangerous reductions in defense spending, which are likely to persist for some time.[37] If these trends gather steam, U.S. primacy could be dangerously eroded and the larger global order itself could be at heightened risk, particularly because U.S. allies today appear unable to make increased compensating contributions. The United States' reluctance to deploy a vigorous unilateralism has thus materialized at exactly the time when its absence has proved to be quite costly.

There is no reason, however, that the current American despondency should become the new normal. The U.S. economy could be on the cusp of experiencing another major round of growth in productivity thanks to emerging breakthroughs in energy, manufacturing, and digitization. An economic rebound stimulated by a new wave of Schumpeterian revolutions could help arrest the United States' relative decline significantly, a prospect that can never be ruled out given the vitality of its national innovation system.[38] What will be required, however, is inspired leadership in Washington—leadership that is willing to squarely confront the nation's economic difficulties, build the foundations for future economic growth, and reinvest in a set of disruptive military capabilities that will enable the U.S. armed forces to successfully execute their global power-projection missions, whatever the opposition. To the degree that the United States can effectively undertake these tasks, it will be able to make those "supernormal" contributions to the production of global public goods and, by so doing, buttress its own hegemony for another long cycle in world politics.

As the United States prepares to manage these three challenges that have arisen in this current "interwar period"[39]—the weakening of alliance

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[37] Ashley J. Tellis, "The Global Economic Crisis and U.S. Power," in *Strategic Asia 2009–10: Economic Meltdown and Geopolitical Stability*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Andrew Marble, and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009), 3–35.

[38] For further information on economic innovations, see James Manyika et al., "Disruptive Technologies: Advances That Will Transform Life, Business, and the Global Economy," McKinsey Global Institute, 2013, http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/business_technology/disruptive_technologies; and Susan Lund et al., "Game Changers: Five Opportunities for U.S. Growth and Renewal," McKinsey Global Institute, July 2013, 2.

[39] Colin Gray, "How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?" *Parameters* 35 (2005): 14.

unity and capabilities in an era where serious threats seem distant, the strengthening of competitors' power due to economic interdependence, and the possibility of a real (as opposed to nominal) relative decline that hinders the United States' ability to underwrite global order—it is obvious that revitalizing U.S. national power remains the foundation on which American hegemony will ultimately be preserved.[40] The effectiveness of this renewal will determine both the latitude for and the potency of unilateralism as a means of protecting U.S. interests. As Washington focuses on national rejuvenation, however, it does not have the luxury of jettisoning its alliances because no matter what their infirmities currently may be, the history of the twentieth century has sufficiently proved three propositions: global hegemony can be best preserved through the additive power provided by allies and friends; the presence of effective confederations enables unilateralism whenever necessary and thus acts as its natural complement; and there is no better device for according "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" than a healthy set of strategic partnerships.

For all these reasons—and especially in the face of a rising China—the challenge before the United States, both around the world and, most importantly, in Asia, consists of how to recast its approach to its geopolitical associations in order to advance vital U.S. interests. This task takes on a special urgency because China's ascendency in Asia is now assured, the likelihood of its evolving into a global rival of the United States is also very high, and China's assertiveness vis-à-vis its neighbors and U.S. power more generally will only further increase in intensity. But the challenge of revamping U.S. geostrategic partnerships also involves a certain delicacy because, thanks to economic interdependence, neither the United States nor its European and Asian partners seek to break ties with China for fear of losing the common gains arising from mutual commerce. Therefore, developing confederations that are simultaneously capable of deterring China without unnerving it, reassuring allies without exacerbating either their own mutual security dilemmas or their common problems with Beijing, and strengthening the web of interdependence in the Indo-Pacific when the future of U.S. power globally appears uncertain will remain quite a challenge.

At the very least, achieving these multiple aims will require what Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall describes as "[a new] alliance strategy that is multifaceted, multilayered, and multi-yeared":

> This would entail a four-pronged approach: First, to build upon existing bilateral and multilateral alliance institutions, relationships, and capabilities; second, to promote the establishment of stronger ties that might become enduring alliances (both bilaterally and multilaterally) with several key countries and regions; third,

[40] Tellis, "Balancing without Containment," 67–84.

> to invest in peacetime security cooperation with countries that can be coaxed toward partnership and may in the future be capable of sustaining an alliance relationship; and fourth, to utilize the full spectrum of cooperative international arrangements that complement alliances.[41]

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has set about these diverse tasks. Even as it has pursued the larger goal of broadening its strategic partnerships, however, the aims underlying these associations have also subtly mutated. During the Cold War, U.S. alliances were oriented primarily toward collective defense, protecting the partners from any external threat by communicating the indivisibility of their armed response. Toward this end, the tightly knit pacts focused equally on dampening intra-alliance rivalries, weakening incentives for free-riding, and mitigating temptations for excessive self-reliance. By so doing, the United States preserved its alliances as instruments that protected both the common security and its own hegemony.

The Asian partnerships that the United States must foster in the future will have to do all this and more. The core of collective defense (or extended deterrence where relevant) will remain unchanged, at least for all the formal alliances involving countries that rely on Washington directly for their security. Because any deterioration in the regional balance of power to the United States' disadvantage cannot be beneficial to its interests, however, the United States will have to countenance the possibility of coming to the defense of some key Asian states *in extremis*, even though these nations may not be bound *a priori* by any agreement that commits Washington to their defense. From Korea to Kuwait, the United States, historically, ended up creating a variety of new strategic partnerships under conditions of adversity, and it is very possible that such contingencies could recur.

Beyond this fundamental responsibility for protecting critical states because of their value for U.S. interests, the United States may also on occasion need the support of various Asian countries in what are otherwise unilateral actions undertaken in the face of necessity. As one analysis stated pointedly,

> The United States has fought in five major wars during the 20th century. In each of these conflicts U.S. forces found themselves operating as part of an alliance, or coalition. Even today, when U.S. military superiority has reached a level rarely matched in history, the United States retains its affinity for combined military operations. Recent military actions in Bosnia, Haiti, Iraq, Somalia, and Yugoslavia all were conducted in conjunction with forces from other nations.[42]

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[41] Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, *Alliances and American National Security* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), viii.

[42] Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "Transforming America's Alliances," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, February 2000, 1.

The need for partners to populate the "coalitions of the willing," both for reasons of capability and legitimacy, especially in situations where the United States pursues military operations without United Nations Security Council authorization, remains another reason for thinking about confederates beyond simply collective defense.

Contributing to the continued provision of global public goods remains an equally important motive for seeking more partners, even outside formal political associations.[43] Because the cost of U.S. contributions toward such collective goods may become more burdensome over time, accepting increased contributions by friends and allies remains an attractive solution. In fact, any potential reduction in U.S. contributions need not be catastrophic if the helping hands of capable powers friendly to the United States can compensate for the decrease. These contributors need not be formal U.S. allies. So long as their political aims fundamentally cohere with Washington's, anything they do to augment the supply of global public goods serves U.S., their own, and other common interests. Given this calculus, developing partnerships with friendly states for purposes of strengthening the liberal international order becomes one more reason for thinking beyond collective defense.

Finally, a critical impetus for developing new strategic ties with countries that may not need U.S. resources strictly for their security is preserving "the balance of power that favors freedom" in Asia.[44] In an environment where many states may be uncomfortable with becoming part of a formal U.S. alliance—either because of their domestic politics, their historical traditions, or their economic ties with China, or even because of a desire to avoid entering into an entangling relationship with the United States or provoking Beijing—it may still be in Washington's interest to develop strong political relations with some key nations. These ties, which are often encompassed by the euphemism "strategic partnerships," are valuable not because they produce active assistance for the United States vis-à-vis China. If they do, so much the better. But even if they do not, such strategic partnerships will still be extremely worthwhile if, having strengthened the partner involved, they serve the purpose of limiting China's ability to dominate its wider periphery and thereby mount more consequential challenges to U.S. interests in Asia and globally. The quest for even passive benefits of this kind, therefore, becomes an important driver of the widening of U.S. strategic ties beyond collective defense.

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[43] The clearest official statement of this goal can be found in U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, D.C., January 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf.

[44] Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice on Terrorism and Foreign Policy" (speech given at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., April 29, 2002).

Seeking the United States: Perspectives from Asia

The diverse chapters in this *Strategic Asia* volume examine the interest, capacity, and willingness of key Asian countries to partner with the United States in the emerging strategic environment. The contributions gathered here, therefore, complement the analysis in this introductory chapter. Whereas this overview focuses on how the United States came to enshrine confederations as part of its grand strategy, what tasks U.S. alliances performed in the past, and how their functions promise to mutate in the future, the individual chapters that follow examine how a variety of Asian counterparts assess the utility, importance, and benefits of their specific associations with the United States and what the impact of such partnerships might be for regional and global security.

Toward this end, each country study broadly takes the following form. To begin, it assesses how the country in question views its external environment in the context of its own strategic priorities, national ambitions, and vision of a desirable international order. By integrating both the pressures emanating from the country's domestic politics and its judgments about perceived threats against the larger backdrop of economic realities as well as the evolving strategic competition between Beijing and Washington, each chapter elucidates how these myriad factors drive the country's approach to working with the United States on a range of economic, political, and security issues.

From this foundation, the analysis then proceeds to the heart of the matter: identifying key priorities for the country being investigated, issues that are also important for the international order, and areas where shared interests with the United States open the possibilities for practical cooperation. Where specific initiatives and mechanisms to build partner capability are relevant to deeper collaboration with the United States, each chapter provides such recommendations as well.

Finally, each investigation evaluates the potential impact of the country's cooperation with the United States along three concrete dimensions: its domestic politics, regional prosperity and stability, and the strength of the international order writ large. By so doing, each chapter describes how national security managers envisage their country's ties with the United States as improving that country's own external environment, while at the same time assessing how each specific partnership advances core U.S. national interests in Asia and beyond. As might be imagined, given the diversity of U.S. associations in Asia, the strength of the relationships and the aims of the various partners involved vary considerably.

The chapter on Japan, authored by Nicholas Szechenyi, abundantly confirms the proposition that Tokyo remains Washington's most capable

partner in Northeast Asia. The Japanese economy today is the second-largest in Asia, but its technological capacities remain preeminent. Unfortunately, however, the stasis of the last two decades has taken a toll on Japanese self-confidence, but Szechenyi emphasizes that Shinzo Abe's government remains determined to revitalize the economy, pursue vigorous diplomatic engagement, and upgrade Japanese defense capabilities to undertake new roles and missions. Success on these counts is by no means complete. Yet if accompanied by a concerted effort at outreach to neighbors who have been previously victims of Japanese aggression, Tokyo's emerging capabilities will serve Washington's core objective of preserving a favorable regional balance of power, even as Japan's contributions to the production of global public goods and possibly even to future coalitions of the willing come to enjoy the approbation of the region at large. What is clear from Szechenyi's analysis, however, is that even as this strategic evolution takes place, Japan remains firmly committed to its alliance with the United States as the principal instrument for advancing its political aims.

The transformation in Japanese security policy is mirrored by the changes occurring in the other critical U.S. partnership in Northeast Asia: the alliance with South Korea. Scott Snyder's chapter on South Korea argues that what was previously a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship of super- and sub-ordination between Washington and Seoul is now slowly changing in the direction of greater equality and a more wide-ranging partnership. South Korea's dramatic economic achievements and its steady consolidation of democracy at home have made this evolution possible, leading to the country's growing desire for more responsibility for its own defense. Seoul's increasing willingness to play on a larger canvas than simply Northeast Asia—in collaboration with the United States—and its rejection of Beijing's effort to limit its alliance relationship merely to peninsular matters subtly aids the balancing of China while creating opportunities for greater South Korean contributions toward regional and global stability. The ongoing changes in the U.S.–South Korean partnership thus reflect the new realities of the post–Cold War order in Asia.

The U.S.-Australian alliance remains the quietest of the major bilateral compacts enjoyed by the United States in Asia, partly because of geography and partly because many of the partnership's most valuable activities, such as intelligence collection, occur entirely outside the public eye. Australia has long been a steadfast partner, contributing troops to every U.S. campaign since World War II. Bates Gill's chapter captures the strength of this relationship eloquently while highlighting how Australia, like other U.S. partners such as Japan and South Korea, is now torn between the challenges of balancing China and remaining economically integrated with it. Because Australia maintains a

highly proficient military and because its strategic ties with the United States run far deeper than those with other states, Australian capabilities will remain valued in diverse arenas, such as protecting the commons, humanitarian assistance, and counterproliferation. This is the case even as Canberra's tightrope walk between Washington and Beijing remains emblematic of the challenges facing many other U.S. partners in the region.

The U.S. alliance with the Philippines is unique because of the colonial bonds that tied the two nations together. After its independence in 1946, the country remained a sturdy, but dependent, ally throughout the Cold War. The Philippines finally rejected the decades-long U.S. military presence on its territories at the end of that epoch as domestic politics took a decisive turn in the direction of democracy. Sheena Chestnut Greitens's chapter on the U.S.-Philippines alliance documents how Manila's discomfort with the memories of U.S. military presence has now slowly been subordinated to its growing fears of China because of the latter's claims over offshore islands in the South China Sea. Unlike many other U.S. allies, however, the Philippines remains a militarily weak state, something its recent military modernization will not alter, at least vis-à-vis China. The Philippines will thus persist as a consumer of the security produced by U.S. military power in the region, yet because of its colonial history and the ferment in its domestic politics, it will also remain an example of a country that cannot fully embrace the United States as it once did. Greitens nonetheless persuasively argues that strengthening the Philippines will aid in deterring China, but that the partnership must be broadened beyond security cooperation in order to satisfy the larger aspirations of the Filipino people.

The U.S.-Thailand alliance is another example of a relationship that has been transformed by the end of the Cold War. With Thailand having actively sought a credible, but informal, security relationship with the United States in order to defend against regional Communist threats—thereby perpetuating the independence that Thailand had atypically enjoyed during the colonial period—the end of the Vietnam War and finally the defeat of Communism eroded the foundations of this partnership. But as Catharin Dalpino notes in her chapter, the country's salience paradoxically increased as Southeast Asia gradually grew more prosperous, new forms of engagement with China materialized, and Thailand's location as a land bridge made it the fulcrum for increased connectivity throughout continental Southeast Asia. Bangkok's return to an older diplomatic practice of seeking flexibility in foreign relations has changed the character of its ties with Washington considerably. For the foreseeable future, however, Thailand's importance in regard to permitting the United States access through the region will protect its significance. The convulsions in Thai domestic politics, as evidenced by the recurring coups,

have stressed bilateral relations periodically, but even when these troubles are finally behind both countries, Thailand's importance as an ally will likely derive from somewhat narrow considerations: providing access for U.S. military movements and hosting major regional training exercises. To that degree, however, this partnership contributes toward preserving peace and stability in the wider region.

In contrast with the countries discussed thus far, the next country assessed in this volume is the first of several that are not allies of the United States. In fact, India, which is the subject of Daniel Twining's chapter, is unlikely to ever become Washington's formal ally, even though it has enjoyed unprecedented U.S. attention in recent years. In what remains a great example of how the evolving post–Cold War environment has demanded new kinds of strategic partnerships, the United States has developed close ties with this large, formally nonaligned democracy in Asia because of the values shared by the two countries. Even more importantly, India's emerging capabilities and extant rivalry with China have made it a desirable object of U.S. engagement. Unlike the ties that bind traditional U.S. alliances, however—which are defined by different types of reciprocity—the transformation of U.S.-Indian relations in recent years has been driven by a unique, calculating detachment on the part of Washington. In an effort to build objective constraints on the misuse of Chinese power in Asia, the United States has sought to aid India's rise on the global stage. It has done so not with the expectation that New Delhi will repay this generosity in specific ways but rather with the expectation that India will preserve a regional balance of power that constrains China's capacity to dominate Asia merely by the fact of India's own developmental and strategic success, thereby advancing U.S. interests in the process. Although any Indian strategic cooperation with the United States would undoubtedly be welcome, the fact that the country's effective rise becomes the true measure of the success of the strategy indicates how the complexities of economic interdependence have now compelled Washington to think of "alliances" in new ways if the fundamental objective of preserving American hegemony globally is to be achieved.

Like India, Indonesia is an important state situated in a critical locale in Asia. Like India again, Indonesia was historically a nonaligned polity that unfortunately subsisted for many decades under military rule. As Ann Marie Murphy emphasizes in her chapter, Indonesia's strategic location at the crossroads of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, its ongoing but largely successful democratic transition, and its status as the world's largest Muslim country all combine to bequeath it with special relevance to the United States. Although Indonesia continues to pursue its external engagements primarily through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the

importance ASEAN accords to a strong partnership with the United States as part of its own efforts to avoid being dominated by China inevitably enhances U.S.-Indonesian ties as well. In recent years, the latter have intensified as a new generation of democratic leaders in Jakarta has, according to Murphy, "demonstrated a willingness to invest [their] diplomatic energies to support the current international order in a manner consistent with U.S. interests." In ways similar to those adopted vis-à-vis India, the United States seeks to shore up Indonesian capacities to deal with a wide range of challenges, including terrorism, natural disasters, and maritime security, thus enabling Jakarta to protect its core interests in the face of both internal dangers and Chinese threats. Washington thereby seeks to ensure that Indonesia thrives as a regional center of power in ways that ultimately enhance U.S. security.

The new post–Cold War effort to build resilient partnerships with states that nonetheless eschew the option of a formal alliance with Washington finds no better example than Singapore, the focus of Matthew Shannon Stumpf's chapter. A small island-state, Singapore has sought to maintain the deepest possible strategic ties with the United States—in fact, reaching the point where it has developed physical infrastructure specifically to support U.S. naval vessels deploying to the country—while consistently rejecting the formalities of an alliance. Given Singapore's location and history, its grand strategy has focused on maintaining close links with both Beijing and Washington, resolutely avoiding any temptation to decisively choose between the two. Yet Singaporean leaders, astutely recognizing the dangers of proximity to an increasingly assertive China, have doubled down on strengthening their partnership with the United States, betting on the fact that U.S. economic and military superiority will ultimately suffice to protect the regional order even in the face of growing Chinese power. To ensure this outcome, Singapore has sought to contribute tangibly by hosting U.S. naval assets, acquiring various U.S. military technologies, and training extensively with the U.S. armed forces—even as it maintains close economic and diplomatic ties with China. For Washington, the U.S.-Singaporean model of engagement remains in many ways the exemplar of what new "alliances" in the post–Cold War order might look like: allies maintaining robust practical cooperation with the United States on the most important strategic issues, while pursuing their interests with other regional countries so long as these do not undermine the larger common objective of preserving an Asia free of Chinese domination.

This principle applies to Taiwan in a most unique way. Although Taipei was Washington's formal partner through the mutual defense treaty signed in 1954, the U.S.-China rapprochement that occurred after President Richard Nixon's historic visit to Beijing slowly left Taipei in a geopolitical netherworld.

Today, the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security is ensured not by an official bilateral treaty but rather by domestic U.S. law—the Taiwan Relations Act—which requires the United States to aid Taiwan through both defensive arms transfers and maintenance of a capacity to intervene in case it becomes a victim of strategic coercion or attack. In an environment defined by tight economic interdependence between China and the United States, on the one hand, and by Beijing's growing global ascendency, on the other, Washington has walked a tightrope for many years struggling to protect Taiwan politically while avoiding conclusively alienating China. This balancing act has been most effective when dyadic relations among the three states involved have enjoyed equipoise. But the longer-term future remains highly uncertain. For the moment, however, Taiwan's growing economic links with China and the stability of their bilateral relations offer welcome respite. Nonetheless, the key to the continued success of the exceptional extended deterrence relationship that exists between the United States and Taiwan will require, as Russell Hsiao highlights in his chapter, a steady strengthening of Taiwan's military capabilities, a willingness on Washington's part to reconsider its traditional policy of "strategic ambiguity," and deliberate efforts to redress what Hsiao calls the "sovereignty gap" in China-Taiwan relations. A failure to do so could not only subvert the security of a steadfast U.S. ally but also undermine the United States' credibility in the face of rising Chinese power in Asia.

On the face of it, Vietnam might appear as an odd inclusion in a volume on U.S. allies and partners in Asia. After all, Washington and Hanoi were locked in a bitter conflict for some twenty-odd years, a domestically divisive war in the United States that ultimately ended in defeat and the loss of over 58,000 American lives. Yet in a remarkable testament to the enduring importance of interests in international politics, Nguyen Manh Hung's chapter succinctly demonstrates that "U.S.-Vietnam relations have come a long way, from enmity to partnership, thanks to two major geopolitical shifts that have created a convergence of strategic interests between both sides: Vietnam beginning to overcome its mistrust of U.S. intentions and commitment, and the rise of China and assertive Chinese behavior in the South China Sea driving worries in both Washington and Hanoi." The steadily intensifying engagement between what remains formally a Communist regime in Vietnam and the anti-Communist paragon par excellence, the United States, indicates the importance to both sides of preserving an Asia that is free from Chinese control. Although Vietnam, like India, Indonesia, and Singapore, will never become a formal ally, U.S. investments in assisting Vietnam to preserve its independence, even if not reciprocated, serve vital U.S. interests. Consequently, Nguyen argues that supporting Vietnam's domestic evolution without threatening its ruling regime, strengthening its economy

through continued investment, and integrating the country eventually into the Trans-Pacific Partnership remain important ways in which Washington and Hanoi can collaborate to achieve their common core strategic interests.

The country chapters in this edition of *Strategic Asia* are supplemented—as they always are in this series—by a special study. In this volume, the special study focuses on understanding an important attribute of interstate competition in the era of economic interdependence: the persistence of strategic hedging. The conventional argument for strategic hedging—that is, the desire of states to avoid either balancing or bandwagoning vis-à-vis China and the United States—is rooted in either uncertainty about the future character of the power hierarchy or ambiguity about state intentions amid diffuse threats. Van Jackson's special study of this issue offers a third perspective. Drawing insights from the literature on network analysis and complex interdependence, he argues that hedging in the Indo-Pacific region is likely to be a permanent—not transient—condition (as is usually supposed) because of the multiple and cross-cutting cleavages that the regional states have to contend with in the evolving international system. This insight has powerful consequences: among other things, it validates the fundamental shift in U.S. regional strategy witnessed since the end of the Cold War—namely, the desire to nurture diverse kinds of strategic partnerships of the type detailed in this volume as a means of preserving a favorable continental balance of power. Jackson argues that these efforts should be supplemented by continued engagement with Asia's multilateral institutions because "consensual multilateralism may be the only acceptable or functional model of security governance in Asia" in the years to come.

Conclusion

The studies gathered in this volume on alliances and partnerships illustrate the central argument of this overview: confederationism, as a constituent element of U.S. grand strategy, is here to stay. U.S. power, no matter how formidable, benefits from the presence of partners thanks to both their capacity to supplement American resources and their ability to bestow legitimacy to various U.S. policies. Even when these are not at issue, however, the company of confederates is undoubtedly valuable because it enhances the freedom the United States enjoys to undertake unilateral actions whenever these are demanded by its global interests. Washington's quest for partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, at any rate, is only eased by the fact that a large number of nations therein value the United States and its protective presence—in fact, demand it, even if they are not formal allies—because of the positive externalities accruing to them specifically

in an environment characterized by both deepening interdependence and rising Chinese power.

The dialectical relationship between confederationism and unilateralism, coupled with the Asian desire for a strong U.S. regional presence even when formal alliances are not particularly favored, highlights an important paradox that ought not to be forgotten by U.S. policymakers: the cohesion between the United States and its many partners, formal and informal, is likely to be greatest when U.S. power is at its most durable and resolute—in other words, when associates may be least needed. If U.S. power atrophies, however, due to either poor policies at home or a failure to lead in the manner appropriate to U.S. interests, the collaborators necessary for success are unlikely to be enthusiastic partners when they are most desirable. The ultimate value of confederationism as an anchor of U.S. grand strategy thus hinges fundamentally on the vitality of U.S. power.