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International Institutions and War

THE PUZZLE *In a well-governed country, the police prevent and punish acts of violence between individuals. Where are the police in international politics? Why is it so hard for the international community to prevent and punish acts of aggression?*

Above: Collective security organizations like the United Nations can influence interactions between adversaries in ways that promote peaceful outcomes. However, these institutions face significant challenges in achieving their goals.

When North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, the United Nations (UN) responded by authorizing member states to use military force to resist this act of aggression. Although North Korea had some influential supporters, including the Soviet Union and China, a coalition of 20 nations led by the United States successfully expelled the North Koreans from South Korea by October 1950. At that point, the UN expanded the forces' mandate and pushed into North Korea. This act provoked China to intervene in order to save its ally, and the Korean War dragged on for another three years.

Around the same time, Chinese forces also invaded Tibet, which neighbors China on the west. China had long claimed sovereignty over this vast, mountainous region, but Tibet had declared independence from China in 1911. Although China never recognized this declaration, Tibet was, in practice, an independent state for the next several decades as China, distracted by civil war and the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, was unable to resist. Not long after the Communists gained control of mainland China in 1949, they sought to reassert the country's historic claim over Tibet. Units of the People's Liberation Army swept into the region in October 1950, quickly defeating the Tibetan army and forcing Tibet's leaders to accept Chinese rule. Tibet's political and religious leader, the Dalai Lama, appealed to the UN to meet the Chinese attack on Tibet with the same kind of response that it had mustered against North Korea. But in this case, the UN took no action, and the Chinese conquest of Tibet was allowed to stand.

In our everyday lives, we generally count on the police to protect us from acts of aggression by other people. If someone breaks into your house, you can call the police. Assuming you live in a place with an effective police force, the police may come in time to stop the person from harming you or your property. Even if the police cannot always stop a crime in progress, they can investigate and try to bring the perpetrator to justice. The existence of a police force has a deterrent effect on would-be criminals, who can be dissuaded from committing aggression by the expectation that they might be caught and punished. Although total security is rarely possible, people who live in societies with well-functioning police and judicial systems rarely experience acts of violence, and they rarely have to commit acts of violence to defend themselves. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of actors in the international system.

Where are the police in world politics? The short answer is that the international system has no police force analogous to what exists in most countries. Each state possesses its own police and its own military, but there is no authoritative institution above states with an independent force that can police relations among them. As suggested by the Korean and Tibetan examples just described, this condition of anarchy means that there is variation in the ways the international community responds to acts of aggression. And this variation has real consequences for people living in the states where such aggression occurs. Thanks to the international efforts that kept it independent, South Korea is today a thriving and prosperous country, with a living standard that far exceeds that of the impoverished North. Tibet, on the other hand, remains a part of China in spite of the fact that many Tibetans want their independence and an active movement for independence continues to this day.

Understanding this variation in international responses requires that we explore the institutions that govern whether and how outside actors respond to acts of violence in the international system. The most obvious of these outside actors are bodies like the UN or its predecessor, the League of Nations (1919–46). Formally known as collective security organizations, these institutions are the closest approximation to a world government that we have. Collective security organizations try to govern relations among their members, providing them with tools for peaceful conflict resolution and a mechanism for organizing collective responses to acts of aggression. To answer the question "Where are the police in international politics?" collective security organizations are a natural first place to look.

For much longer than such organizations have existed, however, states have used an alternative institution to arrange for help from others: alliances. If collective security organizations are like governments, alliances more closely resemble neighborhood associations: relatively small groups of actors that work together to meet common threats or address common needs. Alliances are institutions that help states cooperate militarily, such as by coming to one another's defense in the event of war. In the absence of an effective world police, alliances represent attempts by small numbers of like-minded states to look out for one another.

This chapter continues our inquiry into the puzzle of war by examining how international institutions affect interactions between states as they try to cooperate to prevent or stop international and civil conflict.

Thinking Analytically about International Institutions and War

Alliances and collective security organizations both influence whether or not outsiders will intervene in the event that war breaks out. As a result, they play a role in the bargaining that precedes a war, the bargaining that seeks to end an ongoing war, and the bargaining that takes place in the aftermath of fighting. But, despite these common features, these two kinds of institutions also differ greatly in how they operate. They form in response to different kinds of interests that third parties have in international disputes. And while both kinds of institutions try to facilitate cooperation among states, they address different aspects of the strategic interactions that surround third-party involvement in international disputes. Hence, the factors that predict their success or failure are quite different.

Alliances form when states have compatible interests that motivate them to cooperate militarily. They often seek to influence bargaining interactions with some third party by influencing that adversary's beliefs about the allies' willingness to fight together in the event of war. A core function of these institutions is to strengthen the commitment that allies make to one another and to signal that commitment to others in a credible manner.

By contrast, collective security organizations like the UN form around a common interest, which all states are presumed to share, in reducing violence within and between countries. Their primary challenge is to facilitate collective action by the international community to deter, end, and prevent the recurrence of international and civil wars. The task is a daunting one, and international efforts can be stymied either by the opposition of leading states or by their unwillingness to pay the costs of intervention. As a result, collective efforts to keep the peace are uneven, but certainly better than if these organizations did not exist at all.

Alliances: Why Promise to Fight Someone Else's War?

World War II in Europe started as a territorial dispute between Germany and Poland but quickly grew into something much larger. After Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Britain and France responded two days later by declaring war on Germany. On September 17, the Soviet Union joined the fray, invading Poland from the east, and Poland was quickly swallowed up by its larger neighbors. Several months later, in June 1940, Italy joined the war on the German side and launched an invasion of southern France as German forces attacked France in the north.

In each case, states that joined the war were carrying out the terms of alliance treaties that they had signed earlier. France and Poland had long-standing promises, codified in treaties from 1921 and 1925, to help each other in the event of war with Germany. Britain made a similar commitment to Poland in March 1939. Italy and the Soviet Union, for their parts, had each signed treaties pledging support for German military activities. Italy and Germany forged the so-called Pact of Steel in May 1939. Germany and the Soviet Union unveiled the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (so named for the two countries' foreign ministers) only days before the invasion of Poland. In that treaty, the two countries pledged not to attack each other and agreed to divide Poland between them; in addition, Germany promised the Soviets control over Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Alliances are institutions that help their members cooperate militarily in the event of a war. Like all institutions, alliances specify standards of behavior, or expectations about how states are to behave under certain conditions. They may include provisions for monitoring and verifying each member's compliance and procedures for joint decision making. Alliances also codify bargains between their members that settle distributional issues, such as resolving conflicts that might get in the way of cooperation or specifying how much each member will contribute to the common cause.[1]

alliances
Institutions that help their members cooperate militarily in the event of a war.

These provisions vary, depending on the interests of the allies. Some alliances are offensive, while others are defensive. An offensive alliance is an agreement between states to join one another in attacking a third state. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is a classic example of such an agreement. It not only specified the nature of Soviet-German military cooperation, but it also spelled out how the spoils of conquest would be divided. More commonly, alliances are defensive: states pledge to come to one another's defense in the event that either is attacked. The British and French pledges to Poland had this character. Defensive alliances may be open-ended in the sense that allies pledge to defend

1. The role of alliances in settling territorial conflicts among allies is noted by Douglas M. Gibler, "Control the Issues, Control the Conflict: The Effects of Alliances That Settle Territorial Issues on Interstate Rivalries," *International Interactions* 22 (1997): 341–68.

one another against any and all attackers, or they may be targeted only at specific countries. Alliances may also differ in what the member states are required to do in the event of attack. A typical defensive alliance requires states to come to one another's aid militarily—that is, to treat an attack on the ally as an attack on oneself. Other alliance agreements specify merely that the states will consult one another in the event of war.

The most comprehensive effort to collect and code information on alliances through history, the Alliance Treaty Obligation and Provision (ATOP) project, provides us with a sense of how common these different kinds of provisions are. ATOP researchers identified 538 alliance treaties between states in the period from 1815 to 2003.[2] Of these, just over half (277) involved promises of active military support in the event that one of the allies became involved in a conflict. The vast majority of these alliances (71 percent) were purely defensive in character, only 5 percent were purely offensive, and the rest (24 percent) had both offensive and defensive provisions. Of the agreements that did not provide for active military assistance, most (217) provided for consultation between the allies if either member became involved in military conflict. About a fifth of all alliances include a neutrality clause, which requires that each member promise not to join in any attack against an ally.

The United States currently has defensive alliances with a number of countries: South Korea, Japan, and—through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—Canada and many states in western and central Europe. If any of these states come under attack, they can invoke the U.S. alliance commitment and ask Americans to come to their aid. In turn, the United States can appeal to others if it is attacked. NATO invoked its mutual defense provision for the first time in the alliance's history after the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001. European NATO members assisted in flying aircraft equipped with the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) over U.S. skies from October 2001 to May 2002.

In addition to spelling out their offensive or defensive character, alliances may codify bargains over how much and what each state will contribute to the common defense. Some alliances are symmetrical, meaning that the members have similar responsibilities and contribute in roughly equal amounts. Other alliances are highly asymmetrical, typically because one of the members is much more powerful than the others. For example, while the United States has pledged to defend South Korea, there is little expectation that South Korea would be in a position to return the favor if the U.S. homeland was attacked. In exchange for protection, South Korea provides bases for American troops in East Asia, has contributed to U.S. military efforts in the region, and generally supports U.S. foreign policy diplomatically and economically.

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2. The data collection is described in Brett Ashley Leeds, Jeffrey M. Ritter, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, and Andrew G. Long, "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815–1944," *International Interactions* 28 (2002): 237–60. The data and codebook are available at http://atop.rice.edu (accessed 07/26/11). The figures reported here do not include nonaggression pacts (that is, agreements to refrain from using force), since these do not meet the definition of an alliance.

The United States maintains numerous military bases in Japan, including this one in Fussa, west of Tokyo, as part of a defensive alliance between the two countries. Countries form alliances when they have compatible interests that motivate them to cooperate.

Interests and Alliances

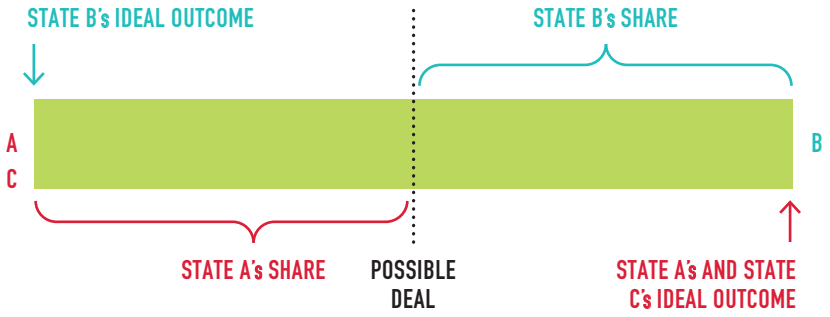
Given that alliances can drag a country into other countries' wars, why do states sign them? Alliances form when states have compatible interests that provide the basis for cooperation. In some cases, states share a common interest in achieving the same outcome. In the lead-up to World War II, the leaders of Britain and France did not agree to defend Poland out of the goodness of their hearts; they did so because they feared that a German conquest of Poland would make Germany militarily stronger, economically more self-sufficient, and therefore a greater threat to their own security. Thus, Britain and France shared Poland's interest in its own survival. Similarly, the United States formed the NATO alliance after World War II because it believed that securing countries like Britain, France, and West Germany from Soviet domination was crucial to its own security.

In other cases, alliance partners might have complementary interests that serve as the basis for a deal. The alliance between the United States and South Korea rests on the fact that South Korea wants protection from North Korea and China, while the United States wants military bases and partners in projecting its power in East Asia. Thus, each partner can provide something that the other values.

Whatever the specific interests are that bring states together into alliances, allies generally have aligned interests in the context of bargaining with third-party states. Figure 5.1 shows how we can depict such an alignment in our bargaining framework. As before, the disputed good is shown as a horizontal bar, and any possible deal separates this good into shares enjoyed by States A and B. We now assume that there is some third state, State C, that also has a stake in the outcome of bargaining between States A and B. If, say, State C has aligned interests with State A, then State C's ideal point is, like State A's ideal point, at the far right end of the bar.

FIGURE 5.1 ***Alignment of Interests***

If State C has common interests with State A, then both State A and State C prefer a deal as far to the right as possible. The more of the good State A gets, the happier State C is.



This means that the more of the good State A gets, the happier State C is. Thus, their interests are aligned, at least when it comes to this dispute with State B.

How these alignments arise is a complicated question without a single answer. A long tradition in the study of international relations holds that alliances form to create or preserve a **balance of power**—that is, a situation in which the military capabilities of two states or groups of states are roughly equal.[3] When a balance of power exists, no state or bloc has a clear military advantage over the other. A power imbalance, in contrast, is considered threatening to the weaker side's interests. According to this view, alliances form when two or more states need to combine their capabilities in order to match the capabilities of another state and thereby counter the threat to their security. Common interests thus arise from a common threat posed by the power of a stronger state or bloc.

balance of power
A situation in which the military capabilities of two states or groups of states are roughly equal.

In the late nineteenth century, both France and Russia feared the growing power and ambition of imperial Germany. Not only did each state want help in defending itself against a possible German attack, but each also feared that if Germany managed to conquer the other, then it would face an even more formidable foe in the future. As a result, each believed that its own survival depended in part on the survival of the other. The 1894 alliance between these states was formed on the basis of this common interest.

Although this dynamic can explain some aspects of alliance formation, the balance of power theory does not fully account for all alliance decisions. First, not all alliances form with the intent of balancing a stronger state. When the Soviet Union allied with Nazi Germany against Poland, it joined the stronger state, exacerbating rather than alleviating the imbalance of power in Central Europe. We refer to such

3. See, for example, Edward Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (New York: Norton, 1955). For an influential statement of the theory, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010). For a historical analysis of balancing and its alternatives, see Paul Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr, 247–86 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976).

behavior as bandwagoning.[4] **Bandwagoning** occurs when states team up with the more powerful side in a dispute in order to share the spoils of conquest. Bandwagoning alliances are often offensive, as the shared interests that underlie them arise not from a common fear but from a desire to cooperate for a common gain.

bandwagoning
A strategy in which states join forces with the stronger side in a conflict.

A second limitation of the balance of power theory is that states can often choose many potential partners in order to balance the capabilities of a stronger state. The arithmetic of balancing capabilities does not explain why some partners are more desirable than others. For example, when Saudi Arabia sought allies against Egypt in 1957, why did it choose to ally with fellow Arab monarchies Jordan and Iraq, rather than with Israel, a state with much more impressive military capabilities and also reason to fear Egypt? The answer lies not in the balance of power, but rather in the ideological and religious incompatibility between Saudi Arabia and the Jewish state, which made an alliance between the two unthinkable.[5]

Conversely, shared cultural or religious identity can help explain why some pairs of states see each other as particularly attractive allies. Strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel, for example, is rooted in part in the perception that Israel is an outpost of Western cultural and democratic values in the Middle East and hence more "like" the United States than are other states in the region.[6]

A final problem for the balance of power theory is that not all strong powers provoke similar balancing responses. For example, ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has been the most powerful country in the world, accounting in 2016 for 37 percent of all world military spending.[7] And yet, there has not been a significant tendency toward creating balancing alliances in response. Indeed, the U.S.-led NATO alliance, rather than falling apart after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, expanded both its membership and the scope of its missions (see "What Shaped Our World?" on p. 206).

A likely explanation is that while states sometimes complain about American arrogance and bullying, very few see the United States as an actual threat to their interests. Whatever differences the United States has had with France, for example, there is virtually no danger of war between them. Commercial, cultural, and ideological ties between the countries are strong, and there are no disputed goods in their relationship that are valuable enough to risk war over. In short, whether or not two states share a common interest vis-à-vis a third state depends on much more than whether the third state has an advantage in military capabilities. Other factors, such as geographic proximity, ideological and cultural similarity, and the existence (or not) of high-value disputes, play a large role in determining which states are considered threatening, and hence worth allying against, and which are not.[8]

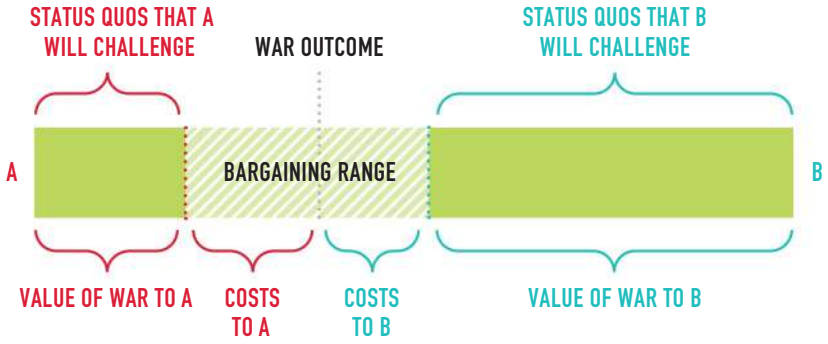
4. Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19 (1994): 72–107.
5. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 204–6.
6. See, for example, Michael N. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, 400–47 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).
7. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," https://sipri.org/databases/milex (accessed 07/10/17).
8. Walt, *Origins of Alliances*.

Alliances and Interstate Bargaining

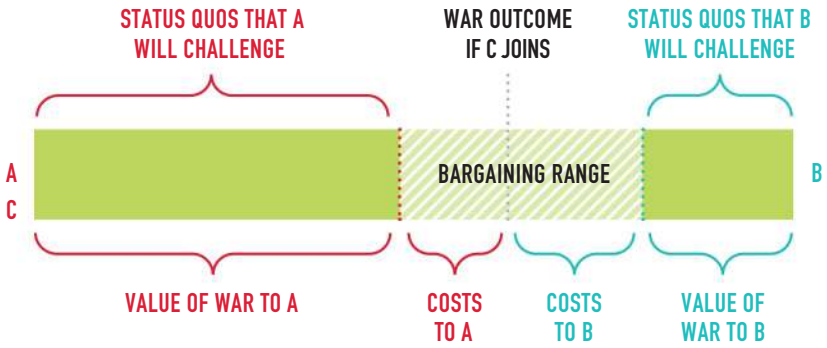
The possibility of intervention by an ally influences international bargaining by changing the likely outcome and costs of war for each side. Returning to the three-state example introduced in Figure 5.1, imagine that if States A and B were to fight a war, the expected outcome would be as shown in the top panel of Figure 5.2. In this interaction, State B is assumed to be more powerful, so the war outcome is close to its ideal point. This means that State B can extract a favorable bargain from State A and is likely to challenge State A to try to realize that bargain (in other words, there is a large range of status quo outcomes in which State B will make a demand of State A). If State C is expected to join State A in this war, however, the outcome and costs will be quite different, as shown in the lower panel. With State C's power added to that of State A, the expected outcome shifts to the right, in State A's favor. Moreover, State B is likely to suffer higher costs in a war against two adversaries, whereas State A is likely to incur lower costs now that State C is carrying some of the burden.

FIGURE 5.2 ***Alignments, Alliances, and Interstate Bargaining***

The bargaining interaction between State A and State B is determined by the expected outcome of a war between the two states.



However, this interaction changes when State C is expected to join State A in the event of a war. As shown below, when State C's power is added to State A's, the expected war outcome shifts to the right, and State B's costs of war increase. As a result, the set of deals that are preferable to war shifts closer to the ideal point of States A and C, and the range of status quo distributions that State B will challenge shrinks.



As before, the bargaining range is the set of deals that are preferred to war by both sides. Because of the change in the likely war outcome, the bargaining range has shifted to the right in the lower panel, benefiting States A and C. War is less attractive to State B, which can no longer extract a lopsided deal. State B's incentive to challenge State A also declines. By shrinking the range of status quos that State B can profitably challenge, the prospect of State C's participation deters State B from initiating crises in the first place. Hence, State C's willingness to intervene influences the bargaining interaction between States A and B by shifting each side's evaluation of war.

In addition, the possibility of intervention can affect whether the opposing sides reach a bargain. In the example just given, the shift in the bargaining range was based on the assumption that both States A and B believe that State C would intervene in the event of war. In other words, it assumed that the two sides form their expectations on the basis of the same information about State C's intentions. What would happen if this was not the case? For example, what if State A expected State C to join a war, but State B did not?

When the parties to a dispute have different information about what third parties will do, the uncertainty can heighten the probability that a bargaining failure will lead to war, for reasons discussed in Chapter 3. As we have seen, Iraq in August 1990 did not know whether the United States would defend Kuwait, and its doubts about U.S. threats to that effect helped bring about the Persian Gulf War. Similarly, we saw in the case of the Korean War that the United States was uncertain about whether China would come to the aid of North Korea if U.S. troops crossed the 38th parallel. In the lead-up to World War I, Germany was unsure until the last moment whether Britain would join its allies, France and Russia, in the event of war.

This observation suggests that alliances influence the bargaining interaction between states by influencing the states' beliefs about what third parties will do. While aligned interests are necessary for alliances to form, the main reason that states sign alliances is to signal those interests to others. After all, if it were completely obvious to everyone which states would come to the defense of others, there would be little need to negotiate and sign treaties to this effect.[9]

Because of their role as signals, alliances face the same challenge of credibility discussed in Chapter 3 with respect to threats. Indeed, an alliance entails an implied threat: "If you attack my ally, I will fight you." Just because a state has an interest in the outcome of its ally's bargaining interactions does not ensure that the state will actually fight alongside its ally in the event of war. As a result, an alliance commitment may be questionable for the same reasons that threats are questionable: they are costly to carry out, and there can be incentives to bluff. Alliances are not, after all, binding contracts. There is no external mechanism to compel states to fulfill their treaty obligations. Rather, the promise to come to another's defense in the event of war is precisely that: a promise, which may or may not be fulfilled. In fact, there are many instances in which allies have not lived up to their commitments.

9. James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): 63–83.

Allies may engage in joint military exercises in order to improve their ability to fight together and to publicize their commitment to do so. Here, American and South Korean soldiers engage in an April 2017 exercise near the border with North Korea.

Indeed, in June 1941, less than two years after signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Germany broke its side of the agreement by invading the Soviet Union and grabbing all of Poland for itself.

This observation suggests that when we talk about alliances, we should be clear to treat them as institutions and not as actors in their own right. It sometimes serves as a useful shorthand to talk about alliances as cohesive actors; for example, we might say that "NATO intervened in Libya." However, we must remember that alliances are institutions formed by states in response to common interests. These institutions may shape states' interests in a way that helps them to act as a cohesive group, but at all times decision-making power rests with the states, not with the alliance itself.[10]

How Alliances Establish Credibility

Whether an alliance can successfully further the interests of allied states depends on the states' willingness to fight on one another's behalf and on their ability to signal this willingness in a credible manner. Therefore, alliances must accomplish two key tasks in order to enhance their chances of success. First, they must make it more likely that allies will fight on one another's behalf than they would in the absence of an alliance. This can be accomplished by decreasing the costs of fighting, increasing the benefits of fighting, and/or increasing the costs of not fighting—that is, of abandoning the ally. Second, alliances must do

10. This characteristic distinguishes alliances from empires and more hierarchical relationships between states in which the capabilities of two or more actors are combined but decision-making power rests in a dominant state. On security hierarchies, see David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

these things in a way that leads adversaries to believe that the allies will indeed fight together. Hence, the goal is both to heighten the allies' interests in aiding one another and to influence the interaction with the rival state by shaping its expectations.

Alliances typically have a number of features designed to further these goals. They increase the benefits and decrease the costs of war by improving the member countries' ability to fight effectively together. Allies may engage in joint military planning and joint military exercises, and they may station troops on one another's soil. For example, the United States has more than 20,000 troops stationed in South Korea and routinely engages in joint military exercises with the South Korean military. By doing so, it makes the expected value of the two states fighting together higher than it would be in the absence of an alliance. This coordination is publicly revealed (even if actual war-fighting strategies are not), which serves to put potential adversaries on notice. Some alliances also contain provisions for joint decision making that further enhance their collective war-fighting abilities. For instance, NATO appoints a Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, which is responsible for all troops under the organization's authority.

Alliances can also increase the costs of abandonment—that is, of failing to fight on an ally's behalf. Prior to the nineteenth century, it was common to cement alliances through a marriage between royal families—under the theory that a king would have special motivation to defend an ally if his daughter was married to that ally's monarch. More commonly, the fact that alliance treaties are generally made public—often accompanied by public signing ceremonies and, in some countries, open ratification processes—can bring states' reputations into play.[11] States may fear that the failure to come to an ally's defense, after making such a public commitment, would hurt their credibility in future conflicts. Such hand-tying strategies seek to bolster the credibility of alliances just as they do the credibility of other threats.

Despite the challenges of establishing credibility, states have historically honored their alliance commitments in war about 70 percent of the time.[12] Although it is hard to know with certainty how often states would have fought alongside their allies even without a formal alliance commitment, this is an impressive success rate, given the lack of any formal enforcement mechanism for treaties and the often substantial costs of war. Moreover, the states most likely to violate agreements are those that have experienced a significant change either in their power or in their domestic regimes. In the wake of such changes, the alignment of interests between the allies may no longer be as strong as it was when the alliance was first signed.[13]

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11. This is generally true of defensive alliances. Offensive alliances, in contrast, may be kept secret if the intended target would otherwise take countermeasures to blunt the effectiveness of the alliance.

12. Brett Ashley Leeds and Sezi Anac, "Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance," *International Interactions* 31 (2005): 192.

13. Brett Ashley Leeds, "Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties," *International Organization* 57 (Fall 2003): 801–27.

There is also evidence that states with defensive alliances are less likely to be targeted by militarized actions in the first place, suggesting that these agreements generally have the intended effect of deterring challenges.[14] These observations suggest that the institutional mechanisms just described are often effective at heightening states' interests in coming to their allies' aid and at signaling that commitment to potential adversaries.

Why Aren't Alliance Commitments Ironclad?

If states have compatible interests that lead them to form alliances and signal their commitments to one another, why is there often uncertainty about whether members will actually fulfill their obligations? Why do allies and other states that are the targets of alliances sometimes have different expectations about whether allies will actually come to one another's aid? To answer these questions, we need to think about the choices facing all sides of a strategic interaction.

While ironclad alliance guarantees can deter challenges to an ally, they also increase the risk that the ally will become more adventurous, making larger and riskier demands on other states. To see this, return to Figure 5.2 (p. 194). Alliances have two effects. As emphasized earlier, an alliance between States A and C deters a challenger, State B, by reducing the probability that it will win a war against the combined might of the two allies. This is why States A and C are interested in forging the alliance in the first place.

At the same time, the alliance strengthens State A in its bargaining with State B. As the expected war outcome moves to the right, the range of status quo outcomes in which State A has an incentive to challenge State B expands. As a result, State A is likely to demand a better bargain from State B and, following the risk-return trade-off explained in Chapter 3, run a risk of war to obtain its demands. In other words, while the alliance between States A and C weakens State B and deters it from challenging State A, the same alliance strengthens State A and gives it an incentive to demand more of State B.

Why might this situation pose a dilemma? A problem occurs if State C expects to pay greater costs of war than its ally, State A, perhaps because State A cares less about the good in dispute. In this case, there are some status quos that State C would prefer to war, but that State A has an incentive to challenge. If State A were to start a crisis under these conditions, then State C would be put in the undesirable position of having to either abandon its ally or risk being dragged into a war that it values less than the status quo. Thus, while State C wants to defend State A

14. Brett Ashley Leeds, "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Interstate Disputes," *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2003): 427–39. Because of the deterrent effect of alliances, the frequency with which states fight on behalf of their allies may understate the true reliability of alliances. We get to observe whether an alliance is honored only if it is challenged by an adversary; absent such a challenge, we do not know whether the allies would have fought together had they been challenged. But if third parties are most likely to challenge the alliances that are least credible, then the reliability of the alliances that are challenged is lower than the overall reliability of all alliances. See Alastair Smith, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene: A Biased Decision," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1996): 16–40.

from challenges, it must also worry about becoming "entrapped" in a costly war by a reckless ally.[15]

In response to this dilemma, states attempt to avoid **entrapment** by limiting their commitments or leaving those commitments purposely ambiguous. In other words, in an effort to control opportunism by their allies, states rarely forge ironclad agreements that they must fulfill. Rather, states attempt to reserve a measure of discretion for themselves on when, how, and to what extent they will meet their alliance obligations.

entrapment
The risk of being dragged into an unwanted war because of the opportunistic actions of an ally.

An important example of this challenge can be found in U.S. relations with China and Taiwan. Since 1949, the United States has sought to defend Taiwan from mainland China, which regards the island as a renegade province. China has repeatedly warned that if Taiwan officially declares independence, that act will be a cause for war. The dilemma for the United States has been this: how to deter China from attacking without, at the same time, making Taiwan feel that it could declare and win its independence with the help of the United States. On the one hand, China might attack if it believes the United States would abandon Taiwan. On the other hand, an ironclad promise to defend Taiwan might encourage pro-independence politicians there to take the fateful step that would risk a war. In order to navigate this dilemma, the United States has at times pursued a policy of "strategic ambiguity": making its intentions less than fully clear in the hopes that China will be deterred from attacking while Taiwan will act with restraint.

This dilemma shows that there can be a trade-off between the *credibility* of alliances (which requires ironclad promises) and efforts to *control* alliance partners (which can require ambiguity and flexibility). There is seldom any way to avoid this trade-off. The more credible the guarantee to an ally, the greater the incentive for that ally to behave opportunistically. But the greater the discretion that the state retains in an effort to limit the risk of entrapment, the less credible is the alliance and the less successful it will be in deterring challengers.

Analyzing the European Alliance System, 1879–1990

As we have seen, alliances are institutions that states create in order to facilitate cooperation in support of common interests. They form when states' interests are aligned to an extent that they may be willing to fight on one another's behalf. They work by making it more likely that the states will, in fact, fight together in the event of war and by signaling this willingness to the adversary. As a result, the success or failure of an alliance depends on (1) the strength of the interests that brought the allies together; (2) the ability of the alliance to alter its members' preferences so that in the event of war, fighting is preferable to abandonment; (3) the effectiveness of the alliance in convincing the adversary of this fact; and (4) the ability of the partners to limit the risk of entrapment.

15. On entrapment and other forms of opportunism by allies, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36 (1984): 461–95.

We can now use these concepts to analyze some of the major events of the last century through the lens of alliance politics. As noted in Chapter 1, the first and second halves of the twentieth century were markedly different in terms of warfare between the world's major powers. In both periods, international politics was shaped by conflicts among the large, industrialized countries in Europe. In both periods, states that felt threatened formed alliances in the hopes of protecting themselves from rivals. Yet the outcomes in these two periods were quite different. The first half of the century witnessed two world wars of unprecedented destructiveness; the second half was remarkable for the absence of war between the two superpowers, in spite of the intense hostility between them. Although a number of factors help explain this variation, part of the answer is that alliances played a stabilizing role in the second period, but not in the first. The logic developed here can help explain why.

Pre–World War I: Two Armed Camps In the lead-up to the First World War, the major powers of Europe divided themselves into two competing alliance blocs. On one side was the Triple Alliance, composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; on the other side were Britain, France, and Russia, bound by an agreement that came be known as the Triple Entente. An entente, which comes from the French word for "understanding," is generally seen as a weak form of alliance, requiring consultation and coordination, not necessarily a strict commitment of military assistance. In Europe, the polarization into two blocs had been decades in the making and reflected the ambitions of a rising Germany, the fears of its neighbors to the east and west, and specific conflicts of interest of territory and colonies.

Although the apparent symmetry between the two alliances might have created a stable balance, the system was, in fact, fraught with danger. The alliance network created the possibility that any small conflict could drag all the European powers into war. Of course, since European decision makers understood that a small spark could lead to all-out war, this system did foster some caution and mutual deterrence by raising the expected costs of war to each side. And indeed, several crises in the first decade of the twentieth century were resolved peacefully, in spite of much saber rattling.

Nonetheless, the system had several features that made it unstable. First, as we saw in Chapter 3, the strategic situation created a number of preventive and preemptive incentives. Germany feared the rise of Russian power, causing some strategists to argue that war with Russia would be better now than later. In addition, Germany's need to plan for a two-front war—against France to the west and Russia to the east—gave rise to the Schlieffen Plan, the German war plan with precise timetables and preemptive logic (see the "What Shaped Our World?" box in Chapter 3, p. 126).

Second, the delicate balance made each of the major powers highly dependent on its allies for security; the prospect of losing an ally was seen as particularly dangerous. Hence, when Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serb extremist on June 28, 1914, the threat that Serb nationalism could rip the Austro-Hungarian Empire apart was also felt keenly in Germany. In the ensuing

crisis, Germany gave its ally a blank check, promising to back Austria-Hungary in whatever the latter chose to do. This commitment, however, emboldened Austria-Hungary, leading it to issue a harsh ultimatum to Serbia.[16]

The set of interconnected alliances and Austria-Hungary's unwillingness to back down turned an otherwise local crisis into a war that consumed most of Europe. This process, whereby the actions of a small number of states drag all their allies to war, has been referred to as "chain-ganging," evoking the image of convicts chained together, forced to move in the same direction.[17] Finally, the sheer number of states involved magnified the possibility of miscalculations. Whether an ally would actually fight in the event of war was a crucial question in determining how hard a state could push or how much it should give. Uncertainty about who would join a prospective war created considerable scope for errors.

Probably the most important source of uncertainty in this event was how Great Britain would react in the event of war. Because it had the most powerful navy in the world—larger, in fact, than the next three largest navies combined—whether Britain would join a continental war was a crucially important question, and one over which there was a good deal of uncertainty until the very last minute. Although the Triple Entente committed Britain to consult with France and Russia in the event of war, the British public and many policy makers in government were not keen to shed British blood over what appeared to be a distant matter.

This uncertainty led German decision makers to believe for some time that Britain might stand aside while Germany took on France and Russia. Moreover, suggestions by British leaders that Britain would join its allies in war were discounted by German leaders as bluffs. It is unclear whether German leaders would have backed off from war, had they been certain that Britain would intervene; it is clear, however, that Germany was encouraged by British wavering to take an aggressive position in the crisis. When Britain belatedly made clear that it would join in the fight, the military actions and diplomatic commitments already made by Germany and Austria were hard to reverse. Once war started, the network of the alliances brought all of Europe into the conflict.[18]

The Coming of World War II, 1919–1939 Germany was defeated in World War I, but with Adolf Hitler's ascension to power in 1933, Germany once more posed a challenge to its neighbors. Although European powers again sought to contain the German threat through alliances, the effort was too little and too late to prevent another devastating war.

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16. Some historians argue that Germany issued the blank check precisely to incite Austro-Hungarian stubbornness and thus provoke war. Among others, see Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967).

17. Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44 (Spring 1990): 137–68.

18. In a final example of how the alliance system failed, Italy refused to join its allies (Germany and Austria) when war broke out. After sitting on the sidelines for several months, Italy decided that the Triple Entente powers were more likely to win. Hence, Italy decided to side with the Triple Entente and, in May 1915, attacked its former ally, Austria-Hungary, with whom it had a long-standing territorial dispute.

In August 1939, Britain formed a defensive alliance with Poland. One month later, Germany invaded Poland, Britain stepped in to defend its ally, and World War II began.

Until the eve of war in 1939, the alliance system that formed to contain Germany rested on a few thin reeds, which easily snapped under Hitler's pressure. Under the terms of the Treaty of Locarno (1925), Britain pledged to defend Belgium and France in the event that either was attacked by Germany and to ensure that Germany respected the demilitarization of the Rhineland region, which bordered those countries. France also signed alliances with several of Germany's neighbors to the east: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. The first of these treaties was tested, and failed, in 1936 when Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland and Britain refused to support France in taking any action to stop the move.

The French guarantees to the eastern European countries lacked credibility because of the geographic separation between them. With most of the French forces positioned to defend a fortified line on the German frontier, France was in a weak position to defend its distant allies from the German threat. The weakness became all too clear in September 1938, when France and Britain acquiesced to German demands for a section of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland. Six months later, in March 1939, Germany invaded and conquered the rest of Czechoslovakia, and France did not lift a finger to save its ally. Not until Germany attacked Poland in September 1939 did France and Britain, which had pledged to defend Poland only days earlier, find the resolve to fulfill their commitments.

Hence, rather than being deterred by the states that sought to contain him, Hitler exploited weak alliances that were not backed up by sufficient resolve or capabilities, highlighting the lack of common interests and credible commitments among the allies. Bandwagoning alliances with Italy, the Soviet Union, and eventually Japan only strengthened his hand. The resulting imbalance between a bloc of revisionist powers and a fragmented group of buck-passing allies, combined with a leader ideologically bent on conquest, cast the world into war once more.

The Cold War: The "Long Peace" in Europe, 1945–1990 After the Second World War, European politics came to be dominated by the competition between two superpowers: the United States, which emerged from the war an unmatched industrial powerhouse, and the Soviet Union, whose large army sat astride much of Eastern and Central Europe. Once again, the countries of Europe sorted into alliances in response to the emerging rivalry. But this time, in the five decades that followed the end of World War II, there were no wars among the major European

powers.[19] How did alliances contribute to stability in this period, when they had failed to keep the peace before?

Within 10 years after the end of World War II, most countries in Europe belonged to either the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** or the **Warsaw Pact** (see "What Shaped Our World?" on p. 206). NATO covered most of the states of Western Europe and bound them in a collective defense treaty with the United States. Its core provision was in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which specified that each member would consider an attack against one or more members to be an attack against them all. The Warsaw Pact covered the states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Germany, which was split after the war into two countries, was also split between the blocs, with West Germany in NATO and East Germany in the Warsaw Pact.

Each bloc formed in response to a perceived threat from the other. NATO was established in 1949 in response to the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe—a presence that the Soviets used to install puppet governments in those countries. The Warsaw Pact formed in 1955 after West Germany was admitted into NATO, raising the fear in Moscow that its enemy in the two world wars would again be rearmed and active on the European stage.

Although the experience of World War I would seem to suggest that two alliance blocs, roughly evenly divided, can be a cause of war, the Cold War alliance system had a number of features that made it different, and more stable, than what came before. First, the diplomatic landscape in 1914 was much more complicated, with several major powers in competition and highly dependent on their allies for security. During the Cold War, by contrast, the system was dominated by the two superpowers. This meant that there was less scope for miscalculation, since the outcome of any conflict was dependent on the choices of fewer key actors.

It also meant that neither superpower would be as threatened by the loss of an ally as the states of Europe were before 1914. Germany in the early twentieth century considered the possible loss of Austria-Hungary extremely threatening, worth risking war over. The United States and Soviet Union, by contrast, had less to fear from the possible defection of allies during the Cold War.[20] And indeed, France's departure from NATO's joint military command in 1966, Yugoslavia's defection from the Soviet orbit in 1948, and Romania's increasingly independent foreign policy starting in the 1960s did not upset the relatively stable equilibrium between the two sides.

A second major feature of the Cold War alliances was their highly institutionalized nature. Both NATO and the Warsaw Pact were more than just pieces of paper promising mutual aid in the event of war. Rather, they included a dense set of military, political, and economic relationships. The United States, in particular, needed to demonstrate that it would uphold its commitment to defend its allies an ocean away, since any uncertainty about the U.S. commitment was seen as inviting Soviet aggression against Western Europe.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

An alliance formed in 1949 among the United States, Canada, and most of the states of Western Europe in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. The alliance requires the members to consider an attack on any one of them as an attack on all.

Warsaw Pact

A military alliance formed in 1955 to bring together the Soviet Union and its Cold War allies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere; dissolved on March 31, 1991, as the Cold War ended.

19. John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security* 10 (Spring 1986): 99–142.

20. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 169–70.

As a result, the NATO alliance provided for close integration of the American and European militaries, a joint command led by an American officer, and the basing of more than a quarter-million U.S. troops on European soil, primarily in West Germany. This forward deployment of U.S. forces served both military and political purposes. It ensured that the United States had capabilities in place to slow a Soviet offensive until much larger reinforcements could come across the sea. It also served to signal the American commitment to the region. In the event of a Soviet attack, U.S. troops would have been quickly involved in the fighting, ensuring that the United States could not remain indifferent.

This political aspect of the American presence in Europe was most clearly evident in the Berlin Brigade, a garrison of about 7,000 troops in West Berlin. Like the rest of Germany, the capital city of Berlin had been divided into western and eastern portions after the war. The city sat in the midst of Communist East Germany, however, so West Berlin was a small island of Western and American influence surrounded by a "red" sea. Given its geographic isolation, the American garrison would have been quickly overrun in the event of a war.

Nonetheless, its presence was seen as a crucial signal of the U.S. commitment to defend Western Europe. The theorist Thomas Schelling described its role vividly:

> The garrison in Berlin is as fine a collection of soldiers as has ever been assembled, but excruciatingly small. What can 7,000 American troops do . . . ? Bluntly, they can die. They can die heroically, dramatically, and in a manner that guarantees that the action cannot stop there. They represent the pride, the honor, and the reputation of the United States government and its armed forces; and they can apparently hold the entire Red Army at bay.[21]

Hence, the military presence was a kind of hand-tying strategy (see Chapter 3): an effort to ensure that if the American commitment to NATO was triggered by a Soviet attack, the United States would have little choice but to fulfill that commitment. The strength of this pledge, clearly signaled to the Soviet Union, had a deterrent effect that contributed to the relative stability of Europe during the Cold War. ("What Shaped Our World?" on p. 206 explores NATO's role since the Cold War.)

As this historical overview suggests, alliances were used frequently in twentieth-century Europe by states looking for partners in defense or conquest. Measured in terms of whether allies fought together when war came, most (but not all) of these alliances were successful. Measured in terms of whether they were able to prevent war in the first place, the track record is more uneven. By far the most successful alliances on this score were the Cold War alliance blocs. Anchored by two strong powers, held together by common security interests, and institutionalized through a variety of military, political, and economic ties, NATO and the Warsaw Pact contributed to a period of relative peace in Europe after World War II. By contrast, the alliances in the first half of the twentieth century either abetted aggression—in the case of the Japanese, Italian, and Russian alliances with

21. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 47.

Hitler's Germany—or failed to contain it, contributing to the outbreak of two catastrophic wars. The inability of alliances to keep the peace would propel the search for a different kind of institution to serve this end: collective security organizations.

Collective Security: When Can the UN Keep the Peace?

As World War I was coming to a close, world leaders began to think about what the postwar world should look like. U.S. president Woodrow Wilson argued that the only way to prevent another such war was to change the nature of world politics. Wilson was convinced that the prewar pattern, in which major powers jockeyed for advantage against one another in shifting alliances, had to go. Alliances could not prevent wars; they could only cause wars to spread into larger, more destructive events. In their place, there should be a permanent institution that would enable countries to police the international system in the name of peace and security for all. From this vision, in 1919, the **League of Nations** was born; although it limped along until 1946, it effectively died in 1939 with the onset of World War II.

As World War II was coming to a close, world leaders once again turned their thoughts to the question of how to prevent another such war. Like his predecessor, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt championed the idea of a permanent governing body that would enable the major powers to police the international system. The **United Nations (UN)** was created in 1945 as a successor to the League of Nations. The UN still functions to this day, but its track record in responding to acts of aggression is, at best, mixed. Why is this? Why have efforts to build an effective international organization capable of policing international politics failed to create a lasting peace?

The League of Nations and the UN are both examples of collective security organizations. Like alliances, **collective security organizations** are institutions that facilitate cooperation among their members. These two kinds of institutions, however, form in response to different kinds of interests. Alliances form when two or more states have a common interest in the outcome of bargaining interactions with an adversary or a set of adversaries and are based on alignments in interests that prompt states to cooperate against a common foe.

Collective security organizations, by contrast, form under the presumption that all states have a common interest in preventing war and aggression, regardless of who the perpetrator and victim are. Unlike alliances, their primary purpose is not to alter bargaining outcomes in favor of one state or another, but rather to ensure that changes to the status quo, if they occur, happen peacefully. They forbid the use of military force by one member state against another, and they generally provide mechanisms, such as mediators or arbitrators, to help member states resolve their disputes peacefully. An attack by one member against another is considered to be a threat to the whole community. As a result, the entire membership is responsible

League of Nations

A collective security organization founded in 1919 after World War I. The League ended in 1946 and was replaced by the United Nations.

United Nations (UN)

A collective security organization founded in 1945 after World War II. With over 190 members, the UN includes all recognized states.

collective security organizations

Broad-based institutions that promote peace and security among their members. Examples include the League of Nations and the United Nations.

WHAT SHAPED OUR WORLD?

The Future of NATO

When the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, many analysts thought that NATO's days were numbered. With the Soviet Union unable to maintain its control over Eastern Europe, the communist regimes in that region fell, and the Warsaw Pact dissolved. When the Soviet Union disintegrated in December 1991, it seemed plausible that the NATO alliance would crumble as well.

NATO's obituaries turned out to be premature. The United States did reduce its troop presence in Europe, but 62,000 U.S. military personnel remain stationed there today. Rather than withering away, NATO expanded eastward, adding 13 states that had been allies or republics of the former Soviet Union (see the map). The alliance also expanded its mission. In the 1990s, NATO intervened with air strikes in the wars that accompanied the breakup of Yugoslavia—not because a NATO member had been attacked, but to address the humanitarian crises those wars created (see pp. 222–225).

Its reach extended further after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, when the alliance invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, declaring that the entire alliance had been attacked. NATO subsequently played an important role in efforts to stabilize Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion in 2001. In March 2011, NATO initiated a military campaign against Libya in response to that regime's violent crackdown against domestic opponents. How do we explain these developments?

Interests Those who expected NATO to be thrown onto the ash heap of history believed that the common interests and fears that originally brought the alliance into being had vanished, and that without a clearly defined purpose, it would eventually disappear.[a] Subsequent events suggest that its members still share interests in common. These include a basic concern for security, but with an expanded conception of where the main threats lie: particularly, terrorism and the ability of terrorists to take root in chaotic, war-torn regions. Moreover, the operations in the former Yugoslavia and Libya showed that the alliance could act on a common commitment to stop massive violations of human rights. NATO members also had an interest in ensuring that former Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe developed stable, democratic, pro-Western regimes; many of those states, for their part, wanted the protection of NATO to guard against a resurgent Russia.

Institutions NATO's persistence also reminds us that institutions often adapt to changing environments rather than die. Observers draw an analogy to the March of Dimes. This charity was originally formed to combat polio, but when that disease was largely eradicated following the discovery of a vaccine, the organization quickly expanded its agenda to include a host of other childhood illnesses. In taking on new missions and "out of area operations"—that is, operations not confined to territory of the member states—NATO has been transformed from a purely defensive alliance into something more akin to a collective security organization.

Interactions Common interests and institutional adaptation do not preclude tough bargaining within the alliance. During the Cold War, NATO faced the collective action problem of providing the public good of common defense against the Soviet Union. Burden sharing was an essential principle of cooperation, but the United States—by far the largest member—was willing to bear a disproportionate share of the costs of collective defense. In return, Washington dominated alliance decision making.

In the last two decades, this bargain has come under strain. American leadership was questioned during the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, when key NATO allies, particularly France and Germany, refused to endorse the Bush administration's case for preventive war. Conflicting views and interests divided the alliance, preventing it from reaching a common policy toward Iraq.[b] In 2011, Germany refused to take part in the operation over Libya.

For its part, the United States has pressured European partners to increase their defense contributions.

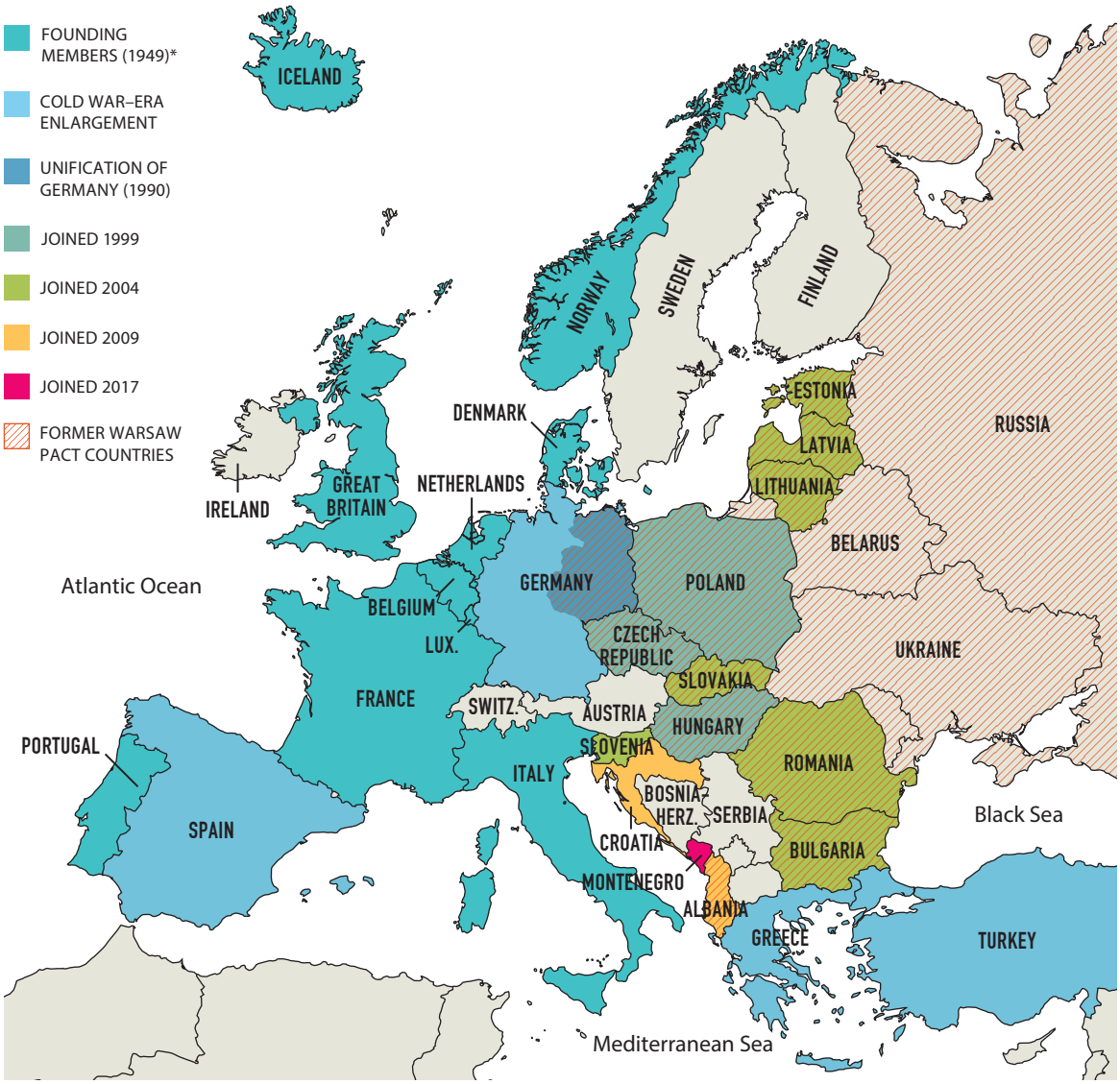
a. For an example of this argument, see John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5–56.

b. See Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).

At U.S. urging, the alliance agreed that members should seek to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense—a benchmark that, in 2017, only 5 of the 28 members reached. When he came into office, President Donald Trump suggested that the U.S. commitment to NATO might depend on its meeting this target. In response, many European governments have argued that military spending is a poor indicator of what they contribute to the common defense.

At the same time, the expansion of NATO up to Russia's borders has contributed to renewed conflict. Russian military advances into Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014)—both countries that at times courted NATO membership—created pressure on the alliance to cooperate in containing and sanctioning Russia. Whether the institution and the common but fraying interests of its members will remain sufficiently robust to overcome the more intense bargaining, both within the alliance and with Russia, remains an open question.

NATO Expansion, 1949–2017



* NATO members also include the United States and Canada

for coming to the aid of the victims of aggression. This collective response is intended to deter would-be aggressors in the first place and, in the event that deterrence fails, ensure that those who wrong the community by engaging in war will not benefit from the transgression.

Although collective security organizations were born out of the desire to prevent interstate wars, they have also sought to prevent violence within states. Indeed, the UN has been quite active in dealing with civil wars and maintaining peace in their aftermath. In recent years, there also has been pressure to expand its scope to deal with gross violations of human rights, such as cases of **genocide**, the systematic slaughter of an identifiable group of people. In fact, genocidal conflicts have led to the sharpest criticism of the UN in recent years: for inaction in such places as Rwanda (1994), Bosnia (1992–95), and Darfur (2003–present; more on these cases will follow). In 2016, the UN condemned a nonstate terrorist organization, the Islamic State, for committing genocide against religious minorities in Iraq and Syria (see Chapter 6 for more on the Islamic State).

genocide
Intentional and systematic killing aimed at eliminating an identifiable group of people, such as an ethnic or religious group.

Unlike alliances, whose membership is restricted to a small number of states with common interests, the membership of collective security organizations is generally universal, or nearly universal. The UN, for example, includes all internationally recognized states. Universal membership reflects the presumption of a community with universally shared interests in international peace and security. There are also numerous regional security organizations—such as the Organization of American States, the African Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—that include all or most of the states in each relevant region.

How Does Collective Security Work?

In theory, collective security works as follows. The mechanism is triggered when one state attacks or threatens to attack another. If it is determined that these events constitute an act of aggression—or, in the language of the UN, a "threat to international peace and security"—then all members of the organization are called on to act against the state that has committed the offending action. Depending on the circumstances, the prescribed action can range from economic sanctions to full-scale military intervention. This threat of intervention is intended primarily to deter actors from making aggressive demands against or attacking one another. A state that knows its actions will be opposed by the full weight of the international community should be reluctant to engage in aggression.

While intervention in interstate conflicts reflects the classic view of collective security, in practice the tool kit of collective security organizations has evolved and expanded in at least two important respects. First, largely because of the difficulties of mounting unified responses to international aggression (see "The Dilemmas of Collective Security" on p. 210), the UN and regional collective security organizations have developed alternative strategies that are intended to foster peaceful conflict resolution without requiring costly interventions. The UN secretary-general, who leads the organization, plays an active role in mediating conflicts and thereby

After civil conflict broke out in the Central African Republic in 2013, the African Union (AU), a regional security organization, deployed soldiers to help contain the violence and protect civilians. In September 2014, that mission was replaced by a larger UN peacekeeping operation. Here, Gabonese soldiers from the AU force, in green berets, confer with newly arriving UN troops, in blue.

helping states identify mutually beneficial bargains.[22] The United Nations also authorizes the deployment of peacekeeping forces—troops from neutral third parties—to help monitor and enforce peace agreements. We will say more about the theory and practice of peacekeeping in the discussion that follows.

Second, collective security organizations have in recent decades extended their mandate to include stopping or preventing civil conflicts and large-scale human rights abuses. Civil wars and genocides have at times been labeled as "threats to international peace and security," giving rise to **humanitarian interventions**, or collective interventions designed to relieve humanitarian crises. Ironically, while peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention do not fit the original view of collective security, they are, in practice, the bulk of what collective security organizations now do.

humanitarian interventions
Interventions designed to relieve humanitarian crises stemming from civil conflicts or large-scale human rights abuses, including genocide.

The various strategies employed by collective security organizations can influence the bargaining interaction between adversaries in at least three ways, all of them intended to foster peaceful outcomes. First, as with alliances, the prospect of outside involvement makes war less attractive by changing the likely outcome of the interaction between states or, in the case of civil wars, between groups. At the extreme, the combined weight of the entire international community means that the defeat of the challenger is virtually certain. (Consider what Figure 5.2 would look like if State C were replaced with the entire international community.) The status quo is stable if both sides know that they will surely lose if they attempt to change the status quo by force. Under such conditions, neither side can shift the bargain in its favor by threatening war.

22. Kjell Skjelsbaek and Gunnar Fermann, "The UN Secretary-General and the Mediation of International Disputes," in *Resolving International* Conflicts, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 75–104.

Second, outsiders can help resolve the commitment problems identified in Chapter 3 by promising to enforce what would otherwise be an unbelievable commitment by one state not to exploit its power against another. A shift in relative power between two states might be rendered less dangerous if the weakened state can count on others to defend it, thus diminishing any preventive incentive it might have. Likewise, a state may feel secure handing over a piece of strategic territory if it knows that others will come to its aid in the event that its adversary exploits this territory to attack or press further claims.

In other words, the state that is made more powerful by the deal can more credibly commit not to exploit its newfound power if it knows that any attempt to do so will be countered by the international community. For example, as noted in Chapter 3, Israel and Syria have a conflict over the strategically valuable Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in 1967. Since control of this territory imparts a military advantage to its owner, Israel has been reluctant to return the land to Syria without guarantees that it (Israel) will remain safe from attack. In 1974, however, the two states agreed to withdraw their forces from the Golan Heights, and the UN inserted over 1,000 peacekeeping troops into observation posts in the hills between the two sides' positions.[23] For four decades, those troops helped ensure that neither side would deploy forces to the area, thereby easing a source of tension in the region. Starting in 2014, the peacekeepers came under attack by militant groups engaged in the Syrian civil war (see Chapter 6), but the mission has continued in spite of the risks.

Third, collective security organizations may play a positive role in promoting peace not through a threat of direct intervention for or against any particular side, but by serving as neutral observers and peacekeepers. Peacekeepers diminish first-strike advantages by interposing themselves between two adversarial factions, as in the Golan Heights. Such operations are particularly useful in cases in which previously warring parties have each pledged to disarm and demobilize, but each fears that if it disarms and the other does not, it will be at a dangerous disadvantage. As we will see in Chapter 6, the commitment problem associated with disarmament is a major obstacle to preventing and ending civil wars. The UN often deploys peacekeeping missions into precisely such situations in order to make sure that both sides uphold their promise to disarm and that neither side attempts to exploit the other in the process. For example, following the end of the civil war in Liberia, which claimed almost 150,000 lives from 1989 to 2003, the UN inserted 15,000 peacekeepers to facilitate disarmament and demobilization.

The Dilemmas of Collective Security

Regardless of where and how the organization chooses to intervene, it faces two major challenges: a collective action problem and a joint decision-making problem. The collective action problem arises from the fact that collective security

23. For more information on the UN peacekeeping mission in the Golan Heights, see www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/undof (accessed 03/02/15).

organizations, unlike their members, do not have the power to tax anyone or to raise and field military forces. As a result, the organizations are wholly dependent on their members to provide troops, funds, and military equipment for any operation. The member states that contribute then face the costs and risks associated with sending troops into combat or forgoing trade because of economic sanctions.

Crucially, the international peace and stability that these actions are intended to provide is a public good. Recall from Chapter 2 that a public good can be enjoyed whether or not one actually contributed to its creation. If the community succeeds in preventing or reversing an act of aggression, all members of the community enjoy the benefit—whether or not they took costly action. After all, even if all states have an interest in seeing aggression halted, their first preference will often be to have the aggression halted by someone other than themselves.

Hence, collective security organizations necessarily face a free-rider problem: the temptation that member states face to let the burden of providing the public good fall on others. Because of this problem, even if everyone shares an interest in cooperating to stop or prevent a war, their collective effort may fall well short of what is required to do so. Indeed, UN peacekeeping missions are often underfunded and undermanned relative to their mandates; the temptation to free ride, to pass the costs to other states, leads to low levels of cooperation.

The challenges of joint decision making are also severe. Members of the organization need to be able to determine which acts constitute a threat to the community, which states are aggressors, and what actions to take in response. These determinations are not always straightforward, since collective security organizations permit states to use force in self-defense. Of course, states generally justify their military actions as being in self-defense, so determining which acts are acts of aggression and which are self-defense is necessary for the organization to function. Otherwise, the entire system can collapse as each side accuses the other of being at fault. A finding that a particular act constitutes a threat to international peace and security not only delegitimizes that act as a violation of community interests, but also grants legitimacy to those who use force to reverse it. As we will see, this grant of legitimacy can be an asset to states that operate under the organization's seal of approval.[24]

Determining whether a given act merits an international response is complicated by the mix of interests that member states have. Although they may share a general interest in halting aggression and promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, they may also have specific interests that diverge in any particular conflict. Recall that collective security organizations, because of their universal membership, often include states with varying, even opposing, interests.

Whereas NATO during the Cold War included only states that perceived a common threat from the Soviet Union, the UN during this period included not only the United States and its NATO allies, but also the Soviet Union and

24. On the UN's legitimacy role, see Ian Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Alexander Thompson, *Channeling Power: The UN Security Council and American Statecraft in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

While the UN Security Council has the authority to identify and dictate the organization's response to international security threats, it is sometimes difficult for members with competing interests to agree on the best course of action. Here, Russia's ambassador to the UN vetoes a resolution that would have condemned the government of Syria, its traditional ally, for a fatal chemical weapons attack in April 2017.

its allies, as well as states that were neutral in the superpower rivalry. This mix of interests means that in many situations, the members of a collective security organization may not all be neutral outsiders to a particular military action. Some may have reasons to favor one side or the other in a dispute, meaning that some will be motivated to see aggression where others will not. Collective security works best when all states are satisfied with the current status quo—a condition that is rarely met.

Institutional Responses to the Challenges of Collective Security

The design of collective security organizations reflects the challenges posed by the dilemmas of collective action and joint decision making. Recall that institutions facilitate cooperation in situations that arise repeatedly. Rather than treating each new crisis in an ad hoc manner, requiring renegotiation of standards and rules each time, institutions embody a lasting set of standards and decision-making rules.

In the two most ambitious collective security organizations attempted in the last century—the League of Nations and the UN—the problems of collective action and joint decision making were addressed by vesting the main decision-making power in the hands of relatively small councils dominated by the strongest states in the system. These councils were given the authority to determine whether a particular action was a threat to international peace and security and to prescribe the organization's response. The League Council began with 4 permanent members—Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan—and 4 nonpermanent members who were

elected every three years. Germany later joined as a fifth permanent member,[25] and the council was expanded to 15.

When the UN replaced the League in 1946, its **Security Council (UNSC)** had a similar structure: 5 permanent members and 6 (later 10) nonpermanent members. The **permanent five (P5)** are the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), and China. In both cases, the privileged few shared a common trait: with the exception of Germany, which was admitted to the League only belatedly, they were the victors of the global wars that gave birth to these organizations.

The voting rules of both councils amplified the influence of these permanent members. In the case of the League Council, all decisions had to be unanimously approved by all 15 members. As a result, any member of the council could block the organization from acting by withholding its support. In other words, every member of the council had **veto power**, and permanent members had permanent veto power. This voting rule was modified in the Security Council. Enacting a substantive resolution in the Security Council requires a "yes" vote from at least 9 of the 15 council members *and* the support of every one of the P5. This change was intended to make decisive action easier—by eliminating the requirement that all members agree—but it also magnified the asymmetrical role of the P5, each of which can block a resolution it does not like.

These arrangements have several virtues. First, vesting decision-making power with a relatively small group of states means that it is not necessary to obtain consensus within the entire membership (which, in the case of the UN, now numbers 193). This both reduces the costs of coming to an agreement and, in theory at least, makes it possible for the organization to respond to crises quickly. Second, these rules ensure that when the organization acts, it does so with the consent of the strongest powers in the international system. This arrangement can help address the collective action problem by ensuring that any operation that is approved will enjoy cooperation and contributions from those members with the greatest resources and capabilities. Moreover, the veto ensures that at a minimum, the organization's actions will not be forcibly opposed by any of these powerful members.

As with all institutions, however, the effects of these rules are not neutral; rather, they bias policy outcomes in a direction that favors the states that were in a position to dictate the rules at the outset. The organization cannot act on its core mission without unanimity among the most powerful states in the system, any one of which can block action by exercising its veto. Such unanimity can be difficult to achieve. When the major powers disagree among themselves, the permanent-member veto introduces a bias toward inaction. The veto also ensures that the organization cannot act in ways that harm the interests of any of the permanent members.

As a result, the organization wields its policing powers unevenly: it may respond to the crimes of those who are weak, or who have no friends among the permanent members, while the crimes of the strong, or those with friends in high places, may go unpunished. In the case of Tibet, mentioned at the outset of this

Security Council (UNSC)

The main governing body of the UN, which has the authority to identify threats to international peace and security and to prescribe the organization's response, including military and/or economic sanctions.

permanent five (P5)

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council: the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), and China.

veto power

The ability to prevent the passage of a measure through a unilateral act, such as a single negative vote.

25. Originally, the United States was intended to be the fifth permanent member, but the United States never joined the League, because of congressional opposition.

Because of its institutional rules, the UN is unlikely to undertake missions that harm the interests of any of its most powerful members. For example, UN efforts to impose economic sanctions on the government of Sudan, in response to the genocide in the Darfur region, were blocked by China. As a big buyer of Sudanese oil, China has an interest in sparing Sudan from punishment.

chapter, any effective action by the UN against China could have been blocked by China's ally, the Soviet Union.[26] More recently, Russia has blocked efforts to sanction the government of Syria, a longtime Russian ally, for indiscriminate killing of civilians during the civil war that has raged in that country since 2011.

In sum, collective security organizations help states cooperate to further their collective interests in international peace by providing rules and standards to address challenges that complicate collective action and joint decision making. Nonetheless, these institutions operate under constraints that limit their ability to act effectively. Collective security organizations are most likely to succeed when two conditions are met. First, the powerful member states that are central to their decision-making processes must all agree on the desirability of collective action. At a minimum, none of these states can be sufficiently opposed that it will block such action.

Second, at least some members must value the collective good highly enough that they are willing to pay the costs in lives and money to ensure that the good is provided. This is most likely when the anticipated costs of intervention are low or when states have some private interest in contributing above and beyond the public interest in stopping aggression. In other words, collective security institutions are useful at promoting cooperation when their key members have strong common interests in protecting the peace; unfortunately, the existence of such common interests is not guaranteed.

The Experience of Collective Security: The United Nations

To see how these predictions have been borne out historically, we consider the experience of the most ambitious collective security organization ever created: the UN. This organization arose from the ashes of World War II with the aspiration, articulated in its founding charter, to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"—a goal that had become all the more pressing with the development of nuclear weapons, which have the capacity to kill millions in the blink of an eye.

26. Communist China was not, at that time, on the Security Council. Until 1971, China's seat on the council was held by Taiwan.

Although the world has not since seen a repetition of global warfare, or the nightmare of nuclear war, the role of the UN in preventing these outcomes is not clear. Indeed, the UN has had uneven success in fulfilling its creators' aspirations. In this section, we briefly review the experience of the UN. As we will see, the challenges facing collective security organizations described in the preceding discussion play a large role in accounting for this organization's limited success historically.

What Does the UN Do? When countries join the UN, they sign on to the organization's charter.[27] Members pledge not to use force in disputes with one another and to seek assistance from the organization in resolving their conflicts peacefully. Chapter VII of the UN Charter authorizes the Security Council to identify acts of aggression and threats to peace and to determine what measures should be taken in response. The charter first provides for economic and diplomatic sanctions to be applied against aggressor states, but it also authorizes the Security Council to "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."

In practice, the Security Council can authorize two different kinds of military operations: peace-enforcement and peacekeeping. A **peace-enforcement operation** is intended to impose peace upon warring parties by intervening in an ongoing conflict, consistent with the traditional vision of collective security. The Security Council can authorize such an operation under Chapter VII of the charter, after finding that a particular situation is a threat to international peace and security. The invasion of one state by another is a classic example of the kind of act that was intended to trigger intervention under Chapter VII. In recent years, the Security Council has also authorized action under Chapter VII for purely civil conflicts when the state in question could not or did not request intervention.

peace-enforcement operation
A military operation in which force is used to make and/or enforce peace among warring parties that have not agreed to end their fighting.

Because peace-enforcement operations are generally targeted against one or more sides that are viewed as aggressors, they are not impartial, and the expectation is that troops involved in such operations will engage in combat. Hence, peace-enforcement operations tend to be heavily armed, and one or more P5 members may be centrally involved in providing the necessary resources. The UN efforts in the Korean War and the Persian Gulf War both fall within this category, as does the 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya, which received UN approval under Chapter VII.

A **peacekeeping operation**, by contrast, typically follows the conclusion of an interstate or civil war. The combatants have agreed to end the fighting, but it is considered valuable to have an impartial force in place to make sure that the war does not resume. In such instances, the UN may assemble a multinational peacekeeping force with the mandate to verify that the terms of the peace agreement are kept: that the cease-fire holds; that any temporary cease-fire lines are respected; that troops are withdrawn or demobilized, if there are provisions to that effect; and so on. In the aftermath of civil conflict, peacekeeping forces have also helped to

peacekeeping operation
An operation in which troops and observers are deployed to monitor a cease-fire or peace agreement.

27. The entire UN Charter can be viewed at www.un.org/en/documents/charter (accessed 03/02/15).

administer elections and ensure their fairness. Their deployment typically requires that the parties to the conflict agree to invite them in—a requirement known as *host nation agreement*. Hence, except in rare cases, peacekeepers are not imposed on warring parties; rather, they deploy only with those parties' consent.

Although peacekeepers may be physically interposed between the adversaries or may patrol in areas where fighting could recur, they are typically lightly armed. Their purpose is not to fight a war, but to make sure that a war does not restart. For this reason, their main resource is not military power, but rather their perceived impartiality; that is, they are neutral brokers, favoring neither side in the dispute. As a result, peacekeepers are often drawn from distant countries with only weak interests in the conflict, and rarely from the P5. To illustrate, Table 5.1 provides a list of the top 10 contributors to peacekeeping missions in January 2018, none of which is a permanent member; the ranking of the permanent members is also shown. Interestingly, peacekeeping operations are not explicitly envisioned by the UN Charter. The difficulties of organizing peace-enforcement operations during the Cold War led the UN to innovate this less costly and less controversial strategy for conflict management.[28]

Cold War Paralysis The UN was born with high hopes but soon found its most ambitious aspirations dashed by conflict among the powerful states in the system. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, which lasted from approximately 1946 to 1989, meant that the Security Council was largely incapable of dealing with issues that cut across this key divide. On many matters that came before the council, one side or the other had an interest in blocking effective action.

For example, when the United States put forward proposals in 1947 to help Greece in its civil war against communist rebels, the Soviet Union exercised its veto. The United States, for its part, wielded its veto quite frequently to stop resolutions that it saw as harmful to Israel, such as those censuring Israel for its treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. France, Great Britain, and China also exercised their vetoes, though on significantly fewer occasions. All in all, during the period between 1946 and 1989, there were 192 vetoes cast on substantive issues before the council. This compares to 646 resolutions passed in the same period. The UN was most active in cases that did not cut across the Cold War divide, in which case one or both superpowers had little direct interest.

The major exception to this generalization, the UN-sponsored intervention in the Korean War, is the one that proves the rule. Two days after North Korea invaded South Korea, the Security Council passed Resolution 83, authorizing member states to assist South Korea in repelling the attack. While the United States provided the bulk of the forces for this operation, it was joined by 19 other states. Given that North Korea was an ally of the Soviet Union, the latter should have been expected to veto the Security Council resolution. This act would not have prevented

28. When authorizing peacekeeping operations, the UN Security Council typically invokes Chapter VI of the charter, which provides for steps to peacefully resolve disputes that have the potential to threaten international peace and security.

TABLE 5.1 ***Top Contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations, January 2015***

RANK	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PERSONNEL
1	Ethiopia	8,370
2	Bangladesh	7,053
3	India	6,695
4	Rwanda	6,476
5	Pakistan	6,216
6	Nepal	5,496
7	Egypt	3,256
8	Senegal	3,219
9	Indonesia	2,702
10	Ghana	2,675

Contributions of Peacekeepers from the P5

RANK	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PERSONNEL
12	China	2,634
31	France	823
35	United Kingdom	729
67	Russia	83
72	United States	57

Source: UN, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ranking_of_military_and_police_contributions.pdf (accessed 03/19/18).

American intervention, but it would have denied the operation UN blessing and perhaps some multilateral support.

The veto failed to materialize because the Soviet Union was boycotting meetings of the Security Council at the time, because of a dispute over China's representation on the body. When the UN was created, mainland China was ruled by a pro-American nationalist government. In 1949, however, Communist forces defeated the nationalists in a civil war, and the latter fled to the island of Taiwan. A year later, when the Korean War broke out, China's seat on the Security Council was held by a representative of the nationalist government on Taiwan. The Soviet Union argued that China's seat should be filled by a representative of the

TABLE 5.2 ***The UN during and after the Cold War***

	COLD WAR (1946–89)	POST–COLD WAR (1990–2017)
Security Council resolutions approved	646	1,751
Vetoed resolutions*	162	39
Peacekeeping missions	18	53

*Vetoed resolutions include vetoes of draft resolutions, and not vetoes of amendments to or subsections of resolutions.

Sources: For information on UNSC resolutions passed, see www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions; on vetoes, http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/veto; on peacekeeping operations, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/past-peacekeeping-operations (all accessed 03/19/18).

Communist government on the mainland, and it refused to attend meetings of the Security Council until that demand was met. Hence, when Resolution 83 came to a vote on June 27, 1950, the Soviet representative was not present to cast a veto. The Soviet Union ended its boycott of the Security Council not long afterward.[29]

The Cold War divide thus crippled the UN for the first five decades of its existence. Although the organization did have a constructive role at times—brokering cease-fires on several occasions and deploying 18 peacekeeping missions—it sat on the sidelines of many of the most dangerous conflicts of this period.

The Gulf War and the "New World Order" The end of the Cold War created new possibilities for the UN. In 1989, the central source of the East-West rivalry, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, receded. And in December 1991, the Soviet Union itself dissolved and was replaced by 15 new independent states, the largest of which, Russia, inherited the Soviet Union's seat in the UN, along with most of its military capabilities. The dramatic realignment of interests and reduction in conflict among the P5 meant that the UN could take on a more active role. And indeed, 1990 marks a major turning point in the activity of the organization. As Table 5.2 shows, the post–Cold War period saw a marked drop in the number of vetoes cast and a corresponding increase in the number of peacekeeping missions and resolutions passed by the Security Council. Map 5.1 on page 220 shows where UN peacekeeping missions were deployed in 2017.

Optimism about the UN's role in the post–Cold War period hit a high point very early on, in the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. As we have seen, U.S. president George H. W. Bush committed almost immediately to ensuring that the conquest of Kuwait would not stand. Bush also made a concerted effort to line up UN support at every step of the way. Between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and

29. China's seat on the Security Council remained in the hands of Taiwan until 1971, when warming relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China paved the way for the seat to be transferred to the mainland's control.

the U.S.-led military operation to reverse it, the Security Council passed 12 resolutions on the crisis. The most important of these, Resolution 678, authorized member states to use "all necessary means" to bring about the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait if Iraq did not comply voluntarily by January 15, 1991.

The Security Council's approval of this resolution owed a great deal to the reduction of conflict in the international system with the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had long been an ally of Iraq, and in an earlier period it might have been expected to veto a resolution like 678. In the post–Cold War environment, however, when the Soviet Union desired better relations with the West, it was relatively easy to overcome that country's reluctance to approve the use of force against its former ally.

The blessing of the UN meant that the United States had substantial international assistance in the ensuing war. The coalition that fought Iraq included troops from 35 nations. As shown in Figure 5.3, the United States supplied the vast majority of the troops for the operation, but the multinational cast and UN blessing had political, if not much military, significance. The participation of a number of Arab and Muslim states was seen as important in blunting Iraq's argument that the United States was waging a war against Islam. The limited mandate of the operation—to liberate Kuwait and not to occupy Iraq—was intended to reassure states in the region that the United States did not have expansionist objectives. International support also reduced the financial costs of the war. Contributions from other countries covered about 90 percent of the $61 billion the United States spent fighting the war—making the Persian Gulf War the least expensive war in America's history on a per capita basis.

The successful operation of the UN machinery in this case led to great optimism about the role this organization could play in the new international environment.

FIGURE 5.3 ***Allied Troop Contributions to the Persian Gulf War, 1990–91***

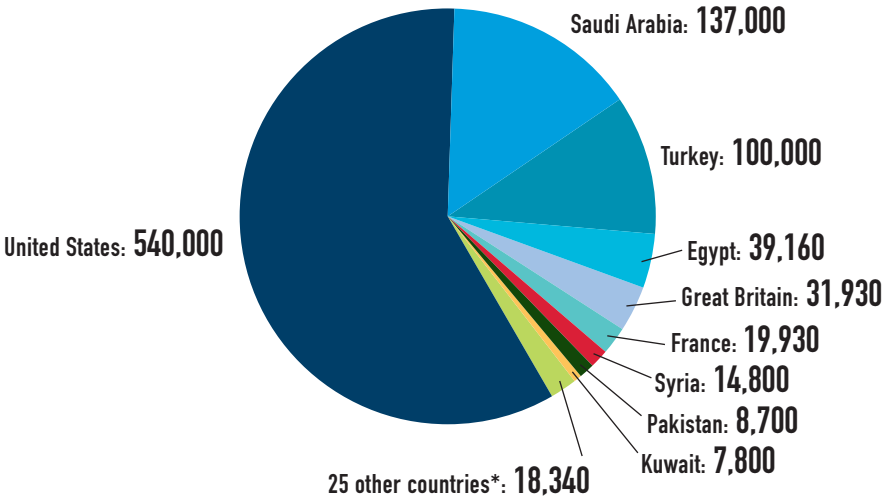
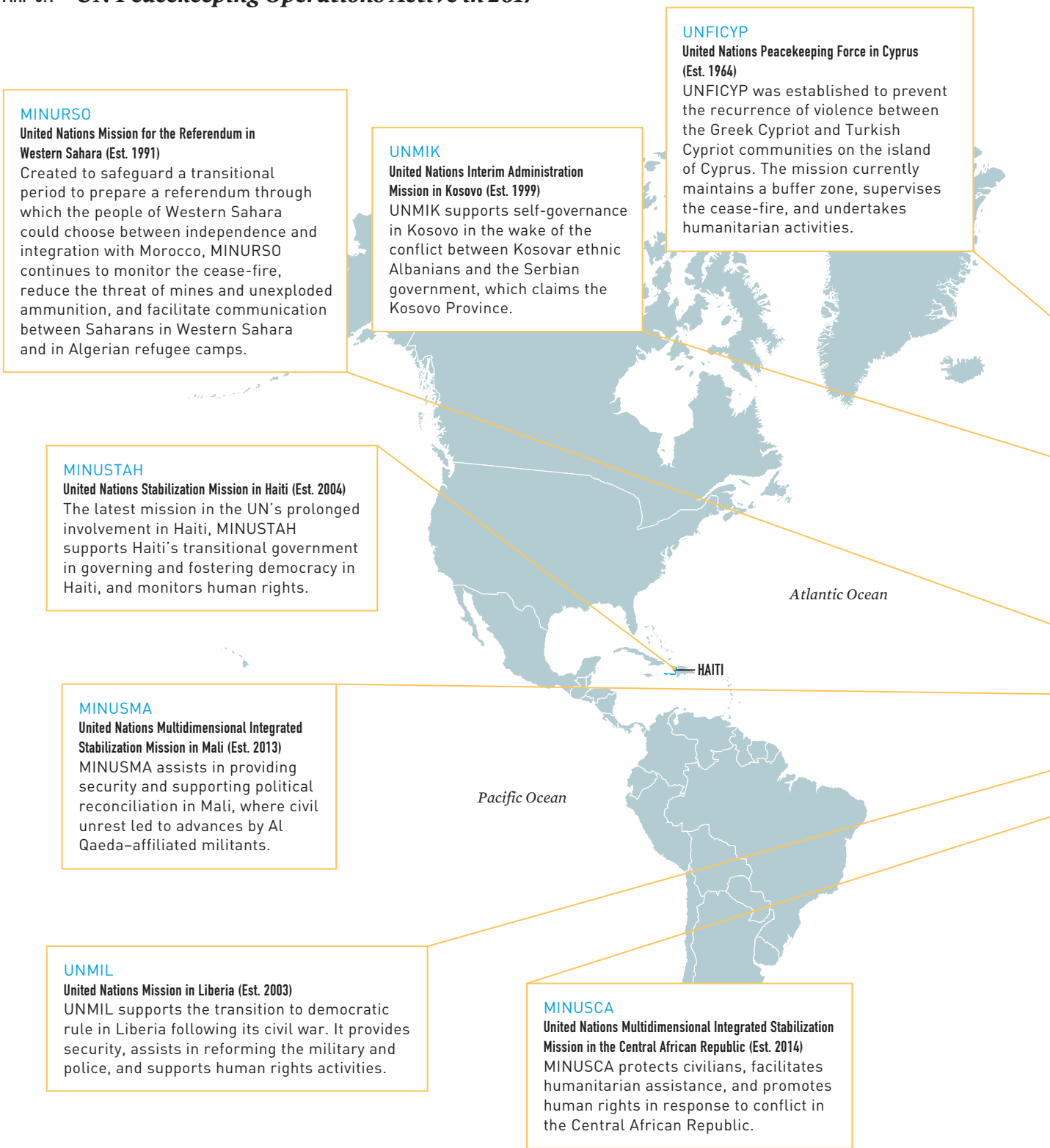
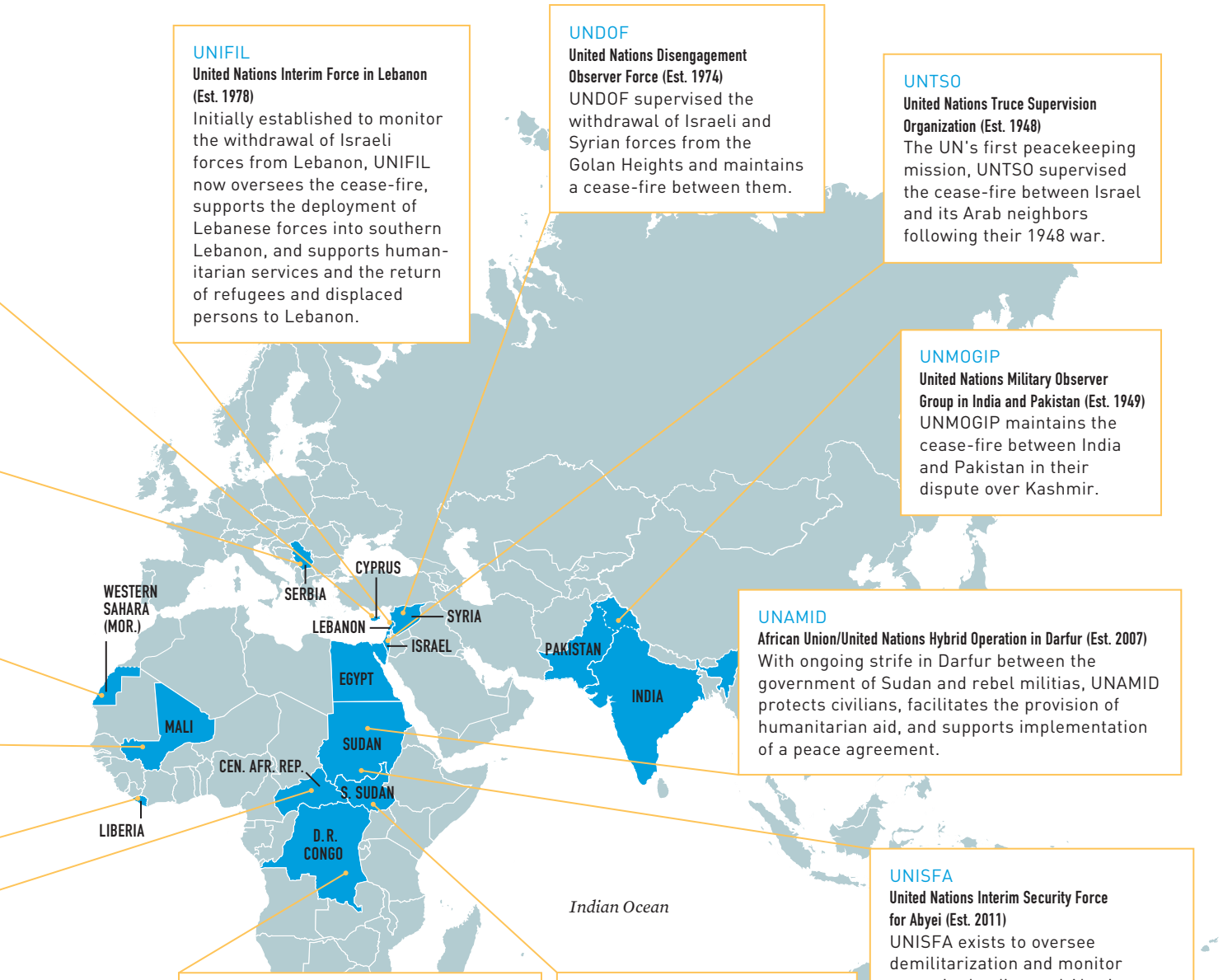


Figure source: U.S. General Accounting Office, *Persian Gulf: Allied Burden Sharing Efforts*, GAO/NSIAD-92-71, Appendix II, 16-7, www.gao.gov/products/NSIAD-92-71 (accessed 10/20/08).

*Bangladesh, Morocco, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Canada, Italy, Australia, Netherlands, Oman, Spain, Bahrain, Germany, Belgium, Senegal, Niger, Argentina, Philippines, Greece, Poland, South Korea, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand, Hungary.

MAP 5.1 *UN Peacekeeping Operations Active in 2017*





UNIFIL
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Est. 1978)
Initially established to monitor the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, UNIFIL now oversees the cease-fire, supports the deployment of Lebanese forces into southern Lebanon, and supports humanitarian services and the return of refugees and displaced persons to Lebanon.

UNDOF
United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (Est. 1974)
UNDOF supervised the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces from the Golan Heights and maintains a cease-fire between them.

UNTSO
United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (Est. 1948)
The UN's first peacekeeping mission, UNTSO supervised the cease-fire between Israel and its Arab neighbors following their 1948 war.

UNMOGIP
United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (Est. 1949)
UNMOGIP maintains the cease-fire between India and Pakistan in their dispute over Kashmir.

UNAMID
African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (Est. 2007)
With ongoing strife in Darfur between the government of Sudan and rebel militias, UNAMID protects civilians, facilitates the provision of humanitarian aid, and supports implementation of a peace agreement.

UNISFA
United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (Est. 2011)
UNISFA exists to oversee demilitarization and monitor peace in the disputed Abyei area of Sudan. The operation will monitor the flashpoint border between north and south, and is authorized to use force in protecting civilians and humanitarian workers in Abyei.

MONUSCO
United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Est. 2010)
MONUSCO took over from an earlier mission (MONUC) to focus on the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.

UNMISS
United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Est. 2011)
In 2011, South Sudan became the newest country in the world. UNMISS is on the ground to consolidate peace and security and to help establish conditions for development.

Map source: www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/current.shtml.

Bush, in his State of the Union address just before the war, spoke of the opportunity to create "a new world order, a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations"—a world in which "a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the UN's founders." Indeed, the UN had seemed to meet the first challenge of this new era quite successfully.

The optimism would turn out to be overblown. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was, in many respects, an easy case for effective international action. By invading a weak neighbor, Iraq had committed a flagrant violation of international law. More important, the attack was seen as directly threatening the interests of the United States and its allies. After gobbling up Kuwait, Iraq was in possession of 20 percent of the world's known oil reserves. Furthermore, the attack put Iraq in a position to threaten Saudi Arabia, home to another 25 percent of the world's oil. All told, the Persian Gulf region contained two-thirds of this valuable natural resource. The possibility that so much of the world's oil could come under the control of a hostile power was seen as threatening to vital American interests. As a result, the United States was strongly motivated to take forceful action to reverse the Iraqi invasion. In all likelihood, it would have done so even if it had been unable to secure UN approval.

Hence, the success of the UN in this case owed a great deal to the fact that the United States, the most powerful actor in the international system, perceived a direct threat to its own interests. The international community was, in this instance, what we called in Chapter 2 a privileged group, since a single member was motivated strongly enough to provide the public good. The next several years would provide ample evidence that when such incentives are lacking, the community's collective interests in stopping aggression and/or ending gross violations of human rights are generally not enough to compel effective international intervention.

The "Triumph of the Lack of Will": Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur The hard tests of the new world order came only a few years after the victory in the Persian Gulf. The decades that followed witnessed a number of bloody and heartrending crises that transfixed the international community but also exposed the limits of that community's willingness to do much about them.[30]

One visible example of the limited will of the international community played out in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The civil conflict in Bosnia was the bloodiest of several violent acts in the breakup of Yugoslavia. Originally composed of five republics—Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia—the Yugoslav federation began to dissolve in 1991 as Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia sought independence, and Serbia, the largest republic, tried to hold the multiethnic state together by force.

The conflict in Bosnia was the most complicated and bloody because this republic was home to three ethnic groups: Serbs (comprising 31 percent of the

30. We take our heading for this section from the title phrase of an insightful analysis of this period; see James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

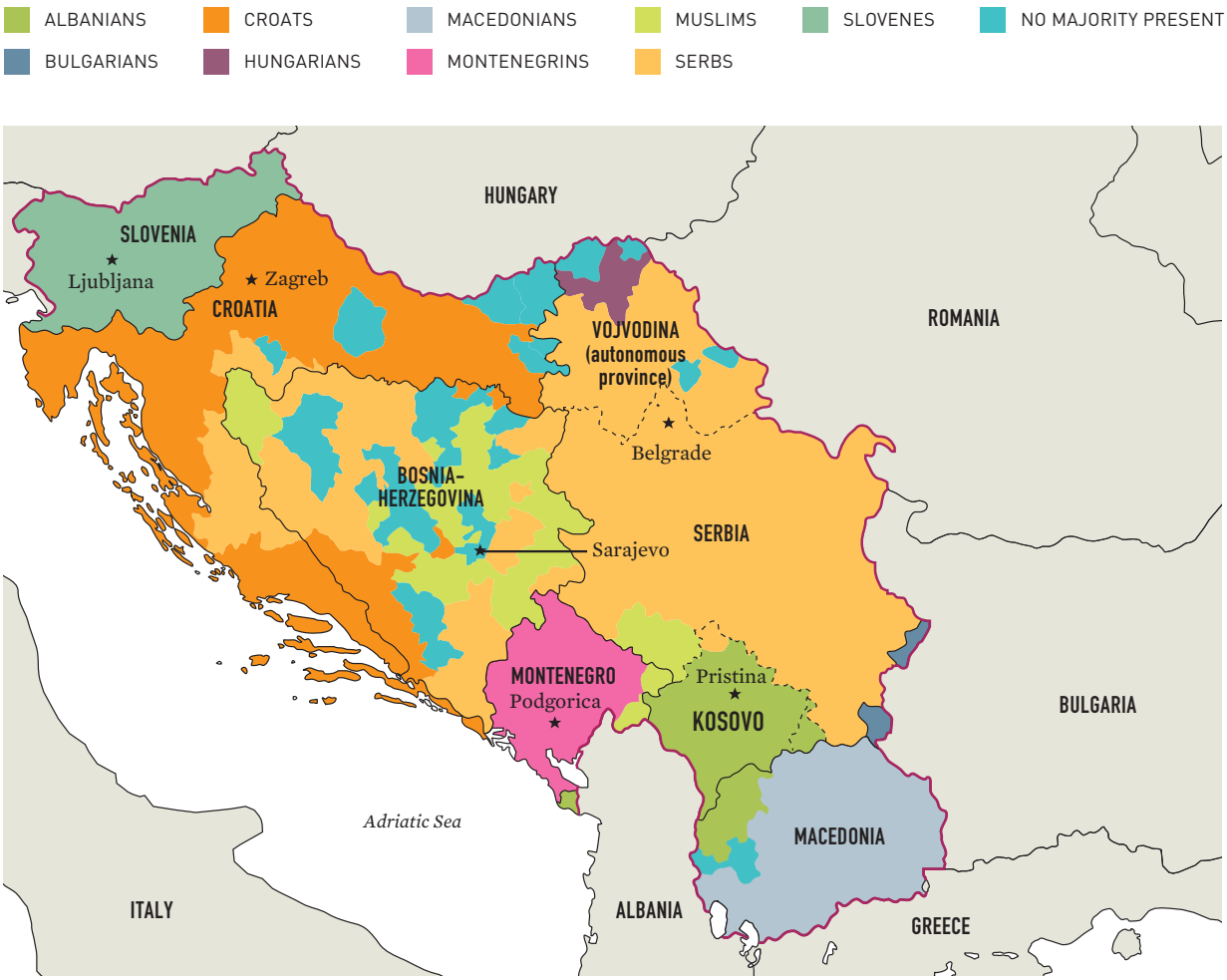
prewar population), Croats (25 percent), and Bosnian Muslims (44 percent), as shown in Map 5.2. Many Serbs did not want to live in an independent Bosnia; rather, they wanted to carve out portions of that republic and join with Serbia. The more radical Croats had similar thoughts of joining Croatia. When Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in March 1992, militant Serbs and Croats rebelled, triggering a three-way war.

The ensuing conflict, which lasted three years, was incredibly brutal, with 300,000 killed, mostly civilians, and at least 2 million refugees displaced from their homes. In addition, the combatants engaged in widespread atrocities against civilians: shelling cities, herding men and boys into detention camps where they were malnourished and mistreated, raping women and girls in order to terrorize the population. While crimes were committed by all sides, the greatest offenders were

Map source: University of Texas at Austin, www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/balkans.jpg (accessed 06/02/15).

MAP 5.2 *Ethnic Divisions in the Former Yugoslavia, 1992*

Groups Comprising 50 Percent or More of the Population of a Given Area



the Serbs, who engaged in a systematic campaign of what became known as "ethnic cleansing": clearing coveted territory of all non-Serbs by either killing them or scaring them into flight.

The international response to these events was feeble and at times counterproductive. Although there was unanimous condemnation of the violence, no one was willing to exert on behalf of Bosnia the kind of effort that had been marshaled to save Kuwait only one year earlier. Without compelling interests, such as securing an important natural resource (like oil), the UN, at the behest of the United States and European powers, responded in a half-hearted way. A peacekeeping force, comprising mostly European troops, was deployed to the area—despite the fact that there was no peace to keep.

Imposed into the war zone under Chapter VII, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) nonetheless had many of the qualities of a traditional peacekeeping force: it was lightly armed, dispersed throughout the country, required to be neutral, and ordered to fire only in self-defense. Its main mission was to distribute food and medicine to civilians and to help keep them out of harm's way. Hence, UNPROFOR sought to treat the symptoms of the war, but it had neither a mandate nor the requisite capabilities to end the war. On several occasions Serb forces took peacekeepers hostage and chained them to artillery pieces in order to deter air strikes against their positions.

The UN declared several Bosnian cities to be "safe havens" where civilians could find refuge from the war under its protection. The hollowness of this promise became evident in the worst atrocity of the war. In July 1995, Serb forces overran the safe haven of Srebrenica and proceeded to massacre 8,000 Muslim men and boys. The 600 Dutch peacekeepers charged with defending the city could do little to resist. When Serb forces threatened to kill some Dutch hostages, the Dutch government and the UN commanders on the ground decided to negotiate their troops' surrender.[31]

The massacre at Srebrenica did finally spark tougher international intervention. In August–September 1995, the United States and NATO conducted sustained air strikes against Serb forces. These attacks helped bring about a peace conference in Dayton, Ohio, that led to the Bosnian war's end in December 1995. Now with a peace to keep, U.S. and NATO forces were deployed as peacekeepers, with the blessing of the UN and alongside international police forces organized by the UN. In a pattern repeated elsewhere (see "The Quiet Successes" on p. 225), the UN mechanism had more success in maintaining a peace already achieved than in ending aggression and gross violations of human rights.

A similar lack of will by the international community was apparent in Rwanda in 1994 and in the ongoing conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan. In Rwanda, conflict between the country's principal ethnic groups, the Hutus and the Tutsis, erupted in genocide in April 1994. In the course of three months, an estimated 800,000 people were killed—many hacked to death by machetes—including 75 percent of

31. Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 399–400.

In the case of Rwanda, the UN and the international community did little to stop ongoing fighting between the Hutus and the Tutsis, even when it became clear that civilians were being massacred. Here, Tutsi victims of a Hutu raid on a refugee camp in nearby Burundi are buried in a mass grave.

the Tutsi population. The international response to this tragedy was very weak. A small UN peacekeeping force already on the ground was overwhelmed. After 10 of its peacekeepers were killed on the first day of the conflict, Belgium withdrew its forces, and other nations followed suit. As the death toll rose, the international community stood by and watched. The killing stopped only after a Tutsi rebel force succeeded in defeating the Hutu forces responsible for much of the slaughter.

The case of Darfur is equally tragic. Since 2003, a bloody conflict has raged in western Sudan, where government-supported militias have carried out systematic killings of the people there. In another widely acknowledged genocide, it is estimated that 200,000–400,000 people have died, and up to 3 million have been displaced from their homes. In spite of widespread outrage, the response of the UN has been weak. Member states have been unwilling to support or contribute troops to a robust military operation to end the violence.

This discussion is not meant to imply that the UN mechanism never works. Rather, it suggests that absent compelling national interests, member states are reluctant to pay heavy costs or embrace high risks to further the community's interest in stopping aggression or ending humanitarian crises. In all these cases, the member states cared about the suffering, but they did not care enough to undertake the kind of military operation that would have been needed to end the conflicts that were the cause of the suffering. "Controversy" on page 226 discusses the NATO-led intervention in Libya (2011), and the challenges that international organizations face when it comes to such interventions.

The Quiet Successes In other cases, the costs of intervention are seen as relatively low, and the UN's track record has been more impressive. These cases generally

CONTROVERSY

Should Outsiders Intervene Militarily to Stop Humanitarian Crises?

In 2011, Libyans revolted against the dictatorial rule of leader Mu'ammar Qaddafi. After initial successes by the rebels, Qaddafi's forces began to reclaim control as they moved east along the coast. The prospect of a bloodbath in Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city, spurred the international community to action. The UNSC passed a resolution authorizing member states to "take all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Libya, which allowed NATO to begin air operations and a naval blockade against Qaddafi's forces. With NATO support, the rebels beat back the loyalists at Benghazi. Qaddafi was captured and killed two months later.

The Libya operation is an example of armed humanitarian intervention, the use of military force by outsiders to stop mass killing or genocide within a country. Other notable examples include the UN-sponsored intervention to relieve a famine caused by civil war in Somalia in 1991–93 and, on a smaller scale, U.S. air strikes against Syria in 2017 to punish the regime's use of chemical weapons.

Applying the Concepts

The main argument for armed humanitarian intervention rests on the idea that everyone shares an **interest** in preventing suffering and death due to civil wars or murderous governments. But the practice remains controversial. Critics argue that (1) claims of humanitarianism disguise the self-interested reasons that actually motivate intervention, (2) military force is a poor instrument for influencing the strategic **interaction** between governments and civilians, and (3) existing **institutions** are not up to the task of deciding whether and when to intervene.

The case for armed humanitarian intervention rests on the moral imperative to protect unarmed civilians facing death at the hands of their government. When a state has failed in its basic obligation to protect its citizens from massacre, genocide, and other crimes against humanity, it has been argued that other states have a responsibility to intervene, by force if necessary (for more on the emergence of the "responsibility to protect" norm, see Chapter 11).

In the case of Libya, the looming attack on Benghazi reminded Western decision makers of their countries' failure to act under similar circumstances in June 1995, when Serb forces overran the city of Srebrenica in Bosnia and massacred 8,000 men and boys. If given the chance to prevent another such atrocity, why not act? A policy of intervention can not only save lives that are at immediate risk, but may also deter governments from committing atrocities in the first place.

While this argument seems compelling, the uncomfortable fact is that most humanitarian crises do not trigger this kind of response. Genocidal killings in Rwanda (1994), in the Darfur region of Sudan (starting in 2003), and against the Rohingya in Myanmar (starting in 2016) met international condemnation but not concerted military action. In Syria, where a civil war has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, U.S. air strikes in 2017 were an exception to a policy that otherwise avoided direct confrontation with the Syrian regime as it bombed and starved civilian populations.

Because the international community cannot possibly protect everyone everywhere in the world, the application of this policy is bound to be inconsistent and influenced by interests other than humanitarianism. The fact that Qaddafi was a hostile and unpredictable leader with enormous oil wealth suggests that other interests contributed to the decision to support the rebellion. No comparable interests compelled intervention in Rwanda, Sudan, or Myanmar, and Russia's interest in preserving a friendly regime in Syria motivated it to block intervention efforts there.

Humanitarian intervention also threatens the interests that states have in exercising sovereign control over internal matters. While atrocities committed against civilians are unacceptable, states have a legitimate interest in maintaining order domestically and preserving their territorial integrity. Indeed, to some critics, the West's recent willingness to intervene looks a good deal like another, older practice: imperialism. Just as imperial powers claimed to bring "civilization" to the lands they conquered,

Benghazi, Libya

humanitarianism may be used to disguise self-interested efforts to undermine or take over unfriendly states.

Another concern about these operations is that military force is a blunt and costly instrument for influencing the interaction between governments and their citizens. Although the most direct way to protect civilians is to deploy troops to shield them from the government's security forces, outsiders are usually reluctant to put their own people in harm's way. For this reason, the Libya campaign was conducted entirely from the air, relying on bombs and cruise missiles. While this strategy was effective at preventing NATO casualties, it also limited NATO's ability to influence events on the ground. Even if an intervention succeeds in easing a crisis, an enduring solution requires a long-term commitment by outside actors that may not be credible. When the foreigners go home, conflict may erupt again. Indeed, Libya has fallen back into civil war as different factions vie to rule that country.

Finally, humanitarian intervention raises the institutional question of who should decide when the international community can get involved. The UN is the natural venue for such a determination. Even so, for the Security Council to authorize intervention in purely domestic conflicts requires an expansive interpretation of what constitutes a "threat to international peace and security." Two members of the Security Council—China and Russia—have been loath to endorse humanitarian intervention, in part because their own human rights records are spotty. Because of the threat of their veto, the Security Council could not act against Sudan or Syria. In the case of Libya, the Security Council (with China and Russia abstaining) approved an operation to protect civilians but did not endorse the goal of ousting Qaddafi.

Supporters of humanitarian intervention have argued that NATO, as an alliance of democracies, is well qualified to act in support of human rights. But under international law, the alliance does not have the authority to undertake such an operation on its own, nor is it universally seen as an impartial force. Thus, while the international community has at times taken steps to protect people in harm's way, it still grapples with the question of how to perform this responsibility well.

Thinking Analytically

1. When do humanitarian interests override a state's interests in exercising sovereign control over its internal policies? Are there good criteria for deciding the answer to this question?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of vesting decisions about the legality of humanitarian intervention in the United Nations Security Council? If you could design an alternative institution to make this decision, what would its membership and voting rules be?

fall under the category of traditional peacekeeping: monitoring and assisting in the implementation of peace agreements. Because the existence of a peace agreement indicates that the opposing parties are ready to stop fighting and resolve their differences, the risks associated with getting involved are not that high. Keeping peace after a war is generally easier than making peace during a war.

For this reason, UN efforts have been most successful in the area of post-conflict reconstruction.[32] In the case of El Salvador, for example, a UN peacekeeping operation played an important role in that country's recovery from a 12-year civil war that had claimed 75,000 lives. The UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) comprised about 700 military observers and civilian police from 17 countries, but it had an expansive mandate to help rebuild the country. ONUSAL not only helped to monitor the demobilization of the warring factions after a 1992 peace agreement, but it also assisted in implementing political reforms designed to address the root causes of the conflict, such as reforming the judiciary, forming and training a new civilian police force, and redistributing land to former combatants. ONUSAL also monitored an election in 1994 to ensure that it was free and fair and that all sides would respect the result. The mission's mandate ended in April 1995, leaving in its wake a country that is generally considered free and democratic.

Similar stories of success in post-conflict reconstruction can be found in Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Cambodia, and even Bosnia, where a NATO-led peacekeeping force with a UN blessing went in after the 1995 peace deal and was deemed to have fulfilled its mission and departed in December 2004.[33]

People following the news likely heard much more about the UN's failings in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur than about the quieter victories in places like El Salvador and Bosnia after 1995. Bloodshed naturally draws more attention than do peace and reconciliation, so the failures of the UN get more publicity than do its successes. (See "How Do We Know?" on p. 229 for more evidence on the success of peacekeeping operations.)

From 9/11 to Iraq and After: Consensus Lost During the 1990s, civil conflicts such as the ones in Bosnia and Rwanda were much more prominent on the UN agenda than were cases of international aggression like the Persian Gulf War. As we have seen, the main impediment to effective action in these cases was a lack of will—the absence of compelling national interests that could have justified committing resources and taking risks. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States changed this focus, exposing a threat that many UN member states, including all of the P5, had reason to fear. The unanimous condemnation of the terrorist attacks and international support for the United States' war in Afghanistan suggested that once again the UN mechanism could work effectively in the new international environment.

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32. See Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

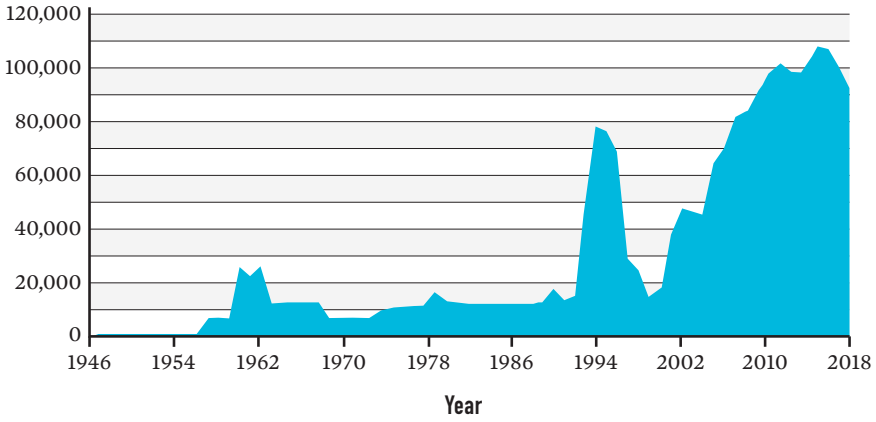
33. The United Nations force was replaced by a European Union force (EUFOR Althea, named after the Greek goddess of healing).

HOW DO WE KNOW?

Does Peacekeeping Keep the Peace?

Since its creation in 1946, the UN has undertaken 71 peacekeeping missions. About 3,600 peacekeepers have died in the course of these operations, whose total cost has been about $100 billion. At the time of this writing, over 112,000 uniformed personnel from 128 countries were deployed in 16 ongoing operations around the globe.[a] Given this expenditure of time, blood, and treasure, it is reasonable to ask: Do peacekeeping operations actually work?

FIGURE A *Total Size of UN Peacekeeping Forces, 1946–2017*



Note: Highest month for each year. Figures include troops, military observers, and police.

Sources: Global Policy Forum, "Size of UN Peacekeeping Forces, 1947–2009," www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/102-tables-and-charts/40734-size-of-un-peacekeeping-forces-1947-2009.html (accessed 03/19/18). Updated through January 2018, using data from https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/0_front_page_0.pdf (accessed 03/19/18).

A number of studies have sought to answer this question. Virginia Page Fortna collected information on cease-fires in interstate and civil wars since 1946. There is a good deal of variation in how long cease-fires last. Some break down almost immediately, others last for years, and still others form the basis for a permanent peace between the adversaries. To determine whether peacekeepers can affect how long a cease-fire will last, Fortna recorded, for each case, whether a peacekeeping force was sent in to monitor and/or enforce the agreement.

Even when other factors that influence the durability of a peace are taken into account, the presence of a peacekeeping operation has a substantial effect on the likelihood that a cease-fire will endure. Looking at the 48 cease-fires in interstate wars that ended between 1946 and 1998, Fortna found that the presence of peacekeepers reduced by 85 percent the probability that a cease-fire would break down in any given year.[b] Similarly, in an analysis of 94 cease-fires in 60 civil wars in the period 1989–99, Fortna found that the presence of peacekeepers reduced the risk of renewed fighting in any given year by about 60 percent.[c]

Another set of studies, by Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, looked more deeply into whether the size and composition of peacekeeping missions matters in civil wars. Combining information on the number of military, police, and unarmed observers in each mission, they showed that a larger presence of military forces reduces violence and lowers civilian deaths. By their estimate, increasing the peacekeeping presence from zero to 8,000 reduces the predicted number of civilian deaths in a country from about 100 per month to 2 per month.[d] Considering the enormous human and economic costs associated with warfare, peacekeeping operations appear to be well worth their price.

a. Data are from www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml (accessed 07/14/17).

b. Virginia Page Fortna, "Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects," *World Politics* 56 (July 2004): 481–519. See also Virginia Page Fortna, *Peace Time: Cease-Fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

c. Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 105.

d. Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (October 2013): 875–91. See also Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, "Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 108 (November 2014): 737–53.

This optimism would prove short-lived, however. Slightly over a year after the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. effort to mount a war against Iraq divided the Security Council and left the organization alienated from its most powerful member. Although all members were on record demanding that Iraq fully account for its past weapons programs, they parted ways on the desirability of using military force to enforce this demand. A majority of the Security Council members, including France, Russia, and China, refused to back a proposed resolution in January 2003 authorizing the use of force against Iraq, in part because many members of the council were reluctant to endorse the U.S. doctrine of preventive war (defined in Chapter 3), which they saw as contrary to the UN Charter's rules on the use of force. Claiming authorization under prior UN resolutions and Article 51 of the UN Charter permitting self-defense, the United States went ahead with the invasion without explicit UN support.

More recently, conflicts among the P5 threaten to once again sideline the organization. As noted earlier, Russia has wielded its veto to prevent the UN from imposing economic or military sanctions on Syria, a longtime Russian ally. Between the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and March 2018, Russia had vetoed eleven resolutions put forward by the United States and its Western allies condemning the mass killing of civilians and the use of chemical weapons. In the spring of 2014, when Russian tanks and troops moved into Ukraine and annexed Crimea, the Security Council debated the matter, but there was no chance that the institution would act against one of its permanent members. The two draft resolutions on Ukraine that came to a vote both fell victim to the Russian veto.[34]

In addition, there is little prospect of the Security Council getting involved in conflicts between China and its neighbors over disputed islands in the South China Sea—disputes that have the potential to become flashpoints for conflict between the United States and China (see Chapter 14). As a result of these rising tensions among the P5, the UN will once again find itself unable to act on key matters of international security.

As this overview suggests, the UN faces two essential requirements if it is to work as intended. First, none of the veto-wielding members can see a potential operation as threatening to its interests. If this requirement is not met—as was true through much of the Cold War and in the case of Iraq—then action can be blocked thanks to the voting rule. Second, member states, particularly the powerful member states, must care enough to devote the necessary resources and take the necessary risks. If those risks are low, as in the case of post-conflict peacekeeping, this requirement may not be hard to satisfy. In the more costly cases of reversing aggression or stopping genocides, a strong interest, such as existed in the Gulf War case, is necessary to ensure that sufficient resources are brought to bear. Thus, effective action can be thwarted in two ways: by self-interest, as in the case of Ukraine, or by apathy, as in the case of Rwanda.

34. An excellent resource on vetoed resolutions can be found at http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick (accessed 07/14/17).

A cynical conclusion that one might draw from this observation is that the UN mechanism is most likely to be effective precisely when it is needed least—that is, when the powerful states agree enough and care enough to take action. In a case like the Gulf War, one could argue, the UN served simply to give a stamp of approval to actions that the United States would have taken anyway. Moreover, it is also clear from the experience of the Iraq War that the failure to get UN approval will not always stop a great power from taking actions that it wants to take.

In light of this conclusion, one might question whether the UN matters at all when it comes to war and peace. The answer is that although the UN matters less than one might hope, the organization does indeed make a difference. First, as already noted, it has played a constructive role in organizing peacekeeping missions to help countries reconstruct in the wake of conflict. In these cases, the UN's perceived impartiality bestows a legitimacy on peacekeepers' efforts that is needed for them to play the role of an honest broker.

Second, the American experience in its two wars against Iraq, in 1991 and 2003, shows that the UN's blessing can be a valuable resource. In the Gulf War, UN support helped build both domestic and international support for the war effort, which contributed to the United States' ability to prevail at low cost to itself. In the case of the Iraq War, the absence of UN support had important implications for the United States' ability to stabilize the country after toppling Hussein's regime. One study of post-conflict reconstruction showed that in order to have a nation-building effort in Iraq that was the same size per capita as the one that was deployed in Bosnia in 1995, the United States would have needed 480,000 combat troops and 12,600 international police.[35] The absence of UN backing, however, meant that some countries that often contribute peacekeeping or police forces to these kinds of missions, such as Pakistan and India, refused to do so in this case. As a result, the U.S.-led coalition had, in March 2004, 154,000 total combat troops, 85 percent of whom were American. And those troops had to serve double duty as an international police force, because there was no separate deployment of police. Hence, there are costs of going to war without the backing of the UN—even if these costs are not always sufficient to prevent a great power from doing so.

Finally, although cooperation is uneven, the UN facilitates joint decision making. Its rules of procedure in the Security Council and established mechanisms for fielding peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations keep countries from having to "reinvent the wheel" each time a crisis arises. Vetoes may interfere with decision making, but without clearly established rules, decisions would be harder to reach even in those instances where cooperation has been successful. Indeed, if the UN did not exist, states would need to create an organization very similar to the one we already have.

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35. James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003).

Conclusion: Are Poor Police Better than None?

At the outset of this chapter, we asked whether and when international institutions can prevent or stop wars between and within states. The track record of both alliances and collective security organizations has been uneven, at best, in this regard. Both are imperfect substitutes for an effective police force of the kind that we take for granted in a well-governed country.

Alliances form in response to common interests—generally, the perception of a common threat. For this reason, allies are often better able to work together in concert than are the more fractious members of, say, the UN. However, the existence of alliances does not ensure that allies will fight together, nor does it ensure that other states will be deterred from making threats. Not all alliances are created equally, as the capabilities and resolve underlying the commitment to defend an ally can vary quite considerably. When these are in doubt, as in the case of the French alliance to Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, the alliance can fail in both deterring threats and defending against them. When states are strongly resolved and take the necessary steps to lock in and demonstrate that commitment, as in the case of NATO, then the alliance institutions can be a source of peace through credible deterrence.

For collective security organizations, like the UN, the primary challenge involves providing a public good in an environment in which there can be competing private interests and the costs of providing the good may be more than anyone is willing to pay. Moreover, the joint decision-making rules set down by the organizations' founding members gave those states important privileges to block actions that they do not like. Hence, these organizations have been most effective only when there has been relatively strong agreement among the powerful states, and they have been crippled when those states are in conflict. They have had their greatest successes when at least one powerful state had a sufficient interest that it was willing to pay costs and take risks to provide the public good for everyone. They have also had more quiet successes when those costs and risks were relatively low, such as in cases of post-conflict reconstruction.

Former UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld reportedly said, "The UN was not created to take humanity to heaven but to save it from hell."[36] This statement reflects a pragmatic understanding of the limits of governance in the international system. States have conflicts of interests that they are willing to fight over, as do people within states. In the absence of an impartial police force, the ability

36. The original source of this well-known quotation is unclear, and slight variations in wording can be found in the secondary literature, possibly because Hammarskjöld said something to this effect more than once. For a speech in which he made this point, see Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds., *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, vol. 2, *Dag Hammarskjöld* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 301.

of third parties to enforce peace depends on whether those parties are willing and able to step in.

Do outsiders have an interest in intervening? Do the available institutions promote intervention by lowering the costs of getting involved or by increasing the costs of staying out? Does the intervention influence the interaction between combatants in a way that resolves the information and commitment problems that can lead to violence? All these questions have to be answered in the affirmative for outside intervention to have a chance at preventing or reversing acts of violence. In cases like the wars in Korea and the Persian Gulf, these conditions were met, and South Korea and Kuwait owe their continued existence to this fact. Similarly, in places like El Salvador and Liberia, effective outside assistance has helped these countries rebuild after decades of civil conflict. But in many other cases these conditions are not met, and the results can be disastrous, as in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur.

And yet, as we survey this uneven record, Hammarskjöld's statement reminds us that even an imperfect police force may be better than none. Although the international system has no central authority analogous to that of a well-governed domestic system, the institutions that have developed in its place have a beneficial—albeit imperfect and uneven—impact on world politics. Alliances and collective security organizations are poor substitutes for an effective and neutral police, but it is likely that the world would be an even more violent place in their absence.

Study Tool Kit

Interests, Interactions, and Institutions in Context

- Alliances form when states have compatible interests that lead them to cooperate militarily. They are institutions created between or among states to facilitate cooperation for the purpose of influencing the outcomes of disputes with outsiders.
- Alliances are successful at deterring or fighting off challenges when allies have a strong interest in coming to one another's aid in the event of war, and when they are able to signal this interest to the opponent in a credible manner.
- Collective security organizations form around a common interest, which all states are presumed to share, in promoting peace. As broad-based institutions, their primary role is to facilitate collective action within the international community so that states can respond effectively to prevent or stop the outbreak of violence whenever and wherever it may occur.
- Collective security organizations are successful when leading states perceive a common and compelling interest in stopping an act of aggression. They fail when leading states have conflicting interests in the outcome of a particular dispute, or when they have too little interest in the matter to justify the costs of intervention.

Key Terms

alliances, p. 189

balance of power, p. 192

bandwagoning, p. 193

entrapment, p. 199

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), p. 203

Warsaw Pact, p. 203

League of Nations, p. 205

United Nations (UN), p. 205

collective security organizations, p. 205

genocide, p. 208

humanitarian interventions, p. 209

Security Council (UNSC), p. 213

permanent five (P5), p. 213

veto power, p. 213

peace-enforcement operation, p. 215

peacekeeping operation, p. 215

For Further Reading

Doyle, Michael W., and Nicholas Sambanis. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. Examines the track record of UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations in civil wars; finds that while the UN is not well equipped to end wars, it has been helpful in peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction.

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Leeds, Brett Ashley, and Burcu Savun. "Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?" *Journal of Politics* 69 (2007): 1118–32. Offers empirical evidence about the conditions under which states decide to break or honor military alliances.

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6

Violence by Nonstate Actors: Civil War and Terrorism

THE PUZZLE ***A great deal of politically motivated violence in the contemporary world is committed by or directed against nonstate actors, particularly rebel groups engaged in civil wars or terrorist networks. Why do some individuals and groups resort to violence against their governments or unarmed civilians?***

Above: Transnational terrorist networks, like the Islamic State (IS), use violence to advance their political goals. In July 2016, IS claimed responsibility for an attack in Nice, France, in which an assailant drove a cargo truck through a Bastille Day crowd, killing over 84 people and wounding hundreds of others.