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Systems for Peace or Causes of War?

Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe

Richard K. Betts

Promotion of the idea of collective security has created a psychological situation in which the United States cannot turn its back on the concept, not because of what collective security can accomplish . . . but because of what millions of people . . . believe it may accomplish in time. Collective security has come to be the chief symbol of hope that . . . a community of nations will develop in which there will be no more war.

Arnold Wolfers[1]

The achievement of orthodox status is very often fatal to the integrity of a concept. When it becomes popular and respectable . . . men are strongly tempted to proclaim their belief in it whether or not they genuinely understand its meaning or fully accept its implications. If the tension between their urge to believe in *it and their disinclination to* believe that *it is valid becomes too strong, they tend to resolve the difficulty by altering its meaning, packing into the terminological box a content that they can more readily accept.*

Inis L. Claude, Jr.[2]

Collective security is an old idea whose time keeps coming.[3] The term has been resurrected and revised in three generations of this century, once after each World War—the First, the Second, and the Cold War—and has been

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1. Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 197.
2. Inis L. Claude, Jr., *Swords Into Plowshares*, 4th ed. (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 246.
3. The concept can be traced back at least as far back as the last millennium, when French bishops in a council at Poitiers and a synod at Limoges declared war on war, decided to excommunicate princes who broke the peace, and planned to deploy troops under a religious bannner to use force against violators. Stefan T. Possony, "Peace Enforcement," *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (1946).

used to refer to: (1) the Wilsonian or ideal concept associated with the Fourteen Points and League of Nations; (2) the Rio Pact, the United Nations, and anti-communist alliances including the UN Command in Korea, NATO, the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, SEATO, the Baghdad Pact, and CENTO;[4] and (3) current proposals for organizations to codify peace in Europe.[5]

The protean character of collective security reflects the fact that many who endorse it squirm when the terms are specified or applied to awkward cases. This has occurred with all incarnations of the idea.[6] The main problem is the gap between the instinctive appeal of the idea in liberal cultures as they settle epochal conflicts, and its inherent defects in relations among independent states as they move from peace toward war. When particular cases make the defects obtrusive the idea is revised rather than jettisoned. When revisions vitiate what essentially distinguishes the idea from traditional concepts it is supposed to replace, the urge to salvage the idea confuses strategic judgment. That is harmless only as long as strategy is not needed.

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4. This was prevalent in official thinking in the first half of the Cold War. For example, see John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 89–95, 204–207; and Dean Rusk, as told to Richard Rusk, and Daniel Papp, ed., *As I Saw It* (New York: Norton, 1990), pp. 503–505.

5. For example, Richard Ullman, *Securing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Gregory Flynn and David J. Scheffer, "Limited Collective Security," *Foreign Policy*, No. 80 (Fall 1990), pp. 77–101; Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 114–161; Malcolm Chalmers, "Beyond the Alliance System," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 215–250; John Mueller, "A New Concert of Europe," *Foreign Policy*, No. 77 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 3–16; James E. Goodby, "A New European Concert" and Harald Mueller, "A United Nations of Europe and North America," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January/February 1991); John D. Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," in Henry J. Aaron, ed., *Setting National Priorities: Policy for the Nineties* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1990). Steinbruner terms his overall vision "cooperative" rather than "collective" security, but the description is similar to the Wilsonian conception: "a global alliance. . . . all countries are on the same side and their forces are not directed against each other. . . . there are no neutrals." Ibid., pp. 68, 74, 109. For a mixed view of prospects, see Stephen F. Szabo, "The New Europeans: Beyond the Balance of Power," in Nils H. Wessell, ed., *The New Europe: Revolution in East-West Relations*, Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, Vol. 38, No. 1 (New York: Academy of Political Science, 1991).

6. "For while the transmutation of lead into gold would be no nearer if everyone in the world passionately desired it, it is undeniable that if everyone really desired . . .'collective security' (and meant the same thing by those terms), it would be easily attained; and the student of international politics may be forgiven if he begins by supposing that his task is to make everyone desire it. It takes him some time to understand. . . . the fact that few people do desire . . .'collective security,' and that those who think they desire it mean different and incompatible things by it." E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919–1939*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 9–10.

Among those who like the idea of collective security, negotiation of arms limitations among states is also popular. Many proponents of the League of Nations linked it closely to plans for general disarmament. That contributed to the association of Wilsonian collective security with utopian visions. In the second half of the Cold War, the shift from pursuit of complete disarmament to limitations aimed at fixing the distribution of military power in stable configurations made the enterprise more serious; indeed it became institutionalized over the past twenty years.

Arms control treaties designed to stabilize military relationships, however, are vestiges of the Cold War. They make sense between adversaries, not friends, and the Russians are on our side now. This may not last, but the size and identity of coalitions that would be arrayed in a new strategic competition—information essential for prescribing the regulation of military balances—cannot yet be known. Bureaucracies and peace strategists nevertheless continue to lobby for arms control as a means to reinforce the current amity. Although constituencies for collective security and arms control overlap, there is at best little connection between the logic of the two goals, and at worst a contradiction.

The main argument in this article is that reborn enthusiasm for collective security is fueled by confusion about which is the cause and which is the effect in the relation between collective security and peace, and by conflation of *present* security *conditions* (absence of a threat) with *future* security *functions* (coping with a threat). This conceptual confusion raises doubts about the congruence of form and function in a collective security system. Is the system designed in a form that will work in conditions where it is needed, or does the form reflect conditions where it is not needed? If changes in conditions prevent the system from functioning according to its design, it will not make war less likely, and will thus make coping with threats harder than if alternate security mechanisms had been developed.

The second possible danger is that instead of failing to perform according to design, collective security or arms control, in succeeding, would *worsen* military instability. Implementing collective commitments could turn minor wars into major ones, and equalizing military power of individual states through arms control without reference to their prospective alignment in war might yield unequal forces when alignments congeal. The usual criticism of collective security and arms control is that they will not work; the other criticism is that if they do work, we may wish they hadn't.

Yes, these are opposite arguments. Moreover, not all of the other criticisms I make of collective security or arms control proposals are mutually consistent. This would be dirty pool if the aim were to discredit the ideas with a contrary prediction of my own. My own view of the future, however, is agnostic. Various potential defects in ambitious proposals for systemic reform are listed not because they will go together, and not to stack the deck of argument, but simply to make the case that a wide range of possibilities is not foreclosed. That simple point precludes confidence in predicting whether or how institutions of collective security or arms control would work.

Granted, nothing important in politics is predictable in detail. Indeed, systems of all sorts, whether simple or complex, often produce unanticipated results,[7] and even enthusiasts for collective security and arms control admit that they will not assure the permanence of sweetness and light in Europe. The least we should try to do when prescribing a system, however, is to make the assumed sequences of cause and effect clear, and to identify dysfunctions or counterproductive effects that *can* be anticipated. The following section frames the issues in terms of some considerations of systems theory. Subsequent sections etch the specific critiques of collective security and arms control; those not interested in systems theory may wish to skip ahead.

Security Systems

The function of a security system is to produce security, and the system should be judged by how it does so rather than by other things associated with it. This also means that a system designed in good times to cope with bad times should be judged in terms of the bad times rather the good times. By my reading, many current proposals for collective security do not fully share these assumptions. To judge the efficacy of the idea and the potential for perverse effects, we need to clarify what the system is supposed to do, how it is supposed to do it, and when.

For reasons argued below, the definition of collective security that we should use as a reference point is the classic Wilsonian ideal. Some charge that criticizing the ideal type prevents appreciation of more limited and realistic variants. We find on closer consideration, however, that most of the qualifications applied in current proposals make collective security more

7. See the chapter by Robert Jervis in Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, eds. *Coping with Complexity in the International System* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, forthcoming).

realistic by making it less collective and less automatic—and thus hard to differentiate from the traditional balance of power standards it is supposed to replace. Unless collective security *does* mean something significantly different from traditional forms of combination by states against common enemies, in alliances based on specific interests, the term confuses the actual choices.

The essential element in the Wilsonian concept is the *rejection of alliances*, expressed in the commitment of all members of the system to oppose any attack against another: "all for one, and one for all." Peace is indivisible. Alliances for defense are mandated only if collective security fails (on the same principle that a threatened citizen may rely on her own gun if the police fail to answer her call). Instead of planning against an identified adversary, security policy consists of the guarantee of united reaction against whoever might transgress. No grievance warrants resort to force to overturn the status quo; military force is legitimate only to resist attack, not to initiate it. States are to be legally accountable for starting wars. In contrast to traditional international relations, protection comes not from balance of power, but from preponderance of power against any renegade, guaranteed by universal treaty obligation to enforce peace whether doing so happens to be in a state's immediate interest or not. Community of power replaces balance of power.[8] The penalty for aggression is to be automatic economic or military sanctions. (Some collective security schemes rely primarily on economic punishment.[9] To keep discussion manageable within space constraints, my ar-

8. G.F. Hudson, "Collective Security and Military Alliances," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 175–176; Kenneth W. Thompson, "Collective Security," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp. 565–566; Kenneth W. Thompson, "Collective Security Reexamined," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1953), pp. 753–756; Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, chaps. 11–12; Inis L. Claude, Jr., *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), chap. 4; Claude, *Swords Into Plowshares*, chap. 12; Roland M. Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (April 1956); Robert E. Osgood, "Woodrow Wilson, Collective Security, and the Lesson of History," *Confluence*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1957), p. 344; M.V. Naidu, *Collective Security and the United Nations* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1974), chap. 2; Frederick H. Hartmann, *The Conservation of Enemies* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982), chap. 13; Erich Hula, "Fundamentals of Collective Security," *Social Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring 1957). Some have argued that collective security is really just an extension of the balance of power system (e.g., Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* [New York: Norton, 1967], pp. 307–308), but this makes little sense unless one is defining it empirically rather than normatively.

9. This helps to sell the idea to those skeptical of military entanglement. See, for example, James T. Shotwell, *War as an Instrument of National Policy and Its Renunciation in the Pact of Paris* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 221.

gument addresses the stronger form of the idea, which assumes military obligations.)

The Wilsonian ideal involves a strong analogy to domestic law enforcement, as in the principle that anyone who takes another's property by force will be arrested and punished, no matter whether the particular seizure seems to threaten other taxpayers or not, and no matter whether the assailant claims legitimate grounds for the attack (for example, saying that he was repossessing funds swindled from him). In domestic society, such claims are permitted to be argued in a court suit, but not by violence. To the extent that this domestic analogy is accepted, it poses severe problems for the logic of collective security in the international system where there is no authority to adjudicate suits (and thus to obviate individual claims to the right of self-enforcement of self-determined legitimate claims). To the extent that this problem is recognized, on the other hand, and the idea of collective security is qualified to allow exceptions to the general rule according to case-by-case judgment on the merits of interests and claims, the distinction of the concept from a regular alliance becomes hopelessly blurred.

WHAT KIND OF SYSTEM?

A collective security system is a mechanism to guard the sovereignty of its members, one designed to function according to certain norms.[10] Since it is not oriented to deterring a specific adversary, it does not function continuously in peacetime. It is an emergency safety mechanism, sitting on the shelf unless activated by emergence of a challenger to the status quo, in a sense comparable to the emergency back-up system in a nuclear power plant, which functions only in the highly unlikely event that normal operation goes awry.

To judge the effectiveness of an emergency system, it is useful to distinguish whether its most essential elements are automatic or volitional. That is, are the safety switches tripped by the alarm, or does the machine depend on *ad hoc* human choices to start it up and keep it going? If a set of conscious choices is required to run the machine, how many are real choices? Are there good reasons that those responsible might decide deliberately not to flip the

10. To purists like Kenneth Waltz, defining a system normatively, in terms of a product expected from it, may be illegitimate. Nor might collective security or arms control be considered systems in themselves. Together, however, they come closer, since collective security is an "ordering principle" of sorts, and arms control affects "the distribution of capabilities across the system's units." See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 82, 97, and passim. I will recklessly use the term "system" anyway.

switches necessary to keep the machine performing according to design? Are the "rules" for how the system works primarily empirical or normative? That is, do they describe how the linked components *do* work, in terms of laws of physics or evidence from experience; or prescribe how they *should* work; or how they would work *if* the operators make the choices stipulated by the designers?

As Charles Perrow makes clear, the interactions in a complex system based on automatic switches may not be fully predictable.[11] They should be far more predictable, however, than the outputs of a system that depends on a combination of deliberate choices. In the latter, the probability of unanticipated interactions of components is potentially doubled, as mechanical uncertainties are compounded by decisional ones. The problem of predictability is further complicated by the strategic quality of decisions in a security system—statesmen trying not just to second-guess machines, but to outwit each other. These differences are of course what makes action in any system of politics harder to predict than in one of physics.

Realist theories of balance of power systems are both empirical and normative, but primarily the former. Just as automobiles in most countries should drive on the right side of the road because they must do so to avoid a crash, states *should* seek power because they *must*.[12] The starkest versions of realism imply that precious little real choice is even available. The deterministic aspect of realism emphasizes automatic qualities of power-balancing

11. Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), chap. 3.

12. Since this article rests more on realist theory than its alternatives, I should admit the troublesome circularity involved here (even though it evokes questions far too large to handle satisfactorily without changing the focus of the article). Idealist statesmen are criticized because failure to bow to necessity and obey the rules of balance of power threatens the security of their nations. Why? Because other states follow the rules and will run over them. But if *some* states do not do what they "must," then in principle there can be no iron law that others will, no strictly logical reason for denying that all states could act according to another norm. In theory, all states could decide to drive on the left. The realist answer would be that empirical evidence shows that most do not do that, so a decision to drive on the left will probably get you killed. (More rigorously developed "neo" realist formulations avoid some of these problems in traditional realist thinking. See Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 44, No. 1 [Spring/Summer 1990], pp. 21–37.) Thorough-going realism is an insufficient guide to life after the Cold War, however, if only because it offers little to explain why the Cold War ended. Just before the Soviet surrender of Eastern Europe the reigning dean of neorealism could still write (as almost anyone would have): "The Cold War continues. It is firmly rooted in the structure of postwar international politics, and will last as long as that structure endures." Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in Robert J. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb, eds., *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 52.

in the international system more than do idealists who focus on cooperation or moral choices. Extreme realists see the rules of balance of power as almost a cybernetic process of constant adjustment to maintain equilibrium. If one state or coalition begins to dominate the system, the others, like thermostats, move to coalesce and right the balance.

A collective security system depends more on volition and normative rules. The design of collective security rests on the norm that states must subordinate their own immediate interests to general or remote ones. While there is disagreement about how thoroughly the theory and practice of balance of power systems have coincided in history, few claim that the case for collective security has yet been confirmed by experience. (As I argue below, the Concert of Europe is not a good example.) Indeed, the main theoretical argument against collective security is that its normative rules have been discredited by the empirically validated rules of balance of power.[13]

All of this highlights the question of congruence between form and function. Will the system's performance correspond to the rules in its design? If not, will the design be just superfluous, or counterproductive? Or will it ever have to perform at all? The test of a security system is how it functions when a challenge to security arises. If it is never tested, its function is only symbolic, not substantive.

Testing, however, poses two problems. One is that the first test may kill the system if the design is flawed—if empirical rules contradict normative ones, and form does not govern function. There are no simulations or dry runs in international conflict comparable to what can be done with real machines. Another is that we may not know when a test occurs. As with deterrence in general, if the design is so good that a would-be challenger does not even dare to try, the system has worked, but no one can prove that it has because there is no certainty that the challenge would have been made otherwise.

FORECASTING AND SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Since an emergency system functions only when the normal environment or operating condition breaks down, its design depends on assumptions about

13. Collective security can be defined empirically. Ernst B. Haas does so in terms of patterns of UN peacekeeping actions. Haas, "Types of Collective Security: An Examination of Operational Concepts," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (March 1955). See also John Gerard Ruggie, "Contingencies, Constraints, and Collective Security: Perspectives on U.N. Involvement in International Disputes," *International Organization*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1974). To evaluate the concept as a model for the more important aim of preserving peace in Europe, however, it is more useful to address it in terms of the aim.

hypothetical and improbable futures. The implication of this point is not quite so obvious that spelling it out should insult a reader's intelligence.

First, many people naturally do think of a security system as one that functions from day to day, in normal times. This is true when normal times are conflictual, as they were in Europe during most of the lifetimes of anyone contemplating the question. Cooperation modified the East-West competition occasionally, but the term "Cold *War*" meant that reliable peace did not exist. Clarity of alignments enabled contingency planning and targeting of strategy against identified threats to develop as ongoing activities. NATO and the Warsaw Pact, high defense budgets and peacetime military readiness, episodic combat in the so-called Third World, and arms control negotiations all went with a security system for an insecure world. Under collective security, in contrast, threats to security remain abstract and everyone is supposed to be willing to act against anyone, so highly developed strategic preparation is circumscribed.

Enthusiasm for collective security emerges from the end of the Cold War, as it did for a while after 1918 and 1945, because the end of an epochal conflict makes peace appear normal. After four decades of Cold War, however, it should not be surprising if people remain psychologically disposed to think of any security system as they thought of NATO, as a machine whirring along from day to day, keeping threats under control. The renewed *appeal* of the idea of collective security flows directly from the present: the happy shock of liberalism's transcontinental triumph shows that radical optimism is not naive after all. The *relevance* of the idea, in contrast, lies in a less happy future where other surprising, rather than likely, changes have occurred.

Second, while the design of an emergency system depends on forecasting the emergencies with which it might have to cope, there are no practical grounds for faith in political forecasts. While everyone will accept the bromide that no one knows what the future will bring, what does one do when asked to predict? The most common approach (and the one that evokes less skepticism than others) is to extrapolate—to project the future as a trajectory from present trends. This reinforces any disposition to think of a collective security system as a constantly functioning one like an alliance. It is also conducive to relaxed specifications for the system's design, because interest in the solution is highest when worry that it might have to be implemented is lowest.

Basing plans for a security system on extrapolation from current trends makes the problem easy. All the great powers are on the same side now,

and all the discernible sources of violence are internal score-settling between national groups within states, or between states that are minor powers. To base plans on anything *other* than extrapolation seems arbitrary. Unless one of the great powers goes bad, or the small scraps in Eastern Europe metastacize, the nature of the international mechanism for preserving security is not terribly important. For either of the malign developments to occur, we have to imagine a sequence of changes in the present trend creating a nasty scenario, but discussion in terms of scenarios has an air of unreality. It is as easy for optimists to reject such approaches as "worst-case" alarmism as it is for pessimists to warn of the complacency in projecting the future from the present.

The problem for security policy is to predict threats and to devise means for coping with them, yet it is especially reckless at the moment to invest confidence in any particular estimate of why, how, and when things will go wrong. Major discontinuities in international relations are seldom predicted. Who would not have been derided and dismissed in 1988 for predicting that within a mere three years Eastern Europe would be liberated, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union deposed, and the Union itself on the ash heap of history? Yet it is hard to believe that the probability of equally revolutionary negative developments, of economic crisis and ideological disillusionment with democracy, of scapegoating and instability leading to miscalculation, escalation, and war several years from now is lower than the probability of the current peace seemed several years ago.

With unusually low confidence in the identity of future threats, flexibility and adaptability to unforeseen contingencies are unusually important. This is not a truism. To increase flexibility for various contingencies precludes optimizing preparations for any particular contingency.[14] Flexibility and power are traded off against each other. Flexibility aims to maximize freedom of choice, which varies inversely with the number of independent actors who must concur with a decision to act. Power, on the other hand, varies directly with the number of actors deciding to join forces.

What does this imply for mechanisms to produce security? *Unilateral* measures (or what Kenneth Waltz calls "internal balancing") are the most flexible; they can be directed against any country and depend least on the cooperation of others. The price of maximal flexibility is a lower limit on the maximum

14. Perrow, *Normal Accidents*, pp. 86–94.

amount of deployable power. *Alliances* combine reduced flexibility with increased power; any member's policy choices are more circumscribed than if it operates independently, but the grouping pools resources for agreed purposes. *Collective security* (if it is to function according to design) is the least flexible because it requires the most extensive cooperation among independent states, according to the most rigid rules, but it offers the greatest potential power (everyone else in the system against any defector).

Alliances should offer the best compromise between unilateralism's weakness and collective action's rigidity. An alliance without a respectable adversary to give it life, however, is bound for dessication. NATO will endure, because popular organizations can survive for a long time from inertia. The longer peace lasts, however, the more NATO will become a shell—not quite hollow, and replete with parades, committee meetings, and rhetorical affirmations—but bereft of serious strategic activity. Shells are far from useless—they can keep the base from which to coordinate remobilization in a shorter time than if it had to be done from scratch—but they do not provide the animating originality that revolutionary political changes seem to mandate. So collective security generates interest more by default than by its own merits: unilateralism seems ineffective or illegitimate, and alliance without an adversary seems anachronistic and empty.

Collective Security as a Norm

If we cannot test the mechanism before putting it into use, as we might test a nuclear power plant safety system, a heavier burden necessarily falls on deduction, and on comparison with cases where security systems have indeed been tested, to validate the logic in the design. Therefore it is not pedantic to take current discussions of collective security to task for imprecision or ambivalence in defining the concept and prescribing functions.

Those who identified the concept with the regional anti-communist alliance organizations spawned in the first decade of the Cold War were stretching the idea to cover arrangements really more consistent with traditional strategy. Dignifying regional coalitions like NATO by calling them collective security organs helped to brand communist states as outlaws and confirm the moralism in American policy, but the fact remained that they were alliances playing the power-balancing game. Many current proponents of collective security, in contrast, trim the concept to cover less than either the Wilsonian or Cold War variants, by allowing big exemptions from the obli-

gation to discipline countries who resort to force. These variants evade what distinguished collective security from either traditional alliances or military isolation. If a collective institution is really to function as a security system rather than a slogan, the elements that are conceptually unique rather than those that are shared with other constructs should set the standard for assessing the idea. The principles of automaticity and universality are what most differentiate collective security from balance of power.

Many who now claim to endorse collective security demur on the ironclad obligation to join in countering any and all aggression. This vitiates the concept. Unless collective security requires states to act on the basis of the legal principle rather than their specific interests in the case at issue, and unless it forbids neutrality in the face of aggression, the concept adds nothing to traditional conventions of collective defense based on alliances and balance of power. Collective security, wrote Arnold Wolfers, "presumably would add nothing to the protection that victims of aggression would have enjoyed under the old system unless such victims could now expect more military assistance than they would have received otherwise." To add to the strength of defense and deterrence, nations must be willing to fight in situations where,

> if they had not been devoted to the principle of collective security, they would have remained neutral or fought on the side of the aggressor. Instead of being allowed to reserve their military strength for the exclusive task of balancing the power of countries considered a threat to themselves or their allies, nations committed to a policy of collective security must divert their strength to struggle in remote places or, worse still, take action against friends and allies.[15]

Nevertheless, in the generations after Wilson many felt the need to endorse collective security while defining it in ways that overlapped significantly with traditional arrangements. They did so because they recognized that the weakness of the League of Nations and the UN had embarrassed the pure concept as naive, yet they still resisted the argument that balance of power politics cannot be transcended.

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15. In the 1935 crisis over Ethiopia, "when faced with the choice of losing the support of Italy or else defaulting on collective security, France chose the latter course." Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, pp. 167–169, 187.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH COLLECTIVE SECURITY?

Before confronting attempts to salvage the principle by softening it, we should note the reasons that so many have rejected it altogether. The main criticism has been that collective security does not work because states fail to honor commitments to automatic action. In the background of the many reasons that they renege is the problem that the animating motive for *constructing* a collective security system ("No More War") is in tension with the imperative required to make the system function when challenged ("No More Aggression"). The former reflects abhorrence of war, but the latter requires going to war where immediate self-interest might not. This reduces the odds that parties to the system will feel the same way about the principle when it comes to cases.

A second objection is that the collective security principle's legalism is too rigidly conservative, since it requires honoring the *status quo ante* irrespective of its merits.[16] Elihu Root complained about Article 10 of the League Covenant:

> If perpetual, it would be an attempt to preserve for all time unchanged the distribution of power and territory made in accordance with the views and exigencies of the Allies in this present juncture of affairs. . . . It would not only be futile; it would be mischievous. Change and growth are the law of life, and no generation can impose its will in regard to the growth of nations and the distribution of power, upon succeeding generations.[17]

This is especially problematic because third parties often do not agree about which side in a war is the aggressor. The closest thing to a criterion that is both general and neutral would be "whoever strikes first across a national border," but this would never be universally accepted. For example, it would have required members of a collective security system to act against the British and Russians in World War II for occupying Iran, against Israel for preempting in June 1967, and against the United States in the 1980s for invading Grenada and Panama. Once we admit that justifications may exist for initial resorts to force, any standard for "aggression" becomes too slippery

16. John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 85, 90–91.
17. Quoted in Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), p. 136. "The dilemma of collective security has been that its major proponents have been driven to oppose social change in the name of the sanctity of treaties." Thompson, "Collective Security Reexamined," p. 770.

to serve consistently. "The problem is not, as the Wilsonians imagined, one of suppressing an infrequent case of diabolism. . . . To determine the aggressor is really to decide which is a bad nation. And a general law can never do this."[18]

Insensitivity to this ambiguity arose in part because, from the establishment of the League of Nations through the war in Korea, "aggressors" were ideologically repugnant states; for democracies "it was natural . . . to assume that committing themselves to deter or punish 'any aggressor anywhere' meant in fact committing themselves to oppose nondemocratic aggressors who were their national enemies anyway." Not until the Suez expedition of 1956 did assigning guilt become awkward.[19]

A third standard objection is that, in practice, organizing according to the principle of collective responsibility undermines preparations to balance the power of troublesome states. Potent alliances cannot be developed with a snap of the finger when innocent states suddenly lose faith in the collective guarantee. "No arrangement would be more likely to create conditions in which one nation can dominate," wrote Kissinger of the Wilsonian dream. "For if everybody is allied with everybody, nobody has a special relationship with anybody. It is the ideal situation for the most ruthless seeking to isolate potential victims."[20]

Fourth, the responsibility to counter every aggressor can endanger a threatened coalition, as when members of the League considered the obligation of resisting the Soviet attack on Finland after Britain and France were already at war with Germany.[21] The counterproductive effect of collective security came closer to actuality earlier, in the case of efforts to punish Italy for its aggression against Ethiopia. Where proponents of the norm see those efforts as feeble, conservative realists charge that they helped push Italy into the Axis alliance. This argument also cuts against current proponents of "limited" collective security as an alternative to the unrealistic demands of the ideal

18. Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," pp. 255, 258.
19. Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, pp. 185–186.
20. Henry A. Kissinger, "Germany, Neutrality and the 'Security System' Trap," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1990, p. D7.
21. "We still read that the path to Nazi aggression was made possible by the failure of the League to coerce Japan in 1931 and Italy in 1935. We have the absurdity, to which collective security is always being reduced, of saying that war in 1931 would have prevented war in 1941. It is implied that had the western states been fighting Japan in Asia they could have fought Germany better in Europe. The verdict of careful history might be that the ill-conceived effort to apply 'sanctions' against Italy in 1935 weakened, not strengthened, the front against Germany." Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," p. 254.

type. The problem in the 1930s was precisely the limitation of the concept, a compromise response; either of the extremes would have been preferable. Had *pure* collective security been applied, the fascist powers could have been crushed early; or had pure balance-of-power strategy been applied, Italy might have been kept in the allied camp by ignoring its depredations in Africa. Falling between the stools, however, truncated collective security and left France and Britain with the worst of both worlds.

A fifth, more general criticism is the structural realist argument that collective security requires centralization which conflicts with independence:

> States cannot entrust managerial powers to a central agency unless that agency is able to protect its client states. The more powerful the clients and the more the power of each of them appears as a threat to the others, the greater the power lodged in the center must be. The greater the power of the center, the stronger the incentive for states to engage in a struggle to control it.
>
> States, like people, are insecure in proportion to the extent of their freedom. If freedom is wanted, insecurity must be accepted. Organizations that establish relations of authority and control may increase security as they decrease freedom. If might does not make right, whether among people or states, then some institution or agency has intervened to lift them out of nature's realm.[22]

The main reason that liberals lost interest in collective security in earlier generations was that it did not work, and the challenge to it had to be met with traditional means. The League Covenant and Kellogg-Briand Pact neither deterred nor defeated fascist aggressions in the 1930s, because the volitional elements of the system faltered; when principle came to practice, statesmen chose not to honor the commitment of the Covenant to united action; they chose not to flip the switches on the collective security machine.

Conservative realists, however, do not just fear that the principle would not work; to them it can be awful if it *does* work. Their criticism is that if abstract commitments are honored, the system inevitably turns small conflicts into big ones, by requiring states to get involved when it is not in their interest to do so. This was the main reason that realists like Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan fell out with liberal hawks over the Vietnam War. The Cold War redefinition of collective security as the global coalition against communist aggression, in rhetoric from Dean Acheson to Dean Rusk, fed

22. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 112.

the domino theory: South Vietnam was important not in itself, but as a matter of principle. Fighting in Vietnam meant avoiding the mistakes of the 1930s in not fighting in Manchuria or Ethiopia. Morgenthau posed the counterproductive effect of the principle:

> It is the supreme paradox of collective security that any attempt to make it work with less than ideal perfection will have the opposite effect from what it is supposed to achieve. . . . If an appreciable number of nations are opposed to the status quo. . . . the distribution of power will take on the aspects of a balance of power. . . . The attempt to put collective security into effect under such conditions . . . will not preserve peace, but will make war inevitable. . . . It will also make localized wars impossible and thus make war universal. For under the regime of collective security as it actually works under contemporary conditions, if A attacks B, then C, D, E, and F might honor their collective obligations and come to the aid of B, while G and H might try to stand aside and I, J, and K might support A's aggression. . . . By the very logic of its assumptions, the diplomacy of collective security must aim at transforming all local conflicts into world conflicts . . . since peace is supposed to be indivisible. . . . Thus a device intent on making war impossible ends by making war universal.[23]

Realist arguments against a collective security system for Europe rest on both fears—that it would not work when needed, or that it would work when it should not. If commitments falter in a crunch, defense against a rogue power will be weaker than if the regular NATO alliance had remained the guarantor of security. If it does work, however, it precludes denying protection to Eastern European countries against each other or a great power. This makes a crisis in that cauldron of instabilities more likely to erupt than to stew in its own juices. Concern with this implication of the classic scheme of collective security for involvement in the Balkans, embodied in Article 10 of the League Covenant (to "preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity of all members"), was a specific reason for U.S. domestic opposition to joining that organization over seventy years ago.[24]

WHY DOES COLLECTIVE SECURITY KEEP COMING BACK?

The Wilsonian ideal of collective security was buffeted by history from all sides in the 1930s, and again after the anti-fascist alliance split. Redefinitions

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23. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* fifth ed. (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. 411–412. See also Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," pp. 258–259.
24. Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp. 102–103.

in the first half of the Cold War were also driven from favor—for hawks, by disappointment with the development of the UN after Korea, and for doves, by disillusionment with the crusade in Vietnam. The term's renewed popularity does not come from a change of mind about the earlier disillusionments, but from the apparent inadequacy of alternative constructs for adjusting to the outbreak of peace, and because some now define the concept in narrow ways that avoid troublesome implications. At the same time, there is no agreement on whether the most troublesome commitment would be to counter aggression by a great power or to pacify wars between Eastern European states over borders and ethnic minorities.

Many proponents of a collective security system for post–Cold War Europe are ambivalent or opposed outright to requiring intervention in a new generation of Balkan wars. Richard Ullman proclaims that "Europe's peace has become a divisible peace," yet endorses a European Security Organization (ESO) that would include "a generalized commitment to collective security. Each member state would commit itself . . . to come to the aid of any other if it is the victim of an armed attack." The obligation, however, would not extend to little victims. Eastern Europe's fate is to be excluded as "a vast buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Germany." If cross-border violence erupts over national minorities in Kosovo or Transylvania, "the major powers would be unlikely to get involved to an extent greater than through diplomacy and perhaps economic pressure." Besides "walling off" local conflicts, the benefit of the buffer zone that Ullman anticipates is to facilitate great power confidence in a shift toward defensively-oriented military doctrines.[25] Similarly, Charles Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan prescribe collective security, yet at the same time make a gargantuan concession to traditional balance of power by endorsing tacit recognition of "areas of special interest" such as a Russian *droit du regard* in Eastern Europe.[26] These notions recognize the defects in the Wilsonian ideal type, and they may reassure the great powers about their security, but they de-collectivize collective security.

Uncertainty about whether the system would cover Eastern Europe is crucial. There are two essential trends in Europe today: in the West, economic and political integration, consensus on borders, and congruence between nations and states; in the East, the reverse—disintegration and lack of con-

25. Ullman, *Securing Europe*, pp. 28, 29, 68, 73–74, 78, 147.
26. Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," pp. 156–157.

sensus or congruence. Will the stability of the West be protected by holding the mess in the East at arm's length? Ullman believes the new collective system would handle misbehavior by one of the great powers, but not small ones,[27] presumably because the stakes are higher. By the same token, however, the costs and risks (such as involvement of nuclear weapons) would be higher too, so the balance of costs and benefits does not obviously make pacification of small wars in Eastern Europe a less attractive objective.

It should hardly be as daunting for the system to settle a fight between Hungary and Rumania or between Ukraine and Poland as to confront one between Russia or Germany and the rest of the continent. At the same time, apparent sideshows in Eastern Europe may offer occasions for abrasions and misperceptions among the great powers if they disagree about intervention. One nightmare would be a Russian attack on Ukraine (far less fanciful than a Soviet attack on NATO ever was; Russian vice president Rutskoi has already broached the issue of recovering the Crimea for Russia).[28] Under true collective security, members of the system would have to aid Ukraine—doing what NATO would not do for Hungary in 1956—thus evoking the danger of escalation and nuclear war. Under realist norms, the West should leave Ukraine to its fate—tragic for the Ukrainians, but safer for everyone else. If we prefer the latter course, why try to dress it up by associating it with collective security?

If one is genuinely interested in collective security as something different from traditional spheres of influence and alignments based on power and national interest, it is hard to write off responsibility for dealing with wars involving *either* great or small states; but if one is primarily interested in avoiding escalation of limited wars into large ones, it is hard to accept advance commitment to engage either sort of challenge before knowing exactly what it is. Since the collective security concept cannot be copyrighted, promoters have the right to amend it to accommodate standard criticisms. Confronted with questions about how the system would handle particular worrisome scenarios, however, some of the revisionists argue not just that the system should be exempted from responsibility for that type of conflict, but that such problems will not arise.

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27. Ullman, *Securing Europe*, p. 68.
28. Celestine Bohlen, "Russian Vice President Wants to Redraw Borders," *New York Times*, January 31, 1992, p. A9.

Conceptual Confusion and System Dysfunction

If revisions of the collective security idea are used to cover arrangements that fit better under other basic concepts like traditional alliance formation, or are used to dignify an arrangement other than a functioning security system, they make it less likely that effects of the system can be predicted from its design. Since collective security is an emergency safety system, and cannot be tested in peacetime the way a real machine can, dysfunctions due to confusions in design may not be evident until the time when the system is most needed.

CONFUSION OF CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Since the collapse of communism it has not always been clear whether the invocation of collective security is meant to enforce peace or to celebrate it. Less emphasis is usually placed on how the system would restore peace in the face of war than on why war (or at least war worthy of concern) will not arise. Ullman writes:

> If one were to rely on the historical record of generalized commitments to collective security, one could not be hopeful. . . . But it is arguable that the conditions now emerging in Europe make the past a poor predictor. . . . No major state has revisionist ambitions that its leaders think they could satisfy by sending troops across borders. . . . A genuine congruence of interests and goals sharply distinguishes the present from previous eras. . . . *it is unlikely that the great powers will soon find their commitments to collective security put to the test of a large, searing, and escalating crisis.*[29]

Ullman does recognize that things could go bad, and urges taking advantage of the current window of opportunity to get an ESO going, so that the regime could buttress stability in fouler weather. Why collective security should work any better in the face of the many logical and historical criticisms noted earlier, however, remains unclear, apart from the idea that it can work because it will not have to (since there will be no rampaging rogue states), or because not all aggressions will have to be countered (so statesmen and strategists can pick and choose, just as they have traditionally). Such hopes may also deflect reservations about automatic commitment to combat unidentified future aggressors, but they imply that *peace is the premise of the*

29. Ullman, *Securing Europe*, p. 66 (emphasis added).

system rather than the product, that peace will cause peace rather than that collective security will cause peace. If we fasten on the import of the current calm, we muddle the difference between the current need for a security organization (which we can see is low) and the future efficacy of such an organization (which we should want to be high).[30]

One can argue that even if peace may be the cause rather than the consequence at the beginning, it can become the consequence as a regime, once established, promotes cooperation and takes on a life of its own. Speaking of the Concert of Europe, Robert Jervis notes that the expectation that it "could continue to function helped maintain it through the operation of familiar self-fulfilling dynamics. . . . There were no 'runs on the bank'." Rules, reciprocity, and institutionalization reinforced opposition to attempts to change the status quo. Recently, the Kupchans argue, the norm of reciprocity is growing again, as reflected in mutual concessions such as Soviet and Western troop withdrawals from Central Europe.[31] These examples are weak reeds.

First, while the nineteenth-century Concert "influenced the behavior of states in ways that made its continuation possible even after the initial conditions had become attenuated," when the conditions eroded, the regime's efficacy did too. By 1823, a mere eight years after the Napoleonic Wars, the Concert was fraying.[32] The Concert "worked" well only as long as the great powers' disagreements were minor; when the consensus cracked over the Crimea in 1854, and again later in the century, so did the Concert.

As to the second argument, the idea that growing reciprocity characterized East-West relations in recent years misreads the end of the Cold War. The peace settlement was no compromise; it was a series of outright victories for the West. The Soviet Union surrendered in arms control negotiations, ac-

30. An analogous issue for nuclear power safety is suggested by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's inability in the early 1980s to think of a way to deal with the potential problem of genetic damage from a plant accident. "If the risks of an accident are kept low enough, they said, there will be no problem with ignoring inter-generational effects. This conclusion answers the question about consequences of accidents by saying they will be trivial because there will be so few accidents." Perrow, *Normal Accidents*, p. 69, citing U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), "Safety Goals for Nuclear Power Plants: A Discussion Paper," *NUREG* 0880 (Washington, D.C.: NRC, February 1982), p. 15.

31. Robert Jervis, "Security Regimes," in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 181–182; Richard N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 56; Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," p. 130.

32. Jervis, "Security Regimes," p. 184.

cepting NATO's terms which required grossly asymmetrical reductions in both the treaties on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). Moscow gave up political control of Eastern Europe without a fight in 1989, getting nothing in return. Within a year the Warsaw Pact was defunct while NATO lived on. The West did not reciprocate Soviet concessions, it just pocketed them. There was more reciprocity during the Cold War when both sides were bargaining with each other (as in SALT I and II or the Helsinki accords) than there was in the ending, as the Russians rolled over belly-up.

Perhaps regimes can bootstrap themselves from consequences to causes, but in the realm of security systems we still lack robust and reassuring models. As to whether regimes can promote peace independent of prior peaceful conditions, why are the failures of the League of Nations or the United Nations to do so not indicative? Indeed, few who think collective security can now work in a Europe of thirty-plus nations are ready to endorse it as viable for the world as a whole. Why not? If an ESO can guard peace, why not the UN? Presumably because the rest of the world has not progressed beyond violent contests and is still "mired in history."[33] When exceptions to the applicability of collective security are pointed out, few reasons are offered for continuing to believe in the idea that do not come back to citations of peace, satisfaction with the status quo, and consensus on legitimate behavior as preconditions for their own enforcement. If Europe remains at peace, it is likely to be not because a collective security system causes it, but because the nations and states of Europe are satisfied.

Few dare propose a pure collective security system, but some argue that realistically limited versions are at least more effective than traditional "balancing under anarchy."[34] This misunderstands the choice. Collective security commitments do not obviate international anarchy any more than an alliance does; only political federation would. And if the salvage job for the concept is completed by dispensing with the unrealistic requirements of universality and automaticity, what then is really left that is not consistent with traditional "balancing under anarchy" to which collective security is ostensibly opposed?

Stripping away the rhetoric of collective security, the actual results that seem to be envisioned by the more realistic proposals that invoke the term are: (1) marginal peacekeeping functions comparable to what the UN has

33. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989), p. 15.
34. Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," p. 116.

attempted in the Congo, Cyprus, Sinai and Gaza (until Nasser evicted the UN force just before the 1967 war), and Lebanon; (2) a collective security cachet on what really amounts to policing by a single dominant power, comparable to the UN actions in Korea and Kuwait where many nations sent token forces but the preponderance of power was imposed by the United States; (3) a condominial system of great power tutelage modeled on the nineteenth-century Concert; or (4) a *de jure* overlay of collective security norms on a *de facto*, unorganized security system, comparable to the Rio Pact "system" in South America.

The limitations of the first of these are well recognized. Cases of UN peacekeeping have generally been modest monitoring and interposition operations,[35] not forthright defeat of aggression as supposed in the basic model of collective security (in large part because there was no international consensus on which sides were the aggressors). The UN missions intervened impartially to separate contending forces under truces which the contenders accepted. Peacekeeping is not peacemaking. Even the peacekeeping was dubious: when the contenders fell out violently again (as in the June 1967 war, the Greek Cypriot coup and Turkish invasion in 1974, or the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982), the UN troops were brushed aside by the combatants. After Korea, UN forces "kept" peace only where and when local contenders did not try to break it.

U.N.-mandated action in the Korean War and against Iraq in 1991 come the closest to real collective security, and the symbolic value of the large number of nations sending combat units was indeed quite significant. In neither case, however, was the military participation of countries other than the United States vital to the outcome. In the recent war, for example, it is implausible that the anti-Iraq coalition forces could have liberated Kuwait without the Americans, or that the Americans could have failed to do so without the assistance of the other forces (although it would have needed the bases in Saudi Arabia). The principle of collective security, however, was indeed vital in motivating the American decision to attack Iraq.[36]

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35. See *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, October 1985).

36. Once Saudi oil was guarded by the Desert Shield deployment, there was no crucial material interest requiring the United States to spend blood and treasure for tiny Kuwait. Nor was enthusiasm for democracy an explanation. After booting Iraq out, Bush handed Kuwait back to the Sabah family oligarchy that had suspended the country's reasonably democratic constitution (and he then stood aside as Saddam Hussein slaughtered the Shi'ites and Kurds who rose

The third and fourth variants suggested above deserve more scrutiny. The relevance of the Concert model has been overestimated, and that of the unorganized system has been underestimated.

THE OLD CONCERT AND THE NEW EUROPE

If we had to find a reasonable hybrid version of collective security, the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe would be it. As a modification, the Concert does not go so far as to become identical with eighteenth- or late nineteenth-century balance of power models. The Concert departs from important aspects of the ideal definition, however, and it also rests on archaic ideological premises. These problems may not disable it as a model for twenty-first century collective security, but they do weaken it.

One discrepancy between ideal collective security and the Concert is that the former sanctifies the security of all nations while the latter subordinates the sovereignty of the weak to the interests of the strong. Under the Concert the great powers colluded to keep peace by keeping each other satisfied; the rights of a Poland were not in the same class as those of an Austria, Prussia, or Russia. The security nurtured by the Concert was selectively collective.[37] To be accurate rather than confusing, we should call it *condominial* rather than collective. Also, maintaining a balance of power (by cooperation rather than competition) remained an important object of the nineteenth-century Concert regime.

The moral glue of much of the Concert (at least of the Holy Alliance in the East) was monarchical conservatism and opposition to liberalism and nationalism. Yet liberalism and nationalism are precisely what most characterize the recent revolution in Europe. This weakens the proposition that the time for another Concert is ripe because the underlying conditions "are once again present," and because burgeoning democracy is conducive to it.[38] Only if the

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against Baghdad). Opposition to aggression as a matter of principle is the primary explanation of the U.S. decision for war.

37. See Richard B. Elrod, "The Concert of Europe," *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (January 1976), pp. 163–165. Consider that the United Nations in 1945 resembled a Concert. The role of the Security Council apart from the General Assembly accorded special rights to the great powers, and Poland's pre-war borders were changed to suit the Soviet Union.

38. Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," pp. 116, 149. On achievments of the regime, see Paul W. Schroeder, "The 19th-Century International System," *World Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (October 1986). It is true that in the West the Concert did accommodate the new forces, as in the creation of Belgium. British and French ideological disagreements with the eastern powers, however, reduced the Concert's unity. See F.H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), chaps. 9–10.

fact of ideological consensus *per se* were all that mattered, irrespective of its content, would this be convincing.

The liberal consensus in today's world, however, has different implications for the rights of great powers. Outside of academic hothouses, liberals are unlikely to rejoice in the pacifying effects of transcontinental democracy in one breath and endorse a two-class system of policymaking and security rights in the next. They cannot easily promote collective security for the big boys on the block, and every-man-for-himself for benighted weak states in Eastern Europe. The point was clear in the statement by Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier that, "the core of any collective system of European security must be a treaty committing every party to provide assistance, including military assistance, in the event of an attack against any participant."[39]

Can we imagine the western powers giving the back of their hand to the new heroes of the liberated zones? Maybe in whispered back alley conclaves, but not in the formal conferences such as defined the Concert system at its height. Even then, as Gregory Flynn and David Scheffer note in dismissing the Concert as a form of collective security, "No one is prepared to redraw the map of Europe for balance-of-power purposes. . . . International law has evolved substantially to protect the integrity of all states."[40] A Concert today would have more trouble juggling two contradictory sets of values: national self-determination, and the sanctity of existing state borders.

Nor can a collective security regime be shorn of ideology, because the essence of the concept is an assumption of legal order and moral obligation independent of immediate national interest. To ignore this is hardly feasible when the flush of enthusiasm for collective security comes mainly from teleological liberalism.[41] The mechanics of the system and the prediction of how it would function cannot easily be separated from the values that are integral to its design.

IS AN ORGANIZED SYSTEM NECESSARY?

Collective security is popular, despite all the logical problems, because it is hard to think of what else should replace the Cold War alliance system. It

39. Quoted in Flynn and Scheffer, "Limited Collective Security," p. 88.
40. Flynn and Scheffer, "Limited Collective Security," p. 81.
41. For example: "There is an inherent logic to the emerging era. . . . The basis of security is being altered by a natural historical progression." Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," p. 66.

seems to go without saying that there must be a grand design and formal regulatory structure. If the structure is not to be designed in terms of bipolar alliances like the Cold War, or multipolar alliances like the classical balance of power, or a fully United Europe, or American dominance, then collective security becomes appealing by process of elimination. Coupled with the celebration of peace, collective security becomes a talisman, a security blanket legitimizing relaxation, rather than a serious action plan for collective war against yet unknown "aggressors." Analysts, however, should bite the bullet and ask what this means about the substance of the security order.

If what we are facing is really a durable condition of natural security in Europe, a post-Hobbesian pacific anarchy, why assume the need for an organized functioning security system of any sort? Why is strategic *laissez faire*, with *ad hoc* adaptation as we go along, unthinkable? What would be wrong if the organization of security on the European continent became like that in South America for the past half-century, where symbolic organs like the Rio Pact continue to exist without substantive import, and states dispense with significant alliance arrangements because there is little concern with the prospect of major international war?[42] Instead of an ESO, why not a UPE (Unorganized Pacified Europe)? If something goes wrong, states could look for allies or other tried and true solutions when the time comes. If this is what ambivalent fans of collective security are implicitly getting at, the two could coexist: an ESO overlay of symbolic commitment in principle to collective security, left sufficiently ambiguous to allow the evolution of traditional initiatives for self-protection in the underlying UPE. In Perrow's terms this would be a "loosely coupled" collective security system, with more potential for adapting to unforeseen circumstances,[43] but its substantive significance would be low; sensible states would not count on it in a pinch.

Unorganized need not mean chaotic and unstable. In physics, equilibrium in thermodynamic systems is called disorganization.[44] Among satisfied states

42. In South America as in Europe, there are exceptions to stability, such as the Beagle Channel dispute which has brought Argentina and Chile close to war (most recently at the end of the 1970s). Unlike Cyprus in 1974, however, such fault-lines have not burst open. Reasons for the impressive long peace in South America since the Chaco War of 1932–35 are not obvious, and present a significant challenge to theories on the causes of war offered by both of the major traditions of international relations theory, realism and liberalism. See the forthcoming Columbia University Ph.D. dissertation by Felix Martín-Gonzalez.

43. Perrow, *Normal Accidents*, pp. 88–97.

44. "Organization or order is lost. . . . When complete equilibrium (disorganization) has been reached it is said that the maximum *entropy* for the system has been achieved." The problem is that entropy is possible only in closed systems, which hardly ever exist. Open systems can have

that recognize each other's satisfaction, the security dilemma is not automatically a problem. Here the symbolic value of a collective security organization might indeed take on a slight substantive function, if the rituals of meetings and consultations reinforced mutual perceptions of innocent aims. As long as genuflection to collective security forms did not impede traditional strategic adaptation to changing circumstances, it would be helpful at best and harmless at worst.

Arms Control Without Alignment

Most enthusiasts for collective security also favor negotiated limitations on armament. Collective security organizations and arms control treaties alike aim to establish legal orders that deter challenges to peace. The rationales behind them, however, are not consistent.

The two forms of regulation deal in different currencies. Collective security is based on commitments of *intent* (that states will act against aggressors). Arms control is based on constraint of *capabilities*. These could be complementary, but there is still a difference between the political logic of one and the military logic of the other. Arms control relies on balance of power, aiming to construct a military balance that in itself dissuades states from thinking that they can use force effectively for attack; moral status in disputes between the parties to arms control is irrelevant to a treaty's impact on the stability of deterrence. Collective security, in contrast, relies on imbalance of power, a preponderance of the law-abiding many against the law-breaking few; moral claims of the states involved are everything.

The impact of arms limitations on military stability depends in principle on beliefs about what would happen if the forces allowed under the agreement were to crash into each other in battle: stability implies that neither side could win by striking first. Thus a stable agreement would be evaluated according to force ratios calculated in terms of dyads. If there is any strategic logic to an arms treaty, it must assume knowledge of who would be on whose side in event of war. It would be nonsensical for A, B, and C to agree to binding constraints of equal armament, forswearing options of unilateral military buildup, if they think that in a pinch two of them are likely to

steady states, but these must be maintained by negative feedback mechanisms. Floyd H. Allport, *Theories of Perception and the Concept of Structure* (New York: Wiley, 1955), pp. 474–475, 484–485 (emphasis in original).

combine against the third. There is nothing stable about a peacetime ratio of 1:1:1 if it translates into a wartime ratio of 2:1. A country expecting that it may have to fight alone will want the option to increase its power unilaterally, and will not logically settle for limits that prohibit that option.

Whereas arms control logically depends on specifying prospective alignment, however, collective security depends explicitly on *not* doing so. It *assumes* that if one breaks the peace the others must join to overwhelm it; that is the whole point of the system. And if collective security rests on the guarantee that members of the system will act together against a renegade, then the individual levels of armament among the states in the system hardly matter as long as no single one develops as much power as the others combined. On the other hand, if the system cannot rely on the universal guarantee, and collective defense has to be substituted for collective security, then the identity of alignments is crucial for judging the stability of peacetime force configurations.

MILITARY CRITERIA FOR LIMITATIONS

Few proposals address in detail what standards or formulas would mesh limits for armament with the logic of a collective security system. Those who embrace the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), or who endorse further reductions along its lines, would base arms control on the old Cold War framework of bipolar alliances that is already gone. The CFE Treaty itself makes no strategic sense (at least for Russia) since the dissolution of the old order. It says nothing about what forces should be allowed to the successor states of the Soviet Union, and aside from that problem the formula for military balance in the treaty is logical only as long as the former members of the Warsaw Pact are assumed to have more strategic affinity with Moscow than with the countries of western Europe.

Another proposal does attempt to supersede the old framework, but with dubious implications. It would establish a supranational "organization, to which all states belong, that regulates the conditions of military deployment for everyone."[45] What would be the benchmarks for regulation? At one point John Steinbruner suggests that "standardized criteria for setting force ceilings *would ensure that no state faced a decisive advantage against any other single state,* and the residual alliances would offer protection against the formation of

45. Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," pp. 108–109.

aggressive coalitions." In the next breath, however, it is proposed that each state be allowed force levels proportional to the length of its borders. By the author's own estimates this showed the old Soviet Union with *more than double* the "offensive potential" of Germany and a far higher margin against any other European state; Turkey with nearly four times as much as its enemy Greece; and Germany with more than twice as much as either Poland or France. All of this contradicts the prior criterion of no decisive advantage between any two states,[46] and shows that the identification of coalitions would remain absolutely essential to assessing the stability of military relationships on the continent.

If the prior criterion were to take precedence, the arms control order should be denominated in terms of force-to-force rather than force-to-space ratios, and should accord absolutely equal forces, battalion for battalion, to all states, irrespective of their size, population, or other asymmetries; Belgium's forces should equal Germany's. The proposal does not do so, because it seeks to endow the new military allotments with a technical character more favorable to defensive operations than to attack, and assumes that this is related to capacity to cover borders with satisfactory force-to-space ratios. To take that criterion seriously, however, contradicts the aim of significant reductions of forces, or for many of the countries in Europe, of any reductions at all.

Ensuring a linear defense means maximizing the density of forces covering the line, to prevent probing attacks from finding a gap or weak point that can be penetrated. Yet the Steinbruner proposal, although denominated in terms of force-to-space ratios, seeks to reduce density rather than maximize it. It aims at an allowance of one brigade per seventy-five kilometers of front,

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46. Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," pp. 74–76 (emphasis added). The estimates also include figures for "defensive potential," but the bar on the graph for the Soviet Union's offensive potential is still longer than the bars for any of the other countries' defensive potentials, and Germany's offensive bar is longer than the defensive ones for any other countries in the compilation except the Soviet Union. (The United States and the United Kingdom do not appear on the chart. Also, the figures for the Soviet Union appear to include only the portions of its border west of the Urals.) A better rationale for the figures is available, ironically, if we substitute assumed coalitions for the notion of "global alliance." This can be read into Steinbruner's mention of "residual alliances," although there is only one alliance of any sort on the continent anyway, since the Warsaw Pact has dissolved and many of its former members would like to join NATO. Allotting to Russia forces that are grossly superior to any other state in the region might bring the actual situation closer to balance if we assume that solitary Russia were to face a coalition of many of the others. Moreover, as Malcolm Chalmers suggests ("Beyond the Alliance System", p. 245), an ESO would limit obligations to Europe, and thus would not guarantee Russia against security problems in Asia or challenges to its southern borders, so Moscow would have another justification for a surplus of capability.

which is a mere one-fifth of the ratio considered adequate (and only a tenth of the optimum) in tactical doctrines of modern armies.[47] This could conceivably be rationalized by compensating for thinner ground forces along the line with unusually large amounts of mobile firepower from air forces, yet the proposal seeks to reduce that dimension of capability as well, and to do so disproportionately (on grounds that airpower is an offensive capability).[48] Low density on the ground, uncompensated by other sources of firepower, opens up much larger possibilities for offensive movement. If total force levels were low enough on both sides, this would prevent penetrations from occupying much of the defender's territory, operations could degenerate into the raiding/counterraiding style of medieval warfare, and strategy would move from denial or conquest toward punishment, but it would all be hardly conducive to linear defense.[49]

Defense-dominance is easier with high force levels and low tech than with low force levels and low tech.[50] If one really wants to base operational

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47. John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 181, 265 n.

48. Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," p. 77. He argues that because "it is generally believed that a standard brigade would have to be concentrated in less than a five-kilometer segment of front . . . in order to overcome well-prepared, competently positioned defenses," overall reduction of force levels would require an attacker to concentrate a larger proportion of its ground units, thus exposing its own defense in other sectors to greater risk of counterattack (p. 75). This, however, appears to lose sight of the relativity of requirements. If the defender's line is much thinner than the standard norm, the concentration an attacker needs to penetrate will be lower as well.

49. See Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 558–560, 652–653, 666–667. At one end of the continuum of force-to-space ratios would be the western front in World War I, where density was so high that sustained penetration proved impossible for most of the war. At the other end would be guerrilla wars, where the ratios are so low that governments cannot cover all points they need to defend, while rebels can concentrate at will to raid those left vulnerable. Force-to-space ratios are certainly not all-determining, especially given big differences in equipment and tactical doctrines between forces. For the most extensive survey of the question, see Stephen D. Biddle, et al., *Defense at Low Force Levels: The Effect of Force to Space Ratios on Conventional Combat Dynamics*, IDA Paper P-2380 (Alexandria, Va.: Institute for Defense Analyses, August 1991).

50. This point must be emphasized because the Steinbruner proposal uses the counter-argument that high-tech defenses and surveillance, coupled with limits on advanced offensive weapons, allow forward defense with low force levels. This is dubious for two reasons. First, it implicitly assumes that defensive forces can move and reconcentrate instantly, in response to instant intelligence detection of concentration by the attacker. No reasons are suggested as to why the strategic initiative, and the prerogative of choosing circumstances of weather and terrain, give the attacker no significant advantage in timing. Second, the proposal is unrealistic about the strategic flexibility of combined arms operations, which blurs simple distinctions between dominantly defensive or offensive characteristics of weapons. For example, in October 1973 the Egyptians used surface-to-air missiles and precision-guided anti-tank munitions (both normally tagged as inherently defensive weapons) to screen the advance of armored forces into the Sinai;

doctrine on linear defense and force-to-space ratios, and simultaneously to reduce the mobile firepower available to defenders for quick movement to threatened sectors, the answer would be to *increase* ground forces (while limiting their mobility), not reduce them. The most effective capability for defense that posed the least capability for attack would be, in effect, heavily armed infantry, lined up shoulder-to-shoulder all along the border, with their legs cut off. To increase forces, however, is hardly a plausible response to the end of the Cold War, no matter what the military logic.

Tactical complexities aside, endorsement of technological and doctrinal "defense dominance" by proponents of collective security[51] is reasonable, but not unambiguously so. Compared with traditional strategic arrangements, which usually develop war plans, deployments, and doctrine in regard to an identified enemy, collective security is likely to *delay* reaction to attack, because the members of the system must react, mobilize, and coordinate their response *ad hoc*. Since preponderant power is not arrayed against an attacker before transgression occurs (if it were, the system would be a regular alliance, not collective security), and strategic initiative can often negate tactical advantage,[52] defeat of aggression will usually have to rely on counterattack to take back lost territory, rather than on direct defense. In that case the tactical advantage of defense passes to the original aggressor, and the counterattack has to rely on its disproportionate strength or offensive ingenuity at the strategic level to succeed. This was indeed the case in the two international actions of the past half-century that came closest to the collective security model: the responses to the North Korean attack in 1950 and to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

POLITICAL CRITERIA FOR LIMITATIONS

The legalism of collective security, which establishes obligations in terms of hypothetical rather than actual enemies, is an apolitical guide to arms control.

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similarly, the Israelis used "offensive" attack aircraft to defend against the advancing Egyptian tanks. Had both sides been limited to the "defensive" elements of force structure only, the Israelis might have held if they had manned the Suez Canal Bar-Lev Line with high force-to-space ratios, but the line was lightly manned.

51. In addition to Steinbruner see Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security and the Future of Europe," p. 136; and Ullman, *Securing Europe*, pp. 73–74.

52. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 363–364, 367; Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1982), p. 15; and Betts, "Conventional Deterrence," *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (January 1985), pp. 163–172.

If no danger of war ever arose, the various potential dyadic power balances affected by treaty limits would not matter strategically, and the arms control agreements' value would depend on how much they facilitated cuts in military expenditure. Nor would limits matter much if a challenge to collective security did arise and all the members of the system honored the obligation to roll back the aggressor. If war were to break out more raggedly, however, with a great power or a set of states challenging the status quo while a number of the others stood aloof from combat, the balances established by apolitical criteria could be disastrous; having been decided without reference to the wartime lineups, it would be only fortuitous if the distribution of capabilities happened to favor the side with defensive objectives.

Worse, formal limitations, especially if they do not produce a balance of power in the relevant dyad, could have more directly dangerous effects. Accords can provide advance warning of aggression, arms controllers claim, facilitating timely countermobilization. As the Kupchans write, "a significant military buildup would *automatically* be interpreted as a sign of aggressive intent, *triggering* a response."[53] If the agreement is violated in order to prepare to commit aggression, automatic reaction would be a good thing; if the violation is motivated by anxiety about military vulnerability, on the other hand, such reaction would be destabilizing, producing the stereotypical escalation of tension that "spiral" theorists worry about. It is quite plausible that anxious states facing an unfavorable balance of forces with emerging enemies could feel compelled to abrogate limitations on their own options imposed by prior apolitically designed arms control formulas. Had legal constraints not existed, their military buildups could seem more innocent or ambiguous, and response could be determined according to the merits of the balance of power rather than the legal order of allowed armament.

This is a particular problem if we have reason to worry about a future change in Russian attitudes toward traditional security. The Soviet Union let the Warsaw Pact crumble not simply because it had no choice; there is no reason to assume that laying down the law with a little violence before November 1989 (as in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and as would have happened in Poland in 1981 had Jaruzelski not imposed martial law) would not have kept Communist governments in power. Instead, Gorbachev adopted a liberal foreign policy, mouthing all the

53. Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," p. 127 (emphasis added).

axioms about cooperation, trust, insanity of the arms race, and obsolescence of traditional concepts of security that we have always heard from doves in the West.[54] If we can unwind the coiled spring of mutual suspicion and tension, Gorbachev believed, we would jointly conquer not just the symptom but the cause of conflict. "New thinking" embraced collective security because the new thinkers, like many liberals in the West, believed security was an artificial problem more than a real one, that there was nothing to fear but fear itself. These were the same new thinkers, however, who believed that the Soviet Union would survive as a state if it reduced its reliance on coercion.

The concessions that happily ended the Cold War were a precipitous loss of security for Russia in the hoary terms of balance of power. The Reds may never come back, but what if the Realists do? What if economic disaster, apparent failure of western liberal models, nasty maneuvers by newly free republics, oppression of Russian minorities in those areas, and upsurge of populist and nationalist bitterness bring the principle of "Looking Out for Number One" back into favor? Will noticing that the old subservient buffer of Eastern Europe is not only gone, but aligned with the West, spur no Russian interest in rearmament? The limits in the CFE agreement, conceived in the context of the two old alliances, preclude parity between Russia and a new western coalition that could include former members of the Warsaw Pact (and even some former Soviet republics). In a meaner world, such military inferiority might seem less tolerable to Moscow than it does now, when it seems irrelevant.

Arms control could make sense in the Cold War because the relevant alignments by which stable force ratios might be estimated seemed clear and durable. By the same token, limitations on individual nations' forces could be pernicious after the Cold War because there is no logical basis by which to determine the allowed ratios before new cleavages emerge and harden. Military balances that appear neutral under one pattern of alignment or lack of it can instantly become destabilizing when countries start lining up in a different pattern. As Charles Fairbanks and Abram Shulsky argue:

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54. "Peace is movement toward globality and universality of civilization. Never before has the idea that peace is indivisible been as true as it is now. . . . at the end of the twentieth century force and arms will have to give way as a major instrument in world politics." In the West, words like this always used to strike hardheaded types as pacifist globaloney, but they were typical Gorbachev rhetoric. "Excerpts From Gorbachev's Speech: 'The Idea That Peace Is Indivisible'," *New York Times*, June 6, 1991, p. A12.

Arms limitation agreements, which by their very nature involve precise ratios and numbers of arms permitted to each side, are far more specific than most treaties. *They thus lack the flexibility that enables most international agreements to bend with change and be infused with a new political content. . . .* When the rigid structure of an arms limitation agreement can no longer contain changed political forces, it will snap apart. The cost may be heavy: after an arms limitation treaty not renewed, as after a divorce, one cannot return to the starting point.[55]

This potential does not matter as long as there is no antagonism that could raise the danger of war, but for the same reason, neither does arms control matter in those circumstances, except to save money. That would be a big exception, and a valuable one if technical stability of military relationships is unimportant. But would arms control necessarily produce lower expenditures than *laissez faire*?

OTHER PERVERSE EFFECTS

In the present atmosphere most governments will rush to cut military budgets unilaterally, and with less attention to the effects on arcane calculations of military stability than in the past. Negotiating on prospective legal regulations, however, necessarily fixes more attention on technical calculations and nuances of disparity. This will especially be a problem if countries seeking arms control *do* worry about how it will affect stability. The goal of arms control might produce ongoing negotiations that reach no conclusion but retard unilateral cuts. The parties "will strain to be sure that all dangers and contingencies are covered," John Mueller writes. "Participants volunteer for such regulation only with extreme caution because once under regulation they are often unable to adjust subtly to unanticipated changes. . . . Arms *reduction* will proceed most expeditiously if each side feels free to reverse any reduction it later comes to regret."[56]

Cold War critics claimed that arms control stimulated military spending (or at least failed to constrain it), as when Kennedy's Limited Test Ban Treaty, Ford's Vladivostok Accord, or Carter's SALT II Treaty coincided with defense budget increases. More indicative for the post–Cold War world should be

55. Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., and Abram N. Shulsky, "From 'Arms Control' to Arms Reductions: The Historical Experience," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Summer 1987), p. 68. (Emphasis added.)
56. Mueller, "A New Concert of Europe," pp. 6, 9.

the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty that fixed capital ship ratios among the great powers, since it was concluded in a period of minimal international tension and was multilateral rather than bipolar in construction. Britain responded to that agreement "with greater activity in naval building than at any time since the armistice."[57] That treaty is also sometimes charged with having stimulated competition in unregulated dimensions of weaponry (for example, the "treaty race" in bigger and better cruisers, replacing the battleship race), and having channelled innovation away from defensive developments (fortifications were prohibited in the western Pacific to secure Japanese agreement to the battleship ratio) and into weaponry of more offensive, destabilizing, "first-strike" capability (aircraft carriers).[58]

Finally, contrary to conventional wisdom, arms control designed in the context of peacetime could endanger crisis management. Collective security proponents usually claim that arms control will reinforce crisis stability because treaty provisions for monitoring and verification will create "transparency" and rules of the road that will reduce chances of accidental escalation in a crisis confrontation.[59] This argument means the most to those who worry that uncontrolled interactions of military forces operating in alert conditions are a more probable cause of war than premeditated resort to force.

Positive reasons for such controls certainly exist.[60] Their relative importance after the Cold War, however, is oversold, while their potential negative consequences are overlooked. Primary concern with crisis interactions as an autonomous cause of war—the notion of "inadvertent" or "accidental" war—is inconsistent with faith in the durability of the current causes of peace. You cannot get hair-trigger alert operations like those in the crisis of October 1962, or mobilization spirals like those in the crisis of July 1914, without a crisis.

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57. Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars* (London: Collins, 1968), p. 332, quoted in Fairbanks and Shulsky, "From 'Arms Control' to Arms Reductions," p. 65.
58. Fairbanks and Shulsky, "From 'Arms Control' to Arms Reductions," pp. 66–67. See also Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
59. Ullman, *Securing Europe*, pp. 141–142; Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," p. 131; Steinbruner, "Revolution in Foreign Policy," p. 75.
60. See Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 99–139; Scott D. Sagan, "Rules of Engagement," *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1991), pp. 78–108; Bruce G. Blair, "Alerting in Crisis and Conventional War," in Ashton B. Carter, John D. Steinbruner, and Charles A. Zraket, eds., *Managing Nuclear Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1987); Bruce G. Blair and John D. Steinbruner, "The Effects of Warning on Strategic Stability," Brookings Occasional Paper (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1991); Kurt Gottfried and Bruce G. Blair, eds., *Crisis Stability and Nuclear War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Yet crisis presupposes conflict. A crisis does not arise through a *deus ex machina*, with no prior clash of interests. A conflict serious enough to produce a military confrontation will mean that the premise of continental contentment has been shattered, in which case *that* problem looms much larger than the technical one of crisis instability due to communication breakdowns.

As others have often noted, it is hard to think of any case of a genuinely accidental war (that is, one due to causes beyond political authorities' control, as distinct from one due to their miscalculation).[61] World War I, the favorite case for those who worry about the problem, does not qualify. Marc Trachtenberg has shown how strategic mythology over the last several decades grossly exaggerated the political "loss of control" in the July 1914 crisis, even if one rejects the Fritz Fischer thesis that German aggression caused the war.[62] To promote arms control measures in order to limit accidental escalation elevates the secondary to the essential. This was reasonable in the Cold War context, when the essential problem endangering security—the ideological and power competition between East and West—was well recognized and addressed steadily through alliances and defense plans, but not now, when the principal problem is to anticipate what basic conflict of interest could arise.

It is also short-sighted to assume that treaty arrangements for verification in peacetime will help defuse crises. Inspection regimes are unlikely to be operating and "transparency" will probably have gone by the boards by the time a crisis erupts. Treaty obligations are usually abrogated before that point

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61. Alexander George defines *inadvertent* war as one "neither side wanted or expected at the outset of the crisis." "Findings and Recommendations," in George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), p. 545. This is expansive enough to include deliberate decisions by political authorities to initiate combat, which are not the same as hypothetical cases where decentralization of authority could produce military operational activities that elude policymakers' control and provoke escalation autonomously. See Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 48, 53, 231–232; or John D. Steinbruner, "An Assessment of Nuclear Crises," in Franklyn Griffiths and John C. Polanyi, eds., *The Dangers of Nuclear War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 39–40. For a study that admits the importance of the danger in principle but shows persuasively the overwhelmingly powerful restraints against it in practice, see Joseph F. Bouchard, *Command in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). Geoffrey Blainey persuasively debunks the notion that accidental wars have occurred, but argues that if miscalculation is included in the definition, virtually all wars could be considered accidental. Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1988), chap. 9, especially pp. 144–145.

62. Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), chap. 2, especially pp. 54–60, 77–80, 84–87, 90–92, 97–98. (A shorter version of this chapter appeared as Marc Trachtenberg, "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 120–150.)

is reached. There are no bolts from the blue; wars do not explode at the instant a conflict of interest develops. Germany junked the arms control provisions of the Versailles Treaty long before 1939, and Japan renounced the 1922 Naval Treaty five years before Pearl Harbor. While abrogation may provide political warning of crisis, it is misguided to count on the monitoring provisions of arms control agreements to provide strategic warning of war or tactical warning of attack.

If inspection regimes or other agreements oriented to crisis management did remain in place during the run-up to crisis, they could just as easily have a counterproductive effect as a dampening one, since the effect of abrogating *during* the crisis could seem much more threatening. It is more likely then than in normal peacetime that an anxious state would rush to revoke restraints on its options for self-defense, or intrusive inspections helpful to its adversary, and that such actions could be read by the adversary as preparations to strike first. "Transparency" can only apply to capabilities, not intentions. If the value of such greater openness depends on the assumption that actions inconsistent with arms control agreements will be presumed evidence of aggressive intent, the regime could harm crisis management as much as help it.

Conclusion

If there is any time when establishing a collective security institution should be feasible, this is it, but collective security will hardly matter unless the present peace goes bad. If there is any time when negotiated arms control should *not* matter, this is it, but agreements achieved now would leave equations of power whose significance could be utterly different, and dangerous, if peace goes bad. Conservative realism, on the other hand, is too fatalistic a guide, since it underestimates the potential grounds for pacific anarchy in Europe. Anarchy, and the competition for power that it encourages, are necessary but not sufficient causes of war. They need a *casus belli* to push conflict over the edge.[63] The "Unorganized Pacified Europe" de-

63. World War I is sometimes cited as caused by pure power rivalry, but without nationalist-imperialist ideologies, territorial disputes, and militarist romanticism it would have been much harder to get the war started. Blainey argues against viewing motives, grievances, or substantive aims as causes on grounds that they are only "varieties of power." Blainey, *The Causes of War*, chap. 10. That all-inclusive definition, however, makes the argument practically tautologous.

scribed above is not markedly less probable than John Mearsheimer's hyper-realist nightmare.[64] Either one, however, is more plausible than a *functioning* collective security system or a politically disembodied arms control regime.

Instituting a collective security organization might be acceptable, nevertheless, for its symbolic value. Despite the negative emphasis in the rest of this article, I am not set against the idea, provided that it is not taken seriously enough in practice to bar parallel security arrangements that should be considered incompatible with it in principle. Similarly, serious and comprehensive arms regulation may never be achieved if leaders lose their sense of urgency and get wrapped up in more important problems, while their bureaucracies get bogged down in technical questions. In any event, arms control constraints that could prove destabilizing in a Europe riven by new alignments would probably be abandoned long before a crisis at the brink of war, so strategists should not fall on their swords to prevent such agreements. But beware of too much insouciance.

In another context Jack Snyder has argued that "neo-liberal institution-building will do great damage if it is attempted, but doesn't work." [65] The same is true of pressures for transforming old security institutions in Europe into a collective security organization, or concluding new arms control agreements, unless we are disingenuous or subtle enough to couple them with other initiatives that work in different directions. If collective security and arms control were important only as symbols, we could accept them as harmless or reject them as diversionary. But symbols can have substantive effects. The effects may be consistent with the symbol if it motivates statesmen to conform with the value that it enshrines; this is what regime theorists hope collective security might do. Or the effects may be antagonistic to the symbol if it obscures reality and prevents properly adaptive action; this is what Realists fear it might do.

All this implies accepting three different but partially overlapping rings of security organization.[66] One ring would be a new European Security Organization, including all the countries in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), but without replacing the second ring, the old

64. John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 5–57.
65. Jack Snyder, "Averting Anarchy in the New Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), p. 40.
66. A similar formulation was first suggested to me in an unpublished paper by Captain Victor Bird, USA.

NATO. This combination is accepted by many current fans of collective security, although some would turn NATO into the sole ESO by admitting Russia, which would be a mistake. The latter aim should be accomplished in the third ring, a discreet concert of the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia, without highly publicized formal meetings like the economic summits (if that model were followed, membership of the concert would have to expand in response to pleas from other big states in the system). We might also want to accept arms control agreements as long as they are modest enough not to confine freedom of adaptation (e.g., alliances according to emergent threats, decisions to refrain from intervention in wars between small states).

The risk in this recommendation is that it will sound either stupid—a mindless endorsement of anything in response to uncertainty about everything—or cynical—a deliberate commitment to institutions whose rationales contradict each other. In either case the idea would prove infeasible. If governments devote themselves symbolically to collective security in a way substantial enough to have any beneficial effects, we cannot count on them to be cynical enough to pursue divergent policies in an equally substantial way. If the happily pacific order of the new post–Cold War Europe goes bad, then the process of traditional adaptation will probably be more hesitant and delayed than otherwise. That might leave us the worst of both worlds: a collective security organization that falters when the chips are down, and a hysterical scramble to establish a better balance of power that goes in such a hurry that it aggravates political tensions.

But what else should we do if not tread water by dabbling in several somewhat inconsistent solutions? While a UPE may be possible, at least for some period of time, it would be reckless to bank on it; while NATO may last, it may wither if nothing new and big and scary replaces the Marxist menace; and while a collective security commitment may capture imaginations, it could leave us in the lurch if we count on it. The problem is, we cannot prescribe a system (if we expect actual statesmen to make it work) based on a principle without reference to cases; we cannot compose a definite new solution until we confront a definite new problem. The current peace is not what makes some novel solution to security suddenly plausible, it is what makes it *harder* to settle on any formula, and what encourages the logically inconsistent policy of overlaying various schemes, regimes, or organizations on each other.

Inconsistency is reasonable if we do not yet know when and against whom we will once again need a functioning security system for Europe. Relying on any single scheme is too risky in the new world where the current threat is uncertainty. Yes, the idea that post–Cold War strategy must define itself against "uncertainty" is becoming a tiresome and suspiciously facile cliché. That is unfortunate, but cannot be helped, because it happens to be true.