## AFF

### Assurance DA---2AC

#### Russian hybrid tactics threatens the unity and credibility of the alliance

Ivana Stradner and Max Frost 20, Jeane Kirkpatrick fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, senior research associate at the American Enterprise Institute, NATO Has a New Weak Link for Russia to Exploit, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/22/north-macedonia-nato-russia/

In 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain made it possible for Adolf Hitler to march into Czechoslovakia despite the overwhelming military superiority of Prague’s Western allies because Chamberlain had decided the issue was “a quarrel in a faraway country, between people of whom we know nothing.” Today, it is similarly difficult to believe that NATO would go to war over its far-flung commitments in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, on March 27, the Western alliance admitted North Macedonia as its newest—and weakest—member. In so doing, it has given Russian President Vladimir Putin a terrific opportunity to expand his influence, further erode NATO’s unity, and test the bloc’s commitment to defend a member of the alliance.

North Macedonia is the definition of a weak link and easy pickings for an adversary. A landlocked country of 2 million inhabitants, it has weak political institutions and only a short history of independence. As of 2018, it spent only 1 percent of its GDP on defense—short of the 2 percent NATO guideline—and had just 8,000 active-duty soldiers. There is simmering communal tension between a Slavic Orthodox majority and a sizable ethnic Albanian, mainly Muslim minority, making it vulnerable to interference. Within NATO, only neighboring Albania has a lower per capita GDP and a higher level of corruption. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index ranks North Macedonia as having Europe’s least developed political culture.Russia has held massive war games that were only thinly disguised simulations of attacks on NATO members such as Poland and the Baltic States.

Moscow has viewed NATO’s expansion in Eastern Europe with suspicion since the 1990s. Yet it wasn’t until the 2000s, after Russia’s military and economy rebounded from the chaos of the post-Soviet era, that Putin declared NATO’s eastward expansion a “direct threat” and openly confronted the alliance. Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008—not coincidentally, the year that NATO declared an interest in Georgia’s eventual accession to the alliance—stopped the bloc’s expansion into former Soviet-controlled areas in its tracks. Putin’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine and subsequent annexation of Crimea, while not a direct assault on a NATO member, further demonstrated Western impotence in the face of Russian aggression. Further north, Russia has held massive war games that military experts say were thinly disguised simulations of attacks on NATO members such as Poland and the Baltic States.

Now that North Macedonia has joined NATO, Putin appears to be relishing his first chance to prove that the alliance is little more than a paper tiger. In 2018, Russia’s ambassador to North Macedonia declared the country a “legitimate target” if tensions between NATO and Russia were to increase. But there was no “if” about it: Even before North Macedonia became a member, Russia had already been working assiduously to ratchet up tensions in the region. Moscow has shipped S-400 anti-aircraft missiles to neighboring Serbia for joint Russian-Serbian military drills, facilitated an attempted coup in Montenegro, and tried to destabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina by stoking sectarian tensions. And in North Macedonia itself, Russia has funded troll factories that, among other things, were used to target the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign with disinformation. Moscow also tried to influence North Macedonia’s September 2018 referendum on NATO membership, is using its embassy and consulates there as bases for intelligence-gathering operations, and has spread propaganda detailing alleged Western plots to break up the country.

That Russia would threaten NATO’s members in Eastern Europe is nothing new, of course. Russia has long attempted to undermine the Baltic countries—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—which joined NATO and the European Union after gaining their independence from the Soviet Union. But today, the Baltic States are well integrated into alliance structures and the European economy and are home to thousands of NATO troops. Whereas the Baltics have become part of NATO’s well-armored front, the Balkans are its soft underbelly.

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 NATO’s posture in North Macedonia and its neighborhood is very limited. The Balkan countries are also poorer, more ethnically divided, and less economically integrated with Europe. Their potential instability and the much lower likelihood of a robust response by the West make North Macedonia and its neighbors ripe and easy targets for Russian meddling.

Taking a page from history’s playbook, Putin rightly assumes that most decision-makers in NATO capitals would consider North Macedonia a “faraway country” of “people of whom we know nothing.” U.S. President Donald Trump, whose relationship with Putin continues to attract attention, confirmed a similar suspicion with regard to neighboring Montenegro when he appeared to question NATO’s commitment to defend the Balkan nation during an interview aired on Fox News. And while some may have taken offense at Trump’s statement, the truth is he speaks for many.

According to a February poll by the Pew Research Center, less than half the populations of France, Spain, Turkey, and Greece hold a favorable view of NATO. Pandering to the alliance’s critics, French President Emmanuel Macron last year declared that NATO had “brain death.” The citizens of only three European countries—Britain, the Netherlands, and Lithuania—say their country should respond with military force if Russia were to attack a NATO member in Eastern Europe.

No surprise then that NATO’s posture toward its newest member remains unclear. Though NATO broadened the definition of its joint defense commitment—Article 5 of the alliance’s charter—to include cyberattacks in 2014, it has failed to clarify just what that means. When asked what level of cyberattack on one of its members would trigger a response, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said only, “We will see.” The 2018 Brussels Declaration reaffirmed NATO’s intent to defend member states from nonconventional attacks—but only meekly asserted that in “cases of hybrid warfare, the Council could decide to invoke Article 5.” These Western weasel words will have been duly noted in the Kremlin.

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The type of meddling Russia has specialized in includes election interference, inflaming ethnic tensions, and provoking violent conflict. These three real possibilities could trigger a NATO response under Article 5. The most pressing issue is securing North Macedonia’s upcoming elections, now postponed until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Polls last showed VMRO-DPMNE, a pro-Russian nationalist party, in a dead heat with the pro-Western Social Democrats. Russian interference in the election process or outcome not only threatens Macedonian sovereignty but, if successful, could result in a government that tilts North Macedonia toward Moscow.

Russia may also seek to pressure and destabilize North Macedonia in other ways, including through Moscow’s regional client, Serbia. Russian propaganda aimed at North Macedonia includes conspiracy theories about the country’s sizable Albanian minority supposedly colluding with NATO and Albania to fold North Macedonia into a “greater Albania” amid great bloodshed. As any student of Balkan history knows, such rhetoric has led to ethnic violence in the region before. Alternatively, Russia may stoke simmering conflicts in Serbia, whose unstable Presevo region directly borders North Macedonia, or the unresolved Kosovo dispute. Either conflict could easily spill into North Macedonia.

NATO’s next steps to secure its new member could include adapting the successful tactics used when Montenegro joined the alliance in 2017. A NATO-sponsored cyberteam provided the Montenegrin government with technical support to learn to identify and counter hybrid warfare. NATO raised awareness of the benefits of NATO membership by working with officials, civil society, local governments, and media organizations. It also worked to improve governance in Montenegro’s defense sector. Similarly, the European Union, which has just opened accession talks with North Macedonia, could move quickly to signal to the world that the Balkan nations are an integral part of Europe.

More broadly, however, NATO needs a mechanism to respond to Russian aggression in the event that the alliance’s members can’t unanimously agree to do so. Article 5 requires unanimity before invoking collective defense, but NATO’s members differ in their attitudes to Russia.

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 One solution would be to form, as a backstop in case it is needed, a coalition of the willing comprising NATO members with credible defense capabilities that are willing to confront Russia and prepare a collective response to any attack.

Despite NATO’s overall military superiority, it has a weak hand in the Balkans, and Russia continues to outmaneuver it there. NATO must quickly signal that it remains steadfast and, having decided to admit it, that North Macedonia is an integral member of the alliance. If NATO fails in its support of new members like North Macedonia, the chances have just risen that it will be met with Russian aggression—hybrid or conventional—that may just mean the end of NATO as a credible alliance.

#### The Chinese hybrid crisis makes the link inevitable

Lindsey W. Ford and James Goldgeier 21, David M. Rubenstein Fellow - Foreign Policy, Center for East Asia Policy Studies, Robert Bosch Senior Visiting Fellow - Foreign Policy, Center on the United States and Europe, 1/25/21, Retooling America’s alliances to manage the China challenge, https://www.brookings.edu/research/retooling-americas-alliances-to-manage-the-china-challenge/#cancel

Edited ableist language

China has now been added to the alliance’s ever-expanding agenda, providing a surprising point of agreement in an otherwise contentious December 2019 NATO summit, at which NATO members committed the alliance for the first time to deal with China’s “growing influence and international policies.” In April 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg charged an independent “Reflection Group” with preparing a report eyeing the future; released in November, the “NATO 2030” document put the challenge in stark terms: “China is… best understood as a full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor.”

Obvious questions remain about the precise role NATO should play vis-à-vis China. There are certainly a host of global security concerns — ranging from China’s presence in Africa and South Asia to its influence in space and cyberspace — where NATO coordination would be valuable. It is unclear, however, what role NATO could, or would, play in an Asian military crisis with Beijing. NATO allies have limited military capabilities they could bring to bear in the Pacific, and few European partners would be eager to be pulled into a conflict in places like Taiwan or the South China Sea. Given that Article V of the 1949 Washington Treaty refers to “an armed attack against one or more [NATO members] in Europe or North America,” a Pacific conflict, even involving U.S. forces, would technically fall outside NATO’s scope. But in a spiralling crisis that would implicate Europe’s strategic and economic interests, could NATO afford to remain on the sidelines? At a minimum, Europe could play a valuable role in the political, economic, or even cyberspace arenas. As European allies seek a bigger role in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. needs to engage them in more frank discussions about these types of scenarios, creating clearer expectations about how different parties might respond before any such conflict appears on the horizon, rather than after one has erupted.

Beyond the question of NATO’s role in Asia, there are also tradeoffs associated with European partners seeking a more prominent role in the Indo-Pacific. Encouraging more regular European military deployments to the Indo-Pacific, while they would be welcomed in Asia, could detract from NATO’s focus on Eastern Europe to deter Russian aggression or in the Middle East to engage in counterterrorism missions. These are areas where Europeans will need to shoulder more of the burden in the coming years as the U.S. continues to rebalance its foreign policy to Asia.

Do the United States and its allies have the right operational capabilities to address a new type of threat?

Whereas NATO has always aspired to multilateral operational effectiveness, America’s Asian alliances lack NATO-like structures to generate closer interoperability, particularly in a multilateral context. Despite the closeness of the U.S.-Japan alliance — a relationship that officials refer to as the “cornerstone” of Asian security, the relationship lacks the integrated command and control structures that NATO enjoys. In fact, the U.S.-South Korea alliance is the only one of America’s Asian treaty alliances that has such a mechanism. Beyond command and control, America’s Indo-Pacific alliances in some cases lack the types of integrated planning mechanisms that NATO has in place, constraining the ability of allies to better align doctrine and force structure with the United States.

These challenges stretch across the operational realm. NATO’s intelligence directorate and fusion center facilitates real-time information sharing among the 30 member states. Indo-Pacific countries have struggled to build similar multilateral information-sharing capabilities even at the unclassified level. Meanwhile, key Indo-Pacific allies such as Japan and South Korea remain outside of arrangements such as the Five Eyes, through which the U.S. shares its most sensitive intelligence with close allies. And while the U.S. and its Indo-Pacific allies engage in frequent bilateral exercises with each other, they are only just beginning to experiment with the types of realistic, multinational training exercises that will be needed to deal with Chinese military aggression.

In addition to enhancing their operational effectiveness, the U.S. and its allies are contending with the question of how to tackle Chinese security threats that are often unconventional and non-kinetic in nature. As Tom Wright has eloquently argued, China is more focused on competing with “all measures short of war” than it is on initiating a major conventional conflict. This reality will force U.S. alliances to adapt to a new set of requirements that stretch far beyond the task of conventional military deterrence for which these relationships were designed. In Asia, the U.S. and its allies are wrestling with how best to address maritime aggression that involves not only the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), but also a vast armed fishing fleet that operates under military control. In the economic realm, they are struggling to devise coordinated responses that will deter, or at least blunt the impact of, China’s use of boycotts and embargos to achieve its security aims. And in outer space and cyberspace, U.S. alliances will have to devise coordinated responses to contend with Chinese offensive capabilities that could ~~blind~~ [block] U.S. satellites or ~~cripple~~ [damage] banking systems and power grids. Addressing these problems will require new types of combined planning, new bureaucratic structures, and a more expansive operational toolkit.

NATO, too, will need to adapt to address the non-kinetic nature of China’s security threats. To serve effectively as a forum for a trans-Atlantic response, NATO needs to more fully consider the impact of China’s investments in Europe on alliance interoperability. Technological lags among European allies over the past three decades have decreased their abilities to work seamlessly with the U.S. in a military operation, and Chinese investments in Europe could exacerbate the problem by putting the security of telecommunications infrastructure at risk.

#### Eliminating unsustainable and unenforceable alliance commitments doesn’t signal unreliability

Brad L. LeVeck and Neil Narang 16, associate professor of political science at the University of California Merced, associate professor in the Department of Political Science and director of the Security Hub at the University of California Santa Barbara 2016, How International Reputation Matters: Revisiting Alliance Violations in Context, https://faculty.ucmerced.edu/bleveck/assets/pdfs/how\_international\_reputation\_matters.pdf

In this context, a particularly good indicator of future alliance behavior may be past behavior. If a state violated its agreements in the past, it seems intuitive that it may be more likely to do so in the future. However, Spence (1973) famously showed that past behavior is not always equally informative and that whether past behavior distinguishes one type from another depends crucially on the behavior’s cost. If, for instance, honoring an alliance becomes so difficult that all states are forced to violate their commitments together, then a violation conveys little information about how reliable one state is relative to another. Beyond this extreme example, the general insight is that alliance violations do more to signal that a state is relatively unreliable when many other states appear to be willing and able to honor the same agreement. Of course, whether other states would honor a particular agreement under similar conditions is often difficult to observe (Narang 2014; Narang and Mehta 2015), as each alliance has elements that are somewhat unique. However, there may be times and regions where system-level shocks cause a large number of countries to simultaneously violate alliance commitments together. This may provide relatively clear evidence to a potential partner that the costs of honoring a previous alliance were so great that even reliable states that would normally honor their commitment were unable to do so. This discussion has important implications for empirically studying how violating an alliance affects a state’s reputation. It is likely that the cost of maintaining an alliance varies significantly by region and time and that one can identify shocks across these dimensions. Figure 1, which plots the percentage of states violating their bilateral security alliance in each region and year based on Leeds et al. (2009), supports this supposition.

#### Collective OCOs solve assurance best

Trey Herr and Jacquelyn Schneider 18, Trey Herr is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. Jacquelyn Schneider is an assistant professor and affiliate faculty at the Center for Cyber Conflict Studies at the U.S. Naval War College, “Sharing is Caring: The United States’ New Cyber Commitment for NATO,” CFR, 10/10/18, https://www.cfr.org/blog/sharing-caring-united-states-new-cyber-commitment-nato

Sharing offensive cyber capabilities raises the question of whether cyber operations can extend effective deterrence to NATO partners. There seems to be little focus on using these operations to deter conventional or nuclear attacks on NATO countries, but this may evolve. The United States seems to want NATO to use cyber operations to deter other cyber operations, particularly those falling under the threshold of armed conflict. Cyber operations have all sorts of problems for deterrence: signaling is difficult, they can be perceived as a cheap threat, and their effects are largely uncertain. By contrast, moving new military forces in Eastern Europe or conducting ground exercises are credible signals of extended deterrence, but are costly and time consuming. Cyber capabilities aren’t free, nor are they necessarily cheap, but the promise to use them can add new credibility to a deterrent threat without the same investment and delay as conventional alternatives. Sharing cyber capabilities may be a cheaper way to signal alliance commitment than other options and might signal a further maturation, and acceptance, of cybersecurity into geopolitics.

#### No spillover

Brad Stapleton 16, Former visiting fellow in defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute and former adjunct researcher at the RAND Corporation, "Trump and NATO—Redefining the US Role,” CATO, 11/11/16 https://www.cato.org/blog/trump-nato-redefining-us-role

Some would argue, however, that although Article V does not legally obligate the United States to deploy military forces in defense of its NATO allies, such a response would be essential to preserve American credibility. In other words, if the United States failed to defend its NATO allies against Russian aggression, all of the United States’ other allies around the globe would begin to doubt whether they could really depend upon the United States. Yet U.S. credibility would only suffer if Washington were to maintain an expectation of U.S. intervention and subsequently failed to fulfill that expectation.

If the incoming Trump administration is serious about reducing its commitment to NATO, its first priority should therefore be to eliminate the expectation that the United States would automatically intervene militarily in defense of its NATO allies. For that expectation is the root of the inequitable distribution of the defense burden within NATO. Why should the European allies invest significantly in defense if they can count on the United States to guarantee their security? Rather than maintaining an implicit commitment to spearhead any defense of NATO territory (particularly in Eastern Europe), the Trump administration could make it clear to the allies that the United States will serve as a balancer of last resort in Europe. In other words, the European allies will bear primary responsibility for the defense of Europe; the United States will only intervene in dire circumstances if they are unable to defend themselves (much like during the two world wars).

### Assurance DA---AT: Baltics

#### Deterrence fails in the inevitable hybrid crisis in the Baltics

Illimar Ploom 18, Estonian National Defence College, and Viljar Veebel Baltic Defence College, Nov. 2018, The Deterrence Credibility of NATO and the Readiness of the Baltic States to Employ the Deterrence Instruments, Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, Vol. 16, Is. 1 p. 195-198

The preceding analysis demonstrates the weaknesses of the Alliance’s deterrence strategy. The overall idea of nuclear capabilities as a supreme guarantee of NATO’s credible deterrence does not help to scale down Russia’s regional ambitions. This is due to both morality arguments as well as practical reasons, such as territorial proximity of Russia and the Baltic counties, difference in opinions and priorities within the Alliance, potential for the escalation of conflict aspects, etc. Russia is justifiably considered to have conventional supremacy in the Baltic region. The conventional balance in the Baltic area is not achievable either for the Baltic countries in total nor with the FPF battalions, and the defense models of the Baltic countries are, by their nature, fully nonaggressive, without any room for pre-emptive initiatives, extra territoriality, or hybrid tools. What is more, as far as the Baltic countries are concerned, some signs of “self-deterrence” are also visible, referring to unsubstantiated, if not somewhat naïve, views of the political and military elite of the Baltic countries, as well as relying on so-called deterrence by imagination. The credibility of deterrence is at risk, depending on different visions of the Alliance’s member states about what should be the values, the focus and the threat perceptions of the organisation, whether Russia should be treated as a potential adversary, or a somewhat vague response of the Alliance to Russia’s political rhetoric. Similarly, the ethnic component – a relatively big Russian-speaking community, particularly in Estonia and Latvia – speaks mostly in favour of Russia in a potential regional conflict. It must be acknowledged that this could, to some extent, also have a deterring effect. Last but not least, as Russia is not suffering from a feeling of stigmatisation and reciprocity, the Alliance lacks tools that would have an entangling or disciplining effect. To answer the question of what should be done in the future to actually deter Russia and to avoid aggression from the Russian side, the essence of the potential conflict should first be discussed. It is argued by this paper that the more precise the aim against whom, what, and when the deterrence is needed, the more cost-efficient the deterrence is. Russia’s past strategy against the Baltic countries can be judged as having been definitely well-thought, covering most of the escape routes for potential “victims”. First, Russia has used the approach based on the Gerasimov doctrine which attempts to find a hybrid conflict model with a very low-intensity. Among other things, that would devalue the Alliance’s credibility and allow an increase in Russia’s negative “bargaining power” in the international arena by occupying part of the opponent’s territory. Since the costs of this type of confrontation are low, Russia’s destabilising attempts will most probably continue, i.e., at least as long as NATO will decide not to “punish” Russia. Second, Russia is simultaneously determined to respond to any regional initiatives of the Alliance with its own respective activities and interventions which have already led to a regional arms race. The reason why something like this has happened is the fact that Russia is strongly prioritizing national and emotional categories, whereas the current overall costs for the Alliance are low enough, giving no reason to worry yet. Also, even if the West contradicts the logic of the sphere of interests, the Baltic states, being situated in such proximity to Russia, are de facto considered as a zone where Russia needs to be allowed to retain high conventional advantage. Thus, any additional conventional defence measure applied on the Eastern flank of NATO could trigger an out-of-proportion arms-race or escalation from Russia. This dynamic is bound to work in Russia’s favour, also in terms of providing ever more justification for its worries and possibly a pre-emptive attack. Based on the past experience of Georgia and Ukraine, as well as Russia’s past strategy against the Baltic countries, one hypothetical scenario why, when, and how would Russia attack the Baltic countries could be constructed. The most likely political aim of the potential aggression against the Baltic countries would be to restore control over the territory of the former Soviet Union, or at least to break off their relations with the Western countries. According to this logic, most of the energy will be invested into delegitimizing of local national political authorities by using the tools of hybrid warfare. Ultimately, this would lead to a situation where, disappointedly, the forces of the Alliance will decide to leave the Baltics. Russia’s aim during such a takeover in the Baltic region would most likely be to maintain as many physical assets and legitimization as possible. This means it will need to avoid aggressive military activities. Also, since the Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Latvia are relatively large, the takeover will have to take place without destroying much of the local infrastructure. However, the initiation of protests of “local women and children” against the “imperialists”, including NATO, is highly likely. This draws on Russia’s previous strategies used in Ukraine in 2014 and in Estonia in 2007. With a “little help” from Russia, this should not be too difficult, considering the public opinion of the local Russian-speaking community, at least in Estonia and Latvia. And, by the same token, the falling out of the Russian-speaking population will be exacerbated by the suspicious attitude towards the latter still prevalent among the Estonian and Latvian speaking communities. Here, the most effective deterrence key would be building a coherent and mutually respectful society. This presumes dealing rationally and systematically with the demographic outcomes of the occupation. Alas, the difficulty is the animosity from the different ethnic sides in these two countries. Returning to the hypothetical scenario, in recent years the Kremlin has tried its best to keep up the ill-feelings among the Baltic people and minorities. Due to the relatively messy political and social situations, the key element of Russia’s strategy is focussed on the Baltic countries not even being able to recognise the beginning of the attack. This means that the latter will omit the opportunity to mobilize, both as far as the Baltic countries or the Alliance is concerned. Should the Baltic countries/Alliance still decide to mobilise themselves, Russia would describe it as an example of the opponent’s aggressive behaviour, as well as a justification to interfere with the aim to protect the “peaceful local people”.

### Assurance DA---Link Turn

#### Lack of cooperative tech relations makes alliance collapse inevitable

Aaron Bazin and, Dominika Kunertova 18, Aaron Bazin, Lieutenant Colonel, Dominika Kunertova, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Center for War Studies in Denmark, An Alliance Divided? Five Factors That Could Fracture NATO, Army University Press, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2018/An-Alliance-Divided-Five-Factors-That-Could-Fracture-NATO/

Technology advances. The participants agreed that technology advances are important for NATO’s continued cohesion. Technology will constitute a significant intervening factor in how NATO nations maintain their cohesion in the future for three reasons. First, ever-evolving communication technology can facilitate the spread of risks coming from outside of the Alliance and exacerbate their negative effect. The examples that resonated the most during focus group sessions are information warfare and targeted propaganda against NATO nations. Internet communications technology creates infinite room for alternative media that distort reality, contribute to the emergence of populist and radical movements, and increase the danger of miscommunication among nations. Second, NATO risks losing the innovation game to the commercial defense industrial sector. In the future, private companies will continue to stay ahead of NATO in designing specifications and setting standards for platforms. This can have a major impact on readiness and interoperability among NATO nations if their innovation efforts (e.g., the U.S. Third Offset Strategy) do not materialize.31 Third, some nations may become reluctant to share their latest technology acquisitions, especially if they put private gains above the collective endeavor. This would pose a challenge “for anyone to share information they own without gaining any profit for themselves.” The political unwillingness may feed distrust, which can result in a deepening interoperability gap between allies on the battlefield, and ultimately, a less cohesive Alliance.

#### Hybrid threats are the most pressing issue to allies---clarifying Article 5 alleviates abandonment fears

Giulio Pugliese 18, PhD, University of Cambridge, Post-doctoral Fellow, the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, Oxford, 2/28/18, "Japan-EU Views on the US and Russia in an Age of Hybrid Threats", IAI Commentaries, Istituto Affari Internazionali, https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/japan-eu-views-us-and-russia-age-hybrid-threats

Hybrid threats and warfare represent one of the most pressing security issues in contemporary world politics. Seldom noticed and appreciated, the unravelling of the international order may slowly come about through repeated hybrid blows to US military credibility and its alliance system. In fact, the unconventional nature of coercion, and the confusion and ambiguity central to hybrid warfare have kindled fears of abandonment by security partners. Because such operations fall short of a direct and conventional “armed attack” by one state against another, the stipulated condition for self-defence and retaliation, allies may fear that in such circumstances security commitments will not be upheld.

Japan, for instance, was uncomfortable with the Obama administration’s weak-kneed response to China’s steady encroachment in the South and East China Seas, which began with China’s seizure of the Scarborough Shoal in 2012. In 2015, Abe eventually secured a redefinition of the guidelines governing the US-Japan security alliance to deter China in so-called “grey zone” scenarios also through intelligence sharing, deeper coordination and bilateral planning.[7] Somewhat similar dynamics and reassurances have been at play among NATO partners following Russia’s encroachment in Ukraine, but fears of abandonment persist.

Concerns of potential entrapments, or slippery slopes towards a full-blown military entanglement due to US security commitments, combined with the very nature of hybrid/grey-zone scenarios, is likely to cloud US decision-making in such instances. This will potentially slow retaliatory measures and circumstantial political factors will have more weight than ever on such decisions. For these reasons, Russian and Chinese activities are currently at the centre of NATO summits and security consultations between Japan and the United States.

### Assurance DA---Resolve Wrong

#### ‘Credibility’ is wrong.

Miranda Priebe 21, Director of the Center for Analysis of U.S. Grand Strategy and Senior Political Scientist at the RAND Corporation, PhD in Political Science from MIT, MPA in International Relations from Princeton University, et al., “Implementing Restraint: Changes in U.S. Regional Security Policies to Operationalize a Realist Grand Strategy of Restraint”, RAND Corporation Research Report, January 2021, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\_reports/RRA739-1.html

Lastly, some argue that if the United States draws down its forces or reduces its commitments in one region, this would make it more difficult to deter adversaries and reassure allies and partners in other regions. Advocates of restraint accept that allies might be rattled. But they argue that U.S. credibility with adversaries is not easily damaged. U.S. adversaries are more likely to consider the U.S. ability to bring capabilities to bear and the issues at stake on a case-by-case basis. As a result, advocates of restraint argue that alliances can be terminated or reshaped with little impact on other extant commitments.76

#### ‘Cred’ theory is nonsense.

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If you have experienced even a few minutes of cable news coverage or handful of newspaper op-eds on American foreign policy, there is a word you will have encountered over and over again: credibility.

The United States, according to this theory, has to follow through on every threat and confront every adversary in order to maintain America's global credibility. If it fails to stand up to challengers in one place, then they will rise up everywhere, and America will see its global standing, and thus its power in the world, crumble.

This argument has dominated Washington especially in the three years since President Barack Obama declined to bomb Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad as punishment for using chemical weapons. Proponents of "credibility" say this matters for more than just Syria.

American allies came to distrust and drift away from US leadership, they argued. And American adversaries grew emboldened — including Russia's Vladimir Putin, whose subsequent invasion of Ukraine was said to be a direct result of weakened American credibility.

"Putin believes Obama does not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up to him in Ukraine. He thinks Obama will talk tough and then look for a way out — just like he did with Assad," wrote Washington Post columnist Marc Thiessen.

"Syria has become the graveyard of U.S. credibility," columnist Michael Gerson wrote in the same paper.

This theory is not exclusive to overheated op-eds. It is pervasive, almost to the point of consensus, in much of Washington's foreign policy community, including among many policy-makers — and has been that way longer than perhaps even proponents realize.

In 1950, as the United States considered whether or not to intervene in the Korean War, a CIA report urged the US to intervene so as to uphold its credibility far away in Europe:

A failure to draw the line would have seriously discredited the whole US policy of containment, gravely handicapping US efforts to maintain alliances and build political influence with the Western European powers and with other nations closely aligned with the US.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson agreed, fearing that European leaders would be in a "near-panic, as they watched to see whether the United States would act." If the US did not invade Korea, Acheson worried, Europe's frail post-war order could be at risk.

And this is not just an American belief. As former National Security Council official Philip Gordon recounted recently, France kept fighting in Algeria, long after the costly war appeared lost, partly out of fear of losing credibility.

"The credibility issue—if you pull out of Algeria, boy, you lose face, right? And so the argument was, stay in and keep a lid on it," Gordon told the Atlantic's Jeffrey Goldberg.

But there is a problem with this theory of credibility: It does not appear to be real. Political scientists have investigated this theory over and over, and have repeatedly disproven it.

Yet the belief in credibility persists, dominating America's foreign policy debate, steering the United States toward military action abroad in pursuit of a strategic asset — the credibility of America's reputation — that turns out not to exist.

How did this idea become so entrenched in Washington, and why does it persist despite being repeatedly debunked? What does it mean to have so many of America's foreign policy discussions turn around an idea that is demonstrably false — and what can this tell us about how and why America intervenes abroad?

The credibility myth

When Americans talk about "credibility" in foreign policy, what they are usually describing is something that political scientists instead call reputational or reputation-based credibility.

In political science, "credibility" usually refers to specific promises or threats, and in this case the research does say that credibility is real. For example, if the US pledges to defend South Korea from a North Korean invasion, then it matters that the US convince both Koreas that this pledge is credible, for example by stationing US troops in South Korea.

"REPUTATIONAL CONCERNS CAN DRIVE STATES INTO WARS OVER TRIVIAL INTERESTS IN PERIPHERAL PLACES"

That is the formal definition of credibility in foreign policy, it's real, and it matters. But when "credibility" is used colloquially, it typically refers to a very different kind of credibility, one based entirely in a country's or leader's reputation from its actions in other disputes or conflicts. (This article uses the colloquial definition of credibility, except where noted otherwise.)

Under this line of thinking, if the US fails to follow through on a threat or stand up to a challenger in one part of the world, then its allies and enemies globally will be more likely to conclude that all American threats are empty, and that America can be pushed around. If the US backed down once, it will back down again.

It's easy to see how people could be attracted to this idea, which puts complicated geo-politics in simple and familiar human terms. It encourages us to think of states as just like people.

But states are not people, and this theory, for all its appealing simplicity, is not correct. There is no evidence that America's allies or enemies change their behavior based on conclusions about America's reputation for credibility, or that such a form of reputation even exists in foreign policy.

"Do leaders assume that other leaders who have been irresolute in the past will be irresolute in the future and that, therefore, their threats are not credible?" the University of Washington's Jonathan Mercer wrote, in introducing his research on this question.

"No; broad and deep evidence dispels that notion," Mercer concluded. "As the record shows, reputations do not matter."

A 1984 Yale University study, for example, examined dozens of cases from 1900 to 1980 to look for signs that, if a country stood down in one confrontation, it would face more challengers elsewhere. The answer was no: "deterrence success is not systematically associated … with the defender's firmness or lack of it in previous crises."

Historians have also looked at specific incidents where the US thought its credibility was on the line and determined that we were simply mistaken.

Acheson's warning that the US had to invade Korea to reassure its European allies, for example, turned out to be wrong: British and French officials in fact worried the Americans were going to pull them into a far-away war.

During the Vietnam War, American officials could see that they were losing, but for years worried that withdrawing would communicate weakness to the Soviet Union, emboldening Moscow to test American commitments elsewhere. Even if Vietnam was lost, American credibility had to be defended.

As historian Ted Hopf has shown, the Americans could not have had it more wrong: Soviet leaders never reached any such conclusion, and in fact were puzzled as to why the US sacrificed so many lives for a war that was clearly lost.

If that's not enough evidence for you, try considering reputational credibility from the opposite point of view, and it starts to look more obviously ridiculous. Dartmouth's Daryl Press once pointed out to my colleague Dylan Matthews that Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev repeatedly threatened to eject the American-led forces occupying West Berlin, but he backed down. The US didn't consider him one iota less "credible" for this, and during the following year's Cuban Missile Crisis took his threats very seriously.

The idea of reputational credibility has also been debunked in the most well-known recent case: the notion that America's failure to bomb Syria in 2013 emboldened Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Proponents of reputational credibility took Putin's 2014 Ukraine invasions as vindication. Surely Putin only invaded because America had damaged its credibility in Syria, they argued. In their view, it showed why it is so crucial for the US to maintain its reputational credibility by never backing down from military interventions.

Julia Ioffe recently investigated this theory for the Atlantic, asking foreign policy officials and experts in Moscow whether there was merit to it. She seemed to reach the same conclusion as have many Russia analysts: that Putin invaded Ukraine for reasons specific to Ukraine. America's supposed reputation loss in Syria appeared to play no role. Some of Ioffe's sources seemed to not even understand the argument of how Syria and Ukraine would connect.

The credibility trap

You will notice something these incidents have in common. In every case, a belief in "credibility" pulls the United States toward fighting a war for the wrong reasons, or toward staying in a war longer than is worthwhile.

This mistaken belief has repeatedly helped to drive American military action abroad, Dartmouth's Jennifer Lind demonstrates in a new article in International Security Studies Forum.

"Indeed, from Korea, to Vietnam, to Bosnia, to Libya, to President Barack Obama’s 'red line’ in Syria, debates about U.S. intervention are thick with admonitions that ‘Our Credibility Is On The Line,'" Lind writes.

"CREDIBILITY HAS MIGRATED FROM FOREIGN POLICY INTO THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF WAR POWERS"

The logic of reputational credibility can only ever lead to the same conclusion: toward the use of American military force abroad, even in cases where there is no clear reason to intervene and where the downsides of intervention would seem to outweigh the upsides. It is a compass that only points in one direction.

In this theory, the use of force is inherently good, regardless of how or where the bombs fall, because it strengthens American leadership globally. And an absence of American military action is almost always bad, because it is said to invite new problems and greater threats.

"Every time analysts and leaders call for war, they warn that inaction will jeopardize America’s credibility," Lind and Press, her husband, have previously written in Foreign Policy.

Alarmingly, despite the mounting evidence against reputation theory, it continues to drive US foreign policy discourse — and has recently even been integrated into the formal legal basis of American foreign policy.

"Credibility has migrated from foreign policy into the constitutional law of war powers," Vanderbilt's Ganesh Sitaraman found in a 2014 Harvard Law Review article:

In a series of opinions, including on Somalia (1992), Haiti (2004), and Libya (2011), the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) has argued that the credibility of the United Nations Security Council is a "national interest" that can justify presidential authority to use military force without prior congressional authorization.

The 2011 case is particularly striking, given that it occurred under President Obama, who has personally denounced reputational credibility as "so easily disposed of that I’m always puzzled by how people make the argument."

Yet reputation theory is so prevalent in American thinking that even a president who specifically opposes that theory — and is himself a constitutional lawyer — has allowed it to be formally integrating into his government's legal case for war.

Are America's allies to blame? Or are we?

If reputational credibility has been so repeatedly debunked, both in specific instances and as a theory, why does it continue to loom so large in America's foreign policy discourse?

Tufts University's Michael Beckley hinted at one possible explanation in a much-discussed article last year in International Security: Could it have something to do with America's uniquely broad network of alliances?

Beckley's article was actually asking a different question — whether those alliances lead the US to war, by allowing allies to "entangle" it in foreign conflict. (Beckley concludes the answer is no; other scholars have disputed his findings.)

But, in reviewing so-called "entanglement theory," Beckley points out that reputational credibility, even if it doesn't exist in the world, is something that definitely exists in the minds of foreign leaders and foreign policy decision-makers.

"The alliance comes to be perceived as an end in itself, transcending the more concrete national security interests for which it was initially conceived," political scientist Jack Levy wrote in a well-known 1981 paper (which Beckley cites). Here's the key quote:

Political decision makers come to believe that support for one's allies, regardless of its consequences, is essential for their national prestige, and that the failure to provide support would ultimately result in their diplomatic isolation in a hostile and threatening world.

So it's not that reputation is a real thing that compels states to act in a certain way, but rather that individual decision-makers are driven by their own mistaken belief in reputation. As a result, Beckley writes, "reputational concerns can drive states into wars over trivial interests in peripheral places."

Some scholars, including Levy, argue that America's allies promote the idea of reputation, as a means to convince the United States to commit more resources to serve their own interests.

Foreign leaders do seem to become awfully preoccupied with American credibility when they want the US to take military action on their behalf. When the US failed to bomb Syria in 2013, for example, Syria's enemies in the region — Arab leaders who are also allied with the US — declared that American credibility was at stake.

"I think I believe in American power more than Obama does," Jordan's King Abdullah II said of Obama's decision to not bomb Syria.

This comes at a time when the US has grown unusually indulgent of its allies, as Jeremy Shapiro and Richard Sokolsky argue in a recent article. This has made American policymakers more likely to heed allies' demands and take their claims at face value.

"THE CREDIBILITY ARGUMENT IS SIMPLY AN EASY (AND HARD TO DISPROVE) WAY FOR ELITES TO SELL THE FOREIGN POLICY THEY'RE MOST INTERESTED IN TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE"

But Dartmouth's Jennifer Lind finds evidence that allies make this argument only opportunistically, and almost always about conflicts in which they are directly involved. They might speak in the language of reputation theory, but their behavior suggests that they do not really believe in it.

Reputation theory, after all, says that America's allies would want the US to intervene as much as possible in other conflicts, when in fact the opposite is usually true.

In fact, so-called reputation is actually driven almost entirely by internal American dynamics. Consider America's belief that it had to intervene in Korea to reassure European allies, who in fact wanted no such thing.

Lind makes this point well by citing America's pledge to defend Taiwan from a possible Chinese invasion. According to reputation theory, Asian leaders who also fear Chinese aggression would want the US to make and uphold this pledge. American policymakers indeed believe this, and it is one reason (albeit far from the only reason) why the US has pledged to fight in such a war.

"Many U.S. leaders and foreign policy elites today argue that, in the event of a war in the Taiwan strait, the United States must defend Taiwan or see its credibility collapse," Lind writes.

In reality, the opposite is true. American allies in Asia, Lind writes, "make it clear that they under no circumstances want war in the Taiwan strait, and fear that the Americans will someday fight one with China."

The Taiwan example is instructive, if alarming: America's foreign policy community believes something that is flatly untrue. And while a Sino-American war over Taiwan is extremely unlikely, it looked substantially less unlikely in the 1990s. It is concerning that American policymakers were committing the US to fight such a war in part because they believed something that was 180-degrees the opposite of reality.

The point is not just that America's mistaken belief in credibility is dangerous, but also that it does not come from allies. It comes from us.

#### No link---alliance cred doesn’t spill over broadly because states view reliability through their stakes and interests in each issue

Iain D. Henry 20, Lecturer at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Spring 2020, “What Allies Want: Reconsidering Loyalty, Reliability, and Alliance Interdependence,” International Security, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 45-83

Third, the reliability idea allows for alliance commitments to be interdependent, but in a broader sense than usually expected. Mercer defines interdependence as “using past behavior to predict or explain future behavior,” and interdependence is often examined in terms of iterative crises: the state backed down in the first crisis, so it is expected to back down in a second crisis.40 Interdependence could also operate on a much quicker schedule, however, in nonconflict situations, and with reference to revelations of interests rather than character. If a state observes something indicating allied unreliability, then it should try to mitigate this risk. A state fearing abandonment could increase its defense budget, seek new allies, peacefully settle old scores, or discuss these fears with the ally. A state fearing entrapment could employ distancing strategies, threaten to withhold support, launch peace initiatives, or even abrogate the alliance. Alternatively, because the state is not judging character, interdependence could be weak: if a state has no real stake in an issue, and its ally’s actions will not affect reliability, then the state may not care how its ally behaves.41

Importantly, this concept of interdependence allows for the ally’s actions to be important now, not just in future crises. Considering how interdependence operates simultaneously across discrete alliance commitments allows for the idea of reliability to be tested within a single crisis. Further, it is more representative of the real world: a state might not need to worry significantly about an adversary’s resolve until the next crisis, but Brett Ashley Leeds finds that when “conditions change, [alliance] violation becomes more likely.”42 Thus, I expect states to be sensitive to variations in their ally’s reliability.

However, because reliability is contingent upon interests—not character judgments—the effects of alliance interdependence might not be as severe as those predicted by other theories. If states do not assess character, then an [End Page 55] ally’s unreliability on one particular issue will not result in the ally being unreliable on all matters. A U.S. backdown and withdrawal in one region may not damage the United States’ reliability in another: it may, instead, improve it. Alternatively, the United States’ unwillingness to support a reckless ally may mean nothing for its determination to defend that same ally against an unprovoked attack.