

ULYSSES'S TRIUMPH: AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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WHETHER OR not realists got the cold war right, they have most certainly got the warm peace wrong. A decade after the Berlin Wall collapsed under the weight of economic ossification, political dissent, and international competition, their dark vision of the future has not come to pass. The United States remains the world's only superpower; unipolarity was not a fleeting moment.¹ America is still actively engaged in world affairs. It has not "come home" to escape distant challenges, nor has it withdrawn and left dangerous multipolar vacuums in its wake.² Most important, despite its continued predominance and political activism, and the first rumblings of international opposition in response to missteps in Kosovo, no coalition has emerged to balance against it.³ Although realists expect to be vindicated in the long term, a

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1. Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (winter 1990/91): 23–33; and Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (spring 1993): 5–51.

2. John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (summer 1990): 5–56; Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (spring 1997): 5–48; and Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (summer 1997): 86–124. Mearsheimer's pessimistic view of multipolarity after the cold war was premised on an American withdrawal from Europe. Since the catalyst did not occur, continued stability in Europe does not constitute a fair test of his predictions. Nonetheless, the failure of the United States to withdraw must be counted against realism.

3. Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (spring 1997): 49–88; Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March/April 1999): esp. 45–46.

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decade is sufficient to assess their claims.⁴ The United States today defies the supposedly immutable laws of *realpolitik*.

The United States has managed this remarkable feat through a strategy of enlightened international leadership that tames American power by embedding it in multilateral coalitions. Forged in the crucible of the Persian Gulf War, this strategy has become the centerpiece of contemporary American foreign policy. In every sustained use of military force since 1989, the United States has pursued essentially the same course. It has helped shape an international consensus on the proper ends and means of foreign policy, and then has bound itself to this consensus by working within a coalition of states ready and able to pull a global “fire alarm” should it step outside agreed limits. America’s unprecedented international power has been “domesticated” by binding it to the will of the international community.

The United States has discovered a new and creative contractual solution to the age-old problem of security cooperation. Ever since President George Washington warned against permanent alliances in his farewell address, the United States has had to readdress two key questions. Should the country pursue its security unilaterally or in cooperation with others? If the latter, how can its interests be best protected against opportunism by untrustworthy partners? After the First World War, the United States opted to retain its historic policy of unilateralism in the debate over the League of Nations. After the Second World War, the United States broke with tradition and created a series of entangling alliances and other, more hierarchic security relationships across its Atlantic and Pacific buffers. Today, after the cold war, the United States has chosen to cooperate with other states through coalitions designed, in part, to garner the benefits of pooling resources and efforts with others, but also to safeguard both friends and foes against its overweening power.

In this article I present a general theory of security relationships and illustrate it in the case of the Persian Gulf War, which, although it is unlikely to be repeated, is perhaps the defining moment of the post-cold war era. I briefly extend the analysis to Somalia and Kosovo. Underlying my explanation is a central metaphor that sees polities as firms producing security. In choosing how to produce, polities may act alone, as in

4. Within one year after the First World War, America’s interwar unilateralism was affirmed in the defeat of the League of Nations. Within two years after the Second World War, the United States took the first steps into the cold war with the Truman Doctrine; within four years, the East-West divide was sealed with the formation of NATO. We have no theoretical reason to believe that the nature of international politics is more opaque today than in these earlier episodes.

unilateralism, or they may pool their resources and efforts with others in pursuit of some joint goal, as in cooperation. If they choose to cooperate, polities may enter into arms-length relationships, such as alliances between two sovereign states, integrate their production in some hierarchy, as in empires, or construct some intermediate relationship between the two, most notably in the Gulf case, protectorates where subordinate states cede control over their foreign policies to a dominant state. In this way, unilateralism is akin to production within a single firm, alliances are analogous to joint production by separate and independent firms, and empires are similar to integration within firms—with the modern, multidivisional corporation being the closest analogy.

The theory shares many key assumptions with realism. Nonetheless, it expects that states will be able to solve problems of cooperation by building effective institutions that bind the hands of the most powerful countries within the system—a conclusion very much at odds with much realist thinking on international politics. The theory explains the choice between unilateralism and cooperation, and among alternative forms of security cooperation, by three primary factors. *Joint production economies* determine the gains from pooling resources and efforts with others. The greater the gains from joint production, the more likely polities are to cooperate. *Opportunism* by one's partner makes security cooperation less attractive. States form hierarchic security relationships precisely to constrain the decision-making capabilities of partners and to reduce the probability that they will defect from cooperation. Finally, *governance costs* are incurred in creating and maintaining all security relationships. Governance costs increase with hierarchy. As the subordinate party gives up ever more valued freedom, the dominant state is able to exercise greater control over its partner. To ensure the weaker party's voluntary submission to such a vulnerable position, the dominant state must bind its hands not to use its increased potential for exploitation. Together, these three variables interact to determine optimal security relationships and, in turn, the relative benefits of unilateralism and cooperation.

In the Persian Gulf War, the United States enjoyed large joint production economies. Cooperation was relatively attractive—indeed, it was a prerequisite for the kind of war desired by American military planners. At the same time, the United States feared costly opportunism, especially by its partners in the Gulf. In response, the United States deployed forces sufficient not only to expel Iraq, should that become necessary, but to dominate and thereby “lead” the coalition. In doing so, it established de facto protectorates over the Gulf states. To safeguard its

partners against its now expanded ability to exploit them, the United States, in turn, committed itself to operating within the limits of the prevailing international consensus, both as it developed in the “inner” coalition of states lined up against Iraq and in the “outer” coalition of states at the United Nations. Building these coalitions, in other words, was a costly signal of its commitment not to act opportunistically toward others—and the costs were real, especially in the constraints imposed upon the United States in the goals and conduct of the war itself.

The Persian Gulf War thus illustrates the forces driving contemporary American foreign policy. The gains from cooperation remain relatively large, at least compared to the costs. Opportunism can be successfully managed at a price the United States is typically willing to pay. These conditions, however, are not fixed. As the cases of Somalia and Kosovo indicate, they vary across regions and change over time. There are also contradictory forces at work that threaten to alter the present equipoise. Unilateralism is now a more viable alternative than at any time since the Second World War. Yet, to eschew cooperation and retreat into unilateralism would disrupt the strategy now used to navigate the perilous shoals of the post-cold war world and perhaps bring us to the world of balancing and war that the realists envision. Unbound, the United States would surely give into the temptations power, and other states would almost as surely rally against it. Present and future policymakers will be judged by how well they manage the contradictions.

THE PROBLEMS OF POWER

THE COLD war competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was like a “black hole,” a collapsed star of sufficient weight that it traps everything—light included—within its gravitational field. For most of the postwar era, the pull of the superpower competition was strongly felt. Regional conflicts that might have escaped the attention of great powers and remained autonomous under other circumstances were seized and inevitably draw into the cold war’s grasp. Each superpower feared that the other might gain some advantage by intervening in a local dispute. To block such gains, each superpower had to be ready to intervene—even preemptively. Regional disputants, in turn, could gain substantial and perhaps decisive assistance by appealing to one or the other superpower. Knowing this, each regional party was compelled to make such an appeal lest its opponent gain at its expense. In this

dangerous courtship, regional parties were driven to request aid and the superpowers were bound to grant it. Regional conflicts quickly escalated into tests of superpower will and capacity, and a single, overarching cleavage was imposed upon international politics.⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war broke this black hole apart, freeing each superpower from the need to anticipate the actions of the other and liberating regional conflicts. This had two primary implications for the United States. First, the single, overarching threat from the Soviet Union dissolved into multiple threats from numerous regional powers. The world did not suddenly become a less threatening place, although stepping back from the brink of nuclear annihilation is a significant change. Rather, regional conflicts regained their autonomy and, perhaps, even expanded as local parties moved to take advantage of the international political flux and the stockpiles of weapons accumulated earlier. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, its challenge to the principle of sovereignty, and its possible control of 40 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, was the first major challenge of this kind. These regional threats provide the primary motivation for the United States to stay engaged in world affairs. Fearful that regional conflicts may diffuse elsewhere in the international system or escalate into unwanted wars, the United States has the incentive and means to stabilize dangerous regions.⁶ This is a different and more indirect role for the United States than deterring Soviet expansionism, but it is no less real.

5. On regional conflicts during and after the cold war, see the essays in David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). On the cold war as an "overlay" on regional conflicts, see Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2d ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), 186–229. This interpretation of the cold war differs in its particulars from Kenneth Waltz's analysis in *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979). Waltz, of course, identified a central contradiction in bipolarity, namely, that no development in the periphery could cause a disruption in the central balance—and therefore the periphery did not matter—and that the competition between the superpowers would be so intense that they would always act to ensure that the other side did not achieve an advantage—and thus that many of the most intense conflicts in the cold war would be played out in the periphery. Where Waltz grounds this contradiction in structure, I emphasize the joint production economies that allowed the superpowers to project force cheaply into the periphery and that made certain locations strategically valuable; the domestic regime choices of states that "locked" them into one side or the other in the cold war and decreased the risk that they would act opportunistically toward their superpower patron; and the relatively low costs to the superpowers of controlling these clients.

6. On the diffusion and escalation of ethnic conflicts, see the essays in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Second, no longer concerned that it would be checked at every possible turn, the United States was freed to intervene in conflicts around the globe according to its inner lights and desires. Today, with a substantially lower danger of superpower escalation, the United States is more able to intervene in international and regional conflicts with the aim of ending the hostilities or, at least, the personal suffering. "Humanitarian" interventions are now possible, as are political interventions designed to promote democracy or halt internal wars. Released from the constant need to balance power internationally, the United States can now act on the basis of its domestic political needs and whims—even when its aspirations are opposed by regional actors. America's "rescue" of Somalia, motivated primarily by a domestic concern over politically induced mass suffering in a foreign land, exemplifies this new form of intervention.

At the same time, this unconstrained foreign policy potentially threatens other states who neither share America's political aspirations nor its comparative advantage in military force. Where Americans see themselves acting in pursuit of universal principles of political liberty and humanitarianism, others see the United States and its military might as a threat to their own political systems and philosophies and regional goals. Where before they could count on the Soviet Union to check the United States, they are left exposed and vulnerable to the capricious and domestically driven whims of American policy. The new U.S. freedom to "do good" in world affairs simultaneously poses the greatest threat to other states around the globe. Diffusing and managing this possible threat to others is the central challenge in contemporary American foreign policy.

Nonetheless, structure is not destiny. Unipolarity grants the United States unprecedented freedom in its choice of foreign policy. The goals it seeks affect how it is perceived by other states. How it chooses to act in foreign affairs matters as well, not least because this influences the goals that can be pursued. A leader must have followers, and by this fact the weaker can check the strong as long as their relationship is mutually beneficial. The question of why states cooperate in security affairs is central to the future of American policy and international relations.

SECURITY COOPERATION IN PERSIAN GULF WAR

INTERNATIONAL security affairs are commonly perceived as the realm of struggle and conflict, not cooperation. This may be true between antagonists. It is certainly not true between polities brought together by

common opposition to the expansionist aims of others. States frequently cooperate, or pool resources and efforts in pursuit of some jointly defined security goal.

When states cooperate, in turn, they must choose some relationship to govern or regulate their interactions.⁷ Security relationships take many forms, varying along a continuum from anarchy to hierarchy. In anarchic relationships, such as alliances, the parties are formally equal. As Kenneth Waltz writes of international relations in general, under anarchy “none is entitled to command; none is required to obey.”⁸ In hierarchic relationships, such as empires, one party is formally subordinate to the other; in such relationships, to reverse Waltz’s aphorism, one party is entitled to command, the other is required to obey. In between these extremes are a variety of intermediate relationships including protectorates, wherein subordinate states remain independent and nominally sovereign but cede de facto or de jure control of their foreign policies to dominant states. International relations is a rich tapestry of varying security relationships, a variety that remains apparent even today if only we look for it. The choice between these alternative forms of security cooperation is determined by three factors, discussed in turn, first in the abstract, and then in the specific case of the Persian Gulf War.

JOINT PRODUCTION ECONOMIES

When cooperation is characterized by joint production economies, the pooling of resources by two polities produces more security than the sum of their individual efforts; the two polities can thereby enjoy more security for the same cost or the prior level of security at less cost to themselves. The greater the gains from joint production, the more likely polities are to cooperate.

Gains from joint production arise in three ways. First, technology influences the costs of projecting force over distance. For instance, the technological innovations that occurred during the Second World War—such as the long range bomber and atomic weapons—substantially

7. The theory summarized here is strictly dyadic; see Lake, *Entangling Relations*, 71–72. We do not have good theories of the “optimal” size of international coalitions. On this point, see Lisa L. Martin, “The Rational State Choice of Multilateralism,” in *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*, ed. John Gerard Ruggie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 91–121; and Miles Kahler, “Multilateralism with Small and Large Numbers,” in *ibid.*, 295–326.

8. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 88.

reduced the costs of projecting force and expanded the defense perimeter of the United States (and Soviet Union).⁹

Second, the production of security for one state often produces benefits for other polities as well, much as American efforts after 1945 to deter possible Soviet expansionism created benefits for both the United States and potential targets in Europe and Asia. By coordinating their efforts—or, in economic parlance, “internalizing” their positive externalities—states may be able to reduce redundant efforts and share costs, lowering joint defense burdens from their unilateral levels. “Burden-sharing” was a key feature in many of America’s security relationships after the Second World War.

Third, pooling resources and efforts opens up the possibility of a division of labor between states. As in other areas of activity, security cooperation can produce mutual rewards through specialization and exchange. The cold war, again, witnessed a limited division of labor between the United States and its European allies, with the former taking responsibility for the nuclear deterrent and naval forces and the latter for land forces and tactical air power.

As the examples here suggest, the increase in joint production economies during and after the Second World War was an important force behind the switch in American policy from unilateralism to cooperation. In the post-cold war world, there are still substantial joint production economies for the United States, although they vary with the specifics of the region and the nature of the threat. American policy in the Persian Gulf War was strongly influenced by the large joint production economies obtainable only through cooperation, including a technological need for land bases in the region, large positive externalities, and a limited division of labor. In the end, the large benefits made cooperation appealing.

Technology. Cooperation in the Persian Gulf War was motivated first and foremost by a technological given.¹⁰ For the United States to deploy sufficient military strength to deter Iraq's continuing aggression or intimidation and to compel it to withdraw from Kuwait required forward land bases in Saudi Arabia or, less attractively, some other Gulf state. As

9. On this and other post-Second World War examples, see Lake, *Entangling Relations*, 152–63.

10. I do not address here the role of technology on the battlefield in the war against Iraq. I am concerned only with how technology shaped the formation of the coalition. On the technology of the war itself, see Stephen Biddle, “Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us about the Future of Conflict,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (fall 1996): 139–79; and the follow-up symposium on “The Gulf War and the Revolution in Military Affairs” in *International Security* 22, no. 2 (fall 1997):137–74.

the eventual conflict demonstrated, a scaled back air campaign could have been waged from aircraft carriers in the Gulf and long range bombers deployed from around the globe. This option would have been punitive and retaliatory, but probably could not have driven Iraq out of Kuwait¹¹—just as subsequent air and missile attacks by the United States on Iraq were only marginally successful in getting Saddam Hussein to grant access to United Nations weapons inspectors.¹² An assault on Iraqi forces in Kuwait was also possible from the sea, and was considered as part of Operation Desert Storm, but ultimately rejected as too dangerous for the Marines who would have to land on the heavily defended coast and too costly, as much of Kuwait City would have to be destroyed to “save” it. Neither a more limited air campaign nor an amphibious assault was ever considered a viable response to the crisis. In addition, neither option conformed to the new military doctrine, developed and implemented in response to the debacle in Vietnam, that called for the use of massive force to crush opponents. Indeed, the only plan available from CENTCOM at the outset of the crisis—1002-90, a draft—was premised upon the large-scale deployment of American forces on Saudi territory.¹³ Within hours of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the National Security Council was already inquiring whether Saudi Arabia was prepared to offer bases to the United States.¹⁴ Deciding to do more than punish Iraq through air power required significant numbers of troops on the ground and new security relationships with the Gulf states.

The technological limits on the deployment of large-scale American forces led the United States and Saudi Arabia to a mutually profitable trade: American troops for Saudi land. This trade was facilitated by a decade of planning and preparation, including the construction in the 1980s of Saudi Arabia's military infrastructure to United States military

11. See Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 228, for an account of Schwarzkopf's briefing on this point to President Bush on August 2.

12. On the limited effectiveness of airpower, see Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); the symposium on “Theory and Evidence in Security Studies: Debating Robert A. Pape's *Bombing to Win*,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 2 (winter 1997/98): 93–214; and Karl Mueller, “Strategies of Coercion: Denial, Punishment, and the Future of Air Power,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (spring 1998): 182–228.

13. Woodward, *The Commanders*, 228.

14. Mohamed Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph: An Arab View of the Gulf War* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 199; Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 85.

specifications.¹⁵ This basic technological fact accounts for the American overture to Saudi Arabia, but it cannot account for the creation of the broader coalition. Only the dyads of the United States and the Gulf states depended upon this technological necessity.

The Division of Labor. There was a small but nonetheless important division of labor in the Gulf coalition. The United States provided a disproportionate number of the forces in Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The absolute contribution, of course, does not determine the extent of the division of labor. Across the various services, only the American contribution of aircraft was exceptionally large. Contributing in most areas, such as combat troops, in the neighborhood of 60 percent of all forces, the United States provided approximately 75 percent of all combat aircraft, over 80 percent of all sorties flown, and over 90 percent of all ordinance delivered by coalition forces.¹⁶ This suggests that, while contributing absolutely across the board, the United States did specialize at the margin in airpower.

In turn, several coalition members supplied important weapons or infrastructure items that were simply unavailable or available only in insufficient quantities in the United States. Great Britain, for instance, provided the majority of the minesweeping vessels deployed in the Gulf—a holdover from the cold war when Britain had assumed primary responsibility for this task within NATO. Israel provided important land mine clearing equipment.

The United States was also dependent upon support from others both in getting to the Gulf and operating within it. It had only one-third of the heavy equipment transports necessary to execute the successful deception and “left hook” assault on Iraqi forces, and it borrowed transports from a wide variety of sources, including Czechoslovakia.¹⁷ More important, perhaps, the 7th Corps stationed in Germany simply could not have redeployed to the Gulf without foreign assistance; moving the corps required 465 trains, 312 barges, 119 convoys of ships, nearly all of which

15. Jeffrey Record, *Hollow Victory: A Contrary View of the Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1993), 73; and HRH General Khaled bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior: A Personal View of the Gulf War by the Joint Forces Commander* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 8.

16. William J. Taylor and James Blackwell, “The Ground War in the Gulf,” *Survival* 33, no. 3 (May/June 1991): 237; Ken Matthews, *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 313–16; and Edward N. Luttwak, “The Air War,” in *International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990–91*, ed. Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 228 and 232.

17. Record, *Hollow Victory*, 143.

came from its European partners.¹⁸ Within the theater, United States forces were dependent upon local trucks and Arab oil (which greatly reduced the shipping requirements from military stocks in the United States). Without some of these seemingly minor forms of assistance, the buildup of United States forces in the Gulf would have been slowed considerably.

These advantages from broad participation, however, must be discounted by the diseconomies introduced by additional members of the coalition. While forces from each new country added to the total capability of the coalition, additional contributions—especially from non-NATO countries—may have degraded the per capita fighting effectiveness of the existing forces.¹⁹ There was little interest in the United States in forces from countries that could not provide for themselves in the Gulf; in some cases, the necessary logistical support that would have been required was greater than the aid to be given. The smaller force contributions were eventually assigned to guard “strongpoints” well to the rear in Saudi Arabia,²⁰ thereby enabling all units at the front to operate at division size or better and significantly reducing potential problems of command and control.²¹ In the end, some countries wishing to contribute forces to the coalition, including Bulgaria and Honduras, were politely turned away because they could not be accommodated logistically.²²

On balance, the benefits of the division of labor were modest: there were few synergies or “force multipliers” between United States and coalition forces. The net benefits of the division of labor, while important, were small and cannot account for the preferred multilateral strategy.

Positive Externalities. Burden-sharing was perhaps the most important material benefit to the United States in Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The Gulf states and other Arab members of the coalition benefited from the deterrence of further aggrandizement, the destruction of Iraq's ability to engage in regional intimidation, and the diminution Iraq's leadership role in the Islamic world. The Western members of the coalition, including

18. James Blackwell, Michael J. Mazarr, and Don M. Snider, *The Gulf War: Military Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Strategic Studies, 1991), 7; Robert A. Doughty and Ira D. Gruber, *Warfare in the Western World*, vol. 2, *Military Operations Since 1871* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1996), 983.

19. On the problems of coalition warfare in the Gulf, see James F. Dunnigan and Austin Bay, *From Shield to Storm: High-Tech Weapons, Military Strategy, and Coalition Warfare in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Morrow, 1992).

20. Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 252–60.

21. Julian Thompson, “The Military Coalition,” in *Iraq, the Gulf Conflict and the World Community*, ed. James Gow (New York: Brassey's, 1993), 147 and 151.

22. Record, *Hollow Victory*, 73.

Japan, benefited from the defense of the principle of territorial integrity most likely a minor consideration in the calculations of most nation capitals—and the breakup of a new and more radical price maker with OPEC.²³ Through cooperation, the United States sought to capture at least some of the positive externalities generated by expelling Iraq from Kuwait: deterring future regional aggression, defending the principle of territorial integrity, and ensuring the continued fragmentation of the world oil market. These benefits help explain why the United States would try to assemble a broad coalition; indeed, in a speech on 17 September 1990, President George Bush emphasized just one theme in justifying the coalition: burden-sharing.²⁴ By building the broadest possible coalition, the beneficiaries of the United States action in the Gulf could be made to contribute to the undertaking. In the end, and under considerable American pressure in some cases, 36 other countries contributed ships to the blockade or ground or air forces to Operations Desert Shield/Storm.

Seeking to balance the diseconomies inherent in diverse forces with the desire to capture some of the benefits provided to others, the United States preferred money over token forces that would otherwise have complicated military planning. Thanks to aggressive American fund-raising expeditions, dubbed Tincup I and Tincup II, the United States collected nearly \$54 billion in cash and in-kind contributions. With Saudi Arabia paying all in-theater costs of the American troops, these contributions covered almost 90 percent of the incremental cost of the campaign. While the United States did not turn a profit, as some early critics suggested, it successfully induced others to contribute to an extent seldom witnessed in international relations.

In summary, in the Persian Gulf War, technological necessities were an important determinant of cooperation. The division of labor was small but nonetheless provided benefits to the United States. The positive externalities were large, and the United States could gain by internalizing these benefits within the coalition. Cooperation was generally quite beneficial to the United States—and others.

23. On the positive externalities created by deterring the Iraqi threat, see Katsuaki Terasawa and William R. Gates, "Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf: Lessons Learned and Implications for the Future," *Defense Analysis* 9, no. 2 (August 1993): 171–95.

24. George Bush, "Toward a New World Order," *Dispatch* (U.S. Department of State) no. 3 (17 September 1990): 93. On the political importance attached to burden-sharing, see James A. Baker III, with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: Putnam's, 1995), 288.

25. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 358–61; Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 493.

EXPECTED COSTS OF OPPORTUNISM

In all cooperative undertakings, polities face a risk that their partners will act opportunistically, behavior that Oliver Williamson defines as “self-interest seeking with guile.”²⁶ In international relations, opportunism can take the form of abandonment, where the partner shirks or fails to live up to an agreement, entrapment, where the polity is drawn by its partner into actions and conflicts it would otherwise avoid, and exploitation, where the partner alters the terms of a relationship to extract a better deal. By failing to produce desired benefits, drawing the polity into unnecessary conflicts, or expropriating a larger share of the gains, opportunism by one’s partner imposes costs upon a polity. Opportunism diminishes the gains from joint production. The greater the costs likely to be imposed by such behavior, the less likely polities are to cooperate, in general, and when they do cooperate, the more likely polities are to insist upon more hierarchical relationships to control better the behavior of their partners.

The actual cost of opportunism, when it occurs, is determined by the degree to which assets are relationally specific—that is, the extent to which they possess more value in one relationship than another. Ports in strategic locations are a prime example. The forward-based defense strategy employed by the United States after 1945, for instance, depended upon a seamless web of naval bases in the western Pacific. Any gap might allow foreign forces to slip through the perimeter, and thus vitiate the entire strategy. If there had been a large number of first class sites, no specific assets would have been created by this strategy; if the United States was denied a base on one island, it might, under these favorable circumstances, simply move “next door.” In actuality, however, there were only a limited number of sites, principally Okinawa, the Philippines, and Guam. Each was essential to the forward defense, as the absence of any one would open up consequential gaps in the perimeter. If any of these partners were to defect from its security relationship with the United States, the costs would be significant. Since each was necessary to the overall success of the strategy, each was potentially in a position to extract nearly all the gains earned by the United States from its forward-based strategy—each could “hold up” the United States and potentially expropriate all of the benefits from cooperation.²⁷

26. Oliver Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, and Relational Contracting* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 30.

27. See Lake, *Entangling Relations*, 167–70.

The ability of a partner to act opportunistically, in turn, is determined by the type of security relationship, or “governance structure,” the parties choose to construct. In relatively anarchic security relationships, such as alliances, both parties retain substantial decision-making capabilities, and thus can act opportunistically if they choose. Despite promises, say, to come to one another’s aid, states within an alliance are the ultimate judges of their obligations. In more hierarchic security relationships, on the other hand, one party exerts substantial control over the other, and the subordinate polity, at the extreme, lacks the ability to decide to act in ways that contravene the interests of the dominant member. When England declared war in 1914 and again in 1939, for instance, Britain’s colonies were automatically placed at war with Germany. It is precisely to constrain the decision-making capabilities of partners and to reduce the probability that they will act opportunistically that leads polities to prefer and attempt to construct hierarchic security relationships. When few specific assets are at risk, alliances and other relatively anarchic security relationships may be adequate to safeguard the interests of the parties; since few real costs will be incurred, the benefits to one polity will not be threatened by opportunism by another. When more specific assets are at risk, however, more hierarchic relationships may be necessary for cooperation to proceed.

Opportunism in the Gulf. Once the United States and the Gulf states recognized the potential gains from pooling their resources against Iraq, the diplomatic focus shifted not to ensuring the largest possible joint economies but to building a workable security relationship at an acceptable cost. As HRH General Khaled bin Sultan, head of the Joint Forces (Saudi) Command, notes, “If the truth be told, the task we faced during the crisis was not winning the war against Saddam...that was the easiest part of it...the greatest challenge we faced...was to make sure that the members of the Coalition worked together without friction or dispute.”²⁸

The United States, the Gulf states, and other coalition members were drawn together by overlapping interests. To a greater or lesser extent, all wanted the Iraqi threat to the region reduced, the monarchy restored in Kuwait, and a stable Iraq in existence to contain the Shiite regime in Iran. States outside the Gulf also wanted to prevent the rise of a radical price maker within OPEC. These shared and mutually reinforcing interests limited the probability of opportunism by the partners of the United

28. Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 264–65.

States. As one of states most inclined to punish Iraq, moreover, the United States was not significantly threatened by entrapment from its partners. Having set out to deter further Iraqi aggression and, ultimately, to expel Iraq from Kuwait, however, the United States feared throughout the crisis that its partners might abandon the coalition and thereby undermine its ability to respond in what was deemed an appropriate fashion.

In the Gulf, the United States had large specific assets at risk, and the potential costs of opportunism were high. This was especially true in relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Although the United States had made substantial investments in its ability to project force during the cold war, it was still dependent upon forward bases in the Gulf to fight a major land war. These bases were, from the American point of view, highly specific assets; without them, it could not have fought the kind of war it planned to liberate Kuwait. The highly specific nature of these bases was a basic fact of the Gulf war, and significantly colored the American response to the crisis, the security relationships it formed in the Gulf, and its broader strategy of building the coalition.

Throughout the fall, the United States was concerned that the Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia in particular, would reach an independent deal with Iraq. As Bush expressed early in the deliberations on how to respond to the Iraqi invasion, "my worry about the Saudis is that they're going to be the ones who are going to bug out at the last minute and accept a puppet regime in Kuwait. We should be asking them how committed they are."²⁹ Early intelligence reports suggested that the Saudis were considering buying their way out of the crisis by paying billions of dollars from their oil revenue to Saddam. Even after the initial agreement on 6 August to deploy troops to Saudi Arabia, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney continued to fret that the agreement might be "soft."³⁰ Had Saudi Arabia defected and reached a separate deal with Iraq, the entire foundation for America's response to the Iraqi invasion would have been undermined.

The Saudis, in turn, were initially skeptical of the American commitment to protect their kingdom and drive Iraq's forces from Kuwait.³¹ For the Saudis, the decision to invite the Americans into their

29. Quoted in Woodward, *The Commanders*, 251. Woodward uses direct quotes from private meetings only when at least one participant specifically recalls or took notes on what was said and is confident about the exact wording. Given the controversy over Woodward's reporting methods, however, these remarks should be treated cautiously.

30. Woodward, *The Commanders*, 253 and 275.

31. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 200, 205.

country was critical. Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states faced two unattractive options during the crisis—as the twist on an old saw went at the time, they were “between Iraq and a hard place.” On the one hand, they could appease Iraq, reach some compromise over Kuwait, and leave themselves vulnerable to future threats and intimidation. Alternatively, they could seek to diminish, in one form or another, Iraq’s regional dominance. Doing this unilaterally required a costly domestic mobilization that most likely could not be accomplished quickly enough to succeed (if at all). Choosing to confront Iraq, therefore, meant inviting in the Americans and becoming dependent upon them for their current and future security.³² This dependence would severely constrain their sovereignty, a price the Saudis were willing to pay only if it was sure to remove future threats from Iraq. Not unreasonably, Saudi Arabia feared that the United States still suffered from a lingering “Vietnam syndrome” that would produce a tentative and gradualist response. They also worried that, although Bush administration officials had spoken out vigorously against Iraq, broader public opinion was more divided and might not sustain a commitment over the longer term. As King Fahd insisted to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, “The most important thing is that they (the Americans) should be sure of what they want to do before they ask us about anything.”³³ Bandar, in turn, made the same point more forcefully to Bush’s National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, “‘Do you guys have the guts or don’t you? We don’t want you to put out a hand and then pull it back,’ the ambassador said, ‘and leave us with this guy (Saddam) on our border twice as mad as he is now.’”³⁴

The solution to this mutual suspicion emerged early on in the negotiations, and was the principal contribution of Secretary of Defense Cheney’s visit to Saudi Arabia soon after the invasion of Kuwait. The United States demonstrated its commitment by offering to send an initial force of 250,000 troops to Saudi Arabia; this signaled that Bush was serious and deeply committed to resolving the Gulf crisis. The Saudis immediately recognized that this was not an incremental or half-hearted

32. Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 22, 26, and 306.

33. Quoted in Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 211–12.

34. Quoted in Woodward, *The Commanders*, 240. See also Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 91; Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 26; Steve A. Yetiv, “The Outcomes of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm: Some Antecedent Causes,” *Political Science Quarterly* 107, no. 2 (summer 1992): 203; and Stefano Guzzini, “Power Analysis as a Critique of Power Politics: Understanding Power and Governance in the Second Gulf War” (Ph.D. diss., European University Institute, Florence, Italy, 1994), 174–75.

step. Appropriately reassured, King Fahd agreed to receive the American troops in order to extricate his country from the now more unpalatable outcome of continuing Iraqi intimidation.

Saudi Arabia's acceptance of the large troop deployment, in turn, provided two critical forms of reassurance to the United States. First, by inviting the American troops, Saudi Arabia decisively broke with the radical Arab states, dramatically restricting its political and diplomatic alternatives for the future. As Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh write, "once committed to the deployment of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, there was no way back for King Fahd. His position could never be safe again unless Saddam was shamefully expelled from Kuwait or, even better, overthrown."³⁵ Locked into a confrontation with Iraq, Saudi Arabia could not back down or abandon the United States without a high cost to itself.

Second, by committing so many troops—more than three-and-one-half times the number of existing Saudi forces—the United States seized the leadership position in the budding coalition. Although the Gulf states had many more direct and immediate interests in the outcome of the struggle, the United States gained the decisive voice in the coalition. Negotiations with Iraq, the timing and conduct of the war, and the nature of the postwar regional order would be decided not in the capitals of the Gulf states but in Washington.

The military dependence of Saudi Arabia and the massive American deployment transferred substantial control over the foreign policies of the Gulf states to the United States, and effectively transformed Saudi Arabia and the other regional states into American protectorates—that is, sovereign countries that lacked the ability to conduct independent foreign policies. From the Saudi view, the Americans were guests in their country and, as such, were subordinate to their formal authority. As but one of the many symbolic demands made by the Saudis, Khaled insisted that his daily meetings with General Norman Schwarzkopf should always be held in his office, forcing the American commander to come to him rather than vice versa.³⁶ Once invited in as "guests," however, the Americans quickly dominated and, in fact, came to control the household. As Khaled notes, one of his most important "symbolic but nonetheless crucial" tasks during Desert Shield/Storm was "making sure our all-powerful American allies did not swallow us up."³⁷ By seizing the leadership role, the United States ensured that the Gulf states forfeited their ability to conduct independent

35. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 95.

36. Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 192.

37. Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 32.

foreign policies. This protected the United States against possible opportunism by Saudi Arabia and others. Real authority now lay with the United States. While Operation Desert Storm was extensively planned in advance in consultation with the coalition partners, and the actual declaration of military hostilities was a surprise to no one, that it fell to Bush to start the war—from Saudi territory—is symbolically important and provides clear evidence of who in the coalition was “calling the shots.”

Safeguarding Cooperation. As Mohamed Heikal, an Arab commentator, succinctly notes, “the first responsibility of a Saudi monarch is to keep intimate relations with Washington, and the second is to do all he can to hide it.”³⁸ The predominance of the Western powers in the response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait caused public opinion in the Arab states, initially opposed to Saddam, to begin to waver.³⁹ Most important, by transferring decision-making authority to Washington, the Gulf states opened themselves to the risk that the United States might act opportunistically toward them, perhaps by expanding the war against Iraq into a crusade against all nondemocratic regimes in the region, which would necessarily implicate the Gulf kingdoms as well, or by pressing them to moderate their opposition to Israel in a postwar regional peace agreement. This potential for opportunism by the dominant state is inherent in any protectorate. Whether or not the United States intended to act opportunistically is almost irrelevant. Its de facto control over the foreign policies of the Gulf states produced the possibility that it might act opportunistically, and this was sufficient to cause concern in the now vulnerable Gulf states.

To induce the Gulf states to subordinate themselves voluntarily, the United States had to make a credible commitment to Saudi Arabia and its other regional partners that it would not exploit its expanded decision-making authority. The United States quickly developed two safeguards that allowed it to exercise its dominance and control while at the same time constraining it from moving beyond a limited war to liberate Kuwait. In other words, the United States created two institutions that allowed it to use its great strength to accomplish its objectives in the region but that also tied its hands and restrained it from exploiting its partners in the process. Within the Bush administration, this was less of a conscious strategy and more a feeling that it was the right thing to do. Nonetheless,

38. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 213.

39. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 225.

it was a brilliant diplomatic maneuver that solved the problem of credible commitment and set an important precedent for future foreign policy initiatives by the United States.

The first safeguard was the inner coalition of states actively opposed to Iraq, indicating that the diverse alliance of states was rooted not only in the joint economies made possible from broader participation but also in the need to protect others from American dominance. Important to the functioning of the coalition was its largely anarchic structure, at least on the surface and for most non-Gulf partners. This allowed the coalition to serve as a check on American opportunism. If the United States dominated others in the same way it controlled the Gulf states, its other partners would lack the freedom to criticize Washington or call attention to its violations of the international consensus. The coalition could serve as an effective safeguard only to the extent that at least some important members were “free agents.” At the same time, America’s leading role gave it a decisive voice and allowed it to use others to meet its objectives despite the appearance of political equality.

This safeguard emerged in tandem with the overture to Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰ Sensing King Fahd’s reluctance to invite in American troops, it was apparently Bush’s chief of staff, John Sununu, who first recognized that “By God, the man needs a cover, an Arab or Islamic cover.” Soon thereafter, Bush telephoned King Fahd, asking whether the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia might be more palatable if they were part of a more broadly-based force. This offer appears to have resolved an important political dilemma facing Fahd and his advisors.⁴¹ Bush and Secretary of State James A. Baker quickly began consulting possible partners, especially in the Arab world. Morocco immediately extended an offer to Saudi Arabia to send troops to the Gulf. In short, the coalition was put together not to balance against Iraq—a task for which it was helpful but not necessary—but to balance against the overweening power of the United States within the joint effort. Indeed, emphasizing their political rather than military importance, Saudi Arabia wanted only token troops from its Arab partners, and accepted the large Egyptian force only at the insistence of General Schwarzkopf.⁴²

40. Baker noted the need for an international coalition in his discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze on August 3; Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 278.

41. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 217–18. See Fahd’s remarks at the conclusion of Cheney’s briefing in Woodward, *The Commanders*, 271, where he explicitly pairs American deployment with Arab assistance, and Cheney’s visit to King Hassan of Morocco on his return from Saudi Arabia, in Woodward, *The Commanders*, 276.

42. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 25.

Members of the inner coalition played important roles as fire alarms. Were the United States to transgress what its partners thought were permissible means and ends in the Gulf, they would loudly and stridently call attention to this exercise of “imperial” power. In this way, the more difficult the partner, the more essential it was to the political purpose of the coalition. This is seen most clearly in the cases of France and Syria.

While it offered qualified support for the United States in public, and promised its full support should conflict erupt, France was nonetheless the most troublesome member of the coalition. It resisted the integration of its forces into the American command structure, adopted an independent course in the conflict, and made a series of diplomatic overtures to Iraq that were strongly opposed by the United States. With the largest Arab population of any European country and close ties to the Maghreb, where support for Saddam was high, France had long maintained a special relationship with Iraq based largely on the exchange of arms for oil. Iraq, in turn, had many supporters within the French government, including Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement—a founding member of the Iraqi-French Friendship Association. Throughout the crisis, France was willing to link the resolution of Iraq’s position in Kuwait with a broader Middle East peace settlement, a move first publicly made by President François Mitterrand in a speech at the United Nations on 24 September. The United States forcefully opposed the policy of linkage, and Baker apparently accused Mitterrand of making “an appeasement speech, like those heard in Europe in the 1930s.”⁴³ A big question mark in the coalition from the beginning, France became increasingly vociferous during the fall.⁴⁴ Until the very end, long after the United States had positioned itself to expel Iraq from Kuwait by force, France continued to push for a compromise solution that might end the conflict short of war.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, there were few mechanisms erected to control French opportunism during the crisis, despite a constant fear that initiatives arising in Paris might fracture the coalition. Not only would establishing greater control over France be extremely costly, but to force it from the coalition or attempt to control it too tightly would vitiate its important role as a check on American opportunism. Rather, the United States simply accepted the risks from its most difficult partner in the inner

43. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 167; Jolyon Howorth, “French Policy in the Conflict,” in *International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990–91*, eds. Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994), 175–79.

44. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory: The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 314.

45. On France’s last minute efforts, see Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 264–74.

coalition. France's role as a check on American power was clearly understood, and no less effective for it. As French president Mitterrand noted in a meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, "We joined the coalition because we wanted to put the brakes on from the inside..."⁴⁶

Similarly, Syria was a central target of American and Arab diplomacy.⁴⁷ As a center of Arab radicalism, Syria's participation in the coalition prevented Saddam—despite his best efforts—from successfully portraying the conflict as one of Western imperialism against Arab nationalism. Equally important, because Syrian and American interests clashed on so many dimensions, Syria could be expected to quit the coalition at the first sign of American opportunism, thereby sending a signal to other states—and especially other Arab states—that the United States was stepping outside the agreed upon goals of the coalition. Other states, therefore, did not need to monitor American policy, they only needed to watch whether Syria was willing to participate in the American-led effort. This helps to explain why the United States exerted an extraordinary effort to bring Syria into the coalition and ensure that its troops actively participated in the fighting.⁴⁸ Like France, it was the anti-Americanism so manifest in other areas of Syrian foreign policy that made it critical to the coalition and a real check on American policy.

The second safeguard was the "outer coalition" in the United Nations. The immediate interests of the United States and the members of the outer coalition diverged sharply. These were, after all, countries that chose not to join the war effort but that nonetheless occupied key positions within the global community and whose support or acquiescence were deemed central to American policy.

The outer coalition was primarily manifested within the United Nations Security Council. The idea of using the United Nations as a source of legitimacy for United States efforts in the Gulf largely originated with Baker, but was received lukewarmly by the Pentagon and White House who feared that it would overly constrain America's freedom of action.⁴⁹

46. Quoted in Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 252.

47. For an overview of Syria's role in the coalition, see Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Syria's Role in the Gulf War Coalition," in *Friends in Need: Burden Sharing in the Persian Gulf War*, eds. Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold, and Danny Unger (New York: St. Martin's, 1997).

48. Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 295–98, 373–74, and 376–67.

49. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 36; Cecil V. Crabb and Kevin V. Mulcahy, "George Bush's Management Style and Operation Desert Storm," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (spring 1995): 259. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 82; and Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 304, cite Bush as supportive of the United Nations from the beginning, although Woodward, *The Commanders*, 284 suggests he was skeptical that it could act effectively.

Yet, it was exactly the chance that the United Nations might not approve American actions in the Gulf that made its support so influential. If the United States was exploiting its partners, their dissent would undermine support in the Security Council, possibly provoking a veto from one of other permanent members, limiting the authority received by the United States, or forcing an alteration in policy. It was the possibility that the United Nations could block American policy that, in fact, conferred international legitimacy.⁵⁰

This is seen most clearly in the approval of Security Council Resolution 678. In October and November, the coalition had begun to weaken, a fact that was apparent to administration insiders if not the general public.⁵¹ The lack of diplomatic progress ignited new fears of war within the United States and other coalition partners. The doubling of American troop strength in the Gulf after the midterm elections, without prior consultation with its partners or public discussion at home, magnified these fears. Iraq also slowly ate away at the coalition's unity by shrewdly manipulating the release of hostages in exchange for high level diplomatic contacts, thereby easing its isolation within the world community.⁵² As the coalition came under stress, Bush and Baker turned once again to the United Nations, reasoning that international approval would relegitimate American actions and reconsolidate the coalition—while at the same time signaling Iraq that it must get out of Kuwait.⁵³ Interestingly, Britain argued that United Nations approval was unnecessary and that the coalition already possessed sufficient authority under the right of self-defense in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Nonetheless, while at least partly sharing this view, the United States returned to the United Nations for explicit approval.⁵⁴ In seeking this support, the president and secretary of state undertook another diplomatic marathon, contacting heads of state and holding over 200 meetings seeking foreign support.⁵⁵ In the end, the United States agreed to soften the language of the resolution, substituting

50. Blackwell, Mazaar, and Snider, *The Gulf War*, 7.

51. Woodward, *The Commanders*, 319.

52. Roland Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis*, Adelphi Paper no. 264 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991/92), 38.

53. They also sought to strengthen domestic and Congressional support. See Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1992), 207 and 212. A senior aide to Secretary of State Baker reasoned that United Nations backing would “box the Democrats in very nicely;” US News, *Triumph Without Victory*, 155. See also Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 322.

54. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 228.

55. Lester H. Brune, *America and the Iraqi Crisis, 1990–1992: Origins and Aftermath* (Claremont: Regina Books, 1993), 67; Woodward, *The Commanders*, 333.

“all necessary means” for “force,” and giving into demands by the Soviet Union and France for a final try at diplomacy before initiating hostilities.⁵⁶ After making these concessions, support for expelling Iraq from Kuwait quickly firmed up. The diplomatic ploy worked.

In a March 1991 speech, Bush stated that he probably would have gone to war against Iraq even without United Nations approval, suggesting that the legitimacy created by Resolution 678 was facilitative rather than decisive. Surely most of the inner coalition would have fought with the United States. The larger unknown is whether the United States would have gone ahead—or at least fought the war as it did—without the acquiescence of the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ In the end, the constraints exerted by the United Nations, were reciprocal: because the legitimacy conferred by the world body was important to the United States, the latter was willing to compromise to obtain the former's approval; but as other countries valued their ability to constrain the United States and wanted to keep it working within the UN framework, the Americans were able to tug the organization in the direction they wanted it to go. Both the inner and outer coalitions exerted important constraints on the United States.

GOVERNANCE COSTS

Governance costs are incurred in creating and maintaining all security relationships. Crafting an agreement, monitoring the behavior of one's partner, and enforcing the security relationship all consume resources that could be put to other uses. Where the expected costs of opportunism generally decline with greater hierarchy, *ex post*, governance costs for the dominant party increase with greater hierarchy. It is the expanded control acquired by the dominant state over the subordinate polity that makes hierarchy attractive, but this greater control only comes at an increasing price. These rising costs inhibit states from pursuing greater hierarchy.

Governance costs arise in two ways relevant to the discussion here.⁵⁸ First, in ceding decision-making authority to the dominant state, the

56. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 230–32. On the wrangle over the wording of Resolution 678, see Woodward, *The Commanders*, 334.

57. Norman Friedman, *Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 56; Robert Springborg, “The United Nations in the Gulf War,” in *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, eds. Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 50.

58. Coercion, a third form of governance cost, can be considered a substitute for the two forms discussed below. In addition, in long term relationships, maladaptation costs may be relevant. See Lake, *Entangling Relations*, 58–65.

subordinate party gives up its valued freedom and allows the dominant state to make decisions for it that it would not, presumably, make for itself. To gain their voluntary compliance, dominant states must not only expend resources to monitor and enforce their writs in their subordinate partners, but they must also compensate them for their lost autonomy. Ironically, in a purely voluntary relationship, the costs of subjugation are borne not by the subordinate polity but by the dominant state. The greater the subordination, the higher the costs to the dominant partner. The resource transfers from the Soviet Union to the members of its informal empire in Eastern Europe provide a clear example of these governance costs. In 1988, as Moscow was reevaluating its imperial relationships, the Soviet subsidy to Eastern Europe was estimated by the Russians themselves to be \$17 billion per year.⁵⁹ Yet, even this was not enough to keep the East Europeans from fleeing the informal empire at the first opportunity.

Second, by ceding decision-making authority to the dominant state, the subordinate polity opens itself to even greater opportunism by its partner. Not only may the dominant state shirk its own contributions to the joint production of security, as might happen in any relationship, it can also use its greater control over the subordinate member for its own ends. To gain the voluntary compliance of the subordinate polity, the dominant state must impose costly constraints on its own freedom of action to signal its benign intent and limit its potential for opportunism. Again, in a purely voluntary relationship, the costs of subjugation fall on the dominant state. It must convince the subordinate polity that, despite its now greater decision-making authority, it will not take advantage of the latter's vulnerable and exposed position. In short, the dominant state must tie its own hands against its potential for increased opportunism; the more authority it wields over the subordinate polity, the greater and more costly are the constraints it must impose upon itself. These self-restraints turned out to be the primary governance costs for the United States in the Gulf War.

Governance Costs in the Gulf. The United States bore two types of costs in constructing and maintaining cooperation during the Persian Gulf War. The first and most direct set of costs were incurred in inducing others to participate in the coalition. The list of favors, gifts, and political compromises made in assembling the coalition is lengthy. Egypt joined the

59. Randall W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 45.

coalition when the United States Treasury forgave \$6.7 billion in previous loans.⁶⁰ In exchange for Syria's participation, the United States lifted sanctions previously imposed for its support of terrorism and turned a blind eye toward its final assault on Lebanon.⁶¹ Syria also received \$500 million in indirect aid from the United States, as well as \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, \$500 million from Japan, and \$200 million from Europe.⁶² Turkey, a willing partner in the coalition seeking to secure its position as linchpin between Europe and the Middle East in the post-cold war world, nonetheless received concessions on textile imports into the United States, trade credits, and approval to resell American military equipment abroad.⁶³ Even members of the outer coalition received concessions. Colombia, then a member of the Security Council, was allowed to renounce its extradition treaty with the United States.⁶⁴ Malaysia, another member, received a break on textile exports to the United States.⁶⁵ China was pardoned by the Bush administration for the crackdown on Tienanmen Square; by receiving Peking's foreign minister, the first high level visit since the assault on prodemocracy demonstrators, the president was able to avoid a Chinese veto of Resolution 678 in the Security Council.⁶⁶ The Soviet Union, the most critical member of the outer coalition, was particularly privileged, receiving at America's request a \$4 billion line of credit from Saudi Arabia.⁶⁷ The United States also chose, in exchange for Russia's support on Resolution 678, to avoid any harsh condemnation of the Soviet crackdown on the Baltic states.⁶⁸ As *U.S. News and World Report* concluded, albeit in slightly exaggerated language, "in terms of actual dollars and compromised principles" the cost to the

60. Martin Yant, *Desert Mirage: The True Story of the Gulf War* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1991), 93; Atkinson, *Crusade*, 54. According to Woodward, *The Commanders*, 287, Saddam tried to bribe Egypt to stay out of the anti-Iraq coalition.

61. Atkinson, *Crusade*, 54; John Pimlott, "The Gulf Crisis and World Politics," in *The Gulf War Assessed*, eds. John Pimlott and Stephen Badsey (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1992), 52.

62. Yant, *Desert Mirage*, 93; U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 86.

63. Tozun Bahcheli, "Turkey, the Gulf Crisis, and the New World Order," in *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 437; Yant, *Desert Mirage*, 93; U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 94-95; Atkinson, *Crusade*, 54.

64. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 94.

65. *Ibid.*, 94.

66. Atkinson, *Crusade*, 54; Brigitte Lebens Nacos, "Presidential Leadership During the Persian Gulf Conflict," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (summer 1994): 545. This linkage was explicit. See Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 322-24.

67. Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 294-95.

68. Smith, *George Bush's War*, 210; Atkinson, *Crusade*, 54.

United States of building the coalition against Iraq was “staggeringly high.”⁶⁹

The second, more indirect, but ultimately more important set of costs were the constraints imposed by the coalition on America’s freedom of action. The magnitude of these governance cost depends, of course, upon an estimate of what the United States would have done in the Persian Gulf if it had fought unilaterally.⁷⁰ Although the United States never self-consciously gave up any important objectives under pressure from the coalition, its objectives and those of the coalition evolved simultaneously during the fall of 1990. In this sense, the self-conscious aims of the United States were endogenous to the politics of assembling and managing the coalition.⁷¹ This makes discerning its autonomous goals—what it would have done on its own—particularly difficult, but not impossible.

The constraints imposed by the coalition are, perhaps, most clearly manifest in the limited objectives of the war. The early deployment of American forces to the Gulf was for the ostensible purpose of deterring further Iraqi aggression against Saudi Arabia. Clear from the outset, however, was a larger United States desire to compel Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait, a desire made most evident in Bush’s famous remark only days after the invasion that Iraq’s conquest of Kuwait “will not stand.” By the start of the war, the stated objectives had expanded to include expelling Iraq from Kuwait and destroying its nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare capability, its ballistic missile program, and its mechanized military units.⁷² By the end of the war, American aims had expanded again to include the sound defeat and, thereby, delegitimation of Iraq and the replacement of Saddam Hussein by another leader drawn from the Sunni minority in Iraq. As evidence of the maximum possible objectives of the United States, an expanded war was envisioned in plans to continue the ground offensive to Baghdad, surround the city with American forces, and “liberate” it with Islamic forces.

The limited objectives of the war sat poorly with the American public, at least once the military imbalance between the coalition and Iraqi forces became evident. Clearly, America’s crusading spirit would have been more

69. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, 94.

70. Note the appropriate counterfactual is fighting unilaterally, not choosing to maintain sanctions longer or giving into Iraq. These alternatives change the goal of American policy, not just the way in which its goal of expelling Iraq from Kuwait was pursued.

71. At the same time, the war aims of the other coalition members were endogenous and also evolved over time. Nonetheless, they did not perfectly coincide with American objectives; Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, 188 and 315.

72. Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, 46.

satisfied with the maximum rather than minimum objectives. Reflecting this desire, the war has spawned a minor literature with titles such as “triumph without victory” and “hollow victory” reflecting the collective unease.⁷³ Even the limited objectives honed by the Bush administration during the fall were only partially fulfilled. While Iraq was expelled from Kuwait, its military capability was not destroyed, as the repression of the Shiites in southern Iraq and the Kurds in northern Iraq immediately after the war attest. When the United States declared a cease-fire, leaving open an escape route back into Iraq, many of the best equipped Republican Guard units avoided destruction. Reflecting both intelligence failures and the limits of air power, the coalition destroyed far less of Iraq's nuclear, biological, and chemical capability than expected—necessitating a subsequent United Nations sponsored program to dismantle these facilities and continuing tension with Iraq over compliance. Finally, Saddam remains in power, having succeeded in putting down the internal insurrections and forestalling possible coups. As early as September 1991, Gregg Easterbrook could write that “it is not even clear that we won the war, though we certainly won the parade.”⁷⁴

In each case, the responsibility for the limited objectives and the failure to fulfill them can be placed, at least in part, on the coalition, which led to a lowest common denominator politics. While Britain and Saudi Arabia apparently hoped to continue the war in order to defeat the Republican Guard units, there was at least implicit pressure from others in the coalition to keep the war more limited.⁷⁵ There was apparently little communication between senior U.S. officials and foreign governments in the closing hours of the war. Nonetheless, the views of Russia and France, in particular, were well known in advance and anticipated by the president and his inner circle in deciding upon the cease-fire. Baker, at least, was genuinely fearful that the Soviet Union “might fracture the coalition by calling on the UN Security Council to halt the continuing slaughter.”⁷⁶ Already shocked by the level of force used against Iraq, the Arabs were generally opposed to any further attacks on the retreating Iraqi forces—and continuing the war would have severely damaged relations with Arab governments in the coalition.⁷⁷ Bush later justified the decision to stop the

73. U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*; Record, *Hollow Victory*.

74. Gregg Easterbrook, “Operation Desert Shill,” *New Republic*, 30 September 1991, 33.

75. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 405 and 412.

76. Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 436.

77. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph*, 316; Friedman 1991, 58. With more extensive war aims than most other Arab states, Saudi Arabia is the exception to this generalization.

war at 100 hours because “the coalition was agreed on driving the Iraqis from Kuwait, not on carrying the conflict into Iraq or destroying Iraqi forces.”⁷⁸ Reflecting on the war, Baker put it more pointedly: “pressing on to Baghdad would have caused not just a rift but an earthquake within the coalition....(and a) war to liberate Kuwait from a universally condemned invasion would have been transformed into a war of U.S. imperialism...”⁷⁹ In the end, we do not know whether the United States, left completely to its own devices, would have given into its crusading spirit and transformed the limited objectives formulated by the coalition into the unconditional defeat of Iraq. Nonetheless, we can see clearly that the possibility of transforming the limited war into a crusade was blocked by the coalition.

The constraints of the coalition are also evident in the period before the war. As shown above, the United States deployed massive forces to the Gulf in part to assure the Saudis of its commitment and to establish control over the coalition. The massive deployment, however, also committed the United States to a combative stance against Iraq and, because of the difficulties of fielding a large force in a hostile climate, imposed a strict timetable on the resolution of the conflict. Most important, this limited the time in which sanctions could be allowed to have an effect.

To maintain the credibility of its commitment, and to deter others from defecting and cutting a separate deal with Baghdad, the United States also had to insist upon no negotiations and no linkage with other issues. Again, the coalitional constraints overlapped with the internal desire of the Bush administration, which believed deeply that aggression should not be rewarded. Nonetheless, the hard diplomatic line followed throughout the conflict was a tremendous impediment to other avenues for potentially resolving the disposition of Kuwait and inhibited the United States from pursuing peace feelers from Iraq. As it was, the last minute discussions with Iraq and especially the offer of a trip by Baker to Baghdad had the Saudis in a “cold sweat.”⁸⁰ It is unlikely that negotiations would have produced a mutually acceptable outcome given Iraq's insistence that Kuwait was an integral part of its territory and America's insistence on

78. Michael R. Gordon and Gen. Bernard E. Trainor. “How Iraq Escaped to Threaten Kuwait Again,” *New York Times International*, 23 October 1994, 10.

79. James A. Baker, “Why the U.S. Didn't March to Baghdad,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 September 1996, M6.

80. On the Secretary of State's proposed visit and actual meeting with Tariq Aziz in Geneva, see Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 46–65; and Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 240–45 and 253–60.

Iraq's unconditional withdrawal. The need to hold the coalition together, however, ensured that negotiations would never really begin.⁸¹

The coalition also restrained the actual conduct of the war. Not only could Saddam not be personally targeted, at least publicly,⁸² but incursions into Iraq had to be limited. None of the Arab states joined in the left hook through Iraq, and none could countenance the violation of sovereignty of a fellow Islamic state. Also crucial was the question of Israel—a “silent” member of the outer coalition. Israel's role in the coalition was not to be drawn into the war and, thereby, potentially disrupt the inner coalition (in this case, opportunistic behavior by this partner would have been the opposite of “abandonment,” rather, joining in). Even though the United States extracted secret commitments from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and even Syria to remain in the war if Iraq brought Israel in,⁸³ the outcome was sufficiently in doubt that the United States nonetheless exerted considerable pressure on Israel to prevent it from responding even to direct Scud missile attacks on its territory. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was dispatched to Tel Aviv with a “blank check” to cover whatever Israel demanded to stay out of the war.⁸⁴ Israel, in turn, pressed the United States to make sure that the blow to Iraq's regional pretensions was decisive and to eliminate the only weapons that could pose an immediate threat to itself, the Scuds.⁸⁵ Poorly constructed and wildly inaccurate, the missiles were, for the inner coalition, militarily insignificant. Nonetheless, to buy Israel's “silence,” the United States devoted a substantial fraction of its air power to destroying the Scuds; during the first phase of the air campaign, 15 percent of all sorties focused on surface-to-surface missiles.⁸⁶

Finally, the United States was constrained by its partners after the war. It could not support the Shiite uprising in southern Iraq because of fears by the Gulf states that an independent Shiite state or autonomous Shiite region might become dependent upon Iran for support. Likewise, with Turkey concerned about its own “Kurdish problem,” the United States could offer only limited support to the Kurds in northern Iraq. As a result,

81. Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 352.

82. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 434.

83. Atkinson, *Crusade*, 83; Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 306–8.

84. Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 388.

85. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 336.

86. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 264 and 309. Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, 50, suggests that despite the magnitude of this effort, the resources devoted to the “Scud hunt” did not materially affect the success of the air campaign.

two of the most likely sources of opposition to Saddam's continued rule were left without significant backing from the United States.

The United States willingly bore substantial costs in direct concessions and compromised principles to build the coalition and accepted the constraints imposed upon it. With the exception of the U.S.-Saudi Arabia dyad, and perhaps ties with other regional states, the broader coalition was not a military necessity. While foreign troops substituted for some fraction of United States forces, this was not a one-for-one tradeoff; the division of labor was small, and the forces from some coalition members were of dubious value. On balance, the military contributions of the non-Gulf states appear insufficient to explain the willingness of the United States to bear the direct and indirect costs of the coalition. Rather, the roots of the coalition lay in the need to gain access to the necessary territory and infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, the desire to safeguard these relationships against possible American opportunism, and—more generally—the need to mask America's influence and capabilities in a one superpower world. The United States was not restrained militarily by Iraq, given its overwhelming superiority on the ground. The external constraints that confronted Washington were imposed not by the enemy, but by America's partners.

BEYOND THE GULF

THE PERSIAN Gulf War is an extreme case. As the largest use of American military force in decades, security cooperation produced large joint production economies for the United States and potentially costly opportunism that necessitated relatively hierarchic relationships to control. To achieve cooperation, in turn, the United States was willing to suffer comparatively high governance costs in the form of tight constraints on policy. The larger the gains from cooperation, the more the United States is willing to pay—and, specifically, the greater the constraints on its own policies it is willing to endure—to ensure its partners' compliance.

Nonetheless, the same pattern of relative benefits and costs has been repeated throughout the post-cold war era, producing the same contractual solution of multilateral coalitions to restrain American power. In Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, the joint production economies were very small. The forces deployed to the strife-torn country were sufficiently limited and, at least initially, politically welcome that the

mission could be staged and reinforced, when necessary, from “offshore;” forward bases were not required. There was no apparent division of labor. The military burden was shared with others, but the savings to the United States was not large—permitting, at most, a quicker phase out of American forces than would have been possible in a unilateral operation.

At the same time, the mission in Somalia incurred no specific assets. Although some partners were more important than others, especially NATO partners like France and Belgium, none provided resources that could not be obtained elsewhere. Yet, to safeguard against possible opportunism by its partners, the United States again chose to carry a disproportionate share of the burden and lead the coalition. Because no specific assets were at risk, however, the expected costs of opportunism were nil and no substantial hierarchy was necessary: the United Task Force (UNITAF) and the later UN command were strictly anarchic relationships.

Finally, the governance costs of cooperation in Somalia were also quite small. Most important, there were no significant constraints on American policy. The coalition did not check American ambition, but rather served to signal only the country’s humanitarian intent; since others could have vetoed the American proposal to send troops if they feared a more political agenda in Washington, their support confirmed the limited goals of the United States. In this case, the coalition tied America’s hands only to objectives to which it had already restricted itself.

The potential for the United States to act opportunistically both toward Somalia and the other countries in the region was substantial. Assuming the role of peacemaker gave the United States substantial control over the country and risked turning the once sovereign state into a “neocolonial dependency.” Somalis, in fact, worried that a United Nations trusteeship might be imposed on the country,⁸⁷ a move that was actually discussed within both the United Nations and the State Department and reported in the news media.⁸⁸ Somalis also feared that the United States would re-establish order only to create a new political system that reflected Western values and interests rather than indigenous cultures and practices.⁸⁹ Thus, even apart from the warring factions that would be the immediate victims

87. John Drysdale, “Foreign Military Intervention in Somalia: The Root Cause of the Shift from UN Peacekeeping to Peacemaking and its Consequences,” in *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention*, ed. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 126.

88. Joshua Muravchik, “Beyond Self-Defense,” *Commentary* 96, no. 6 (December 1993): 19.

89. Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, “The U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia: A Hidden Agenda?” *Middle East Policy* 3, no. 1 (winter 1993): 60; Jonathan Stevenson, “Hope Restored in Somalia?” *Foreign Policy*, no. 91 (summer 1993): 149.

of peace, Somalis at large were apprehensive about their occupation by the forces of an external power.

Neighboring states also worried that a weak Somalia dependent upon the United States would allow the country to be used as a staging area for intervention elsewhere in the region.⁹⁰ Some feared that the intervention in Somalia might be a preemptive strike against Islamic fundamentalism.⁹¹ The Islamic military government in Khartoum, described by one State Department official as “apoplectic” about the intervention, feared that Somalia might be used as a site to support an American move into the southern Sudan.⁹²

That these fears were exaggerated or, from the American point of view, wholly unjustified is, as in the Gulf case, both true and somewhat besides the point. A successful intervention in Somalia gave the United States de facto control over the country and the *ability* to accomplish such goals if it so chose. Even if the United States did not consciously possess such imperial designs, the countries of the region could not be confident that it might not exploit its new opportunities once the initial mission was accomplished. Just as in the Persian Gulf, where the United States might have given into its crusading spirit and transformed a limited into an unlimited war, in Somalia the United States might have given into a modern day “manifest destiny” designed to rescue weak African regimes from themselves or from an encroaching Islamic fundamentalism.

Aware of these concerns, the United States, once again, self-consciously constructed both an inner and outer coalition to signal the Somalis and others of its limited, humanitarian ambitions. First, as Jeffrey Lefebvre notes, “in order to avoid creating the wrong impression, the United States agreed to lead, but insisted that other states participate in the United Task Force...”⁹³ Second, the nature of the mission was strictly limited in public pronouncements and in its planning and execution. Accordingly, disarming the warlords and rebuilding the institutions of government in Somalia were explicitly ruled out of the mission statement of UNITAF. Third, the United States insisted on working through the United Nations and, later, replacing UNITAF with a regular United Nations peacekeeping

90. Lefebvre, “U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia,” 58; Jonathan T. Howe, “The United States and United Nations in Somalia: The Limits of Involvement,” *Washington Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (summer 1995): 50.

91. Lefebvre, “U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia,” 59–60.

92. Lefebvre, “U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia,” 59; Anonymous State Department official, interview with author, 7 November 1996, Washington, D.C.

93. Lefebvre, “U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia,” 61; see also Howe, “The United States and United Nations in Somalia,” 51.

force as soon as possible, at most within several months. These safeguards ultimately contributed to the long term failure of Operation Restore Hope: by restricting its forces to only humanitarian missions, the United States failed to use the only window of opportunity in which the warlords might have been disarmed effectively, and by insisting on a quick hand-off to the United Nations, the United States transferred responsibility to the organization before the latter was, in many ways, prepared to assume it. Nonetheless, the safeguards were ultimately rooted in the need to signal America's strictly benign ambitions in Somalia.

This same pattern has been repeated in Haiti, Bosnia, and wherever the United States has used substantial force since the end of the cold war. Even in Kosovo, its most recent exercise of military force, the United States led a coalition to mask its overweening power—in this case, the newly expanded NATO. Although NATO is more institutionalized, in this instance it is quite similar to the ad hoc coalitions put together by the United States elsewhere: individual members decided how and to what extent to participate in the operations, with some being substantially more interventionist, such as Great Britain, and others more obstructionist, such as Greece. The formal nature of NATO did not relieve the United States of the need to manage actively its coalition.

As in Somalia, the inner coalition in the air campaign against Serbia was not formed out of military necessity. Although bases in Italy and other regional states were no doubt useful, the strategic bombing campaign against Serbia could have been carried out by the United States unilaterally if necessary. Given the limited nature of the campaign, there was only a slender basis for a division of labor. The only significant military advantage of the coalition was in burden-sharing, but even here the net advantages were modest.

With few specific assets at risk, the expected costs of opportunism were also relatively small. Nonetheless, the United States once again seized a leadership role within the coalition. NATO includes states with diverse interests, some who urged the use of ground forces, others who opposed even the limited air campaign, but none who possessed the ability to act independently of the United States. Far from being an important constraint, this diversity coupled with military weakness actually allowed the United States substantial freedom to chart its own course.

The outer coalition, lodged within the United Nations Security Council, was substantially more opposed to American policy in Kosovo than in the other cases examined here. China was already vigorously against the NATO intervention even before the bombing of its embassy in Belgrade. Russia

has long standing ties to Serbia. For this reason, the United States avoided the United Nations, where the vetoes of these permanent members might have potentially constrained its policy. The United States was willing to let Russia take the lead in searching for a negotiated solution, but only on terms it found acceptable. As in Somalia, the checks on American policy were more domestic than international.

The United States opted to work within NATO to diffuse once again the threat other countries might feel from its hegemony and the violation of sovereignty embodied in its effort to secure regional autonomy for Kosovo. Many other countries also have secessionist minorities. For the United States to decide unilaterally who can secede would clearly have been an abuse of power—norms of sovereignty are very much shared and socially constructed ideas. Combined, these considerations would have made unilateral action in Kosovo by the United States uniquely threatening to other states around the globe. Thus, perhaps more than in any other instance since the end of the cold war, it was important to mask American power.

Ideally, the United Nations would have been the proper forum to legitimate the intervention, but opposition from Russia and China precluded this. The United States relied instead upon NATO in its newly adopted guise as a “European” collective security organization. Hiding American hegemony behind a European mask was effective. This is no small accomplishment. Yet, tensions between the United States, on the one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, elicited the first significant protests against America’s domination of the post-cold war world. Combined with the exclusion of Russia and China from any formal oversight of the air war against Serbia, these protests threaten to undermine the international legitimacy the United States seeks. In its efforts to avoid the constraints likely to be imposed on its policies by the Security Council, the United States may have chosen a mask one size too small.

CONTRACTING CONTRADICTIONS

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY cooperation remains attractive to the United States for both the material benefits and legitimacy it provides. There are, however, two general tensions in current policy. Our choices today will be judged tomorrow by how well these contradictions are managed.

First, American leadership facilitates cooperation by reducing the probability of opportunism by partners, but it also limits the gains from cooperation. By providing a disproportionate share of the forces in joint military operations in order to establish control over its partners, the United States precludes an effective international division of labor and foregoes opportunities to share its defense burdens with others. By leading, the United States constrains the joint production economies it enjoys and thereby limits the expected costs of opportunism and governance it is willing to bear.

In seeking to reduce the risks of opportunism, the United States threatens to undermine its own incentives for cooperation. In an era of unprecedented American power, it is easy to believe that the United States can or should seek to control all risks—including those from potential partners. Leadership does control opportunism, but it also weakens the roots of cooperation. Americans must guard against the desire to seek risk-free cooperation.

Second, by leading, the United States subordinates other states. This further limits the burdens it can expect others to shoulder, for the United States must buy their compliance with new sidepayments or, equivalently, less burden-sharing. More important, establishing international hierarchies, such as the *de facto* protectorates created during the Gulf war, requires great constraints on the United States and raises the governance costs of cooperation. America cannot lead unless others follow, and its partners will not follow unless the United States takes them where they are willing to go. The United States has considerable influence over the international consensus, but leading within this consensus binds it to a significant degree. These governance costs are increasingly unpopular with American voters, and may be the primary impediment to cooperation in the future.

In an era of seemingly unlimited American power, constraints on the use of that power are hard to endure. If Americans must shield themselves against an exaggerated desire to control the risks of cooperation, they must also guard against an undue demand for foreign policy autonomy. If they choose to act alone in foreign policy, Americans must be careful that the independence gained outweighs the cooperation lost—both for the specific case at issue, and in the more dire future likely to follow. In untying their hands, Americans not only threaten others but may provoke the very challenges they seek to avoid.