

# Promises under Pressure: Reassurance in Asymmetric Alliances\*

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## Abstract

Great powers frequently reassure allies of their protection by stationing troops abroad, visiting allied countries, and making public statements. Yet the causes of alliance reassurance are understudied in the academic literature. Indeed, reassurance is puzzling because it invites allies to free-ride or provoke their adversaries, knowing that they have their patron's support. Despite the drawbacks, I argue that patrons use reassurance to discourage their allies from seeking outside options and reducing their dependence on the alliance. Patrons thus face a dilemma wherein they trade off between withholding reassurance for short-term leverage and using reassurance to preserve their long-term influence. I test the theory using a new cross-national dataset of U.S. reassurance from 1950-2010, as well as qualitative evidence from U.S. reassurance toward West Germany from 1961-1974. The findings have implications for understanding how states manage their alliances, and suggest a pathway through which weaker states can shape great powers' foreign commitments.

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## Introduction

When do great powers reassure their junior allies (protégés)? Reassuring allies has been a central part of U.S. foreign policy since the early Cold War, with U.S. officials going to great length to increase allies' confidence in U.S. protection. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, for one, argued that “both the size and the specific elements of [American] forces are driven more by the need to reassure those that we protect under the nuclear umbrella than by U.S. requirements alone.”<sup>1</sup> Since 1945, the United States has stationed hundreds of thousands of troops on allied soil, and U.S. officials make countless foreign visits and public statements to demonstrate support for American partners.<sup>2</sup> Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter made such an effort to signal U.S. commitment during overseas trips that the *New York Times* dubbed him the “secretary of reassurance.”<sup>3</sup> Nor, in many cases, can reassurance measures be attributed to a desire to deter a third party. Rather, reassuring allies is often an end in itself. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, U.S. President John F. Kennedy made a secret arrangement to withdraw U.S. nuclear missiles from Turkey in exchange for the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. In doing so, Kennedy sought to save face as a credible protector among allies — but notably not in the eyes of the United States' primary adversary, thus deliberately reassuring allies without a deterrence purpose.<sup>4</sup>

Theories of alliance politics suggest that reassurance is an important means to maintain alliance cohesion. In his seminal book *Alliance Politics*, Glenn Snyder argues that reducing an

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<sup>1</sup> Clark A. Murdock. *Exploring the Nuclear Posture Implications of Extended Deterrence and Assurance*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> James H. Lebovic and Elizabeth N. Saunders, “The Diplomatic Core: The Determinants of High-Level US Diplomatic Visits, 1946-2010,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2016), pp. 107-123.

<sup>3</sup> Helene Cooper, “Pentagon Chief Ashton Carter Adds ‘Secretary of Reassurance’ to His Portfolio,” *New York Times*, August 3, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Jervis. “The Cuban Missile Crisis: What Can We Know, Why Did It Start, and How Did It End?” *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Critical Reappraisal*. Ed. by Len Scott and R. Gerald Hughes. New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 1-39, esp. p. 26.

ally's fear of abandonment mitigates the risk that it will abandon one's own state in turn.<sup>5</sup> Yet reassurance also comes with negative consequences. Bargaining leverage within an alliance depends on the credibility of states' threats to abandon their partners, and thus great power patrons should limit the extent to which they are perceived as committed to their allies.<sup>6</sup> Reassurance measures, however, are intended to have exactly the opposite effect. Other strands of literature similarly suggest that reassuring allies can make them more willing to provoke their adversaries or free-ride.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there are many instances in which American officials have been ambivalent or unwilling to reassure U.S. allies. Donald Trump is the most recent manifestation of this tendency, but he is hardly unique. During the early 1970s, Richard Nixon withdrew one-third of U.S. forces from South Korea over the protests of the South Koreans, continually weighing the merits of further withdrawals, and later that decade Jimmy Carter went as far as planning to pull out all U.S. ground forces. Similarly, John F. Kennedy threatened to withdraw U.S. troops from West Germany to secure compensation for the costs of stationing them in the country, remarking that "We cannot continue to pay for the military protection of Europe while the NATO states are not paying their fair share."<sup>8</sup>

Yet there has been little systematic study of the conditions under which great powers choose to reassure, and of how they manage these trade-offs. This is especially true outside the context of symmetric alliances among great powers in multipolarity, where the theory of alliance

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<sup>5</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*; Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Mancur Olson Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (1966), pp. 266-279; Todd Sandler, "The Economic Theory of Alliances: A Survey," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1993), pp. 446-483; James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 41, No.1 (1997), pp. 68-90; Brett V. Benson, *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting, No. 38 (Part II), January 25, 1963, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1961-1963, Vol. 13, pp. 486, 489.

management presented by Snyder was intended to apply.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, both seminal works as well as a slate of recent literature have downplayed the ability of protégés to shape the commitments of their patrons, arguing that the power disparity between them means that the alliance is more valuable to the protégé than to its patron, and that — especially in bipolar and unipolar systems — protégés have limited exit options in any case.<sup>10</sup>

In this study, I explore variation in reassurance in asymmetric alliances — those involving a disproportionately powerful state (patron) that provides security for its weaker partners (protégés). I argue that despite the power disparity that exists between them, patrons often have good reason to reassure their allies: namely, to dissuade allies from seeking outside options that can allow them to become more independent — such as nuclear weapons, conventional military arming, and other alliances. In doing so, a patron can more effectively maintain control over its alliances and preserve its bargaining leverage over its partners in the long-term. Indeed, such concerns are likely even when an ally lacks an alternative patron, as will often be the case in bipolar and unipolar systems. I focus on two factors to explain variation in reassurance both across allies and over time. First, the availability of outside options — whether in the form of self-reliance or alternative security partners — determines how easily allies can meet their security needs without the alliance. Second, when the patron faces constraints on the resources it can devote to its foreign commitments, allies are likely to question its reliability and consider pursuing outside options. The more credible an ally's outside options and the more it doubts its patron's reliability, the more its patron will reassure it.

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<sup>9</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Snyder, *Alliance Politics*; Tongfi Kim, “Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2011), pp. 350-377; Benson, *Constructing International Security*; Michaela Mattes, “Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design,” *International Organization*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (2012), pp. 679-707; Michael Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts,” *International Security* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2015), pp. 7-48.

I test these propositions by studying the behavior of the United States toward its allies, using data on U.S. reassurance that includes original coding of public statements, diplomatic visits, foreign troop deployments, and military exercises from 1950-2010. The results support my expectations; the United States makes greater effort to reassure allies with more credible outside options — even after including a number of controls to account for the level of threat.

This study makes a number of contributions. First and most directly, although reassurance is often invoked as an independent variable or causal mechanism, this is to my knowledge the first study to explicitly study variation in reassurance as an outcome variable. Reassurance plays an implicit role in what Snyder termed the “alliance security dilemma,” which holds that allies must constantly balance the twin risks of abandonment and entrapment and that states use reassurance to avoid being abandoned by their allies.<sup>11</sup> Yet the alliance security dilemma does not specify the conditions that explain variation in how states actually make the trade-off between showing more versus less commitment toward their partners. Izumikawa, for example, presents evidence that rewards and punishments can be means of maintaining alliance cohesion, but he largely treats reassurance as one independent variable among many, and does not present a theory of the conditions under which reassurance will be used.<sup>12</sup> I fill this gap by providing evidence on the conditions under which reassurance varies using new quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Second, this study contributes to the literature on alliance bargaining by expanding our conception of outside options, offering ways to measure them, and showing that states often attempt to prevent their allies from cultivating outside options in the first place. Scholars have long argued that allies which can find alternative sources of support hold a bargaining

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<sup>11</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1984), pp. 461-495; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>12</sup> Yasuhiro Izumikawa, “Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-US Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2018), pp. 108-120.

advantage.<sup>13</sup> Yet it remains unclear how to identify and measure which allies have stronger outside options *ex ante*. A recent pathbreaking study by Kim addressed this issue by focusing on polarity as an independent variable, arguing that the number of great powers determines allies' outside options.<sup>14</sup> However, this not only makes the strong assumption that allies can choose their patron from any great power, but also neglects other forms of outside options — such as neutrality via conventional or nuclear arming — which have played a substantial role in U.S. alliances.

Third, this study provides insight into how weaker parties in asymmetric alliances can shape the commitments of great powers. A wave of recent research argues that great powers can design their alliance treaties in ways that mitigate the alliance security dilemma. In particular, numerous studies argue that the nature of an alliance treaty — whether it is vague or precise, bilateral or multilateral — shapes great powers' ability to exert control over their partners and evade entrapment.<sup>15</sup> Yet all of these studies offer a “top-down” logic of alliance commitments, insofar as they assume that great powers can effectively dictate the design of their treaties, with little heed to the preferences of weaker states. Indeed, Mattes posits that “minor powers...might be unable to force more costly alliance designs given their limited bargaining power,” while Beckley similarly claims that the United States “is unlikely to incur major costs to display loyalty to allies that depend on U.S. protection and patronage for their survival.”<sup>16</sup> These arguments, however, have difficulty explaining why great powers like the United States have historically gone to great lengths to reassure their protégés. While patrons do indeed shape their

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<sup>13</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*; Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence*.

<sup>14</sup> Tongfi Kim, *The Supply Side of Security: A Market Theory of Military Alliances* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Kim, “Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States”; Mattes, “Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design”; Benson, *Constructing International Security*; Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Mattes, “Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design,” p. 680; Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts,” p. 19.

alliance commitments to exert control over their allies, they often do so not unilaterally by fiat but by accommodating their allies' fears of abandonment.

In the next two sections, I discuss the literature on reassurance, and then present my theory. I then proceed to the quantitative analysis, followed by a case study on U.S.-West German relations during the 1960s and 1970s to illustrate causal mechanisms. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of theoretical and policy implications and avenues for future research.

## **Reassurance in Alliances**

Reassurance — which I define as acts made by a state which are intended to convince an ally that its assistance will be forthcoming in the event of an attack from a third party state — has received surprisingly little attention in the alliances literature.<sup>17</sup> Instead, most research studies the causes and consequences of alliance formation. Here, the alliance treaty itself is treated as the ultimate assurance and indicator of support and friendly relations.<sup>18</sup> Scholars have in turn studied whether the existence and design of an alliance affect a number of outcomes of interest, including conflict<sup>19</sup>, nuclear proliferation<sup>20</sup>, trade between allies<sup>21</sup>, and alliance reliability.<sup>22</sup> Yet focusing on alliance formation and design overlooks alliance management dynamics. Indeed, the

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<sup>17</sup> See also Jeffrey Knopf, ed. *Security Assurances and Nuclear Nonproliferation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2012. Notably, this definition of reassurance excludes measures taken to support allies who are already under attack.

<sup>18</sup> James D. Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1994), pp. 270-297; James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3 (2000), pp. 63-83; Curtis S. Signorino and Jeffrey M. Ritter, "Tau-b or Not Tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1999), pp. 115-144.

<sup>19</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds, "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2003), pp. 427-439; Benson, *Constructing International Security*.

<sup>20</sup> Dan Reiter, "Security Commitments and Nuclear Proliferation," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2014), pp. 61-80; Philipp C. Bleek and Eric B. Lorber, "Security Guarantees and Allied Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2014), pp. 429-454.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew G. Long and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Trading for Security: Military Alliances and Economic Agreements," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (2006), pp. 433-451.

<sup>22</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds and Sezi Anac, "Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance," *International Interactions*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2005), pp. 183-202.

design of alliance treaties cannot explain much of the variation in states' satisfaction with their alliance partners. Only 27 of the 551 alliances in the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP, version 4.0) dataset entered into a "second phase" with altered provisions between 1946 and 2016 — and only three of these were U.S. alliances.<sup>23</sup>

Reassurance has not gone unnoticed, however. A number of studies point to the effect that patron signals of support can have on allied behavior – in particular, dampening the risk of nuclear proliferation and reducing allies' incentives for military readiness.<sup>24</sup> McManus and Yarhi-Milo, for their part, find that autocratic states tend to receive private signals of U.S. support while democratic states receive public ones.<sup>25</sup>

But although the literature recognizes the importance of reassurance and has studied *how* patrons reassure and the *consequences* of reassurance, research explaining the *causes* of reassurance and identifying the conditions under which patrons reassure is sparse. Indeed, some scholars see it as essentially suboptimal. Posen, for example, claims that reassurance encourages allies to free-ride and engage in risky behavior such as provoking their adversaries.<sup>26</sup> Fearon similarly argues that states may elect not to tie their hands in extended deterrence crises because doing so can lead to moral hazard problems in their alliances.<sup>27</sup> In U.S. foreign policy, many

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<sup>23</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds et al., "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944," *International Interactions*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2002), pp. 237-260.

<sup>24</sup> Knopf, *Security Assurances and Nuclear Nonproliferation*; Alexander Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance: The Alliance Politics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Carla Martinez Machain and T. Clifton Morgan, "The Effect of US Troop Deployment on Host States' Foreign Policy," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2013), pp. 102-123.

<sup>25</sup> Roseanne W. McManus and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "The Logic of 'Offstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations," *International Organization*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (2017), pp. 701-733.

<sup>26</sup> Posen, *Restraint*.

<sup>27</sup> Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests."

scholars skeptical of reassurance see it as being partly a function of American political pathologies — whether due to domestic lobbying or elite habit.<sup>28</sup>

While there is a vast academic literature on deterrence, it pays limited attention to reassurance except to note that the two are likely to overlap.<sup>29</sup> A few authors suggest that reassuring allies may be more difficult than deterring adversaries, whether due to psychological biases or because allies care not only about whether deterrence works, but also about the consequences of deterrence failure.<sup>30</sup> But this literature does not investigate the conditions under which great powers reassure allies apart from what is required for deterrence.

The literature on alliance management and bargaining, for its part, sheds light onto the subject by pointing out that convincing an ally of one's own loyalty is a way to encourage it to remain loyal as well.<sup>31</sup> However, in addition to not specifying and empirically verifying the conditions under which this logic is most compelling, much of the literature downplays the risk of abandonment that great powers face in asymmetric alliances. Seminal works, for example, argue that great powers have little reason to fear abandonment in their asymmetric partnerships with weaker states — particularly in bipolar and unipolar systems — as weaker allies are inessential to the great power's survival and have nowhere else to turn for protection.<sup>32</sup> A wave

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<sup>28</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007); Patrick Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2018), pp. 9-46.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*. Second ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983); David S. Yost, "Assurance and U.S. Extended Deterrence in NATO," *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (2009), pp. 755-780; Murdock, Exploring the Nuclear Posture Implications of Extended Deterrence and Assurance; Brett V. Benson, Adam Meirowitz, and Kristopher W. Ramsay, "Inducing Deterrence through Moral Hazard in Alliance Contracts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2014), pp. 307-335.

<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Michael Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (1982), pp. 309-324.

<sup>31</sup> Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics"; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>32</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1990), pp. 137-168; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

of recent literature similarly argues that great powers have considerable leeway in setting the terms of their alliance commitments to weaker states.<sup>33</sup>

This conventional wisdom in large part underestimates patrons' fears of abandonment by their allies because it tends to take an overly narrow view of both what abandonment by a smaller power can mean for its patron and what outside options are available to allies. In asymmetric alliances, the most salient risk for the patron is not necessarily that allies will break the alliance or refuse to provide support in wartime, which is generally of paramount importance in symmetric alliances between great powers, all of which can meaningfully shape the outcome of a major war. Rather, allies can deny the patron a number of other benefits, such as refusing to allow the patron's military forces on their territory, providing military access to the patron's adversaries, and undercutting the patron's restrictions on trade with mutual adversaries. Similarly, allies' outside options can include not just finding another great power to protect them, but any number of measures that can allow them to become more self-reliant and less dependent on the patron — such as conventional military arming, obtaining nuclear weapons, forming coalitions with other smaller states, or simply reaching a rapprochement with adversaries.

Moreover, even studies which draw attention to weaker allies' capacity to influence their patron provide limited insight into the conditions under which allies' outside options are credible, and do not focus on reassurance. Kim treats polarity — the number of great powers — as the main determinant of outside options, thus ignoring alliances among smaller powers as well as assuming that all great powers are viable alternatives.<sup>34</sup> For other authors, allies' bargaining leverage derives from their strategic value, which they can exploit to extract benefits such as

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<sup>33</sup> Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States"; Benson, *Constructing International Security*; Mattes, "Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design"; Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances."

<sup>34</sup> Kim, *The Supply Side of Security*.

military base rents.<sup>35</sup> Yet strategically valuable allies should need reassurance the least, as their patron has intrinsic motivations to protect them.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, in many cases patrons reassure their allies even when the latter do not explicitly bargain for it. Indeed, reassurance is often not just a bargaining outcome, but rather, as I argue below, a means for the patron to preserve its *future* bargaining leverage by encouraging allies to remain dependent upon it. In this way, patrons not only react to allies' demands, but also proactively discourage them from considering outside options in the first place.

Thus, little research has systematically explored variation in reassurance in asymmetric alliances, and as a result our understanding of *why* and *when* patrons reassure is incomplete. This study fills the gap by presenting a strategic theory of reassurance which both explains why allies need reassurance as well as identifies the conditions under which a patron is likely to reassure them. In the following section I address each of these questions in turn. In doing so, I describe the conditions under which allies have more credible outside options, as well as the patron's motivations to discourage allies from pursuing measures that can reduce their dependence on the alliance.

### **Theory: Reassurance and Alliance Control**

My theory on the causes of reassurance in asymmetric alliances is built on four assumptions, which I elaborate upon in the next part of this section. First, the weaker party (the junior ally, or protégé) seeks protection from its stronger partner (the patron). Second, the patron prefers that its allies remain loyal to it and pursue policies consistent with its interests. Third, neither the patron

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<sup>35</sup> David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Alexander Cooley and Hendrik Spruyt, *Contracting States: Sovereign Transfers in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High: Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

nor its allies know each other's intentions with certainty, and those intentions can change. Fourth, an ally's willingness to defer to the patron's preferences is largely a function of its dependence on the patron.

Based on these assumptions, I argue that patrons use reassurance both proactively and reactively to offset allies' fears of abandonment, in order to discourage them from pursuing outside options that could allow them to reduce their dependence and distance themselves from the alliance. The problem for both the protégé and the patron is one of time inconsistency; each has reason to question whether its partner will continue to value and uphold the relationship. Protégés will fear that their patron may abandon them when faced with the prospect of fighting a costly war on their behalf, while the patron will fear that protégés may chart a more independent and less deferential foreign policy course if and when they outgrow their dependence on its protection. Reassurance represents a solution to both fears, offering allies greater confidence in their patron's continued commitment to defend them while providing the patron a means to maintain influence over its partners.

A patron thus faces a dilemma. On the one hand, reassuring allies encourages them to remain dependent on its protection and thus subject to its influence in the long-term. By doing so, however, a patron reduces the credibility of its threats of abandonment and thus undercuts its short-term leverage. The theory I present in the following pages explores the conditions under which the patron has greater incentive to use reassurance, and derives testable hypotheses.

### **The Need for Reassurance in Alliances**

The international politics literature largely treats alliances as means for states to bolster their security or gain influence over partners. In terms of security, alliances represent a means of

“capability-aggregation” with which states maximize their relative power vis-à-vis third parties.<sup>37</sup> Alternatively, alliances can provide states with other benefits, including side payments or opportunities to restrain their partners.<sup>38</sup> This is most common in asymmetric alliances between great powers and non-great powers. Weaker states need security but can do little to improve the security of a great power. As a result, great powers provide them with protection, and in exchange allies give up some of their autonomy. This often entails policy concessions to the patron such as striking trade agreements on terms favorable to it, granting it military bases, and refusing to cooperate with its adversaries.<sup>39</sup>

However, it is unlikely that all members will ever be fully confident in the alliance. In an anarchic international system, no higher authority can force partners to cooperate, and parties to an alliance are likely to be concerned about both whether their partners will actually support them and the amount of support they will bring to bear. In principle, alliance treaties bind their signatories to support each other, and are often considered the strongest means by which partners can assure each other of their commitments to do so.<sup>40</sup> In practice, however, alliance treaties are an imperfect means of assurance. First, the terms of an alliance are rarely, if ever, so unambiguous as to remove all doubt about whether a partner would be obligated to act, or whether it could instead justify non-intervention by appealing to the situation’s extenuating or unique circumstances.<sup>41</sup> Even if partners do follow through, the timing and amount of their

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<sup>37</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>38</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, “Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management,” *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*. Ed. by Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1976), pp. 247-286; Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1991), pp. 904-933.

<sup>40</sup> Morrow, “Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs”; Morrow, “Alliances: Why Write Them Down?”

<sup>41</sup> Leeds et al., “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944”; Benson, *Constructing International Security*; Mattes, “Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design.”

support is subject to their own discretion.<sup>42</sup> Second, not only are alliances' terms quite static, but alliances can also be abrogated, and partners' interests, capabilities, and intentions can change over time and may be difficult to observe.<sup>43</sup> Finally, the primary obligation of an alliance — support during wartime — is not an ongoing process where compliance can be verified. A patron's willingness to carry out its promise can only be determined once it has been tested, at which point it is too late.

Allies are thus likely to need frequent reaffirmation of their patron's commitment. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, for example, described France as having “an almost hysterical fear that we and the British will one day pull out of Western Europe.”<sup>44</sup> More recently, a 2017 poll showed that 20-40% of the populations of NATO countries doubted U.S. willingness to defend NATO.<sup>45</sup> Reassurance serves as a way for a state to convince its partners that it will honor its obligations. This can take the form of public promises, military forces deployed on allied territory, or high-profile diplomatic visits, to name just a few. These serve to bolster allies' confidence by demonstrating the patron's willingness to incur costs on their behalf or by putting its reputation among international and domestic observers on the line.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, patrons also face uncertainty about their allies' intentions. Allies' willingness to pursue policies in line with the patron's preferences are subject to doubt over time, as they may change course by downgrading their reliance upon the alliance and finding other

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<sup>42</sup> Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances.”

<sup>43</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds, “Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties,” *International Organization*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (2003), pp. 801-827; Brett Ashley Leeds and Burcu Savun, “Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (2007), pp. 1118-1132; Roseanne W. McManus, “Making It Personal: The Role of Leader-Specific Signals in Extended Deterrence,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (2018), pp. 982-995.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley R. Sloan, *Defense of the West: NATO, the European Union, and the Transatlantic Bargain* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> Pew Research Center, “NATO's Image Improves on Both Sides of Atlantic,” May 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 2008 ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Fearon, “Signaling Foreign Policy Interests.”

ways to address their security concerns. This, in turn, renders them less dependent on the patron's protection, and thus less susceptible to its influence.<sup>47</sup> American policymakers as far back as the 1950s, for example, feared that Japan might position itself as a neutral actor that kept both the United States and the Soviet Union at arm's length, and they sought to discourage it from pursuing a more independent foreign policy by convincing the Japanese that the United States would sufficiently meet Japan's security needs.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, U.S. officials at various points, particularly during the 1970s and again in the 1990s, worried that a united Europe could develop into a political and even military rival of the United States.<sup>49</sup>

Fundamentally, then, reassurance is an instrument of control, intended to "lock-in" the patron's leverage. Protection is the patron's quid pro quo in the alliance, and if allies doubt this protection, they are likely to seek other options for meeting their security needs. In the short-term, these may threaten the patron's interests by, for example, tempting adversaries to drive a wedge in the alliance.<sup>50</sup> In the long-term, the pursuit and acquisition of outside options can have downstream effects in the form of greater allied autonomy. Independent allies, in turn, have less incentive to uphold their end of the bargain by supporting the patron's foreign policy initiatives — joining it in military conflict, hosting its bases, striking favorable trade agreements — and refusing to do the same for its adversaries.<sup>51</sup> In the remainder of this section, I discuss the outside options available to allies, the patron's motivations for discouraging allies from seeking them,

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<sup>47</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>48</sup> Yukinori Komine, "Whither a 'Resurgent Japan': The Nixon Doctrine and Japan's Defense Buildup, 1969-1976," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2014), pp. 88-128; Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics."

<sup>49</sup> Barry R. Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2006), pp. 182-183; Thomas Robb, *A Strained Partnership?: US-UK Relations in the Era of Detente, 1969-77* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2014), ch. 2

<sup>50</sup> Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry."

<sup>51</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*; Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*.

and the conditions under which these options are more credible, ultimately deriving testable hypotheses to explain variation in reassurance.

### **Allies' Outside Options: Self-Reliance and Alternative Partners**

Reassurance occurs in the shadow of alliance “exit,” which consists of a spectrum. In the most extreme cases, allies can abrogate or violate the alliance treaty. Far more commonly, however, patrons fear their allies will attempt any number of independent policies — such as pursuing rapprochement with adversaries, seeking partnerships with third parties, or striving for neutrality — and distancing themselves from the patron while still remaining in the alliance. The allies most capable of pursuing independent policies and distancing themselves from the patron — and thus more likely to receive reassurance — are those which have more attractive outside options.

Two types of outside options offer allies a route to autonomy from their patron: self-reliance and alternative partners. The allies most able to reduce their dependence on the alliance are those with both friendly relations with third parties and a degree of self-sufficiency. First, allies can attempt to provide for their own security, in effect “going it alone.” If allies are sufficiently powerful or are capable of obtaining nuclear weapons, they may be able to meet their security needs without relying on another country’s protection or striking deals with adversaries. Second, they can move closer to third party states — including but not limited to their (or the patron’s) adversaries. For one, allies can pursue *détente* with adversaries, whether through compromise or by making concessions to them in order to reduce tensions and the risk of war — or even in exchange for direct pledges of nonaggression. Alternatively, they can seek support from other

third parties, whether by seeking a security guarantee from another great power or by forming coalitions with non-great powers.

Each of these outside options carries potentially adverse consequences for the patron in both the short- and long-term. Allies' arms buildups, for one, can exacerbate their neighbors' insecurity, sparking regional arms races which can produce spirals of hostility that draw allies — and potentially the patron — into war.<sup>52</sup> These consequences are magnified in the case of allied nuclear weapons development, which can more rapidly shift the balance of power. Nuclear proliferation may beget further proliferation, and may raise the risk of war — whether accidental or intentional — by emboldening allies to behave more aggressively and by giving neighbors incentive to conduct a preventive strike.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence showing that the United States put considerable pressure on its allies to refrain from seeking independent nuclear capabilities.<sup>54</sup>

A patron similarly has incentive to prevent allies from moving too close to third parties. In the case of mutual adversaries, any seeming discrepancy in the alliance's posture can give the appearance of weakened alliance cohesion, and thus diminish the alliance's deterrent power and tempt adversaries to drive a wedge through it.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the patron will likely be concerned about the concessions its ally might make as part of a compromise with an adversary which could undercut the alliance's ability to pose a united front, weaken the patron, or strengthen the adversary — such as evicting the patron from bases on the ally's territory.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, if allies

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<sup>52</sup> Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Mark S. Bell, "Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2015), pp. 87-119; Nuno P. Monteiro and Alexandre Debs, *Nuclear Politics: The Strategic Causes of Proliferation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> Nicholas L. Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Timothy W. Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2011), pp. 155-189.

<sup>56</sup> Lake, *Entangling Relations*, pp. 140-141; Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics."

align with non-adversary third parties, the patron faces the possibility of “commitment creep,” wherein it may be entangled in the affairs of its allies’ partners.

In the long-term, outside options reduce allies’ need for the patron’s protection, whether by providing a substitute for it or by mitigating their threat environments. This reduces allies’ dependence on the patron and enables them to reclaim some autonomy, which is detrimental to the patron first of all because the more independent allies are, the less control it has over them. The patron can thus expect that such allies will be less cooperative with it and less likely to spurn cooperation with adversaries out of deference to it.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Kroenig argues that U.S. opposition to allied nuclear proliferation stems from its desire to retain influence over them.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, acts that reduce allies’ dependence on the patron can make the path to actually leaving the alliance more plausible in the future. France, for example, withdrew from NATO military command in 1966 after obtaining nuclear weapons earlier that decade.

Importantly, the patron may be suspicious of allies’ attempts to exercise autonomy even if they have no intention to abandon or reduce their commitment to the partnership. As I discuss in the case study, for example, American policymakers regarded West Germany’s rapprochement with the Communist bloc during the 1970s with apprehension. Their fears did not reflect a genuine West German desire to leave NATO; nevertheless, they anticipated that incremental steps toward a more independent foreign policy and improvements in relations with the Soviet Union could eventually tempt Western German leaders to conclude that their need for NATO had diminished.

A patron thus has incentive to reassure its allies to discourage them from meeting their security needs through outside options. It can use reassurance proactively to encourage allies to

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<sup>57</sup>Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry”; Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*.

<sup>58</sup>Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

remain dependent, or reactively if allies are already considering outside options. Allies may even deliberately use their outside options as bargaining chips to extract assurances. South Korea, for example, pursued nuclear weapons in the 1970s both to hedge against U.S. abandonment and to deter the United States from withdrawing troops from the Korean Peninsula.<sup>59</sup>

I would therefore expect reassurance to vary in response to the credibility of allies' threats to pursue outside options and distance themselves from the alliance. The allies best positioned to become more independent of their patron, in turn, are those which can more easily pursue self-reliance or seek alternative partners. Specifically, allies with significant *latent military power*, a *latent nuclear capability*, and a greater number of *alternative security partners* have stronger outside options, and will receive more reassurance. Each of these facilitates allies' path to greater independence from the alliance, and functions as a latent capability for alliance exit. The allies with the most credible outside options are those which have a combination of all three.

### **Self-Reliance**

First, allies with larger economies can more easily pursue a nonaligned, autonomous foreign policy, whether by relying on their own military power or by aligning with other states. For one, economic resources serve as the foundations of military power. While they may not be able to defeat a great power by themselves, powerful allies can more credibly threaten to impose significant costs on an invader.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, their larger market size decreases their dependence on foreign trade, rendering them less sensitive to economic coercion.<sup>61</sup> Thus, allies with larger economies can more easily pursue neutrality, and are not as vulnerable to the bullying or

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<sup>59</sup> Sung Gul Hong, "The Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option," *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*. Ed. by Pyong-guk Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 483-510.

<sup>60</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>61</sup> Chad Rector, *Federations: The Political Dynamics of Cooperation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

coercion which might otherwise make them reluctant to distance themselves from alliance with their patron.

Second, the credibility of allies' threats to pursue nuclear weapons is a function of both their economic and military strength and whether they have the latent capacity to build nuclear weapons. Conventionally powerful allies have a more credible threat of obtaining nuclear weapons for two reasons. For one, they have greater resources with which they can attempt to develop nuclear weapons. Second, their greater conventional strength renders them more able to deter preventive attacks on their nuclear programs.<sup>62</sup> States with a latent nuclear capacity, in turn, can more quickly obtain nuclear weapons. Fuhrmann and Tkach even find that nuclear latency itself may deter attacks.<sup>63</sup> This is especially likely to be the case among states which are not subject to inspections and safeguards under the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), as their nuclear weapons efforts can more easily evade detection.<sup>64</sup> This, in turn, makes reassurance more important by rendering preventive efforts more relevant than reactive efforts to discourage allied nuclearization. The possibility of detection may also reduce allies' willingness to seek nuclear weapons by raising the possibility of preventive attack by a neighbor or adversary, regional nuclear arms racing, or economic sanctions imposed by the patron or a third party.<sup>65</sup>

### **Alternative Partners**

Finally, allies with more partners to choose from can more easily meet their security needs by relying on third parties. Specifying which allies have more viable alternative security partners is

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<sup>62</sup> Monteiro and Debs, *Nuclear Politics*; Jan Ludvik, "Closing the Window of Vulnerability: Nuclear Proliferation and Conventional Retaliation," *Security Studies* Forthcoming (2018), doi: 10.1080/09636412.2018.1508635.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, "Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2015), pp. 443-461.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Yonatan Lupu, "Do Arms Control Treaties Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 60 (2016), pp. 530-539.

<sup>65</sup> Monteiro and Debs, *Nuclear Politics*; Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

difficult *a priori*, as states can choose their partners based on expedient circumstances. On average, however, I would expect that the allies at greatest risk of realigning are those which are on friendlier terms with the patron's major power competitors. Similarly, allies with larger economies and more latent military power also have more to offer third parties. The patron's adversaries will be tempted to improve relations with powerful allies because peeling them away from the patron does more to undermine it. Indeed, Izumikawa argues that this explains the Soviet Union's attempt to entice Japan away from the United States in the 1950s, which the United States countered with its own assurances and rewards.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, larger allies are more valuable to other potential partners because they can bring more resources to bear on those partners' behalf.<sup>67</sup> China's economic and military clout made it a valuable partner to the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, for example, which allowed it to further distance itself from the Soviet Union.

Alternatively, Kim argues that allies have fewer options in unipolar system, where there is only one great power (the patron), than in bipolar systems, where there are two.<sup>68</sup> However, this logic breaks down when the other great power in a bipolar system is, as will likely be the case, the very threat against which the alliance is directed.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the assertion that allies have no alternatives in a unipolar system assumes that allies face threats that only the patron can protect them from. This is less likely to be the case than in bipolar systems, however, as the threats allies face — to the extent that they face any — are less severe. The absence of another great power which poses a threat to their survival reduces allies' dependence on the patron and creates

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<sup>66</sup> Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics."

<sup>67</sup> Kim, *The Supply Side of Security*.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

opportunities for them to rely on non-great powers — including each other.<sup>70</sup> Thus, it is difficult to make *ex ante* predictions about relative levels of reassurance during the bipolar (Cold War) and unipolar (post-Cold War) periods due to these countervailing effects; I would expect them to be relatively comparable.

A summary of the causal logic can be found in Figures 1-2. The hypotheses I test are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1.** Allies with stronger outside options will receive more reassurance from their patron.

**Hypothesis 1a.** Allies with greater latent military power will receive more reassurance.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Allies with a latent nuclear weapons capability will receive more reassurance.

**Hypothesis 1c.** Allies with more alternative partners will receive more reassurance.

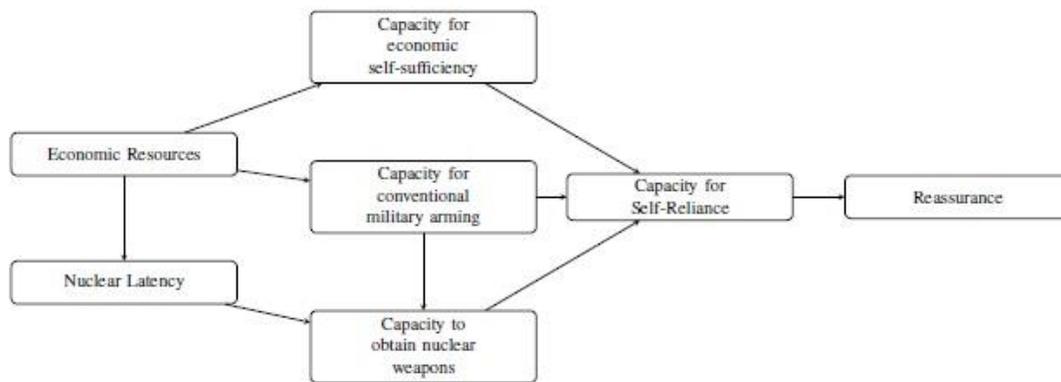


Figure 1: The causal pathway between allies’ capacity for self-reliance and patron reassurance.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2009), pp. 107-108; Zachary Selden, “Balancing Against or Balancing With? The Spectrum of Alignment and the Endurance of American Hegemony,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2013), pp. 330-364.

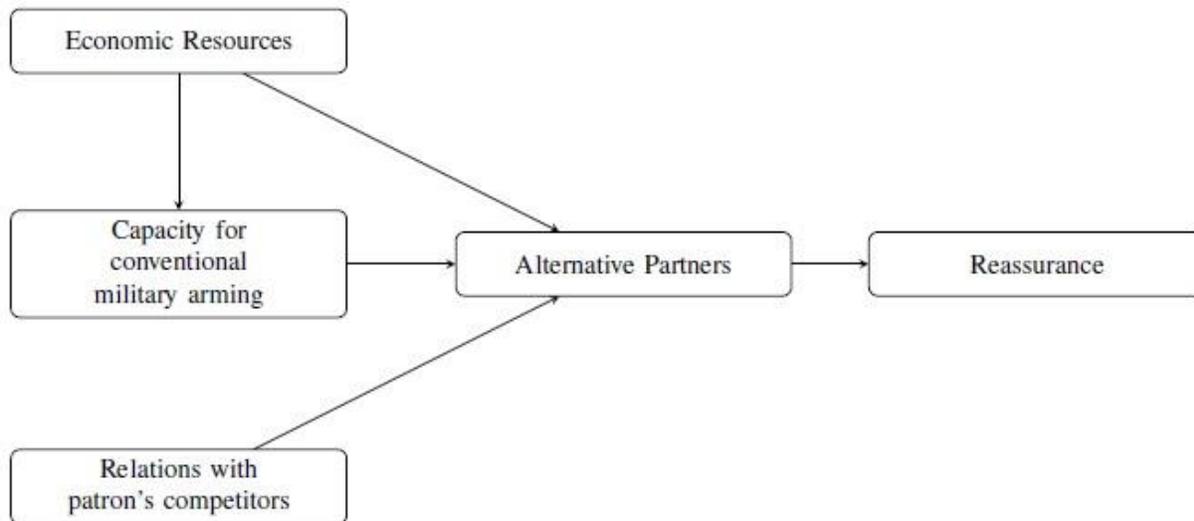


Figure 2: The causal pathway between allies' alternative partners and patron reassurance.

### **When Do Allies Pursue Outside Options?: The Role of Resource Constraints**

Allies are more likely to chart an independent course, in turn, when they doubt the patron's reliability. This reduces the security benefits allies can expect from relying on the patron, which gives them incentive to consider outside options. In particular, allies are likely to question the alliance's value when the patron faces constraints on its ability to sustain its foreign commitments and pressure to retrench from those commitments. Such constraints shape allies' incentives for pursuing outside options through three mechanisms: first, by making the patron more reluctant to intervene in disputes on allies' behalf; second, by reducing the resources that are available to the patron for defending allies; and third, by encouraging the patron to seek détente with its adversaries.

When a patron faces pressure to retrench, allies may fear that it will abandon them in an hour of need, whether owing to a lack of political will or to limits on the resources it can devote to their defense. In the case of South Korea, for example, the United States proved reluctant to

respond to a series of North Korean provocations during the late 1960s and early 1970s, including an assassination attempt on the South Korean President and the shooting down of a U.S. aircraft. This was in large part because the Vietnam War constrained both U.S. ability and willingness to escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula — much to the chagrin of the South Korean government.<sup>71</sup>

Additionally, constraints create incentives for the patron to pursue détente with or accommodate its adversaries in order to avoid over-extension. This was part of the logic behind Mikhail Gorbachev’s pursuit of détente with the West during the 1980s, as well as Richard Nixon’s rapprochement with China and the Soviet Union in the 1970s.<sup>72</sup> However, patron-adversary détente is also likely to stoke allies’ fears of being “sold out” as part of a grand bargain between the patron and its adversary.<sup>73</sup> During the late 1960s and 1970s many U.S. allies, despite seeing merits in the relaxation of tensions between the Eastern and Western blocs, feared that if dictated by the United States, détente could be the precursor to the United States striking a deal with the Soviet Union or China at the expense of their own interests.

When allies perceive that the patron is unwilling or unable to defend them, they are likely to seek outside options. This, in turn, gives the patron incentive to reassure them. Lanoszka finds that U.S. allies are more likely to pursue nuclear weapons in the wake of doubts about the credibility of U.S. protection — and, in particular, after a major withdrawal of American

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<sup>71</sup> Robert R. Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121 and Mayaguez Incidents: Some Continuities and Changes* (Baltimore, MD: Occasional Papers/Reprints in Contemporary Asian Studies, 1978), pp. 6-13; Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 63-65; Min Yong Lee, “The Vietnam War: South Korea’s Search for National Security,” *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*. Ed. by Pyong-guk Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 420-421.

<sup>72</sup> Randall L. Schweller and William C. Wohlforth, “Power Test: Evaluating Realism in Response to the End of the Cold War,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2000), pp. 60-107.

<sup>73</sup> Keren Yarhi-Milo, Alexander Lanoszka, and Zachary Cooper, “To Arm or To Ally? The Patron’s Dilemma and the Strategic Logic of Arms Transfers and Alliances,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2016), pp. 90-139.

troops.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, South Korea and Taiwan began pursuing nuclear weapons in response to concerns about U.S. reliability during the 1970s and ceased pursuit only in response to strong American pressure coupled with reassurance.

Both *material* (resource) and *political* constraints can put pressure on the patron's ability to sustain its foreign commitments. Costly foreign wars and economic downturns, for example, can sap the patron's resources. The costs of maintaining foreign commitments at their present level may thus become less tenable due to budgetary constraints brought on by economic hardship or the loss of blood and treasure in foreign wars.<sup>75</sup> During the 1950s, for example, the Eisenhower Administration sought to reassure U.S. allies that its "New Look" policy, in which the United States would rein in its defense spending in the aftermath of the Korean War and look to allies to provide more for their own defense, did not imply a weakening of the U.S. commitment to defend them.<sup>76</sup> This leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2.** A patron will reassure its allies more when it faces resource constraints.

In terms of political constraints, domestic isolationist sentiment raises the possibility that domestic actors will force policymakers to renege on their commitments.<sup>77</sup> When policymakers face domestic pressure to retrench by reducing either defense spending or their country's overseas military presence, exit becomes more attractive for allies. Richard Nixon, for one, feared that Congressional and public pressure for retrenchment during the 1970s — most notably

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<sup>74</sup> Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance*.

<sup>75</sup> Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2011), pp. 7-44; Kyle Haynes, "Decline and Devolution: The Sources of Strategic Military Retrenchment," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (2015), pp. 490-502.

<sup>76</sup> Sloan, *Defense of the West*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>77</sup> See also Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1988), pp. 427-460.

in the form of a series of amendments and resolutions sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, which called for withdrawing significant numbers of U.S. troops from abroad — might lead allies to move closer to the Soviet Union or to pursue nuclear weapons.<sup>78</sup> U.S. officials thus used considerable reassurance measures to counteract the voices of domestic actors.

Political constraints are likely to be partly, though not wholly, influenced by material constraints. That is, I would expect domestic pressure for retrenchment to be stronger in the aftermath of a costly foreign war, or in the wake of an economic crisis, as resource constraints are likely to sap the public's appetite for foreign entanglements. Research suggests that protracted, costly wars sap domestic political support for foreign entanglements.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, economic hardship constrains the patron's ability to collect revenue, which forces guns-butter trade-offs in which domestic audiences may prioritize internal spending over spending on foreign commitments.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, material constraints are unlikely to be fully determinate of political constraints. Indeed, domestic audiences may even see spending on the military as a means of injecting money into the economy, per Keynesian economic logic.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Kreps shows that policymakers can insulate themselves from domestic accountability by financing war through borrowing and deficit spending rather than taxation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Phil Williams, *The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>79</sup> John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973); Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> Terrence L. Chapman, Patrick J. McDonald, and Scott Moser, "The Domestic Politics of Strategic Retrenchment, Power Shifts, and Preventive War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2015), pp. 133-144.

<sup>81</sup> Guy D. Whitten and Laron K. Williams, "Buttery Guns and Welfare Hawks: The Politics of Defense Spending in Advanced Industrial Democracies," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2011), pp. 117-134.

<sup>82</sup> Sarah E. Kreps, *Taxing Wars: The American Way of War Finance and the Decline of Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

**Hypothesis 3.** A patron will reassure its allies more when it faces domestic pressure to retrench from its foreign commitments.

A summary of the causal pathway behind H2 and H3 can be found in Figure 3. In terms of the mechanisms beyond these hypotheses, I would expect to see evidence that resource constraints and political constraints are associated with: 1) a reluctance to intervene on allies' behalf; 2) a decline in the resources a patron devotes to its military readiness; and 3) the pursuit of *détente* with adversaries. Indeed, the results in supplementary Tables A8-A10 suggest that these expectations are borne out.

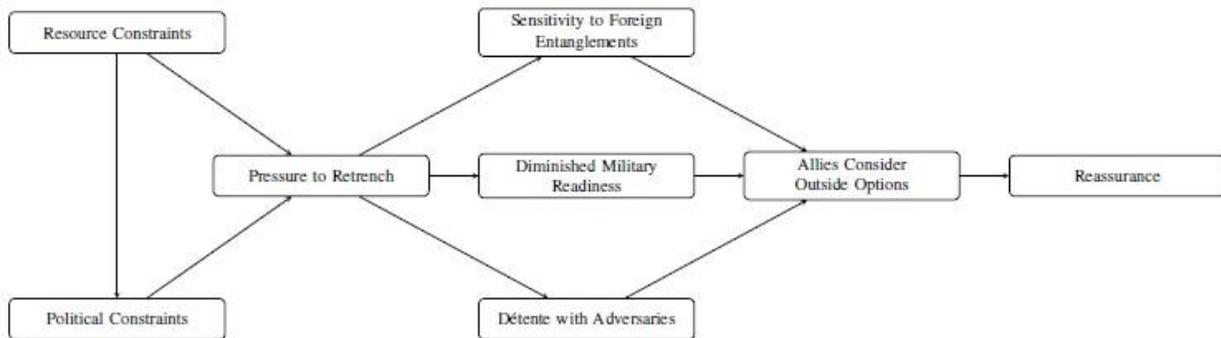


Figure 3: The causal pathway between pressure to retrench and reassurance.

## Research Design

I test the hypotheses using a cross-national dataset of U.S. reassurance between 1950 and 2010. The unit of analysis is the ally-year, and my sample includes all states defined as having defense pacts or ententes with the United States in Version 4.1 of the Correlates of War's Formal Alliances Dataset.<sup>83</sup> However, I exclude U.S. allies in the Americas — both Canada, to which the United States is allied through NATO, and the Latin American countries, many of which it is

<sup>83</sup> Douglas M. Gibler, *International Military Alliances, 1648-2008* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009). <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>.

allied to through the Organization of American States (OAS). This is because these countries were not subject to direct threat of attack from the Communist bloc — only to internal subversion, which is not this study’s focus. Moreover, they were within the U.S. Monroe Doctrine sphere of influence, and did not share many adversaries with the United States — aside from (in some cases) the Soviet Union, from which they were quite far. Nevertheless, the results are largely robust to the inclusion of U.S. allies in the Americas (see Table A19).<sup>84</sup> In addition to creating a tractable sample that is not *ad hoc*, limiting the universe of cases to formal allies allows me to impose a number of scope conditions. First, it establishes a baseline of prior commitment, as treaty allies can most reasonably expect to be reassured in the first place. Moreover, formal allies are likely to share common defense interests and threat perceptions, which is not necessarily the case among informal allies.<sup>85</sup> Second, it limits the sample to relationships in which allies receive guarantees of protection, rather than solely material benefits such as aid and arms.

Ideally, I would also include the Soviet Union’s alliances during the same period. However, in addition to data availability issues, there are arguably at least two differences between their blocs that render comparisons problematic. First, participation in the American alliance system was voluntary rather than coerced. Second, Soviet allies were comparatively more concerned with internal threats than external ones.<sup>86</sup> But although I do not explicitly study

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<sup>84</sup> The states included in the sample are shown in Table A5. The results are robust to using the ATOP coding of alliances (see Table A18).

<sup>85</sup> Evan N. Resnick, “Strange Bedfellows: U.S. Bargaining Behavior with Allies of Convenience,” *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2010), pp. 144-184.

<sup>86</sup> Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Soviet alliances, Nelson and Crump present evidence which suggests that bargaining within the Soviet bloc was shaped to a great extent by the threat of exit.<sup>87</sup>

### **Threats to Inference**

In studying the effects of outside options on U.S. reassurance, there are three primary challenges. The first is endogeneity. Allies may make threats or attempts to seek outside options in response to a lack of reassurance, and thus the causality of the relationship could be reversed. Similarly, the United States might withhold reassurance from allies which are distancing themselves from the alliance to punish them. As a result, I do not use attempts to pursue outside options as my independent variables. Instead, I focus on factors that affect allies' latent ability to exploit outside options. These factors are observable by both parties, thus allowing them to tailor their behavior in anticipation of the other's actions.

The second is unobserved variation across countries and regions. The threat environment allies face is likely to vary across regions due to their geographic differences. In addition, the type of alliance and the number of U.S. allies varies significantly across regions; whereas it had a tight multilateral alliance (NATO) with numerous states in Europe, it had bilateral pacts (excluding SEATO) with a smaller number of allies in Asia. As such, I always include country or region fixed effects in my models.<sup>88</sup>

Third is change over time. It may be the case that U.S. assurances universally increase or decrease over time in ways not captured by the control variables, and thus the estimated effects

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<sup>87</sup> Daniel N. Nelson, *Alliance Behavior in the Warsaw Pact* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986); Lauren Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-1969* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> My coding of regions is based on the Correlates of War's; see appendix for details.

for the independent variables might be biased if they are correlated with these secular trends.<sup>89</sup> To account for temporal trends, I always include one of the following: linear, squared, and cubic time trends; year fixed effects; or decade fixed effects.<sup>90</sup>

## **Dependent Variable**

For my dependent variable I use several measures of reassurance, the primary of which are instances of public statements and diplomatic visits made by U.S. officials to allied countries. In the case study, I examine additional means of reassurance that are harder to capture in a quantitative analysis, including nuclear and conventional military doctrine and private statements. For a quantitative analysis, however, I argue that statements and visits best capture the theoretical concept of reassurance.

While not as costly a signal as more tangible measures such as foreign-deployed troops, statements and visits are far from costless. The time leaders spend visiting other countries or making public statements of support is time not spent on other priorities.<sup>91</sup> A wave of recent literature argues that presidents' time and attention are scarce resources constrained by competing priorities, and has shown that presidents' involvement in foreign policy (including overseas travel) is negatively affected by the existence of pressing domestic concerns.<sup>92</sup> The same is true for Secretaries of State, who are responsible for a variety of foreign policy issues and must thus prioritize. Moreover such public signals are likely to generate some expectation of

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<sup>89</sup> The over-time trend in U.S. reassurance can be found in Figure A1 in the appendix, and shows that there has indeed been a gradual uptick in reassurance over time, especially after the 1950s and early 1960s.

<sup>90</sup> David B. Carter and Curtis S. Signorino, "Back to the Future: Modeling Time Dependence in Binary Data," *Political Analysis*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2010), pp. 271-292.

<sup>91</sup> Lebovic and Saunders, "The Diplomatic Core."

<sup>92</sup> David Lindsey and William Hobbs, "Presidential Effort and International Outcomes: Evidence for an Executive Bottleneck," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (2015), pp. 1089-1102; Judith G. Kelley and Jon C.W. Pevehouse, "An Opportunity Cost Theory of US Treaty Behavior," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 59 (2015), pp. 531-543; Ian Ostrander and Toby J. Rider, "Presidents Abroad: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy," *Political Research Quarterly*, Forthcoming (2018), doi: 10.1177/1065912918809212.

support on the part of allies, domestic audiences, and other international audiences.<sup>93</sup> Signals of support, especially if done in public, can thus have the effect of tying the patron's hands by creating reputational costs if it does not follow through.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, McManus finds that visits and statements of support from major powers decrease the likelihood of attack against their protégés.<sup>95</sup>

The evidence suggests that both U.S. allies and U.S. policymakers take statements and visits of support very seriously. For example, the South Koreans interpreted Vice President Walter Mondale's decision to visit Tokyo but not Seoul in early 1977 as a signal of U.S. disinterest in their country.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, U.S. officials in the Nixon Administration feared that Defense Secretary James Schlesinger's statement that the United States would be "automatically" involved in the event of a North Korean attack would be misread by the South Koreans as a stronger statement of support than intended.<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, other measures of reassurance are even more imperfect, first of all because of data availability. For one, troop deployments change very little over time, and are skewed by a number of outlier countries (Germany, Japan) that account for a large percentage of the total number of troops. Similarly, data on military exercises are not widely available until the late 1970s.<sup>98</sup> Second, statements and visits are direct forms of reassurance, whereas troop deployments and military exercises can be multi-purpose, and used not only for reassurance but

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<sup>93</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (1994), pp. 577-592.

<sup>94</sup> Alexandra Guisinger and Alastair Smith, "Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2002), pp. 175-200; Anne Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> McManus, "Making It Personal."

<sup>96</sup> Chae-Jin Lee and Hideo Sato, *U.S. Policy toward Japan and Korea: A Changing Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 107-108.

<sup>97</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 13-14.

<sup>98</sup> Vito D'Orazio, "International Military Cooperation: From Concepts to Constructs," Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2013.

also for power projection and building partner fighting capacity. Nevertheless, in additional models I also use these measures of reassurance as the dependent variable.<sup>99</sup>

Using text from U.S. presidential statements, I hand-coded instances of public presidential declarations of reassurance between 1950 and 2010. With the paragraph as the unit of analysis, I summed the number of statements a president made toward each ally in a given year that expressed a reaffirmation of the United States' commitment to protect it. My data on U.S. presidential statements come from the American Presidency Project.<sup>100</sup> Second, I collected data on U.S. President and Secretary of State visits to foreign countries from the U.S. Department of State.<sup>101</sup> I then sum statements and visits together to create my measure of reassurance. Statements of support and visits reinforce each other. While statements are a more direct form of reassurance, they are less costly than a diplomatic visit. Statements are thus given weight by a visit, and both are highly time-variant with wide data availability. The results are robust to using a standardized index that combines the two, as well as to using statements and visits separately, as Tables A22-A24 in the appendix show.<sup>102</sup>

## **Independent Variables**

### **Allies' Outside Options**

Allies' latent conventional military power is captured using their logarithmized gross domestic product (GDP). This captures the total resources available to allies for their own self-defense.

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<sup>99</sup> Military aid and arms transfers may also represent reassuring signals, but are just as likely to be a way of helping allies do more for themselves rather than rely on U.S. protection.

<sup>100</sup> Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/> (accessed March 8, 2017). I thank Roseanne McManus for generously sharing some of the raw speeches data she collected. My coding rules can be found in the appendix.

<sup>101</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Presidents and Secretaries of State Foreign Travels," Office of the Historian. 2017, <http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels>.

<sup>102</sup> Statements and visits are correlated with U.S. troop deployments and military exercises. See Tables A3 and A4 in the appendix, respectively.

Data come from Gleditsch's Expanded Trade and GDP Dataset.<sup>103</sup> As robustness checks I use alternative proxies — namely allies' population and their Correlates of War Composite Indicator of National Capabilities (CINC) scores.

Second, following the convention in the literature, I measure whether allies have a latent nuclear weapons capability using a dummy variable which takes a value of 1 if the ally has a pilot-scale nuclear reactor but does not possess nuclear weapons, and 0 otherwise.<sup>104</sup> Nuclear latency data are from Fuhrmann and Tkach.<sup>105</sup> In some models I replace this dummy variable with one that takes a value of 1 if the ally both has a latent nuclear capability and has not ratified the NPT. I also include a dummy variable for whether an ally actually possesses nuclear weapons, as these allies have credible threats of exit as well.<sup>106</sup>

Third, to capture allies' relations with U.S. competitors, I include a measure of the amount of support each ally received from the Soviet Union (for all allies during the Cold War), China (for allies in East Asia after the Cold War), or Russia (for allies elsewhere after the Cold War), using the latent variable approach developed by McManus and Nieman, which captures the overall signals of support each ally receives (e.g., military exercises and diplomatic visits).<sup>107</sup> This variable is attractive because it captures adversary signals of support rather than allies' own attempts to pursue friendlier relations, and thus the potential for endogeneity is reduced. The results should still be treated with some caution; however, to the extent that higher adversary

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<sup>103</sup> Kristian S. Gleditsch, "Expanded Trade and GDP Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (2002), pp. 712-724.

<sup>104</sup> Fuhrmann and Tkach, "Almost Nuclear"; Rupal N. Mehta and Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark, "The Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency," *International Studies Quarterly*, Forthcoming (2017), doi: 10.1093/isq/sqx028.

<sup>105</sup> Fuhrmann and Tkach, "Almost Nuclear."

<sup>106</sup> Philipp C. Bleek, "Why Do States Proliferate? Quantitative Analysis of the Exploration, Pursuit, and Acquisition of Nuclear Weapons," *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century*. Ed. by William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, Vol. 1: The Role of Theory (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 159-192.

<sup>107</sup> Roseanne W. McManus and Mark David Nieman, "Identifying the level of major power support signaled for protégés: A latent measure approach," *Journal of Peace Research*, Forthcoming (2019), doi: 10.1177/0022343318808842.

support captures allies' dissatisfaction with the United States in response to low levels of reassurance, the direction of the bias should run opposite to the predicted relationship, thus weakening the result. Moreover, the potential for endogeneity is mitigated because the measure varies extremely little over time within countries.

### **U.S. Resource Constraints**

I measure U.S. resource constraints by using a proxy which captures the course and aftermath of protracted, costly foreign wars — namely, the U.S. wars in Korea (1950-1953), Vietnam (1965-1973), and Iraq (2003-2011). Wars can divert resources from the economy, increase the deficit and debt, contribute to inflation, and lead to shortages in military manpower.<sup>108</sup> I would expect allies' doubts about U.S. reliability to gradually increase over the course of a protracted war, and then to gradually decrease as the United States recovers. The course of the war is likely to create pressure to divert resources from other commitments as it drags on, while the patron's appetite for foreign entanglements is likely to be diminished in its aftermath.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, a long line of research suggests that protracted, costly wars sap American domestic political support for foreign entanglements.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, I create a variable that increases by 1 each year that a war has been ongoing, reaches a maximum value in the year the war ends, and then gradually decreases by 1 each year after the war has ended. For example, in the case of the Vietnam War, the variable has a value of

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<sup>108</sup> Hugh Rockoff, *America's Economic Way of War: War and the U.S. Economy from the Spanish-American War to the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 27-42; Krebs, *Taxing Wars*.

<sup>109</sup> Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer Spindel, "Divided Priorities: Why and When Allies Differ Over Military Intervention," *Security Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2018), pp. 575-606; Ted Hopf, *Peripheral visions: Deterrence theory and American foreign policy in the Third World, 1965-1990* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

<sup>110</sup> Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*.

1 in 1966 (the year after the start of the war), 8 in 1973 (the year the war ended), 7 in 1974, and 1 in 1980.

One might also expect that economic hardship would constrain U.S. resources. However, for the period under study — with perhaps the exception of the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis — most periods of economic hardship are too brief and insufficiently deep to cause substantial doubt about the U.S. commitment to allies. Similarly, until the mid-2000s levels of U.S. government debt were relatively constant. As a result, assessing the effects of economic hardship is difficult, as they are likely to be somewhat underpowered, and I do not make it a focus of the empirical analysis. However, as I discuss below, additional analysis shows that economic hardship is associated with more reassurance.

### **U.S. Domestic Pressure**

In order to capture domestic pressure, I use Congressional legislation. Using the *Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions*, I hand-coded all bills, resolutions, or amendments (1950-2014) that came from either the Foreign Affairs or Armed Services committee from either the House of Representatives or the Senate, creating a count variable for “retrenchment legislation.” This variable captures legislation that either calls for troop reductions from allied territory or seeks to limit or question the U.S. commitment to an ally. Because such legislation often occurs in sporadic bursts — with some years featuring many pieces of legislation being preceded or followed by years without any — I create a moving average for the number of retrenchment legislation in the past three years. This is an attractive measure because Congress has a more direct role in foreign policy than does the public. While the electorate can in principle punish or reward policymakers through elections, Congress can directly shape policy by passing laws and

by appropriating (or not appropriating) fund.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, research suggests that public opinion on foreign affairs responds to elite cues.<sup>112</sup> Finally, annual public opinion data on foreign policy are difficult to come by, particularly during the earlier years of the Cold War.<sup>113</sup>

## **Control Variables**

I include a number of controls, all of which (except those which are time-invariant or are dummy variables for specific years) are lagged by one year to ameliorate concerns about simultaneity bias.

## **External Threat**

First, I control for the external threat environment, which one might expect to drive allies' demand for reassurance — and U.S. desire to supply it — in the first place. From a purely deterrence perspective, a patron should be more likely to send signals of support to its allies in a high threat environments in order to send a strong deterrent signal to the alliance's shared rivals.

First, I control for allies' conflict involvement by including the number of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) each ally was involved in during a given year, weighted by its hostility level.<sup>114</sup>

Second, I account for the overall capabilities of the United States and its most powerful competitors, which I define as the Soviet Union during the Cold War and Russia and China

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<sup>111</sup> Helen V. Milner and Dustin Tingley, *Sailing the Water's Edge: The Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>112</sup> John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Adam J. Berinsky, "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (2007), pp. 975-977.

<sup>113</sup> Virginia A. Chanley, "U.S. Public Views of International Involvement from 1964 to 1993: Time-Series Analyses of General and Militant Internationalism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1999), pp. 23-44.

<sup>114</sup> Data come from version 4.1 of the Correlates of War's Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset. Glenn Palmer et al., "The MID4 Data Set, 2002-2010: Procedures, Coding Rules and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2015), pp. 222-242. <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>.

during the post-Cold War. I do so by controlling for the U.S. CINC score, as well as that of the Soviet Union for all allies during 1950-1989, China for allies in East Asia during 1990-2010, and Russia for allies elsewhere during 1990-2010. CINC data are from version 4.0 of the Correlates of War's National Material Capabilities dataset.<sup>115</sup>

Third is allies' geographic proximity to U.S. competitors and adversaries. Here, I control for allies' distance from the Moscow or Beijing, as well as whether they share a border with a U.S. rival.<sup>116</sup> During the Cold War, I define U.S. rivals as any member of the Soviet bloc, and during the post-Cold War period I define them as Russia, China, and, following Lai, as the "rogue states" identified by U.S. policymakers as posing regional threats: Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Serbia, Sudan, and Syria.<sup>117</sup> The vast majority of U.S. allies are clustered around the periphery of the former Soviet Union and China; proximity to Moscow allows me to capture allies' proximity to the heart of Soviet/Russian military power, while for allies in East Asia, the center of the threat emanated from the area surrounding Beijing — including not only China, but also North Korea and the Soviet Far East. These variables capture allies' vulnerability as well as how difficult it would be for the United States to defend them.

Fourth, I control for adversary behavior that could be seen as indicators of hostile intentions. Specifically, I include a dummy indicator for instances in which an adversary invaded and

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<sup>115</sup> J. David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985," *International Interactions*, Vol. 14 (1987), pp. 115-132. <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>.

<sup>116</sup> The Soviet bloc includes all members of the Warsaw Pact, as well as China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and (starting in 1976) Laos and Cambodia. Data come from version 3.1 of the Correlates of War's Direct Contiguity dataset, 1816-2006. Douglas M. Stinnett et al., "The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2002), pp. 58-66. Capital city distance data come from Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "Measuring Space: A Minimum-Distance Database and Applications to International Studies," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (2001), pp. 739-758.

<sup>117</sup> Brian Lai, "Examining the Goals of US Foreign Assistance in the Post-Cold War Period, 1991-96," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2003), pp. 103-128.

occupied the territory of a country not allied with the United States.<sup>118</sup> During the Cold War, there were three such cases: the Soviet invasions of Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Afghanistan (1979). Additionally, after the Cold War I include Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia. Because these states did not benefit from U.S. protection, adversary behavior in these cases can be considered more plausibly exogenous to U.S. reassurance. I code the first year of each of these instances as 1, as well as the following two years, as I would expect U.S. reassurance to have increased in response to the initial shock of the attacks.<sup>119</sup>

Finally, I also include a dummy variable for "U.S. Nuclear Superiority," which takes a value of 1 for years in which the state with the next-largest nuclear weapons arsenal (the Soviet Union/Russia) had an arsenal that was less than 25% the size of the United States'.<sup>120</sup> In practice, this takes a value of 1 for the years 1950-1966, and 0 otherwise. Once the period of U.S. nuclear superiority ended, U.S. credibility came into doubt as it no longer had a clear first-strike capability and thus would put its own cities at risk by defending allies.<sup>121</sup>

### **Economic and Political Characteristics**

Second, I control for allies' level of economic development using their logarithmized GDP per capita. Wealthier, more developed allies may receive more attention from the United States, both in terms of visits and statements, because they are more economically important to U.S. interests.<sup>122</sup> Data are from Gleditsch's Expanded Trade and GDP data.<sup>123</sup> Next, I control for each

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<sup>118</sup> Occupation data are from the list compiled by Benjamin Denison, "Strategies of Domination: Uncertainty, Local Institutions, and the Politics of Foreign Rule," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2018.

<sup>119</sup> See appendix for more details.

<sup>120</sup> Data on nuclear arsenals run from 1945-2014, and come from the Federation of American Scientists, Nuclear Notebook: Nuclear Arsenals of the World, <http://thebulletin.org/nuclear-notebook-multimedia> (accessed March 16, 2017). The results are robust to using a 10% or 50% threshold as well.

<sup>121</sup> Todd Sandler and John F. Forbes, "Burden Sharing, Strategy, and the Design of NATO," *Economic Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1980), pp. 425-444; Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence."

<sup>122</sup> Lebovic and Saunders, "The Diplomatic Core."

ally's regime type, using the binary democracy indicator created by Cheibub et al.<sup>124</sup> Democratic peace theory might expect that democratic patrons will show favoritism toward their democratic allies due to shared norms and political identities.<sup>125</sup>

### **Alliance Type**

Finally, I also control for alliance type by including a dummy variable for whether the country is allied to the United States via a defense pact, which carries an explicit guarantee of assistance, or via an entente, which does not. These differences in terms may produce different expectations of reassurance.

### **Model Specifications**

Because my dependent variable is a count of the number of U.S. reassurance statements and visits, I employ count regression models. The distribution of the dependent variable is somewhat over-dispersed, however, which suggests that a negative binomial model is more appropriate than the basic Poisson model.<sup>126</sup> The negative binomial regression equation I use is specified as follows:

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<sup>123</sup> Gleditsch, "Expanded Trade and GDP Data."

<sup>124</sup> José A. Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James R. Vreeland, "Democracy and dictatorship revisited," *Public Choice*, Vol. 143 (2010), pp. 67-101. This measure has fewer missing data issues than the more commonly-used Polity score.

<sup>125</sup> Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (1986), pp. 1151-1169.

<sup>126</sup> A. Colin Cameron and Pravin K. Trivedi, "Econometric Models Based on Count Data: Comparisons and Applications of Some Estimators and Tests," *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1986), pp. 29-53.

$$\text{Assurances}_{i,t} = \exp(\beta_1 \text{GDP}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{NuclearLatency}_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 \text{AdversarySupport}_{i,t-1} + \beta_4 \text{WarCosts}_{i,t} + \beta_5 \text{DomesticPressure}_{i,t} + \gamma \mathbf{X}_{i,t-1} + \mu_i + \text{Time}_t + \text{Time}_t^2 + \text{Time}_t^3 + \varepsilon_{i,t})$$

where  $i$  indexes countries,  $t$  indexes years,  $GDP$  represents the logarithmized value of the ally's gross domestic product,  $NuclearLatency$  represents whether an ally has an operational pilot- or lab-scale nuclear reactor,  $AdversarySupport$  measures the amount of support an ally received from a U.S. competitor,  $WarCosts$  is a variable capturing the course and aftermath of U.S. foreign wars,  $DomesticPressure$  represents the moving average of Congressional retrenchment legislation,  $\mathbf{X}_{i,t-1}$  is a vector of control variables,  $\mu_i$  is a vector of country or region fixed effects,  $Time$  is the number of years that have elapsed since the beginning of the sample, and  $\varepsilon_{i,t}$  is a stochastic error term. I employ standard errors clustered by country throughout. In some models I include year fixed effects in place of the time trends.<sup>127</sup>

## Results

The econometric results provide support for my propositions. U.S. allies with stronger outside options, measured using latent military and nuclear potential as well as alternative alliance partners, receive more reassurance. Additionally, the United States goes to greater lengths to reassure its allies when it faces resource and political constraints that bring its reliability into question. Finally, I find that these factors provide a stronger explanation for U.S. reassurance than alternative explanations.

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<sup>127</sup> Summary statistics are in Table A2 in the appendix. As a robustness check, I also cluster standard errors by year.

Table 1 shows the results. Models 1-5 include all control variables as well as region fixed effects and linear, squared, and cubic time trends, while Models 6-7 include year fixed effects and exclude the covariates which vary only over time, and Models 8-10 include country fixed effects and exclude the covariates which feature little-to-no variation within countries. The year and country fixed effects allow me to control for unobservable variation across years and countries, but cannot be included alongside covariates which do not vary much across countries and over time, respectively, due to issues with collinearity.

Models 1-7 show that there is a robust positive relationship between allies' GDP, nuclear latency, and the amount of support they receive from adversaries, and U.S. reassurance. Specifically, a 100% increase in allied GDP increases the amount of reassurance it is predicted to receive by about 39%, while nuclear latency increases it by about 31%. Each one-unit increase in adversary support, in turn, increases reassurance by about 22%. Models 2, 4, and 7 use a more restrictive version of the nuclear latency variable, coding as 1 only states with a latent nuclear capability that have not ratified the NPT, and the results are even stronger. This is in line with the expectations of H1, and suggests that allies with stronger outside options — both in the form of self-reliance and alternative partners — receive more reassurance from the United States.

<i>Dependent Variable: Statements + Visits</i>										
							Year FE		Country FE	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
GDP (log)	0.326*** (0.059)	0.350*** (0.062)	0.329*** (0.058)	0.351*** (0.061)	0.328*** (0.058)	0.331*** (0.058)	0.353*** (0.061)			
Nuclear latency	0.267+ (0.150)		0.256+ (0.148)		0.260+ (0.149)	0.248+ (0.151)				
Nuclear latency (non-NPT)		0.551** (0.174)		0.531*** (0.161)			0.548** (0.176)			
Ally w/ nuclear weapons	0.698*** (0.210)	0.637*** (0.184)	0.681** (0.210)	0.623*** (0.182)	0.684** (0.209)	0.677*** (0.204)	0.619*** (0.177)			
Adversary support	0.199+ (0.108)	0.204+ (0.107)	0.223* (0.109)	0.227* (0.107)	0.216* (0.108)	0.220+ (0.119)	0.219+ (0.117)			

US war costs	0.068 <sup>*</sup> (0.034)	0.060 <sup>+</sup> (0.035)			0.037 (0.034)			0.084 <sup>*</sup> (0.033)		0.060 <sup>+</sup> (0.033)
Retrenchment legis.			0.140 <sup>**</sup> (0.050)	0.124 <sup>*</sup> (0.050)	0.107 <sup>*</sup> (0.049)				0.133 <sup>**</sup> (0.047)	0.079 <sup>+</sup> (0.048)
Post-Cold War	-0.297 <sup>+</sup> (0.175)	-0.332 <sup>+</sup> (0.180)	-0.317 <sup>+</sup> (0.192)	-0.346 <sup>+</sup> (0.195)	-0.336 <sup>+</sup> (0.186)			-0.058 (0.175)	-0.039 (0.204)	-0.068 (0.196)
GDPpc (log)	-0.117 (0.129)	-0.086 (0.135)	-0.105 (0.128)	-0.076 (0.134)	-0.108 (0.129)	-0.103 (0.126)	-0.072 (0.132)			
Democracy	0.113 (0.166)	0.081 (0.166)	0.101 (0.166)	0.071 (0.166)	0.105 (0.167)	0.105 (0.163)	0.068 (0.157)			
Distance from US	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)			
Distance to adversary	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)			
Land border w/ adversary	-0.124 (0.221)	-0.172 (0.214)	-0.124 (0.218)	-0.171 (0.211)	-0.123 (0.219)	-0.139 (0.217)	-0.190 (0.210)			
Entente	0.544 <sup>+</sup> (0.290)	0.564 <sup>+</sup> (0.302)	0.528 <sup>+</sup> (0.279)	0.549 <sup>+</sup> (0.290)	0.531 <sup>+</sup> (0.283)	0.498 <sup>+</sup> (0.280)	0.516 <sup>+</sup> (0.289)			
Ally MIDs (weighted)	0.019 <sup>+</sup> (0.010)	0.018 <sup>+</sup> (0.010)	0.020 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.019 <sup>+</sup> (0.010)	0.020 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.021 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.021 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.019 <sup>*</sup> (0.009)	0.020 <sup>*</sup> (0.009)	0.020 <sup>*</sup> (0.009)
US CINC	2.078 (4.458)	1.398 (4.421)	-6.411 (6.455)	-6.289 (6.302)	-3.894 (6.185)			3.082 (3.039)	-6.558 (6.163)	-2.540 (5.587)
Adversary aggression	0.146 (0.118)	0.142 (0.119)	0.114 (0.110)	0.114 (0.110)	0.142 (0.114)			0.163 (0.104)	0.109 (0.093)	0.156 (0.100)
US nuclear superiority	0.656 <sup>*</sup> (0.290)	0.672 <sup>*</sup> (0.299)	0.201 (0.232)	0.262 (0.233)	0.470 (0.299)			0.703 <sup>*</sup> (0.278)	0.060 (0.250)	0.509 <sup>+</sup> (0.300)
Adversary CINC	0.719 (1.288)	0.585 (1.373)	0.197 (1.216)	0.132 (1.300)	0.323 (1.271)			2.888 <sup>*</sup> (1.275)	2.500 <sup>*</sup> (1.192)	2.665 <sup>*</sup> (1.234)
Country FE	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
T,T2,T3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Year FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
N	1343	1343	1333	1333	1333	1343	1343	1373	1357	1357
Log-likelihood	-1815.047	-1812.093	-1807.404	-1804.645	-1806.780	-1778.426	-1775.135	-1762.377	-1752.317	-1750.377

Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses. + p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 1: Main results. Coefficients estimated using negative binomial regression models.**

	<i>Dependent Variable: Statements + Visits</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	Year FE (4)	Country FE (5)
GDP (log)	0.366 <sup>***</sup> (0.062)				
Nuclear latency		0.737 <sup>***</sup> (0.220)			
Adversary support	0.234 <sup>*</sup> (0.108)	0.244 <sup>*</sup> (0.118)	0.212 <sup>+</sup> (0.112)	0.232 <sup>+</sup> (0.129)	
GDP+Latency (index)			0.356 <sup>***</sup> (0.067)	0.352 <sup>***</sup> (0.067)	
War Costs+Retrenchment legis. (index)	0.133 <sup>**</sup> (0.047)	0.134 <sup>*</sup> (0.053)	0.135 <sup>*</sup> (0.053)		0.139 <sup>**</sup> (0.046)
Ally w/ nuclear weapons	0.572 <sup>**</sup> (0.201)	1.199 <sup>***</sup> (0.217)	1.032 <sup>***</sup> (0.181)	1.035 <sup>***</sup> (0.179)	

Post-Cold War	-0.340 <sup>+</sup> (0.193)	-0.139 (0.159)	-0.243 (0.163)		-0.069 (0.195)
GDPpc (log)	-0.105 (0.136)	0.083 (0.138)	-0.024 (0.123)	-0.023 (0.121)	
Democracy	0.104 (0.184)	0.156 (0.131)	0.126 (0.124)	0.133 (0.125)	
Distance from US	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	
Distance to adversary	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	
Land border w/ adversary	-0.159 (0.215)	-0.097 (0.279)	-0.075 (0.239)	-0.090 (0.237)	
Entente	0.517 <sup>+</sup> (0.305)	0.299 <sup>+</sup> (0.175)	0.439 <sup>*</sup> (0.199)	0.415 <sup>*</sup> (0.205)	
Ally MIDs (weighted)	0.020 <sup>+</sup> (0.010)	0.028 <sup>*</sup> (0.011)	0.024 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.025 <sup>*</sup> (0.010)	0.021 <sup>*</sup> (0.009)
US CINC	-4.208 (6.400)	-5.618 (5.900)	-4.542 (5.970)		-4.473 (6.031)
Adversary aggression	0.159 (0.116)	0.113 (0.107)	0.108 (0.110)		0.142 (0.096)
US nuclear superiority	0.445 <sup>+</sup> (0.243)	0.377 (0.242)	0.438 <sup>+</sup> (0.239)		0.351 (0.253)
Adversary CINC	0.547 (1.338)	0.489 (1.189)	0.149 (1.114)		2.557 <sup>*</sup> (1.184)
Country FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
T,T2,T3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Year FE	No	No	No	Yes	No
N	1333	1333	1333	1343	1357
Log-likelihood	-1809.979	-1856.795	-1826.151	-1799.469	-1750.716

Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses. + p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table 2: Main results, using indexes created via principal component analysis. Coefficients estimated using negative binomial regression models.

Models 1-5 and 8-10, in turn, show that it is during periods in which the United States faces resource constraints due to costly foreign wars, and political constraints due to retrenchment pressure from Congress, that U.S. officials use more reassurance. These results provide support for both Hypotheses 2 and 3. In substantive terms, each one-unit increase in the War Costs variable increases the amount of predicted reassurance by around 8%, while each piece of Retrenchment Legislation increases it by 15%. In Models 5 and 10, which test H2 and H3

simultaneously by including the War Costs and Retrenchment Legislation variables in the same models, the results are largely consistent with those of the models which test them separately, though the results are somewhat weaker. This is unsurprising, however, given that I expect political constraints to be largely shaped by resource constraints, and thus controlling for political constraints soaks up variation otherwise explained by resource constraints. Indeed, Table A7 in the appendix shows that domestic retrenchment pressure occurs most often in the wake of costly foreign wars.

Because several of my independent variables are not only tightly correlated but also capture different elements of the same underlying theoretical concept, including them in the same model weakens the statistical significance of their coefficient estimates because they explain some of the same variation in the dependent variable. To mitigate this, I also run the analysis using composite measures obtain from principal component analysis (PCA). First, GDP and nuclear latency are positively correlated ( $\rho = 0.3554$ ) and contribute both independently and interactively to an ally's capacity for self-reliance, as Figure 1 showed. The index produced has an eigenvalue of 1.355, and explains 67.8% of the variance in these two variables. Second, as described previously and laid out in the causal pathway presented in Figure 3, resource constraints not only independently shape reassurance but also contribute to political constraints, which in turn have their own impact. The index produced using PCA has an Eigenvalue of 1.141 and explains 57% of the variance. The results in Table 2 show that these indexes have a strong relationship with U.S. reassurance. Moreover, Models 1-2 show that GDP and nuclear latency's estimated effects on reassurance are much larger when the other is excluded from the model.

As for the controls, wealth and regime type do not have a statistically significant effect on U.S. reassurance. Notably, the coefficients on the threat variables other than ally MIDs are

negative or statistically insignificant, suggesting that aggressive adversary behavior is not the sole or even the most important driver of reassurance. This is in direct contradiction to “pure deterrence” explanations for reassurance, which focus on signaling vis-à-vis adversaries rather than allies. This increases my confidence that the results are driven by a logic of reassurance. Additionally, the coefficient on the post-Cold War dummy variable is overall fairly small in all models, and does not reach statistical significance in some models, suggesting that the United States used similar amounts of reassurance during both the bipolar and unipolar periods. Indeed, a visual inspection of the over-time trend in U.S. reassurance presented in Figure A1 shows no clear break after the Cold War ended.

### **Robustness Checks**

Next, I subject the results to a variety of robustness tests. I do so first of all by adding more control variables which capture potential alternative explanations. First, I control for U.S. trade ties with each ally, measured as bilateral trade as a percentage of total U.S. trade, which Lebovic and Saunders show is positively associated with U.S. visits.<sup>128</sup> Second, I control for the partisanship of the U.S. president by including a dummy variable indicating whether he was a Democrat. Democrats are often seen as more in favor of dovish and multilateral foreign policies, while Republicans are hawkish and favor unilateralism.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, I include decade fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable. The results in Tables A11-A13 show that the findings are robust to these changes in model specification.

Second, I use alternative proxies to capture my independent variables. For allies’ latent conventional military power (H1a), I replace allies’ log GDP with their log population, CINC

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<sup>128</sup> Lebovic and Saunders, “The Diplomatic Core.”

<sup>129</sup> Chanley, “U.S. Public Views of International Involvement from 1964 to 1993.”

score, and, following Beckley, with their GDP multiplied by GDP per capita (logarithmized).<sup>130</sup> Table A15 replicates the main results using these measures. Table A16, in turn, uses measures of U.S. economic hardship in place of the costs of U.S. foreign wars. The results are quite robust to these changes.

Additionally, as an alternative to congressional legislation, I use measures of isolationist public opinion to capture political constraints (H3). The first of these is public support for foreign aid, which captures the populace's attitude toward promoting the well-being of foreigners. The second is public attitudes toward U.S. involvement in world affairs. These both represent commonly-used metrics for the public's degree of internationalism.<sup>131</sup> Table A17 shows that the results for H3 hold when using public instead of congressional retrenchment pressure. Years in which a greater percentage of the U.S. population favored reducing foreign aid and staying out of world affairs featured more reassurance.

Finally, I also use different measures for my dependent variable. First, I operationalize reassurance using the number of U.S. troops deployed on an ally's territory.<sup>132</sup> Table A20 presents ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results using logarithmized troop numbers as the dependent variable. The level of U.S. troops does not vary much over time, however, and so I focus largely on explaining cross-national variation. These results show that more powerful allies and allies with a latent nuclear capability hosted significantly more U.S. troops. Second, I use allies' military exercises with the United States as the dependent variable, employing exercise

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<sup>130</sup> Michael Beckley, *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>131</sup> Eugene R. Wittkopf, *Faces of Internationalism: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Chanley, "U.S. Public Views of International Involvement from 1964 to 1993."

<sup>132</sup> Troop deployment data are from Tim Kane, "Global U.S. Troop Deployment, 1950-2005," Center for Data Analysis Report 06-02, The Heritage Foundation. 2006.

data for 1977-2004 from D’Orazio.<sup>133</sup> Table A21 shows the results, which are consistent those from using statements and visits.

### **The United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, 1961-1974**

To further demonstrate the mechanisms behind my hypotheses, I present qualitative evidence from relations between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) during 1961-1974. I chose this case and this period because they feature extreme values on my independent variables, as well as change over time. West Germany had considerable latent nuclear and conventional military potential, and the costs of the Vietnam War imposed significant resource constraints on the United States. Compared to President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963), U.S. policymakers in the administrations of Lyndon Johnson (1963-1968) and Richard Nixon (1969-1974) faced both material constraints and considerable pressure from Congress and the American public to retrench and pursue a more inwardly-focused foreign policy. Cases with extreme values on the independent variables are useful for tracing the logic of hypotheses because they are the cases in which one would expect causal mechanisms to be most operative.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, comparing the early part of the 1960s to the late 1960s and early 1970s allows me to assess variation over time for H2 and H3.

My theory would predict very high levels of U.S. reassurance toward the FRG, particularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s. West Germany’s nuclear latency and conventional military potential made it at high risk of exit, thus forcing the United States to reassure it. Additionally, I anticipate intense West German interest in outside options during the

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<sup>133</sup> D’Orazio, “International Military Cooperation.”

<sup>134</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

later years of the Johnson Administration and during the Nixon Administration, owing to concern about U.S. unreliability in the wake of the Vietnam War and accompanying domestic isolationism. As such, I would expect to see even greater preoccupation with reassuring the FRG under Nixon (and, to a lesser extent, Johnson) than under Kennedy.

## **Early and Mid-1960s**

### **West Germany's Outside Options**

Throughout the Cold War, keeping the FRG tied to the Western bloc was a near-constant concern among policymakers in both the United States and other NATO countries. As NATO Secretary General Hastings Ismay put it, the purpose of NATO was “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”<sup>135</sup> As such, American security assurances to West Germany were not only a means to deter Soviet aggression, but also a means to prevent the emergence of a neutral, nuclear Germany that could play the Western and Eastern blocs against each other, and even threaten its neighbors once more.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, Richard Nixon highlighted the importance of reassuring Germany when he remarked in May 1971 that “as a freshman Congressman [I] saw three reasons for NATO: the threat from the Soviet Union, the weakness of Western Europe and the need for a home for the Germans,” arguing that “one could perhaps debate the first two of the original reasons for NATO, but the third still existed.”<sup>137</sup> After World War II, West Germany hosted the largest number of peacetime U.S. foreign-deployed forces, never fewer than 220,000 between 1955 and 1989.

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<sup>135</sup> David Reynolds, *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>136</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 321-322.

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum for the Record, “The President’s Meeting with Former High Government Officials and Military Officers on the Mansfield Amendment,” May 13, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 275.

Concern about German nuclearization, inherent in its economic and potential military might, was exacerbated by the FRG's ambiguous nuclear behavior. This included covert nuclear cooperation with France and Italy and skepticism of nonproliferation treaties such as the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT).<sup>138</sup> Indeed, German leaders intentionally used nuclear ambiguity as a bargaining chip to secure American assurances.<sup>139</sup> Chancellor Konrad Adenauer declared in 1955 that the FRG could not indefinitely remain an "atomic protectorate," while Minister of Defense Franz Strauss made a veiled threat in 1961 that, without some form of nuclear sharing, France and Britain "could easily find followers" seeking to become nuclear states.<sup>140</sup>

### **U.S. Reassurance**

In an effort to discourage German nuclearization, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations proposed a NATO Multilateral Force (MLF) — an integrated NATO nuclear force in which the United States would retain a veto. They hoped that the MLF would allow for centralized American control while also reducing allies' incentives to develop their own nuclear arsenals.<sup>141</sup> Kennedy admitted in private that the MLF was "merely a façade" designed to discourage German nuclearization.<sup>142</sup> Kennedy's Military Representative Maxwell Taylor wrote to him that "If West Germany is to continue to be a contented non-nuclear member of NATO....West

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<sup>138</sup> Eugene Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2015), pp. 109-114.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Nuclear Sharing," December 20, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 13, pp. 289-292.

<sup>140</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 231; Catherine A. Kelleher, *Germany & the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 186

<sup>141</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 213-215, 284-285, 304-329; Memorandum of Conversation, "Summary of Discussion on MLF, Atlantic Defense and Related Matters," October 31, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 13, pp. 95-100.

<sup>142</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, p. 314

Germans need reassurance not only through the provision of this NATO nuclear force but also through evidence of a determination to use all NATO atomic weapons.”<sup>143</sup>

The MLF was never implemented, however, as a result of Soviet, French, and British opposition, as well as skepticism from the U.S. Congress. By early 1966 the concept was effectively dead. As an alternative, the Johnson Administration instead turned to creating a NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) that would give allies greater access to information on U.S. nuclear strategy and input into overall NATO nuclear policy.<sup>144</sup> As part of its effort to persuade the FRG to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1966-1968, the Johnson Administration assured the FRG that the NPT’s stipulations were compatible with the NPG, and the new Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger and Foreign Minister Willy Brandt publicly insisted that the FRG’s adherence to the treaty was contingent upon the NATO security guarantee.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to nuclear sharing and consultation, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations used other reassurance measures. Kennedy told Adenauer in April 1961 that “the United States was prepared and determined to stand by its commitments,”<sup>146</sup> and to secure the FRG’s signature of the LTBT in 1963 he promised to keep American troops in Germany.<sup>147</sup> The fundamental trade-off U.S. policymakers faced was that, as long as preventing German nuclearization remained a U.S. foreign policy priority, the FRG would continue to need considerable assurances — including a substantial U.S. troop presence. This was ultimately the course they chose, and

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<sup>143</sup> Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Germany, February 18, 1966, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 13, pp. 314-315.

<sup>144</sup> Kelleher, *Germany & the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 247, 249-257; Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint,” pp. 118-121.

<sup>145</sup> Jenifer Mackby and Walter B. Slocombe, “Germany: The Model Case, A Historical Imperative,” *Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*. Ed. by Kurt M. Campbell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 190, 192-195, 199

<sup>146</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, NATO and East-West Relations, April 12, 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. 13, p. 273.

<sup>147</sup> Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint,” p. 117.

the one followed by subsequent administrations as well, and U.S. troop levels remained stable until the end of the Cold War.

But Kennedy and Johnson also used threats of abandonment to coerce the FRG into greater defense burden-sharing. Policymakers in both administrations explicitly linked U.S. troop levels to German burden-sharing, and were often brutally straightforward with their pressure. Kennedy directed that “we should get ready with actions to squeeze Europe,” in response to allied free-riding and to French efforts to assist the Germans in their nuclear efforts.<sup>148</sup> He argued that “we should be prepared to reduce quickly, if we so decided, our military forces in Germany” in order to cut costs and put pressure on the Europeans to do more for themselves, remarking that “We cannot continue to pay for the military protection of Europe while the NATO states are not paying their fair share and living off the ‘fat of the land.’”<sup>149</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was an especially vocal proponent of troop withdrawals, telling FRG Defense Minister Kai-Uwe von Hassel that “America cannot carry this burden [of defense] if it couldn’t reduce this deficit” via payments to offset the costs of U.S. deployments, and led the way in crafting plans for withdrawals.<sup>150</sup> National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy later advised Johnson that Chancellor Ludwig Erhard “should be left in no doubt” that the continuation of American deployments was contingent on offset.<sup>151</sup> This approach would change under Nixon, who had more reason to fear that West Germany would pursue outside options if the United States did not take a soft touch.

### **Late 1960s and Early 1970s**

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<sup>148</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 374.

<sup>149</sup> Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting, No. 38 (Part II), January 25, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. 13, pp. 486, 489.

<sup>150</sup> Francis J. Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958-1971* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 103-108, 111.

<sup>151</sup> Joseph Lepgold, *The Declining Hegemon: The United States and European Defense, 1960-1990* (New York: Praeger, 1990), pp. 127, 129.

## Resource Constraints and Domestic Pressure

Resource constraints during the late 1960s and early 1970s, stemming in large part from the costs of the Vietnam War, intensified the need for reassurance. Allies increasingly doubted the reliability of U.S. protection, and as a result became more interested in exploring outside options to reduce their dependence on the United States. U.S. military spending declined throughout much of the decade, and Nixon proclaimed the “Nixon Doctrine,” which stressed that allies would hold the primary responsibility when it came to defending themselves.<sup>152</sup>

Moreover, the year 1966 saw the first major congressional resolution by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to cut U.S. forces in Europe, which was followed up by similar resolutions in 1967, 1969, and 1974, as well as by the Mansfield Amendments in 1971 and 1973-74, which also proposed troop reductions.<sup>153</sup> Other congressional proposals were less dramatic, but still very much intent on withdrawing troops and demanding that West Germany and NATO make greater contributions, while the National Commitments Resolution of 1969 and the War Powers Act of 1973 sought to limit the president’s ability to deploy U.S. forces abroad without congressional approval.<sup>154</sup> Mansfield and other proponents of troop withdrawals, including Senators Stuart Symington and William Fulbright, argued that the costs from Vietnam made stationing hundreds of thousands of troops in Europe unsustainable, and favored prioritizing domestic spending.<sup>155</sup> Additionally, sluggish economic growth coupled with a mounting balance of payments and trade deficit provided further impetus for troop withdrawals to save costs.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Richard Nixon, *United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s: Building for Peace* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 5-8.

<sup>153</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement: NATO’s First Fifty Years* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999), p. 138.

<sup>154</sup> Williams, *The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 162, 170; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, and Company, 1979), pp. 939-940

<sup>156</sup> Williams, *The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe*, pp. 200-201.

Indeed the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the FRG and other NATO members took resource and political constraints in the United States very seriously. During the Johnson administration, the West German ambassador reported that a number of factors, including the war in Vietnam and the “neo-isolationist trend” in the United States, made major troop withdrawals quite possible.<sup>157</sup> In 1970 the West Germans requested “an indication...of the minimum European defense contribution” that would be needed to contain the retrenchment pressure that the United States faced.<sup>158</sup>

What also raised concerns about U.S. unreliability was the American effort at détente with the Soviet Union. This included the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties in 1972 and 1979 (SALT I and II, respectively), as well as negotiations for Mutual Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) from Europe. These efforts were in no small part motivated by the costs of Vietnam, which made reducing tensions more attractive as a means of decreasing the probability of another costly war, and containing the arms race attractive as a means of cutting peacetime costs. Yet détente raised concerns on the part of allies, who feared that the result could be a U.S.-Soviet bargain in which allied interests were sold out so the superpowers could make themselves more secure.<sup>159</sup> In particular, since the defense of Europe relied heavily on the threat of nuclear escalation, the US-Soviet Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War in 1973 raised concerns

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<sup>157</sup> Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 48.

<sup>158</sup> Telegram from U.S. Embassy (Bonn) to William Rogers, “Defense Burden Sharing,” June 1970, Folder “Germany, Vol. V [2 of 2],” NSC Files, Country Files, Box 683, Richard M. Nixon Library, Yorba Linda, California [hereafter RMNL].

<sup>159</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, *The Entangling Alliance: The United States and European Security, 1950-1993* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 98-99, 102-103; Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement*, pp. 116-117; Kissinger to Ford, “Meeting with Permanent Representatives of the North Atlantic Council,” June 19, 1975, Folder “North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1975 (3) WH,” National Security Adviser’s Files, NSC Europe, Canada, and Ocean Affairs Staff Files, Box 53, Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

about U.S. willingness to go to war on allies' behalf.<sup>160</sup> Discouraging allies from pursuing their own, separate versions of détente with the Soviet Union thus required reassuring them that the United States would not sell them out, as well as consulting and informing them.<sup>161</sup> National Security Adviser (later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger put the matter well in his memoirs: "in times of relaxing tension, [Europeans] dreaded a US-Soviet condominium."<sup>162</sup>

### **West Germany's Interest in Outside Options**

Indeed, the FRG's interest in outside options increased as U.S. reliability came into question. The first of these was its nuclear option. German leaders implicitly linked potential nuclearization with concerns about American credibility, particularly as Congressional pressure escalated.<sup>163</sup> American fears of German exit became more pronounced as evidence mounted that the FRG was, in fact, "reexamining [its] relations to the United States and to NATO" and considering nuclear cooperation with France in late 1966.<sup>164</sup> The French option had previously been less attractive, as it could not offer the kind of protection the United States could. But with the American commitment in doubt the FRG's other options became increasingly attractive.<sup>165</sup>

Fears of German rapprochement with the Soviet Union also intensified beginning in the later years of the Johnson Administration. Ambassador George McGhee warned that if the United States seemed on the verge of retrenchment, West Germany "would be forced to reorient its basic security policy," which "could take the form of...a 'go-it-alone' nationalism or efforts to

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<sup>160</sup> Clift to Kissinger, "Reported Reactions in FRG Cabinet to US-USSR Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War," June 30, 1973, Folder "Germany, Vol. XIII [2 of 3]," NSC Files, Country Files, Box 687, RMNL.

<sup>161</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 382-383, 386; Telegram from U.S. embassy (Bonn) to Rogers, "US-German MBFR Consultations," June 1971, Folder "Germany, Vol. IX [3 of 3]," NSC Files, Country Files, Box 685, RMNL.

<sup>162</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 94.

<sup>163</sup> Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power*, pp. 142-149, 162-164; Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint," pp. 121-123

<sup>164</sup> Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power*, pp. 143, 154-155.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113; Powaski, *The Entangling Alliance*, pp. 71-72.

accommodate itself to the Soviets.”<sup>166</sup> These concerns persisted into the Nixon Administration. Decision-makers feared that West Germany — as well as the other members of NATO — were likely to undertake “increasing accommodation to the Russians on political and economic issues” in response to their perceptions of U.S. unreliability.<sup>167</sup> This process could incite a trend toward “Finlandization,” with allies distancing themselves from the United States and becoming increasingly willing to defer to Soviet preferences.<sup>168</sup> In the wake of the first Mansfield Amendment in 1971, Kissinger warned “that Europe will seek nuclear autonomy or will move in the direction of Finland or possibly do both things simultaneously” if American withdrawal seemed imminent.<sup>169</sup>

When the Social Democrats came to power and Willy Brandt became Chancellor in 1969, trends toward Soviet rapprochement accelerated in the form of *Ostpolitik*, an effort toward improving relations with the Communist bloc. Brandt argued in 1968 that “West Germany cannot really depend on the Americans,” and as a result pursued rapprochement with East Germany and the Soviet Union to reduce the FRG’s dependence on the United States.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, German officials explicitly used the Soviet option in order to extract U.S. assurances. In a meeting with Laird, West German Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt “made a strong plea for maintaining a substantial US troop presence in Europe,” and warned that “if the U.S. cuts its troop level, Germany and other European countries would inevitably begin to accommodate [sic]

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<sup>166</sup> McGhee to State, September 20, 1966, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 15, p. 418.

<sup>167</sup> Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Hillenbrand) to Secretary of State Rogers, “Tensions in US Relations with Europe,” November 15, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 326.

<sup>168</sup> Leggold, *The Declining Hegemon*, p. 138.

<sup>169</sup> Minutes of a Legislative Interdepartmental Group Meeting, “Mansfield Resolution,” May 12, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 270.

<sup>170</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *The Cold War and After: History, Theory, and the Logic of International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 167.

with the East.”<sup>171</sup> Both Brandt and NATO Secretariat Manilo Brosio warned in 1971 that troop withdrawals would destroy Europe’s faith in the United States.<sup>172</sup> The result was a significant amount of concern among U.S. policymakers that the FRG would pursue a more neutral foreign policy.<sup>173</sup>

## **U.S. Reassurance**

In response, American officials used reassurance to offset the perception that the United States was an unreliable protector. For one, American policymakers made great effort to assure NATO allies that there would be no unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe. Unlike Kennedy, Johnson increasingly balked at threatening troop withdrawals, as he feared that doing so would only further encourage the FRG to reach out to the Soviet Union — as began to occur under Chancellor Kiesinger’s leadership.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, in 1968 Johnson launched what became the annual Exercise REFORGER, a joint exercise between the United States and the FRG in which two divisions of American forces surged into Germany to demonstrate U.S. capability to quickly reinforce the area in the event of a Soviet attack.<sup>175</sup>

This trend continued under Nixon, who stressed that although the United States could not take primary responsibility for its allies’ defense, it would honor its alliance pledges.<sup>176</sup> He declared that the United States would no sooner withdraw from Europe than from Alaska.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Telegram from U.S. Embassy (Bonn) to William Rogers, “Secretary Laird’s Talk with FRG Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt,” June 1970, Folder “Germany, Vol. V [2 of 2],” NSC Files, Country Files, Box 683, RMNL.

<sup>172</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 945.

<sup>173</sup> Williams, *The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe*, pp. 217-218; Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Hillenbrand) to Secretary of State Rogers, “Tensions in US Relations with Europe,” November 15, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 322-328.

<sup>174</sup> Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>175</sup> Robert D. Blackwill and Jeffrey W. Legro, “Constraining Ground Force Exercises of NATO and the Warsaw Pact,” *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1989), pp. 69-71.

<sup>176</sup> Nixon, *United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>177</sup> Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, p. 69.

Nixon's first visit as President in 1969 was to Europe, during which his primary objective was to "affirm our commitment to NATO."<sup>178</sup> He declared the NATO security guarantee to be "unique" and "irreplaceable," and proclaimed that "the United States will, under no circumstances, reduce, unilaterally, its commitment to NATO."<sup>179</sup> The administration further stressed that it would consult and inform the NATO allies on bilateral US-Soviet negotiations on arms control and other issues.<sup>180</sup> In this way, the administration followed the approach favored by Assistant Secretary of State Hillenbrand, who argued that "Statements by both the President and [Secretary of State Rogers] can still do much to influence European attitudes toward this country, given their continuing psychological need for assurances from us."<sup>181</sup>

U.S. officials stressed the need for reassurance among themselves as well.<sup>182</sup> They feared that withdrawals would encourage Finlandization among NATO allies and undermine American bargaining leverage with the Soviets.<sup>183</sup> Officials hesitated to threaten withdrawals lest they "erode German confidence in our security commitments."<sup>184</sup> Kissinger asserted that "one thing

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<sup>178</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>179</sup> Lepage, *The Declining Hegemon*, p. 149; Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958-1971*, p. 190; Richard Nixon, "Remarks to Reporters Summarizing His European Trip," October 4, 1970, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2697> (accessed November 27, 2017).

<sup>180</sup> Telegram from U.S. embassy to William Rogers, "Allied Consultation on SALT," June 1969, NSC Files, Country Files, Box 681, RMNL; "Memorandum of Conversation between President Nixon and Chancellor Kiesinger at the White House," August 7, 1969, NSC Files, Country Files, Box 682, RMNL.

<sup>181</sup> Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Hillenbrand) to Secretary of State Rogers, "Tensions in US Relations with Europe," November 15, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 328.

<sup>182</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 12, "NATO," April 14, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 57-58; Kissinger to Nixon, "Under Secretaries Committee Recommendation on Scenario for Explaining Reduction in Our Force Commitments to NATO," October 14, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 69-71; Report on a NATO Commanders Meeting, September 30, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 190-194.

<sup>183</sup> Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement*, pp. 151-153; Memorandum of Conversation, "Notes on President Nixon's Meeting with NATO Foreign and Defense Ministers," April 11, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 51-56; Minutes of a National Security Council Review Group Meeting, "U.S. Strategies and Forces for NATO," June 16, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 159-168; Minutes of a Combined Review Group and Verification Panel Meeting, August 31, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 180-189.

<sup>184</sup> C. Fred Bergsten to Henry Kissinger, "German Offset Problem," March 24, 1969, Folder "Germany, Vol. I [1 of 2]," National Security Council Files, Country Files, Box 681, RMNL. See also Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, "Recommended New U.S. Position on the German Offset Problem," February 22, 1969, Folder "Germany, Vol. I [1 of 2]," National Security Council Files, Country Files, Box 681, RMNL.

we *must* avoid is any arm-twisting of the Germans,” for fear of encouraging German neutralism, while Laird and the U.S. Representative to NATO counseled that Nixon go out of his way to emphasize that troop withdrawals would not be forthcoming.<sup>185</sup> Nixon, for his part, argued against troop withdrawals on the grounds that “The key to what we do is what effect does it have on Germany....Some Europeans would think to move toward the Russians because they are uneasy about more US reductions.”<sup>186</sup> He further posited that “the effect [of withdrawals] would be catastrophic” on Germany, potentially setting off a chain of events in which “the Germans left the fold and the umbilical cord [was] cut.”<sup>187</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In this study I explained the conditions under which great power patrons reassure their allies, a question which until this point has remained understudied in the academic literature. I argued that great powers use reassurance to discourage their allies from pursuing outside options, and that allies are most likely to do so when they perceive their patron’s commitment as unreliable. In order to test these claims, I created an original dataset of U.S. reassurance, and found that these propositions received considerable support in empirical tests. Specifically, the United States has been more likely to reassure its allies when it has faced resource and political constraints that bring its reliability into question, and it has also reassured allies with stronger outside options more.

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<sup>185</sup> Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power*, pp. 190-191; Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon, “Report on My Trip to Europe,” November 9, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 315-322; Telegram From the Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Department of State and the Department of Defense, “NATO’s December Ministerial,” November 29, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, pp. 346-347.

<sup>186</sup> Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, “NSC Meeting: NATO & MBFR,” November 19, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 230.

<sup>187</sup> Memorandum for the Record, “The President’s Meeting with Former High Government Officials and Military Officers on the Mansfield Amendment,” May 13, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 41, p. 275.

In addition to offering and empirically testing a theory of reassurance, this study has theoretical implications for understanding alliance management and design, and suggests avenues for future research. For many studies, alliance restraint functions most effectively when the patron can use threats of abandonment to coerce its partners.<sup>188</sup> In this view, using reassurance can make allies more difficult to control, creating moral hazard problems and emboldening allies to challenge their adversaries. By contrast, the theory I present here suggests that reassuring allies can actually serve as a tool of alliance control, as it encourages them to depend on their patron rather than pursue self-help.

In terms of alliance design, a number of scholars argue that the terms of an alliance pact — for example, whether it contains provisions for trade or joint military coordination — can greatly affect its perceived credibility.<sup>189</sup> In focusing on how weaker allies can bargain for reassurance, this study suggests avenues for further research on how weaker allies might also bargain to shape alliance treaties. Existing studies focus on understanding how great powers shape treaty design to mitigate their own risks of entrapment.<sup>190</sup> Future research, in turn, could show both how allies attempt to shape alliance treaty design to mitigate their own risk of abandonment and how great powers accommodate their allies' preferences to discourage them from seeking outside options. Additionally, more research could be done to identify the conditions under which reassurance is actually effective at rendering allies more confident in their patron's protection.

The analysis also has implications for understanding the role of alliances in U.S. foreign policy. The post-Cold War expansion of the U.S. alliance network is an enduring subject of

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<sup>188</sup> Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence*; Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>189</sup> Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs"; Leeds and Anac, "Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance."

<sup>190</sup> Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States"; Benson, *Constructing International Security*; Mattes, "Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design"; Cha, *Powerplay*.

debate, with some scholars questioning the rationale of overseas commitments in light of the unusual margin of security enjoyed by both the United States and its partners.<sup>191</sup> My theory suggests that the advent of unipolarity was a double-edged sword for the United States. While it reduced the immediate value of alliances for the United States, it also unmoored American partners from their own dependence on U.S. support, thus motivating Washington to continue providing security in order to discourage them from going their own way. Indeed, evidence indicates that U.S. efforts to maintain and expand NATO were driven in large part by a desire to discourage both Germany from re-militarizing and the European Community from acting as a competitor.<sup>192</sup>

In the wake of Donald Trump's presidency, a number of allies have expressed doubts about the credibility of U.S. commitments. My findings suggest that withholding reassurance and deliberately casting doubt on U.S. protection makes allies prone to reconsider their reliance on the United States and to pursue outside options instead. Indeed, U.S. partners may be doing just that, with NATO allies increasingly debating the merits of an independent European nuclear deterrent and recent polls showing that a majority of South Koreans favor obtaining nuclear weapons.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Posen, *Restraint*.

<sup>192</sup> Timothy Andrews Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), ch. 10.

<sup>193</sup> Max Fisher, "Fearing U.S. Withdrawal, Europe Considers Its Own Nuclear Deterrent," *New York Times*, March 6, 2017; Michelle Ye Hee Lee, "More than Ever, South Koreans Want Their Own Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Post*, September 13, 2017.