



Efforts to Avoid Conflict: Alliances, Arms, and Bargaining

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Summary

Key Terms

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) Nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

deterrence Preventing another actor from doing something they would otherwise do.

compellence Forcing another actor to do something they would not otherwise do.

Given the pervasiveness of interstate conflict, states devote significant attention to preparing for war, trying to prevent attacks from others, and negotiating their differences. This chapter discusses alliances—why they form, their size, who joins with whom, and how they relate to the likelihood of war. The chapter also discusses the acquisition of conventional weapons and **weapons of mass destruction**, their dangers, and how states try to control military buildup and arms races through arms control agreements. States join alliances and arm themselves for both security and other motivations. The post–Cold War era has seen significant efforts to address the nature of old alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and threats from conventional, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

As we will see in this chapter, states often form alliances and acquire arms in order to prevent others from doing something that they would otherwise do (**deterrence**) or to force others to do something that they would not otherwise do (**compellence**). Alliances often try to achieve extended deterrence by signaling to others that a stronger state's military arsenal will be used to protect their junior alliance partners. In the Cold War, the United States hoped its nuclear arsenal would deter a Soviet attack against its allies around the world. Alliances and arms races may also involve a compellence strategy. In the 1991 Gulf War, for example, the United Nations created a coalition to compel Iraq to leave Kuwait.

Deterrence and compellence involve communicating goals and commitment to other actors through bargaining and negotiation. How states bargain and negotiate alliances and arms agreements is also a topic in this chapter. The strategies that diplomats adopt stem from their efforts to deter or compel, but they also come from the relationship between current and future conflicts and from pressures from domestic constituents. These strategies can have significant effects on the resolution of international conflict in global politics.

Alliances

alliances Formal associations in which states pledge to militarily protect each other in specified circumstances.

Alliances, or international coalitions, seem to be an inevitable result of interaction among sovereign political units. **Alliances** are “formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership.”¹ “Wherever in recorded history a system of multiple sovereignty has existed, some of the sovereign units involved in conflicts with others have entered into alliances.”² Alliances were part of interstate relations in ancient India and China, in Greece during the era of city-states, and in Renaissance Italy. They have been a constant feature of the political landscape since the rise of the modern state in the mid-seventeenth century.

Why are these coalitions such a prominent part of international relations? The most common answer given by policymakers is that they are a necessary defense against aggression. Often, or perhaps most of the time,

defense is the actual motive for the formation of alliances. But some alliances are formed for more aggressive purposes. The pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, which resulted in the immediate dismemberment of Poland, is probably the most prominent twentieth-century example of an alliance that was formed precisely for the purpose of carrying out aggression as opposed to deterring it.

Whether for defensive or offensive purposes, alliances are usually formed to give members an advantage in interstate conflicts. But under what conditions states are most likely to form alliances, who will ally with whom, what kinds of alliances are most effective and cohesive, and what effects alliances have on the stability of the international system are issues about which there is still substantial disagreement.

Balancing

The most traditional set of answers is supplied by the balance-of-power ideas of realism discussed in Chapter 6. According to this theory, countries form alliances when any state in their midst becomes so powerful that it threatens to establish hegemony, or domination of the system. Through the mechanism of fluid alliances, the balance is preserved, and if war is not avoided, at least the powerful, aggressive state is denied victory. Most balance-of-power theorists would argue that alliances so used are beneficial, indeed necessary, for the stability of the international system.

balancing Joining an alliance against states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat.

States engaging in **balancing** behaviors “join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat. States choose to balance for two main reasons. First, they place their survival at risk if they fail to curb a potential hegemon before it becomes too strong. . . . Second, joining the weaker side increases the new member’s influence within the alliance, because the weaker side has greater need for assistance.”³ What do states actually balance against? Stephen Walt argues that while traditionally realists have focused on capabilities or *power*, it is more accurate to say that states balance against *threats*. “Although power is an important part of the equation, it is not the only one. It is more accurate to say that states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat. For example, states may balance by allying with other strong states if a weaker power is more dangerous for other reasons. Thus the coalitions that defeated Germany in World War I and World War II were vastly superior in total resources, but they came together when it became clear that the aggressive aims of the Wilhelmines and Nazis posed the greater danger.”⁴ Walt believes that balancing against threat, not power, is what drove many states into the U.S. alliance system during the Cold War.⁵ Although the power of another state is certainly important (states rarely ally against a state with little capabilities), a state’s geographical proximity, perceived aggressive intentions, and the offensive nature of a state’s power are other factors that states consider when they assess threats.⁶

Because of balancing, one common pattern of alliance formation can be summarized in the statement, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Republican France, for example, allied with Czarist Russia in 1894 because they had a common enemy, Germany. Republican France allied with the Communist Soviet Union in 1935 for the same reason. Two of the clearest examples of the principle “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” in post–Second World War international politics arose from the conflict between Pakistan and India. The two newly independent nations fought over Kashmir in 1947. In the ensuing decade, they developed sharply contrasting political systems. India was democratic, while Pakistan was ruled by a military dictatorship. The dictatorship, though, was staunchly anti-Communist and aligned itself with the Western world in not one but two alliances: the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Despite membership in these two strongly anti-Communist alliances, Pakistan soon found itself with a strong Communist ally. Pakistan’s enemy, India, became involved in a border dispute with China, which erupted into a war in 1962. China thus emerged as the enemy of Pakistan’s enemy, and by the mid-1960s, Pakistan had membership in two Western military alliances and simultaneously maintained friendship with the People’s Republic of China.

This conflict produced further coalitions of strange bedfellows. While Pakistan developed into a military dictatorship strongly allied with the forces of Western democracy, democratic India remained resolutely neutral in the Cold War conflict. But in 1971, as the civil war between West and East Pakistan became more serious and India decided it must intervene, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (still a democratic leader at the time) abandoned India’s long-standing policy of nonalignment and signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. Why? Because by that time, the Soviet Union was an enemy of India’s enemy, China.

Bandwagoning

bandwagoning Joining an alliance with the superior power to share in the benefits of the alliance.

States may join alliances for reasons other than balancing. **Bandwagoning** is a strategy that involves joining an alliance *with* the stronger power, rather than joining an alliance to balance *against* the stronger power (or threat). States engage in bandwagoning to share in the benefits of an alliance. “Simply put, balancing is driven by the desire to avoid losses; bandwagoning by the opportunity for gain. The presence of a significant threat, while required for effective balancing, is unnecessary for states to bandwagon.”⁷ Bandwagoning can take several forms. “Jackal bandwagoning” involves several states joining forces to overcome a predominant power, like jackals attacking a lion, in order to share in the spoils of the attack. “Wave of the future bandwagoning” occurs when states perceive that one state will likely prevail in the future. “During the Cold War era, for example, many less-developed countries viewed communism in this way. Consequently, they did not have to be coerced or bribed to join the

Sino-Soviet bloc; they did so voluntarily.”⁸ “Piling-on bandwagoning” comes at the end of a conflict when states on the losing side opportunistically switch their allegiance in order to be on the winning side. At the end of World War II, for example, several states switched from the Axis to the Allied side because the Allied side was winning. In addition, the Allied powers had announced that states that did not declare war against the Axis coalition by March 1, 1945, would be excluded from membership in the to-be-formed United Nations. “More recently, the overwhelming superior coalition arrayed against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War exemplifies piling-on bandwagoning behavior.”⁹ Certain states may be more likely to bandwagon than others. Weaker states, for example, might be more likely to bandwagon than balance.¹⁰

The Size of Alliances

While bandwagoning reasons for joining alliances would lead us to expect quite large coalitions, others would argue that alliances among large numbers of states, particularly large numbers of major powers, are not in the interests of states and are difficult to maintain. In particular, coalition theory expects that in certain situations, including international relations, “participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger.”¹¹ This is known as the size principle; in effect, it predicts that the pattern of alliances in the international system will result from two contradictory intentions held by states: (1) to join a winning coalition and (2) to win as much as possible for themselves. Obviously, the first aim will lead each state to prefer larger alliances because they can ensure victory. The second leads each state to prefer smaller alliances because they can provide the biggest share of whatever there is to win. The result of such contradictory aims will be alliances that are just as large as they must be to win but no larger, so that alliances will be **minimum winning coalitions**.

minimum winning coalitions Alliances only as large as they must be to win.

Historically, minimum winning coalitions have been quite rare. There are several reasons that coalitions in world politics are often much larger than minimum winning ones. For example, states are unlikely to want to take the risks involved in forming minimum winning coalitions. In a parliament, forming a coalition of political parties just big enough to win ensures victory. In world politics, once the coalition is formed, it may well have to defeat an opposing coalition in a war. Also, any attempt to form a minimum winning coalition may be foiled by the difficulty of measuring power (see Chapter 4). What was thought to be just enough to win may turn out to be insufficient. Even if that problem does not occur, a minimum winning coalition may have to fight long and hard to win the war, whereas a much larger coalition might win easily. Furthermore, despite some complications in recent alliances, a systematic review of the historical record shows that larger international alliances do not show any tendency to break up faster than small alliances do.¹²

It is true, though, that once large alliances are formed, there is difficulty in maintaining them because of the competing interests of states, particularly the interests of the major powers involved. After the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia constituted a grand coalition because France was defeated as the only other great power in the world. The coalition began to show signs of disunity as early as the Congress of Vienna in 1815, at which the postwar arrangements were determined. Austria and Britain secretly allied with the French against the Russians and the Prussians. "Hence followed this astonishing result: Austria and England, both of whom had been fighting France for nearly a generation, brought a reconstituted French government back into world politics and allied with it against their own former allies in the very moment of victory."¹³

The most spectacular dissolution of a grand coalition took place after the Second World War. During the war, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain (with some help from France) constituted what was fairly close to a minimum winning coalition. But after the war, with Italy defeated and Japan and Germany nearly prostrate, the Big Three became a grand coalition. Controversy continues among U.S. historians about the origins of the Cold War (see Chapter 3). According to coalition theorists, the Cold War occurred as a more or less inevitable result of the breakup of the grand coalition. The fact that the only state in the world strong enough to threaten the United States was the Soviet Union, and vice-versa, also played a role. "Having defeated the Axis, the winners had nothing to win from unless they split up and tried to win from each other."¹⁴

Actual cases of post-Cold War coalitions also demonstrate the difficulty of maintaining large alliances. On the one hand, the multistate coalition against Iraq, formed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, largely held together for quite a long time after the war. More than a decade later, UN economic sanctions were basically still in place, and the United States still maintained no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq. Without some support from the coalition, this would have been difficult. On the other hand, the grand Gulf coalition certainly showed the cracks that the size principle would predict, even before the 2003 intervention in Iraq. Substantial opposition to the sanctions increased in the Middle East and from Russia and France. When the United States tried to reconstitute this "grand alliance" in 2002 and 2003, it met considerable resistance from other major powers, including Russia and France. The United States proceeded with some other states, dubbed the "coalition of the willing," but this was a much smaller alliance compared to that in the 1991 Gulf War.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the coalition against Al Qaeda and Afghanistan was quite large, thus violating the minimum winning principle. Yet it too demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining a large alliance. Concerns from Pakistan about the ethnic makeup of the post-Taliban Afghani government, for example, had to be balanced against the preferences of the internal Afghani opposition

groups involved in the military campaign against Al Qaeda. The debate over the intervention in Iraq in 2003 also brought into question the long-term viability of a large alliance against terrorist groups.

Other Factors in Alliance Formation and Maintenance

Beyond power, threats, gains, and size calculations, states may choose alliance partners for other reasons, and these factors challenge the more traditional, balance-of-power assumptions in the realist theoretical perspective. In particular, “views of international relations that are based exclusively on considerations of security and issues of war and peace may miss a major motivation that states may have in joining alliances and in their foreign policy more generally. If multiple goals can be shown to underlie the formation of alliances, we must question a fundamental premise of realism.”¹⁵ States may choose partners, for example, that share a common ideology, common economic and political systems, or similar cultural characteristics. Once alliances are formed, these affinities, institutional arrangements, and norms of alliance behavior may constrain alliance members.¹⁶ States may also join alliances to counter domestic, rather than external, threats, such as poor economic conditions.¹⁷ These factors, various forms of liberalism argue, are important in alliance behavior as well as traditional security concerns.¹⁸

Recent evidence on the tendency for states to ally with other similar states is mixed,¹⁹ but even if states do ally out of ideological solidarity, it does not necessarily mean the alliance will be long-lasting. Indeed, Walt argues that “certain types of ideology cause conflict and dissension rather than solidarity and alignment. In particular, when the ideology calls for the members to form a centralized movement obeying a single authoritative leadership, the likelihood of conflict among the members is increased.”²⁰ In the Soviet-led alliance during the Cold War, for example, ideological differences between the Soviet Union and some of its alliance partners, particularly Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and China at various times, contributed to alliance problems and even intra-alliance military conflict.

Regardless of ideology, maintaining a cohesive alliance can be complicated by disputes over **burden sharing**, or the costs of the alliance. The burden-sharing debate has been particularly important in the NATO alliance. “Meeting the Soviet threat through coordinated action was the *raison d’être* of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, . . . but the distribution of the costs of achieving that objective was a persistent source of contention. The allies consistently failed to meet the goal, emphasized by the United States, of bearing the same defense burden.”²¹ The burden-sharing debate may have arisen from the very nature of the alliance. Providing a collective deterrent to the Soviet threat was in the interests of all; it was a collective good. But as economist Mancur Olson has pointed out, collective goods often lead to uneven contributions by those who

burden sharing How costs of alliance are distributed among member states.

benefit from them. In alliances like NATO, he argued, there is a “tendency for the ‘larger’ members—those that place a higher absolute value on the public good—to bear a disproportionate share of the burden.”²² Thus, for many years, the United States incurred most of the costs for maintaining the alliance. (The characteristics of collective goods will be discussed further in Chapter 10 in the context of international trade and monetary relations and in Chapter 13 in the context of environmental challenges.)

Alliances and War

At least equal in interest to the question of which nations will ally are questions concerning the effects of alliances on incidences of international war. Alliances have usually been intended to help a state avoid war or to help it win a war already in progress. Whether alliances serve the first purpose well is a matter of some dispute in research on international relations.²³ It may be true that a state threatened with aggression can deter the potential aggressor by acquiring one or more formal allies. But these alliances also may convince the potential aggressor that it is the victim of a strategy of encirclement, which can lead to several undesirable reactions. For example, the aggressor target of the alliances may seek its own alliance partners. Before the initial alliance was formed, the potential aggressor may have had trouble finding such partners because the important states in the area were not aware of the lines of cleavage in the system. But an alliance or two could conceivably polarize the situation to the point where the potential aggressor will find it easy to form a counteralliance. Also, alliances can clarify the situation in such a way as to allow a potential aggressor to calculate just how much help will be needed to launch a successful war.²⁴ At worst, the polarized situation can result in the very thing that the original alliance was designed to avoid: an enemy attack. The attack might be carried out either because the original alliance made the enemy afraid or because the enemy’s confidence was bolstered by the alliance it created in response to the original coalition.

This analysis is all highly speculative, of course, and it seems fairly clear that in the past, such speculation was influenced heavily by the role that alliances played in the previous big war.

After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, in which France lost badly partly due to its lack of allies, “statesmen grew more fearful of isolation, and they made greater efforts than in the pre-1870 era to establish and maintain alliances in peacetime.”²⁵ As a result, the rate at which the European great powers formed alliances in the period from 1875 to 1910 was significantly higher than the rate from 1814 to 1874.²⁶ By 1914, the European state system was virtually honeycombed with formal alliances. These alliances in retrospect seem to have been an important part of the problem that led to a major conflagration because of an intrinsically unimportant spat between Austria and Serbia. Alliance ties sucked Germany

into the conflict. After Russia became involved, alliances then entangled France and Britain. Thus, alliances came out of the First World War with a rather tarnished reputation. "In the late 1930s . . . policymakers and strategists who had lived through the trench warfare stalemates of 1914–18 believed that conquest was difficult and slow. Consequently they thought that they could safely stand aside at the outset of a conflict, waiting to intervene only if and when the initial belligerents showed signs of having exhausted themselves."²⁷ So policymakers deliberately avoided commitments to enter into wars immediately in the form of alliance treaties. Again, in retrospect, the avoidance of alliance bonds seemed disastrous. If effective alliances with the targets he attacked before his move against Poland had been formed against Hitler, he might not have begun the Second World War.

Right or wrong, alliances came out of the Second World War with their reputation for deterring aggression restored, at least in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. The United States, in the years following the war, formed the most extensive set of formal alliances in the history of the world: the Rio Pact in Latin America, CENTO in the Middle East, SEATO in Asia, and a treaty between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) in the South Pacific to implement the U.S. policy of containment. Several bilateral pacts were also concluded, such as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, first signed in 1951, which pledged the United States to defend Japan in exchange for the use of Japan's military bases. The keystone of the U.S. system of alliances was NATO, centered on Western Europe. Having already signed an alliance with Communist China, the Soviets soon organized the Warsaw Pact to counterbalance NATO (and in response to the rearming of West Germany in 1955), thus solidifying the bipolarity of the international system (see Chapter 3 for further discussion and definitions of NATO and Warsaw Pact). This proliferation of alliances after the Second World War was inspired, like the rapid rate of alliance formation after the quick Prussian victory over France in 1870, by perceptions regarding the scope and pace of warfare. "Just as the Prussian [victory] over . . . France encouraged statesmen to scramble to line up allies in advance of the next war, the tremendous destructiveness of the Second World War encouraged states that had formerly sought safety in neutrality . . . to lobby for admission to NATO in an attempt to avoid becoming a battlefield in a future war."²⁸

The structure of the alliance network that emerged after the Second World War changed considerably over the next few decades and was transformed quite dramatically in 1991. The Sino-Soviet alliance ceased to exist in 1961. For several complicated reasons involving Middle Eastern politics at the time, the United States never did join CENTO, and that organization died. SEATO was disbanded in 1975 after the Communist victories in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, NATO and the Warsaw Pact were by far the most important alliances for each of the superpowers.

Alliances After the Cold War

When the Warsaw Pact was disbanded in 1991, its demise naturally called into question the continuing necessity and purpose of its major rival, NATO, because there was no apparent power or threat to balance against. Defenders of NATO today insist that it deserves credit for preserving peace in Europe since 1945 and that it would be a mistake to disband it even though the Warsaw Pact is dead. And in fact, fairly soon after the end of the Cold War, NATO's most enthusiastic supporters argued that it was crucial to expand its membership to take in several Central and Eastern European states—not so much as a defense against a possible Russian attack but rather to solidify these new democracies. According to one proponent of NATO's inclusion of new states in East-Central Europe, "An expansion of NATO today . . . must have as its primary purpose the internal transformations of new member states."²⁹ Thus, domestic factors were an important argument for extending the alliance.

The hope that bringing East-Central European countries into NATO might help solidify their newly democratic regimes seems based in part on the experience of Germany. Making West Germany a member of NATO in the 1950s does seem in retrospect to have solidified its transition from Nazism to democracy. Although there is some evidence that membership in such an alliance will consolidate a nation's democracy,³⁰ it seems clear that alignment with the United States, for example, is certainly no guarantee of stable democracy. During the 1960s, even though most countries in the region were members of the Rio Pact, "sixteen military coups took place in the Latin American countries."³¹

Some worry about the credibility of an expanded NATO. Will the United States and the rest of NATO respond as promised to attacks on their new allies in East-Central Europe? Even more to the point, will potential attackers believe that NATO would defend its newest members? There is certainly room for doubt. "After seeing how reluctant George [H. W.] Bush and Bill Clinton were to send American troops to Bosnia, . . . it is easy not to visualize a future American president sending American soldiers to central Europe to sort things out there."³² A historical review of alliances reveals that alliance commitments have been honored on only about 27 percent of the occasions on which they have been tested in actual conflicts.³³ Of course, it is likely that unreliable alliance ties are precisely the ones likely to be tested, whereas reliable alliances may well produce their intended deterrent effect most of the time. "It is unreliable alliances that . . . [attract] attacks. Only a small proportion of alliances need to be unreliable to generate the empirical observation that alliances are on average unreliable."³⁴

In 1999, three Central European states—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—formally joined the NATO alliance, increasing the number of member countries to nineteen. Very soon after they assumed formal membership in NATO, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland faced



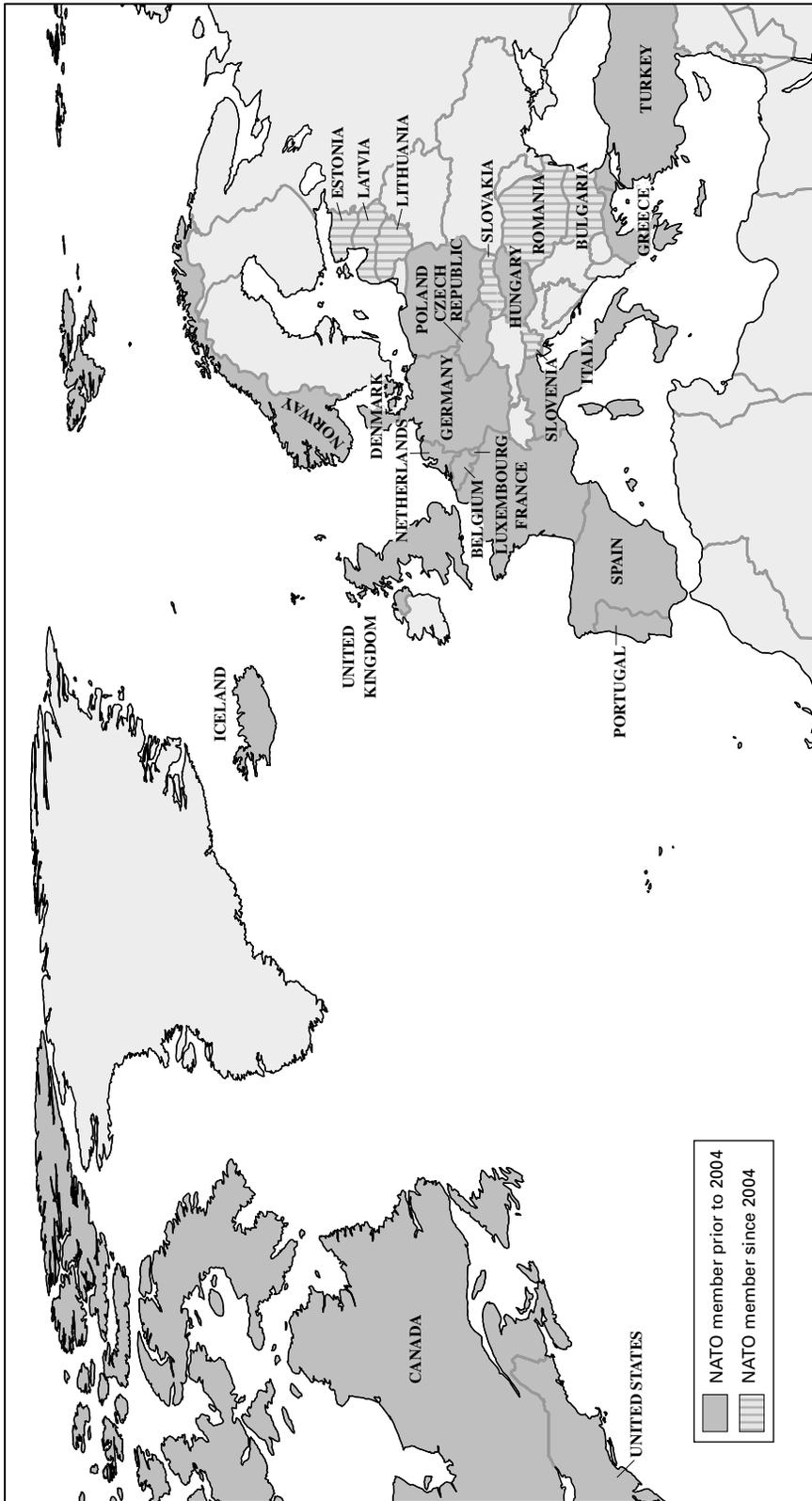
Map: Political-Military Alliances, Atlas page 28

their first opportunity to be active participants when NATO began its attacks on Yugoslavia due to its treatment of ethnic Albanians in its province of Kosovo. "Instead of being a security liability, the new members were an asset to the Alliance despite the inadequacy of their armed forces. Expansion improved NATO's ability to conduct a bombing campaign . . . and to deploy peacekeeping troops in the Balkans because, absent expansion, the Czech Republic and Hungary would likely have lent far less support. . . . Hungary's provision of military bases, transportation routes, and other forms of logistical support was strategically significant."³⁵ In 2004, seven more countries joined the alliance: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, bringing the total number of states in the alliance to twenty-six (see Map 8.1). Other East European countries, including Ukraine, Albania, and Croatia, have discussed future membership with NATO.

NATO expansion has occurred over Russian objections. Indeed, "the management of relations with Russia is among the most difficult of NATO's current political tasks. . . . and Russia's condemnation of NATO enlargement created an atmosphere of increasing suspicion and distance even before the 1999 Kosovo crisis" during which Russia withdrew from the Partnership for Peace (an organization for joint military planning in Central and Eastern Europe) in protest.³⁶ Although Russia was particularly concerned about the invitation to the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—all former republics of the Soviet Union), its objections were less vociferous than many expected. This may have been due to the attempts to give Russia a greater voice in NATO decision making. In 2002, NATO formally provided "Moscow a role from the outset in NATO discussions about a fixed variety of topics, including nonproliferation, crisis management, missile defense and counterterrorism. . . . Moscow will not be a member of the alliance or be bound by its collective defense pact, in which all members pledge to come to each other's defense if necessary. Nor will Russia have a veto over NATO decisions or a vote in the expansion of its membership."³⁷

In addition to NATO's new members, the post-Cold War world has brought new roles to the alliance. During the wars in the former Yugoslavia, NATO modified its constitution to engage in "out-of-area" operations. NATO's mission in the Balkans was clearly beyond the defense of an ally from an outside threat. To many observers, "the NATO intervention in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 exemplified the challenges of an old alliance that has to adjust to a new world, where enemies and threats are no longer quite as clearly defined. . . . The Alliance was able to maintain an impressive degree of cohesion in a situation in which such cohesion was in no way guaranteed at the outset."³⁸ NATO has also responded to threat from a nonstate actor. After the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, NATO, for the first time in the alliance's history, activated a clause in its charter by which members regard an attack on one member as an attack on all.³⁹ Many NATO members

Map 8.1 The New NATO, 2004



Source: From www.nato.int/

took part in the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, and NATO, operating under United Nations mandate, officially took over command of the military mission to provide security to the post-Taliban regime, in 2003.

Indeed, “with little fanfare—and even less notice—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has gone global, . . . seeking to bring stability to other parts of the world. In the process, it is extending both its geographic reach and the range of its operations. In recent years, it has played peacekeeper in Afghanistan, trained security forces in Iraq, and given logistical support to the African Union’s mission in Darfur. It assisted the tsunami relief effort in Indonesia and ferried supplies to victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States and to those of a massive earthquake in Pakistan.”⁴⁰ The division within NATO over the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq, however, may have long-lasting negative effects on the alliance. “While no one in Europe is predicting the death of NATO . . . , the damage is evident in the renewed willingness of Germany and France to consider a military policy separate from . . . [the Atlantic alliance]. But the larger obstacle may be the widespread perception across the Continent that a political Rubicon has been crossed, and that divisions will not be bridged easily, or soon.”⁴¹

Arms and Arms Control

In addition to joining alliances, states deal with the potential threat of war by building a military, by acquiring weapons.⁴² This may be for offensive purposes in preparation for war, but the acquisition of arms may also be for defensive purposes—to protect territory and citizens and to deter others from attack. States may also acquire weapons for domestic political reasons.⁴³ As discussed in Chapter 5, military-industrial complexes have long been accused of influencing armament decisions for their own profit. Indeed, “arms expenditures would seem to be perfect candidates for government decisions arrived at through bureaucratic and incremental processes. They are long-term, noncrisis, budgetary decisions that ordinarily involve a large number of interested domestic actors . . . legislators, political officials in the executive branch, civilian defense officials, military officers in various rival services, manufacturers of weapons and their subcontractors, citizen groups, and so on.”⁴⁴

For all of these reasons involving external security and internal politics, the world spends massive amounts of money on arms. Although world military expenditures declined at the end of and following the Cold War, from 1987 to 1998, they have been on the rise since 1998. In 2004, \$975 billion went toward military spending, equal to 2.6 percent of the world’s GDP or \$162 per person. The current level of military expenditures is just 6 percent lower than the peak of military spending during the Cold War, in 1987–1998. The recent rise is primarily due to the high levels of U.S. military spending, primarily for the “war on terror” generally and for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq specifically.⁴⁵



TABLE 8.1

The Fifteen Top Military Spenders, 2005

Rank	Country	Spending (billions)
1	United States	\$478.2
2	United Kingdom	48.3
3	France	46.2
4	Japan	42.1
5	China	41.0
6	Germany	33.2
7	Italy	27.2
8	Saudi Arabia	25.2
9	Russia	21.0
10	India	20.4
11	South Korea	16.4
12	Canada	10.6
13	Australia	10.5
14	Spain	9.9
15	Israel	9.6

Note: Figures in purchasing power parity dollar terms converted at 2003 rates. Figures for Russia and China are estimates.

Source: Data from SIPRI Yearbook, 2006.

The United States is by far the biggest spender, accounting for half of the world's total in recent years. Table 8.1 lists the fifteen top spending states in 2005.

arms control Efforts to limit or ban weapons in states' military arsenals.

Often states simultaneously engage in arms buildup and **arms control** efforts. They agree to arms control treaties in order to control the damage of war should it occur or to lessen the likelihood of war. Arms control may simply be arms limitations agreements; putting, for example, a ceiling on the number of a certain type of weapons that states can have. Arms control agreements may also involve disarmament agreements, requiring states to give up a certain class or type of weapons. The buildup and control of arms are important ways that states respond to and deal with international conflict.

Conventional Weapons

arms transfers Sales or gifts of military weapons.

Most of the money that states spend on arms goes for conventional weapons. Conventional weapons are also traded on the world market or given as part of a military assistance program by one state to another. **Arms transfers** of major conventional weapons (measured in value) declined in the early post-Cold War years, held steady in the late 1990s, and declined

TABLE 8.2

Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons to the Leading Recipients by Region, 2000–2004

Recipients by Region	Values of Arms Transfers (millions)
Asia	\$36,011
Europe	21,137
Middle East	11,686
Americas	6,934
Africa	5,127
Oceania	2,384

Note: Figures are expressed in millions of dollars at constant (1990) values.

Source: Adapted from SIPRI 2005 Yearbook, Appendix 10A, p. 449.

again in 2001. The United States is the largest weapons supplier, accounting for 47 percent of global arms transfers in 2004. Together with the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom supplied the world with 76 percent of the arms transfers from 1997 to 2005.⁴⁶ As Table 8.2 indicates, much of the recent arms transfers of major conventional weapons go to the developing world—Asia in particular. The top five recipients of major conventional weapons transfers from 1997 to 2005 were China, Taiwan, India, Greece, and Turkey.⁴⁷

A growing area of concern regarding conventional weapons is the proliferation of light weapons, or **small arms**, such as pistols, rifles, machine guns, and shoulder-fired antitank and anti-aircraft missiles. Relatively cheap to obtain and easy to transport and hide, light weapons have become extremely significant in many post-Cold War civil conflicts:

The centrality of light weapons in contemporary warfare is especially evident in the conflicts in Liberia and Somalia. In Liberia, rival bands of guerillas—armed, for the most part, with AK-47 assault rifles—have been fighting among themselves for control of the country, bringing commerce to a standstill and driving an estimated 2.3 million people from their homes and villages. In Somalia, lightly armed militias have been similarly engaged, ravaging the major cities, paralyzing rural agriculture, and at one point pushing millions to the brink of starvation. In both countries, UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions have proved unable to stop the fighting or disarm the major factions.⁴⁸

Small arms in Iraq, particularly “improvised explosive devices” (IEDs) have been a significant cause of injury and death to foreign troops, Iraqi military, and Iraqi civilians. IEDs are small versions of antipersonnel land mines, another type of conventional weapon drawing international

small arms Typically inexpensive light weapons that an individual can carry.

attention. Land mines, “which can cost as little as \$10 a piece, are planted in roads, markets, pastures, and fields to hinder agriculture and otherwise disrupt normal life. An estimated 85 to 110 million uncleared mines are thought to remain in the soil of some sixty nations, with the largest concentrations in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and the former Yugoslavia. Each year some 25,000 civilians are killed, wounded, or maimed by land mines, and many more are driven from their homes and fields.”⁴⁹

What role do arms transfers play in international conflict? The impact of arms transfers to areas of conflict is complex. “While suppliers have different reasons for supplying weapons, the arms suppliers cannot control whether arms deliveries will stabilize or destabilize a particular relationship. Sometimes the weapons help to end a war; in other situations the acquisition of new weapons increases insecurity and could thereby reduce the likelihood of a peaceful solution.”⁵⁰ Most research on this question supports the view that arms transfers generally increase the likelihood of conflict, although other factors are important as well.⁵¹ For example, one study found that arms transfers from major powers make states more likely to initiate military disputes and to be targets as well.⁵² Arms transfers are most worrisome when they are received by parties to ongoing conflicts, such as the Indian-Pakistani conflict, and when they contribute to arms races.

Arms Races and International Conflict

arms race Competitive increase in armaments by two states or coalitions of states.

When rival states engage in significant military buildups, arms races become a concern. An **arms race** is “a progressive, competitive peacetime increase in armaments by two states or coalitions of states resulting from conflicting purposes and mutual fears.”⁵³ Arms races are an example of the security dilemma (discussed in Chapter 6), as one state’s decision to arm may simply be for defensive reasons but may be interpreted by another state as an offensive threat. When each state responds to increase its security, the overall result is a less secure situation for all. Many believe that arms races will spiral out of control and contribute to war, but systematic analyses of arms races in general have not found that they make wars much more likely. One study of arms races between 1816 and 1980 reports that “military buildups . . . have little direct effect on the likelihood [of] war. Only approximately 20 percent of arms races . . . were . . . followed by war.”⁵⁴ A more recent study, though, reports that states involved in serious disputes and an arms race at the same time are substantially more likely to end up in a war against each other than are states involved in disputes when no arms race is underway.⁵⁵

This evidence does not necessarily justify the conclusion that arms races are dangerous. Perhaps states conducting arms races are less likely to get involved in serious disputes in the first place, so that if one compared states in arms races with states not in arms races (rather than comparing states in serious disputes and simultaneously in arms races with other

states in serious disputes but not in arms races), the rapidly arming states would be seen as less likely to become involved in war. Admittedly, it is certainly possible that arms races increase tensions and thus cause wars that otherwise would not have occurred. But it is perhaps equally plausible that states become involved in arms races because they accurately perceive their disputes with other states as being sufficiently serious to lead to war and that the subsequent wars are more the result of those existing disputes than the result of the arms accumulations themselves. In short, it is clear that “arms races have been a preliminary to war. . . . The major wars of our century—World Wars I and II—have each been preceded by arms races. But just as clearly, many wars have not been preceded by such mutual arms buildups, and many arms races never end in war.”⁵⁶ While there is comparatively less research on the role of arms races in internal conflicts, recent evidence suggests a similar pattern: The acquisition of arms by warring sides in an internal conflict is associated with, but is not necessary for, an escalation of violence.⁵⁷

Conventional Arms Control

Nevertheless, states have often entered into arms control agreements to limit damage from conventional weapons or lessen the chances of war from arms races. Indeed, in the early 1920s, at the Washington Naval Conferences, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy agreed to limit the weight of their naval fleets. More recently, the **Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty** (known as the CFE treaty) was a direct response to the end of the Cold War in Europe. “Signed in 1990 and fully implemented by 1995, the CFE treaty created a military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact by reducing to equal levels each group’s military holdings in five categories of conventional weapons: tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, helicopters, and aircraft. . . . Another measure of the success of the CFE treaty is the fact that it was used as a model by the Dayton accords for the regional arms control settlement in the former Yugoslavia.”⁵⁸

For the most part, however, the control of conventional arms and the limitation of arms buildup through arms transfer have not been a high priority:

Despite the correlation between high levels of arms imports and chronic instability, control of the conventional arms traffic has been a relatively minor international concern until fairly recently. For most of the Cold War period, arms sales were considered an essential glue to alliance systems and a useful tool in gaining influence in the Third World. Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, however, the world community became much more concerned about conventional arms trafficking. The fact that Saddam Hussein had been able to accumulate a massive military arsenal . . . from external sources led many world leaders to regret their earlier failure to control the arms trade.⁵⁹

Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty Agreement creating military balance of conventional weapons between NATO and the Warsaw Pact at the end of the Cold War.

international arms embargoes Agreements to cease arms transfers to threatening or unstable states.

One recent effort to monitor the arms trade is the establishment of a voluntary “register” of arms imports and exports so the international community can monitor buildups. This information may be important in directing attention to certain regions, but it does not prevent the buildups. Furthermore, while arms sales have declined in recent years, transfers to some particularly unstable regions remain at very high levels. States do cooperate to impose **international arms embargoes** on some high-conflict regions. In 2004, 6 countries and 5 rebel groups were under mandatory UN Security Council embargoes.⁶⁰ Countries under recent UN mandatory embargoes include Iraq, Somalia, and Angola.

Given the types of post–Cold War conflicts and the proliferation and destructive capabilities of small arms, there have been efforts to monitor and control arms trafficking of this type. Controlling light weapons—what has been called “microdisarmament”—has only recently come on the agenda of the international community and will be difficult given the lack of information on the small arms trade and the black market nature of much of this trade.⁶¹ In the late 1990s, the United Nations established the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to investigate the problem and potential solutions, and in 2001 the United Nations held its first large conference on the subject, the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. State and nonstate actors attending the conference agreed, among other measures, to coordinate efforts to track trade in small arms and light weapons, crack down on illicit trade in these weapons, and engage in effective disarmament where possible.

Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty Agreement to ban production and export of land mines designed to harm or kill people.

Those interested in controlling small arms have tried to build on the success of the **Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty**, drafted in 1997. Also known as the Ottawa Treaty, this agreement bans production and export of land mines designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure, or kill one or more persons. “Since the signing of the Ottawa treaty, a remarkably large number of states have moved to add their signatures and ratifications. Within a year, 130 countries had signed it, and the number swelled to 154 by early 2006. But perhaps more significant is that countries quickly expedited the ratification process to approve the treaty. . . . The landmine ban is widely considered the most quickly negotiated and ratified international convention ever.”⁶² Still, in 2007, many countries, including China, Iraq, Russia, and the United States, had not signed the treaty.

Nuclear Weapons: Thinking the Unthinkable

The nuclear era introduced new concerns about the acquisition of arms. During most of the Cold War era, the United States and the Soviet Union possessed about 95 percent of the world’s nuclear warheads. As a result, each superpower had enough firepower to obliterate the other’s citizens several times over. Were there *any* good reasons for the Americans and the Soviets to keep stockpiling fantastically destructive weapons for

decades, or did the process continue for as long as it did because both sides succumbed to madness, the greed of their respective military-industrial complexes, or incredibly foolish pride?

Since millions of people would have died in almost any nuclear war, it might seem logical to conclude that such a conflict was always unthinkable and virtually certain not to occur. But the nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union would have been much less serious and intractable than it was for decades if the probability of nuclear war were virtually zero. In fact, under certain conditions, it might have been rational for one or both sides to initiate a nuclear war, even if we optimistically assume that nuclear weapons have a sobering effect on both sides, leading them to think more conservatively about using them. To the extent that one side believes the other is actually preparing to launch an attack, it may be rational to strike first. Confronted with such a situation, leaders on both sides might reason as follows: Our side, of course, would not dream of committing such a horrifying and repugnant act as launching a first strike. We are too honorable and humanitarian to do such a thing. But I am not so sure about the Soviets [Americans]. Being Communists [capitalists], they are inherently imperialistic. And they know that if they strike first, they will win. Worse, they know that we know that they will win if they strike first. Because they know that we know that they will win if they strike first, they might well conclude that we will strike first, if only to avoid catastrophe. Considering this, they are sure to attack. Thus, we must launch a nuclear attack.

Fortunately, the nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union changed so that this logic, based on the ability of a first strike to eliminate all of the enemy's weapons and thereby allow the initiator to escape retaliation, was no longer valid. In fact, a first strike that deprived the other side of any significant ability to retaliate became highly unlikely, at least by the late 1960s. In other words, the leaders of the former Soviet Union and the United States were usually quite confident that if they were the victim of a first strike, their **second-strike capability** would enable them to deliver a devastating counterattack. Second-strike capability was the basis of the nuclear doctrine **Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)** that came to dominate superpower strategic thinking by the 1970s. The MAD doctrine argued that stability could be maintained between the nuclear powers because they were both vulnerable to each other's second-strike capability. Neither side would attack because they knew that the other could absorb an initial attack and still render unacceptable damage in a second strike.

But the Cold War nuclear confrontation was often quite tense, because technological developments always posed a danger that a nuclear war might become winnable. As early as 1960, Henry Kissinger pointed out that "every country lives with the nightmare that even if it puts forth its best efforts its survival may be jeopardized by a technological breakthrough on the part of its opponent."⁶³ And such nightmares were

second-strike capability

The ability of a state to deliver a devastating counterattack after being attacked by nuclear weapons.

Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)

Strategic doctrine based on the idea that war between the superpowers was deterred when they both were vulnerable to each other's second-strike capability.

Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)

Program to use a space-based technology to strike down incoming missiles.

magnified during the Cold War by the fact that each side was making determined efforts to achieve such breakthroughs, whether by developing more accurate intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), or submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), or ballistic missile defense systems like President Ronald Reagan's **Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)**, a research program to build a space-based system to defend the nation against strategic ballistic missiles.

Innovations of that type were inspired in part because successful deterrence required more than simply second-strike capability. A deterrence strategy was effective *only if* the leaders of the other side could not even imagine that a first strike might be successful. To be more precise, during the Cold War, the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union had to contend continuously with the possibility that deterrence might break down and a nuclear war might break out if the decision makers on either side became convinced that the other side *imagined* that its enemies *believed* that a first strike might be successful. As long as these reciprocal fears of surprise attack⁶⁴ existed, there was always the possibility that a nuclear war might occur—not only because of an accident or insanity but also because one side or the other (or most dangerously, both sides) would find itself in a position where nuclear war seemed, by some calculations, a logical option.

The Nuclear Arms Race and the Prisoner's Dilemma

The nuclear arms race during the Cold War can also be seen as a rational response to uncertainty. From 1945 until 1993, the United States deployed about 70,000 nuclear warheads, and the Soviet Union made about 55,000. Both states continued to add to their arsenals, partly because of a situation that is known in game theory as the **prisoner's dilemma**.

prisoner's dilemma

Scenario in which actors following individually rational strategies produce the least-desired outcome.

Game theory is an approach to the study of global politics that focuses on situations that two or more actors find themselves in and the choices that these situations lead actors to make. Game theory is based on mathematics and is also referred to as formal models.⁶⁵ Formal models depict actors, such as states, in various situations (games), and assume that they make rational choices, given their individual preferences and the incentives (the rules of the game) (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of rational actors). Game theory predicts the likely outcomes, the solutions to the game, that result from actors' interacting in various scenarios, such as the prisoner's dilemma.

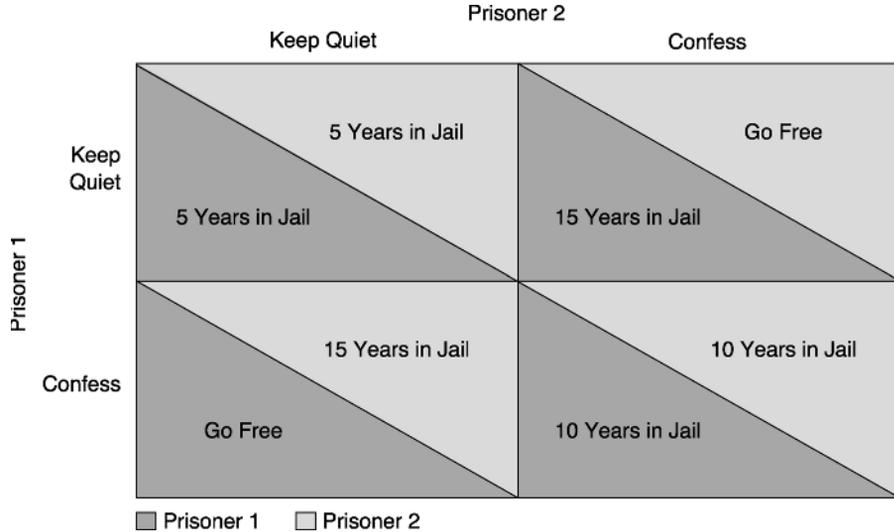
game theory

Mathematical approach for predicting outcomes of actors' interactions in various scenarios.

The prisoner's dilemma game gets its name from a story designed to illustrate the underlying dilemma. The structure of such a game is presented in Figure 8.1. In the prisoner's dilemma story, two bank robbery suspects are detained by the prosecutor and placed in separate rooms. The prosecutor tells each of them individually that she has enough evidence to convict them on a minor weapon possession charge, which carries a penalty of five years in jail. She also tells each of them that if he will

Figure 8.1 The Prisoner's Dilemma

The game theory matrix shows the payoff to each prisoner for confessing or not confessing a crime to the prosecutor.



confess to his and his partner's crime, then the prosecutor will reduce the charges leveled against him (by taking off five years of jail time). The only way the prosecutor can convict either of the suspects for the serious bank robbery charge (which carries a fifteen-year jail sentence), however, is for one of them to confess to their involvement in the robbery. In this scenario, each suspect must decide whether to keep quiet or confess. The cells in Figure 8.1 represent the results (termed "payoffs" in game theory) for each prisoner based on each prisoner's choice of whether to confess or keep quiet. Which is the rational strategy from their individual points of view? Social scientists have debated the definition of rationality at some length, but in the context of games like this, game theorists point out a couple of important ways in which self-interested calculations lead both of the suspects to confess.

Prisoner 1 wonders to himself what would be best for him to do if his partner keeps quiet. If prisoner 1 also keeps quiet (illustrated in the top left box of Figure 8.1), then he will get five years in jail from the weapon possession charge. If he chooses to confess while his partner keeps quiet (illustrated in the bottom left box of Figure 8.1), then he will be charged only with weapon possession (a five-year jail term) but will also be rewarded for supplying evidence for prosecution (with a five-year sentence reduction), resulting in no jail time at all. Clearly, the choice favors confessing (and going free) over keeping quiet (and getting five years of jail time).

But what if prisoner 1's partner decides to confess to their crime instead of keeping quiet? In that case, prisoner 1 will certainly be charged with the serious bank robbery (fifteen years of jail time). He can either keep quiet himself and receive no reduction in his sentence (top right of Figure 8.1), or he can also choose to confess and at least get five years knocked off his sentence (resulting in ten years of jail time; bottom right

of Figure 8.1). Again, clearly the choice favors confessing (ten years of jail time) over keeping quiet (fifteen years of jail time). So no matter whether prisoner 1's partner chooses to keep quiet or to confess, prisoner 1 will do less jail time by confessing. To be sure of receiving the shorter jail sentence, prisoner 1 should confess. Of course, the same logic holds for the second prisoner. Following the same reasoning, prisoner 2 will conclude that regardless of his partner's choice, he will do less jail time by confessing than by keeping quiet.

Because each prisoner is rational (in this case, each wants to spend the least amount of time in jail as possible), each will come to the conclusion that he should confess to their crime. Game theorists call this the "dominant strategy" because regardless of the behavior of the other prisoner, it is the rational thing for each of them to do individually. What is particularly compelling about this dominant strategy is that it results in both prisoners spending ten years in jail (the bottom right box of Figure 8.1), whereas had they both kept quiet, each would receive only a five-year jail sentence (the top left box of Figure 8.1). Although they both would prefer five years in jail instead of ten years, they receive the longer sentence because they followed their individually rational strategy. Individually rational behavior resulted in an outcome that neither individual would prefer. This is why the prisoners have a dilemma: Being rational by trying to get the least amount of jail time as possible actually results in more jail time. By thinking of this scenario in terms of the underlying structure of choices and payoffs, which demonstrates how each individual actor's outcome is dependent on the moves made by the other player, game theory provides some insight into why irrational consequences can result from rational behavior.

The logic of the Prisoner's Dilemma helps to make sense of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States had to consider the various outcomes that depended on Soviet actions. From the U.S. perspective, the prospect of nuclear superiority (if the Soviets did not engage in the buildup) was tempting, like confessing when your partner in crime remains silent (see again Figure 8.1). And the prospect of nuclear vulnerability (if the Soviets built up their nuclear arsenal but the United States did not) was to be avoided at all costs, like keeping quiet while your partner in crime confessed. Given these options, the United States and Soviet Union chose to build up their nuclear arsenals rather than restraining their buildup (and perhaps spending their money on other things).

Under those conditions, it is not so surprising that the United States and the Soviet Union had very large defense budgets and accumulated weapons at a very rapid rate for four decades after the Second World War. From the point of view of the decision makers on both sides, they were only protecting their countries. But from the point of view of many outside observers, the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was dangerous. It would ultimately, many felt, lead to the nuclear holocaust that

both sides were ostensibly trying to avoid. Even as recently as 1979, Hans Morgenthau, father of the modern realist perspective, declared that “the world is moving ineluctably toward a third world war a—strategic nuclear war. I do not believe that anything can be done to prevent it.”⁶⁶

The arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States was clearly dangerous, not to mention incredibly wasteful in purely economic terms. But it did come to an end without nuclear disaster. This is not a historically unprecedented outcome for arms races, as we have seen. It was, however, the potentially most dangerous arms race in the history of the world. Although their stockpiles of such weapons are much reduced today, the United States and the Soviet Union in 2006 still deployed around 5,000 strategic warheads each.⁶⁷ Fortunately, “Russia has signed reciprocal agreements with the United States, the United Kingdom and China stating that they will not target their missiles at each other while they are on normal alert status.”⁶⁸

Although it is certainly fortunate that the two vast arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union are no longer deployed in a tightly organized fashion, ready to initiate what would surely have been the most lethal war in history, the disintegration of the Soviet Union created new dangers. “The collapse of the Soviet Union left Soviet strategic forces scattered across the newly independent states. Missile and bomber bases were distributed across Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.”⁶⁹ The good news is that “Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have transferred to Russia all the strategic and tactical nuclear warheads they inherited following the collapse of the Soviet Union.”⁷⁰ The bad news is that continued reform in Russia toward democracy is not assured. It is not at all inconceivable that ultranationalist, Communist, or fascist leaders could take over in Russia and return control of massive nuclear power to intensely antagonistic hands. It is also frighteningly possible that the painful and bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia might be duplicated in the former Soviet Union.

The Threat of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Even if Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union develop into peace-loving democratic states, the world will not be safe from the threat of nuclear weapons. Nations other than the United States and Russia possess these weapons of mass destruction, although the United States is the only state that has ever used an atomic bomb (as it did twice in Japan in 1945). Great Britain, France, and China have each had nuclear weapons for decades now. The nuclear arsenals of these states are small compared to the United States and Russia. In 2002, Great Britain had about 185 warheads, France had 348, and China had approximately 402 in stockpile.⁷¹ India first exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and in 1998, both India and Pakistan “declared” themselves nuclear powers with a series of underground tests. It is estimated that India has no more than

35 nuclear weapons and Pakistan 24 to 48.⁷² In 2006, North Korea tested its first nuclear weapon. Outsiders believe that North Korea has enough nuclear material to make at least 8 nuclear bombs. Israel has not declared itself a nuclear power, but it is assumed that it has about 200 nuclear weapons.⁷³ South Africa once had nuclear weapons but has subsequently destroyed them, and Libya claimed that it had come close to building a nuclear bomb before it abandoned its unconventional weapons program and agreed to international weapons inspectors in 2003.⁷⁴

The international community was also concerned about Iraq's nuclear ambitions after the Persian Gulf War in 1991. "[E]ven though Iraq signed the NPT [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty] it managed to mount a massive covert program to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. . . . The Iraqi program involved more than 10,000 qualified technical people who remain[ed] in place as a competent cadre."⁷⁵ Suspicions that Iraq had continued to develop its nuclear programs led to the return of UN inspection teams in 2002 and were one justification for the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq in 2003, although no evidence of nuclear weapons were found post-invasion. Many states possess the technology and material to build nuclear weapons, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, and Ukraine.

The nuclearization of South Asia is of particular concern. In May 1998, India conducted underground testing of several nuclear devices. Within three weeks, Pakistan responded with its own underground nuclear tests, despite intense international pressures. "Given the history of conflict between the two states, most members of the international community viewed the introduction of nuclear weapons into South Asia with alarm. Fueled by religious animosity and disagreements over their border, India and Pakistan had fought three major wars since the British partitioned colonial India into India, East Pakistan, and West Pakistan in 1947. Outbreaks of violence and crises between India and Pakistan had become more frequent in the 1990s"⁷⁶ and have continued in recent years. Some analysts attribute this to the increased suspicions over each others' nuclear aims and others argue that India and Pakistan are particularly likely to use their nuclear weapons against each other.⁷⁷ Indeed, "soon after the 1998 tests, Pakistani military planners developed more belligerent strategies against India. Dusting off an old plan, in the winter of 1999, Pakistani infantry units . . . snuck into Indian-held Kashmir. The incursion sparked the 1999 Kargil War, in which over 1,000 soldiers were killed on both sides before Pakistani forces reluctantly withdrew. According to U.S. and Indian intelligence, before the fighting ended, the Pakistani military had started to ready its nuclear capable missiles for potential use."⁷⁸ Yet, despite ongoing tensions over Kashmir, India and Pakistan, as nuclear powers, have not directly engaged in large-scale conventional war or nuclear conflict.

North Korean proliferation has been an area of concern for quite some time. North Korea announced in 2002 that it had a program to produce nuclear material, despite an earlier agreement not to do so (see Chapter 3). Despite six-party negotiations (including the United States, North Korea,

South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia) and a North Korean agreement in 2005 to dismantle all of its nuclear programs, talks on how to implement this agreement stalled and the issue became more complicated when North Korea test-fired several ballistic missiles in the summer of 2006, in defiance of the six parties' wishes. When North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in the fall of 2006, attention shifted to dismantling or preventing further development of North Korea's nuclear program.

Why would North Korea develop nuclear weapons? "The North Koreans have presented a rationale for developing . . . such a weapon. . . . They point out that the United States, which has more nuclear weapons than any other country, has labeled North Korea a member of the "axis of evil," thereby making the country a possible target of pre-emptive attack."⁷⁹ Others, however, see North Korea's actions stemming more from the regime's strategy of keeping North Korea isolated in order to remain in control of its people and from the economic rewards that it believes it can get from the international community in exchange for promises to give up its nuclear program.⁸⁰

Iran is another state receiving attention on the topic of **nuclear proliferation**. "The issue of Iran's nuclear ambition is complicated. On [the] one hand, Tehran is a signatory to the NPT [**Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty**] and since the mid-1970s has called for making the entire Middle East a nuclear-free zone. On the other hand, Western powers . . . have suspected that Iran has been secretly developing nuclear capability since the mid-1980s . . . Iranian leaders categorically deny these accusations and assert that their nuclear program is only for peaceful purpose," which is allowable under the NPT.⁸¹ Weapons inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have made accusations that Iran's nuclear energy programs violate some aspects of the Nonproliferation Treaty and that Iran had secretly worked on the potential development of a nuclear bomb, but this agency has not found solid evidence that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.⁸² Negotiations between Western countries and Iran worsened in 2006 when Iran restricted access to IAEA inspectors, threatened to withdraw from the NPT, and the IAEA referred the issue to the United Nations Security Council.⁸³ In August 2006, the Security Council gave Iran 30 days to suspend its uranium enrichment program or face sanctions, but at the time of this writing, Iran had yet to comply and negotiations continued.⁸⁴ The Iranian issue is further complicated by decades of poor relations between Iran and the United States, U.S. accusations that Iran sponsors terrorist groups in Iraq and Lebanon, and Iranian suspicions that the United States is determined to militarily dismantle the Iranian regime no matter what Iran does.

Beyond the Iranian and North Korean cases, it is clear that more states might acquire nuclear weapons, and perhaps the threat that these new owners of nuclear weapons will actually use them may be greater than that which existed during the Cold War. International attention to nuclear proliferation has rapidly increased since the end of the Cold War. Today,

nuclear proliferation

The spread of nuclear weapons into the hands of more actors.

Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)

agreement in effect since the 1970s to prevent further nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament.

not only are states' desires for nuclear weapons a concern, but many worry about nuclear capabilities acquired by nonstate actors, such as terrorist groups. According to Graham Allison, founding dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and former assistant secretary of defense for policy and plans, "Given the number of actors with serious intent, the accessibility of weapons or nuclear materials from which elementary weapons could be constructed, and the almost limitless ways in which terrorists could smuggle a weapon through American borders, . . . a nuclear terrorist attack on America in the decade ahead is more likely than not."⁸⁵

Could the spread of nuclear weapons be good news? Could nuclear deterrence provide stability as some argue it did during the "long peace" between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War? It has been argued for some time now that nuclear proliferation in the Middle East has the potential to bring stability to that volatile region.⁸⁶ Others have asserted in more general terms that "proliferation may serve the global desire for peace"⁸⁷ and that "the spread of nuclear weapons is something that we have worried too much about and tried too hard to stop . . . the measured spread of nuclear weapons is more to be welcomed than feared."⁸⁸ The end of the Cold War evoked an argument to the effect that stability in Europe would be enhanced if Germany acquired nuclear weapons and if Ukraine developed nuclear weapons as a deterrent against Russia.⁸⁹ Another proliferation "optimist" argues that "the leaders of medium and small powers alike tend to be extremely cautious with regard to the nuclear weapons they possess . . . the proof being that, to date, in every region where these weapons have been introduced, large-scale interstate warfare has disappeared."⁹⁰

One main objection to optimism about the impact of nuclear proliferation in the developing countries involves the vulnerable nature of nascent nuclear forces. One of the possible virtues of the large nuclear forces in the hands of the Soviet Union and the United States was that they made both states relatively safe from the destabilizing impact of technological breakthroughs.⁹¹ Even without such breakthroughs, emerging nuclear forces in the developing world are vulnerable to preemptive strikes, and so they will tempt such strikes. "Even if both sides prefer not to preempt, each may fear that the other side will; consequently, both may decide to launch at the first (perhaps fake) indication of an attack."⁹²

In the end, perhaps it is most important to point out that the costs of guessing wrong on this issue are not equal in both directions. If nuclear proliferation is discouraged when actually it is beneficial, the cost is the loss of a boost to stability and a somewhat larger probability of conventional wars. If proliferation is encouraged when it is actually dangerous (even if it makes war a less rational option), then tolerating or encouraging proliferation would be experimentation in the absence of any solid evidence on which to base estimates of the results. The Policy Choices box on nuclear proliferation presents some of the issues surrounding proliferation and preventive efforts.



ISSUE: The number of states with nuclear weapons capabilities has increased in the last decade and more states may be on the verge of testing and stockpiling nuclear weapons. Intuitively this seems to be problematic and almost certainly a recipe for disaster. However, there is another side to this deceptively complicated problem that emphasizes the stability that such weapons can bring and the difficulties of preventing nuclear proliferation.

Option #1: Nuclear proliferation can provide many benefits to the international system, and generally should be embraced.

Arguments: (a) Nuclear weapons create stability between actors, as they make the potential cost of going to war too great for states to seriously contemplate. Nuclear rivalry was a main reason the United States and the Soviet Union did not directly fight during the tense Cold War. (b) States acquire nuclear weapons for security and prestige. States that are secure and enjoy status are less likely to initiate conflict and are more likely to cooperate on many international issues. (c) There are no effective strategies to prevent nuclear proliferation—incentives do not stop states from acquiring them and punishments often push them faster toward proliferation.

Counterarguments: (a) States are not necessarily rational actors who calculate costs and then choose courses of action. Decisions are made by fallible humans, religious zealots, and impassioned policymakers, thereby reducing the supposed “rational” effectiveness of nuclear deterrence. Today’s international system is very different from the Cold War period—multiple nuclear rivals, protracted conflicts, and unstable states make it less likely that nuclear deterrence would work. (b) Nuclear security may embolden states to engage in more risky, aggressive behaviors. (c) There have been many nonproliferation successes. Extending the deterrence of existing nuclear states, imposing economic sanctions, establishing international monitoring agencies, and incentive-based negotiations have all worked to convince states to forgo nuclear ambitions.

Option #2: Nuclear proliferation constitutes one of the most serious problems facing humanity, and efforts to prevent it should be foremost on the minds of leaders.

Arguments: (a) More actors in possession of nuclear weapons means a greater likelihood of having such weapons get into the hands of rogue states or unstable leaders. (b) Unstable nuclear regimes increase the chance of accidental nuclear war or the transfer of nuclear weapons into the hands of terrorist groups. (c) Although nuclear weapons have killed far fewer people than conventional weapons, the potential destruction is much greater. A nuclear attack in a large city, enacted by a single decision maker, could kill hundreds of thousands in one stroke.

Counterarguments: (a) Claims that certain countries cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons are rooted in prejudice and misunderstanding. The only country ever to have used a nuclear device in hostility is the United States. (b) The international community can implement safeguards to protect nuclear facilities. It is not in the interests of states to share nuclear technology with nonstate actors. (c) The real weapons of mass killing in humanity’s arsenal are small arms and light weapons, which are profitable to sell and readily distributed to unstable countries without hesitation. Arguments by arms exporters for limiting nuclear proliferation are thus hypocritical.

Nuclear Arms Control

Most states recognize the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Even during the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States cooperated in an effort to prevent other states from acquiring nuclear weapons. In the 1960s, they helped draft the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The hope that this agreement would restrict the nuclear club to a membership of five (China, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States) was crushed in May 1974 when India exploded its first nuclear device.

In 1995, the NPT was extended, and by 2001, 188 states had signed the treaty, making it “the most widely-adhered to arms control treaty in history” according to the U.S. Department of State.⁹³ Although North Korea agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its nuclear weapon program under the October 1994 U.S.–North Korean Framework Agreement, it announced in 2002 that it had been continuing to develop its nuclear materials program and withdrew from the NPT. Talks to get North Korea to reenter the treaty were stalled for many years before it tested its first nuclear weapons in 2006.⁹⁴ India, Israel, and Pakistan have all refused to sign the treaty. In addition to the extension of the NPT, there have been several more specific, significant successes in the antinuclear proliferation effort in recent years. In the early 1990s, South Africa dismantled its arsenal of six nuclear weapons and signed the NPT in 1991. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have not only transferred to Russia all the strategic and nuclear warheads they inherited as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have also joined the NPT and opened their nuclear facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Algeria agreed to join the NPT in 1995, and Libya announced in 2003 that it would comply with the treaty. Argentina and Brazil have brought into force a nuclear-free zone in that part of the world through the Treaty of Tlatelolco and have also accepted IAEA inspections. The Treaty of Pelindaba (1996) and the Treaty of Bangkok (1997) create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa and Southeast Asia, respectively.

In addition to the NPT, decades of multilateral negotiations produced the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, banning all testing of nuclear weapons. By 1999, more than 150 countries had signed the treaty, but the U.S. Senate rejected it that same year.⁹⁵ “The Senate vote marked at least a temporary setback for international efforts to bring the CTBT into force, since the USA is one of the 44 states which must ratify the treaty in order for it to enter into force. The treaty’s prospects were given a boost, however, when the Russian Duma voted overwhelmingly to ratify it on April 21, 2000. . . . In addition, in September [2000] Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee pledged that his government would not conduct further nuclear testing while it attempted to build a consensus on signing the CTBT.”⁹⁶ By 2007, however, the treaty had not entered into force.

The United States and Russia have also engaged in significant bilateral arms reduction efforts, building on the SALT talks during the détente

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Proposed agreement to ban nuclear weapons testing.

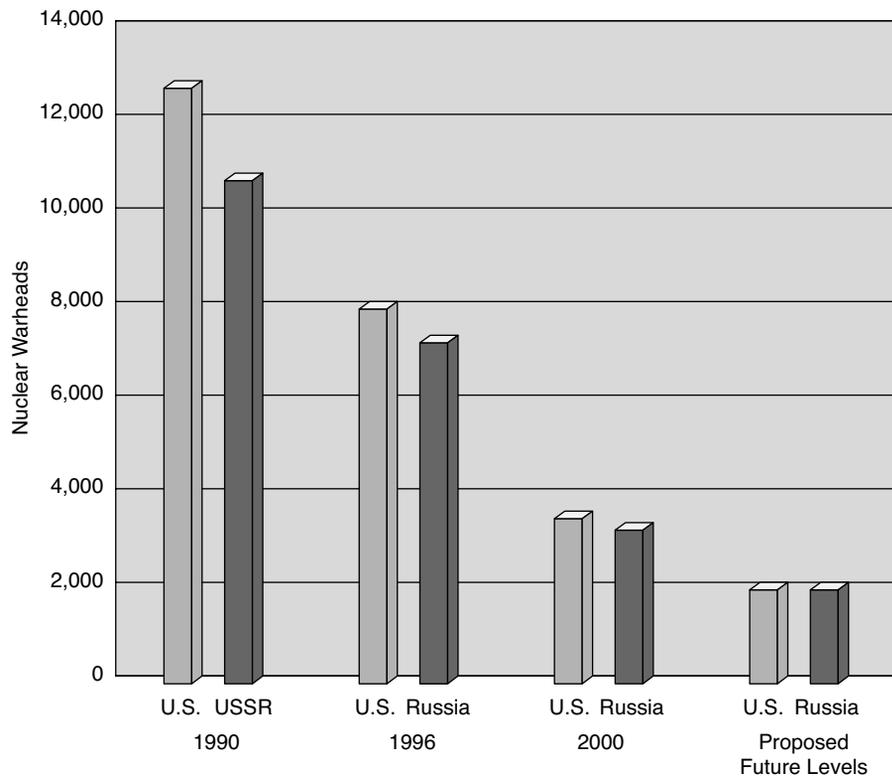
era of the 1970s (see Chapter 3). In 1991, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) was signed, reducing the number of nuclear warheads and delivery systems in each country. In 1993, START II banned all land-based multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) and committed both parties to make phased reductions in their strategic nuclear forces. The levels of nuclear warheads agreed to in START II were quickly outdated, however, as the United States and Russia announced plans for unilateral cuts that would take their strategic nuclear forces well below START II levels. In 2002, the countries codified these pledges in the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), better known as the **Moscow Treaty**. According to this agreement, each side will reduce its number of warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by the year 2012. The agreement has been criticized for not requiring these reductions to be permanent (the warheads can be stored and later brought back into use) and for its lack of verification procedures. Others, however, praised the two sides for committing to reductions in a formal treaty which became legally binding after the U.S. and Russian legislatures approved it in 2003. With the addition of the Moscow Treaty, the general reduction of the number of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era, as depicted in Figure 8.2, is quite a remarkable arms control achievement.

Moscow Treaty

U.S.–Russian agreement to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear warheads by the year 2012.

Figure 8.2 Reductions in U.S. and Soviet/Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces

Source: Data compiled from the Stockholm Peace Research Institute's *SIPRI Yearbook 1996*, the *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, and from the U.S. Department of State, "Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation On Strategic Offensive Reductions," <http://www.state.gov/t/ac/trt/10527.htm>, accessed September 19, 2006.



ballistic missile defense (BMD) system
 Defense system designed to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles.

Talks over nuclear arms reductions between the United States and Russia have been complicated by the U.S. decision (announced in 2001) to withdraw from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty. Withdrawing from the treaty allows the United States to conduct tests, without any conditions, for a missile defense system. Opposition to the building of a **ballistic missile defense (BMD) system** came from within the United States and from the international community (expressed, for example, by China, Russia, and a number of states in Europe and Asia). "The controversy obstructed efforts to further reduce strategic nuclear arms and gave rise to international concern that the entire framework of nuclear arms control was in danger of breaking down."⁹⁷ Opposition to BMDs is based on the concern that they will undermine stability by compromising second-strike capability, the foundation of nuclear deterrence and the ABM treaty. Opponents argue that BMDs do not address the types of threats, such as from terrorists with crude weapons, that states are more likely to face. Supporters counter that BMDs address the real threat from rogue states who are acquiring ballistic missile technology and they can decrease the probability of such an attack by making the probability of success less likely.⁹⁸

Beyond Nuclear

Even if nuclear weapons can be kept under control, the post-Cold War world promises to be a dangerous place because of the rapid spread of ballistic missiles, which can deliver conventional or nuclear weapons over fairly long distances, and the potential diffusion of chemical and biological weapons. Some twenty-five countries, most in the developing world, have acquired or attempted to acquire ballistic missiles. Nine of them are in the Middle East, but India and Pakistan, North and South Korea, Brazil and Argentina, Taiwan, and South Africa either have or have tried to get ballistic missiles.⁹⁹ Ballistic missiles are difficult to defend against and can be very accurate with missile-guided technology.

chemical weapons
 Weapons that contain chemical elements, such as chlorine gas and mustard gas.

Ballistic missile technology also allows the delivery of chemical and biological weapons. While the horrors of nuclear weapons are relatively well publicized, **chemical weapons** are less familiar. Modern use of chemical weapons dates back to "April 22, 1915, when German troops entrenched at Ypres, Belgium, opened 6,000 chlorine cylinders, releasing a cloud of deadly gas into the wind blowing toward their French adversaries. Thousands perished in this first large-scale use of chemical warfare. Two years later, Germany introduced another deadly chemical to the battlefield as well: mustard gas. By the war's end, chemical weapons had inflicted 1.3 million casualties, including almost 100,000 deaths."¹⁰⁰ Chemical weapons were again used in World War II by Italy against Ethiopia and Japan against China.¹⁰¹ Concern over the proliferation of chemical weapons came to the foreground in the 1980s when Iraq used them against Iran and against Kurds living in Iraq. "The number of countries believed to have chemical weapons programs has grown from about a dozen in 1980 to about 20" near the end of

biological weapons
Weapons that contain biological agents such as anthrax or plague bacteria.

the 1990s.¹⁰² Chemical weapons such as phosgene (a choking agent) or nerve agents (which induce nausea, coma, convulsion, and death) are estimated to be capable, if attached to ballistic missiles, of killing forty to seven hundred times as many people as missiles equipped with conventional weapons.¹⁰³

Biological weapons are even more lethal. Ballistic missiles might be equipped with “bombs,” for example, that could spread anthrax, plague bacteria, or the Ebola virus. Germany used anthrax in World War I against its opponents’ horses and mules. During World War II, the Soviet Union reportedly used typhus and typhoid fever as a weapon of war, and Japan used plague germs in bombs dropped on China. Many of these diseases can kill within days, vaccines often must be administered before infection to be effective, and antibiotic treatments are of uncertain effectiveness. In short, biological weapons like anthrax delivered by ballistic missiles could be as lethal as at least small nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁴ It is estimated that at least seventeen states possess biological weapons.¹⁰⁵ Countries such as Iraq, Japan, the former Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States have developed anthrax as an agent of biological warfare.¹⁰⁶

Why would nations want to acquire chemical or biological weapons? They are much more lethal than conventional weapons, they have nearly the military effectiveness of small nuclear weapons, and they are cheaper and easier to acquire than nuclear weapons—they are “a poor man’s nuclear weapon.” Furthermore, ballistic technology is not necessary for the use of chemical and biological weapons; “a crude dispersal system may be enough to kill thousands and cripple a major metropolitan area.”¹⁰⁷ In 1993, a U.S. federal agency estimated that “a crop duster carrying a mere 100 kilograms of anthrax spores could deliver a fatal dose to up to 3 million residents of the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.”¹⁰⁸

The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City in 1993 could have been much worse had the chemical weapon been delivered not in a common truck but in some technologically sophisticated ballistic missile. “The bombing of [the] World Trade Center . . . was meant to topple the city’s tallest tower onto its twin, amid a cloud of cyanide gas. Had the attack gone as planned [the cyanide container malfunctioned], tens of thousands of Americans would have died.”¹⁰⁹ In 1995, Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese Buddhist sect, attempted to murder tens of thousands of people by placing eleven bags filled with the nerve gas sarin wrapped in newspapers on five subway trains. Twelve people were killed and more than five thousand hospitalized. In 1990, in the first known chemical weapons attack by a nonstate actor, the Tamil Tigers used chlorine gas against the Sri Lankan military.¹¹⁰

These incidents, in the United States, Tokyo, and Sri Lanka suggest “a trend toward nonstate actors becoming proliferation threats.”¹¹¹ In light of the September 11 terrorist attacks, there is a heightened fear that groups like Al Qaeda have chemical and biological weapons capabilities.

Indeed, it was suspicions regarding Al Qaeda’s aims to use chemical weapons against U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia that prompted the U.S. to

attack a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998, in response to bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa (see Chapter 7). “[S]ince that time incontrovertible information has repeatedly come to light that clearly illuminates al Qaeda’s long-standing and concerted efforts to develop a diverse array of chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons capabilities.”¹¹² Terrorist groups have not, however, yet taken up chemical and biological agents as their weapons of choice. Indeed, fewer than sixty terrorist incidents out of the eight thousand recorded in the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database involved “any indication of terrorists plotting such attacks, attempting to use chemical or biological agents, or intending to steal or fabricate their own nuclear devices.”¹¹³

Although the threat from nonstate actors is worrisome, the more orthodox international threat posed by states armed with chemical or biological weapons is not to be dismissed lightly. The U.S. government has alleged that several states—including China, India, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, and Syria—are either seeking chemical and biological weapons or have the capacity to develop them. The United States and the United Nations had been particularly concerned about Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons potential in the 1990s. “The UN Security Council . . . placed Iraq under an international sanctions regime in order to compel it to comply with the conditions of Resolution 687, which includes the destruction of its CBW and the termination of the CBW-related programmes under international supervision.”¹¹⁴ The UN inspectors returned to Iraq to verify compliance in 2002, but doubts by the United States and other countries about Iraq’s claims that it had completely dismantled all such programs was one of the justifications used for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, no clear evidence of chemical or biological weapons programs has been discovered in postwar Iraq.

Efforts to Control Ballistic Missile Technology and Chemical and Biological Weapons

Given the threat, there have been a number of attempts to deal with these weapons of massive destruction and their delivery systems. In 1987, the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** was established, seeking to control the export and production of missile technology capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction. The MTCR is a voluntary agreement, with no enforcement. From 1987 until 2003, the countries that joined the MTCR grew from seven to thirty-three.¹¹⁵

In January 1993, a **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, which aims for the destruction of all chemical weapons, was opened for signing, and by 2007, 182 states were parties to the convention. For some time, the United States was *not* among those countries. However, shortly before the deadline in April 1997, at which time the convention would have gone into effect whether or not the United States had agreed to it, the U.S. Senate agreed to ratification. The four states that have declared their chemical weapons

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)

Voluntary agreement that seeks to control export and production of missile technology capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction.

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

Agreement whereby signature states pledge to destroy their chemical weapons.

programs—India, South Korea, Russia, and the United States—are in the process of destroying those weapons. “The CWC contains an extensive verification regime which works through both routine and challenge inspections of both states and chemical industries (this is significant because non-state actors have not previously been brought into arms control treaties). Nevertheless, critics remain sceptical of the CWC’s deterrent abilities.”¹¹⁶ The CWC builds on a 1925 Geneva Protocol, an agreement that banned the use, but not production, of chemical weapons in warfare in reaction to the horrors caused by chlorine and mustard gas in World War I.

Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC) Agreement banning production, stockpiling, and use of biological agents.

There is also a **Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC)**, dating from 1972, that bans the production, stockpiling, and use of biological agents, but ensuring compliance with it is difficult. Although, as of 2006, 171 states had become parties to the convention, the BTWC “has two basic weaknesses. First, because of the dual-use nature of microbial pathogens . . . the line between treaty-permitted and prohibited activities is largely a question of intent. . . . Second, the . . . [convention’s] lack of formal verification measure has made it toothless and unable to address a series of alleged violations.”¹¹⁷

It is clear that although the end of the Cold War may have eliminated the threat of a truly massive nuclear war, at least for the time being, it has not delivered the world from the menace posed by nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and chemical or biological weapons. For the foreseeable future, a growing list of state and nonstate actors will continue to threaten their enemies with a deadly combination of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction.

Bargaining and Negotiation

bargaining and negotiation Formal and informal communication between actors.

When states enter into alliances and arms agreements, they do so through **bargaining and negotiation**—informal and formal communication between actors. Bargaining and negotiation are another way that states try to resolve or avoid conflict and form the bulk of state-to-state relations. Indeed, bargaining takes place on an ongoing basis between most states as they seek to cooperate and enter into mutually beneficial arrangements. States bargain over the NPT, the World Trade Organization, and environmental treaties such as the Kyoto protocol. “Within the realm of international relations, diplomatic negotiation is central to the functioning of the system of nation-states that has evolved over time.”¹¹⁸

Nonstate actors are part of international bargaining as well. “Increasingly, negotiation situations feature actors that are neither sovereign states nor reliant on those states for membership and direction.”¹¹⁹ At times, substate actors negotiate directly with other states. In 2006, for example, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger negotiated with British Prime Minister Tony Blair an agreement to collaborate on research to address problems of global warming, thereby bypassing the U.S. national government.¹²⁰ Nongovernmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, also bargain with

states and other nonstate actors on a variety of topics (see Chapter 13 on the role of NGOs in environmental issues). States also bargain with terrorists, despite many states' official policies not to negotiate with such groups.¹²¹

Coercive Diplomacy and Bargaining Strategies

International actors sometimes attempt to bargain by engaging in coercive diplomacy and initiate or imply threats to deter or compel other actors.¹²² As we have seen in this chapter, deterrence and compellence are critical strategies in global politics and are the foundation of many decisions to pursue alliances and build up arms. Both deterrence and compellence involve demonstrating capabilities, signaling the credibility of a threat, and communicating to other actors the will and terms of the use of this threat. Alliances and arms involve boosting a state or coalition's capabilities—increasing their power in relation to that of their potential adversaries. Credibility and communication are achieved through successful bargaining and negotiation.

Bargaining strategies in deterrence, for example, are designed to convince the other side that the costs of doing something they want to do (such as attacking) outweigh the benefits that they will achieve from this action (such as control of a territory). To do this, negotiators must convince the other side that they will impose these high costs (attacking back) and that this threat is credible (they really will carry it out) and not a bluff. Many argued that the 1950s U.S. nuclear strategy known as massive retaliation, in which the United States threatened to use its nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union for any unwanted behavior, was not credible. The United States certainly had the capability to do this, but would it really launch an all-out nuclear war over, for example, South Korea or West Berlin, risking Soviet retaliation directly against Washington, D.C.?

This credibility must be successfully communicated to the other side. Successful communication, unfortunately, requires that the other side receive the threat *as it is intended*. If, for example, the target of the threat does not see the costs as great as the actor that is initiating the threat or sees the benefit of actions differently, the message is not successfully communicated. Under the MAD nuclear strategy, the United States estimated that if it could maintain a second-strike capability that ensured, after absorbing an initial strike from the Soviet Union, that it could destroy 20 percent of the Soviet population and infrastructure, this was a credible deterrent threat. The danger is that the Soviet Union may not have seen this as a great cost. In the Second World War, the Soviets were willing to lose 20 million people, a considerable cost, for the benefit of defeating the German threat. Estimating what the other sides' costs and benefits are and how they weigh those is a very difficult part of coercive diplomacy.

Communicating capability often involves taking a hard bargaining line, but this can sometimes lead to unfortunate outcomes. The United States refused for years to back down in its battle with North Vietnam over

the fate of South Vietnam and yet failed to achieve its objective despite that prolonged effort. One might assume that actors would learn from such experiences that a more conciliatory bargaining strategy is called for. But systematic analysis of eighteen serious international disputes that occurred between 1905 and 1962 reveals that diplomats and other makers of foreign policy may not draw such conclusions from previous foreign policy failures. "Prudence suggests that a state that has suffered a recent defeat whether through war or by being forced to submit in an escalating crisis should act with greater caution in the next encounter with the same adversary." But what the analysis of these eighteen disputes shows instead is that "policymakers view crisis bargaining as a test of a state's power and resolve, so that unsuccessful outcomes are seen as resulting from a failure to demonstrate sufficient resolve." So when states lose one conflict, "the lesson tends to be to use more coercive bargaining the next time."¹²³

The logic or theory behind such a coercive strategy is that "effective . . . bargaining [is] dependent on exploiting the other side's fear of war through the use of credible threats and punishments, that is, on demonstrating a willingness to accept the risk of war to achieve state objectives."¹²⁴ This outlook on international politics leads to what might be called a "**bullying**" strategy of bargaining, because it relies heavily on force and threats of force, as opposed to compromises and "carrots," or rewards, for desired behavior. A bullying strategy relies almost exclusively on severe threats and punishments until and unless the bargainer's demands are accepted.

But diplomatic bargaining is not a simple game in which one succeeds by adopting extreme positions or acting tough all of the time. Data on forty international crises that occurred between 1816 and 1980 indicate that a bullying strategy was used only about 35 percent of the time. Almost as often, the participants in those crises instead used a more flexible and conciliatory "**reciprocating**" strategy, in which one side imitates or duplicates the kind of diplomatic moves made by the other party regarding a dispute or crisis. Bargainers who engage in a reciprocating strategy respond to coercive or bullying moves involving force or the threat of force with threatening or violent moves of their own. But unlike "bullies," who rely on threats or force regardless of what the other side does, reciprocating strategists respond in a cooperative or conciliatory way to compromising moves and signals from the other side.¹²⁵

Realists would expect that bullying strategies work better than reciprocating strategies, while others who analyze bargaining believe that this is unduly pessimistic. Such strategies are insufficiently sensitive, in this view, to the danger that hardline bargaining can lead to an escalation of coercive moves that will precipitate wars that neither side wants. In the analysis of forty crises mentioned earlier, bullying strategies led to war in almost two-thirds of the crises in which they were used, while reciprocating strategies achieved either a diplomatic victory or a compromise nearly two-thirds of the time. Does this mean that reciprocating strategies are

"bullying" strategy

Bargaining strategy relying heavily on force and threats of force.

"reciprocating" strategy

Flexible bargaining strategy in which one side imitates or duplicates the kind of diplomatic moves made by the other actor.

always preferable? That depends partly on the priority that decision makers involved in international negotiations and crisis situations give to avoiding international war. Clearly, avoiding war is not always the highest priority for policymakers. Sometimes, for example, they may consider it even more important in confrontational situations to achieve victory or avoid defeat. And some evidence suggests that states are more likely to gain a victory by adopting a bullying strategy.¹²⁶ In any event, “it is clear that many international actors continue to view military force as a primary way of achieving their goals in contemporary international affairs.”¹²⁷

In short, although diplomats may take extreme positions that can backfire, sometimes such positions are effective bargaining tools that reflect an understanding of the importance of precedents in international politics. Similarly, the decentralized character of the global political system, where every actor must ultimately protect its own interests, often tempts decision makers to adopt coercive bargaining strategies. But just as often, actors will bargain in a more conciliatory or reciprocating fashion, meeting coercive moves with coercive responses and cooperative signals with cooperation. Coercive strategies may help gain diplomatic victories (and avoid humiliating defeats), especially if the actors employing them seek a change in the status quo, but history also suggests that they carry a higher risk of war than do reciprocating strategies. Those more conciliatory strategies have produced substantially more peaceful outcomes in international disputes.

Diplomats and Their “Games”

diplomats
Government officials
engaged in negotiations
and bargaining.

The job of negotiating across state boundaries is performed by **diplomats**, that is, those people officially engaged in negotiations or bargaining. Diplomats are often misunderstood and unappreciated. In the popular conception, the essence of the diplomatic profession is deceit (“An ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the commonwealth,” Sir Henry Wotton observed in 1604), and professional diplomats are almost universally suspected of having lost touch with their home countries and the values of their citizens. They typically spend so much time out of the country that they only naturally become more sympathetic to the concerns of the “foreigners” with whom they live than does the average citizen who rarely leaves the country; and that sympathy can easily be mistaken for diminished loyalty. Also, to the average person, diplomats seem to play a lot of silly games when they negotiate. At the truce negotiations during the Korean War, for example, diplomats spent considerable time and energy discussing the relative height of flags placed on the negotiating table. At the Paris peace talks aimed at ending the Vietnam War, diplomats wrangled for weeks (while soldiers and civilians died) over the shape of the bargaining table. Why do diplomats engage in such seemingly senseless behavior?

Diplomats from South Korea and North Korea engage in negotiations over the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

(Segye Lee-Won, Lorea Poll/
AP Photo/AP Images)



An important part of the answer involves a fundamental attitude that diplomats, as well as national leaders, seem to have concerning bargaining and negotiating with their counterparts. Although this concern is not made explicit in every case, diplomats involved in international bargaining are almost always less concerned about the issue immediately at hand than about the impact of the settlement on resolving future issues. Let us consider first the implicit bargaining that goes on between states (and their leaders) over crucial issues of peace and war.

It is highly probable, for example, that in 1939, Britain and France chose to take a hard line against Germany when it invaded Poland not because the leaders in those countries were primarily concerned about Poland but rather because they were worried about how the settlement between Poland and Germany would affect the resolution of future European territorial issues. Because they had already backed down in the face of several of Hitler's aggressive actions (for example, against Austria and Czechoslovakia), the British and the French felt that they could not allow Hitler to resolve his conflict with Poland with such ease that he would conclude that any future conflict could be settled just as easily and victoriously. Similarly, although Kennedy and his advisers were quite concerned about the missiles the Soviets had placed in Cuba in 1962, the missiles themselves were not their greatest concern. Rather, their main worry was that if they allowed the Soviets to get away with sneaking missiles into Cuba, it would be impossible to predict the Soviets' next scheme, and the ability of the United States to deter such schemes would be called into serious question.¹²⁸ At the time of the Vietnam War, Vietnam was not that valuable to the United States either economically or strategically. But U.S. policymakers at the time made clear, with their

talk of Munich and the domino theory, that they were very concerned about how an unsatisfactory outcome of the Vietnam War might affect future conflicts. Subversives all over the world, it was believed, might be so encouraged by a North Vietnamese victory that similar wars of national liberation would break out in several other parts of the world.

Nations and their diplomatic representatives are especially concerned about the impact that settling current problems will have on future issues because precedents and the status quo have an almost sacred place in international relations. Diplomats engaged in bargaining are often concerned that a concession on the current issue will imply that concessions on similar or related issues in the future will be expected and will be very difficult to refuse. In short, because the status quo is so important, and because the settlement of an issue can establish a precedent for the settlement of future issues (that is, alter the status quo), diplomats are anxious to avoid giving the impression that they make concessions easily. The shape of the bargaining table may not itself be important, but concessions quickly granted on that issue may create expectations of quick concessions on other issues that will be difficult to overcome.

Some bargaining strategies may also seem puzzling. If, for example, a diplomat creates the impression that he or she is a little crazy for being so stubborn about the shape of the bargaining table, that may not be all bad. As one well-known scholar of bargaining in international politics points out, "If a man knocks at a door and says that he will stab himself on the porch unless given \$10, he is more likely to get the \$10 if his eyes are bloodshot."¹²⁹ In other words, the man is more likely to get the money if he somehow conveys the impression that he is actually crazy enough (because his eyes are bloodshot) to stab himself if refused. Similarly, if a diplomat can convey the impression that he or she is really a tough nut to crack even on such a seemingly minor issue as the shape of the bargaining table, that reputation may stand him or her in good stead during negotiations over the more important issues.

The silly games that diplomats seem to play are also a function of the symbolic value that the process holds and what it reflects about the underlying issues and definition of the conflict. The shape of the table, in other words, can say something about the shape of the conflict. If the table is round, all participants are seen as equal players with equal interests. If it is in the shape of a rectangle, the participants who get to sit at the "head" of the table are in some way already privileged and may see their interests prevail because of the way that the procedures are arranged.

Bargaining and negotiation is also often affected by who is not at the table: each side's constituents back home. Diplomats must return to their domestic political constituents (discussed more extensively in Chapter 5) at the end of negotiations and persuade them that the international agreement for which they bargained is legitimate. Because of this, negotiators are often looking over their shoulder to see how various positions and agreements are being received at home. In fact, they are often simultaneously bargaining

with the other actors across from them at the negotiating table and with their domestic constituents to find an agreement that is acceptable to both. This dynamic has been termed two-level games (also discussed and defined in Chapter 5) and has been described this way:

Each national political leader appears at both game boards. Across the international table sit his foreign counterparts, and at his elbows sit diplomats and other international advisors. Around the domestic table behind him sit party and parliamentary figures, spokesmen for domestic agencies, representatives of key interest groups, and the leader's own political advisors. The unusual complexity of this two-level game is that moves that are rational for a player at one board (such as raising energy prices, conceding territory, or limiting auto imports) may be impolitic for that same player on the other board. . . . Any key player at the international table who is dissatisfied with the outcome may upset the game board; and conversely, any leader who fails to satisfy his fellow players at the domestic table risks being evicted from his seat.¹³⁰

The constant balancing act that two-level games require in international negotiations means that agreements may be difficult to reach and the process may appear a bit convoluted. At times, however, negotiators successfully overcome these challenges and diplomats resolve international disputes.

SUMMARY

- In order to deal with the threat of conflict, states enter into alliances, build up their military arsenals, enter into arms control agreements, and otherwise bargain and negotiate differences with other actors in global politics.
- Coalitions of states emerge with regularity whenever and wherever independent sets of political entities interact. Alliances have often played a vital role in international politics. States may join alliances for a variety of reasons, including balancing against another power or perceived threat or bandwagoning together with a stronger power in order to share in the benefits of an alliance. Alliances may also form based on common ideological, economic, or political affinities. While history suggests that grand coalitions occur more often than one might expect, large coalitions can experience significant difficulty in maintaining the alliance relationships.
- Whether alliances serve the purpose of deterring aggression and creating peace is a question on which analysts seem to differ. History shows that when alliances seem to contribute to war, they will be avoided in the postwar era; when leaders think that a recent war could have been averted by an alliance, allies will be pursued in the postwar period.

- NATO is an alliance born in the Cold War but living on today and expanding with new members in central and eastern Europe. Considerable debate has arisen over the continuation, membership, and role of the alliance, with particular concern about Russian reaction.
- States build up their arsenals for offensive and defensive purposes, as well as for domestic political reasons. World military expenditures are currently on the increase, with the United States as the top spender. States produce and transfer a variety of conventional weapons. Arms transfers are currently declining but remain at high levels in some regions. The proliferation of small arms and land mines has been of high concern in many of the current conflicts. A variety of agreements to control conventional arms have been concluded, including the Moscow Treaty and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty.
- The Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was the most dangerous and pervasive but still peaceful international rivalry in world history. Throughout the Cold War, both sides continued to stockpile nuclear weapons well beyond the point at which each had enough firepower to kill the other's citizens several times over. These stockpiles of weapons may have protected both sides from the threat of a disarming first strike, which might have deprived them of their ability to retaliate. This incredibly dangerous and expensive arms race ended without the global catastrophe that many argued it would ultimately bring. That is not an unprecedented outcome. Most arms races have not ended in international war.
- The end of the Cold War has not liberated the world entirely from the dangers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Some argue that nuclear proliferation can stabilize tense relationships, just as they did in the Cold War. Nuclear proliferation may have made intentional wars less likely, but may also increase the probability of accidents and unintentional escalation to nuclear conflict. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is an important agreement in the effort to control nuclear proliferation. Many countries are acquiring ballistic missiles and attempting to stockpile biological and chemical weapons. Some progress in dealing with these weapons has been made through the CWC and the BTWC.
- Diplomats are often tempted to engage in coercive bargaining and negotiation strategies in order to deter or compel their adversaries. However, coercive diplomacy requires successful communication of capability, commitment, and credibility, which may be difficult to achieve. Coercive bargaining strategies quite clearly carry a greater risk of international war, which can sometimes be avoided with more conciliatory reciprocating bargaining strategies. Diplomats' strategies can also be affected by domestic politics that constrain the moves they can make at the negotiating table.

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