FROM HEGEMONY TO AMBIVALENCE.
NATO'S TRANSFORMATION AND EUROPEAN STABILITY

by

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Introduction

Although the scholarly literature on alliances is extremely rich and variegated[1], it is no exaggeration to argue that its conceptual and theoretical content leaves something to be desired[2]. In the work of political scientists and analysts, alliances are invariably seen as aggregations of power, reflecting either the need to face some threat or the opportunity of achieving some gain. But diplomatic historians know better. Indeed, they often show that the functions performed by alliances are not simply confined to a third, external, party: in fact, most alliances involve functions of reciprocal control and management <u>among the allies</u>: in many alliances, the partners try and restrain or influence each other, and what is often at issue is not merely the pursuit of the collective interests of the alliance but the coexistence of various national interests.

Why are some alliances simple aggregations of power and other alliances are tools of control and management? Shedding light on such a question is relevant, first of all, for theoretical purposes. By selecting conceptual criteria that reflect those dynamics, one can distinguish among different coalitional patterns and develop a typology of alliances. What is typical of NATO (and of other similar alliances of the past), in other words, can be appreciated only in a <u>comparative</u>

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[1] For a literature review, see Cesa 1995.

[2] There are, needless to say, important exceptions. Among the most useful works, see Dingman 1979, Jervis 1979, Morrow 1991, Snyder 1984, 1990, 1991, 1997.

perspective. This is why a typology is so important. Such a typology, in turn, can be very helpful in the analysis and interpretation of the evolution of the Atlantic Alliance in the post-Cold War world. It will be argued that after the end of the East-West conflict, NATO has undergone a structural transformation that explains many of its members' policies and preferences. More exactly, while NATO used to be a «hegemonic» alliance, it is now in the process of becoming an «ambivalent» alliance, with all the implications that this entails.

The paper is divided in five parts. The first section will briefly, and critically, review the most important findings of the theory on alliances produced by International Relations as an academic discipline; the second section will outline a new theoretical framework on the origins and functioning of alliances; the third part will focus on the major changes in transatlantic relations brought about by the end of the Cold War and the limits of the interpretions usually offered; the fourth part will deal with the most important traits of the new «ambivalent» alliance that is emerging, with special emphasis on the role of the leader; the last part will formulate a final assessment of US-European relations in terms of asymmetric interdependence.

1. The Limits of Alliance Theory

The issue most often addressed by the scholarly literature under review over the past decade has probably been the origins of alliances. It is important to notice that this problem is

not, so to speak, self-contained; in fact, many scholars also draw conclusions about the perfomance, the endurance, and the end of alliances precisely from the nature of their origins. The different views available can be summarized as it follows.

[table 1 about here]

Alliances are, to many, the result of the existence of some threat or of the opportunity to make some gain, both of which can have an external or domestic dimension. Realist theory usually focuses on an external threat. Hence, the emphasis on balancing as a behavior and/or as an outcome[3]. Other Realist scholars have recently noted that the possibility of making some profit is also a powerful reason for states to ally. Here the focus is on bandwagoning: revisionist states will find it more congenial to ally with powerful states, in order to subvert the status quo [Schweller 1994]. Both variants of Realism look at the state as a unitary, rational actor. Those who do not accept this view open up the state's «black box», and trace the origins of alliances back to the ruling élites's policies and preferences, i.e. to some difficulties that they have to deal with at home [Larson 1991] or to the prospect of increasing the military and economic resources at their disposal for domestic purposes [Barnett & Levy 1991].

Now, the emphasis on domestic issues usually leads to ad hoc explanations that do not lend themselves to be transformed into

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[3] This view is of course associated with balance of power theory [Morgenthau 1973; Waltz 1979]. In a similar vein, other scholars have stressed the role of threat, rather than sheer power as the most important incentive for states to join forces [Walt 1985, 1987].

significant generalizations. As for the theories based upon external factors, they constitute the backbone of what is known as the «power aggregation» model of alliances, which is by all means the most accepted explanation of what alliances are for and about. Yet, the «power aggregation» model is afflicted by a number of problems. To begin with, the distinction between «threat» and «profit», while sharp on paper, is much less clear-cut in practice. Even the most obvious examples of «profit» alliances have a «threat» component (e.g. the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact), and viceversa, in most alliances based on a «threat», at least some of the partners betray a «profit» motive (e.g. the first three anti-Napoleonic coalitions). In addition, the «power aggregation» model assumes that the interests of the allies, be they defensive or offensive, converge. Realism as a whole is adamant on this point. The reason is quite obvious: in stressing the saliency of shared interests, the Realists mean to deny that alliances can be based on other factors such as, for example, ideology or values at large. In so doing, however, one tends to forget that, besides the necessary interest(s) in common, the allies often have also <u>other interests</u>, whose compatibility cannot be taken for granted.

The only attempt to elaborate on this «darker side» of alliances has been made by a historian, in a seminal article that has not had the impact it deserved. In reviewing the most important European alliances from 1815 to 1945, Paul Schroeder makes a series of important points. First, the goal of aggregating capabilities is not always vital in the formation and functioning of alliances; second, many alliances function as pacts of restraint, controlling the actions of the partners in

the alliance themselves; third, alliances are not always employed to indimidate an enemy, but also to conciliate it, in the interest of managing the international system as a whole [Schroeder 1976, pp. 230-231]. Realism traditionally stresses the struggle between states and alliances, considering the latter mostly in cooperative terms. But Schroeder's insights suggest a dimension of alliance politics that Realism has always overlooked because of its insistence on the balance of power: <u>competition and conflict occur even within alliances</u>. Diplomatic history shows that behind the mask of cooperation one often finds attempts to embarrass, discredit, and control the allies, in the pursuit of national interests that do not coincide with those on which the alliance is based.

2. Alliances: A Typology

How can we distinguish, then, among alliances? Some alliances are, in Schroeder's words, «weapons of power», others «tools of management». Some are mostly oriented toward an external goal (in a defensive or offensive way), others are better studied in light of their internal dynamics. Any ally's behavior takes place in two different contexts: 1) on a «triangular» level, as the ally and its partner(s) face a common enemy; 2) on a «bilateral» level, as the ally and the partner entertain other relations of various sort. In behavioral terms, it has been argued [Snyder 1984, 1997] that, on the «triangular» level, the ally can «get closer» to its partner(s) (i.e. it can further strengthen and renew its original commitment to the

alliance) or «move away» from its partner(s) (i.e. it can signal in many ways that the alliance has lost some, or much, of its original saliency). We may add that on the «bilateral» level, that is, in areas other than the relations with the common enemy, the ally can «support» or «oppose» its partner(s)' policies. How can those different behaviors, as well as their various combinations, be explained? It has been suggested that «getting closer» and «moving away» reflect the fear of being «abandoned» or «entrapped» by the partner(s), respectively [Snyder 1984, 1997]. As for the «supporting or opposing» alternative, we can hypothesize that the partner(s)'s policies in areas other than the relations with the common enemy reflect the fear that the partner(s) become(s) too weak or too strong, respectively.

All this suggests a few things about the behavior of the ally. What about the dynamics <u>among allies</u>? The differences among alliances are, first, a function of the degree of compatibility of the allies's various interests. Although the allies do share, in most cases, a «minimum common denominator» in terms of interests, they also have, as noted, other interests that can be more, or less, compatible with the interests of their partners. The question to be asked is therefore the following: do the allies have, beside some core, common, interest, other interests whose satisfaction entails some damage for their partners? If they do, the alliance is characterized by a «low compatibility» of interests; if they do not, on the contrary, the alliance can be said to rest upon a «high compatibility» of interests. The evolution of an alliance

reflects precisely the way in which the allies's interests are structured, i.e. whether they become more, or less, compatible.

A second dimension to be taken into consideration is the power relations among the allies, in terms of their reciprocal dependence. Here the crucial factor is the amount of need, so to speak, that one ally has of the other.

The two criteria adopted, i.e. the compatibility of interests other than the ones on which the alliance is based and the interdependence among the allies, are particularly important. The former is linked to the «abandonment-entrapment» dilemma, and the different policies it entails. More exactly, the more dependent an ally, the more it fears being abandoned; the less dependent an ally, the more it fears being entrapped. The second criterion is in turn linked to the «strengthening-weakening» dilemma: the more compatible the interests among the allies, the more reciprocally supportive their policies; the less compatible the interests among the allies, the more competitive their policies.

All this leads to four different types of alliance, each with its own distinctive traits.

[Table 2 about here]

1. Aggregation alliance. The allies have approximately the same need one of the other and their other interests are highly compatible. This means that their reciprocal control is low, and that the alliance is mostly an aggregation of power against some common enemy. Balancing and bandwagoning (à la Schweller) both reflect this state of affairs. This is the alliance that most

scholars have in mind in their theories and conceptualizations. Partners, here, «get closer» to each other, and «support» each other's policies in areas other than competition with the common enemy. The fear of abandonment is mitigated by the awareness of symmetric interdependence. Since this alliance requires a general convergence of interests (high compatibility), it represents a fairly rare case in diplomatic history, notwithstanding the great emphasis it has received by the specialized literature.

The alliance of Italy and Prussia in 1866 is simply a war machine against Austria; similar observations apply to the 1902 alliance between Great Britain and Japan, whose other interests in the Far East, although not identical, are nevertheless compatible; finally, the 1912 Balkan League (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece) is basically an aggregation of power to wage war against Turkey.

2. Concert. As the aggregation alliance, a concert is characterized by symmetric interdependence among the allies. Unlike the aggregation alliance, however, the other interests among the allies are not really compatible. In symmetric interdependence, a low compatibility of interests means that there is the possibility that an ally, if unchecked, will damage its partner(s). Reciprocal dependence entails that no one can implement a decision without the support, or the permission, of the other; yet such a support, or permission, is quite unlikely due to the low compatibility of interests, and will in any case be the result of tough bargaining among the partners. The most typical trait of this alliance is therefore reciprocal

restraint. Each fears that the other(s) might become too powerful, and each tends therefore to «oppose» the other(s)' initiatives. On the one hand, the allies «get closer», because they need each other; on the other hand, they «oppose» each other.

The Holy Alliance of 1815, of Austria, Prussia and Russia is a union of forces against the revolution and in favor of the territorial status quo; at the same time, the alliance prevents its members from taking unilateral initiatives in Italy, Germany and Poland. The alliance of France and Great Britain for their joint intervention in the Crimea in 1854, is first of all directed against Russia; yet, Great Britain has reasons to believe that France, if it goes alone, could score unilateral gains in the region; finally, the alliance of Russia and France in 1894 is the result of the partners's fear of isolation; at the same time, though, the allies have also other interests (France on the Rhine, Russia in the Straits) which neither is inclined to support; the result is mutual paralysis.

3. Hegemonic alliance. In this alliance, the partners have highly compatible interests, but some allies need the others to a greater extent. Such an asymmetry of interdependence is a formidable source of power, a decisive means through which the less dependent partner can affect the policies of the more dependent. The less dependent ally, henceforth «hegemon», is thus able to obtain the obedience of the more dependent allies, henceforth «followers». The hegemonic alliance is a pact among non-equal powers, whose most common feature is the protection of the followers by the hegemon. The hegemon offers protection in

return for obedience; the followers obey inasmuch as this is consistent with their security needs. Like the aggregation alliance, the hegemonic alliance can usually be traced back to the existence of a common enemy. But in the hegemonic alliance the partners do not perform the same functions: the followers limits themselves to balance against the enemy, while the hegemon, besides balancing, restrains the followers and makes them give up some sovereign prerogatives of theirs. Each ally, therefore, «supports» the other. However, in light of the asymmetry of interdependence, the hegemon exerts some influence and control over the follower(s). Unlike the next case, however, the latter here have no reason to oppose the hegemon's policies. In addition, while the hegemon fears being «entrapped», the followers fear being «abandoned». This allows the former to control and restrain its allies, while at the same time it provides for stability at the system level.

The alliances stipulated by Bismarck in 1866 and 1867 with Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg are hegemonic alliances in this sense. The small German states obtain security against France, and Prussia, besides preventing them from falling under Austrian or French control, employs the alliances in order to promote the national unification of Germany. The asymmetry of interdependence, however, need not be so great. The Austrian-German alliance of 1879 and the Triple Alliance of 1882 can be interpreted along similar lines. The hegemon offers a series of guarantees to the followers, and in so doing it ties them down. Hence, the hegemon policy vis-à-vis the followers consists in making itself indispensable, and in moving in such a way as to preclude them any significant alignment alternative. As

asymmetry declines, or as interests change, we can therefore expect the hegemon to do whatever it can in order to keep the followers in a situation of dependence.

4. Ambivalent alliance. In asymmetrical interdependence, when interests are not highly compatible, the less dependent ally, henceforth «leader», is more free to pursue its own interests since it has more resources at its disposal and, in general, more options to choose from. This allows the leader to exert a significant influence upon the followers. Yet the latter are now in a different position: since their interests are less compatible with those of the leader than it is the case in the hegemonic alliance, they will try, in turn, to affect the leader's policies. Both the leader and the followers appreciate the security produced by the alliance. But the central feature of the ambivalent alliance is the bargaining process among the partners, like the concert alliance. Unlike the latter, however, in the ambivalent alliance the bargaining is conducted with unequal power: the inevitable outcome is unequal influence within the alliance. For the followers, the alliance is the lesser of two evils: they still depend on the leader, although they resent its policies, and hope to be better able to affect its decisions «from within» than «from the outside»; for the leader, it is always convenient to exert influence upon the followers. The result is mutual conditioning, as in the concert alliance. However, the asymmetry of interdependence means more power for the leader, that forces the followers to comply. The latter do, then, but in a very reluctant way, as they constantly try to affect the decisions made by the leader.

The Austrian-Prussian alliance of 1854 reflects this tension. For Austria, Prussian support is necessary against Russia; yet for Prussia, the alliance is important precisely to constrain Austria and prevent it from going to war with Russia. The German-Italian alliance of 1939 is another example: in light of Britain's ambiguous attitude, Italy fears, after the Anschluss, to find itself isolated; in addition, Mussolini hopes to make Hitler move along predictable lines. To Germany, on the other hand, the value of the alliance consists mostly in binding Italy, thereby preventing it from playing the role of the «determinant weight».

3. NATO after the End of the Cold War

Throughout the Cold War NATO was an hegemonic alliance in the sense outlined above[4]. The existence of a common threat, the asymmetric interdependence between the Europeans and the Americans, and a substantial, although by no means complete, compatibility of other interests among the allies made the alliance function, as a whole, like other hegemonic alliances of the past. The US played a crucial role in producing security for itself and its partners. «Hegemony», in its classical meaning, refers to a «benign power»: while the order and the security it creates are, first of all, a reflection of the hegemon's interests, the latter takes into consideration the interests of

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[4] Among the most incisive interpretations of NATO during the Cold War, see Calleo 1987, Kaplan 1988, Kissinger 1965, Osgood 1962. For an excellent balance sheet, see Howard 1999.

its partners too. This is made possible by the high compatibility of interests among the allies. Within this context, the US constantly exerted influence (that derived from the asymmetry of interdependence bewteen Washington and the European capitals) to shape and to implement common policies.

The end of the East-West confrontation has inevitably brought about a deep transformation of NATO and the functions performed by the allies [Walt 1989, 1997, 1998/99; Gordon 1997]. Those who link alliances to a threat invariably point out the weakening of NATO once the danger from the East has disappeared. The evaporation of the Soviet threat, more in particular, has eliminated the overriding common interest that used to keep the US and Europe together. This, in turn, has allowed conflicts of interests to emerge between the two shores of the Atlantic, has exacerbated the traditional problem of credibility, making members question whether their partners are still genuinely committed to providing assistance, and has put at the allies's disposal a wider array of foreign policy and security options. Those trends seem to be further reinforced by a parallel weakening of economic ties: on the one hand, US trade with Asia is now more than one and a half times larger than the trade with Europe (Asia surpassed Europe as the main target of US trade at the beginning of the 1980's); on the other hand, a deeper, and successful, economic integration of the European Union may well strain ties with the US in a number of ways [Bergsten 1999].

Yet, while at the beginning of the 1990's pessimism about the survival of NATO was widespread, almost a decade later the balance sheet seems to be quite different from the one anticipated: NATO's missions have been redefined, its membership

has expanded, and the allies have even gone through a war preserving a remarkable degree of cohesion. How can one account for the trasformation of NATO in the post-Cold War international system? And what trend can be expected in the foreseeable future? The issue has been addressed by a number of policy studies and a few theory-oriented works. Among the latter, some emphasize NATO's institutional dimension, while others focus on traditional power and security factors[5].

Institutional explanations have relied on two sets of factors. On the one hand, the impact of NATO's institutionalization has been analyzed in depth, leading to several insights. The existence of a large bureaucracy, for example, is said to have created a powerful Atlantic élite that resists pressures to dismantle the alliance; in addition, institutionalization has produced capabilities that the allies regard as worth keeping anyway, especially if those are highly flexible and can be employed in circumstances different from the original purpose [McCalla 1996]. Other scholars have adopted a broader theoretical framework in which NATO is seen as yet another international institution [Keohane 1984]. According to this view, the constraints of uncertainty deriving from international anarchy create incentives for states to create and maintain istitutions that provide symmetric and credible information. Information, in turn, is essential for promoting cooperation. While a hegemonic power is often an essential factor in creating institutions, the functions that the latter produce once they become established are so important that

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[5] Still others try to strike an uneasy balance between these two general perspectives [Chernoff 1995, Hellman & Wolf 1993].

cooperation persists even in the absence of hegemony. Alliances, like NATO, can be seen as international institutions performing this crucial information function. Although a threat is often essential in explaining the origins of alliances, if the latter provide information and make a reciprocally beneficial cooperation possible, they persist even after the threat has gone. Thus, the institutional focus on NATO as a source of information and as a mechanism for overcoming cooperation problems claims to explain NATO's persistence and further development [Duffield 1994/95, Keohane 1988, Wallender & Keohane 1995].

Some realist scholars, for their part, insist on sheer strategic interests and security needs. To them, NATO is still a better arrangement than any other alternative. More in particular, NATO can still hedge against a resurgent Russia, provide the means to extend security to Central Europe, and further reduce the probability of future tensions in Western Europe [Glaser 1993, Art 1996]. The US, in these analyses, is almost invariably seen as «bound to lead», to use Joseph Nye's memorable expression, a role that cannot be abdicated, no matter how badly the US would like to mind its own shop, if European stability is to be mantained at all.

Neither view is entirely convincing. Institutional theory has been challenged in many ways in the past [Baldwin 1993]. Among its several weak points, it is here sufficient to recall that institutions are more likely to perform their much-vaunted functions above all in the economic field, whereas in security matters things seem to be quite more difficult and complex [Lipson 1984]. Cooperation among states is often impaired by the

possibility that one partner will gain more than the others, something often referred to as the «relative gains problem» [Grieco 1988, 1990]. In addition, institutional theory focuses on the circumstances and the mechanisms that make cooperation more likely, whereas in most cases what is at issue is not so much whether cooperation will emerge as the specific features of the cooperative arrangement. This, in turn, is largely a function of the distribution of power among the partners, something on which institutional theory is silent [Krasner 1991].

As for Realist interpretations, their greatest strength, i.e. emphasis on continuity, is also their greatest weakness. To argue that NATO is still everybody's second best choice is certainly correct, in a very general sense. At the same time, though, whereas much attention has been devoted to European scenarios and potential and actual new threats in the Old Continent, precious little has been said about the incentives that the US has to renew and possibly further consolidate its role in European affairs. In other words, many reflections on NATO in the 1990's and beyond fail to consider US policies vis-à-vis the European allies as part of a general strategy aimed at strengthening NATO per se. This attitude is by no means surprising, given the prevailing theoretical orientations discussed above. If alliances are simply about meeting a threat, then one has to discover, or even invent, new threats as the old ones fade away. If, on the other hand, alliances are also about influencing the partners themselves and affecting their policies, according to the various national interests involved, then the transformation of NATO in the 1990's can be seen in a

different, and more comprehensive, light. The rest of this paper
will argue that the changes that have characterized NATO during
the past decade can be more fully appreciated through the
conceptual lenses developed above: NATO is in the process of
becoming an «ambivalent» alliance, in which the leader tries to
reassert itself and the other partners reluctantly follow.

4. The Leader Asserts Itself...

The major difference between a hegemonic alliance and an
ambivalent alliance, as noted, is that although they are both
characterized by asymmetric interdependence, the former relies
on a high compatibility of interests among the partners whereas
the latter is afflicted by a low compatibility of interests. The
end of the Cold War has of course been the most important source
of change. Many analysts and scholars argued, especially at the
beginning of the transition in the early 1990's, that the US
might, or would, now go back to isolationism, a perspective that
was generally feared, both in Europe and in America itself. But
was this possibility ever real? In the transformation from
hegemon into leader, the US has retained a basic, fundamental,
interest in the alliance, i.e. its preservation. Such an
interest has not been driven by the ghost of some new common
threat; rather, throughout the decades NATO has happened to
become the most important tool in American hands to have a say
in European affairs. This, in itself, goes a long way in
explaining the US interest in keeping NATO alive.

This central and often overlooked aspect can be derived in theoretical terms from the types of alliance sketched above. In a hegemonic alliance, due to asymmetrical interdependence, the less dependent partner will inevitably affect the more dependent partner. Since this relationship works at the advantage of the less dependent, the latter will find it convenient to perpetuate it, and will discourage the partners's attempts to narrow the dependence gap. The more dependent allies, in turn, have no reason to seriously try and escape hegemony, due to the high compatibility of interests. As interests begin to diverge, however, the alliance will be afflicted by a new set of tensions. In a nutshell, the followers will engage in more energetic efforts to extricate themselves from the hegemon's control; the hegemon, for its part, will do its best in order to prove itself still indispensable to the followers. Such a strategy entails opposing the followers's policies that might reduce their dependence, launching new initiatives aimed at reaffirming the alliance's saliency, and exploiting the opportunities that present themselves to exert leadership. This is precisely what the US has done in the 1990's: American ambiguity, if not outright hostility, towards an autonomous European defence capability, the enlargement of NATO, and the role played by the US in Bosnia and in Kosovo, as well as the American efforts to «globalize» NATO, can all be seen as components of a highly coherent strategy through which the leader intends to keep European affairs under control.

4.1 Who's afraid of the European pillar?

It was no coincidence that the first to define what the new European order should look like was the US. After the Berlin's Wall fall in November 1989, the US was quick to grasp the implications of the impetuous events that were taking place, and moved with an overriding concern in mind: NATO's preservation and German unification were the two sides of the same coin. An unbound Germany was seen not only as a potential destabilizing factor in Europe, but also as the end of NATO. Hence, a «dual track» strategy: the American support for German unification was coupled with the simultaneuous decision to redefine the Atlantic Alliance: at the NATO summit in London, in July 1990, four major initiatives were launched: the enhancement of the political component of the alliance, the proposed joint declaration with the Warsaw Pact, the invitation issued to the USSR and its alliance to establish diplomatic relations with NATO and the proposal about transforming the CSCE into a veritable organization. The first three steps were intended to make NATO look more relevant to the new Europe [Art 1996, pp. 10-13].

The American initiative came at a time when the European allies, under the impact of German unification and the end of the Cold War, were indeed engaged in their own thinking about the changing European scene. France was toying with the idea of bringing about a European security arrangement in which the US would eventually be relegated to a secondary role; Britain, on the other hand, felt more reassured by traditional means, i.e. the preservation of the American military presence in Europe. Thus, while France was pushing forward the notion of a «European Defense Identity» (EDI), Britain was in favor of a larger role

for the Western European Union (WEU)[6], which could not be easily controlled by the European Community (EC) and had an organic and subordinate relation to NATO by treaty.

The intra-European debate came eventually to an end in 1993, thanks to a series of compromises. The WEU would be part of the European Union (EU); yet, behind the carefully drafted documents that the allies produced on several occasions, what emerged was the fact that the European Union had accepted the primacy of NATO. NATO and the WEU would be «separable but not separate»: two chains of political command were to be coupled with only one set of military capabilities. This would make the WEU dependent on NATO for military staff work, command structure, and more importantly for logistics, intelligence and lift. Within this context, the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) play an important role[7]. The CJTF concept was first suggested by the US in 1993 with two purposes in mind: first, to stop the European aspirations for a stronger EDI, second to promote burden-sharing. The prospect of employing NATO assets in a more flexible and selective way, according to the circumstances (the so called «coalitions of the willing»), in fact, undercut the rationale for autonomous European defense capabilities. Not surprisingly, the French often expressed their reservations about CJTF, arguing that the US could thus veto the WEU's use of specific NATO assets, and frequently insisted that the WEU's right to employ such assets should be automatic, without even an

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[6] For two recent works on the history and prospects of the WEU, see Deighton 1997 and Rees 1998.

[7] Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) are to consist of inter-allied and inter-service command entities and forces. They are to provide structures and procedures for a flexible use of specific NATO assets by specific allies and possibly even non-NATO countries, depending on the circustances.

obligation to consult the other NATO partners, to avoid any subordination to NATO and the US [Yost 1998b, pp. 189-217].

The second half of the 1990's then witnessed a lively debate between France (supported at times by Spain and Belgium) and the other European allies led by the US. To France, CJTF should handle «non-article 5» contingencies without reporting to SACEUR and SACLANT; in addition, the French have called for establishing structures for CJTF distinct from SHAPE. Behind such proposals, it is not diffult to see the attempt to bring about the EDI under a different name. Also, the French plan would indeed relegate NATO's integrated military structure to the least likely «article 5» contingencies, thereby undermining its central role. However, when France tried to get the allies's support for its views, American diplomacy was able, in the words of a French journalist, to ensure that the EDI would not be able to function without the approval, assistance and supervision of Atlantic structures, i.e. the US itself [quoted in Yost 1998b, pp. 204-205].

Current EDI efforts are based on a consensus among the allies that the long-standing goal of a European pillar can be achieved only within NATO and not against it. At the same time, though, EDI implies distinctness from the US, and some formulations of EDI's purposes reveal a good deal of distrust vis-à-vis the US. Despite the prominence of the EDI in NATO statements since 1990, in practice little has been achieved. What the French call a European «mentality of dependence» with regard to NATO and the US that prevents the Europeans from doing more lest the US do less, national differences among the major powers in interests and security challenges, and a widespread

European reluctance to pay the financial costs of greater
defense autonomy are probably the most important reasons why EDI
does not take off[8]. Under such favorable circumstances, it is
relatively easy for the US to point out the advantages of NATO.
What is often surprising, in American writing, is the candor
with which many analysts express their views: the US must be the
«watchman» of Europe [Art 1996, p. 37], NATO must «retain
primacy» [Hunter 1999, p. 202], an autonomous European defense
capability would «needlessly duplicate NATO assets» [Yost 1998b,
p. 200], the US commitment to the European allies «takes the
national security question off the policy agenda for those
countries. This makes the renationalization of west European
defense policies [...] less likely» [Brown 1999, p. 211]. All
this points at the perpetuation of the American sphere of
influence in Europe; although the nations lying within it
associate voluntarily themselves with the US, such an
arrangement nonetheless requires some sacrifice of national
independence.

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[8] For yet another recent proposal, see Schake, Bloch-Lainé and Grant 1999.

4.2 Bigger is better (or isn't it?)

Not only has NATO survived the end of the Cold War; is has even been able to expand, by acquiring in April 1999 three more members. Here again, those who see a necessary link between threat and alliances are in trouble, since it is very hard to argue that NATO's enlargement has been the result of a perceived common threat. Rather, the decision to expand is pretty much consistent with the expectations about the leader's behavior that we can extrapolate from the models outlined above.

That NATO should expand its membership has been, first of all, an American idea about which the allies have not been too enthusiastic. What is even more interesting, however, is that none of the rationales invoked to justify such a move stands a close scrutiny [Brown 1997, 1999]. Deterrence of Russia is not a very convincing argument, for the simple reason that it is hard to see how, and why, Russia should pose a threat to Eastern Europe (not to mention Western Europe) in the foreseeable future. In fact, many analysts have pointed out that the result of enlargement might be precisely the opposite, i.e. NATO can well end up antagonizing Russia, thereby bringing about needless tensions and frictions [Harries 1997/98, Gardner 1997, Kennan 1998, MccGwire 1998]. In addition, if the three new members really perceived a danger from the East, they would be adding to their military capabilities; instead, they are doing the opposite. The vague justification according to which NATO membership will project stability into the region runs counter the simple observation that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are already quite stable. As for the promotion of

democracy [Allin 1997], one can retort that EU membership would be far more effective. The countries involved are historically, politically, culturally and socially linked with Western Europe, and it is hard to see how a military alliance can facilitate «civilian» development, a job for which the EU is far better equipped.

That enlargement has been a slap on the face of Russia can hardly been denied, in light of the implicit understanding, at the time of the Soviet collapse, that the West would not take advantage of Moscow's withdrawal from Eastern Europe. Similarly, enlargement has indeed complicated the West's relations with Russia [Strategic Survey 1998/99, pp. 35-36], leading to a hardening of the Kremlin's attitudes everywhere its voice can be heard (e.g. the UN, OSCE). The independent role played by Moscow in the Kosovo war can be interpreted precisely as a way of regaining the initiative after being relegated to a marginal position in European affairs. Not only has enlargement created new and unnecessary sources of tensions with what remains the most formidable military power in Europe. Many doubts have also been raised about its financial costs. Although the issue is still largely unsettled [Asmus, Kugler & Larrabee 1997, Carpenter & Conry 1998], it is not reasonable to expect that the new members and the Western European allies will pay the bill; nor can one assume that the US Senate will be willing to write a blank check for extending US guaratees to the East. In conclusion, enlargement is either likely to entail a financial burden that nobody seems willing to shoulder, or it will merely result in a declaration of protection by the US, a policy that,

to some, is not a strategy but a worrisome case of self-delusion [Perlmutter & Carpenter 1998].

Yet, enlargement has occurred. If the explanations frequently adopted do not sound convincing, what has been then, its true rationale? In elaborating his «institutional stability theory», L. Skalnes argues that enlargement was part of a broader strategy of enveloping the countries of Eastern Europe in a numner of different international institutions, including NATO, whose common purpose has been to bind the new members's future governments to a particular policy [Skalnes 1998]. More exactly, alliances are said to offer policymakers effective instruments for managing the domestic politics of the new members, and by extension their foreign policy as well. Skalnes claims that the central point is that NATO membership was linked to domestic reform. On the one hand, his case is rather weak, because his only evidence of the link between NATO and domestic reform is to be found in the official statements of leaders and politicians. On the other hand, though, Skalnes touches upon the crucial theme indeed: beyond the financial difficulties and the risk of antagonizing Russia, enlargement reflects above all the leader's attempt to consolidate and expand its influence over the Old Continent. Significantly, some have called it «an unprecedented projection of American power into a sensitive region hitherto beyond its reach [...], a veritable geopolitical revolution» [Harries 1997/98, p. 4]. By the same token, some scholars include, among the reasons on President Clinton's mind, «the need to demonstrate US leadership at a time when others questioned that leadership» [Goldgeir 1998, p. 101]. If we drop the official rhetoric, enlargement, in other words, can truly be

seen as something very close to imperial expansion. As such, it has a momentum of its own: it is convenient, from the American point of view, insofar as it promises to make the US still more visible in European affairs; in addition, no contervailing power is there to stop it. Not surprisingly, some even claim that the expansion of NATO is a long-term historical process that is still far from finished, and that NATO has not reached yet its ultimate limits [Brzezinski 1998].

As noted, the European allies did not seem particularly eager to enlarge NATO, at first. Then, they accepted the American plan, and now some of them are even asking to include yet other new members [Kamp 1998]. The attitude of the Europeans well reflects their inherent ambiguity about the alliance. On the one hand, one can argue that they are simply followers ready to comply to the decisions made by the leader. After all, a larger and stronger NATO should provide more security. But there is another factor that deserves mentioning. Some scholars have pointed out that one of the risks enlargement entails is that NATO will become less, and not more, effective [Binnendijk & Kugler 1999]. As it has been observed, enlargement has not become an important public issue for NATO's current members, thus creating the impression that the alliance's viability no longer much matters to them [Mastny 1999, p. 188]. Unable and unwilling to explicitly say that they longer consider NATO as important as they did in the past, it may well be that the Europeans see in the enlargement process a silent way of deactivating the alliance, of diluting it in yet another international forum in which the common denominator is inevitably bound to become lower and lower. Should this happen,

US influence would of course decrease, while the Europeans nations, by the opposite token, would be less restrained by the leader and would regain some freedom of action.

4.3 Out of area or out of business

NATO's self-reassessment brought about by the end of the Cold War produced, in 1991, a new «strategic concept», i.e. a reformulation of the alliance's mission. NATO's area of geographical concern was extended to the entire European continent, and threats to stability were defined in broad functional terms: in addition to traditional military problems, the Atlantic Alliance would also address territorial disputes, ethnic rivalries and political and economic problems throughout Europe. If NATO was unwilling to take on these issues, so the argument went, its relevance to European security would diminish: hence the dictum «out of area or out of business».

The 1991 «strategic concept» included no reference to peacekeeping. However, NATO's exclusive command of the Implementation Force (IFOR) operations in Bosnia completely changed this view. The case of Bosnia, and later the case of Kosovo, are quite revealing of this aspect of American strategy vis-à-vis the European allies. In both cases, the US waited for its partners to cook in their own juice: the crises should be handled by the Europeans, and would provide a good opportunity for them to show that they could get out of trouble without American help. As the allies failed, the US intervened reaffirming its leadership, evidence in itself of the centrality of NATO in post-Cold War Europe. In the words of D. Yost, «a

determination to maintain NATO's general cohesion and effectiveness was arguably one of the main motives behind the belated US assertion of leadership regarding Bosnia in mid-1995» [Yost 1998a, p. 147]. One can even push the argument a bit further: the Dayton Bosnian settlement, i.e. the preservation of a multi-ethnic state composed of nationalities that have clearly demostrated that they no longer desire to live side by side, is functional to NATO and US leadership, for it is only thanks to a prolonged military involvement of the Atlantic Alliance that Bosnia can hope to survive. By the same token, the American idea of turning Kosovo into a NATO protectorate is quite revealing. Here again, the leader exploits the opportunity offered by its clumsy allies, and clearly shows how groundless was the fear of an American disengagement from Europe.

Having secured itself a new role in post-Cold War Europe, the US has then tried to tie the European allies even tighter. According to some American officials, the US is spending a lot of money on power-projection capabilities to stabilize Europe without getting much in return. If the US is to stay in Europe, then NATO's European members must help the US address its global concerns. Hence, NATO must go «out of Europe or out of business». In particular, Secretary of State Albright sees NATO as a «force for peace from the Middle East to Central Africa» [quoted from Strategic Survey 1998/99, p. 34]. By the same token, the US would like to engage the Europeans in an across-the-board common policy on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Yet it is no secret that most European nations do not support US views about the Middle East and proliferation.

The combination of traditional collective defence and the new collective security responsibilities was reflected in the CJTF concept, further developed and specified at the 1999 Washington summit[9]. Where ultimate authority in the new military structure should lie has been a major source of tension between the US and France. Besides, other European countries as well are unhappy with the US refusal, after the unhappy experiences with the UN in Somalia and in Bosnia, to subordinate NATO or US forces to a UN military command. Although the problem of legitimacy of the use of force is to be taken seriously, what is at issue here is also the transformation of NATO into a tool of US policy. And although European positions vary considerably, in general the allies are reluctant to permit NATO to become a potential instrument for enforcing European consent to American strategic goals on a global level. After all, not even the most imaginative interpretation of the text of the NATO treaty can suggest that the partners have «out of area» obligations.

5. ... and the Followers Reluctantly Comply

And yet, more often than not, the followers comply. Their modest bargaining power, if nothing else, allows them to find suitably ambiguous compromises to mask these differences of view. Such ambiguities reflect the fact that NATO is made of

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[9] For an interesting, theory-oriented analysis of the impact of CJTF, see Lepgold 1998. To Lepgold, CJTF facilitates the joint action of a small group of nations, which is considered a solution to the collective action problem. This may very well be so. But in thic case, we would end up with ad hoc coalitions of states that, for various reasons, find it convenient to cooperate out of Europe, and the role of NATO as a whole would be marginal.

separate states with their own specific national interests. Hardly a revelation, of course. Yet, although differences among the allies have always existed [Howard 1999], the discipline of collective defense has gone with the disappearance of the big, common threat. Why, then, do the followers still follow? The most important reason can again be appreciated in considering the basic features of the ambivalent alliance. In this type of alliance, it will be recalled, although the followers pursue interests that are no longer very compatible with those of the leader, they are still rather dependent on the latter. NATO scholars and analysts point out different problems and suggest different solutions; on one thing, though, they all agree, i.e. European weakness. Such a weakness has two implications: first, Europe has no credible alternative to cooperation with the US; second, as in all relationships based upon asymmetric interdependence, the bargaining process and result reflect the unequal distribution of power: the leader affects the followers more than the followers affect the leader.

Much has been written on American «unilateralism» throughout the 1990's: some point out that the US runs the risk of finding itself alone in acting as if this were a unipolar world [Huntington 1999]; others, while expressing a similar fear that American hegemony might provoke an international backlash, notice that the US is still seen by most states as indispensable for keeping order and stability [Maynes 1998]; still others, in a blunter way, argue that for all the bleating about US hegemony, no nation, except for China, acts as if it wanted genuine multipolarity [Kagan 1998]. If we confine our perspective to the Old Continent, it can indeed be argued that

if the European nations were seriously interested in putting an end to the American tutelage, they would increase their defence budgets considerably rather than slashing them. It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this point. Unable and unwilling to provide themselves with the means that are necessary to play an autonomous role on the international stage, the European nations are bound to stick to NATO, no matter how much they may resent American leadership.

Since the end of the Cold War, both the US and Europe have cut defense spending by about 25% in real terms, but the gap between their capacities has widened. Such a gap will widen further now that US military spending is surging again. In nuclear terms, the US role is still, obviously, unmatchable [Yost 1999]; in addition, as America's armed forces leap into the information age, Europe's traditional armies and equipment become more and more obsolete [Freedman 1998]. It is highly significant that in the war against Serbia, although 13 countries have taken part in the NATO air strikes, at least 70% of the firepower deployed has been American [The Economist 1999].

The burden-sharing issue has always been a source of friction between the US and Europe. What is often pointed out is that the US would like the Europeans to contribute more to meeting the costs of NATO, whereas the Europeans take advantage of US leadership to get a free ride[10]. In fact, things are more complex than that. While the US may complain about European free-riding and lack of support for US initiatives, Europe's

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[10] This manifestation of the «collective action problem» has been studied extensively since the seminal article by Olson and Zechauser [1966]. See, among the more recent works available, Goldstein 1995, Murdock and Sandler 1991, Oneal 1990a and 1990b, Sandler 1994.

dependence on US assets gives Washington a powerful leverage over its allies. Hence the ambiguous attitude that the US has always adopted vis-à-vis a European security system, for it is very clear that a stronger Europe would be less amenable to US leadership and policies. In the American ideal world, the European allies should be both stronger and loyal. But since this is almost a contradiction in terms, it is more convenient for the leader to keep paying the costs by itself. The heavier the burden, the bigger the role one is entitled to. As for the followers, the trade-off is structured in specular terms. For them, the financial benefits of not incurring the costs of building the defence capabilities that the leader provides makes their limited role bearable.

What are, then, the conclusions to be? In theoretical terms, the case of NATO in the post-Cold War period points at the need to look for other motives and purposes besides the standard ones of security against a threat and power aggregation, and in particular the desire to control one's ally. The way in which mutual control or influence is exercised is truly important for the durability and effectiveness of an alliance. As for stability and order in Europe, if NATO functions as a pact of restraint, it may promote peace to have powers locked into it, as Schroeder noted [1976, p. 256]. It need not be true that partners must have harmonious aims. As long as no viable alternative is available, the allies are, so to speak, forced to coexist, even if their interests are not highly compatible. NATO is certainly not very representative of what alliances have traditionally been for and about, in international history: a peace-time, nuclear, multi-member coalition that has never been

seriously tested by fire is hardly a typical alliance. Yet, like many other similar alliances of the past, in its transition from a hegemonic to an ambivalent alliance NATO displays a central feature that cannot go unnoticed, i.e. the shifting balance between elements of rivalry and cooperation.

TABLE 1: The Origins of Alliances in Current Literature

	THREAT	**PROFIT**
DOMESTIC	Preservation of the ruling élite's power	Increase of the resources at the ruling èlite's disposal
EXTERNAL	Preservation of the state's international position	Improvement of the state's international position

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TABLE 2: Types of alliances

INTERDEPENDENCE AMONG THE ALLIES

	SYMMETRIC	ASYMMETRIC
HIGH	**aggregation**	**hegemonic**
COMPATIBILITY OF INTERESTS		
LOW	**concert**	**ambivalent**

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ABSTRACT

In International Relations theory alliances are invariably seen as aggregations of power, reflecting either the need to face some threat or the opportunity of achieving some gain. But, as diplomatic historians show, alliances perfom other functions as well, including reciprocal control among the allies, and what is often at issue is not merely the pursuit of the collective interests of the alliance but the coexistence as well as the clash of various national interests. Moving from two general criteria, that is the compatibility of interests among the allies (high or low) and their interdependence (symmetric or asymmetric), the paper first identifies four different types of alliances, i.e. «power aggregation», «concert», «hegemonic alliance», «ambivalent alliance». NATO is then analyzed in its transformation from a «hegemonic» into an «ambivalent alliance».

In a «hegemonic alliance», due to asymmetric interdependence, the less dependent partner will inevitably affect the more dependent partner. The more dependent allies, in turn, have no reason to seriously try and escape hegemony, due to the high compatibility of interests among the partners. As interests begin to diverge, however, the alliance is no longer «hegemonic»; if asymmetry persists, the result of this transformation will a an «ambivalent alliance». The latter will be characterized by a new set of trends. Fearing to lose the power to influence its allies, the leader will do its best in order to prove itself still indispensable. This entails opposing the followers's policies that might reduce their dependence, launching new initiatives aimed at reaffirming the alliance's saliency, and exploiting the opportunities that present themselves to exert leadership. This is precisely what the US

has done in the 1990's, in a highly coherent strategy that looks at NATO as the most important tool through which European order and stability, defined in American terms, can be maintained. The European allies, in turn, have little choice but to keep following, due to the still remarkable dependence gap between them and the US.