

Strange Bedfellows

Evan N. Resnick

U.S. Bargaining Behavior with Allies of Convenience

Throughout history, states have periodically made common cause with bitter adversaries for the purpose of confronting even more urgent national security threats. Although the term “alliance of convenience” has been widely used to depict these tenuous strategic partnerships, the dynamics of such alliances have yet to be systematically explored by international relations scholars and U.S. policymakers. This is puzzling, given that alliances with unsavory, unreliable, and dangerous enemies—including Louis XVI’s France during the American Revolutionary War, Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union during World War II, Mao Zedong’s China during the Cold War, and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War—have repeatedly proven necessary to thwart a host of even greater near-term threats to the United States and its interests since the country’s founding.

A crucial yet heretofore unexamined puzzle stemming from this recurrent phenomenon pertains to the terms on which the United States’ alliances of convenience have been consummated and maintained. Historically, in the face of shared threats, has the United States tended to exact a high price for its military cooperation with allies of convenience, or, more troubling, has it borne the heavier burden of creating and sustaining such partnerships?

The answer to this question carries salient implications for current and future U.S. national security policy. As U.S. hegemony continues to erode as a result of a severe economic recession, rising government debt, and the continuing costs of the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. policymakers will be increasingly hard-pressed to unilaterally defend the country’s security interests.¹ Consequently, barring a reversal of the internationalist grand strategy that it has consistently pursued since World War II, the United States will have to increasingly rely on foreign allies to help confront rising great power competitors, rogue states, and terrorist groups. Inevitably, a num-

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1. Robert A. Pape, “Empire Falls,” *National Interest*, No. 99 (January/February 2009), pp. 21–34.

ber of prospective allies will be regimes whose domestic political values and foreign policy interests are antithetical to those of the United States in important respects. If the United States has historically tended to bargain successfully with such allies, then U.S. policymakers should actively court such alliances; they not only promise to reduce the cost to the United States of balancing against newly ascendant adversaries, but they will also have the added benefit of enhancing U.S. influence over prior adversaries that by necessity enter into disadvantageous strategic relationships with the United States. If the United States has tended to fail in past attempts to bargain with allies of convenience, however, U.S. policymakers will have to approach the prospect of striking such alliances with far greater wariness and circumspection. Forming an unholy alliance with one adversary against another may not be worth doing if there is a strong likelihood that the former will cheat on its commitments against the latter or if it dictates the terms of the alliance such that the dangers it poses to the United States increase prohibitively, or both.

In this article, I investigate the United States' record in bargaining with its allies of convenience since its rise to superpower status after 1945. I begin by defining an alliance of convenience. I then articulate three rival hypotheses predicting the expected outcome of U.S. bargaining with post-1945 allies of convenience, drawn from theories representing the research programs of neorealism, two-level games, and neoclassical realism. Both the neorealist and two-level games theories predict that the United States should have bargained successfully with post-1945 allies of convenience, albeit via distinct causal mechanisms. Neorealism attributes this success, at least on issues of interest to U.S. policymakers, to the United States' favorable position in the international system vis-à-vis its weaker and more immediately endangered allies of convenience, whose alliances with the United States have all been informal and thereby easy for the latter to sever. The tying hands theory, derived from the two-level games research program, attributes U.S. success to the large disparity in formal decisionmaking power between U.S. officials and their exclusively autocratic allies of convenience. This disparity has permitted U.S. officials to more credibly threaten the dissolution of the alliances in question by domestic opponents in the event that major concessions from the allies were not delivered. By contrast, neoclassical realist theory combines elements of both the neorealist and tying hands theories to arrive at the opposite prediction. It proposes that the inclination of senior U.S. officials to exploit the United States' favorable international systemic position vis-à-vis its allies of convenience to bargain aggressively with the latter should have been vitiated

by their relative lack of formal decisionmaking power. Rather, the desire to protect the controversial alliances from being scuttled by domestic opponents should have impelled U.S. leaders to adopt an overly conciliatory bargaining stance toward the United States' allies, resulting in bargaining failure.

I test these propositions in the case study of the U.S. alliance of convenience with Saddam Hussein's Iraq against revolutionary Iran during the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War. Whereas both the neorealist and tying hands theories strongly predict successful U.S. bargaining with Iraq on the contentious issues of Iraq's sponsorship of terrorism and proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, the historical record supports the neoclassical realist theory, which predicts lethargic and thereby unsuccessful U.S. bargaining. I conclude by discussing the theoretical and policy implications of my findings.

Defining "Alliances of Convenience"

"Alliance of convenience" is a term whose ubiquity extends far beyond international politics, pervading all facets of public and private life. The term is usually considered interchangeable with another equally well-worn aphorism, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," which is believed to be of ancient Arabian or Roman origin.² The earliest known written exposition of this logic can be found in the *Arthashastra*, the classic treatise on statecraft written by Indian philosopher Kautilya circa 250 B.C., in which Kautilya stipulates that "[t]he king who is situated close to the enemy, but separated from the conqueror only by the enemy, is termed the friend (of the conqueror)."³

Traditionally, however, the synonymous phrases "alliance of convenience" and "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" are employed to describe a newly cooperative relationship between rivals, a context that is not explicit within those phrases or in Kautilya's stipulation. It is more clearly conveyed in the oft-paraphrased declaration by the shipwrecked and drunken Trinculo, in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, who is forced to dive under the robes of the monstrous Caliban to secure shelter from the impending storm: "Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep under his gabardine; there is no other shelter hereabouts; misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past."⁴ To wit, during World

2. S.C. Lee, R.G. Muncaster, and D.A. Zinnes, "'The Friend of My Enemy Is My Enemy': Modeling Triadic International Relationships," *Synthese*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 354, 357 n. 1.

3. Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, Bk. 6: *The Source of Sovereign States*, trans. R. Shamastry (Bangalore, India: Government Press, 1915), http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Arthashastra/Book_VI.

4. See "The Tempest," Act 2, scene 2, <http://Shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/tempest.2.2.html>.

War II, both British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt explicitly compared their archetypal alliance of convenience with Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union to a pact with "the devil."⁵

In the absence of an explicit and operational definition of the term "alliance of convenience" within international relations, I advance the following one: the initiation of security cooperation between two states that are ideological and geopolitical adversaries, in an effort to balance the growing threat posed by a third state (or coalition or nonstate actor) that each of the partners views as a greater immediate danger to its security than is posed by the other partner.⁶

The first part of the definition stipulates that allies of convenience must be ideological and geopolitical adversaries. This requirement dovetails with the conventional usage of the term, which is typically invoked to describe an alliance between the unlikeliest of partners, namely, actors that are at loggerheads along all major dimensions of their relationship save for their shared aversion to a third party. In the domain of international politics, the states least likely to form alliances will be those that exhibit conflicting domestic political values and foreign policy interests. I code the partners to an alliance as ideological adversaries if, at the time the alliance was formed, they possessed divergent ideologies, defined as "the principles upon which a particular leadership group attempts to legitimate its claim to rule and the primary institutional, economic, and social goals to which it swears allegiance."⁷ Salient ideological conflicts since the French Revolution have pitted liberal democracy against illiberal autocracy, free-market capitalism against communism, communism against fascism, and liberal democracy against illiberal democracy.⁸ I code the partners to an alliance as geopolitical adversaries if, at the time the alliance was formed, they possessed ongoing or unresolved conflicts of interest in one or more salient foreign policy issue areas. Specific operational indicators of geopolitical conflict consist of the following pre-alliance behaviors: (1) the partners were on

5. See Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 3: *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), pp. 370–371; and "[Letter from] Roosevelt to Churchill, No. 219, November 19, 1942," in Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas, eds., *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975), Doc. 185, p. 282.

6. This definition is in turn based on Stephen M. Walt's broad definition of an alliance as "a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states." Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 1 n. 1.

7. Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 5.

8. See *ibid.*; John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994), pp. 87–125; and Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6 (November/December 1997), pp. 22–43.

Figure 1. Typology of Alliances

		ideological correspondence of alliance partners	
		ideological harmony	ideological conflict
geopolitical correspondence of alliance partners	geopolitical harmony	special relationship alliance	ambivalent alliance
	geopolitical conflict	ambivalent alliance	alliance of convenience

opposing sides of a war or proxy war;⁹ (2) the partners were members of rival peacetime alliances (formal or informal); (3) the partners staked rival claims of ownership or a sphere of influence over a given territory; and (4) one partner engaged in aggressive or destabilizing activity that the other partner viewed as threatening to its national security.

By defining alliances of convenience in these terms, I am able to conceptually differentiate such alliances from balancing alliances in which the partners are neither geopolitical nor ideological rivals, as well as those in which they are either geopolitical or ideological rivals (figure 1 above).

This framework allows for the specification of two distinct types of defensive alliances aside from alliances of convenience, namely, “special relationship alliances” and “ambivalent alliances.”¹⁰ Alliances between states whose pre-alliance relations were characterized by relative geopolitical and ideological harmony are categorized as “special relationship alliances”; those between

9. I include one state’s sponsorship of terrorist attacks against another under the rubric of proxy war.

10. The term “special relationship” was coined by Winston S. Churchill to denote the “fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples . . . between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States.” Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” reprinted in Robert R. James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, Vol. 7 (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), pp. 7285–7293.

Figure 2. Continuum Depicting Relative Ease of Formation, Management, and Perpetuation of Different Alliance Types



states whose pre-alliance relations were characterized by either ideological or geopolitical conflict are categorized as “ambivalent alliances.”

This typology permits alliances to be broadly differentiated according to their relative ease of formation, management, and perpetuation. The extent to which mutually threatened states are divided by salient ideological or geopolitical animosities, or both, will generally determine the level of difficulty that such states will experience in forming an alliance in response to that threat, managing the alliance once it is formed, and perpetuating the alliance to the point at which victory over the common enemy is achieved, and perhaps beyond. Alliances of convenience will generally be the most difficult alliances to form, manage, and perpetuate; special relationship alliances will be relatively easy to form, manage, and perpetuate; and ambivalent alliances will range between these two extremes (figure 2).¹¹ Thus, although a rising external threat will exert considerable pressure on endangered states to balance against it, the relative responsiveness, cohesion, and longevity of the balancing alliance will vary depending on whether the members of that alliance possess preexisting ideological or geopolitical conflicts, or both.¹²

This article focuses on the management dimension of alliances of convenience. Alliance management encompasses bargaining among the partners over two categories of issues: issues that directly pertain to the adversary against which the alliance is directed, and issues that do not pertain to the adversary. With regard to the former category, alliances of convenience, as opposed to the other two types of alliances, should be most susceptible to the generic pathologies of abandonment and free riding or buck-passing.¹³ With

11. It is possible for a given alliance to shift from one type to another in response to changes in geopolitical behavior or domestic ideology by one of both of the partners. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this point.

12. This conceptual framework runs contrary to John J. Mearsheimer’s categorical claim that all alliances “are only temporary marriages of convenience: today’s alliance partner might be tomorrow’s enemy, and today’s enemy might be tomorrow’s alliance partner.” Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), p. 33.

13. Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 50–52; and Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 157–162.

regard to the latter category, because alliances of convenience are forged by states possessing a recent history of ideological and geopolitical antagonism, they will inevitably be characterized by the existence of one or more serious disputes among the partners on issues unrelated to the shared enemy against which the alliance is directed.

The second part of the definition of an alliance of convenience holds that the chief motivation behind the creation of such an alliance is the rise of an overarching third-party threat to the alliance partners. In this regard, alliances of convenience are distinct from “pacts of restraint” or “tethering alliances,” in which two rivals form an alliance primarily to avoid war with each other or to otherwise restrain or control each other’s actions.¹⁴ This part of the definition also holds that an alliance of convenience forms in response to changes in the balance of threat, as opposed to the balance of power, posed by the third party to two (or more) adversaries. As conceptualized by Stephen Walt, “threat” is a compound variable consisting not only of aggregate capabilities (i.e., power) but also of geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions. Thus, it encompasses cases in which an alliance forms between two states, A and B, against a third state, C, whose aggregate capabilities have not necessarily increased but that has begun to pursue a foreign policy toward A and B so hostile and aggressive that it trumps the threats posed by A and B to each other.

Three Hypotheses on U.S. Bargaining with Allies of Convenience

Since its rise to superpower status in the aftermath of World War II, the United States has established seventeen distinct alliances of convenience, which are listed in the appendix.¹⁵ The dependent variable in question is the outcome of U.S. bargaining with these allies on the issues in which the partners had diver-

14. Paul W. Schroeder, “Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management,” in Schroeder, David Wetzel, Robert Jervis, and Jack S. Levy, eds., *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 21–24.

15. I restrict the temporal focus of the study to the post-1945 period for two reasons. First, during this period, all of the countries with which the United States has established alliances of convenience have been small, regional powers that were closer and more vulnerable to the source of the shared threat(s) than the United States. If the United States failed to pursue tough and successful bargaining strategies with such states, it is unlikely that it would have had greater success dealing with allies of convenience prior to 1945, when such allies included great powers such as the Soviet Union during World War II. Second, the post-Cold War unipolar international system more closely resembles the bipolar Cold War system than the multipolar pre-Cold War system, insofar as the United States possesses superpower status and its allies of convenience have been and will be small, regional powers, not great powers.

Figure 3. Neorealist, Tying Hands, and Neoclassical Realist Hypotheses on U.S. Bargaining with Post-1945 Allies of Convenience

neorealist hypothesis

United States less dependent, less committed to alliances of convenience than its partners (i.e., United States more powerful and less proximate to shared threats; alliances informal in character)



successful U.S. bargaining with allies of convenience, especially on issues in which the United States is strongly interested

tying hands hypothesis

U.S. negotiators more domestically constrained than those of autocratic allies of convenience



successful U.S. bargaining with allies of convenience

neoclassical realist hypothesis

United States less dependent, less committed to alliances of convenience than its partners (i.e., United States more powerful and less proximate to shared threats; alliances informal in character)



United States is a "weak state"



failed U.S. bargaining with allies of convenience, even on issues in which the United States is strongly interested

gent preferences. Specifically, did the outcome of bargaining on these issues lie closer to the ideal point of the United States or of its ally?¹⁶ Below I introduce three theories and their respective hypotheses on the question of whether the United States or its allies of convenience should have generally emerged triumphant in intra-alliance bargaining (for a summary, see figure 3).¹⁷

NEOREALISM

The neorealist research program consists of works that attempt to explain international political behavior or foreign policy behavior, or both, by reference to the structure of the international system.¹⁸ Neorealists share a set of theoretic-

16. Although each of the three theories that I bring to bear on this question predict uniformly successful or failed U.S. bargaining with post-1945 allies of convenience, it is possible that in any given case, the bargaining outcome may be mixed (i.e., the United States gets its way on some issues while the ally gets its way on others). If this outcome is more frequent than anomalous, it casts doubt on the predictive strength of all three theories.

17. These predictions are both retrodictions and forecasts. In other words, they "predict" both past and future U.S. foreign policy behavior. Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1996), p. 13 n. 16.

18. International relations scholars disagree as to whether neorealist theories can be used to ex-

cal assumptions: the international system is anarchic; the most important actors are nation-states; states seek, at minimum, to survive; state behavior is primarily a response to external environmental pressures or opportunities; and states are generally able to efficiently mobilize domestic resources in response to international pressures or opportunities.¹⁹

The seminal application of neorealism to the subject of alliance bargaining is Glenn Snyder's defining work, *Alliance Politics*.²⁰ According to Snyder, the outcome of intra-alliance bargaining is a function of the balance of dependence, commitment, and interests among the alliance partners.²¹ The advantage in bargaining will be possessed by the partner that is relatively less dependent on the alliance, less formally committed to it, and more interested in the outcome of the dispute(s) in question.²²

Neorealism expects the United States to have bargained successfully with its post-1945 allies of convenience. Since the end of World War II, the United States has been a global military and economic superpower, rivaled only by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.²³ Meanwhile, all of the United States' allies of convenience have been smaller regional powers. In addition, as the predominant power in a friendly Western hemisphere populated by weak neighbors, the United States has been geographically less proximate to the sources of the shared threats than its allies of convenience.²⁴ Thus, it has been nominally the less dependent alliance partner. In addition, because all U.S. alli-

plain and predict the foreign policy behavior of individual states. See *ibid.*, pp. 7–53; Kenneth N. Waltz, "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1996), pp. 54–57; and Colin Elman, "Cause, Effect, and Consistency: A Response to Kenneth Waltz," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1996), pp. 58–61.

19. Elman, "Horses for Courses," pp. 18–21; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 79–101; and Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 11–14.

20. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 16.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

22. *Ibid.* Snyder measures dependence along three dimensions: the extent of a state's need for military aid, the degree to which the ally fills that need, and the availability of alternative ways of meeting the need. Snyder defines "commitment" as the product of both the character of the verbal promise articulated in the alliance contract and the interests that each state would have in aiding the ally apart from the formalized alliance contract. Technically, the United States' post-1945 alliances of convenience do not meet Snyder's restrictive definition of alliances as "formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership" (*ibid.*, p. 4). I argue, however, that their informality implies a lower U.S. commitment than would be the case if they were formalized.

23. See statistics and rankings in William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 10–22.

24. Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (July/August 2002), p. 24; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 19–23; and

ances of convenience have been informal, the United States has been nominally less committed to these alliances than those, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, that have been formalized in treaties. Further, the United States' relative independence vis-à-vis its allies of convenience suggests that it should have also been less committed than its allies to the perpetuation of bilateral security cooperation in the absence of formal alliance treaties. Given that the interests of the United States vis-à-vis its allies are likely to have varied in intensity from ally to ally and issue to issue, this hypothesis will be more likely to hold in those disputes in which the United States has been at least as interested in the outcome as its ally, and it should be less powerful in predicting the outcomes of disputes in which U.S. interests have been markedly lower than those of its ally.

TWO-LEVEL GAMES/TYING HANDS THEORY

A second perspective derives from the two-level games research program, which consists of works that attempt to explain international bargaining outcomes by reference to the combination of international and domestic circumstances that simultaneously confront negotiators. The metaphor of the two-level (i.e., international and domestic) game permits scholars to examine the oftentimes innovative and dynamic strategies by which diplomats exploit their position in international negotiations to manipulate domestic political constraints at home and in other countries and use those constraints to manipulate the outcomes of international negotiations.²⁵

Arguably, the most prominent theory yielded by the two-level games framework has been dubbed the "tying hands" theory, which counterintuitively proposes that the outcome of interstate bargaining will usually favor the state whose negotiators' autonomy is most domestically constrained.²⁶ The more institutionally constrained negotiator will be able to wrest concessions from a less constrained interlocutor by more credibly informing him or her that "I'd like to accept your proposal, but I could never get it accepted at home."²⁷

The tying hands theory predicts that the United States should have gener-

Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), pp. 39–40.

25. The seminal work is Robert D. Putnam, "Appendix: Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," in Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson, and Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 431–468.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 441; and Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 19.

ally engaged in successful bargaining with its post-1945 allies of convenience, given its extremely small “win-set,” or range of domestically acceptable agreements, relative to those of its allies of convenience, which have all been autocracies. According to Stephen Krasner, the most important attribute of U.S. politics is “the fragmentation and dispersion of power and authority,”²⁸ stemming from the constitutionally mandated separation of foreign policymaking powers between the executive and legislative branches, as well as the numerous checks and balances between these branches.²⁹ Thus, the United States’ win-set will generally be smaller than those of more centralized democracies, let alone authoritarian regimes. In addition, dramatic and controversial foreign policy decisions such as the establishment of an alliance of convenience with an ideological and geopolitical adversary can be expected to provoke significant domestic opposition in the United States. Consequently, the United States should have frequently and effectively relied on a credible tied-hands negotiating strategy toward its allies. The probable effectiveness of the strategy should have been further bolstered given that all of the United States’ allies of convenience have been small powers located closer in proximity to the source of the shared threat, which implies that they should have been extremely reluctant to defect from the alliance altogether in the face of exacting U.S. demands.³⁰

Importantly, although both neorealism and the tying hands theory advance identical hypotheses, they do so on the basis of discrete causal mechanisms. Neorealism predicts that favorable international systemic factors will produce U.S. bargaining success. Thus, during process tracing, neorealism would expect U.S. policymakers to emphasize these factors in negotiations with the ally. By contrast, the identical tying hands prediction is premised on the United States’ relatively narrow win-set; hence, that theory would expect U.S. policymakers to emphasize their lack of domestic maneuverability during negotiations with their allied counterparts.

28. Stephen D. Krasner, “United States Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unraveling the Paradox of External Strength and Internal Weakness,” in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 61.

29. Thomas E. Mann, “Making Foreign Policy: President and Congress,” in Mann, ed., *A Question of Balance: The President, the Congress, and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1990), pp. 4–5.

30. In such circumstances, Putnam’s admonition—that the smaller a state’s win-set, the higher the likelihood that bargaining will completely break down as a result of an absence of overlap between that state’s win-set and the win-set of its rival—should have been less of a concern to U.S. negotiators. Putnam, “Appendix,” pp. 448–450.

NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

A third theory of U.S. bargaining with post-1945 allies of convenience derives from the burgeoning research program dubbed neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realists are united in their belief that “[international] systemic pressures are filtered through intervening domestic variables to produce foreign policy behaviors.”³¹ Neoclassical realist scholars subscribe to the traditional realist assumptions that the international system is anarchic; the most important actors in the system are states; and states’ foreign policy behavior is primarily motivated by the desire to promote national security by “seeking to control and shape their external environment.”³² According to neoclassical realism, the international system establishes the broad parameters within which states pursue their foreign policy interests, though domestic political factors frequently render the impact of systemic variables on foreign policy behavior “indirect and problematic.”³³

The neoclassical realist theory introduced here is situated within a stream of neoclassical theorizing that emphasizes the difficulties that a given state’s foreign policy executive, defined as the most senior executive decisionmakers responsible for crafting foreign policy, experiences in its efforts to extract and utilize national resources in response to pressures and opportunities generated by the international system.³⁴ Neoclassical realists share with their classical realist forebears the belief that states possessing weaker extractive capabilities (i.e., “weak states”), usually democracies, operate at a disadvantage in foreign policy, relative to states with more robust extractive capabilities (i.e., “strong states”), usually autocracies.³⁵

31. Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 6.

32. Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (October 1998), p. 152.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

34. See Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies: The Effect of State Autonomy on the Post-World War Settlements* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (July–September 2006), pp. 464–495; and Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

35. Walter Lippmann, *Essays in the Public Philosophy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), p. 20; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 205–206, 218–219; George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 4; George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 59; and Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, “Conclusion: The State of Neoclassical Realism,” in Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, p. 281.

In accordance with neoclassical realism's stress on the primary causal role played by international systemic variables in foreign policy behavior, the theory posits that the rise of an overarching third-party threat will exert strong pressure on a given state to form a countervailing alliance of convenience with a less immediately threatening ideological and geopolitical adversary. In accordance with neoclassical realism's emphasis on the intervening role played by domestic political variables, however, the theory also holds that the extractive capability of the ally of convenience that holds the relatively advantaged position in the international system (i.e., the partner that is less dependent and committed, and at least as interested in the outcome of bargaining on the issue[s] in conflict) plays a critical mediating role in the process by which that partner's systemic advantage is converted into bargaining power. Specifically, if the systemically advantaged partner is a "strong state" in extractive terms, then it will successfully convert this advantage into bargaining power over its (systemically disadvantaged) partner, as predicted by neorealism. The theory departs from neorealism, however, in additionally proposing that if the systemically advantaged partner is a "weak state" in extractive terms (i.e., internally weak), then it will fail to convert this advantage into bargaining power over its partner.

Internally strong states will generally succeed in bargaining with allies of convenience, but internally weak states will not because the former are less vulnerable than the latter to domestic opponents eager to subvert the alliance. As stated above, it is virtually inevitable that a state will encounter domestic opposition to the initiation of any dramatic, controversial, and potentially hazardous shift in its foreign policy behavior, such as the sudden establishment of an alliance with a prior enemy. In a weak state, this opposition will be able to challenge the foreign policy executive's policy at numerous nodes, or "veto points" in the policymaking process.³⁶ As a result, the foreign policy executive will be preoccupied with sustaining fragile domestic support for the alliance, which is necessary to extract the national resources required to support the ally.

In such circumstances, it would be prohibitively risky for a weak state's foreign policy executive to adopt a tough bargaining posture toward the ally. In doing so, the foreign policy executive would focus domestic attention on the ally's past and continuing transgressions, which would lend further credence

36. On veto points, see George Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism, and Multipartyism," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1995), p. 293.

to the arguments voiced by domestic opponents of the alliance, thereby emboldening and empowering those opponents and further jeopardizing domestic support for the alliance.³⁷ Rather, the foreign policy executive will be impelled to dampen the domestic opposition by conveying an artificially benign image of the ally. Specifically, this behavior will include one or more of the following tactics: (1) willfully ignoring and downplaying the significance of continuing misbehavior by the ally; (2) overselling the magnitude of marginal or cosmetic concessions by the partner; (3) reneging on prior threats to retaliate against the partner's misbehavior; and (4) promoting and relying on the lobbying activities of private economic or ethnonationalist interest groups, or both, that are usually unequivocally supportive of the alliance. Although such interest groups can be expected to campaign strongly on behalf of the alliance against domestic opponents, they will also actively resist the imposition of any political fetters or conditions on cooperation with the ally.

Thus, whereas the foreign policy executive in a strong state will exploit a favorable systemic position to aggressively and successfully drive hard bargains with an ally of convenience (i.e., the neorealist proposition), the foreign policy executive in a weak state will deliberately forfeit its systemically derived bargaining leverage over the ally to shield the overall alliance policy from subversion by domestic opponents.³⁸

This neoclassical realist theory hypothesizes that U.S. bargaining with post-1945 allies of convenience should have been extremely feeble, resulting in failure. Although the United States has enjoyed a superior systemic position over all of its allies of convenience, this advantage should have been nullified by countervailing domestic pressures. Because the United States is an internally weak state, attempts by the foreign policy executive to pursue its foreign policy objectives are frequently confounded by "dissident bureaus, a recalcitrant Congress, and powerful private actors."³⁹ In practice, this means that the foreign policy executive possesses "relatively little command of material resources . . . that can be used to offer incentives or to make threats,"⁴⁰ and it

37. Alexander L. George, "Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimacy," in Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and George, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1981), p. 255.

38. Three prominent neoclassical realists contend that foreign policy is most likely to "deviate from the requirements of systemic imperatives" when the foreign policymaking authority of the foreign policy executive is highly restricted, when there are many veto points in the policymaking process, or when domestic opposition to the foreign policy executive's policy is high. See Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, "Conclusion," p. 281.

39. Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials, Investments, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 63.

40. Krasner, "United States Commercial and Monetary Policy," p. 61.

lacks the ability to calibrate the deployment of those material resources it has managed to extract.⁴¹ The rise of overarching third-party threats to the United States and various adversaries since 1945 should have provided the foreign policy executive in the United States with a modicum of domestic political leverage to establish alliances of convenience with those adversaries. At the same time, residual domestic opposition should have compelled the foreign policy executive to ignore its partners' misbehavior, oversell the magnitude of their minor or tactical concessions, renege on prior threats to punish their misbehavior, and, if possible, mobilize private interest groups favoring the unconditional expansion of those alliances, thereby fatally undermining the executive's bargaining position.

It bears noting that although the neoclassical realist research program has exclusively produced theories of foreign policy (i.e., theories that attempt to explain the foreign policy behavior of individual states), rather than theories of international politics (i.e., theories that attempt to explain the outcome of interactions between states), the neoclassical realist theory proposed above serves both purposes.⁴² The theory predicts both U.S. bargaining behavior vis-à-vis allies of convenience as well as the outcome of U.S. bargaining with allies of convenience, because it posits that domestic pressures in an internally weak state such as the United States will induce the foreign policy executive to deliberately attenuate its bargaining behavior to such a degree that it effectively capitulates to allies of convenience on issues in which the respective preferences of the weak state and those of its allies diverge. In other words, the weak states will fail to meet the minimal threshold of bargaining vigorousness that is necessary, if not sufficient, to achieve ultimate bargaining success vis-à-vis the alliance partner. A minimally vigorous bargaining strategy necessarily encompasses each of the following three tactics: (1) acknowledging misbehavior by the alliance partner; (2) accurately identifying the magnitude of any concession(s) rendered by the partner; and (3) threatening and imposing punishment(s) against the partner in response to its partial or complete noncompliance. Thus, barring the intervention of a factor exogenous to the theory, the United States (or any weak state) cannot possibly achieve bargaining success vis-à-vis an ally of convenience if it fails to meet even these minimal standards, by ignoring the alliance partner's misbehavior, overselling merely tactical or

41. Stephen D. Krasner, "Domestic Constraints on International Economic Leverage," in Klaus Knorr and Frank Trager, eds., *Economic Aspects of National Security* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 172.

42. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy," in Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, pp. 19–23.

cosmetic concessions by the partner, or refraining from threatening and imposing any costs on the ally for its misbehavior. By contrast, the neorealist and tying hands theories—which are theories of international political behavior, not of foreign policy behavior—implicitly postulate that the United States' favorable systemic position and domestic narrow win-set, respectively, will lead the foreign policy executive to adopt at least a minimally vigorous bargaining strategy in the pursuit of ultimate bargaining success vis-à-vis the ally of convenience.

The U.S. Alliance of Convenience with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War

I test the neorealist, tying hands, and neoclassical realist hypotheses in the case study of the U.S. alliance with Saddam Hussein's Iraq during that country's protracted war against Iran during the 1980s.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

On September 22, 1980, Iraq launched a military invasion of neighboring Iran, which since that country's Islamist revolution of January 1979 had been ruled by the firebrand Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. After Iraq's invasion quickly faltered, a spirited Iranian counteroffensive brought Iranian forces into southern Iraq, at which point a prolonged stalemate took hold.⁴³ During this period, between late 1982 and early 1986, Iraq's economy spiraled into severe crisis, gradually shifting the war's momentum in Iran's favor.⁴⁴ In February 1986, Iranian forces conquered the Fao Peninsula, a key Iraqi outlet to the vital Shatt al-Arab waterway, and threatened Iraq's second-largest city of Basra.⁴⁵ A serious deterioration in Iran's economic fortunes, however, set the stage for a major Iraqi onslaught beginning in April 1988, resulting in the retreat of Iranian forces from Iraqi territory. By early August, both sides had accepted UN Security Council Resolution 598, which called for a cease-fire and restoration of the status quo antebellum.⁴⁶

THE U.S. ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE WITH IRAQ

At the war's outset, the U.S. administration of President Jimmy Carter struck a neutral posture, forswearing the provision of arms to either belligerent.⁴⁷ Af-

43. Geoff Simons, *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), pp. 274–283.

44. Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (London: Grafton, 1989), pp. 129–152.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 167–186.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 243–251.

47. Kenneth R. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), pp. 77–78.

ter Ronald Reagan replaced Carter in January 1981, the new administration continued its predecessor's policy of formal neutrality, but as Iraq's military position began to deteriorate, in early 1982 it began to engage in significant security cooperation with Baghdad.

The Reagan administration's decision to ally the United States with Iraq at this juncture meets both of the conditions set out in my definition of an alliance of convenience: (1) the pre-alliance relationship between the United States and Iraq was characterized by sharp ideological and geopolitical conflict; and (2) Iran represented an overarching threat to both the United States and Iraq.

First, at the time the alliance between the United States and Iraq was initiated, the two countries were both ideological and geopolitical adversaries. Ideologically, whereas the United States was a liberal democracy, Iraq's newly ascendant president, Saddam Hussein, was a repressive autocrat who presided over an increasingly totalitarian state. Formally, the ideological program espoused by Iraq's ruling Arab Socialist Renaissance Party, or Baath Party, consisted of a "nebulous and often contradictory" mixture of pan-Arabism and socialism.⁴⁸ In practice, however, Saddam's Iraq closely resembled the fascist totalitarianism practiced by Stalin (Saddam's professed role model).⁴⁹

Geopolitically, for more than two decades, Iraq's foreign policy had been increasingly at odds with the United States' foremost global interest in containing the spread of Soviet power and influence, as well as its major regional interests in protecting Israel and promoting a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iraqi-U.S. relations began to deteriorate in the aftermath of a 1958 military coup in Baghdad, which resulted in the overthrow of the pro-Western Hashemite monarch, Faisal II. In short order, the new regime of Gen. Abdul Karim Qassim withdrew from the U.S.-sponsored Baghdad Pact, a regional anti-Soviet collective security organization created in 1955; canceled a bilateral military aid agreement with Washington that had been inaugurated in 1954; threatened to invade Kuwait in 1961; and began accepting deliveries of arms and economic credits from the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ Bilateral tensions escalated dramatically after Qassim was overthrown in 1963 by a Baath-led putsch. Between 1963 and Saddam Hussein's assumption of Iraq's presidency in 1979,

48. Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 7.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 11. See also Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

50. Bruce W. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush, and Saddam, 1982–1990* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), p. 31; and Richard M. Preece, *United States–Iraqi Relations*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, July 30, 1986), Report No. 86-142F, pp. 9–10.

Iraq intervened militarily on the Arab side in both the 1967 Six-Day War and 1973 Yom Kippur War against Israel; severed diplomatic relations with the United States; signed a fifteen-year friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1972; spearheaded the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League in retaliation for Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's acquiescence to the U.S.-brokered Camp David peace deal in 1978; and became one of the world's most active sponsors of radical Palestinian terrorism.⁵¹

Second, the threat posed by Iran trumped that posed by Iraq to the United States and by the United States to Iraq. For the United States, the Iranian Revolution deposed the United States' long-standing regional ally, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and installed in his place Khomeini, who transformed the Iranian polity into an Islamist theocracy. Khomeini railed against the United States (the "Great Satan") and Israel (the "Little Satan"); sponsored the activities of radical Islamic terrorist groups; and sought to export the revolution to the surrounding Arab states of the region, including the pro-American states of Bahrain, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Then, in November 1979, a student mob both inspired and supported by Khomeini seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and proceeded to hold fifty-two U.S. employees hostage for fourteen months.⁵² This act, which captivated, infuriated, and appalled the American public, marked the end of a dramatic, yearlong transformation of Iran from the United States' closest ally in the Persian Gulf to its "bitterest foe."⁵³

The Iranian Revolution also stoked the fears of Iran's longtime Iraqi nemesis. Saddam Hussein's decision to launch an invasion of Iran was primarily motivated by Khomeini's rhetorical exhortations to Iraq's majority Shiite population to rise up and overthrow Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime in Baghdad, as well as by Iran's provision of material support to Iraq's Shiite underground, its refusal to withdraw from certain Iraqi territories, and its resumption of support for the ongoing Kurdish insurgency in northern Iraq in violation of the 1975 Algiers Treaty. Saddam also viewed the postrevolutionary chaos and military purges that were engulfing Iran as providing a temporary window of opportunity for Iraq to, at minimum, seize oil-rich Iranian borderlands and reassert Iraqi control over the Shatt al-Arab and, at maximum, conquer Tehran and depose the Ayatollah's regime.⁵⁴

Washington and Baghdad began to cooperate strategically only in early

51. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 32–33; and Preece, *United States–Iraqi Relations*, p. 10.

52. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm*, pp. 15–16; and Walt, *Revolution and War*, pp. 212–216.

53. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm*, p. 16.

54. Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 230–231, 238–241; and Simons, *Iraq*, p. 276.

1982, after Iraq's opening thrust into Iran had stalled and the Iranian army began to mount a serious counteroffensive. Prior to this juncture, the Reagan administration's initial fear that the Iraqi invasion would result in Iraq's conquest of Iran led it to permit Israel to covertly supply billions of dollars worth of U.S. arms and spare parts to Iran in 1981 and 1982.⁵⁵ In February 1982 the State Department removed Iraq from its list of terrorism-sponsoring states, thereby permitting Iraq to receive U.S. government-financed export credits and to import high-technology, dual-use U.S. goods.⁵⁶ Around the same time, the White House began to provide Baghdad with highly classified military intelligence on Iran. It also privately encouraged the United States' Arab and West European allies to secretly (and illicitly) sell their U.S.-made armaments to Iraq.⁵⁷ The United States additionally enabled Baghdad to devote precious budgetary resources to the war effort by successfully lobbying the Export-Import Bank of the United States to approve a massive \$484 million loan to Iraq to support the construction of a major oil pipeline (which was subsequently aborted), as well as an annual short-term credit line of \$200 million to finance Iraqi purchases of U.S. manufactures.⁵⁸ Even more important, the White House similarly prevailed on the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to issue several hundreds of millions of dollars worth of agricultural loan guarantees for Iraq.⁵⁹ The bilateral relationship reached a turning point when the two allies formally reestablished diplomatic relations in November 1984, which precipitated the expansion of bilateral intelligence sharing and the U.S. approval of large numbers of licenses for high-technology, dual-use exports to Iraq.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, in 1983 the State Department inaugurated "Operation Staunch," a U.S.-led international

55. Walt, *Revolution and War*, p. 226.

56. Bruce W. Jentleson, "Iraq: Failure of a Strategy," in C. Richard Nelson and Kenneth Weisbrode, eds., *Reversing Relations with Former Adversaries: U.S. Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 128. The Carter administration had placed Iraq on the newly inaugurated terrorism list in December 1979. See Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. May Let Iraq Buy Jets Despite Terrorism Questions," *New York Times*, August 6, 1980.

57. Seymour M. Hersh, "U.S. Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War against Iran," *New York Times*, January 26, 1992; Douglas Frantz and Murray Waas, "Bush Secret Effort Helped Iraq Build Its War Machine," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1992; Alan Friedman, *Spider's Web: The Secret History of How the White House Illegally Armed Iraq* (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 82; and U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Nomination of Robert M. Gates to Be Director of Central Intelligence," Executive Report, No. 102-19, 102d Cong., 1st sess., October 24, 1991, pp. 179-180.

58. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 43-44, 55.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 47-48; Hiro, *The Longest War*, p. 160; and Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, pp. 202, 211. Annual exports from the United States to Iraq grew from approximately \$400 million in 1985 to \$1.5 billion in 1989. See Joe Conason, "The Iraq Lobby," *New Republic*, October 1, 1990, p. 15.

arms embargo against Iran, and placed Iran on the State Department's list of terrorism sponsors.⁶¹

Beginning in August 1985, however, a small group of officials in the National Security Council and CIA began to undermine the burgeoning alliance with Iraq by initiating a covert program of arms sales and intelligence transfers to Iran, in exchange for Iranian help in releasing U.S. citizens being held hostage by Shiite terrorists in Beirut, Lebanon. The program was abruptly discontinued in late 1986, however, when it was exposed by the international media.⁶²

In response to Iran's conquest of the Fao Peninsula and the embarrassing revelation of the arms-for-hostages operation, the White House further ratcheted up its support for Iraq. Annual CCC allocations swelled from \$536 million in 1986 to \$1 billion in 1988; the Commerce Department approved a staggering 97.5 percent of export license applications for dual-use items bound for Iraq; and the CIA began to provide Iraq with intelligence pertaining to "strategic economic infrastructure targets in Iran."⁶³ Most important, in the spring of 1987, Reagan ordered the U.S. Navy to ostensibly enter the war on Iraq's behalf, by "reflagging" and escorting Kuwaiti oil tankers traversing the Persian Gulf. The U.S. naval flotilla in the Persian Gulf subsequently unleashed a devastating series of attacks against Iranian naval ships and oil platforms. Concurrently, the White House imposed a comprehensive embargo on imports from Iran and banned the export to Iran of fourteen categories of dual-use items.⁶⁴

61. Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner, 1990), pp. 421–424; and Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, p. 142. Throughout the war, the United States also voted in favor of a series of one-sided UN Security Council resolutions that condemned Iran for perpetuating the war and attacking neutral shipping. Hiro, *The Longest War*, pp. 135–136; and Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 47.

62. Hiro, *The Longest War*, pp. 216–218; and Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 56–59.

63. U.S. National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Policies, "CCC-Proposed \$500 Million Export Credit Sales Guarantee Program—Iraq," action memorandum, August 29, 1985; "National Advisory Council Staff Committee, Minutes Meeting 86-20, May 20, 1986"; "National Advisory Council Staff Committee, Minutes Meeting 86-28, July 15, 1986"; Letter from Kerry E. Reynolds to Michael D. O'Connor, "[Proposed Allocation for GSM-102 Credit Guarantees]," January 7, 1987; "National Advisory Council Staff Committee, Minutes Meeting 88-14, April 5, 1988"; and National Security Council Electronic Message, "Iran Game Plan [Response of Alton Keel to William Cockrell included]," November 21, 1986, all in Joyce Battle, ed., *Iraqgate: Saddam Hussein, U.S. Policy, and the Prelude to the Persian Gulf War (1980–1994)*, National Security Archive Microfiche Collection (Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1995), Docs. 273, 332, 345, 390, 542, and 376; and Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 62.

64. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 61; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner, 1993), pp. 926–927; Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 425 n. 9; Jeffrey J. Schott, "Economic Sanctions, Oil, and Iran," testimony before the Joint Economic Committee, "Energy and the Iranian Economy" hearing, 109th Cong., 2d sess., July 25, 2006, appen-

INTRA-ALLIANCE DISPUTES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND IRAQ

Even as the United States joined forces with Iraq in an ultimately fruitful alliance of convenience against Iran, significant disagreements divided the fledgling allies. The most salient of these were (1) Iraq's continued sponsorship of international terrorism against Western targets and, relatedly, its staunch opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process; (2) its suspected efforts to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles; (3) its repeated and flagrant use of chemical weapons (CW) against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians; (4) its suspected illicit use of certain U.S. exports for the purpose of waging the conventional war against Iran; and (5) its severe repression of human rights domestically.

The analysis below focuses on only the first two of these five disputes (terrorism and nuclear/missile proliferation), because Iraqi reforms on these matters, as opposed to the latter three (diversion of U.S. exports to the war effort, use of CW, and repression of human rights), would not have seriously jeopardized the foremost U.S. aim of preventing Iraq from suffering a military defeat at the hands of Iran. As a result, on the latter issues, the balance of interests likely favored Iraq.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, on all three issues, the Reagan administration at most paid lip service (in the vaguest of terms) to its opposition to suspected Iraqi misbehavior, thereby permitting such misbehavior to continue unimpeded.⁶⁶

By contrast with the above issues, the disputes over terrorism and nuclear proliferation did not bear directly on Iraq's war effort against Iran.⁶⁷ Iraq's

dix A: U.S. Sanctions against Iran: Chronology of Key Events, 1984–2006, <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/print.cfm?doc=pub&ResearchID=649>.

65. "Memorandum, State Department to ETRD—Vehicles File, 'Notifying Congress of [Redacted] Truck Sales,' Classification Unknown, March 5, 1984"; and "Intelligence Assessment, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, 'Is Iraq Losing the War?' Secret, April 1986"; in Malcolm Byrne and Christian F. Ostermann, eds., *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988: Reader of Declassified U.S. Documents*, prepared for the conference "The Origins, Conduct, and Impact of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., July 19–20, 2004, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/docs/The%20Origins,%20Conduct,%20and%20Impact%20of%20the%20Iran-Iraq%20War,%201980-1988.pdf>, Docs. 57 and 97 (pp. 6, 8–9), respectively.

66. See, for example, "Statement Read by the Department of State Spokesman John Hughes, March 5, 1984," *Department of State Bulletin*, April 1984, p. 64; "Memcon [Memorandum of Conversation]: Secretary's Meeting with Iraqi Depprimmin [Deputy Prime Minister] Tariq Aziz, November 26, 1984, 10:00AM," in *Battle, Iraqgate*, Doc. 228; Cable from U.S. Interests Section, Baghdad, to the State Department, "End-Use Assurances on Hughes Helicopter Sale," January 10, 1983, in *ibid.*, Doc. 93; Cable from State Department to U.S. Embassy, Baghdad, "Intended Use of Helicopters," Secret, March 2, 1985, in *ibid.*, Doc. 245; and "Cable, American Embassy London to State Department, 'Rumsfeld One-on-One Meeting with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tariz Aziz,' Secret, December 21, 1983," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Doc. 41.

67. Some sources have suggested that Saddam's escalated support for terrorism during the 1980s

support for Palestinian terrorists actually contravened its more immediate interests in securing U.S. and West European subvention in the war, while the CIA believed that Israel's 1981 air strike against Iraq's Osirak reactor had dealt a severe blow to Iraq's nuclear program, from which it was unlikely to recover in the short term.⁶⁸

In addition, these issues were highly salient to U.S. decisionmakers. Of the two, terrorism was the more immediate concern. As the number and destructiveness of terrorist attacks around the globe escalated dramatically over the course of the 1980s and the U.S. public became extremely agitated about the terrorist threat, the Reagan administration's counterterrorism rhetoric grew increasingly shrill.⁶⁹ The seriousness with which the administration viewed the growing problem of terrorism was evinced in its April 1986 decision to launch air strikes against Libya, in retaliation for that country's sponsorship of multiple terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and those of its allies.⁷⁰

Iraq's covert nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs also represented serious affronts to U.S. interests. Iraq's nuclear weapons program not only contravened the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but also jeopardized the U.S. priority of forestalling the spread and use of nuclear weapons in the volatile Middle East region.⁷¹ Additionally, on a personal level, President Reagan possessed a deep-rooted fear of nuclear apocalypse, which

represented a desperate effort to kindle a new Arab-Israeli war that would persuade Iran to end its war with Iraq and join forces with Iraq against Israel. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, p. 114; Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 52; and Hiro, *The Longest War*, p. 63. Even if this was the case, it was clearly a long shot at best, and it would be highly unlikely that Saddam would push ahead with this gambit in the face of a threat by the United States and its allies to retract their wartime support for Iraq.

68. "Intelligence Assessment, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, 'The Iraqi Nuclear Program: Progress Despite Setbacks,' Top Secret, June 1983," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*, Doc. 25.

69. A 1986 survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found that terrorism ranked only behind the nuclear arms race on the list of the U.S. public's foremost foreign policy concerns. John E. Reilly, "America's State of Mind," *Foreign Policy*, No. 66 (Spring 1987), p. 42. See also President Ronald W. Reagan, "Remarks at the American Bar Association's Annual Convention, July 8, 1985," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, Vol. 21, No. 27 (July 8, 1985), p. 877; and Secretary Shultz's address before the Jonathan Institute's Second Conference on International Terrorism on June 24, 1984, "Terrorism: The Challenge to the Democracies," *State Department Bulletin*, No. 84 (August 1984), pp. 31-34.

70. Tim Zimmerman, "Coercive Diplomacy and Libya," in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), pp. 201-228.

71. "United States Non-Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Policy, July 16, 1981," National Security Decision Directive, No. 6, in John Pike, ed., Online Database of Presidential Directives and Executive Orders, Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-1468t.gif>.

underpinned his visceral belief in the need to completely eliminate nuclear weapons.⁷² Meanwhile, in 1982 President Reagan formally inaugurated international negotiations to create a missile technology control regime aimed at slowing the global spread of ballistic missiles. Revealingly, in March 1985 the White House instructed all relevant U.S. government agencies to begin enforcing the regime, even though Congress had not yet formally ratified the pact.⁷³

THREE PREDICTIONS ON THE OUTCOME OF U.S. BARGAINING WITH IRAQ

According to the neorealist and tying hands hypotheses, the Reagan administration should have bargained aggressively and successfully with Iraq on the issues of terrorism and nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation, albeit via discrete negotiating strategies. Conversely, the neoclassical realist hypothesis predicts anemic and fruitless U.S. bargaining with Iraq.

The U.S.-Iraq alliance of convenience constitutes a “most likely” case from the vantage point of the neorealist and tying hands theories, and therefore represents a “tough test” for neoclassical realism, which makes the opposite prediction of those theories.⁷⁴ The case is a most likely one for neorealism given the extreme asymmetries of dependence and commitment within the alliance that grossly favored the United States. The asymmetry of dependence stemmed primarily from the United States’ status as a global military and economic superpower that was located on the other side of the world from the common enemy of Iran. In contrast, Iraq was a small, regional power that shared a lengthy land border with the far larger and more populous Iran. Thus, the Iranian threat to the United States was significant but distant, indirect, and limited.⁷⁵ For Iraq, however, the Iranian threat was imminent, direct, and existential, with outnumbered Iraqi troops pitted against a highly motivated Iranian adversary bent on the outright “[r]emoval of Saddam Hussein’s

72. John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 357–362.

73. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, pp. 208–209; and “Nuclear Capable Missile Technology Transfer Policy, November 30, 1982,” National Security Decision Directive, No. 70, in Pike, Online Database of Presidential Directives and Executive Orders, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-070.htm>.

74. Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 7 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 94–137.

75. From Washington’s vantage point, an Iranian victory in the conflict would increase the potential for the radical and rabidly anti-American Iranian regime to fix the rate of extraction and price of Persian Gulf oil on which the economies of the United States and its allies depended. Hiro, *The Longest War*, p. 263.

regime.”⁷⁶ This geopolitical asymmetry of dependence was compounded by an equally lopsided economic asymmetry. As the war ground on, Iraq’s underdeveloped economy was battered by the combined effects of the war, a fall in world oil prices, and the drastic curtailing of Iraq’s oil exports because of Syria’s closure of Iraq’s main oil pipeline.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the United States, which was the world’s largest and most advanced economy, engaged in a negligible amount of commerce with Iraq and did not import Iraqi oil in large quantities.⁷⁸

Further, much of the strategic assistance furnished by the United States to Iraq was not easily replaceable. Most important, the United States was the only country able to provide Iraq with sensitive satellite intelligence on Iranian troop positions and economic targets, and pressure its Arab and West European allies to both sell Iraq U.S.-made weapons and restrict arms transfers to Iran.⁷⁹

The Iraq case also represents a bellwether by comparison with the United States’ other Cold War-era alliances of convenience. Iraq was the United States’ sole Cold War ally of convenience that was recruited to confront not the Soviet Union or a Soviet proxy, but rather a weak, nonaligned state (Iran). Therefore the United States should have been less preoccupied with the need to maintain the alliance against the common enemy, and more highly motivated to secure concessions from its Iraqi ally on disputed issues, than should have been the case in its anti-Soviet alliances of convenience. Also, the U.S.-Iraq alliance was unique among the United States’ Cold War alliances of convenience insofar as it operated during a full-scale ground war, in which the ally of convenience, but not the United States, was directly involved in a life-or-death armed struggle.⁸⁰ If the United States could not elicit substantial concessions from its ally of convenience under these especially favorable cir-

76. The quotation is from a public statement made in 1981 by the speaker of the Iranian parliament. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

77. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 81.

78. During the early years of the war, the United States did not import any Iraqi oil. By 1987, U.S. oil imports from Iraq had increased only modestly to 30 million barrels. Only in the final year of the war did U.S. imports rise dramatically, ballooning to 126 million barrels, which represented one-quarter of Iraq’s total oil exports. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

79. Jentleson claims that merely by virtue of the economic benefits that Iraq was receiving from the United States, the Reagan administration “should have been able to hold Iraq to its commitment not to threaten the interests of its new and vital [U.S.] supporter.” Jentleson, “Iraq: Failure of a Strategy,” pp. 131–132.

80. This situation changed only slightly once the U.S. Navy began conducting combat operations against the extremely weak and greatly overmatched Iranian navy during the 1987–88 reflagging operation.

cumstances, it is unlikely that it could have elicited them from its anti-Soviet allies, which were not actually engaged in full-scale war against the shared Soviet threat. The United States' relatively low commitment to the alliance of convenience with Iraq was reflected in the informal nature of the alliance, the Carter and Reagan administrations' steadfast refusal to depart from a formally neutral posture toward the two belligerents at any point during the conflict, and the repeated assertions made by U.S. officials during the war that their preferred outcome was not an Iraqi victory *per se*, but rather the prevention of an Iraqi defeat.⁸¹

These considerable asymmetries of dependence and commitment were most vividly evinced, however, by the U.S. decisions to covertly transfer arms to Iran during the early stages of the war (1981–82) in order to forestall an Iraqi victory, and to provide both arms and intelligence to Iran in 1985–86, so as to secure the release of the U.S. hostages in Lebanon. Notably, when the latter operation was exposed by the media, the Iraqi regime exhibited, in the words of one U.S. official, “considerable restraint” in its response.⁸²

81. “Cable, State Department to American Embassy Amman, ‘Kittani Call on Under Secretary Eagleburger,’ Secret, March 24, 1984,” pp. 1–2; and “Briefing Papers, State Department, ‘Gulf War Update: U.S. Attitude toward Iran; the Gulf War,’ Secret, February 27, 1986,” in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Docs. 61 and 93, respectively. This neorealist hypothesis could be challenged by the contention that U.S. dependence on and commitment to the alliance with Iraq were magnified by the fear that Saddam would gravitate more closely toward the Soviet bloc. This thesis is supported by the president’s July 1983 approval of National Security Decision Directive No. 99, which called for “expanding our political and commercial influence in Iraq . . . to counter Soviet influence in Southwest Asia.” Quoted in letter from George P. Shultz to Caspar W. Weinberger, April 30, 1985, attached to State Department memorandum, “Computers for Iraq: DOD’s Proliferation Concerns,” Secret, April 3, 1985, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 319. A series of three declassified intelligence assessments disseminated to policymakers over the course of the war, however, cast doubt on this possibility. First, an August 1983 CIA assessment noted “some important constraints on the improvement in Soviet-Iraqi relations,” namely, the existence of high levels of distrust between the two governments, the Soviet Union’s aversion to antagonizing its Syrian proxy, and the Soviet desire to improve relations with Iran. Second, a September 1984 Defense Intelligence Agency report judged that Moscow would have “great difficulty in translating its [military] assistance into political influence [over Iraq].” Third, an April 1986 CIA report claimed that the Iran-Iraq War “has not served Moscow’s overall interests in the region despite boosting Soviet arms sales,” and that despite the Soviet Union’s transfer to Iraq of more than \$6 billion in arms over the course of the conflict, Soviet leaders shared the U.S. desire for neither of the two belligerents to win decisively. See “Intelligence Assessment, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, ‘Moscow’s Tilt toward Baghdad: The U.S.S.R. and the War between Iran and Iraq,’ Top Secret, August 1983”; “DIA Defense Estimative Brief, ‘Prospects for Iraq,’ Classification Unknown, September 25, 1984”; and “Intelligence Assessment, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, ‘Is Iraq Losing the War?’” all in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Docs. 29, 76, and 97, respectively. In fact, the only occasion in which the administration clearly acted out of a credible fear of being outbid by the Soviets was its decision to reflag Kuwaiti merchant vessels in 1987. This decision, however, had little to do with Iraq directly, as it was motivated primarily by the desire to prevent the Soviet Union from “playing a key maritime role in the [Persian] Gulf.” Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 926.

82. “State Department Memorandum, Richard W. Murphy to Under Secretary Armacost, ‘U.S.-

Thus, neorealism predicts that the United States should have repeatedly and successfully exploited these vast asymmetries of dependence and commitment to extract sizable concessions from Iraq on issues considered salient to U.S. policymakers. If these systemic factors were salient, process tracing of the case should reveal multiple instances in which U.S. decisionmakers and diplomats bargained tenaciously with their Iraqi counterparts, emphasizing the United States' favorable systemic position vis-à-vis Iraq and threatening to abandon Iraq to the fate of Iran (or potentially even switch its allegiance to Iran) in the event that Baghdad did not fundamentally change its behavior on the issues in question.

The case should also be a most likely one for tying hands theory given the vast gap in internal state strength between the United States, a weak state democracy, and Iraq, a strong state totalitarian dictatorship. The tying hands logic suggests that this gap should have led to highly successful U.S. bargaining with Iraq, by emboldening U.S. policymakers to frequently and credibly warn their Iraqi interlocutors that domestic critics in the Congress and the executive branch would slow, stall, or even roll back the burgeoning bilateral relationship in the absence of major Iraqi concessions to appease those critics. Meanwhile, given that the Iraqi regime's very survival was imperiled throughout the war and that it was heavily dependent on U.S. assistance, it would have been extremely risky, if not suicidal, for Baghdad to defect from the alliance altogether on account of the stringency of U.S. conditions.

By contrast, the neoclassical realist theory introduced in this article predicts that the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War should have provided the Reagan administration with some political capital to form an alliance of convenience with Iraq, but that lingering domestic political opposition to the relationship should have effectively stifled the inclination and willingness of the foreign policy executive to exact major concessions from Iraq. A 1984 State Department memo captured the fragility of the administration's domestic position, reporting that the "depth of anti-Iranian and anti-Syrian public and Congressional sentiment has mitigated even some hardliners' reactions to our recent alleged 'tilt' [toward Iraq]," but simultaneously cautioning that a possible Iraqi escalation of the war would "add to public and Congressional opposition [to Saddam's regime]."⁸³

The administration's worries about potential domestic opposition to the fur-

Iraqi Relations: Picking Up the Pieces,' Secret, December 5, 1986," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*, Doc. 110.

83. "State Department Memorandum, David T. Schneider and Jonathan T. Howe to Secretary of State, 'Easing Restrictions on Exports to Iraq,' Classification Unknown, January 30, 1984," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*, Doc. 50.

ther consolidation of the alliance with Iraq surfaced repeatedly during the war. For example, an internal State Department memo drafted for Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger in 1983 warned that “[c]ongressional and public support for an overt tilt to Iraq would be difficult to obtain.” Similarly, a memo drafted for Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost in 1986 admonished that “[w]e should not—and given Congressional opposition, we could not—move away from our policy of neutrality in the Gulf War by providing arms to Iraq.”⁸⁴ In early 1987, Armacost even advised Secretary of State George Shultz against transferring U.S. weapons to Iraq through third countries, because, among other reasons, such a move “could provoke a strong negative reaction in Congress.”⁸⁵

In addition to the latent opposition that repeatedly deterred the Reagan administration from more robustly expanding the alliance with Iraq, domestic opponents in Congress and even in the executive branch attempted to restrict the assistance that the White House had actually managed to extend to Saddam. As is discussed in greater detail below, the administration’s removal of Iraq from its terrorism list in 1982 prompted multiple efforts by congressional opponents to further attenuate the bilateral alliance. Then, in 1987, skeptical legislators in both the House and Senate introduced a flurry of bills and amendments aimed at forestalling the administration’s implementation of the reflagging operation.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, in 1985 and 1986, senior officials in the Department of Defense repeatedly objected to the Commerce Department’s provision of export licenses to U.S. firms seeking to sell Iraq high-technology goods on the grounds that they were being used to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. At the same time, the Export-Import Bank suspended its

84. “Cable, State Department to U.S. Interests Section Baghdad, ‘Visit of Iraqi Foreign Minister,’ Secret, January 15, 1983”; “State Department Memorandum, Nicholas A. Veliotos and Jonathan T. Howe to Lawrence S. Eagleburger ‘Iran-Iraq War, Analysis of Possible U.S. Shift from Position of Strict Neutrality,’ Secret, October 7, 1983”; and “State Department Memorandum, Richard W. Murphy to Under Secretary Armacost, ‘U.S.-Iraqi Relations: Picking Up the Pieces,’ Secret, December 5, 1986,” all in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Docs. 19, 30, and 110, respectively.

85. “State Department Memorandum, Richard W. Murphy, H. Allen Holmes, and Under Secretary Armacost to Secretary of State, ‘U.S. Policy on Third-Country Transfers of U.S. Arms to Iraq,’ Secret, February 4, 1987,” in *ibid.*, Doc. 117.

86. Adam Tarock, *The Superpowers’ Involvement in the Iran-Iraq War* (Commack, N.Y.: Nova Science, 1998), pp. 145–148. The only measure that actually passed both chambers was an amendment requiring the secretary of defense to submit a detailed report to Congress prior to initiating the operation. *Ibid.*; and Ellen C. Collier, Paul E. Gallis, Stuart D. Goldman, Clyde R. Mark, Ronald O’Rourke, and Richard M. Preece, “The Persian Gulf and the U.S. Naval Presence: Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service Issue Brief (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, updated August 3, 1987), Order Code IB87145, pp. 14–15.

\$200 million short-term credit line to Iraq, because the Iraqi government had fallen \$3.5 million behind in its payments to the bank.⁸⁷ Thus, a 1986 State Department memo acknowledged that bilateral relations were “thin and likely to remain that way” because of the efforts of domestic opponents, and advocated strong policy intervention “to arrest the constriction.”⁸⁸

ISSUE #1: IRAQ’S SPONSORSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Although the Reagan administration publicly claimed that the removal of Iraq from the State Department terrorism list in 1982 was precipitated by “Iraq’s improved record [on terrorism],” privately, U.S. officials were fully aware that Iraq’s record had not improved.⁸⁹ That this move elicited dissent within the Congress should not have been surprising, given that a congressional outcry had prompted the prior administration to reverse its earlier approval of the sale to Iraq of eight naval engine cores and five commercial aircraft.⁹⁰ Later that year, both the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee inserted mild anti-Iraq measures into their respective versions of the annual foreign aid bill, which were later shelved for unrelated reasons.⁹¹ Congressional opposition intensified in 1983 however, when Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) inserted a provision into the reauthorization of the 1979 Export Administration Act that would have returned Iraq to the terrorist list within ninety days, unless the president both certified that Iraq was no longer supporting terrorism and obtained a formal assurance from the Iraqi government that it would not do so in the future. The Senate’s companion bill did not contain this measure, however, and a House-Senate conference committee was convened to bridge this and other discrepancies between the two bills.⁹²

87. When the bank’s chairman, John A. Bohn Jr., refused the State Department’s subsequent request to rescind this decision, Vice President George H.W. Bush personally intervened and persuaded Bohn to unfreeze Iraq’s credit line. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 55–56, 60–61.

88. “State Department Memorandum, Richard W. Murphy to Michael H. Armacost, ‘Iraq: CPPG Meeting of Wednesday, July 23,’ Secret, July 23, 1986,” in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Doc. 102.

89. Guy Gugliotta, Charles R. Babcock, Benjamin Weisner, and Lucy Shackelford, “At War, Iraq Courted U.S. into Economic Embrace,” *Washington Post*, September 16, 1990.

90. David A. Flores, “Export Controls and the U.S. Effort to Combat International Terrorism,” *Law and Policy in International Business*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1981), pp. 567–575.

91. The House version of the bill included a provision placing Iraq back on the terrorism list, but also included language permitting the president to waive the provision on national security grounds. The Senate provision was even weaker; it merely required the president to notify Congress prior to any future removal of a country from the terrorism list. Pamela Fessler, “Congress’ Record on Saddam: Decade of Talk, Not Action,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, April 27, 1991, p. 1069.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 1069, 1072; and Preece, *United States–Iraqi Relations*, pp. 26–27.

As Congress debated the Export Administration Act in late 1983, Iraq made a concession on terrorism, expelling Abu Nidal, one of the world's most notorious terrorist leaders, and his Black June Organization from Baghdad.⁹³ Months earlier, William Eagleton, the head of the U.S. interests section in Baghdad, had informed Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that, in light of Congress's ongoing deliberations over the Berman amendment, any evidence that Iraq could furnish to show that it had decisively rejected terrorism would "have immediate positive effects."⁹⁴ This solitary instance of tough bargaining and (at least tactical) Iraqi compliance, which comports with the tying hands proposition, ultimately proved to be an aberration in an otherwise consistent pattern of U.S. deference to Iraq on the terrorism issue.

Despite the favorable role that U.S. domestic pressure had played in Saddam's decision to expel Abu Nidal, the administration almost immediately labored to weaken this pressure. In late December 1983, Undersecretary Eagleburger implored Export-Import Bank President William Draper to end the bank's prohibition on lending to Iraq. Draper's decision had been occasioned by "legal constraints . . . arising from Iraq's [continuing] links to international terrorists."⁹⁵ Then, late the next year, in response to a written objection lodged by Representative Berman to the U.S. sale of helicopters to Iraq because of Baghdad's continued sponsorship of terrorism, the State Department's congressional liaison, Tapley Bennett Jr., oversold the salience of the Abu Nidal expulsion by expressing the hope that Iraq "not revert to its previous support for international terrorism." Bennett also affirmed that "independent information" supported Iraq's "categorical assurances [that it had] severed ties to international terrorists."⁹⁶ Additionally, in June 1985 Secretary of State Shultz dispatched a letter to Representative Berman in which he urged the legislator to withdraw his amendment to the Export Administration Act on the grounds that Iraq had "effectively disassociated itself from international

93. Bureau of Intelligence and Research to Secretary Shultz, State Department Information Memorandum, "Iraq's Retreat from International Terrorism," July 1, 1986, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 341; Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 52; Hiro, *The Longest War*, p. 63; Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, p. 130; and Patrick Seale, *Abu Nidal, A Gun For Hire: The Secret Life of the World's Most Notorious Arab Terrorist* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), p. 111.

94. "Cable, State Department to U.S. Interests Section, Baghdad, 'Message from the Secretary for FONMIN Tariq Aziz: Iraqi Support for Terrorism,' Secret, May 23, 1983," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*, Doc. 24.

95. "Letter from Lawrence S. Eagleburger to William Draper, Secret, December 24, 1983," in *ibid.*, Doc. 45.

96. Letter from W. Tapley Bennett, Jr., to Rep. Howard L. Berman, "[Response to Representative Berman's Letter Regarding Export of Bell Helicopters to Iraq]," December 6, 1984, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 230.

terrorism.” Further, Shultz pledged to return Iraq to the terrorism list if the State Department concluded that “any group based in or supported by Iraq is engaged in terrorist acts.”⁹⁷ Finally, in a major public address on terrorism in July 1985, President Reagan explicitly singled out Cuba, Iran, Libya, Nicaragua, and North Korea as state sponsors of terrorism but conspicuously omitted Iraq from the list.⁹⁸

The administration’s efforts were complemented by those of private interest groups in the United States eager to maximize commercial relations with Iraq. Mere days after Berman received Shultz’s missive, he received another from Carl Schwensen, the executive vice president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, who admonished Berman that the association would be “strongly opposed to any steps that needlessly jeopardized [U.S. trade with Iraq].”⁹⁹ Soon after receiving both messages, Berman relented and dropped the anti-Iraq measure.¹⁰⁰

Within months, the administration’s assurances that Iraq had stopped sponsoring terrorism were exposed as hollow. Not only did the Iraqi regime permit Abu Nidal to retain an office and a farm in Iraq, but it also maintained significant contacts with the Black June Organization at least through the summer of 1990.¹⁰¹ In addition, Iraq’s expulsion of Abu Nidal did not affect its continued support for other radical Palestinian factions such as the May 15 Organization, and the expulsion was closely followed by a dramatic increase in Iraqi support for the military wing of Yasir Arafat’s rival Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).¹⁰²

Even more egregiously, however, in late 1985 Iraq played a central role in one of the decade’s most notorious terrorist attacks, the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and subsequent execution of a wheelchair-bound

97. “Legislative History, PL 99-64: Export Administration Amendments of 1985 [Letter From George Shultz to Representative Howard Berman, Dated June 20, 1985, Attached],” in *ibid.*, Doc. 260.

98. Reagan, “Remarks at the American Bar Association’s Annual Convention.”

99. Letter from Carl F. Schwensen, Executive Vice President of the National Association of Wheat Growers, to Rep. Howard L. Berman, June 24, 1985, quoted in Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 55.

100. Fessler, “Congress’ Record on Saddam,” p. 1070.

101. “Cable, American Embassy Baghdad to State Department, ‘[Title Obscured],’ Confidential, July 18, 1985,” in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Doc. 86; State Department Cable from U.S. Embassy, Iraq, to State Department, “Iraq and Terrorism,” Secret, June 27, 1990, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 1442; and Elaine Sciolino, *The Outlaw State: Saddam Hussein’s Quest for Power and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1991), p. 164.

102. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 53; Mary Curtius, “Iraq, Seeking Leading Role in Arab World, Supports PLO and Jordan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 20, 1985; and “Arafat Says Military Arm of PLO Is Out of Tunisia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 8, 1986.

American passenger by members of the Palestine Liberation Front. Although the four hijackers were eventually arrested in Italy, the mastermind of the operation, Abu Abbas, who was a member of the PLO's executive council, evaded capture.¹⁰³ In response to a formal U.S. request for Abbas's extradition to the United States in the event that the terrorist leader attempted to seek refuge in Iraq, an Iraqi official defiantly proclaimed that Iraq would "welcome" Abbas.¹⁰⁴

Remarkably, even as the *Achille Lauro* affair was still unfolding, on October 15, Italian police arrested two Arab men arriving at Fiumicino airport in Rome on an Iraqi Air flight from Baghdad, after explosives were detected in their luggage. One of the men confessed that they had arrived in Rome with orders to attack "any" American target. After the State Department expressed "distress" and "grave concern" about the incident, and urged the Iraqis to conduct an investigation into the matter, the Iraqi government dubiously rejoined that one of the apprehended terrorists was a transit passenger from Kuwait whose luggage had not been screened in Baghdad. A subsequent State Department note on this allegation declared, "We have now raised this issue with the Iraqis at least five times through various channels; they have persisted in sticking with their original flimsy story." On October 25 Shultz sent Foreign Minister Aziz a message that beseeched the Iraqi government to conduct a full investigation into the Rome incident and "reemphasized" the administration's concern about Iraq's willingness to provide sanctuary for Abu Abbas.¹⁰⁵ In reply, Aziz denied any Iraqi connection with the Rome terrorists and insisted that Abbas was innocent of any involvement in the *Achille Lauro* hijacking.¹⁰⁶

In mid-November the U.S. media reported that Abbas had received sanctuary in Baghdad, and that the White House had declined to pursue Abbas's extradition but was trying to play down his presence in Iraq to prevent the bilateral relationship from further fraying. These developments prompted Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) to introduce a resolution prohibiting all licenses for the export to Iraq of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, though the measure later died after it was referred to the Senate Banking Committee.¹⁰⁷ A June

103. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 679–675.

104. State Department Chronology, "Chronology: October 4 through December 6, 1985," Secret, circa December 6, 1985, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 291.

105. *Ibid.*

106. The two Rome terrorists were soon identified as operatives of the May 15 Organization based in Baghdad. *Ibid.*

107. Preece, *United States–Iraqi Relations*, p. 28; and "Legislative History of S. 1897: A Bill to Amend the Export Administration Act of 1979 to Prohibit the Export to Yugoslavia or Iraq of Certain Articles or Technology," Library of Congress, <http://icreport.loc.gov>.

1986 internal State Department memo acknowledged that Iraq's alleged retreat from terrorism "was painfully slow,"¹⁰⁸ and a later RAND study estimated that by the end of the 1980s, no fewer than 1,400 international terrorists were still operating out of Iraq.¹⁰⁹ Iraq's malfeasance on the terrorism front also belied its rhetorical efforts during the war to project a more constructive stance toward the Arab-Israeli peace process, which was a U.S. priority.¹¹⁰

This sequence of events refutes the neorealist and tying hands prediction of U.S. bargaining success vis-à-vis Iraq, and it confirms the neoclassical realist prediction of weak and ultimately failed U.S. bargaining. The neorealist hypothesis is called into question by the Reagan administration's thoroughgoing reluctance to induce Iraq into conceding on the terrorism issue by threatening to curtail or sever the alliance on the grounds that the latter was far more dependent on, and committed to, the alliance than the former. Meanwhile, on only one occasion, the U.S. administration acted in accordance with the tying hands hypothesis, when it successfully secured Iraq's expulsion of Abu Nidal in 1983. Prior and subsequent events, however, clearly evinced the aberrant nature of this action. The administration, joined at an important juncture by the National Association of Wheat Growers, responded to repeated Iraqi provocations and the spasms of opposition that they generated in Congress by overselling Iraq's small-scale concessions on terrorism, downplaying and neglecting new evidence that flatly contradicted its optimistic assertions, and refusing to condition its increasingly generous subvention to Iraq to reformed Iraqi behavior.¹¹¹

ISSUE #2: IRAQ'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAMS

Iraq's suspected diversion of high-technology U.S. exports to the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles touched off an internecine battle

108. State Department Paper, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Iraq's Retreat from International Terrorism [Excised] [Cover Memorandum Attached]," Secret, July 1, 1986, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 341.

109. Bruce Hoffman, *The Ultimate Fifth Column: Saddam Hussein, International Terrorism, and the Crisis in the Gulf*, P-7668 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, August 1990), p. 2.

110. Cable from U.S. Interests Section, Baghdad, to the State Department, "Prospects for DAS [Deputy Assistant Secretary] Draper's Visit to Baghdad," April 4, 1981, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 45. On the changing Iraqi rhetoric toward Israel, see Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 48; Preece, *United States-Iraqi Relations*, p. 24; and Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1991), pp. 161-163.

111. Jentleson argues that the Reagan administration was loath to crack down on Saddam for his regime's continued support for terrorism because it "was so fixated on the anti-Iran objective that Iraq was safe from reinclusion on the terrorism list no matter what he did." Jentleson, "Iraq: Failure of a Strategy," p. 132. The cogency of this explanation is called into question by the administra-

within the administration in March 1985, when Richard Perle, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, dispatched a cautionary memo to his superior, Undersecretary of Defense Fred Charles Iklé. In it, Perle advised that the approval of two pending licenses for the export to Iraq of advanced computers should not be granted unless the Iraqi government provided scrupulous and verifiable nonnuclear use assurances for those items. Branding Iraq a “problem country,” Perle noted that “many if not all the elements of a substantial [plutonium] reprocessing capability are in place, and there are currently about 40–45 [kilograms] of HEU [highly enriched uranium] in Iraq in fresh and spent reactor fuel.”¹¹² Unfortunately for Perle, the Pentagon’s bureaucratic position on the export licensing issue was disadvantageous. Although the Defense Department is empowered to review and provide recommendations on high-technology export license applications referred to it by the State and Commerce Departments, the latter departments alone possess the authority to grant licenses for munitions items and dual-use technologies, respectively.¹¹³ Despite Perle’s admonitions, the computer export applications were approved by the Commerce Department, under the heavily watered-down condition that the Iraqi government merely provide its verbal assurance that the exports would not be diverted to illicit ends.¹¹⁴

Perle’s intervention elicited a hostile response from the State Department. On April 29 Secretary of State Shultz dispatched a letter to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger objecting to “unwarranted denial or further delay” in the licensing of dual-use export applications, and admonishing that such behavior contravened the administration’s goals of weaning Iraq from the Soviet Union and restraining Iraqi behavior. Shultz added that U.S. intelligence had concluded that there was no evidence of a risk that Iraq was likely to transfer sensitive technology to Moscow or that Iraq had embarked on a nuclear weapons program.¹¹⁵

Perle countered Shultz in a July memo to Weinberger, in which he pointed to “a body of evidence indicating that Iraq continues to actively pursue an interest in nuclear weapons, that the large number of Warsaw Pact nationals in Iraq makes diversion-in-place a real possibility, and that, in the past, Iraq

tion’s willingness to facilitate the large-scale covert transfer of billions of dollars of U.S. weapons and equipment to Iran in 1981–82 and again in 1985–86.

112. Department of Defense Memorandum, “Computers for Iraq,” Secret, March 10, 1985, in *Battle, Iragate*, Doc. 313. See also Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 50–51.

113. “United States Exports of Sensitive Technology to Iraq,” hearing before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 102d Cong., 1st sess., April 8 and May 22, 1991, p. 15.

114. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 51.

115. Letter from George Shultz to Caspar Weinberger, April 29, 1985.

has been somewhat less than honest in regard to the intended end-use of high-technology equipment.”¹¹⁶ By September 1985, dozens of export license applications—including items bound for Iraq’s Atomic Energy Commission and air force—that had been “red-flagged” by Perle and his deputy, Stephen Bryen, were nevertheless approved by the Commerce Department.¹¹⁷ Among the most notorious recipients of these exports were the Saad 16 research complex, which was Iraq’s “largest and most important site for missile and nonconventional [including nuclear] weapons development”;¹¹⁸ the Nassr State Establishment for Mechanical Industries (NASSR), which the Pentagon identified as a “bad end-user” and “military facility,” but the Commerce Department benignly categorized as a “multifunctional complex”;¹¹⁹ and the Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization (MIMI). Both NASSR and MIMI were suspected of developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.¹²⁰

These events prompted Bryen to dispatch a letter to Paul Freedenberg, the assistant secretary of commerce for trade administration, requesting a reversal in the Commerce Department’s decisions to permit the export of two advanced computers to a suspicious Iraqi research and development center, on the attenuated condition that the applicants themselves vouched for the legitimacy of the end user. Instead, Bryen urged Freedenberg to impose stricter government-to-government assurances on those exports.¹²¹ Freedenberg ignored the memo and later defended his inaction on this and other Pentagon requests with the contentions that the U.S. intelligence community had not proffered conclusive evidence that the Iraqi end users were suspicious, and that unnecessary delays in the licensing process would have caused Iraq to look elsewhere to import the desired goods.¹²² This bureaucratic donnybrook came to a head in the summer of 1986, when, at the urging of the State Department, National Security Adviser John Poindexter issued a National Security Decision Directive compelling all government agencies to be “more forthcoming” on export license requests for Iraq.¹²³

116. Defense Department Action Memorandum, “High Technology Dual-Use Export to Iraq [Letter from George P. Shultz to Caspar W. Weinberger, Dated April 30, 1985, Attached],” Secret, July 1, 1985, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 262.

117. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, pp. 204–205.

118. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 207; and Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 63.

119. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 89.

120. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

121. Letter from Stephen D. Bryen to Paul Freedenberg, “[Regarding Export License for Computers Destined to Iraq],” September 19, 1986, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 359.

122. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, p. 205.

123. *Ibid.*, p. 241; and State Department Memorandum, “The Vice-President’s March 2 Meeting with Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoon [Background Papers and Talking Points Attached],” Confidential, February 26, 1987, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 410.

Having been trumped bureaucratically, Perle appealed to sympathetic ears Congress. In a letter sent to Senators John Glenn (D-Ohio), Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), Perle decried the reckless behavior of the State and Commerce Departments. Glenn was so incensed by Perle's allegations that he convened a hearing on the matter in February 1987. During that hearing, Glenn accused Richard Kennedy, the State Department's ambassador-at-large for nuclear affairs, of increasingly circumscribing the Defense Department's access to State Department cables pertaining to nonproliferation.¹²⁴

Despite the efforts of Perle, Bryen, and their allies in Congress, during the final two years of the Reagan administration, the Commerce Department approved 241 dual-use export license applications and rejected a mere 6. Congressional investigators have estimated that two of every seven licensed exports to Iraq between 1985 and 1990 were diverted to military uses. By comparison, Deputy Undersecretary Bryen claimed to have raised objections to approximately 40 percent of the license applications sent to the Pentagon for review by the Commerce Department.¹²⁵

The marginalization of domestic opposition to untrammelled Iraqi access to dual-use U.S. technologies was facilitated by the lobbying activities of private business interests eager to profit from such trade. In May 1985 Marshall Wiley, a former Foreign Service Officer, established the U.S.-Iraq Business Forum to promote commerce between the United States and Iraq. By late 1986, the forum had attracted the membership of more than forty organizations, including major oil companies such as Amoco, Exxon, Mobil, Occidental, and Texaco; defense firms such as Bell Helicopter, Lockheed Martin, and United Technologies; and other high-profile Fortune 500 corporations such as AT&T, Bechtel, Caterpillar, and General Motors.¹²⁶ Notably, at a forum conference in early 1988, an administration official informed its members that the White House depended on them to "help preserve—and expand the overall U.S.-Iraqi relationship through its commercial side."¹²⁷ Wiley also later attested that Reagan administration officials had assured him that "not only were our goals consistent with U.S. policy, but what we were endeavoring to do served to enhance their policy."¹²⁸

124. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, pp. 266–267.

125. "United States Exports of Sensitive Technology to Iraq," p. 4; and Statement by Congressman Henry Gonzales (D-Tex.), *Congressional Record*, House of Representatives, 102d Cong., 2d sess., July 21, 1992.

126. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, pp. 220–221; and Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 84.

127. Quoted in Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, p. 85.

128. Quoted in Murray Waas, "What We Gave Saddam for Christmas," *Village Voice*, December 18, 1990, p. 36. Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun informed a group of chief executive officers from

The forum's activities reinforced the administration's aversion to holding economic relations with Iraq hostage to political objectives. In a November 1986 letter to Secretary of State Shultz, the forum's chairman, Robert Abboud, advocated the further liberalization of bilateral commerce with Iraq on the grounds that Iraq had become a "force for moderation and stability in the region."¹²⁹ Early the next year, Abboud sent a letter to the Commerce Department in which he protested the "difficulties encountered in obtaining export licenses [for Iraq]."¹³⁰

This account of U.S. negotiations with Iraq concerning the latter's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles broadly contradicts the neorealist and tying hands theories' prediction of successful U.S. bargaining, and comports closely with the neoclassical realist prediction of weak and ultimately failed U.S. bargaining. As voices in the upper levels of the Pentagon began to express suspicions about active Iraqi programs to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and began pushing for tightened restrictions on U.S. exports of dual-use technologies to Iraq, the foreign policy executive refrained from exploiting either its geopolitical strength or its domestic political weakness to condition its continued strategic cooperation with Iraq on Baghdad's cessation of its proliferation activities. It even refused to take the far less confrontational step of linking the future licensing of U.S. dual-use exports to Iraq's provision of more intrusive and verifiable end-user assurances. Instead, the administration oversold Iraqi compliance with its nuclear nonproliferation agenda, ignored glaring evidence of Iraqi misbehavior, mobilized private interest groups seeking to maximize U.S. trade with Iraq, and marginalized all domestic sources of opposition to unchecked bilateral trade, thereby ensuring continued Iraqi misbehavior.

Conclusion

In this article, I have begun the process of filling the vacuum of scholarly knowledge concerning "alliances of convenience" in international relations.

major U.S. corporations that the Iraqi government would favor U.S. firms that joined the forum. Jentleson, "Iraq: Failure of a Strategy," p. 136; Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 80–86; and Douglas A. Borer, "Inverse Engagement: Lessons from U.S.-Iraq Relations, 1982–1990," *Parameters*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 51–65.

129. Letter from A. Robert Abboud to George P. Shultz, November 20, 1986, in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 375. The letter received an enthusiastic and supportive response from the State Department in March 1987. See "Letter with Cover Note, Richard W. Murphy to A. Robert Abboud, March 5, 1987," in Byrne and Ostermann, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988*, Doc. 123.

130. Letter from A. Robert Abboud to Bruce S. Smart Jr., March 10, 1987, "[Requests Clarification of U.S. Export Licensing Policy for Iraq; Membership List Attached]," in Battle, *Iraqgate*, Doc. 412.

First, I explicitly defined an alliance of convenience as the initiation of security cooperation between ideological and geopolitical adversaries to counterbalance a growing third-party threat. Second, I introduced neorealist, tying hands, and neoclassical realist hypotheses pertaining to the likely success of U.S. bargaining with post-1945 allies of convenience. Third, I tested these hypotheses in the case of U.S. bargaining with Iraq on the issues of terrorism and proliferation during the Iran-Iraq War, and found that the record of weak and failed U.S. bargaining confounded the neorealist and tying hands theories, but matched the neoclassical realist theory. Although further empirical testing of the cases listed in the appendix is necessary to more fully validate the neoclassical realist proposition, the Iraq case is a most likely one for its neorealist and tying hands rivals, which should instill considerable confidence in its robustness.

This study contributes to a substantial theoretical literature that investigates the paradoxical influence exercised by small powers over great powers.¹³¹ In particular, a subset of this literature examines what Robert Keohane referred to in a seminal article as “the big influence of small allies.”¹³² Keohane argued that a small power ally of the United States could effect favorable modifications in the behavior of its superpower patron if it could count on continued U.S. support given the latter’s overarching grand strategic imperatives; if it held a stronger vested interest in the outcome of the dispute in question; if it could cultivate agencies within the executive bureaucracy eager to cement the alliance; and if it could exploit influential domestic interest groups in the United States to mobilize public opinion on the ally’s behalf. In a more recent work, Stephen Walt has argued that the last strategy, which he refers to as the domestic political “penetration” of a militarily strong ally by a weaker one, will be more likely to succeed if the targeted ally is relatively secure; if its domestic polity is relatively open and accessible to foreign actors; if the two states share a mutual affinity based on similar cultures; and if the penetrator can rely on a sympathetic group of supporters within the target country.¹³³

131. Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Routledge, 1990); Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,” *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (January 1975), pp. 175–200; Ivan Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Robert O. Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1969), pp. 291–310; Robert O. Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 2 (Spring 1971), pp. 161–182; and Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 3d ed. (New York: Longman, 2000).

132. Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies.”

133. Walt, *Taming American Power*, pp. 194–217. See also John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

This article contributes to the above literature the insight that even small power allies that are widely disliked and distrusted by the U.S. government and general public, and which exhibit domestic cultural and political values that are sharply divergent from those of the United States—such as Iraq during the 1980s—can nevertheless exercise considerable bargaining power over the United States. Neoclassical realist theory stipulates that it is domestic opposition to, rather than domestic support for, the alliances of convenience struck with these states that compels the foreign policy executive in the United States to refrain from bargaining aggressively with those allies. Although, as in the case of Iraq, the activities of pro-alliance private interest groups will reinforce this temptation, it is the broader context of domestic opposition that engenders it in the first place and enhances the foreign policy executive's reliance on those groups.

Three policy implications follow from this study's findings. The first is that any U.S. decision to transform yesterday's adversary into today's ally of convenience should not be taken lightly, given the serious possibility that a domestically rooted U.S. bargaining pathology is likely to inadvertently result in the creation a stronger adversary tomorrow. In fact, this is precisely what happened in the aftermath of the U.S. alliance with Iraq. Nearly a decade of virtually unconditional U.S. strategic support dramatically increased Iraq's military power.¹³⁴ Over the next two years, the unreformed Iraqi regime undertook a massive conventional military buildup, continued to sponsor terrorism and develop unconventional weapons, and adopted an increasingly belligerent foreign policy toward its Persian Gulf neighbors, Israel, and the United States, culminating in its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In response, the United States had to muster a broad multilateral coalition to forcibly liberate Kuwait from the grip of its former ally of convenience.¹³⁵

Second, U.S. policymakers might reduce the anticipated costs and risks associated with the formation of an alliance of convenience by keeping the relationship as low-key and covert as possible. To the degree that U.S. strategic cooperation with an ally of convenience takes place "below the radar screen" of U.S. domestic politics, the foreign policy executive will be able to avoid the domestic pressures that can paradoxically tempt it into adopting an overly conciliatory position vis-à-vis its alliance partner. For instance, both after the October 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan to depose the Taliban regime and

134. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, "Department of Defense Appropriations for 1990, Part 2," testimony before the Subcommittee on Defense, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, February 7, 1989, 50th Cong., 2d sess., pp. 283–376.

135. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995).

root out the al-Qaida terrorist organization's headquarters, and a year later, when the U.S. Navy sought to tighten enforcement of UN economic sanctions against Iraq, tacit and small-scale alliances of convenience were struck with Iran. But because strategic cooperation in these instances took the form of clandestine diplomacy, joint covert action, and inconspicuous naval coordination, it did not require widespread congressional, bureaucratic, and public acquiescence, and transpired largely out of the public spotlight.¹³⁶

Finally, the argument presented here implies that any given U.S. attempt to conditionally conciliate an adversary in the absence of an overarching third-party threat will be even more prone to failure than the attempt to do so under the auspices of an alliance of convenience. Since the end of the Cold War, a number of foreign policy scholars and analysts have advocated a policy of "constructive engagement" with Iran, North Korea, Syria, and other U.S. adversaries.¹³⁷ Most proponents of engagement believe that a carefully calibrated strategy that deploys both sticks and carrots will be more likely to reform the behavior of the United States' enemies than one that relies on sticks alone. In fact, during the Obama administration's first year in office in 2009, senior officials explicitly embarked on a conditional "engagement" strategy toward Iran and North Korea.¹³⁸ This article's findings suggest that the Obama administration's decision in recent months to suspend this nascent policy in favor of the pursuit of intensified UN sanctions against both countries was likely a prudent one.¹³⁹ This is because the domestic pressures that impede U.S. bargaining behavior with an ally of convenience should logically be magnified when the United States attempts to constructively engage an enemy in the absence of a shared threat. As discussed earlier, for internally weak states such as the United States, the rise of a third-party threat should provide the foreign policy executive with some domestic political breathing room to establish an alliance

136. Michael R. Gordon, with Neil MacFarquhar, "Threats and Responses: Diplomacy: Iraq's Neighbors Seem to Be Ready to Support a War," *New York Times*, December 2, 2002.

137. Representative works include Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, eds., *Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000); Miroslav Nincic, "Getting What You Want: Positive Inducements in International Relations," *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 138–183; Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

138. Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Foreign Policy Address at the Council on Foreign Relations," Washington, D.C., July 15, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126071.htm>; and "Obama's Speech to the United Nations General Assembly," *New York Times*, September 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/24/us/politics/24prexy.text.html>.

139. Helene Cooper and Martin Fackler, "Obama Takes Stern Tone on North Korea and Iran," *New York Times*, November 19, 2009.

of convenience with a prior adversary. It thereby stands to reason that the attempt to conditionally engage an adversary in the absence of any pressing systemic imperative (i.e., a third-party threat) suggests that domestic opposition to the policy in the United States will be even more intense and widespread. Consequently, the foreign policy executive can be expected to be even more susceptible to the temptations to ignore misbehavior by the target state, oversell the target state's meager concessions, avoid punishing the target, and rely on private interest groups seeking to maximize contacts with the target state. In addition, the target of engagement will experience even less pressure to concede to U.S. demands than an ally of convenience asymmetrically threatened by a rising third party.

To wit, for the two years that immediately followed the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, the outgoing Reagan administration and succeeding administration of George H.W. Bush continued conciliating Iraq, hoping to transform that country into "a minimally responsible member of the international community."¹⁴⁰ In light of the diminution of the Iranian threat, however, both U.S. administrations were confronted by intensified congressional and bureaucratic opposition to the policy, and in their desperation to keep the policy from imploding, they resorted to the familiar wartime tactics of downplaying Iraqi provocations, overselling flimsy Iraqi concessions, refusing to punish Saddam's regime for its transgressions, and relying on the actions of the U.S.-Iraq Business Forum, which collectively eroded the United States' deterrent capability and enabled Iraq's subsequent aggression against Kuwait.¹⁴¹

140. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 306.

141. See, among others, Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, pp. 68–180; Amatzia Baram, "U.S. Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988–1990," in David W. Lesch, ed., *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2003); and Zachary Karabell and Philip D. Zelikow, "Iraq, 1988–1990: Unexpectedly Heading toward War," in Ernest R. May and Zelikow, eds., *Dealing with Dictators: Dilemmas of U.S. Diplomacy and Intelligence Analysis, 1945–1990* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 167–202.

Appendix. U.S. Allies of Convenience, 1945–Present

Ally of Convenience	Shared Enemy	Time Span
Saudi Arabia	Soviet Union	1945–91
Spain	Soviet Union	1947–76
Yugoslavia	Soviet Union	1949–89
Romania	Soviet Union	1964–90
China	Soviet Union	1972–89
Zaire	Soviet Union/Angola	1974–91
Ethiopia	Soviet Union/Somalia	1976–77
Somalia	Soviet Union/Ethiopia	1978–89
Pakistan	Soviet Union	1980–88
Iraq	Iran	1982–88
Saudi Arabia	Iraq	1990–2003
Syria	Iraq	1990–91
Sudan	Al-Qaida	2001–present
Libya	Al-Qaida	2001–03
Iran	Taliban in Afghanistan	2001–02
Iran	Iraq	2002
Saudi Arabia	Al-Qaida	2003–present

SOURCES: Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Theodore J. Lowi, "Bases in Spain," in Harold Stein, ed., *American Civil-Military Decisions: A Book of Case Studies* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1963), pp. 669–705; Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle, eds., *Friendly Tyrants: An American Dilemma* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), pp. 403–450, 479–506; Joseph F. Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1992); Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995); Fred Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations: The Cold War and Africa, 1945–1990* (Amsterdam: UV University Press, 1994); Steven David, "Realignment in the Horn: The Soviet Advantage," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 1979), pp. 69–90; Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), pp. 233–283; Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2005), pp. 345–346; Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2008); and Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 219–258.