

Cohesion Deconstructed: Why Alliances Fail

A Monograph

by

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14. ABSTRACT Since 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has deterred, and contained Russian expansion into Europe. NATO achieved this military and political objective by maintaining a cohesive alliance. In order for NATO to continue to succeed in achieving this objective, the Alliance needs to focus on maintaining political and military cohesion. Potential defection from the alliance by member states presents critical strategic and operational risk to international stability. In order to examine the relevance of cohesion, the phenomenon itself must be deconstructed. Based on a theoretical framework inspired by George Liska's classic work on alliance formation and cohesion, this paper adopts three hypotheses: (1) Politically cohesive alliances will achieve their political goal; (2) Militarily cohesive alliances will achieve their military goal; (3) Defection from an alliance will cause the alliance as a whole to fail. These hypotheses generate concrete questions that are applied to two historical case studies, Otto von Bismarck's alliance system post 1871 and the Axis Powers of World War 2. The results are then analyzed in order to gain insight on what it takes for NATO to continue its successful record.					
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Abstract

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One of the most relevant alliances that has significantly influenced and shaped today's security environment is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since 1949, the NATO alliance, which now includes 29 member states, has deterred, and contained Russian expansion into Europe. NATO achieved this military and political objective by maintaining a cohesive alliance. In order for NATO to continue to succeed in achieving this military and political objective, the Alliance needs to focus on maintaining political and military cohesion. Potential defection from the alliance by member states presents critical strategic and operational risk to international stability.

In order to examine the relevance of cohesion within political-military alliances, the phenomenon of cohesion itself must be deconstructed. This monograph therefore does not assume military cohesion to be a mere sub-set of political cohesion but a unique, relevant element of alliances. Based on a theoretical framework inspired by George Liska's classic work on alliance formation and cohesion, this paper uses the methodological approach of structured, focused comparison. It adopts three hypotheses. It assumes that when alliances are politically cohesive, they will achieve their political goal. It secondly assumes that militarily cohesive alliances will achieve their military goal. Finally, it assumes that defection from an alliance will cause the alliance as a whole to fail. These hypotheses are the foundation for concrete questions that are applied to two historical case studies. Otto von Bismarck's alliance system post 1871 and the Axis Powers of World War 2 present very different and unique cases of alliances. The results of structured, focused comparison are then analyzed with regards towards their implications on NATO, in order to ultimately gain insight on what it takes for NATO to continue its successful record of deterrence.

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Introduction

The idea of fighting wars or, in more general terms, of answering threats using alliances is not new. Many military thinkers and theorists have written on the subject of military and political alliances. Writers as early as Sun-Tzu recognized their importance.¹ Carl von Clausewitz used alliances as an example for his thoughts on centers of gravity.² His contemporary Baron Henri-Antoine de Jomini lists the fulfilment of alliance obligations as one of nine reasons for a government to go to war.³ The consensus, although variations occur, is that it is better to answer threats and fight wars in an alliance than alone.

One of the most relevant alliances that has significantly influenced and shaped today's security environment is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since 1949, the NATO alliance, which now includes 29 member states, has deterred, and contained Russian expansion into Europe. NATO achieved this military and political objective by maintaining a cohesive alliance. In order for NATO to continue to succeed in achieving this military and political objective, the Alliance needs to focus on maintaining political and military cohesion. Potential defection from the alliance by member states presents critical strategic and operational risk to international stability.

This study seeks to examine the relevance of political and military cohesion between member states within NATO. More specifically, it will scrutinize the potential strategic and operational risks in the case of member states defection from the alliance.

Originally designed as a system of collective defense, with Article 5 at the heart of the NATO treaty, the most current doctrine acknowledges that the threat environment in the Atlantic-European area

¹ See Sun-tzu, *The Art of War* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1994), 177 "Thus the highest realization of warfare is to attach the enemy's plans; next is to attack their alliances"

² "Basing our comments on general experience, the acts we consider most important for the defeat of the enemy are the following: 3. Delivery of an effective blow against his principal ally if that ally is more powerful than he." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 596.

³ Baron de Jomini, *The Art of War* (Radford: Wilder Publications, 2008), 8.

of interest has changed. Specifically, threats are no longer limited to the military realm but also include civilian threats.⁴ The conditions under which the alliance was established in 1949, however, have changed significantly. Today, NATO finds itself in troubled waters. Ongoing debates on national defense budget spending, political tensions between member states and differences in approaching the heterogeneous plethora of threats the alliance faces impose tremendous strain on its cohesion.

Certain terms need to be clarified in regards to their use in this study. Deterrence is understood as “the maintenance of military power for the purpose of discouraging attack” or expansion.⁵ In contrast to deterrence, containment is defined as “the policy, process, or result of preventing the expansion of a hostile power or ideology.”⁶ The distinction between political and military objectives is of vital importance to this study. A military objective is a goal that is of significance primarily to military actors and is usually achieved by the use of military instruments. A political objective includes military objectives but also includes goals that are of concern to and achieved by all other instruments of national power, to include diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments. The term alliance, for the purpose of this study, means “an association to further the common interests of the members.”⁷ Defection from an alliance means not only the actual abandonment of the alliance but also includes actions taken, either intentionally or negligently, with the aim of weakening the alliance or limiting its freedom of action. This includes violations of treaties, interaction with common adversaries or outright hostilities displayed towards alliance partners.

⁴ Compare: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency, Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, (21 December 2010), Nr. 0208.

⁵ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “deterrence,” accessed August 19, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deterrence>.

⁶ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “containment,” accessed August 19, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/containment>.

⁷ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “alliance,” accessed August 19, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alliance>.

Theories on the formation and cohesion of alliances abound. The specific subject of NATO however, requires a theoretical framework that is both recognized enough and contemporary enough to be relevant. For this reason, this study will rely on the theory of alliance formation and cohesion as put forth by George S. Liska, most notably in his 1962 book *Nations in Alliance*.

This study will rely on three hypotheses to determine if the thesis is supportable. The first of these is “When an alliance maintains military cohesion, it is able to achieve its military objective.” The second hypothesis replaces the term military with the word political and thus reads, “When an alliance maintains political cohesion, it is able to achieve its political objectives.” The third hypothesis necessary to support this study’s thesis is “If one or more member states defect from the alliance, then the alliance as a whole fails.”

The limitations of this study lie in the scope of the theoretical framework and the extent to which historical case studies can be discussed. George Liska’s theory uses the wider framework of realism in international relations and thus needs to be understood in that specific context. The scope of this study does not permit the introduction of alternative theoretical lenses.

Every examination of political phenomena is, by its very nature, set in a contemporary context and thus has to rely on certain assumptions. This study assumes three things. First, that NATO will continue to exist as a political-military alliance in the years to come. This assumption is necessary to validate the purpose of the study. The second assumption is that NATO’s enlargements throughout history did not constitute an act of aggressive expansion but were conducted in the spirit of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁸ The third assumption is that NATO is an effective instrument to address threats in today’s threat

⁸ North Atlantic Treaty, Preamble: “The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.”

environment and is thus relevant as an organization in itself, not merely as an extension of its member states individual national governments.

Following this introduction, this study will provide an overview of relevant literature, the state of research and a definition of additional terms in a literature review. A subsequent description of the employed methodology precedes the discussion of two case studies that will be used to examine historical precedents of alliance cohesion. An analytical discussion of the findings from these case studies will lay the foundation for the conclusion of the study.

Literature Review

One could argue that the idea of forming alliances predates the concept of a state. However, it is only in a nation-state context, that the term alliance will be used here. Alliances are a vital component in the study of theories of International Relations. This being the case, the need to define the scope and applicability of the theoretical lens used for this monograph is self-evident. This short overview of theory will be followed by a more conceptual section, in which some of the key terms will be defined in depth, discussed and for which a methodology of measure will be introduced. A broader empirical overview of the field of study, more specifically of the hypotheses that relate to this monograph's topic, and a discussion of how these hypotheses compare to the ones used for the purposes of this study will conclude this section.

Even though the term alliance is central to the field of International Relations, and theorists as early as Thucydides mention alliances and their importance, comprehensive theories dealing exclusively with the phenomena of alliances, to include their formation, cohesion, and dissolution, are not quite as numerous as one might expect.⁹ Among the ones that do exist, several stand out as particularly concise

⁹ Stephen M. Walt states that "The importance of this subject [alliances] is manifest." and adds numerous references to underline this point. See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 1.

and closely related to the subject of this monograph and will therefore be discussed in some detail here in order to provide an overview over existing theoretical approaches and clarify why this study will rely largely on George Liska's theory.

In his 1987 book *The Origins of Alliances*, Stephen Walt approaches the subject of Alliances within the framework of the Realist school of thought of International Relations. He specifically examines the formation of alliances and the underlying causality. Stephen Walt offers a detailed analysis of the reasons for alliance formation and proposes five principal reasons for states to initiate cooperation. In order to respond to a threat, states may form alliances with either the weaker side or the threatening, stronger side. The former case is designated as balancing, the latter as bandwagoning. Walt further proposes ideology, foreign aid and transnational penetration as reasons for alliance formation. He self-proclaims his theory as a developed balance of power theory, which he calls a balance of threat theory.¹⁰

Walt's analysis serves as a starting point for Patricia Weitsman, Her 2004 book *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* specifically focuses on the hypotheses of balancing and bandwagoning behavior as methods of threat response and couples them with Paul Schroeder's thesis that alliances can also serve as a tool to manage allies.¹¹ Whereas Walt focuses on alliance formation, Patricia Weitsman examines alliance behavior and alliance cohesion. *Dangerous Alliances* seeks to test Walt's and Schroeder's findings against a background of a case study methodology that centers on alliances before and during World War I. She does so by examining both external and internal implications of states' behavior within alliances. In addition, she differentiates threat levels and, in doing so, introduces a higher degree of granularity into the examination of alliance dynamics. This necessitates a divergence from a purely realist point of view and she thus incorporates elements of institutionalist theory into a generally realism-dominated field of study.

¹⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Preface [X].

¹¹ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 3.

Both theoretical approaches discussed above yield unique approaches and offer valuable insights to this study. Other theoretical frameworks certainly exist and may be valuable for the examination of alliances. Most notably, utilitarian approaches and game-theory are popular to explain alliances and related phenomena.¹² However, for the purpose of this monograph, these alternate methods will not be utilized. Utilitarian approaches focus chiefly on the “why” and “when” of alliance formation, in that they seek to explain the underlying conditions and reasons for alignment. However, they do not take into account balancing rationale in assuming that states primary motivation for forming alliances is to increase utility in general. Concerning game-theoretical approaches, this monograph shares Stephen Walt’s stance towards their utility in explaining alliance behavior. As useful as they are in analyzing mutual tradeoff behavior and bargaining, both certainly elements of alliance behavior, they fail to “take into account the impact of perceptions, ideology, and geography.”¹³ Thus, they too will be of no extended use in this study as perceptions, ideology and geography are three central elements in any security environment.

George Liska takes these three elements into account. His 1962 book *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* thus serves as a theoretical framework and lens on the one hand and sets the stage for the underlying question of implications of alliance defection on the other hand. Liska organizes his work in two parts, identifying patterns and principles of alliances first before he discusses more concrete trends and policies. In the first part of his study, Liska examines reasons for alignments, to include dealignment and realignment, in general. Primarily, he argues, conflicts drive alliances provided they are “sufficiently intense, and security is the chief concern.”¹⁴ In the absence of a direct conflict, and in contrast to traditional balance of power theory, Liska writes that states are usually either “too free or not free enough to follow the guidance ... of the balance of power.”¹⁵ In other words, the abstract

¹² Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1962), 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

rationale of balance is in practice hard to achieve because too many choices present themselves to states, specifically in choosing alliance partners. These reasons may include seemingly irrational ones such as “domestic or regional conflicts, ideological or historic biases, or ... special inducements to opportunistic behavior.” Overall, he identifies three main reasons for states to engage in alliances: security, internal stability, and status. These reasons answer the question of why to align with another state. More complex is the answer to the question with whom to align. In order to determine this, states need to consider interests and gains or liabilities.¹⁶ Concerning alliance cohesion, Liska identifies shared ideologies as the central element. Ideology’s function is to rationalize the grounds for alliance and to enable alliances to endure potential setbacks.¹⁷

The principles that Liska suggests are timeless. They are limited only insofar as they assume the principal actors for alliances to be states. His ideas do not depend on a specific environment to be applicable and are not to be viewed in a specific context, neither political or temporal, nor technological or economical. For this reason, this monograph will utilize the core elements of George Liska’s alliance theory in order to test the thesis. Weighing gains and liabilities on the foundation of shared interests in order to protect or improve internal stability, security or status will serve as a lens through which the formation of alliances will be evaluated. The element of shared ideology, the principal agent in maintaining cohesive alliances will be adopted as the determining factor in the dissolution of alliances, whether through dealignment or realignment.

As stated in the introduction, this monograph relies on different key terms that are central to the subject of International Relations in general and alliance theory in particular. Despite their central status however, they are often contested and require definition in order to create a shared understanding.

The term alliance is central to this study. A broad definition has been offered in the introduction and will not be repeated here. In the specific context of International Relations, however, a more nuanced

¹⁶ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 29-30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

view is appropriate. Institutionalized cooperation between states for one or more specified reasons is not a singular phenomenon. Scientific terms like coalition, concert, confederation or alignment are all similar in content but different in nuance. As this study concerns itself primarily with NATO and is thus set in a security related context, Stephen Walt offers the definition this study will adopt. He designates an alliance as a “formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states.”¹⁸ The specific aim of security cooperation is the distinguishing factor towards other forms of cooperation. Patricia Weitsman offers a similar, although somewhat expanded, definition. She defines alliances as “any formal or informal agreement between two or more states intended to further (militarily) the national security of the participating states. It is a continuing security association among member states with an element of forward planning and understanding to aid member states militarily or through benevolent neutrality.”¹⁹ George Liska’s definition falls considerably shorter and lacks the necessary depth to be considered for this study. He claims that “alliances merely formalize alignments based on interests or coercion” and adds, in the temporal context of the ongoing Cold War, that “such formalizations have been more important for the free world and its leader than for the adversary.”²⁰ Liska uses alignment and alliance freely and interchangeably throughout his work. Alliances per se are difficult to measure, they either exist or they do not. An alliance exists, when two or more states actively cooperate in the realm of security, either formally or informally, by treaties, diplomatic measures or military action.

Cohesion is a highly subjective term and necessitates a concise definition. Patricia Weitsman adopts the definition suggested by Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan: “Cohesion is the ability of member states to agree on goals, strategy, and tactics, and coordinate activity directed toward those ends.”²¹ Liska takes a much more general approach and defines cohesion as allies “staying together despite setbacks.”²²

¹⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 1.

¹⁹ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 188.

²⁰ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 3.

²¹ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 35.

²² Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 61.

For its higher degree of nuance, this monograph will adopt Patricia Weitsman's definition. Likewise her proposed method of measuring cohesion will be adopted and this study will "assess alliance cohesion according to the extent to which the member states are in agreement over the overriding goals of the alliance and the ideas of how to attain those objectives."²³

The definition of defection offered in the introductory section to this study remains valid. It is generally congruent with what Liska calls dealignment, this being "any movement out of an alliance either in war or in peace, regardless of whether such a movement is completed or not."²⁴ It needs to be noted, that in other theoretical approaches the phenomenon of alliance defection plays a subordinate role. Stephen Walt does not explicitly consider defection but assumes that either bandwagoning or balancing causes states to realign with other allies.²⁵ Following this logic means to assume that a state can further its interest best by leaving one alliance and become neutral or join another alliance and assumes that the benefits of leaving outweigh the costs. This approach does not consider implications for the remaining states in the alliance.

The final term that requires further definition is at the same time the most problematic one. International stability looms in the background wherever alliances are concerned, most prominently in balance of power theory. As mentioned before Liska indicates that balancing is usually too abstract a goal for states to achieve. He concedes however that "... in international stability they [actors] tend to be interested only indirectly, as the condition of respect for their security and status, and conditionally ... with their role in upholding international stability."²⁶ International stability assumes the existence of a system of some sort, which in turn suggests that this system gravitates towards an equilibrium. In the 1975 book *Arms, Alliances and Stability: The Development of the Structure of International Politics*

²³ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 35.

²⁴ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 42.

²⁵ For an expanded discussion on bandwagoning and balancing refer to Chapter 1 of *The Origins of Alliances*.

²⁶ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 30.

Partha Chatterjee defines stability as the ability of the system to “maintain itself in the face of disturbing forces by shifting to new states of equilibrium.”²⁷ This monograph will generally follow this definition, and understand international stability as the ability of an international system, to include states, governmental organizations, and alliances to maintain or regain a state of equilibrium. As stability is difficult to quantify, this study will measure stability qualitatively, by assessing the constellation of the international system in regards to the actors, and whether or not this constellation constitutes an equilibrium.

As stated before, the literature on alliances in general is plentiful, both from an International Relations and from a historical perspective. However, to this author’s knowledge and after extensive, although arguably not exhaustive, research, there is an apparent gap in the study of alliance defection and its implications on international stability examined through a theoretical lens. A dissertation offered by Gabriel Max Scheinmann at Georgetown University in 2016 examines defection in the specific context of “flipping”, meaning leaving one alliance and joining another, a phenomenon previously referred to as realignment. Other publications, predominantly in article-format exist, but none has explicitly addressed the topic presented here. This monograph attempts to close that gap.

The three initial hypotheses that are used in order to support this study’s thesis remain generally unchanged. Alliance cohesion consists of at least two parts, military cohesion and political cohesion. Although one might argue that, ultimately, militaries are merely an instrument of political will, there is a distinct element to military cohesion in that cooperation to achieve specified ends, and the mechanisms necessary to do this differ greatly from political mechanisms. Thus, a separate hypothesis is justified and necessary: when an alliance maintains military cohesion, it is able to achieve its military objectives. The definition and measure of cohesion suggested above for alliance cohesion can be applied to military cohesion as well. None of the researched works makes the distinction between political and

²⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *Arms, Alliances and Stability: The Development of the Structure of International Politics* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1975), 43.

military cohesion. It is rather assumed that alliance cohesion assumes political cohesion, which in turn includes military cohesion.

As is the case for military cohesion, political cohesion is not approached as a singular component in any of the researched works. However, George Liska formulates his thoughts on the cohesion of alliances within a generally political, as opposed to behavioral or social, context. Cohesion, he hypothesizes, is achieved through rationalizing the grounds for alliance by way of ideology. Other factors, such as preferred diplomatic style, consultations or coercion among alliance members are all factored into this central hypothesis.²⁸ Patricia Weitsman, distinguishing wartime from peacetime alliances, argues that cohesion is generally threat based. Her hypotheses is that wartime alliances, formed under a high external threat level, may dissolve once the threat is no longer existent. However “if the level of threat internal to an alliance is low, even if the level of external threat diminishes, the alliance may very well endure.”²⁹ Stephen Walt is chiefly concerned with alliance formation. Cohesion finds its expression mainly when the dissolution of alliances is concerned. His hypotheses are that in a balancing scenario, wartime alliances will dissolve when the enemy is defeated, whereas in a bandwagoning scenario the alliance formed to oppose a threat will disintegrate when the threat becomes serious.³⁰ The hypothesis introduced in this study, when an alliance maintains political cohesion, it is able to achieve its political objectives, is not covered by the referenced authors.

The last hypothesis underlying this monograph, if one or more member states defect from the alliance, then the alliance as a whole fails, is only implied in the referenced works. Patricia Weitsman, in her analysis of the Triple Alliance between Italy, Austria-Hungary and Germany, plainly states that Italy’s defection from the alliance in 1915 resulted in Italy ultimately fighting its former allies. No hypothetical

²⁸ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, Chapter 2.

²⁹ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 6.

³⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 39.

character can be attributed to this finding.³¹ George Liska regards defection not as a failure of an alliance, but speaks of realignment or dealignment.

This section served as an overview over the existing literature in this particular field of study, established a theoretical framework and discussed the key terms of this monograph in more detail. Most importantly, it showed that there is very little focused study to the operational and strategic implications of alliance defection, highlighting the need to fill this gap.

Methodology

This study will use a case study methodology to examine the effects of insufficient cohesion leading to alliance defection. As the history of states in general and conflicts between states in particular is also the history of alliances, a large amount of evidence regarding all facets of alliances is available. In order to test the hypotheses suggested in the previous section of this monograph, however, anecdotal analysis is insufficient, as results may be too heavily dominated by factors specific to the case study. The advantages that a single case study presents, namely the advantage to emphasize depth in research and analysis are intriguing. However, since alliance cohesion is determined by a multitude of factors, using a single case study is too specific to extrapolate even a general trend. Thus, more specifically, the method of structured, focused comparison of two case studies will be employed. In this method, a fixed set of questions serves as a constant and will be applied to the specific case studies in order to identify indicators that determine the effects of defection. A subsequent section will introduce these research questions in detail.

The two case studies used in this monograph will offer a good overview of alliance dynamics and the role of cohesion for success or failure of an alliance. One of the most skilled and shrewd politicians of his time, was Prussian, and later on German, chancellor Otto von Bismarck. His use of alliances was a

³¹ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 9.

central part of Prussian and German politics in the late 19th and early 20th century. Arguably, one of his greatest achievements was German unification in 1871. Once the *Reich* was unified, Otto von Bismarck pursued Germany's interests with an intricate system of alliances, which will constitute the first case study.

The second case study will deal with another German alliance, although one that ultimately did not succeed. The so-called Axis-Powers of World War 2, Germany, Italy, and Japan, flanked by some minor axis states and a host of client states dominated the early phases of World War 2, controlling large parts of Europe, Northern Africa, and Asia. One can observe many aspects of alliance dynamics in this particular case study and it yields promising results for answering this monograph's central question.

The use of structured focused comparison requires concise, relevant and focused research questions and close adherence to them.³² The questions presented in this section will be applied to the case studies mentioned above in order to identify implications of insufficient cohesion for alliances. As mentioned above, this monograph distinguishes military and political cohesion as two separate elements of alliance cohesion. It is thus relevant to identify military and political objectives that each of the two alliances had, as congruent objectives are a vital element in alliance formation. If and how this element also influences cohesion, whether directly or indirectly will be examined by asking the initial two questions: "What were the alliance's political objectives?" and "What were the alliance's military objectives?"

As stated in preceding sections, the threat factor appears to be vital for both the formation of and the cohesion within an alliance. Some theorists, such as Stephen Walt, constructed their entire theory based on the element of threat. It is therefore appropriate to focus the next two research questions on this subject. "What were the threats the alliance identified?" and "How were these threats addressed by the

³² Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

alliance?” seem suitable to address this matter. The expected outcome of this question is that there were clearly identifiable threats and a concise, coordinated method of addressing them.

As George Liska points out, ideology plays a key role in alliance cohesion. This includes values, principles and commitments that are not founded on cultural or historical ties but that are shared consciously and voluntarily by the member states. By asking the questions “On which principles did the alliance depend?” and “What were the shared values of the alliance?” it is expected to identify exactly the rationalizing element of alliances that George Liska eluded to.

While the questions presented so far deal predominantly with reasons for alignment and their implications for cohesion, the final two questions will address the issue of alliance defection more directly. By asking “Which issues were controversial between the alliances members?” this study hopes to identify potential breaking points and general patterns for alliance defection. The term defection as used in this study serves as a basis for the concluding question. “What constituted, or would have constituted, defection from the alliance?”

This suggested body of research questions will identify the reasons for and results of loose, insufficiently cohesive alliances and potentially highlight the outcome of defection from the respective alliance.

This monograph relies mainly on the books listed in the bibliography. For the theoretical part of the study, primary sources and secondary sources were used. The case study section is founded on archival research, conducted mainly in Fort Leavenworth’s Combined Arms Research Library, with few books received from other libraries. German and French works were used wherever appropriate, translations, where necessary, were made by the author and indicated accordingly. Various online sources served as quick reference and flanked the efforts of primary and secondary source study.

The stage is sufficiently set for the analysis of the two case studies and the subsequent analytical portion, the main body, of this monograph. This section served to identify the methodology, structured focused comparison and the research questions necessary to apply this methodology. Though extensive,

the detailed understanding of both theoretical framework and applied methodology is vital in order to prepare the grounds for approaching the subject that lies ahead.

Case Studies

In order to illustrate alliance dynamics and the importance of cohesion within alliances, this section will evaluate two case studies as presented above. A short overview of each case will lay the foundation and precede the application of the research questions in the following section. This section ends with a summarizing conclusion.

Overview Case 1: German Alliances after 1871

Otto von Bismarck's post-1871 alliance system consisted of multiple, interdependent elements and can rightfully be characterized as highly complex. As Theodore Hamerow writes in his introduction to the English translation of Bismarck's memoirs: "Once the Franco-Prussian war was over, he [Bismarck] became the indefatigable defender of the status quo."³³ He realized that France was the imminent threat to the newfound order in Europe and concluded that the French Republic needed to be isolated from potential allies. "Realizing that Paris was not strong enough to seek revenge singlehandedly, he forestalled its quest for partners by creating a complex system of alliances embracing most of the powers of Europe."³⁴ A central part of this alliance system was to maintain cordial relations to Russia in order to prevent a two-front war against France in the west and Russia in the east. "Friendship with Russia was, and always remained, the basis of Bismarck's system of alliances", observes Ian Morrow in 1970.³⁵ It was this fear of a two front war that motivated the first treaty in Bismarck's alliance system. The League of the Three Emperors, *Dreikaiserbund* in German, was formed in October 1873 and

³³ Otto von Bismarck, *Reflections and Reminiscences*, ed. Theodore S. Hamerow (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), 10.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ian F. D. Morrow, *Bismarck* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 102.

included Austria-Hungary, Russia and of course Germany. A somewhat volatile alliance, temporarily disbanded and subject to multiple reviews, it officially lasted until 1887.³⁶

Closely connected to the history of the *Dreikaiserbund* are the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary and the Triple Alliance, which added Italy. The Dual Alliance was formed in 1879 and was a reaction to deteriorating relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia. In the treaty, Germany and Austria-Hungary agreed to mutually support in the event of a Russian attack on either of the two states.³⁷ Three years later, Italy was added in order to tie another European monarchy by contract to the German Empire.

The final building block in Bismarck's system of alliances was the *Rückversicherungsvertrag* or Reinsurance Treaty between the German Empire and Russia, signed in November 1887. The treaty sought to reconstruct the bridge that had been damaged by the signature of the German-Austrian treaties. The reinsurance treaty assured mutual neutrality in the event of an attack of a third party on either of the signatory states.

In effect, Bismarck's alliance system achieved two things. On the one hand it eliminated the German fear of a two front war against her traditional enemies, Russia and France. On the other hand however, Bismarck had also inadvertently created the antagonist to the German alliance system, the Triple Entente between Great Britain, France and Russia. Moreover, an aggressive Franco-Russian alliance was only mitigated by the *Rückversicherungsvertrag*. Much of the system depended on Bismarck and his personal diplomatic skill. It soon became apparent that "the system, like its creator, was mortal and perished with him."³⁸

³⁶ This monograph regards the League of the Three Emperors as one alliance, although it was disbanded in 1878, only to be revived in 1881. Other researchers distinguish between the two leagues. Patricia Weitsman offers a good, expanded overview of the *Dreikaiserbund* and regards it as two separate alliances. Compare: Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 39-64.

³⁷ Morrow, *Bismarck*, 105.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

The first question to be asked of this case is concerned with the political objectives of the alliance. In regards to this case, the political objective of the alliance was twofold. It served primarily to maintain a state of peace in Europe, and secondly to establish a system of monarchic order to guard against the dangers of socialist republicanism and bourgeois revolution.

The primary purpose becomes quickly evident in the original document founding the Dual Alliance, which stresses its purely defensive character: “Their Majesties, the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the Emperor of Germany, while solemnly promising each other never to allow their purely defensive agreement to develop an aggressive tendency in any direction, have determined to conclude an alliance of peace and mutual defense.”³⁹ The Triple Alliance is worded less absolute but includes elements beyond the sphere of security policy. Within the limits of their own interests, the founding document allows for “an exchange of ideas on political and economic questions of a general nature”⁴⁰ between the signing states. Although this provision did not have any hard policy consequences, it does stress the peaceful orientation of the treaty.

Bismarck states his secondary political objective, safeguarding European monarchies against republican tendencies clearly in his own memoirs. He classifies it as “the struggle between the two European tendencies which I should designate on the one side as the system of order on monarchical basis and on the other as the social republic.”⁴¹ Bismarck concedes that he had aimed at establishing such a system since the wars of unification but saw the feat finally achieved with the establishment of the Triple Alliance.⁴²

³⁹ German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary, accessed October 29, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1856.

⁴⁰ German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy (May 20, 1882), accessed October 29, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1860.

⁴¹ Bismarck, *Reflections and Reminiscences*, 236.

⁴² *Ibid.*

The second question applied to Bismarck's alliance system is "What were the alliance's military objectives?" Primarily, the objective was avoiding a two-front war against France in the west and Russia in the east, for the newly founded German Reich. Erich Brandenburg observed in 1927 that this was a very real possibility: "A revival of the old coalition of the days of Frederick the Great – France, Austria, and Russia – which Bismarck had long dreaded, was by no means so improbable as it seemed to a later generation."⁴³ In the event of such a war however, Austria-Hungary was the logical ally and the fact that Austria-Hungary was a part of three of the four alliances regarded here reflects that logic. The Chief of the German General Staff shared this view. *Feldmarschall Helmuth Graf von Moltke* asserted that, in the event of a simultaneous Austrian and German mobilization, Russian troops would be diverted from Germany's northeastern front in order to address the Austrian threat first. This would allow Germany to shift forces to the western front in order to engage the, supposedly more capable, French troops first.⁴⁴ The German General Staff's contingency plans drawn up in the early 1880's and the concrete Austro-German consultations were directed at the problem of how to deal with the Russian threat in the east.⁴⁵

The third question to be addressed here is "What were the threats identified by the alliance?" This question is closely connected to the first two. Working off the belief that Germany was indeed "satiated" and heeded no further expansionist ambitions, Bismarck viewed any alliance between European powers that did not include Germany as the key threat. In particular, this included a potential Franco-Russian alliance. "The Austro-German combination", writes William Langer in 1931, "would serve even as a barrier to an eventual Franco-Russian alliance because the combination of Germany and Austria would be so strong that England would join it, thus making it impossible for France to take the side of Russia in a

⁴³ Erich Brandenburg, *From Bismarck to the World War: A History of German Foreign Policy 1870-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 8.

⁴⁴ Graydon A. Tunstall, *Planning for War Against Russia and Serbia: Austro-Hungarian and German Military Strategies, 1871-1914* (Highland Lakes: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1993), 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-22.

future conflict.”⁴⁶ Unmistakably though, it was France, who’s potential revanchist tendencies and the unwillingness to permanently concede Alsace-Lorraine, that was seen as the potential future aggressor that needed to be isolated.⁴⁷

How did the Alliance address the identified threats? is the fourth question to be considered for this case study. The answer to this question is twofold. Primarily, the alliance system itself contained aggressive tendencies by integrating past, and potentially future, enemies into mutually binding contracts of military assistance. These contracts complemented each other and included safeguards against failure, as is the case in the *Rückversicherungsvertrag*. Secondly, especially in the case of the Dual and Triple Alliances, concrete military consultation between signatory states sought to address the identified threats.

The *Dreikaiserbund*, the Dual and the Triple Alliance bound traditionally hostile states together by treaty. This bond, which suggests a superficial commonality in the respective alliances, however, was attained by fundamentally different mechanisms. In the case of the *Dreikaiserbund*, it was internal dynamics that served the underlying purpose of maintaining peace in central Europe. The alliance is characterized by Patricia Weitsman as a “vehicle for Russia and Austria to contain their hostility toward one another and for Germany to hedge its bets.”⁴⁸ It served its purpose by enabling the signatory states to keep a close watch on one another and constitutes a mutual case of regarding ones enemy’s enemy as a friend. The Triple Alliance emulated this method of addressing threats by joining forces with traditional adversaries. Disputes between Austria-Hungary and Italy over the Italian provinces under Habsburg rule prevented more concrete threat mitigation measures and a higher degree of institutionalization.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments 1871-1890* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), 180.

⁴⁷ Bismarck, *Reflections and Reminiscences*, 10.

⁴⁸ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 63.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

In the case of the Dual Alliance a significantly higher degree of concrete military cooperation and consultations on military strategic levels institutionalized the alliance.⁵⁰ These consultations were rather detailed and focused on the employment of forces in the eastern theater and the strategic mobilization of forces overall. The results of the Austro-German General Staff discussions formed the foundation for German strategic planning, indicating a high level of substance and relevance.⁵¹

On which principles did the Alliance depend? is the fifth research question determined for the purpose of this monograph. Given the fact, that Bismarck's alliance system was defensive in nature, the logical conclusion is, that the alliances depended on the principals of either mutual military assistance in case of attack by a non-signatory state or, as a minimum, benevolent neutrality in all other cases.

The League of the Three Emperors established such neutrality in the second treaty, dated June 18, 1881. It emphasized neutrality over active assistance, and included mutual promises of restraint as far as activities in the Balkans were concerned.⁵² The latter point was clearly tailored towards the lingering conflict of interests between Austria-Hungary and Russia.

The treaty of the Dual Alliance went a step further. Under the condition of non-aggression, a pact of mutual defense and peace was codified on October 7, 1879. The treaty explicitly accounts for the eventuality of a war initiated by Russia against either Germany or Austria-Hungary and states that in such a case "the high contracting parties are bound to come to the assistance one of the other with the whole war strength of their empires"⁵³

⁵⁰ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 79.

⁵¹ Tunstall, *Planning for War Against Russia and Serbia*, 22.

⁵² German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Three Emperors' Treaty with Austria and Russia (June 18, 1881), accessed October 31, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1858.

⁵³ German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary, accessed October 29, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1856.

The treaty of the Triple Alliance reads different yet and specifically addresses multiple concrete scenarios. While the treaty once again stresses the peaceful and purely defensive nature of the alliance, it binds both Germany and Austria-Hungary to come to Italy's assistance in the event of a French attack against Italy and stipulates the same for the event of a French attack on Germany. The attack of a non-signatory major power on any of the three signatory states was to constitute a *casus foederis*. Finally, the Triple Alliance even took into account the event of a preemptive war: "In case a Great Power ... should threaten the security of the states of one of the high contracting parties, and the threatened party should find itself forced ... to make war against it, the two others bind themselves to observe towards their ally a benevolent neutrality. Each of them reserves to itself, in this case, the right to take part in the war ..."⁵⁴

The next question to be asked is: What were the shared values of the alliance? In the present case of Bismarck's alliance system, the shared values were monarchism and conservatism. As indicated in the answer to the first question, one of Otto von Bismarck's aims was to safeguard the German Imperial Monarchy against socialist, democratic revolutionary tendencies. More than a personal sentiment and antipathy, he regarded these movements as a real danger for Germany. The preamble to the Triple Alliance treaty clearly states that the monarchs of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy were "animated by the desire to fortify the monarchical principle and thereby to assure the unimpaired maintenance of the social and political order in their respective states."⁵⁵ Although Patricia Weitsman disputes that this indication of shared value was sufficient to maintain cohesion within the alliance, it is a codified commitment to monarchism and conservatism. Moreover, she acknowledges the scholarly dispute that exists over this issue. Considering the internal politics of the signatory states at the time, such as Bismarck's struggle with social democrats and the *Kulturkampf* of the era or liberal tendencies in Italy

⁵⁴ German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy (May 20, 1882), accessed October 29, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1860.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

versus conservative catholic dominance in Austria-Hungary, this monograph views any treaty that is motivated by a clear commitment towards the monarchic principle at least as a cohesive factor.⁵⁶

The seventh question identified is: Which issues were controversial between the alliance members? Numerous issues, in varying degrees of relevance, are apparent when one considers the socio-political reality of the late 19th century. In general, controversial issues can be grouped into two categories. The first category includes matters that had their origin in domestic policies to include the aforementioned ideological and religious differences. These issues have been outlined in the preceding paragraph. The second category comprises territorial conflicts and disputes that appear normal, considering the fact that in many cases former enemies entered into alliances with one another. In addition, geographic proximity and contiguous borders added potential for conflict.⁵⁷

The key controversy between Russia and Austria-Hungary was certainly the mutual dependence, and resulting ambitions to expand influence, on trade routes through the Dardanelles and the Strait of Constantinople. This matter was amplified by a lingering conflict in the Balkans, which reached a boiling point with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. Both Austria-Hungary and Russia saw the region as their natural sphere of influence. In response to revolts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under Ottoman rule at the time, Russia, the self-declared protector of Slav interests, declared war on Turkey. This, in turn, sparked Austro-Hungarian concerns that its own Slavic minorities might be inspired to similar actions, thus threatening the integrity of the Austrian Empire.⁵⁸ Arguably, it was this issue that caused the cessation of the *Dreikaiserbund* in 1878. This problem set was substantial enough to be included in the

⁵⁶ For an expanded discussion on this subject, see Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 91-98.

⁵⁷ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, 44.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

founding treaty of the Triple Alliance, where mutual respect to ambitions in the Balkans and the acceptance of the closing of the Dardanelles was agreed upon.⁵⁹

A second major territorial dispute was the one between Austria-Hungary and Italy, chiefly over Trento and Trieste, a conflict that has its roots approximately seventy years earlier. Austria-Hungary had gained control over Trento and Trieste after the Congress of Vienna in 1814. The process of Italian unification returned most of the Italian peninsula to Italian rule but left the enclaves of Trento and Trieste under Austria-Hungary's rule. Unlike the Balkan issue however, this conflict was not mentioned in the treaties of the Triple Alliance.⁶⁰

A host of other issues, somewhat less flagrant than the ones discussed here, certainly existed and put strain on the respective alliances. These include the strain that the war scare of 1875 put on German-Russian relations or the volatile situation in northern Africa, where Italian and French interests were at stake, mainly over influence in Tunisia. The scope of this paper does not allow for a more exhaustive analysis of these issues.

The eighth question to be discussed reads: What constituted or would have constituted defection? Based on the definition this monograph follows, two cases of defection from the various alliances in Bismarck's system occurred. These are the Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, and Italy's actions that culminated in the exit from the Triple Alliance in 1915. It needs to be noted, that due to the particular style of diplomacy in the period, secret and supplementary treaties and consultations were the norm rather than the exception and all treaties included mutual assurances of secrecy, intent and action taken by a state were not always congruent. The two cases indicated here are obvious and clear cases of defection.

⁵⁹ German History Documents: Documents - Military and International Relations, Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy (May 20, 1882), accessed October 29, 2017, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1860.

⁶⁰ This was neither the case in the initial treaty nor in the subsequent treaties of the Triple Alliance, the last of which dates 5th December, 1912. Moreover, the question was not even raised in the separate treaties between Austria-Hungary and Italy that were signed in the context of the Triple Alliance. For the full text of these treaties, refer to: Alfred Franzis Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary 1879-1914*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920).

The case of Russo-French *rapprochement* constitutes a defection from the Three Emperors League. This does not apply to the Franco-Russian alliance of 1891, which superseded the *Dreikaiserbund* but rather refers to the pro-French stance that Russia took in the war scare of 1875. Following new French military laws, which were perceived as aggressive action and a threat to Germany, numerous German newspapers and journals speculated about an imminent war. This in turn caused France to turn to Russia, and Great Britain, for support, most likely taking into account the well-known German fear of a two front war. Russia in fact did lend modest support to France, siding with Great Britain in discouraging a possible German attack on France. If this was ever planned or not is debatable, however the mere fact that Russia decided against benevolent neutrality or even assistance by promising support to France in such a case, restricted Germany's freedom of action.⁶¹

The origins of Italy's defection from the Triple Alliance began with a change in Italy's reigning monarch in 1900 which brought with it a different stance towards the pursuance of interests in the Balkans and a newly sparked interest in better relations with France. Although "this was not technically against the letter of the Triple Alliance, it certainly meant that ... neither Germany nor Austria-Hungary could be sure of Italy."⁶² Rising hostilities in the following years accelerated the downfall of the Triple Alliance, although it was renewed once more in 1912. The defection finally occurred on April 26, 1915 when Italy signed the Treaty of London with Great Britain, France and Russia "for the purpose of waging war jointly with France, Great Britain, and Russia against all their enemies."⁶³

⁶¹ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments 1871-1890*, 49-55.

⁶² Guenther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976), 124.

⁶³ The Treaty of London, accessed November 11, 2017, [https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Treaty_of_London_\(1915\)](https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Treaty_of_London_(1915)).

Overview Case 2: The Axis Powers of World War 2

Where Bismarck's alliance system was designed to maintain a brittle peace for a newly founded German empire, the coalition commonly referred to as the Axis Powers⁶⁴ had quite the opposite objective. Though with its roots in a time of peace, the Axis is a classic example for a wartime coalition. While the Axis included numerous states, either as client states or as co-belligerents, this monograph will focus on the core members of the Axis as mentioned above. Three treaties constitute the core of Hitler's alliance system. These are the so-called pact of steel or *Stahlpakt* of 1939, the Anti-Comintern pact of 1936 / 1937, and the Tripartite Pact or *Dreimächtepakt* of 1940. While the Anti-Comintern pact initially only included Germany and Japan, it expanded in 1937 to include Italy. The Axis-alliance was thus codified in two tripartite and one bilateral treaty.

When examining German alliance politics under national socialist rule, one needs to be constantly aware of the fact that there is a plethora of ideological factors and domestic issues that motivated German *raison d'état* in this period. Anti-semitism, the ideal of Aryan supremacy, and the unlimited expansion of *Lebensraum* are only the most prominent of these factors. It is easy to get lost in the question of whether or not this can be considered a foundation for "rational politics" or not. This question, although highly relevant overall, cannot and will not be answered in this monograph. It is the dynamics of the alliance of the Axis Powers that is examined here, not the rationale in Hitler's foreign policy.

The *Stahlpakt* was signed on 22nd May 1939 in Berlin by Germany's foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop and his Italian counterpart, Benito Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano di Cortellazzo. It formalized the alliance between Germany and Italy, which had been concluded informally in 1936. The alliance was far from natural or obvious and was slow in the making. Although Hitler

⁶⁴ For a brief discussion on the origins of the term "Axis" see Elizabeth Wiskemann, *The Rome-Berlin Axis: A History of the Relations between Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), ix.

admired Mussolini for his ideas and called him "... the premier anti-Marxist in Europe..." in *Mein Kampf*, substantial political issues initially stood in the way of an alliance.⁶⁵

The Anti-Comintern pact was equally unforeseen. No long-standing ties existed between Germany and Japan, as German traditionally focused on German-Chinese relations. Even after Hitler's rise to power, nothing indicated a change in this relationship much less a formal alliance between the two states. Too many controversial issues and a troubled common past seemingly prohibited a close cooperation.⁶⁶ However, the expansion of the original pact to include Italy in 1937, underlines the significance of the treaty, as it constitutes one of only two documents signed by all three core Axis Powers, the other one being the Tripartite pact.

The Tripartite pact, signed in September 1940, is a rather short document, consisting of only six articles. The magnitude and scope however is far-reaching and highly ambitious to say the least. In it, Germany, Italy, and Japan agree on the establishment of a "new order" in greater East Asia and Europe and agree to mutually assist each other in the establishment of said order. As outlined in article six of the pact, this undertaking was estimated to conclude by 1950, a mere ten years after the alliance was formed. The three nations thus not only agreed on changing the order of the world, they also estimated it could be achieved within a decade.⁶⁷

Had the alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan, codified and formalized mainly by the three treaties mentioned above, been successful in achieving its aims, it would have "ended Western civilization and returned Europe, Asia and the world to the Dark Ages of bloodshed, brutality, fascism and militarism."⁶⁸ This statement brutally visualizes the explosive potential this alliance had.

⁶⁵ Richard L. DiNardo, *Germany and the Axis Powers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005b), 26.

⁶⁶ Jonathan R. Adelman, ed., *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 62-63.

⁶⁷ Three-Power Pact Between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Signed at Berlin, September 27, 1940, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp#art>.

⁶⁸ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 1.

As with the previous case, the first question here is “What were the alliance’s political objectives?” Although the answer to this question is complex and multi-layered it is best summarized by the words of the Tripartite pact of 1940: to establish a new order.⁶⁹ The essential political goal was thus to install “demarcated spheres of interest” and divide the world into “sectors of regional hegemonies.”⁷⁰ Clearly, Germany and Italy were to control the European sphere while greater East Asia was to be dominated by Japan.⁷¹ At the center of this new order, and mainly promoted by German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, was to be a “continental power bloc stretching from Madrid to Tokyo.”⁷²

The second political objective seems blatantly obvious but is in fact more complicated than it seems. The perceived mutual objective of preventing the spread of communism constituted the basis for the signing of the Anti-Comintern pact. However, no concrete mechanism was codified. The pact merely states that the signatory states were to keep each other informed and to “confer upon the necessary measure of defense.”⁷³ Moreover, there was no alternative offered to communism, no common ideology that was to be pursued. The three states were all governed by distinct systems, fascism in Italy, National Socialism in Germany and absolute imperial monarchy in Japan.

The second question to be considered here is: What were the alliance’s military objectives? While the Anti-Comintern pact, as stated above, only vaguely hints at concrete measures, the Tripartite Pact constitutes a genuine clause of mutual assistance and collective defense. It states that “They [the signatory states] further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war or in the

⁶⁹ Three-Power Pact Between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Signed at Berlin, September 27, 1940, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp#art1>.

⁷⁰ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 69.

⁷¹ DiNardo, *Germany and the Axis Powers*, 93.

⁷² Klaus Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich*, trans. Anthony Fothergill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 102.

⁷³ The Avalon Project: Anti-Comintern Pact, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/tri1.asp>.

Chinese-Japanese conflict.”⁷⁴ Considering that the pact was signed during an ongoing war, it is somewhat disingenuous to consider it a defensive alliance. Another major military objective was to “deter the United States from intervening in the war, which was in a state of limbo after the failure to bring Britain to its knees.”⁷⁵ This deterrence hinged on the ability of Japan to act as a Pacific counterweight and thus prohibit the United States to focus entirely on the European theater. On a military strategic level, this can be regarded as the securing of the eastern, or Pacific, flank by deterrence. The treaty also created “specific military commissions to coordinate military plans and strategy.” However, these were largely ineffective as they did not convene on a regular basis and had only marginal influence on military planning and operations.⁷⁶

The *Stahlpakt* between Germany and Italy goes a step beyond collective defense. It renders binding military assistance to the other party in the event of any war, regardless of the causes for that war. Moreover, it specifies this assistance and explicitly states that all military forces will be used in such a case. In addition, the treaty establishes measures for military coordination and the coordination of war economies and even outlines how a jointly waged war should end, specifically forbidding separate armistices, or peace treaties.⁷⁷

The third question reads: What were the threats that the alliance identified? The answer to this question is threefold. Primarily, the alliance saw their intended new order threatened, in particular by the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and China.⁷⁸ The second threat that the Axis powers identified was of ideological nature. Communism countered their individual as well as their collective views of the world and their, somewhat contorted, vision of peace. This was discussed in the preceding

⁷⁴ Three-Power Pact Between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Signed at Berlin, September 27, 1940, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp#art1>.

⁷⁵ Anthony Beevor, *The Second World War* (New York: Back Bay Books / Little, Brown and Company, 2012), 143.

⁷⁶ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 69.

⁷⁷ Mario Toscano, *The Origins of the Pact of Steel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 407.

⁷⁸ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 69.

paragraphs. Finally, as the war progressed the third major threat emerged. The survival of the nations themselves was at stake.

The first identified threat was caused by multiple failures on the Axis powers' side. The first of these was to eliminate the British threat. Pre-War attempts to neutralize Great Britain as an enemy by entering into an alliance with the British Empire failed.⁷⁹ The other option, defeating Great Britain militarily, proved equally unsuccessful. At the time the Tripartite Pact was signed, the *Luftwaffe* had tried to gain air superiority over Great Britain in preparation of *Operation Seelöwe* for more than two months and was losing the battle.⁸⁰ Attempts to eliminate the Soviet Union as a player initially seemed more promising. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 1939 provided the basis for the initial German attack on Poland and later evolved into what some scholars label a quasi-alliance.⁸¹ However, the very nature of National Socialist ideology, specifically the quest for *Lebensraum* in the east, prohibited a long-lasting neutrality, cooperation, or even alliance between the two states. The idea of keeping the United States out of the war could never be realized either. Following the defeat of Japanese forces at Nomonhan and the subsequent Japanese orientation towards the south, specifically the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States engaged in a two-ocean war. China, finally, had already been at war with Japan since 1937 and was thus a real and present threat throughout the war.

How did the alliance address the identified threats? is the question that logically follows. It needs to be stated that of the three identified threats stated above, only the first one, the establishment of a new order, was addressed at all. Moreover, it was mainly addressed by parts of the alliance, Germany and Italy, who engaged in coalition warfare. Japan was largely isolated in the Pacific theater and not part of a coherent Axis strategy. The defeat of communism would have been a by-product of defeating the Soviet

⁷⁹ Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich*, 38-50.

⁸⁰ Beevor, *The Second World War*, 137.

⁸¹ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 32.

Union and was not addressed with means other than warfare. Clearly the third threat was directly caused by said warfare and ultimately led to the defeat of the Axis powers.

The degree to which Germany engaged in coalition warfare is highly debatable. While some scholars argue that “at least in terms of liaison with the armies of its allies, Germany waged coalition warfare effectively, ”others argue that the Axis hardly even constituted a coalition at all.⁸² This certainly rings true for the case of Japan. As Jonathan Adelman states: “The notion of joint German-Japanese operations against the British Empire in the Middle East remained in the realm of unrealistic fantasy” and combined planning between the allies“ if it can be said to have existed at all, was without doubt a complete fiasco.”⁸³ With Italy, however, a certain degree of coalition warfare was in fact realized. For the Air forces, this mainly included airspace coordination and very limited joint airstrikes and escort missions. The Navy arguably realized the highest degree of cooperation, mainly in the fields of submarine and anti-submarine warfare. For the Army, very little cooperation occurred, the exception being Erwin Rommel’s campaign in Northern Africa. However, there were no true unified command structures to coordinate efforts, as the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff did for the Allies.⁸⁴

The next question asks: On which principles did the alliance depend? As outlined previously, the respective treaties that stand as the foundation of the Axis, emphasized a distorted view of mutual assistance, in the case of the *Stahlpakt*, or collective defense in the case of the Tripartite Pact. However one might evaluate the true nature of these assistance obligations, they primarily served Germany in furthering its military goals. There was no coordination or even an effort to synchronize mutual military action, unless Germany deemed it necessary to achieve its own goals or, in the latter stages of the war,

⁸² DiNardo, *Germany and the Axis Powers*, 192.

⁸³ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 17.

⁸⁴ DiNardo, *Germany and the Axis Powers*, 193-195.

survive. Instead of mutual assistance or collective defense it was "... only distress and defeat [that] brought Italy and Germany closer together."⁸⁵

The sixth question this section will answer is: What were the shared values of the alliance? In the case of the Axis powers, it is difficult to identify a canon of shared values. Fascism, National-Socialism and Japanese Imperialism, although somewhat similar in their aims, differed fundamentally in their basic premises and overall ideological foundation. The scope of this monograph does not allow for an expanded discussion of the ideologies and their differences. The only values the Axis powers could agree upon were anti-communism and the belief that the world needed to be reordered and ruled by hegemony. It remains highly questionable in how far these views actually constitute values in and of themselves. As outlined previously, there was no common ideology that was to replace communism after its defeat. In fact, the opposite was the case. Most of Germany's allies were "...rightist authoritarian regimes which shared some features of the German world view but rejected its core of a radical transcendent restructuring of the world with Germany as the dominant power."⁸⁶

The next question to be asked of this case study is: Which issues were controversial between the alliance members? In general, two main subjects constituted grounds for controversy. Primarily, territorial disputes between Germany and Italy were still unresolved at the outbreak of the war and also transcended into the larger question of who was to be at the center of the new order after the war. Secondly, and arguably more importantly, German racism, rooted in and expressed through the National Socialists Aryan supremacy ideology, proved to be insurmountable.

Hitler's political aims had always included the *Anschluss*, the integration of Austria into the German Reich. However, the southern Austrian region of Tyrol extended deep into territory, up to the *Lago di Garda*.⁸⁷ Roughly 200,000 German speaking Austrians inhabited this region, called *Alto Adige* by

⁸⁵ Adelman, *Hitler and His Allies in World War 2*, 16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁷ This region was previously a part of the Habsburg Empire and was given to Italy following the peace of St. Germain in 1919. For details, see Wiskemann, *The Rome-Berlin Axis*, 23.

the Italians, that, in Hitler's mind, formed an integral part of the German Reich. However, this conflict was only the tip of the iceberg and indicated a much larger problem. Mussolini was afraid, and rightly so in retrospect, that the incorporation of Austria into the Reich directly threatened Italy's very existence. Even before Hitler took power in Germany in June 1932, he stated: "If Austria ceases to exist, there can be no more order in Central Europe. Great dangers will then threaten Italy."⁸⁸ This dispute was never resolved amiably, and ultimately Hitler annexed South Tyrol, and the equally contested Adriatic port of Trieste, in 1943 "with complete indifference to the reactions of Mussolini."⁸⁹

More fundamental than territorial disputes with Italy were Adolf Hitler's fantasies of and twisted theories on racial supremacy. On a fundamental level, the idea that the Aryan *Herrenrasse*, or master race, reigned supreme among humans, and thus had not only the right, but also the inherent obligation to exterminate non-Aryan races, dominated the National Socialists every political action. It permeated every aspect of the state, to include foreign policy. As Klaus Hildebrand states it was this "dogma of supremacy," which caused a delusional over-estimation of Germany's strength and power, "failed to solve the problem of keeping a coalition together in war."⁹⁰

The final question to be asked in this case study is: What constituted defection? Unlike many answers before, this one is clear cut. Italy's surrender in 1943 constituted an undeniable defection from the alliance of the Axis powers. The defeats of the Axis powers military forces in Stalingrad and in Northern Africa placed the coalition in a highly vulnerable position. This was especially true for Italy, which now constituted the exposed southern flank of the Axis. Internal political turmoil was the spark that ignited the powder keg that was Italy. Following Mussolini's removal from power in late July 1943, the little trust that existed in German-Italian relations was destroyed completely. On September 3rd 1943, General Giuseppe Castellano signed the Italian capitulation, agreeing to unconditional surrender and

⁸⁸ Wiskemann, *The Rome-Berlin Axis*, 31.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Klaus Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 76.

immediate cessation of hostilities in all theaters of war. In a twist of irony, this surrender also created the Italian Liberation Corps, which acted as a co-belligerent with the Allies for the remainder of the war.

This section, adhering to the methodology of structured, focused comparison as outlined in section three of this monograph, scrutinized two alliances through the lens of eight research questions. Both Bismarck's alliance system and the alliance of the Axis powers in World War 2 provided good grounds to examine the inner mechanics and cohesive elements present in alliances. As is characteristic for case studies, many more examples could have been cited. However, the choice of case studies in combination with the research questions will yield a solid foundation for the following findings and analysis section, in which the evidence collected from the case studies will be tested against the original hypotheses this monograph assumes.

Findings and Analysis

This section will analyze the results of the structured focused comparison as presented in the previous section. By reflecting and analyzing the empirical evidence extracted from the two case studies through the lens of the hypotheses as proposed in the introduction of this monograph, this section will provide further insights into the role of cohesion in alliances. This section will thus first present the answers to the research questions, as they apply to the case studies. In a second step, the results yielded from the case studies will be evaluated in regards to whether or not they support the three hypotheses this monograph assumed.

The first question examined the political objectives of the respective alliance. The empirical evidence collected from the first asserts that Bismarck's alliance system served two purposes, maintaining a peaceful European order and safeguarding the monarchic order against socialist and republican tendencies. The alliance system as established by Otto von Bismarck thus shows an interesting double characteristic. While externally oriented towards the goal of a long lasting peace, it internally sought to maintain the political status quo. More than that, Bismarck saw the stable order of monarchic rule as a *conditio sine qua non* for peace. Overall, the coalition's political goals were not only oriented towards a

substantial, positive goal but also suggested a way to achieve this goal. The scope of the alliance's goals was limited, realistic and, although certainly ambitious, achievable. The volatility of Europe's political order in the 19th century was not only taken into account by the supreme architect of the alliance system, Bismarck explicitly formulated a safeguard against revolution and instability as one of the alliance's political goals.

Case two presents a fundamentally divergent answer to the first question. Where Bismarck's alliance system sought to maintain a monarchic system in order to achieve or maintain peace, the Axis powers ultimately wanted to establish a new order by partitioning the entire world into spheres of influence. The secondary goal was to prevent the spread of communism, in itself no small feat, but when combined with the herculean ambition of achieving world dominance intuitively impossible. The Axis powers pursued two external goals, both of which were exceedingly complicated to achieve as they were nearly unlimited.

The second question asks: What were the military goals of the alliance? Bismarck's primary concern was, and had been for a long time, the latent possibility of a two-front war against France in the West and Russia in the East. Avoiding this scenario became the primary military objective he pursued. As with the formulation of his political goals, this objective is rather clearly defined, limited in scope and thus appears realistic. Political and military leadership of the German *Kaiserreich*, Bismarck and von Moltke, agreed on this goal, further cementing it as a bedrock of the alliance system. Concrete measures were implemented, particularly Austro-German consultations, in order to realize this military goal.

Again, the Axis powers' goal setting was slightly more ambitious. It is important to stress the fact however, that the Axis powers present a *de facto* case of a wartime coalition, which has significant influence on agenda setting, as the alliance needs to deal with imminent threats first. Factoring this in, the military goals set by the Axis, general military assistance, collective defense, and preventing the United States from entering the war by deterrence in the Pacific theater, seem logical and are in fact similar to the goals that Bismarck formulated for his alliances: avoiding a two-front war and assembling military

support or, in case one, benevolent neutrality. The key differences here are scope and established mechanisms. The Axis powers needed to deter the United States with a credible Japanese fleet in the Pacific in order to prevent war entry. Considering the fact that Japan was already engaged in an ongoing war with China and French Indochina, this posed a significant challenge for the Imperial Japanese fleet and thus the Axis powers overall. Further, no concrete mechanisms were established by the Axis to achieve this military objective. Although the *Stahlpakt* included an element of military coordination and the Tripartite pact called for the coordination of plans and strategy through military commissions, no substantial effort was made to realize these measures.

The third question asks which threats the respective alliance identified. For the first case study, the main threat was one of counter-alliances. Bismarck's system hinged on the inclusion in as many alliances as possible in order to achieve the political and military objectives outlined above. First and foremost this meant avoiding a Franco-Russian alliance at all cost. An alliance between these two nations would have directly threatened the territorial integrity of the, newly satiated, *Reich*, as Bismarck assumed that France was unwilling to permanently concede the Alsace and Lorraine regions. The primary threat thus directly related to the military objective of the alliance.

The Axis powers' threat perception, as outlined, consisted of three threats. Primarily, they saw their intended world order threatened; secondly they identified Communism as an ideological threat to their respective ideologies, National Socialism, fascism and imperialism; and thirdly, as the war progressed, the survival of the Axis powers' nations was threatened. In sum, the Axis powers dealt with three existential threats simultaneously. The threat to the intended new world order was imminent and present, as resistance to both Japan's and Germany's expansionism was countered by the Allies. Likewise, the perceived threat of rising Communism appears accurate. Communism can be regarded as the logical antagonist, the counter-ideology to the Axis powers' political systems and their underlying ideologies. Finally, and self-evident, the course of the Second World War brought about the third existential threat. In distinction to the other two threats however, the Axis powers' individual survival as

nations was not at risk from the very outset of the alliance. It is to be regarded as a self-inflicted threat and, while relevant to the overall scenario, was not a factor that influenced the formation of the Alliance. Undoubtedly however, it certainly played an important role in the fall of the Axis.

The fourth question asks how the alliances addressed the identified threats. Bismarck's alliance system was solely designed to address these threats. By aligning with nations that were once enemies, and had the potential to be future ones as well, Bismarck created a system of mutual and collective oversight and at the same time, a control mechanism to prevent open hostility. This concept of power control through diplomacy was enhanced by entering into a more institutionalized form of military cooperation with Austria-Hungary as indicated in the Dual Alliance. By making use of diplomatic as well as military solutions, all geared towards concisely addressing the identified threat, Bismarck created a system that, until today, stands as one of the classic examples of *Realpolitik* on one hand and successful statesmanship on the other hand.

The Axis powers, as described in the case study, only addressed one of three threats. Forced into dealing with the ongoing war that threatened the Axis powers' idea of a new world order, the Axis resolved to partial joint warfare. As outlined, however, it was mainly Italy and Germany who engaged in coalition warfare at rudimentary levels and geographically limited to the European and Northern African Theater. The Axis was not designed to engage in coalition warfare. Too different were the ideologies, too vast was the area of operations, too little institutionalization, coordination and joint planning took place. The Axis coalition was fundamentally unable to effectively address the threats it had identified.

The fifth question examined the role of the principles on which the alliances depended. As shown, Bismarck's system of alliances was a system of collective security. As such, it depended on the trust between the respective nations that they were to assist each other in the event of a non-signatory state or, at a minimum, at least ensure benevolent neutrality. While varying degrees of assistance or neutrality were codified in the respective treaties, the underlying consensus was, that lasting peace could be achieved through multilateral interdependence. This consensus was largely realized by addressing real

and persistent threats that were in the member-states collective interest. While one could argue that Germany engaged in *Realpolitik*, and thus primarily sought to further its own interests, the other allies had much to gain from the alliance as well.

In stark contrast hereto stands the nature of the Axis powers' principles. While superficially similar in nature to Bismarck's alliance principles, the case study has illustrated that it was less mutual defense and collective security and more the unilateral advancement of Germany's goals that the alliance aimed at. Unilateral gains outweighed collective gains and ultimately put too much stress on a foundation that was brittle to begin with.

Similar observations can be made with regards to the sixth question, which asked what the shared values of the alliances were. In regards to the first case, it was the preservation of monarchic rule and conservative political systems that the alliance members pursued. It was, in other words, a conservation of the political status quo, which was a perceived mutual gain and was thought to guarantee political stability.

In contrast, the Axis powers lacked a fundamental understanding of what it was they wanted to achieve. The shared aversion against communism constitutes only a negative goal and no agreed upon, coherent alternative to communism was provided. Instead, the three political ideologies outlined in the case study were to achieve the goal of preventing the spread of communism. It is justified to assert that there simply was no set of shared values to support the Axis powers.

The seventh question asked which issues were controversial between the alliance members. In the case of the Bismarck alliance system, two main sets of controversial issues were identified. While the first set, disagreements caused by domestic factors, could apparently be checked by the seemingly more important shared values of monarchic rule and conservatism, the second set, territorial disputes, could not. Multiple disputes over boundaries, influence, territories and access to said territories presented a major issue within the alliance system and constituted a high level of internal threat and instability.

In the case of the Axis powers, territorial disputes between Germany and Italy and German racism were identified as the major points of contention between the alliance members, with the latter point arguably being more fundamental. Aryan supremacy ideology did not allow for anyone else to rule besides Aryans. Since this was the bottom line of National Socialist political thought, the logical deduction was that ultimately, Germany alone was to be at the center of the world order. It was thus the very foundation of National Socialist ideology that made Germany as a country systemically unable to align itself with other nations.

The final question asked what constituted defection. Two instances of defection were identified for the first case, the Russo-French *rapprochement* and Italy's exit from the Triple Alliance. As shown in the first case study, Russia's actions in the war scare of 1875 restricted Germany's freedom of action and thus constitutes defection as defined for the purpose of this monograph. Moreover, it arguably damaged Bismarck's reputation as a stable actor, both domestically and internally. It was, in short, the first dark cloud over the bright skies of a lasting peace in continental Europe. The second case of defection, Italy's exit from the *Dreikaiserbund* in 1915, was preceded by a gradual decline in alliance relationships, which brought with them an increasing level of conflict over core political issues, especially over the Balkan question and the nature of Franco-Italian relations. Italy's defection almost a year after the outbreak of World War 1 created the dreaded two-front situation, although not quite the one that Bismarck expected and tried to safeguard against.

Italy's defection from the Axis in World War 2 created a similar outcome, although under different circumstances. Concrete military defeats, which caused political instability, preceded Italy's decision to capitulate, leaving the southern and southeastern flank of the Axis exposed. This, in effect, created a third front for Germany – a military situation it would not be able to address, and which ended with Germany's total defeat in 1945.

The first hypothesis asserts that when an alliance maintains military cohesion, it is able to achieve its military objectives. The evidence presented supports this hypothesis. Cohesion, as defined in the

literature review section of this monograph, depends on the agreement on goals, strategy, and tactics as well as on the coordination of activity directed towards those ends. As shown, the Axis powers could not attain a level of military cohesion sufficient to address the security environment or achieve the desired goals. The fundamental lack of genuinely shared goals prevented military cohesion on the highest military levels. Subordinate levels that did try to coordinate operational and tactical activity lacked direction, due to the absence of shared purpose. Bismarck's alliances produce a mixed outcome with regards to this hypothesis. Overall, the level of military cohesion was insufficient to bond all the alliances together permanently, this point is illustrated by Italy's defection from the Triple Alliance. The Dual Alliance however, displayed a high degree of military cohesion and was ultimately successful until its eventual military defeat in World War 1. This suggests, that military cohesion is a contributing factor in maintaining an overall cohesive alliance.

The second hypothesis asserts that when an alliance maintains political cohesion, it is able to achieve its political objectives. This hypothesis is supported as well. The overarching political objectives of Bismarck's alliances, maintaining peace and safeguarding monarchic rule, certainly resulted in a high level of political cohesion. This is documented amply by the continuous review and renewal of the respective alliance treaties, ongoing and amiable diplomatic relations, and the fact that Bismarck created a domestic environment that was geared towards maintaining the alliances. With Italy's political reorientation, initiated in 1900, came a deterioration in political cohesion within the Triple Alliance, ultimately causing its disintegration. The Axis powers, from the outset, could agree only on one political goal, to prevent the spread of communism. As shown throughout this study, no shared alternative, no counter-design to communism existed. In consequence, political coordination was low, as there was no ends to which coordination could be directed. German National Socialist ideology, above all the imperative of single rule by the Aryan master race and lack of personal connections between the leaders of the Axis powers, further prevented political cohesion.

The third hypothesis asserts that if one or more member states defect from the alliance, then the alliance as a whole fails. The evidence collected from the two case studies partially supports this hypothesis and thus generates a mixed outcome. As shown, in both cases it was the defection of a member state that ultimately caused the downfall of the alliance or the alliance system. Case study one showed, however, that not every action taken by a member state that falls under this paper's definition of defection leads to the alliance's failure. The war scare of 1875, and the Russo-French *rapprochement* that occurred in conjunction therewith, was a significant event and it arguably damaged Bismarck's intricate system of alliances. But it did not lead to the dissolution of the Three Emperors League and was not singularly causal for the temporary disbandment of the Alliance in 1878.

Conclusion

The case studies evaluated in this monograph have, with the limitations stated in the introductory section, provided sufficient evidence to support the three hypotheses. Military cohesion and political cohesion enable an alliance to achieve its military and political goals. Defection of a member states may cause an alliance to fail. Further research projects in this field should thus focus on different types and categories of defection in order to provide further insights into the phenomenon of defection. For the purpose of this monograph, it is assumed that the act of leaving the alliance in both cases produced an amount of risk, both operational and strategic, that the respective alliances were unable to mitigate.

Viewed in this light, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization produces an impressive record of maintaining a cohesive alliance. The alliance has also evolved however. Two general areas of evolution can be identified. Primarily, the Organization has expanded its *raison d'etre*, evolving from a firmly defensive alliance, centered around the collective defense of its member states, into one that frequently engages in missions that are neither defensive in nature nor in the vicinity of the northern Atlantic. Secondly, the Alliance has gradually expanded its territorial reach. Of special importance here are the expansion rounds that occurred after the fall of the Soviet Union. The alliance now includes ten former

members of the Warsaw Pact signatory states. One could even argue that the defection of these former Warsaw Pact members led to the failure of that alliance. One factor in maintaining political cohesion, thus, seems to be the ability to adapt to changing environments, to reach satisfactory compromise on key political issues and to create a consensus concerning the alliances reason for being. Within NATO, this is achieved through summit meetings and their ensuing declarations and the permanently established political mechanisms and venues, such as the North Atlantic Council. It is these permanent institutions that ensure permanent discourse and dialogue – the foundation for compromise and consensus. The transatlantic alliance maintained cohesion despite frequent internal political discord. As Peter H. Langer noted in 1986: “It is difficult to recall a period in the history of the western alliance when anything approaching perfect harmony prevailed.”⁹¹ Perfect harmony, in fact, seems to be the rare exception, as Lawrence Kaplan notes: “NATO’s war against terrorism inspired a brief spirit of unity in the alliance”⁹² Issues of contention between member states have always existed and included substantial matters, such as the nuclear debate of the 1980s, discourse over out-of-area missions, burden sharing within the alliance, or, more recently defense budget spending. None of these disagreements, however, broke the political cohesion of the alliance. This, of course, is not a guarantee for future success.

The second evolution the alliance has seen is the geographical expansion eastward. As assumed by this monograph, this eastward expansion does not constitute a more aggressive stance towards Russia. Political efforts to engage politically and diplomatically with Russia, be it by way of the NATO-Russia Council or the inclusion of Russia in the Partnership for Peace program indicate a desire to cooperate rather than divide. Cooperation in these venues was suspended following the Russian aggression towards the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, all civilian and military cooperation was suspended and NATO leaders condemned Russia’s

⁹¹ Peter H. Langer, *Transatlantic Discord and NATO's Crisis of Cohesion. Foreign Policy Report 1986* (Cambridge: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1986).

⁹² Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), ix.

actions at the Wales summit.⁹³ NATO, as an alliance, did not invade territory, did not coerce its newer, Eastern European members into joining the alliance. The decision to join NATO was made by free states and is in line with the spirit of the founding document, which expresses the goal of “peaceful and friendly international relations.”⁹⁴ This peaceful and voluntary expansion, however, has brought with it greater political fragmentation and political problems once on the outside of the alliance are now internal problems. As Sarwar Kashmeris observes: “As NATO has expanded from a tight-knit group of Western European allies to a collection of twenty-eight members whose security interests are not always aligned, NATO has lost the political cohesion that is essential to successful alliances.”⁹⁵

In contrast, military cohesion is strong within NATO. In contrast to frequent political discord, NATO cooperates closely and within fixed, integrated headquarters, staffs, schools, centers of excellence and even units. Joint exercises are normal and joint missions are the norm rather than the exception. NATO’s militaries have cooperated closely ever since the alliance was founded in 1949. Multiple mutual exchange programs for officers and non-commissioned officers alike continue to strengthen military cohesion within NATO. It is safe to assert that between military and political cohesion, military cohesion is stronger.

The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in April 1949 explicitly allows for member states to leave the alliance in Article 13 – to this date, no state has made use of this provision. As is the case with political cohesion, this does not guarantee, that it will not happen. Any alliance made up of independent, sovereign states is subject to change, regardless of its purpose, prosperity or track record. Defection does happen – as was most prominently seen in the case of the British vote to leave the European Union. Precise predictions as to what would happen should one or more members defect from NATO are impossible.

⁹³ Compare North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Relations with Russia*, accessed February 15, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm.

⁹⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, accessed February 15, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm.

⁹⁵ Sarwar A. Kashmeri, *NATO 2.0: Reboot Or Delete?* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

The evidence collected from the case studies suggests, however, that defection in the face of high external pressure, such as ongoing military hostilities, would create a high level of operational and strategic risk. NATO needs to focus its efforts primarily on maintaining political cohesion, in order to avoid such a scenario. Resolutions need to be found for the relationship between Russia and NATO's southeastern member states, specifically Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The alliance needs to remain steadfast in regards to its founding principles and make use of its standing mechanisms for dialogue and discussion. If this succeeds, NATO will be able to maintain its track record as keepers of the Euro-Atlantic peace.

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