HUB AND SPOKES:
EXPLAINING THE ORIGINS AND PERSISTENCE OF
THE U.S. BILATERAL ALLIANCE SYSTEM IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

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Abstract

This dissertation examines why a network of bilateral alliances became and remained the dominant structure of the American alliance system in the Asia-Pacific region. Challenging the conventional view that the United States deliberately designed and imposed the bilateral structure to maximize its influence over the region, this dissertation offers an intergovernmentalist explanation that the U.S. bilateral alliance system was created and maintained by explicit and implicit bargains between the United States and its regional allies and argues that not only the United States but also its regional allies had a considerable influence on both the origins and persistence of the American hub-and-spokes alliance system. Taking a historical institutionalist approach, this dissertation presents the following findings on the American hub-and-spokes system’s (1) origins, (2) a missed opportunity for structural change, and (3) the long-term persistence during and after the Cold War. First, the creation of the hub-and-spokes system was an outcome of bargains in which the United States made a series of concessions regarding the institutional design of its alliance system. Second, SEATO, a U.S.-led multilateral security pact that could have changed the bilateral structure, failed to survive due to its flawed organizational design chosen by its key member states. Third, the United States and its regional allies’ responses to exogenous shocks and trends, along with habitual path dependence, contributed to the persistence of the American hub-and-spokes system throughout and after the Cold War.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ v

Chapter 1. Introduction.................................................................................................. 1

- Introduction ............................................................................................................. 14
- Preference Intensity and Unforced Concession .......................................................... 18
- The Origins of the U.S. Bilateral Alliance System in Asia ........................................... 26
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 48

Chapter 3. A Patchwork of Concessions: The Origins of the U.S. Alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, 1953–4
- Introduction ............................................................................................................. 53
- Potential Explanations and Predictions ....................................................................... 56
- Explaining the U.S. Alliances with South Korea and Taiwan ....................................... 60
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 87

- Introduction ............................................................................................................. 89
- Potential Explanations and Predictions ....................................................................... 93
- The Rise and Fall of SEATO ..................................................................................... 99
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 123

- Introduction ............................................................................................................. 127
- Potential Explanations and Predictions ....................................................................... 130
- U.S. Alliance System in the Asia-Pacific after the Demise of SEATO ......................... 138
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 159

Chapter 6. Conclusion
- Summary of the Findings .......................................................................................... 162
- Theoretical Implications ............................................................................................ 166
- Policy Implications .................................................................................................... 168

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 171
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To my parents
Chapter 1

Introduction

The Puzzle

Why does the United States have only a group of bilateral alliances rather than a multilateral security pact in the Asia-Pacific region? The American “hub-and-spokes” alliance system in Asia, a web of bilateral security agreements between the United States and its regional allies, is the most important and distinctive element of the Asia-Pacific security architecture.¹ It has played a prominent role in shaping regional dynamics as the most pre-eminent politico-military institution, influencing almost all of the regional powers’ foreign and security policies throughout and after the Cold War. While few dispute the importance of the American alliance system in the region, there is little agreement on why a set of bilateral arrangements became and remained the dominant structure, which has been a highly debated question among scholars seeking to understand the origins and development of the Asian security architecture and the U.S. security presence in the Asia-Pacific.

This dissertation joins the debate by offering a novel and comprehensive account of the origins and persistence of the hub-and-spokes system. More specifically, it aims to provide a more accurate analysis by disaggregating the puzzle into the following key sub-questions. First, why did the United States and its allies in the Asia-Pacific draw up a set of bilateral agreements in lieu of a multilateral alliance at the beginning of the Cold War? Second, why did the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), the only (short-lived) U.S.-led multilateral alliance, fail to survive? Third, why and how has bilateralism persisted throughout various changes in strategic environments during and after the Cold War? These sub-puzzles seek to unravel the reasons why bilateralism was established as a “default” setting at the beginning (first question), why a potential turning points or an opportunity that could have changed the bilateral structure was missed (second question), and what causal mechanisms have maintained or reproduced the hub-and-spokes system over the long term (third question).

All these questions must be answered in order to understand why we now observe a set of bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific. Importantly, each question requires a separate evaluation of alternative explanations because a causal factor that works on one occasion may have no causal impact on another, and vice versa. Unfortunately, most of the extant literature on the U.S. hub-and-spokes system rests on the unfounded assumption that there is a single, all-encompassing explanation or “grand theory” that can explain the creation and persistence of the alliance system. Yet such a simple overarching account is less likely to capture the complex causal dynamics at play, and difficult to test against empirical evidence. The complex puzzle of the American hub-and-spokes system can be better explained by disaggregating it into different empirical sub-puzzles, and by testing more narrowly focused theoretical explanations, as Barbara Geddes suggests:
Big, romantic, untestable ideas can be made amenable to rigorous investigation by first breaking them up into their component processes and then theorizing these processes one at a time. Breaking up the traditional big questions into the processes that contribute to them would make possible the construction and testing of theories.\footnote{Barbara Geddes, \textit{Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 40.}

Dividing a simple why question into a series of successive sub-puzzles is also an effective way to analyze the causal dynamics of complex events without sacrificing historical details.\footnote{Eric Grynaviski, “Contrasts, Counterfactuals, and Causes,” \textit{European Journal of International Relations} 19, no. 4 (2013): 832-5.} In addition, it is an approach that more accurately accords with historical reality and takes into account that a historical phenomenon of great significance in fact consists of a series of events.\footnote{For instance, the end of the Cold War was not a single event but a group of events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Malta Summit, collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Matthew Evangelista, “Explaining the Cold War’s End: Process Tracing All the Way Down?” in \textit{Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool} eds. Andrew Bennett and Jefferey Checkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 155-8.}

By systematically testing alternative explanations drawn from the literature on international bargaining, alliance politics, and international organizations and institutions to solve the key sub-puzzles, this dissertation offers a structured and comprehensive analysis of the causal processes that contributed to the creation and persistence of the bilateral structure of the American alliance system in the Asia-Pacific.
The Argument in Brief

In this dissertation, I offer an *intergovernmentalist* explanation for the origins and persistence of the American hub-and-spokes system. My central claim is that explicit and implicit bargains between the United States and its regional allies led to the formation and maintenance of the U.S. bilateral alliance network in the Asia-Pacific. I argue that, contrary to the predominant view that the United States deliberately designed and solidified the bilateral structure of its Asia-Pacific alliance system by exerting hegemonic influence, not only the United States but also its regional allies had a considerable influence on both the origins and persistence of the American hub-and-spokes alliance system. More specifically, based on my primary and secondary sources from both sides of the Pacific, this dissertation presents the following findings on the American hub-and-spokes system’s (1) origins, (2) a missed opportunity for structural change, and (3) the long-term persistence during and after the Cold War.

First, the creation of the hub-and-spokes system was an outcome of bargains in which the United States made a series of concessions regarding the institutional design of its alliance system. The United States initially had planned to form a multilateral alliance in the Asia-Pacific, but it eventually abandoned the multilateral plan and embraced bilateralism. Drawing on insights from social choice theory and the crisis bargaining literature, I demonstrate that this consequential shift was induced by the differences of the degrees to which the U.S. and its prospective allies wanted a specific form of alliance system. This finding is significant because it disconfirms the predominant view in the field that the United States deliberately designed the bilateral system to maximize its influence over regional allies.
Second, SEATO, a U.S.-led multilateral security pact that could have changed the bilateral structure, failed to survive due to its flawed organizational design chosen by its key member states. Disconfirming rival explanations focusing on collective beliefs and bureaucratic pitfalls, this dissertation reveals that the member states of SEATO intentionally designed inefficient organizational rules and structures to hamstring effective collective actions to reduce the risk of entanglement and prevent other members’ free-riding. From its inception, SEATO was organized hypocrisy doomed to fail.

Third, the United States and its regional allies’ responses to exogenous shocks and trends, along with habitual path dependence, contributed to the persistence of the American hub-and-spokes system throughout and after the Cold War. After the demise of SEATO, during the Cold War era, the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies maintained the bilateral pattern of their security cooperation without reflecting the efficacy of the existing system or exploring institutional alternatives. However, the continuity of the bilateral system after the Cold War was a result of their strategic choices to address the new challenges. The United States and its regional allies consciously reselected their traditional hub-and-spokes system as a reliable institutional solution to cope with the strategic uncertainty in the early post-Cold War era, and they reaffirmed the relevance of their traditional bilateral security ties in their efforts to address the challenges of rising China in the 2000s.
Theoretical Framework, Method, and Data

This dissertation does not advance a single, overarching theory that explains both the origins and persistence of the American bilateral alliance network. The U.S. hub-and-spokes system we now observe is a compound historical construct that resulted from a combination of different causal mechanisms and processes. One cannot explain both the creation and persistence of the system with a single, ahistorical theory that does not capture such complex causal dynamics.

For the same reason, this dissertation focuses on the historical origins and development of the U.S. alliance system in Asia instead of simply comparing the contrasting institutional settings in Asia and Europe, where the United States joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Many existing works on the U.S. hub-and-spokes system attempt to find a theory that explains under what conditions states select multilateral or bilateral alliances by comparing the post-war situations in Asia and Europe. At a glance, such a comparison appears to provide a useful opportunity for a quasi-experiment. However, it ignores the complex historical processes that contributed to the different institutional developments in the two regions. For example, in Europe, the United States was invited to join a multilateral security framework after European countries created a collective defense alliance—the so-called Brussels Treaty—which later evolved into NATO with U.S. participation. In contrast, in Asia, it was the United States that initiated discussions on forming alliances with regional countries. Furthermore, a simple comparison of post-war Asia and Europe makes it difficult, if not

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impossible, to examine why and how the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies maintained their bilateral alliance system throughout and after the Cold War.

Yet my aim is not to simply duplicate diplomatic historians’ accounts of the American alliance system’s creation and development. As an analytic bet, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, I disaggregate the complex puzzle of the U.S. bilateral alliance system into three empirical sub-puzzles—(1) the origins, (2) the failure of a structural change (i.e., the failure of SEATO), and (3) the long-term persistence of the bilateral structure and I test more narrowly focused explanations by incorporating theoretical insights from the literature on interstate bargaining, alliance politics, design of international institutions, organizational failure, and institutional continuity.

In doing so, I take a historical institutionalist approach as this dissertation’s basic theoretical framework. Historical institutionalism itself cannot be regarded as a theory, since it does not provide any specified hypotheses or causal mechanisms. However, as a “framework,” historical institutionalism offers useful insights and analytical merits in analyzing the origins and historical development of political institutions such as the American hub-and-spokes alliance system. As Daniel Nexon states, historical institutionalism provides a “toolbox for grappling with the dynamic nature of causal processes and their embeddedness within specific socio-historical contexts.” In addition, while it emphasizes the importance of temporality and context, historical institutionalism allows rationalist and sociological explanations within its framework. More specifically, this dissertation rests on the following historical institutionalist assumptions. First, it assumes that the creation of, and changes in, institutions are often episodic and

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contingent upon historical conditions.⁷ For this reason, instead of looking for a
generalizable, ahistorical explanation, I analyze the historical origins and development of
the U.S. alliance system with a focus on critical junctures at which the United States and
its allies decided to select or maintain the bilateral design of their alliance system.⁸
Second, I assume that the causes of institutional continuity can be distinct from the causal
factors that contributed to the creation of the institution in the first place.⁹ For this reason,
this dissertation examines not only how the U.S. hub-and-spokes system was created in
the beginning, but also why it was maintained without a major change during and after
the Cold War.

Based on this approach, this dissertation employs the method of process tracing,
which is defined as “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures
of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about
causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case.”¹⁰ Process tracing, which
examines whether events and processes of interests fit the observable implications drawn
from hypothesized explanations, has several merits in explaining complex historical
phenomena. First, by mobilizing multiple observations of causal processes and

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⁸ By critical juncture I mean a moment at which a particular institutional arrangement is selected between two or more alternative paths, leaving a long-lasting impact on the evolution of the institution. For a more detailed discussion on the concept, see Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen, “The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism,” World Politics 59, no. 03 (2007): 341-369.


sequences, it outperforms other methods in evaluating competing explanations for highly complex causal dynamics such as strategic interactions and path dependence.\textsuperscript{11} Second, since it is particularly sensitive to equifinality—multiple causal pathways that result in the same outcome—process tracing enables researchers to conduct a more delicate analysis of complex causal dynamics.\textsuperscript{12} Third, process tracing is advantageous in dealing with variables that are difficult to quantify, such as threat perception and preference intensity.\textsuperscript{13}

This dissertation traces causal processes by examining qualitative data provided by primary and secondary sources, including government documents, public statements, personal memoirs, and analyses and interpretations by historians, regional experts, and journalists. These sources were gathered through archival and literature research in the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

**Aims and Contributions**

The main purpose of this dissertation is to shed new light on the ongoing scholarly debate on the American alliance network in the Asia-Pacific. More specifically, it seeks to contribute to our understanding of the U.S. bilateral alliance system in three ways.

First, regarding its origins, I reframe the puzzle by taking the view that alliances, like many other international institutions, are formed through interstate negotiations. More specifically, this dissertation focuses not only on the institutional preferences of the


states but also on the negotiations and bargains between them as key processes that resulted in the bilateral system. Most extant works on the U.S. bilateral alliance system focus too much on the conditions under which states prefer bilateral or multilateral alliances. At the same time, these works neglect to comprehensively address the bargaining phase of alliance building. To understand why and how alliances take specific institutional forms, one needs to analyze not only why states prefer specific forms—the ‘inputs’—but also how the varying degrees of bargaining power of different states generate the ‘final’ design of alliances. Focusing both on national preferences and interstate bargains, this project seeks to provide a more accurate and balanced account of why and how a series of bilateral agreements became the initial setting of the U.S. alliance network in the Asia-Pacific.

Second, this dissertation, by examining the creation and demise of SEATO, brings into the debate an analysis of a potential turning point or “missed opportunity,” which could have changed the bilateral structure. Although the multilateral security organization lasted more than two decades until its eventual dissolution, surprisingly little attention has been given to this critical event in the ongoing debate on the American alliance network in the Asia-Pacific. The design of the regional security architecture may have been very different if this multilateral alliance had succeeded. Through a careful investigation on why the multilateral alliance of SEATO failed to survive, this dissertation examines the causal factors and mechanisms that steered the United States and its regional allies away from this alternative institutional pathway.

Third, I attempt to provide a systematic, empirical test of the competing explanations on the persistence of the U.S. hub-and-spokes alliance system. Although most existing scholarly works explicitly or implicitly accept the claim that institutional
lock-in and path dependence mechanisms contributed to the persistence of bilateralism, no serious attempt has been made to test such explanations against empirical evidence. Without clear identification and empirical validation of the causal mechanisms, such path dependence accounts fall short of accurately explaining the persistence and dominance of specific institutional structures.14 Through a systematic investigation of different pieces of evidence, this dissertation empirically tests what mechanisms were critical in maintaining or reproducing the bilateral structure.

In addition to engaging the debate on the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the small but growing literature on the variations and changes in alliance design. Recently, inspired by the “rational design of international institutions” literature, there has been a remarkable development in the research on the variation in alliance designs.15 Most of these works, contrary to the traditional “balance of power” literature which basically treated alliance dynamics as a multilateral process, focus primarily on dyadic “contracts” between two allies as a basic unit of analysis.

Although such a dyadic approach contributed to the development of rigorous theoretical models by simplifying the analytical framework, it neglects an important multilateral dimension of alliance designing—how states select, exclude, and organize their security partnerships in a multi-state system before delving into specific terms of agreements with


their chosen partners.\textsuperscript{16} By taking various strategic considerations and interactions at the regional level into analytical scope, this dissertation demonstrates how multilateral factors affect the creation of different bilateral alliances.

I also aim to contribute to the study of alliance politics and international organizations by examining the puzzle of the failure of SEATO with a novel theoretical framework of dysfunctional international organizations. By taking this approach, my study attempts to find theoretical implications for the two questions international relations scholars have routinely neglected: (1) Why do alliances collapse? and (2) What causes dysfunction of international organizations? Whereas studies on the origins, designs, functions, and impacts of alliances and international organizations have made significant progress in recent decades, only a few theoretical—and even fewer empirical—works have addressed these two intriguing puzzles. My dissertation seeks to fill this gap and demonstrate that the studies on alliance politics and international organizations can provide valuable theoretical insights to each other.

Apart from revealing the causal factors and processes that shaped and maintained the bilateral alliance network, this dissertation seeks to provide policy implications for understanding the internal dynamics and identifying potential changes in the U.S. alliance system, which is still is the most important regional security institution in the Asia-Pacific. The strategic environment of the region faces great uncertainty due to a number of challenges, such as the rise of new regional powers and the rapidly changing military, political, economic, and demographic forces within and across countries in the region. How the United States and its regional allies and partners will cope with such new challenges.

strategic challenges is a critical question, and the variables and analytical framework provided in this dissertation may help to better analyze and predict how the U.S. alliance network and the regional security architecture will evolve in the future.
Chapter 2

Unforced Concession:
The Unexpected Origins of the U.S. Bilateral Alliance System
in the Asia-Pacific, 1951

Introduction

Why and how did the United States choose a bilateral structure when it created its alliance network in Asia? As the first puzzle, this chapter investigates the origins of the American bilateral alliance network in the Asia-Pacific. The central cleavage in the debate over the origins of the American hub-and-spoke system arises from different interpretations of U.S. institutional preferences and the role of regional powers. The first view, which can be labeled as the “hegemony design” thesis, explains the bilateral system as a product of an American hegemonic design. Its basic assumption is that a huge power gap between the United States and its allies would have enabled Washington to design the alliance system in its favor. From this perspective, scholars such as Christopher Hemmer, Peter Katzenstein, John Ikenberry, and Victor Cha have offered plausible
reasons why U.S. policymakers preferred bilateralism, such as cultural prejudice, consideration of policy autonomy, and concerns about unruly allies.¹⁷

However, despite its valuable theoretical insights, the hegemonic design thesis remains persuasive only until we remember another important fact: American policymakers tried to form a multilateral alliance in the region before making bilateral security agreements. As several diplomatic historians have richly documented, the Truman administration attempted to build the so-called Pacific Pact in 1951 with a group of Asia-Pacific countries before creating the hub-and-spoke system.¹⁸ If American policymakers preferred bilateralism as the hegemonic design thesis claims, why did they try to build a multilateral alliance in the first place?

This apparent incongruity between historical facts and the hegemonic design thesis led another group of scholars to espouse an alternative view, which can be called the “tyranny of the weak” thesis. Mostly focused on the unrealized 1951 Pacific Pact initiative, scholars such as Galia Press-Barnathan, Kent Calder, Min Ye, Kai He, Huiyun Feng, and Arthur Stein contend that the Truman administration preferred multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific. Yet Washington was not able to form a multilateral arrangement it

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preferred, they argue, because recalcitrant regional powers frustrated the American initiative.\textsuperscript{19}

Yet a critical puzzle arises from this explanation. If the United States preferred a multilateral security pact, why did it fail to push forward its preferred institutional design despite its preponderant material and bargaining power? In the wake of World War II, all the prospective American allies were weak and in desperate need of security and economic assistance from Washington. Under such circumstances, why did the United States make concessions, not the small regional powers? Unfortunately, most existing accounts espousing the tyranny of the weak thesis fail to provide compelling behavioral logic and empirical evidence to show how the small regional powers beat the United States in the bargains for alliance building.\textsuperscript{20}

The debate so far shows that we need to explain what determined the outcome of the negotiations for the unrealized Pacific Pact plan, which lies at the core of this debate. As Calder and Ye point out, the Pact initiative was a critical juncture at which the United States changed its course of action from multilateralism to bilateralism.\textsuperscript{21} The Truman administration formed a series of bilateral security agreements right after negotiating the


\textsuperscript{20} For a notable exception, see Calder, “Securing Security through Prosperity,” 140-142. Calder suggests that Japan frustrated the U.S. Pacific Pact plan by exploiting Dulles’s sense of urgency. This account’s validity will be examined in the empirical analysis section.

\textsuperscript{21} Calder and Ye, \textit{The Making of Northeast Asia}, 39-45.
Pacific Pact plan with regional powers in early 1951, and these bilateral deals created the hub-and-spoke network which lasted more than six decades. A convincing answer should clearly explain what factors determined the surprising outcome of this negotiation, from which the Truman administration abandoned the Pacific Pact initiative and began to embrace bilateralism.

Focusing on this question, in this chapter, I offer a novel account of why and how the United States ended up forming a set of bilateral alliances at the beginning of the Cold War in the Asia-Pacific. Drawing on insights from social choice theory, I claim that the key factor which contributed to the creation of the bilateral alliance system was the differential intensities of institutional preferences held by the United States and its allies. Primary sources from both sides of the Pacific show that the Truman administration neither deliberately designed the bilateral structure nor was frustrated by small-but-super allies who punched above their weight. Rather, the change in the American course of action from multilateralism to bilateralism was an unforced, voluntary concession that occurred because the Truman administration did not strongly prefer a specific form of alliance while its regional allies had a strong preference in the matter. Although the 1951 Pacific Pact plan was the sole concrete U.S. design for the Asia-Pacific security contemplated before the formation of the hub-and-spoke system, American institutional preference was loose and flexible. The Truman administration’s primary goal at the time was to rehabilitate and incorporate Japan into the anti-communist coalition, and the choice between bilateralism and multilateralism was much less important than the existing accounts assume. Washington abandoned the Pacific Pact plan and embraced bilateralism because its prospective allies in the region, notably Australia and New Zealand, strongly desired exclusive security arrangements with the United States.
The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section discusses how differential preference intensities can determine negotiation outcomes by inducing unforced concessions. Then the second section provides empirical predictions and formulates methodological principles. The third section investigates how differential intensities of institutional preferences shaped the bilateral structure of the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific, by examining primary sources from the United States, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. A brief conclusion summarizes key findings and discusses their implications for history, policy, and international relations theory.

Preference Intensity and Unforced Concession

Preference Intensity in International Politics

Preference intensity has long been regarded as an important explanatory variable in international relations. In the field of strategic studies, scholars suggest—although they use different terms such as motivation, determination, resolution, or resolve—that warring parties’ intense preference for victory is a key determinant of major conflict outcomes. This “motivational theory of victory” posits that a state that pursues victory more vigorously often prevails because it can bear more risks and costs. We can find the same logic in the crisis bargaining literature as well. As Thomas Schelling points out, crisis bargaining often follows the logic of the Chicken game, which tests confronting parties’ willingness to take risks to

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achieve desired outcomes.\textsuperscript{24} In such a situation, preference intensity plays an important role since the party with a less intense preference is more likely to retreat from the risk-taking competition.\textsuperscript{25}

In contrast, a different logic dictates the relationship between preference intensity and bargaining outcomes in the realm of international cooperation. In a non-coercive negotiation from which bargaining parties can walk out whenever they want, those who more intensely want to conclude an agreement—i.e. who fear the collapse of it—tend to have a weaker bargaining position. Andrew Moravcsik describes this logic as asymmetric interdependence, by putting that the bargaining power of a negotiating party is “inversely proportional to the relative value that it places on an agreement.”\textsuperscript{26} Studies of various types of international cooperation including regional integration, alliances, peace treaties, and international organizations support this logic by revealing that those who fear the collapse of negotiations more often make concessions, whereas a bargaining party with attractive outside options rarely makes compromises.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Thomas Schelling, \textit{Arms and Influence} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 116-125.


The Logic of Unforced Concession

In addition to these two mechanisms—risk/cost acceptance and asymmetric interdependence—this chapter identifies another mechanism through which preference intensity influences state behaviors and international outcomes: the logic of unforced concession. Before beginning the theoretical discussion, I define preference intensity as the degree to which a political actor desires a particular outcome in a given issue area.

What is the logic of unforced concession and how is it related to preference intensity? Building on the concept of extended preference provided by social choice theory, I argue that a bargaining party can get what it desperately wants in a cooperative negotiation when its counterpart has only a mild preference for that item and thus has no strong incentive to compete over it. The basic logic is intuitive as illustrated in the following example. Suppose that there are two individuals A and B, who have very different tastes. While individual A has only a mild preference for Italian food, individual B has a very strong preference for Chinese cuisine and a violent distaste for Italian food. If A and B go out for dinner together, where would they choose to dine in a town which has only Chinese and Italian restaurants? Unless their personal relationship is bad, the commonsensical answer would be that they will select a Chinese restaurant, even if A possesses a greater influence over B. What behavioral logic leads us to this prediction? Social choice theorists John Harsanyi, Donald Davidson, and Ken Binmore explain that people do not always follow their personal preferences based on individual utility calculations when they make social choices. Rather, they often make decisions based on their “extended preferences,” which allow someone to understand how much others would be (dis)satisfied in different hypothetical

28 I borrowed the basic idea of this example from John Harsanyi, Rational Behavior and Bargaining Equilibrium in Games and Social Situations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 52-53.
situations, by putting themselves in those other people’s positions.29 In the example above, according to the logic of interpersonal utility comparison, A will agree to go to a Chinese restaurant because the utility she will get from having Italian food is smaller than the disutility B will derive from dining at an Italian restaurant.

Can we find the same behavioral pattern in the grim world of international politics, in which states doggedly pursue their respective self-interests? Although it is difficult to imagine states making altruistic concessions, an unforced concession based on extended preferences can occur under the right conditions. More specifically, even in an asymmetric negotiation between small and great powers, a small power can get what it badly wants when the following three conditions hold. First, the relationship between the two countries should be cooperative so that the stronger power can take into account its extended preference, which considers both parties’ satisfactions. Second, the negotiation should be a non-zero-sum game in which the increase in the small power’s utility does not decrease the great power’s utility; in the language of social choice theory, the utility function of the great power should not assign negative utility to the utility level of its counterpart. Third, the great power must have no or only a mild desire to compete over the negotiated item desperately pursued by the small power. Even if the first two conditions hold, the small state cannot get what it wants unless this last condition is met. The item pursued by the small power must not be closely

related to the great power’s core interests, which can provide direct incentives to compete. The great power should also have no indirect incentives to use the item as an instrument for issue linkage. If the great power wants to use it for punishment over other issues, or as a future side payment to the small power, then the great power’s unforced concession is unlikely to occur.

Why would the great power make a concession in such a situation? An unforced concession by the great power is likely to occur when the above three conditions hold, for two reasons. First, from a rational perspective, acting selfishly over an issue of minor importance (i.e. mild preference) in this situation does not make sense since the potential damage to the cooperative relationship with the small power would outweigh the benefit of such an action. Taking away the item the small power greatly desires might seriously disappoint the small power, or even make it hold a grudge. Second, considerations about reputation and legitimacy can also motivate the great power to make a voluntary concession. Making a concession in an issue area of minor importance is a good way to present the image of being a “benign hegemon” without paying high costs.

What determines the strength of a preference and how do we measure it? The intensity of a preference is a function of the perceived interests at stake, and we can measure it by examining the motives behind policymakers’ policy preferences—why they prefer a particular policy option. If policymakers believe that a policy option has significant strategic or political implications, they will have a strong preference for or against it. In contrast, if they think the policy is a minor issue or just an instrumental, substitutable measure for other more important goals, then their preference intensity would be relatively low. By examining the perceived interests at stake, we can measure preference intensities without falling into
analytical traps of tautology and strategic misrepresentations.\textsuperscript{30} It is tautological to conclude that a state’s preference is mild because it made a concession in a negotiation, since the concession is the outcome we want to explain.\textsuperscript{31} Even if we attempt to avoid tautology by examining causal “steps” such as the words and deeds of bargaining parties revealed through a negotiation process, it would still be problematic since bargaining parties can intentionally misrepresent not only what they want but also how much they want it.\textsuperscript{32} Yet by looking at policymakers’ perception of what is at stake in a policy option, we can measure the strength of their preference for or against it without relying on the outcome we want to explain or on strategic deceptions that can lead us into serious measurement errors.

One thing that should be noted here is that perceived interests, not objective ones, determine the intensity of preferences. Even if a particular option resulted in some benefits, such consequential merits do not necessarily prove that policymakers knew and deliberately pursued those benefits at the outset. To be regarded as a source of policymakers’ intense preference, such benefits should have been expected by policymakers beforehand. Since such perceptions about interests are private information, to measure the intensity of preferences, we need to investigate the internal policy discussions and considerations in order to measure the intensity of preferences, rather than judging only

\textsuperscript{30} This approach was inspired by Joshua Kertzer’s discussion on how to measure resolve. Joshua Kertzer, \textit{Resolve in International Politics} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 113-119.


from the preferences verbally or behaviorally revealed during negotiations. In addition, the subjective nature of preference intensity suggests that various factors that hinder objective cost-benefit analysis, such as time constraints, distractions by other issues, and lack of appropriate expertise or experience, can influence the intensity of policymakers’ preferences.

*Predictions: What Should We Be Able to See?*

This chapter claims argues that the logic of unforced concession best explains the outcome of the alliance building negotiations between the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies, which resulted in the creation of the hub-and-spoke alliance system. What kind of evidence should we be able to observe to validate this empirical claim?

To begin with, we need to know whether the three key conditions discussed above—cooperative relationship, non-zero-sum game, and mild U.S. preference—were met. The satisfaction of the first condition, the cooperative relationship between the United States and its counterparts, seems to be evident. These countries were negotiating security alliances, a highly-developed form of cooperative relationship based on common security interests and concerns. Yet the first condition will be more clearly confirmed if there is evidence of U.S. policymakers’ empathy for their prospective allies’ interests and concerns. The strongest form of evidence would be U.S. empathy presented in the records of internal communications. In contrast, empathic expressions shown in the interaction with the prospective allies should be regarded as weaker evidence, since such expressions could be remarks made for the sake of diplomatic courtesy.

The second condition, which requires the negotiations to be non-zero-sum, should be supported by the evidence of U.S. perception that the prospective allies’ gains regarding
the alliance structure did not represent a loss in terms of U.S. interests. Even if these countries were in a cooperative relationship with the United States in general, the Truman administration could have thought that it was playing a zero-sum game regarding the potential distributive implications of multilateral and bilateral security arrangements. If such evidence is found, my explanation would be disconfirmed.

As for the third condition that the Truman administration had only a mild institutional preference for a multilateral alliance, I suggest the following observable implications. First, if my explanation is correct, there should be evidence showing that American policymakers considered the design of the alliance network to be a minor issue or an instrumental, substitutable measure for other more important policy objectives. Second, my explanation would be falsified if there is evidence of a U.S. perception that the choice between multilateral and bilateral structure would have significant implications for key interests and concerns such as the risks of abandonment and entanglement, effective protection of allies, burden sharing, and domestic backlash. Third, any evidence of indirect incentives for U.S. policymakers to push hard on the issue of alliance structure, such as issue linkage or punishment, would disconfirm my unforced concession thesis.

The unforced concession thesis also requires evidence demonstrating that the prospective allies had strong institutional preferences for a bilateral alliance structure. To measure their preference intensities, I examine the presence of observable implications similar to the ones suggested above. Evidence showing that these countries regarded the form of alliance as an important issue relating to their key policy concerns would validate the conjecture that they had strong preferences. Yet empirical evidence which demonstrates that these regional powers perceived the alliance structure as an issue of minor importance would disprove my explanation.
In addition, to examine whether the unforced concession thesis is the best explanation, we also need to know how well it stands in comparison with its rivals. The first rival, the hegemonic design thesis, claims that the United States imposed a hub-and-spoke structure because it preferred bilateralism. If that is accurate, we should be able to find documentary evidence demonstrating that policymakers of the Truman administration preferred bilateralism and they utilized U.S. material and bargaining power to obtain their regional allies’ agreement to the hub-and-spoke alliance network.

The other rival, the tyranny of the weak thesis, contends that regional allies frustrated the U.S. multilateral initiative and won a “forced concession” from the Truman administration. This argument rests on an assumption that even though the United States was enjoying a preponderance of power at the time, its bargaining power may not have corresponded with its material capacity. If this account is true, there should be evidence of a strong American preference for a multilateral structure and regional allies’ possession of bargaining leverage over the United States.

**The Origins of the U.S. Bilateral Alliance System in Asia**

*The Formation of the U.S. Alliance Policy toward the Asia-Pacific*

In the wake of World War II, the Truman administration was not interested in forming or joining any type of alliances in the Asia-Pacific up until October 1950. In a hearing on the ratification of NATO before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1949, one U.S. official testified that “the United States was not considering joining in any other regional defense arrangement for the Pacific or elsewhere.”33 The most important reason American

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policymakers eschewed the idea of an Asia-Pacific alliance was their concerns about free-
riding and moral hazard. In December 1949, NSC 48/2 advised that the United States “must
not take such an active part in the early stages of the formation of such an association” unless
the Asia-Pacific countries’ commitment and capacity to share the security burden were
clearly demonstrated.34

A series of unsuccessful appeals for “Asian-NATO” by regional powers well
illustrate the American reluctance to enter into an alliance in the region. The first plea for a
regional security pact was made by the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan. In March
1949, not long after the United States and its European allies drafted the North Atlantic
Treaty, President Elpidio Quirino of the Philippines made a proposal for a regional defense
pact similar to NATO.35 In May, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of Taiwan and President
Rhee Syngman of South Korea joined the motion for a regional alliance equivalent to NATO
in Asia.36 Yet the Truman administration swiftly rejected their proposal, maintaining that it
was not interested in a regional alliance in the Asia-Pacific.37 A record of internal discussions
shows that American policymakers were suspicious about Chiang and Rhee having ulterior
motives. They believed that these shrewd Asian leaders were using Quirino’s proposal to
opinion [to] that end.”38

34 NSC 48/2 The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia, Foreign Relations of the
35 Telegram, Charge in the Philippines (Lockett) to the Secretary of State, March 22, 1949, FRUS,
37 Press Release by the Secretary of State, May 18, 1949, Department of State Bulletin, No. 20
(May 1949), 696.
38 Telegram, Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, Top Secret, July 29, 1949, in FRUS,
Australia and New Zealand, two major British Dominions in the Pacific, hoped to form a NATO-like alliance with the United States as well. New Zealand officially expressed its interest in a regional defense arrangement parallel to NATO in June 1949.\(^{39}\) Australia, another enthusiastic supporter of a U.S.-led security pact, followed suit by urging the necessity of “a firm agreement between the countries that have a vital interest in the stability of Asia and the Pacific” in March 1950.\(^{40}\) Yet, again, Washington responded that it was not interested in creating such a regional alliance, stating that an “initiative for any Pacific or Asiatic assn [association] must be indigenous.”\(^{41}\)

Although it made little headway, the idea of an Asia-Pacific multilateral alliance was once floated inside the U.S. State Department. In January 1950, a working group headed by Special Assistant to the Secretary John Howard proposed a multilateral Asia-Pacific security pact. Modeled after NATO, it was designed to address the potential threats of Japanese resurgence and communist aggressions in Asia. The proposed pact included the United States, Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand as potential members. Yet Howard’s plan was soon rejected by John Foster Dulles, who had a significant influence on the Truman administration’s Asia policy. Dulles, a respected Republican with considerable experience in international affairs, was brought into the State Department in April 1950 as a part of President Truman’s effort to consolidate bipartisan foreign policy. Although Dulles was officially a special consultant to the Secretary of State, he was the one who made key decisions regarding the Truman administration’s Asia policy since President

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Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson had him to take charge of Asia-Pacific affairs. Constrainingly, Dulles rejected Howard’s proposal because he feared that such an arrangement would send the wrong message that the United States was willing to abandon the countries outside of the multilateral pact in the region.

Even the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 did not change the American reluctance about forming an Asia-Pacific alliance idea. Rather, the policymakers the Truman administration accelerated their efforts to complete a peace settlement with Japan, because they believed that the communist aggression in Korea was ultimately aiming at Japan, an important industrial center that must not be taken by the Soviets. Based on this consensus, Dulles began exploratory talks with several countries about the Japanese peace settlement issue from September to November 1950. During these talks, he found that Asia-Pacific countries were strongly opposed to a lenient peace settlement due to their fear about the potential resurgence of Japanese militarism. Especially, Australia and New Zealand insisted that they would not support the U.S. proposal without supplemental safeguards—alliance with the United States. Dulles again rejected their demands, responding that creating such a

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regional alliance would invite free-riding and make the excluded countries more vulnerable to communist aggressions.\textsuperscript{47} Yet it appears that he began speculating the idea of a multilateral alliance as a potential reward for regional powers’ cooperation with the Japanese peace settlement from these discussions. Although Dulles never gave an indication that his government would seriously pursue it, he asked Australia’s Minister for External Affairs Percy Spender whether Canberra would be satisfied if Washington created “a chain of Pacific defense running from the Aleutians through Japan, the Philippines to Australia and New Zealand.”\textsuperscript{48}

What triggered the change in the U.S. attitude toward an Asia-Pacific alliance was China’s sudden intervention in Korea in October 1950. Alarmed by the rapidly deteriorating situation on the Korean Peninsula and the increasing threat to Japan, the Truman administration began to seriously consider an Asia-Pacific alliance as an instrument to achieve an early Japanese peace settlement. In a memorandum to Acheson sent in December 1950, Dulles urged him to conclude the peace settlement with Japan as soon as possible in order to secure military bases in Japan and enlist Tokyo in the struggle against communism.\textsuperscript{49} In the same document, he officially opened the possibility of creating a multilateral pact for the first time by suggesting that “it may be necessary to have a Pacific pact, initially of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, the United States, and perhaps Indonesia.”\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{49} Memorandum by the Consultant to the Secretary (Dulles) to the Secretary of State, December 8, 1950. \textit{FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI}, 1359.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 1360.
The regional pact idea was proposed to generate support among the Asia-Pacific countries for the Japanese peace settlement. On December 12, 1950, four days after Dulles officially raised the possibility of a Pacific security pact, the State Department drafted a “Pacific Declaration” proposal. This document shows that U.S. policymakers began to consider the creation of a pact to address regional powers’ opposition to the Japanese peace settlement. It stated that:

Recent development in Korea have increased the urgency of developing Japan’s resistance to Communism and Japan’s ability to assume a responsible and secure position . . . In progressing to this end, the cooperation of other off-shore Pacific nations is highly important. … Australia and the Philippines have frequently expressed interest in a “Pacific Pact” which would set forth the mutual security interests of the nations in the area. It has been made clear that such a “pact” would go far to win their acceptance of a liberal Japanese peace treaty. The proposed Declaration would meet this desire and might therefore be expected to hasten the conclusion of a general peace settlement with Japan.51

Truman approved this proposal and instructed the State Department to draft a multilateral alliance plan in January 1951. The plan, named the “Pacific Ocean Pact” proposal, envisioned a multilateral security pact among the countries named by Dulles in his December 1950 memorandum.52 Reflecting the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who did not want

U.S. forces “spread thin” all over mainland Asia, the membership was strictly confined to the countries of the “Pacific islands chain.”

The draft and Dulles’s comments on it demonstrate that the Pacific Pact plan had two clear purposes: (1) rehabilitating Japan and (2) reassuring Asia-pacific countries through an institutional setting binding Japan into a collective defense system. As an essential prerequisite for the pact, Dulles made it clear that “the United States should not become committed to the Pact unless it is assured that the other parties will agree to the kind of a Japanese peace that the United States feels is necessary.” In addition, there was an article which stated that, “each Party recognizes that if there should be direct aggression in the form of armed attack in the Pacific Ocean upon any of the Parties, such attack would be dangerous to its own peace and safety.” In explaining this article, Dulles made the following comment:

The reference to “armed attack in the Pacific Ocean upon any of the parties” designedly includes the possibility of attack by one of the parties, e.g. Japan, upon one of the others. It is sought in this way to meet one of the two primary purposes of the Pact, namely to give sufficient reassurances to Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines so that they will consent to a peace with Japan which will not contain limitations upon rearmament.

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53 Memorandum by the Special Assistant to the Consultant (Allison) to the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), January 4, 1951. FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI, 132-133.

54 Memorandum by Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Consultant to the Secretary, to the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), January 4, 1951. FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI, 137.

55 Ibid., 135.
These records demonstrate that U.S. policymakers pursued the creation of the Pacific Pact as an instrumental measure to achieve the more important goal of rehabilitating Japan. This point suggests, as will be shown in the next section, that Washington could easily have changed its course of action from multilateralism to bilateralism as long as it could still achieve the Japanese peace settlement. Contrary to claims made by several scholars about the U.S. motives behind the Pacific Pact plan, available records of the Truman administration’s decision-making process do not show any evidence that American policymakers at the time contemplated the multilateral plan in order to address other types of strategic or political concerns such as risks of abandonment and entrapment, effective military operations, burden sharing, or domestic backlash.

Rather, available records suggest that the logic of institutional binding was the only reason why the Truman administration pursued the creation of the Pacific Pact. Institutional binding is a strategy by which states address potential threats and hostilities by binding themselves together in mutually constraining institutions such as international treaties, organizations, and alliances. According to Ikenberry, the binding institution can reduce the distrust and hostilities among states by providing “voice opportunities” to its members and raising the costs of exit. As NATO was successfully integrating the Western European powers by keeping “the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down,” policymakers of the Truman administration perceived that the Pacific Pact would allay the

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57 Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 41-42.
regional powers’ fears about Japan by keeping the communists out, the Americans in, and the Japanese down in the region.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{Dulles’s Trip to the Asia-Pacific: Negotiations for the Pacific Pact}

In January 1951, after approving the State Department’s Pacific Pact plan, Truman sent Dulles to the Asia-Pacific region as his special envoy to negotiate the peace settlement with Japan and the Pacific Pact with prospective allies. In his directive letter dated January 10, Truman reaffirmed that the pact “would have the dual purpose of assuring combined action as between the members to resist aggression from without and also to resist attack by one of the members, e.g. Japan, if Japan should again become aggressive.”\textsuperscript{59} As further evidence of mild U.S. preference, this letter confirms that the Pacific Pact proposal was an instrumental measure to achieve a more important goal of rehabilitating Japan by reassuring regional powers with a multilateral setting. Following Truman’s instruction, Dulles embarked on his trip to the prospective members of the Pacific Pact—Japan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and potentially Indonesia.\textsuperscript{60}

Surprisingly, Dulles did not discuss the Pacific Pact plan with his interlocutors in Japan and the Philippines, the first two countries he visited. Some historians surmise that Dulles and Japan’s Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru would have exchanged their opinions about the pact plan, and Calder even argues that Yoshida was the one who frustrated the U.S.

\textsuperscript{58} The quoted functions of NATO were said by Sir Hastings Ismay, the first Secretary General of NATO. Joseph Nye, \textit{The Paradox of American Power} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33.

\textsuperscript{59} Letter from Truman to Dulles, January 10, 1951, Philip A. Crowl Collection on John Foster Dulles: 1951 January-June, box 13, Folder 1, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

\textsuperscript{60} Memorandum by Allison, \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 790-792.
Pacific Pact initiative.\textsuperscript{61} Yet neither U.S. nor Japanese primary sources show any record of such discussions between the U.S. delegation and the Japanese government.\textsuperscript{62} In the Philippines, Dulles only made a vague statement that “some form of security arrangement should be developed” among Asia-Pacific countries, and even lied that his government “at this moment had no specific proposal of its own to advance” when President Quirino asked about Washington’s Asia-Pacific security plan.\textsuperscript{63}

Why did Dulles not talk about the Pacific Pact in Japan and the Philippines? Historian David Mabon suggests that he abandoned the pact plan due to serious British objections he learned about early in his trip.\textsuperscript{64} Dulles did indeed face strong opposition from Britain, which was unhappy about the exclusion of itself and its Asian colonies from the proposed pact, when he delivered the Pacific Pact plan to a British representative in Tokyo.\textsuperscript{65} Yet it is difficult to conclude that British objections forced Dulles to abandon the Pacific

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\textsuperscript{63} Memorandum of conversation, by the Deputy to the Consultant (Allison) at the Malacanan Palace, February 12, 1951. \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 152-153.

\textsuperscript{64} Mabon, “Elusive Agreements,” 168.

\textsuperscript{65} The United States Political Adviser to SCAP (Sebald) to the Secretary of State, February 2, 1951. \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 143-144.
Pact, since he negotiated the pact proposal with the Australians and New Zealanders later in his trip. In addition, Dulles assured his antipodean interlocutors that he “had not in any way indicated to the U.K. that the U.S. accepted its objections as valid.”

Rather, the absence of discussions about the Pacific Pact and Dulles’s activities in Japan and the Philippines seems to indirectly reaffirm that the pact plan was just an instrumental measure, which was much less important than the primary goal of rehabilitating Japan and incorporating it into the Western coalition. In Japan, what Dulles focused on was gaining Tokyo’s agreements about rearmament and the right of the U.S. military to use Japanese military bases, not Japan’s inclusion in the regional security pact. When asked by one of his aides “how much the Mission could tell the Japanese about the contemplated Pacific Pact,” Dulles responded that “we would not want to dangle the pact before them since we did not yet know whether the idea of a pact would be realized.”

In another internal meeting, Dulles mentioned that he “did not consider it as important from the Japanese point of view that there be a Pacific Pact,” pointing out that “Japan could probably get around its Constitution without the benefit of such a pact.” Although there is no available document that explains why Dulles did not reveal the Pacific Pact plan in the Philippines, it appears that he did not need to bring up the topic to obtain Manila’s cooperation about the Japanese peace

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settlement. Although Quirino expressed deep distrust toward Japan, he demanded economic reparations in return for endorsing the peace settlement, not a security arrangement to address the potential threat from Japan.\textsuperscript{70} For this reason, Dulles focused on Manila’s economic needs instead of dangling the carrot of the Pacific Pact.\textsuperscript{71}

After visiting Tokyo and Manila, Dulles flew to Canberra to meet his Australian and New Zealander counterparts.\textsuperscript{72} Prior to his arrival, through a series of contacts with U.S. officials in Washington, Australia and New Zealand were able to learn that Dulles was going to propose a multilateral security pact in return for their agreement to the Japanese peace settlement.\textsuperscript{73} Based on this information, the two antipodean powers busily exchanged their opinions on negotiation goals and strategies in order to present a united front against a potential U.S. divide-and-conquer negotiation tactic.\textsuperscript{74} These discussions demonstrate the objectives they pursued, as well as why and how much they wanted them.

Given the information that Washington was seriously pursuing the rehabilitation of Japan through an early, lenient peace settlement, the top priority of Canberra and Wellington was securing a formal defense treaty with the United States. To achieve this goal, they agreed

\textsuperscript{70} Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Consultant to the Secretary, to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (MacArthur), March 2, 1951, \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 901.

\textsuperscript{71} Memorandum of conversation, by the Deputy to the Consultant (Allison) at the Malacanan Palace, February 12, 1951. \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 882-883.

\textsuperscript{72} Dulles did not visit Indonesia, since he learned that Jakarta was not going to join the U.S.-led security pact, during his stay in Japan. Frederick Sherwood Dunn, \textit{Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan} (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963), 196; The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Secretary of State, February 3, 1951. \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 145-146.

\textsuperscript{73} Cablegram from Australian Embassy in Washington, January 22, 1951; Cablegram from the Minister of External Affairs to the New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra, January 26, 1951, both from A 5799, 19/1951 Visit to Australia of Mr. J. F. Dulles, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA).

to link the issues of the peace settlement and the defense treaty in the upcoming negotiation with Dulles. In a meeting between Australian and New Zealand officials, New Zealand’s Minister of External Affairs Frederick Doidge urged that “if, as now seems inevitable, Japan is to be permitted a measure of rearmament, it is essential that Australia and New Zealand obtain an adequate guarantee of their security against any possible Japanese aggression in the future.”

Echoing this point, Australia’s Minister of External Affairs Percy Spender observed that “it is obvious that the two questions [of the Japanese peace settlement and a defense treaty] must now be regarded … as closely inter-related.”

As to the design of the security arrangement, they shared a clear and intense institutional preference: an exclusive alliance that only included Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Emphasizing that “the best form such a guarantee might take would be a tripartite arrangement,” Doidge told his Australian colleagues that “it should be the joint endeavor of Australia and New Zealand in their talks with Mr. Dulles to secure his agreement to an arrangement of this nature.” Spender reaffirmed this strong institutional preference, stating that “our first objective should be to try to obtain this [securing a US

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76 Pacific Defence Pact: Forthcoming exploratory Talks with Mr. John F. Dulles, February 15, 1951, A 4940, C228 Pacific Defence Post - Preliminary talks with John Foster Dulles, NAA.


78 Notes on Discussions between the New Zealand and Australian ministers of external affairs, Canberra, February 13, 1951, *DNZER*, 590-591.
security guarantee] without entering into unaccustomed and undesirable commitments throughout the Pacific.”

Why did Australia and New Zealand have such a strong preference for a trilateral alliance? Records of the discussions inside and between the two countries show that they had a variety of reasons to be serious about the membership of their alliance. First of all, they did not want to be entangled in conflicts in Asia. New Zealand, which already made an internal conclusion that providing its forces to Asian countries was a “misdirection of military effort,” did not want to share the risk and burden of protecting Japan and the Philippines. Australia had the same strategic concerns. Spender wrote to his cabinet that “it is obviously impracticable for us to consider entry into a commitment that might involve the dispatch of Australian troops to Japan for her protection in the event of attack. It would also be undesirable . . . to assume the same obligation towards the Philippines.”

Second, both Australia and New Zealand were worried about the potential strategic and domestic ramifications of allying with Japan. Wellington expressed its concern that such an alliance “might afford Japan a pretext for interference in New Zealand affairs.” Canberra fretted that allying with Japan might antagonize other regional powers which were not in a

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79 Pacific Defence Pact: Forthcoming exploratory Talks with Mr. John F. Dulles, February 15, 1951, A 4940, C228 Pacific Defence Post - Preliminary talks with John Foster Dulles, NAA.

80 Report by the Joint Planning Committee: The Defence of the Pacific-Strategic Background and Examination of the Military Requirements for A Pacific Defence Pact, April 18, 1950, DNZER, 544.

81 Pacific Defense Pact: Forthcoming exploratory Talks with Mr. John F. Dulles, February 15, 1951, A 4940, C228, NAA.

good relationship with Tokyo. Yet perhaps the most serious concern was that an alliance with Japan would enrage their domestic constituents, who still had vivid memories of Japanese aggression during World War II. Wellington was concerned that an alliance with Japan would be “unacceptable to New Zealand public opinion.” Canberra similarly worried that “such a proposal raises extremely awkward issues in view of the undoubted bewilderment and perhaps indignation of many sections of Australian opinion.”

Third, both countries were skeptical about the Philippines’s capacity to contribute to the alliance. New Zealand saw that an alliance with the “corrupt and unstable” government of the Philippines “might prove a grave embarrassment” to Australia and New Zealand. Australia held the same view. In his letter to Spender, Australia’s Prime Minister Robert Menzies revealed his skepticism: “I do not really believe either the Philippines or Indonesia has a sufficiently stable Government to be a usefully contributing partner.”

Fourth, as historians Thomas Robb and David James Gill point out, the Australians and New Zealanders had racial and cultural biases originating in their Western identities that seemed to have affected their inimical attitudes toward Asian countries. Both countries sought an alliance with the United States not only against communism and Japanese

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83 Document 44. Minute From Tange to Watt, February 1951, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *The ANZUS Treaty 1951: Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* (hereafter *ANZUS*) (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), 60.


86 Notes on Discussions Held in the Department of External Affairs, March 19, 1951, DNZER, 663.

87 Document 42. Extract from Cablegram from Menzies to Spender, February 6, 1951, *ANZUS*, 56.

88 Robb and Gill, “‘The ANZUS Treaty during the Cold War,’” 140.
militarism, but also “against Asian expansionism generally.” For this purpose, they agreed that Australia and New Zealand “should seek to avoid close military and political association with Asian countries.”

Based on this consensus, Doidge and Spender held their first meeting with Dulles on February 15. Contrary to Dulles’s initial expectation that a comprehensive regional security pact would allay their anxieties about Japan, Doidge and Spender strongly demanded an exclusive alliance between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. After discovering his counterparts’ deep distrusts of and fears about Japan, Dulles questioned why they wanted to exclude not only Japan but also the Philippines from their potential security arrangement. In his view, the Philippines might “feel jealous” if the United States formed a defense pact with the only two “white” countries in the region. Yet rather than forcefully pushing forward the original idea of a multilateral security pact, according to Australian records, Dulles instead “handed over the problem” to Spender and Doidge by asking them “to find the answer.” Spender replied by asking “why there could not be a series of bilateral arrangements between the United States and all the components of the island grouping.”

The next day, stating that he was now “prepared to consider all possible suggestions,” Dulles opened the possibility for four different combinations of security

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89 Notes on Discussions Held in the Department of External Affairs, March 19, 1951, DNZER, 663.


91 Ibid., 599.


94 Memorandum by Mr. Robert A. Freary of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, February 16, 1951. FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI, 162.
arrangements: (1) separate bilateral alliances between the United States and each Asia-Pacific
country; (2) a trilateral alliance among the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, plus
two U.S. bilateral treaties with Japan and the Philippines; (3) a quadrilateral arrangement
between the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, and a bilateral
alliance between the United States and Japan; and (4) the five-party security pact originally
e envisioned in the Pacific Pact plan. 95 It was a quick and remarkable change from the original
plan, and circumstantially suggests that the Truman administration had no strong preference
for a multilateral setting. Dulles’s flexible attitude was not surprising to Spender and Doidge,
since U.S. officials in Washington had already asked for antipodean opinions about a
potential trilateral security arrangement, indicating their willingness to consider alternatives
to the multilateral Pacific Pact even before Dulles’s arrival in Canberra. 96 Although some
American representatives gently reminded Australia and New Zealand of the benefit of
including Japan—controlling Tokyo through institutional binding—their institutional
preferences were steady and clear. Reaffirming that “a trilateral arrangement would be the
most desirable form,” Doidge suggested that “bilateral arrangements might be made by the
United States with the Philippines and Japan.” 97

After these discussions, Dulles and his antipodean counterparts finally drafted a
preliminary version of their security arrangement, which later developed into the ANZUS
treaty. Although it was basically a tentative draft of a tripartite treaty, the agreed draft did not

95 Memorandum by Mr. Robert A. Freary of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, February 16,
1951. FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI, 162.; Summary of Discussions on the Japanese Peace Settlement,
February 16, 1951, DNZER, 604.

96 For Minister from Ambassador, Cablegram from Australian Embassy in Washington, February

97 Summary of Discussions on the Japanese Peace Settlement, February 16, 1951, DNZER, 605-
606.
include a specific membership clause because the negotiators did not agree on the participation of the Philippines. While Doidge and Spender stubbornly insisted on the exclusion of the Philippines, Dulles was concerned that Manila might be enraged by being omitted. He wanted to “reserve the position” of the Philippines, stating that his government needed “to consider the matter further before taking [a] final view on the inclusion of the Philippines.” Japan’s inclusion was not a serious issue for them. When Dulles once again suggested the idea of including Japan, Doidge and Spender expressed their concerns about domestic backlashes. Dulles replied that he understood “the political difficulties of the Australian and New Zealand positions.” Although it can be regarded as weak evidence of empathy since it may simply have been a diplomatic gesture, Dulles’s remark shows his empathy for the difficult position of his interlocutors.

The Japanese peace treaty was discussed after the negotiation on the alliance. Based on an American proposal envisioning the settlement of territorial, political, economic and legal issues, Dulles and his antipodean counterparts agreed to pursue an early Japanese peace settlement. Although Doidge and Spender complained about the lack of strong military restrictions on Japan, Dulles interpreted their actions as “more or less perfunctory objections,” and viewed that his interlocutors were opposing “largely ‘for the record’” due to

100 Ibid., 611.
their concerns about domestic backlashes.\textsuperscript{102} After completing the negotiations in Canberra, Dulles briefly visited Wellington and then returned to Washington.

\textit{The Creation of the Hub-and-Spoke System}

Although Dulles did not give a satisfactory answer to Australia and New Zealand about the final form of their alliance while he was in Canberra, the U.S. position regarding the inclusion of the Philippines was determined not long after Dulles's return to Washington. In a draft memorandum to Truman, which was circulated to high-ranking government officials on April 2, Dulles summarized that his trip to the Asia-Pacific countries had made it “apparent that desired results can be better achieved by a series of arrangements rather than by a single arrangement.”\textsuperscript{103} In the same document, he expressed his empathy for the position of the antipodean powers by writing that “in the case of Australia and New Zealand it was found that their public opinions also would not accept an ‘alliance’ with Japan but that there was much interest in a mutual assistance arrangement, initially limited to Australia, New Zealand and the United States.”\textsuperscript{104} In its conclusion, the memo recommended to change in the U.S. policy from multilateralism to bilateralism:

> It is believed that the three arrangements contemplated, one with Japan, one with the Philippines, one with Australia and New Zealand, and possibly one with Indonesia, will in fact achieve what your [Truman’s] letter of January 10, 1951 described as “the

\textsuperscript{102} Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Consultant to the Secretary, to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (MacArthur), March 2, 1951, \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 902.

\textsuperscript{103} Memorandum (from John Foster Dulles), April 2, 1951, State Department Central Files (RG 59), A1 1455, box 2, U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereafter USNA).

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
dual purpose of assuring combined action as between the members to resist
aggression from without and also to resist attack by one of the members, e.g., Japan,
if Japan should again become aggressor.”

The idea of forming a series of separate security treaties gained support from high-ranking
State Department officials, including Secretary Acheson. The Defense Department and the
Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were satisfied with the existing military base and logistics
agreements with Manila, also supported the exclusion of the Philippines from the security
arrangement with Australia and New Zealand, expressing their opposition to “any
enlargement of the scope of Philippine participation in United States security
arrangements.”

As another piece of circumstantial evidence, the record of the meeting between State
Department officials and the New Zealand ambassador on April 13 shows that the change in
American policy was an unforced concession that reflected the strong institutional
preferences of the antipodean powers. At the meeting convened to brief him on U.S.
alliance policy, New Zealand Ambassador Carl Berenden was told by Assistant Secretary
for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk that “in the view of the fact that it was apparently the
first preference of both New Zealand and Australia that the Philippines not be included, the
United States could go ahead with negotiations looking toward a tripartite pact only.”

105 Ibid. Regarding Truman’s letter of January 10, 1951, see fn. 55.
106 Memorandum from Perkins to Dulles, April 3, 1951, RG 59, A1 1252, box 10, USNA;  
Secretary of State to Secretary of Defense (Marshall), April 5, 1951. FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI, 185.
107 The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Secretary of State, April 13, 1951, FRUS, 1951,  
108 Memorandum of Conversation on Pacific Security Arrangement, April 13, 1951, RG 59, A1  
5557, box 31, USNA.
Fully in the spirit of Dulles’s recommendation, President Truman announced a blueprint for Asia-Pacific security on April 19 which envisioned separate security arrangements between the United States and a group of regional powers.\textsuperscript{109} Based on this blueprint, along with the San Francisco Treaty which rehabilitated Japan as a sovereign state, a series of defense treaties were made with the Philippines (August 30, 1951), with Australia and New Zealand (September 1, 1951), and with Japan (September 8, 1951). The result of this patchwork alliance building was a hub-and-spoke network of separate alliances, which consisted of the United States as a hub and its Asia-Pacific allies as the spokes in the system.

Although the final decision was made in Washington after Dulles’s trip, the empirical analysis so far demonstrates that the key turning point toward bilateral agreements was Dulles’s negotiation in Canberra. He did not discuss the Pacific Pact plan in Tokyo and Manila as shown above, and American policymakers began to seriously consider bilateral settings after learning of Australia and New Zealand’s strong preference for an exclusive alliance with the United States.

Were key conditions for the unforced concession thesis satisfied in the negotiation between the United States and the antipodean powers? Primary sources examined above show that all the conditions were met. First, the Truman administration perceived Australia and New Zealand as its security partner and pursued a cooperative relationship with them. In addition, American primary sources provide both weak and strong evidence of U.S. empathy for Australia and New Zealand. Dulles, the chief architect of the hub-and-spoke system, expressed his empathy for antipodean policymakers’ concerns about the domestic

\textsuperscript{109} The content of Truman’s address can be found in Memorandum by the Consultant to the Secretary (Dulles) to the Secretary of State, April 13, 1951, \textit{FRUS, 1951, Vol. VI}, 203-204.
ramifications of allying with Japan, both in the negotiation in Canberra and in his communication with other U.S. officials after his trip.

Second, no available record supports the idea that American policymakers viewed the negotiation over the form of their security arrangement as a zero-sum game. It was not a competitive bargain, and what Canberra and Wellington desired—an exclusive alliance with the United States rather than a region-wide security pact—did not have serious distributive implications for Washington. Although Dulles initially expressed his concern about Manila’s potential negative reaction to the Australian and New Zealand demands, the Philippines issue was easily resolved by forming a bilateral alliance with Manila.

Third, both direct and circumstantial evidence suggests that the United States had only a mild preference for the multilateral Pacific Pact, whereas Australia and New Zealand had a very clear and intense preference for an exclusive alliance. Since policymakers of the Truman administration viewed the pact plan just as an instrumental, substitutable measure designed to gain regional powers’ support for the Japanese peace settlement, they had no strong preference for the multilateral pact. Some might raise a doubt that it is difficult to believe that the United States did not carefully consider important issues related to the design of its alliance system, such as the risks of entanglement, alliance effectiveness, and burden sharing. Surprisingly, however, no available record of the U.S. policy formulation and decision-making process shows any considerations about such issues as factors in choosing the hub-and-spoke structure, and no available evidence suggests that the Truman administration wanted to use the design of its alliance system as a bargaining chip at the time. In contrast, Canberra and Wellington had strong motives to pursue an exclusive alliance, including concerns about entanglement, burden sharing, domestic political backlashes, and cultural prejudices. Available historical records show no evidence that the antipodean powers
perceived the alliance structure as an issue of minor importance. Why did the Truman administration not pay close attention to the various transactional and distributive implications of different alliance designs? The U.S. decision-making process examined above suggests that American policymakers’ preoccupation with the Japanese peace settlement issue and their short time horizon influenced their inattention to the potential costs and benefits of bilateral and multilateral settings. For the Truman administration, what mattered most at the time was rehabilitating Japan, and it wanted to achieve this goal as early as possible in the face of the increasing communist threat in Asia. American alliance policy toward the Asia-Pacific region, both the original Pacific Pact plan and the final hub-and-spoke system, was an offshoot of the U.S. effort to secure Japan rather than of a carefully crafted long-term alliance strategy with respect to the region.

**Conclusion**

The findings of this chapter call for a reassessment of our conventional wisdom about the origins of the American bilateral alliance system in the Asia-Pacific and about U.S. foreign policy in the region. Contrary to the hegemonic design thesis that emphasizes the U.S. preference for bilateralism, the Truman administration, which created the hub-and-spoke system at the beginning of the Cold War, originally planned to form a multilateral Pacific Pact with a group of regional powers. Available historical records disconfirm the tyranny of the weak thesis as well, since the change in the American course of action from multilateralism to bilateralism was an unforced, voluntary concession which reflected the strong preferences of Australia and New Zealand, who desired an exclusive security arrangement. The Truman administration had only a mild preference for the Pacific Pact, since it pursued the pact plan only as an instrumental, substitutable measure to allay regional
powers’ fear about Japan. After learning that the pact initiative would have no such assuaging effects and the antipodean powers would be more satisfied with separate security arrangements, the Truman administration easily shifted its alliance policy from multilateralism to bilateralism. As a result of this unforced concession derived from differential intensities of institutional preferences, the United States established the hub-and-spoke alliance network by making a series of separate security agreements.

As for the competing explanations, little evidence supports the claims of the hegemonic design and tyranny of the weak theses survive. To begin with, the findings of this chapter disconfirm the hegemonic design thesis. The multilateral 1951 Pacific Pact plan was the sole Asia-Pacific alliance initiative pursued by American policymakers before they began negotiating with the Asia-Pacific countries. Available U.S. governmental records from 1949 to 1951, the period right before the creation of the American hub-and-spoke system, show no single evidence of the deliberate formulation of a bilateral alliance system prior to the Canberra meeting.\textsuperscript{110}

Then how about the tyranny of the weak thesis? Was the change in the American course of action a “forced concession” as this account claims? Given the historical context of the negotiations between the United States and Asia-Pacific countries, two factors could have been the potential source of the regional allies’ bargaining leverage: asymmetric interdependence and issue linkage. As discussed in the theory section, the logic of asymmetric interdependence suggests that a bargaining party who more strongly desires an agreement tends to have weaker bargaining power in a non-coercive, cooperative negotiation. According to this theoretical insight, if the Truman administration wanted Australia and New Zealand as alliance partners more than the antipodean powers wanted the United States, this

\textsuperscript{110} For the list of the examined records, see appendix.
asymmetric relationship could have reduced the bargaining power of Washington thereby leading it to make a forced concession. Yet available circumstantial and direct evidence clearly demonstrates that the parties who desperately sought the alliance were Australia and New Zealand. Although American policymakers perceived the antipodean powers as important security partners, they did not highly evaluate the strategic value of Australia and New Zealand and rejected their Pacific alliance proposals multiple times.\textsuperscript{111} Even after Dulles agreed to make a security agreement with Australia and New Zealand in his negotiation in Canberra, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised him to minimize the U.S. commitment to the alliance.\textsuperscript{112}

Another possibility is that the Truman administration may have redirected its alliance policy in exchange for Australia and New Zealand’s agreement on the peace treaty with Japan. Given the undeniable fact that American policymakers came up with the idea of the Pacific Pact to gain the antipodean powers’ support for the Japanese peace settlement, it seems to be a reasonable conjecture that Australia and New Zealand could have “traded” the peace treaty issue for a favorable alliance design.

Yet a closer look at the sequence of exchanges suggests that the antipodean powers’ agreement on the peace settlement was \textit{quid pro quo} for an alliance with the United States \textit{per se}, not the design of it. As shown above, what Dulles brought back to Washington after his negotiation in Canberra were the antipodean powers’ agreement on the peace treaty and a draft of a security arrangement which did not include a membership clause.\textsuperscript{113} While Dulles


\textsuperscript{112} Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense (from the Joint Chiefs of Staff), April 11, 1951, RG 59, A1 1230, box 3, USNA.

agreed to consider the antipodean suggestion to form a separate security arrangement with each nation, he did not give any indication that “such a suggestion will, in fact, prove acceptable to the United States.” The trilateral form of the alliance among Australia, New Zealand, and the United States was finalized by the unilateral U.S. decision in mid-April, about two months after the issue of Japanese peace settlement and a tentative defense treaty were traded in Canberra in mid-February.

In addition, the records of discussions between Australia and New Zealand show that Canberra and Wellington knew that the Japanese peace settlement issue could not be a golden key to open every door. An Australian memorandum delivered to New Zealand advised that “The utmost care would have to be taken to ensure that, in opposing American pressure to include the Philippines, the United States is not antagonized to the point of expressing disinterest in any security pact at all.” It also pointed out that “Japanese Peace Treaty will be approved by a large majority of participating countries, even though Australia and New Zealand object strongly to such a Treaty.” In another memorandum that explained the position of Australia and New Zealand, Spender wrote that “we have come to the conclusion that while a tripartite pact remains our first objective, rather than jeopardize the prospect of obtaining a formal American guarantee for Australia and New Zealand, we would be willing to accept a quadripartite arrangement.”

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114 Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Consultant to the Secretary, to the Minister for External Affairs of New Zealand, February 18, 1951, Vol. VI, 175.

115 Dulles’s negotiation in Canberra ended on February 17, 1951, and the final U.S. decision to form a trilateral valliance with Australia and New Zealand was first notified on April 13, 1951. See fn. 104.


117 Draft Message from Minister of External Affairs (Spender) to Mr. Gordon Walker, March 1951, EATS 77 PART 3 Pacific Pact [ANZUS Treaty] Mar 1951 - Mar 1951 [1.5cm], NAA.
that Australia and New Zealand would not have been able to use the peace treaty issue as their bargaining chip if the United States had strongly preferred a multilateral pact.
Chapter 3

A Patchwork of Concessions:
The Origins of the U.S. Alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, 1953–4

Introduction
As shown in the previous chapter, the basic structure of the American hub-and-spokes alliance system in the Asia-Pacific was established in 1951. The policymakers of the Truman administration, who had no strong, clear institutional preferences about the post-war alliance network in the region, easily changed course from multilateralism to bilateralism during negotiations over the unrealized Pacific Pact plan. As a result of this policy shift, they concluded a series of separate security agreements with Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand in 1951. Yet two other bilateral security pacts remain unexamined: alliances with South Korea and Taiwan.

Why did Washington choose bilateral security ties with Seoul and Taipei? This chapter tackles this puzzle by examining the origins of the American bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan. Since the first chapter only examined the Truman administration’s Asia-Pacific policy and the alliances it formed with major island powers in 1951, it would be worthwhile to investigate why bilateral settings were chosen by the Eisenhower administration, which made security agreements with South Korea and Taiwan from 1953 to 1954. Unfortunately, most existing works by historians and political
scientists focus on the overall development of the bilateral security relations between the United States and these two Asian powers in the early Cold War era, rather than on why a bilateral form of security cooperation was chosen.\(^{118}\)

One notable exception is Victor Cha’s “powerplay” thesis, which focuses on Washington's love-hate relationships with Seoul and Taipei at the beginning of the Cold War from the “hegemonic design” perspective. According to this explanation, the Eisenhower Administration intentionally chose a bilateral design in order to exert maximum control over Rhee Syngman of South Korea and Chiang Kai-shek of Taiwan through bilateral settings that would maximize U.S. influence over them.\(^{119}\) At a glance, given the incontrovertible historical fact that U.S. policymakers were seriously concerned about Rhee and Chiang’s adventurist foreign policies, Cha’s argument seems a highly


plausible explanation for the bilateralism in the American alliances with South Korea and Taiwan. If this explanation is valid, the powerplay thesis should be regarded as an important part of the explanation for the broader puzzle of American bilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region, along with the unforced concession thesis suggested in the previous chapter.

Were the bilateral security deals with South Korea and Taiwan an outcome of the Eisenhower administration’s preference for bilateralism, as the powerplay thesis claims? In this chapter, I attempt to revise this historical narrative by demonstrating that the bilateral security agreements with South Korea and Taiwan were the results of a patchwork of concessions rather than U.S. preference for bilateralism. Cha is correct to explain that Washington formed bilateral alliances in order to restrain these reckless anti-communist powers. However, the process of alliance formation and U.S. decision-making suggests a causal story different from the one provided by the powerplay thesis, especially in terms of U.S. strategic intentions and the nature of the bilateral security arrangements. First, the bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan were the result of a piecemeal process of concessions rather than a strategic design based on the logic of bilateral control. Available evidence, both direct and circumstantial, reveals that the Eisenhower administration, which wanted to avoid any type of formal alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, did not pursue maximum control through bilateral settings. Instead, Washington reluctantly added Seoul and Taipei to its bilateral alliance network one at a time, as crises on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait forced it to cut undesirable security deals with these powers. Second, as several diplomatic historians point out, the bilateral security deals were offered to South Korea and Taiwan as positive inducements to gain their cooperation with U.S. diplomatic efforts to manage the
conflicts on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait, rather than negative constraints intended to leash Seoul and Taipei, as the logic of powerplay suggests.\textsuperscript{120}

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section reviews potential explanations and identifies their observable implications. Then, the second section analyzes why and how the Eisenhower administration ended up making bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, using American, South Korean, and Taiwanese primary sources. The concluding section summarizes key findings and discusses implications.

**Potential Explanations and Predictions**

*Powerplay: Maximum Control through Bilateral Settings*

A first possible explanation for the bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan is Cha’s “powerplay” thesis that the Eisenhower administration intentionally made bilateral pacts to maximize its control over these unruly Asian allies through bilateral settings. The general idea of alliances being used as instruments for political management and control is not new in either practice or theory. Paul Schroeder has already shown that European powers throughout history often controlled other states by taming them as allies, and Jeremy Pressman has more recently adopted and theorized this idea in political science.\textsuperscript{121} What is new in Cha’s explanation is his attempt to connect states’ need to control their allies to the choice between bilateralism and multilateralism in alliance formation.


More specifically, Cha believes that the form of an alliance is determined by the power of the would-be controller and target states, as well as by the would-be controller’s imperative to maximize its power.\textsuperscript{122} When a small state attempts to control another small state, it is likely to choose the multilateral option due to its insufficient political resources. Thus, it can use other alliance members’ resources and political influence to control the target state. Multilateral alliance is also likely to be chosen when small states seek to control a great-power ally. This is because collectively binding the great power with other states is the most effective way to prevent unilateral actions by the great power and increase the political leverage of small states within the alliance. When a great power pursues control over another great power, although the former can exert some influence over the latter through a bilateral alliance, it is likely to choose the multilateral option as well, because it is the more cost-effective option; whereas the bilateral option requires costly bargains with the target great power, a multilateral alliance reduces the cost of control by providing collective binding mechanisms that diffuse its political burden. Conversely, a great power chooses a bilateral alliance when it seeks to control a small state. “Multilateralism gives the advantage to the small power,” Cha writes, “but bilateralism maintains or even amplifies a great power’s capabilities.”\textsuperscript{123} In a bilateral setting, compared to a multilateral one, a great power can exert more influence on its small ally by controlling the latter’s domestic policies and its access to strategic resources or territories.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} Cha, “Powerplay,” 164-6; idem., \textit{Powerplay}, 28-32.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 31.
Based on this theoretical logic, Cha claims that the United States made bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan to maximize its control over these “rogue” allies. Washington preferred a bilateral alliance with Taiwan since it needed to prevent the adventurist leader Chiang Kai-shek from entrapping the United States in a war between communist China and Taiwan. Similarly, the United States also favored a bilateral setting to maximize its control over South Korea, governed by the unruly leader Rhee Syngman, who frequently attempted to provoke another war with North Korea.\footnote{Cha, “Powerplay,” 168-177; idem., Powerplay, 65-121.}

If this account is valid, we should be able to see the following observable implications. First, there should be evidence showing that U.S. policymakers recognized the necessity of strict control over South Korea and Taiwan. Second, and more important, it should be supported by empirical evidence demonstrating that U.S. policymakers found bilateral settings a more effective way to control South Korea and Taiwan prior to the decision to sign defense treaties. Even if bilateral security ties provided more political leverage to Washington in its relations with these states after the formation of security arrangements, the consequential benefits of bilateralism do not necessarily prove that American policymakers knew and deliberately pursued such merits from the outset. While benefits are important, they are often realized retroactively. In order to make the case that such benefits shaped the design, we should be able to observe that an anticipation of such benefits and an intention to pursue them were sources of the American preference for bilateralism.
Patchwork of Concessions

As an alternative to the historical narrative provided by the powerplay thesis, I claim that the bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan were the results of a patchwork of concessions the United States made during different crises. More specifically, I offer the following arguments about U.S. policy preferences and the actual process of alliance formation.

First, when it came to relations with South Korea and Taiwan, the Eisenhower administration preferred not bilateral alliances but no alliances at all. When policymakers formulate an alliance policy, they make not a binary choice between multilateralism and bilateralism but a selection among three alternatives—multilateralism, bilateralism, and no alliance. If a state has a grave concern about the risk of entrapment, a rational choice for it would be to keep its potential partner at arm’s length with an informal commitment, rather than making a formal commitment in the form of a bilateral or multilateral alliance. For this reason, even though the Eisenhower administration intended to prevent the communist takeover of South Korea and Taiwan, it is reasonable to expect that Washington would have favored supporting Seoul and Taipei’s security effort without making a formal commitment rather than entering into any security pacts, regardless of form, with these troublesome partners.

Second, this reluctant attitude led the Eisenhower administration to make alliance decisions about South Korea and Taiwan on a crisis basis, and this piecemeal approach resulted in separate bilateral alliances. The policymakers of the Eisenhower administration, who loathed the idea of forming alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, did not have a comprehensive alliance strategy that may have enabled the institutional connection of these powers to other allies in the region. Rather, as tumultuous
international dynamics on the Korean peninsula and in cross-strait relations forced them to accept South Korea and Taiwan’s unwelcome demands for defense treaties, the Eisenhower administration reluctantly added these states to its list of allies one by one.

To validate these arguments, the following observable implications need to be found. First, there should be evidence of stable and constant U.S. preference against alliances with South Korea and Taiwan before the formation of defense treaties. Regarding this observable implication, to overcome the potential problem of strategic misrepresentation of preferences, we must be able to find such evidence not only in Washington’s responses to the demands for defense treaties from Seoul and Taipei but also in the records of internal discussions among key American policymakers. In addition, if my account is valid, the timing of the U.S. policy shifts—giving serious consideration to defense treaties with South Korea and Taiwan—should coincide with international crises that (1) had a temporal gap between them, (2) substantially weakened the bargaining power of the United States in its relations with South Korea and Taiwan, and (3) imposed severe temporal and cognitive constraints on American policymakers, thereby hindering their formulation of an alliance policy in the broader context of comprehensive regional security architecture.

**Explaining the U.S. Alliances with South Korea and Taiwan**

In this section, drawing on primary sources produced by the governments and policymakers of the United States, South Korea, and Taiwan, I prove that a patchwork of U.S. concessions resulted in the formation of separate bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan. To do so, I examine how the Eisenhower administration, which resisted the alliances with these countries until the last minute, ended up making bilateral defense treaties with South Korea
amid the negotiations for the Korean Armistice Agreement in 1953 and with Taiwan amid the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954.


As the war in Korea reached a stalemate in the spring of 1951, after the intervention of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (CPVA), the Truman administration shifted its goal from achieving a total military victory on the Korean peninsula to negotiating a settlement. On May 4, 1951, NSC 48/4 recommended finding a settlement that would terminate hostilities through armistice agreements and secure South Korean territory and authority only south of the 38th parallel.126 Two weeks later, NSC 48/5 reconfirmed the revised American goals, stating that the U.S. objectives were seeking “by political, as distinguished from military means, a solution of the Korean problem” and avoiding “the extension of hostilities in Korea.”127 Based on this consensus, through a series of secret talks with the Soviet Union, the United States began to probe the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the Korean War.128

The sudden change in U.S. policy stunned South Korean President Rhee Syngman, a stubborn anti-communist with an ambition to unify Korea with military support from the United States. Rhee, who “regarded anything short of the expulsion of the Communists across the Yalu as a failure, a defeat in the war,” tried to persuade his American interlocutors that ending the war with a settlement would lead the United

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128 Memorandum by George F. Kennan Concerning Events from May 18 to May 25, 1951, Ibid., 460-461.
States to “have it all [to] do over again, quite possibly in circumstances far more unfavorable to the United States than the present ones.”

Despite Rhee’s strenuous efforts, however, formal negotiations for an armistice between communist forces and the United Nations Command (UNC) led by the United States began in July 1951.

After a series of unsuccessful attempts to cajole the Americans into seeking a military unification of Korea, Rhee decided to pursue a mutual defense treaty with the United States as an alternative goal. His basic strategy was linking the armistice issue with his demand for a bilateral security arrangement with Washington. In a letter to President Truman on March 21, 1952, Rhee wrote that the South Korean people would support an armistice agreement only if it was pursued in conjunction with a mutual security pact and military assistance from the United States. Yet he failed to persuade policymakers in the Truman administration, who did not want to make a formal commitment in the form of a defense pact. Regarding Rhee’s demands, Secretary Acheson advised Truman that “it would not be in our national interest to negotiate a mutual security pact at this time,” because “so long as the United States and the United Nations retain adequate military forces in Korea, there would seem to be no necessity for a formal security agreement.” In addition, he recommended not even replying to Rhee’s letter.

To Rhee’s disappointment, the Eisenhower administration, which succeeded the Truman administration in January 1953, did not want a security pact with South Korea.

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either. On April 3, South Korea’s Foreign Minister Pyun Young-tai demanded a mutual
defense treaty between Seoul and Washington, stating that the “lack of defense pact
would leave Korea in [a] position inferior to Japan, Philippines, Australia, [and] New
Zealand.”

131 Although the American embassy in Seoul suggested a mutual security pact
to “take full advantage of [the] eagerness of Koreans for [a] defense pact with [the] US to
obtain maximum concessions from ROK [Republic of Korea],” the Eisenhower
administration’s response was negative. 132 An internal State Department memo to the new
Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, advised that Washington was not “in any position
at this time to give the Korean Government any assurance with regard to the conclusion
of a defense pact,” since such a treaty would “present problems in relation to maintaining
the UN character of the present action in Korea and has been strongly opposed by [the]
Defense [Department] in the light of the fact that their general war plans do not call for
the defense of Korea.”

Yet the Eisenhower administration presented its skeptical view on a mutual
security pact to the South Koreans in a more diplomatic manner. Although Dulles flatly
rejected repeated requests for a mutual defense treaty at a series of meetings with South
Korean officials from March to April 1953, he politely added that “it would be better
from the United States’ point of view to give consideration to such a pact after the
political conference has worked out a peaceful settlement for Korea.” Instead of a mutual

131 Telegram (from Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles), April 3,
1953, 302.1, Box 6, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84), U.S.
National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereafter USNA).

132 Telegram (from Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles), April 7,
1953, 302.1, 302.1, Box 6, RG 84, USNA.

133 Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to
defense treaty, to relieve Seoul’s concern about potential abandonment by Washington, he suggested President Eisenhower’s declaration that the United States would not abandon Korea.134

The disgruntled Rhee’s ensuing brinkmanship began with a series of political and diplomatic maneuvers, and it caused serious concerns for American policymakers. Rhee and other South Korean officials publicly called for a unification by force and openly blamed armistice negotiations. Responding to Rhee’s call, the National Assembly of South Korea adopted a resolution that urged the complete unification of the Korean peninsula, and hundreds and thousands of South Korean people held rallies in major cities against an armistice agreement. U.S. officials viewed these movements as being mobilized by Rhee, since the South Korean president could manipulate public opinion “in whatever direction he desired.”135

What worried Washington most was the possibility of a unilateral withdrawal by the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army from UNC control. This was a serious threat, since the UNC’s authority over the ROK Army had been personally granted by Rhee, not by a formal agreement.136 If he sought to derail the ongoing armistice negotiations between the UNC and the communists, Rhee was technically able to retake operational control of the South Korean armed forces whenever he wanted and launch unilateral military actions against the Chinese and North Korean forces. This was the nightmare scenario

134 Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), April 8, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV, 897-900.


that all the U.S. officials wanted to avoid. The Commander-in-Chief of the Far East
Command, General Mark W. Clark, warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the South
Korean government could consider withdrawing its representatives from the UNC
armistice delegation, or even withdrawing the Republic of Korea Army from UNC
control, to thwart the armistice agreement.137

The threat of unilateral action by South Korea was delivered through diplomatic
channels as well. On April 24, South Korea’s ambassador to the United States, You Chan
Yang, informed U.S. officials in Washington that President Rhee was prepared to
withdraw South Korean armed forces from the control of the UNC to “fight it out alone
and either to win or lose, if necessary.”138 Alarmed by the South Korean move, General
Clark met Rhee on May 12 to persuade him not to take any actions that might thwart the
settlement process. In the meeting, Rhee made it clear that he desired a defense treaty
with the United States, complaining that he could not understand why the United States
did not want to agree to a security arrangement similar to what it had completed with
Japan and antipodean powers in 1951. Despite Clark’s efforts to persuade him, Rhee gave
no assurance to the UNC Commander that South Korea would avoid taking actions that
would hinder the armistice negotiations.139

Despite Rhee’s agitation, the Eisenhower administration still wanted to avoid a
mutual defense pact with South Korea. Although General Clark and American

137 The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, April 6, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV,
878.

138 Aide-mémoire from Ambassador You Chan Yang, attached to Memorandum of Conversation
by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), April 24, 1953, ibid.,
935.

139 The Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 13, 1953, ibid.,
1010-1012.
Ambassador to South Korea Ellis O. Briggs cautiously recommended considering the possibility of a security pact with South Korea, policymakers in Washington did not want to make a formal alliance.\textsuperscript{140} The State Department instructed Ambassador Briggs to tell Rhee the United States was “not prepared [to] engage [in a] mutual security treaty with ROK under present circumstances.” Instead, Washington proposed to begin “informal discussions with ROK looking toward [the] conclusion [of a] comprehensive agreement on military assistance and related matters,” including a declaration by President Eisenhower of the U.S. commitment to the security of South Korea and a “Greater Sanctions Statement” on a military and economic assistance program.\textsuperscript{141}

The American proposal of a presidential declaration and military assistance came with a threat that the United States could use not only carrots but also sticks to get Rhee’s cooperation. The Korean War had become increasingly unpopular in the United States, and American policymakers were willing to take coercive measures against Rhee to end the conflict as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{142} In a letter to the U.S. Embassy in Korea, Washington instructed American officials in South Korea to inform Rhee that “President [Eisenhower] considers it necessary President Rhee clearly understand there are limits on what [the] US can agree to or tolerate.” The letter made it clear that “President [Eisenhower] cannot consider Rhee’s repeated requests for [a] mutual security treaty,” since such an arrangement would reduce other countries’ military contributions in Korea by

\textsuperscript{140} The Ambassador in Korea (Briggs) to the Department of State, April 1, 1953, ibid., 906-907; The Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 13, 1953, ibid., 1010-1012.

\textsuperscript{141} The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, May 15, 1953, ibid., 1029-1032.

\textsuperscript{142} In a national poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in April 1953, more than majority of the respondents (55 percent) expressed their negative opinion that the war on the Korean Peninsula was not worth fighting. John E. Mueller, “Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 65, no. 2 (1971): 360.
undermining the UN’s authority on the Korean security issue and it would be difficult to get Congressional approval. “If satisfactory assurances [by South Korea are] not received,” the letter instructed, “Rhee should be clearly told [the] US will be compelled [to] take all necessary measures [to] ensure [the] security [of] US and other UN forces in [the] unfortunate event [that] before or after armistice he orders ROK forces [to] take unilateral military action and withdraws them from UNC.”

Was the Eisenhower administration ready to use “all necessary measures,” as it warned? In fact, the United States had already made a secret contingency plan codenamed “Operation Everready,” which envisioned the removal of Rhee from power by using UNC forces, when he purged the members of South Korea’s opposition party to consolidate his domestic power during the summer of 1952. Although it was never invoked in 1952, the plan once more attracted the attention of American officials in May 1953, as Rhee’s relentless campaigns seriously threatened the prospect of the armistice agreement. On May 4, the U.S. Eighth Army reported to Washington a detailed operational plan to detain South Korean military and civilian leaders, including Rhee, and establish an interim military government under the name of the UN, “in the event that operational control of Republic of Korea forces is weakened or lost prior to or after the conclusion of an armistice.”

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143 The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, May 22, 1953, ibid., 1086-1090.
144 Ibid., 1089.
145 The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 5, 1952, ibid., 377-379.
146 Paper Submitted by the Commanding General of the US Eighth Army (Taylor), May 4, 1953. ibid., 965-968.
Based on this plan, high-ranking officials from the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff held a meeting on May 29 to discuss whether to carry out Operation Everready. Although some military leaders argued that the United States “should be prepared to take Rhee into protective custody rather than try to sweeten him up with a security pact,” officials from the State Department expressed concern about the negative political ramifications of a military coup by the UNC. After failing to reach a clear conclusion, the participants in the meeting decided to suggest three policy options to President Eisenhower: (1) proposing a mutual security pact with South Korea, (2) removing Rhee and taking over the South Korean government, and (3) pulling U.S. forces out of the Korean peninsula.\footnote{Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, May 29, 1953, ibid., 1114-1119.}

On the next day, after a briefing by Secretary of State Dulles and Secretary of Defense Charles Erwin Wilson on the three alternatives, Eisenhower decided to choose the first option.\footnote{The Chief of Staff, US Army (Collins) to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark), May 30, 1953, ibid., 1122.} This was a significant shift, since he had been opposed to such a mutual defense treaty with South Korea until a week before the decision.\footnote{The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, May 22, 1953, ibid., 1086-1090. In addition to this record, in a meeting with JCF on May 30, Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson told his interlocutors that "When we talked to the President last week we talked about this [mutual defense pact issue] . . . At that time he decided that we would not offer Rhee a security pact." Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, May 29, 1953, ibid., 1118.} Yet he also made it clear that the following points had to be assured by the South Korean government as key conditions for the initiation of formal negotiations.\footnote{The Chief of Staff, US Army (Collins) to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark), May 30, 1953, ibid., 1123.}
a. The Korean Government will refrain from opposition to and agitation against an armistice along the lines presently proposed by the UNC and use its influence to restrain the Korean population from engaging in such agitation and opposition.

b. The ROK will cooperate in the implementation of an armistice agreement.

c. The armed forces of the ROK will remain under operational control of CINCUNC [Commander-in-Chief UN Command] until US and ROK mutually agree such arrangements [are] no longer necessary.

On June 6, replying to a letter from Rhee that urged the necessity of a mutual defense pact, Eisenhower directly informed the South Korean president that he was now ready to talk about a formal security arrangement with Seoul. He wrote, “You speak of a mutual defense pact. I am prepared promptly after the conclusion and acceptance of an armistice to negotiate with you a mutual defense treaty along the lines of the treaties heretofore made between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines, and the United States and Australia and New Zealand.”

To Washington’s surprise, Eisenhower’s proposal failed to satisfy Rhee. In a meeting with General Clark and Ambassador Briggs after receiving Eisenhower’s letter, Rhee continued to threaten his American interlocutors that “he would feel free to take any action from now on” to resist an armistice agreement, arguing that “the US is making a great mistake in adopting these tactics of appeasement.” Although Clark and Briggs tried to persuade him by bringing the mutual defense treaty issue onto the table, he indicated

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151 Letter from President Eisenhower to President Rhee, June 6, 1953, White House Central Files, Official File Box 686, DDEL.
no interest and told them “it is too late.” Summarizing the results of the meeting, Clark expressed his frustration: “Rhee was utterly unreasonable and gave no ground whatsoever. He himself is the only one who knows how far he will go but undoubtedly he will bluff right up to the last.”¹⁵²

Why was Rhee unhappy with the American proposal of a mutual defense treaty, which he so desperately sought? It was because of the timing of the proposed negotiations. In fact, he did not think it was too late. Rather, he was worried that it would be too late to start negotiations after the conclusion of the armistice agreement, as Eisenhower proposed. Although official South Korean government records on Rhee’s negative reaction to Eisenhower’s proposal are still not available, Pyo Wook Han, the South Korean diplomat who took charge of the defense treaty issue at the time, writes in his memoirs that Rhee wanted to make a mutual security pact with the United States before the conclusion of the armistice agreement. According to Han, Rhee’s decision to unilaterally release 25,000 anti-communist prisoners of war (POWs) on June 18 was made to achieve a defense pact as early as possible.¹⁵³

The sudden release of the POWs was a political bombshell that Rhee dropped to disrupt the armistice negotiations. He blamed the UNC, claiming its effort to achieve a negotiated settlement was “making the complications worse than ever, which will lead to serious consequences and result in something to the satisfaction of our enemy.” In the same statement, he announced that “I have ordered on my own responsibility the release

¹⁵² The Commander in Chief, United National Command (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 7, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV, 1149-51.

¹⁵³ Pyo Wook Han, Yiseungman gwa hannii oegyo (이승만과 한미외교, Rheee Syngman and the Korea-US Relations) (Seoul: Joongang Ilbosa, 1996), 154.
of the anti-communist Korean prisoners.”\textsuperscript{154} At the time, the United States was negotiating with communist forces to repatriate the POWs to North Korea. Rhee’s unilateral action infuriated China and North Korea, making them break off negotiations and reopen offensives.

His action enraged American policymakers as well. At an emergency NSC meeting held on the day Rhee announced his unilateral decision, Eisenhower expressed his frustration and resentment by stating that the United States seemed to have “acquired another enemy instead of a friend.”\textsuperscript{155} On the same day, Secretary Dulles summoned South Korean prime minister Peak Tu Chin, who was visiting Washington at the time, and Ambassador Yang to deliver Eisenhower’s wrath, describing Rhee’s unilateral action as “backstabbing.”\textsuperscript{156} Dulles told the South Koreans that Rhee’s decision “had obviously created a most embarrassing, difficult, and perhaps explosive situation.”\textsuperscript{157} Yet there was no viable option that the United States could use as punishment for the South Korean action. Although a joint meeting between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff was held on the next day to discuss whether to invoke Operation Everready, it was found to be impracticable, since Rhee was strongly backed by the South Korean armed

\textsuperscript{154} Press Released of the Office of Public Information, Republic Korea, June 18, 1953, attached to The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) o the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Clark), June 18, 1953, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV}, 1199.

\textsuperscript{155} Discussion at the 150th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, June 18, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series, Box No. 4, DDEL.

\textsuperscript{156} Han, 154.

\textsuperscript{157} Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), June 18, 1953, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV}, 1206-1210.
forces and thus South Korean military leaders were unlikely to cooperate with a military coup by the UNC.\textsuperscript{158}

After showing he could do whatever it took to get what he wanted, on June 22, Rhee delivered to General Clark an aide-mémoire containing his demands. The document gave the following points as the conditions for his cooperation on the armistice negotiations:

(1) The Political conference after the signing of the armistice [will] sit no longer than 90 days. . . (2) Before signing the armistice, the United States will enter into a mutual defense treaty with the Republic of Korea, as I have already done with other nations of the Pacific Area; (3) The United States will give this [ROK] government an adequate military aid so as to build up the ROK Land, Sea and Air defense strength, as well as economic aid . . . (4) No foreign armed forces shall enter the Republic of Korea with a view to guarding prisoners of war, nor shall any Communist indoctrinators. . .\textsuperscript{159}

On June 25, as a special envoy of President Eisenhower, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter S. Robertson visited Seoul to negotiate with the South Korean government. The South Koreans reiterated the requests in Rhee’s previous aide-mémoire, especially demanding the ratification of a mutual defense treaty before the

\textsuperscript{158} Memorandum of Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-JCF Meeting, June 19, 1953. ibid., 1213-1221.

\textsuperscript{159} Aide-mémoire from President Rhee, June 22, 1953, attached to the commander in Chief, United National Command (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 23, 1953, ibid., 1241.
conclusion of an armistice agreement. They insisted that “the armistice [should] be held up until the Senate acted on the treaty, since the ROK would have no assurance after an armistice that the Senate would approve a treaty.” The U.S. reassured them that the Greater Sanctions Statement, which included massive military and economic assistance programs and security assurance by the United States, would be able to fill the gap between the armistice agreement and the ratification of a mutual defense treaty. The American officials also warned that “Rhee should realize Senate ratification [of] any Mutual Defense Treaty [would be] more dependent on what he does than on any further assurance at this time by [the] President and Senate leaders.”

After three weeks of pulling and hauling, on July 9, Rhee delivered a South Korean draft treaty with a promise that he would no longer resist the armistice negotiations. In a letter to Robertson, the head of the American delegation, Rhee wrote, “we understand the difficulty of securing immediate ratification by [the] US Senate, and we agree that it may be ratified, if not at this session of Congress, then at [the] next session. We have not hesitated to accept [the] assurances of President Eisenhower and of Secretary Dulles that we may depend upon its ratification by [the] Senate.” He pledged that “Although we cannot sign [a] truce, we shall not obstruct it.” He also withdrew his other demands about the political conference and foreign military troops on the Korean peninsula. Following these talks, the mutual defense treaty between the United States

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160 The Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Department of State, June 26, 1953. ibid., 1276-77.

161 Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), July 4, 1953, ibid., 1328.

162 The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, July 4, 1953, ibid., 1329.

163 The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), July 9, 1953, ibid., 1357-8.
and South Korea was agreed to by Rhee and Secretary Dulles, who visited Seoul in August 1953. Although there were some contentions on the military intervention clause between Rhee, who insisted an automatic intervention, and Dulles, who preferred intervention through constitutional procedures, Rhee finally accepted Dulles’s position by agreeing to a mutual security pact modeled after the US-Philippine and ANZUS treaties.  

Although Rhee made a small concession at the final stage, the achievement of the security pact with the United States was a dramatic victory for him. He succeeded in changing the minds of American policymakers, who did not want a formal alliance with South Korea, by executing clever political maneuvers that exploited the U.S. desire for an early settlement of the Korean War. Furthermore, his decision to release POWs accelerated the negotiation process by sparking an international crisis that put significant pressure on the Eisenhower administration. After he came back to Washington after the negotiations with Rhee, Dulles complained, “We had to use up all the bargaining power we possessed to get President Rhee to go along with the armistice.”

The process and outcome of the interactions between the United States and South Korea examined so far show that the bilateral alliance between the two countries was the

164 Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), August 5, 1953, ibid., 1466-1473; Draft Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, August 5, ibid., 1474-1475; Memorandum of conversation by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), August 6, 1953, ibid., 1675-1480; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Second Secretary of the Embassy in Korea (Calhoun), August 6, 1953, ibid., 1478-1480; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), August 7, 1953, ibid., 1481-1488; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), August 7, 1953, ibid., 1488-1489; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), August 8, 1953, ibid., 1489-1490.

165 Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the Under Secretary of State (Smith), August 14, 1953, ibid., 1495-6.
result of the Eisenhower administration’s diplomatic concession, forced by President Rhee’s brinkmanship, and of a serious crisis caused and manipulated by Rhee. Contrary to the predictions of the powerplay thesis, the policymakers of the Eisenhower administration resisted any formal alliance with Seoul until they were forced to consider it, and the bilateral security pact was a positive inducement for Rhee’s cooperation amid crisis rather than a leash to control him. This interpretation is clearly supported by the South Korean government’s later assessment of the negotiation process, made five years after the conclusion of the treaty:

The Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States was made to satisfy the demand of President Rhee Syngman, who stubbornly resisted an armistice and urged the unification of Korea during settlement negotiations in 1953 . . . Responding to President Rhee’s demands, President Eisenhower . . . agreed to form a mutual security pact model[ed] after the alliances the United States made with the Philippines, and Australia and New Zealand . . . This joint statement [by President Rhee and Secretary Dulles] suggests that the United States exchanged the defense treaty and economic assistance for the consolidation of the ROK Armed Forces [for] the ROK’s pledge to agree with the armistice and not to take unilateral actions.¹⁶⁶


As it became clear that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s ambition of retaking continental China was a hopeless pipe dream and the very survival of the Nationalist regime was at risk in the early 1950s, Taiwan began to explore the possibility of a mutual security pact with the United States. Taipei’s first attempt for a bilateral defense treaty with Washington was made in March 1953. Although Chiang had once broached the idea of an Asian version of NATO with South Korean President Rhee Syngman and Philippine President Elpidio Quirino in 1949, after the United States formed separate security arrangements with Japan, the Philippines, and Australia and New Zealand, a bilateral security pact seemed a more viable form of formal security guarantee by the United States.167 On March 19, in a meeting with Secretary Dulles in Washington, Taiwan’s ambassador to the United States, Wellington Koo (Gu Weijun), proposed a bilateral defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan, along the line of the treaties Washington had previously made with Tokyo, Manila, Canberra, and Wellington.168

Yet Dulles’s response was negative. He replied that his government “would not want to make a treaty which would result in a commitment for the United States to go to war on the mainland of Asia and that it would be extremely difficult.” If the treaty envisaged only the protection of Formosa Island to avoid this problem, Dulles added, it would be “embarrassing” to the Nationalist regime, which had long claimed to be the sole legitimate government of China. Dulles also pointed out that the formation of the mutual

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security pact would encourage South Korea’s Rhee Syngman, who had been urging the necessity of a defense treaty between Washington and Seoul, to demand the same level of formal U.S. commitment to the security of South Korea.\textsuperscript{169}

As revealed at the meeting between Dulles and Koo, the Eisenhower administration was not interested in making an alliance with Taiwan. Although President Eisenhower declared that he would release the Nationalist regime from its constraints by denuclearizing the Taiwan Strait soon after his inauguration, his Taiwan policy did not envision the protection of the Nationalist regime through a formal security pact.\textsuperscript{170} NSC 146/2, “United States Objectives and Course of Action with Respect to Formosa and the Chinese National Government,” adopted on November 6, 1953, clearly stated that the basic policy of the United States toward Taiwan was to “strive to make clear to the Chinese National Government that its future depends primarily upon its own political and economic efforts and upon its ability to command the respect and support of the Chinese people.”\textsuperscript{171}

Although Taiwan’s first proposal received an outright rejection from the U.S., the conclusion of the bilateral security pact between Washington and Seoul in 1953 encouraged Taipei to make a second attempt. Not long after the US-ROK mutual defense treaty was signed on October 1, 1953, the Nationalist regime began to contact U.S. officials to achieve a similar security agreement. When Vice President Nixon visited Taipei in November 1953, Taiwanese officials emphasized the desirability of a bilateral

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{170} Eisenhower’s famous declaration to “denuclearize” the Taiwan Strait was made during his first State of the Union address. Message from the President to the Congress, February 2, 1953, ibid., 140.

\textsuperscript{171} United States Objectives and Course of Action with Respect to Formosa and the Chinese National Government (NSC 146/2), November 6, 1953, ibid., 309.
security arrangement between Washington and Taipei, in accordance with the precedents of the bilateral security pacts the United States had made with several Asia-Pacific states. In a letter to Nixon, Taiwan’s foreign minister, George Yeh (Ye Gongchao), wrote, “since the signing of the U.S.-Korean pact, the feeling has been gaining ground that if the United States could afford to conclude a pact with Korea, she could equally well, if not better, afford to conclude one with Free China along similar lines.”

In addition, he drafted a Sino-American mutual defense treaty modeled after the bilateral American alliances in the region and handed it to U.S. Ambassador to Taiwan Karl Rankin in February 1954. Again, however, Taiwan’s diplomatic efforts failed to change the Eisenhower administration’s policy. Persuaded by the Taiwanese, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson cautiously recommended serious consideration of the Taiwanese proposal. Yet Secretary Dulles summarily dismissed the idea of a bilateral security pact with Nationalist China, since he was worried that the formation of a defense treaty with Taiwan could derail the Geneva Conference, which was planned to be held in April 1954 to discuss the settlement of the conflicts in Korea and Indochina with the members of the UN Security Council. Dulles also added that a security pact with Taiwan “might be harder to sell to the Senate than was the Korean Treaty.”

Yet Taiwan did not cease its efforts to achieve a defense pact with the United States. In May 1954, in his personal message to President Eisenhower, Generalissimo

172 Koo, COHP, Vol. 7, Pt. H, Sec. 3, H-246, CRBML.
174 Memorandum for the File by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), February 27, 1954, ibid., 369.
Chiang expressed his desire to form “a pact patterned after the agreements between America and the Philippines, between America and Japan, and between America and Korea,” assuring the Americans that “we shall never take any unwarranted action by ourselves.”\footnote{Closing Remarks of President Chiang Kai-shek during Conversation 24 May 1954 in Taipei, May 24, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box No. 10, DDEL.} About a month later, on June 28, Generalissimo Chiang reassured U.S. officials that after the conclusion of a mutual security pact, he would not take any unilateral military action against communist China without U.S. permission, in case concerns about potential entanglements made it difficult for Washington to start a discussion about a bilateral security arrangement.\footnote{Memorandum for the President: Message from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, June 28, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box No. 10, DDEL.} Taiwanese ambassador Koo also contacted U.S. officials in July 1954 to inform them his government was still interested in a mutual security pact with the United States and ask whether the Eisenhower administration’s position had changed since their previous communication. However, to Koo’s disappointment, the response from American officials remained negative. Walter P. McConaughy, the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, responded that “there had been no change in our position since it had been communicated by the Secretary [Dulles] to the Ambassador [Koo].”\footnote{Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), July 16, 1954, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XIV}, 493.}

The rejection of the Taiwanese proposal in the summer of 1954 disconfirms the core argument of the powerplay thesis, that the United States formed its bilateral alliance with Taiwan to control Taipei’s behavior through a bilateral setting. Even though Chiang pledged to restrain his future actions in return for a mutual defense treaty, the Eisenhower
administration still did not show any interest in his proposal. Although Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Robertson became sympathetic to Taipei’s position, several State Department officials opposed the idea of making a defense pact with Taiwan, pointing out that such a move would cause relations with India, who were then trying to draw China away from the Soviet Union, to deteriorate and that Taiwan had already been receiving enough political and military support from the United States.\textsuperscript{178}

The response of Dulles, who had the authority to greenlight a treaty discussion, was lukewarm at best. Despite Robertson’s repeated requests to let him start negotiations for mutual defense, Dulles replied that he “would prefer to delay decision as to timing because of the complexities of the offshore island problem.”\textsuperscript{179}

What pushed the Eisenhower administration to seriously consider a mutual security pact with Taiwan was neither U.S. strategy for bilateral control nor the Generalissimo’s promise to restrain himself; it was the first Taiwan Strait crisis, which began with the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s artillery bombardment of Quemoy (Kinmen) Island on September 3, 1954.\textsuperscript{180} The crisis posed a serious dilemma for the United States, which had been trying to avoid its military commitment to the defense of offshore islands controlled by the Nationalist government in Taiwan. While the majority opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

\textsuperscript{178} Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Jernegan) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), August 27, 1954, ibid., 551; Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to Harold N. Waddell of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, August 27, 1954, ibid., 552; Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), August 27, 1954, ibid., 552-553.

\textsuperscript{179} Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), September 1, 1954, ibid., 554.

\textsuperscript{180} For the background and the process of the crisis, see Accinelli, \textit{Crisis and Commitment}, 157-210; Thomas E. Stolper, China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands: Together with an Implication for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), 34-48.
supported military intervention to protect the islands, such an intervention could escalate into an all-out war between the United States and China. Yet considering the international reputation of the United States, Washington could not easily abandon the Nationalist government either.\textsuperscript{181}

To solve this “horrible dilemma,” Dulles came up with a new idea. He proposed to get an injunction from the UN against further hostile actions, by taking the offshore island issue to the UN Security Council (UNSC) as “incipient aggression” by communist China.\textsuperscript{182} Dulles’s rationale for the UN initiative, later code-named “Oracle,” was that the United States would be able to derive a benefit regardless of whether the Soviet Union vetoed the UNSC resolution.\textsuperscript{183} If the Soviets agreed to resolve the crisis by issuing the UN injunction, the United States and Taiwan would be able to stabilize the Taiwan Strait. Even if the Soviet Union did not agree to pass the resolution, the reputation of the Soviet Union and communist China would be damaged by ignoring the “the will of the majority of the UN.”\textsuperscript{184}

After President Eisenhower approved this UN scheme, Dulles started to work on it with the United Kingdom, a trustworthy ally and a permanent member of the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{185} After a series of secret talks in mid-September, the British promised to support Dulles’s idea and suggested New Zealand, then a member of the UN Security Council,

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\textsuperscript{181} Memorandum of Discussion at the 213\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of the National Security Council, September 9, 1954, ibid., 583-595.

\textsuperscript{182} Memorandum of Discussion at the 214\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of the National Security Council, Denver, September 12, 1954, ibid., 619.

\textsuperscript{183} Accinelli, \textit{Crisis and Commitment}, 163.

\textsuperscript{184} Memorandum of Discussion at the 214\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of the National Security Council, Denver, September 12, 1954, ibid., 620.

\textsuperscript{185} Memorandum of Conversation, by Roderic L. O’Connor, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, September 22, 1954, ibid., 653-655; Memorandum of Discussion at the 215\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, September 24, 1954, ibid., 659.
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submit the issue to the Council, advising that “initiation of [the] matter should preferably be by a member not closely identified with situation although having legitimate interest.”

Although cooperation with the United Kingdom and New Zealand went smoothly, one potential problem for the Eisenhower administration was that Taiwan would not welcome the move. In a secret telegram to Washington, American ambassador to Taiwan Rankin warned,

Unless other offsetting steps are taken previously or concurrently it may be anticipated Government of Republic of China will regard action as another Yalta by which free China, this time at British behest, is to be sold down river as result of secret deal made behind Chinese backs . . . In sum, GRC [Government of Republic of China] probably would see as primary US move appeasement of UK and hence of Communists, with all but disastrous psychological and perhaps military results to free China and corresponding benefits to Reds.

Assistant Secretary Robertson, who had been sympathetic to Taipei on the treaty issue, followed up on Rankin’s point by suggesting that the United States could earn Chiang’s cooperation with the UN initiative by providing a mutual defense treaty as “offsetting steps.” Requesting that he be allowed to start a negotiation for a security pact with Taipei, Robertson wrote to Dulles that “conclusion of a mutual defense treaty with the GRC

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186 The Secretary of State to the Department of State, September 27, 1954, ibid., 663-4. The New Zealand initiative in the UN proposed by the British was later code-named Operation Oracle. Garver, 59; Memorandum of a Conversation, January 19, 1955, FRUS, 1955-1957 Vol. II, 45.

187 The Ambassador in the Republic of China (Rankin) to the Department of State, October 5, 1954, ibid., 682.
[Government of the Republic of China] is not only an essential move to offset the effects of the contemplated action in the UN, but is also the best means of deterring a Communist attack against Formosa."\(^{188}\)

Robertson's suggestion successfully convinced Dulles and Eisenhower, who had been skeptical about the value of a defense treaty with Taiwan. They agreed to provide a formal security guarantee in the form of a defense pact with Taipei in return for Generalissimo Chiang’s support for the UN initiative, on the condition that “this treaty, however, should make it clear that it is truly a defense treaty and that we are not going to defend our partner while our partner attacks.”\(^{189}\)

A week after Eisenhower approved the proposal, Assistant Secretary Robertson flew to Taiwan to discuss the UN scheme with Chiang. As Rankin had predicted, the Generalissimo did not like the idea of resolving the issue through the UN.\(^{190}\) He told his American interlocutors that “the proposal could be used in pursuance of the current Communist line and would play into Communist hands,” adding that “it would have a destructive effect on the morale of his troops, the common people living on Formosa, the overseas Chinese, and their enslaved fellow countrymen on the mainland who are looking for signs of resistance to Communism.”\(^{191}\)

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\(^{188}\) Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1954, ibid., 706-707.

\(^{189}\) Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), October 7, 1954, FRUS Vol. XIV, 708; Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), October 8, 1954, ibid., 709.

\(^{190}\) The Ambassador in the Republic of China (Rankin) to the Department of State, October 14, 1954, FRUS, ibid., 754-5.

\(^{191}\) Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (mcConaughy), October 13, 1954, ibid., 732.
Yet Chiang immediately changed his attitude when Robertson brought up the issue of a mutual defense treaty as a reward for his cooperation with the plan. Stating that “the prospect of a defense pact did have a bearing on his evaluation of the proposed UN move,” he agreed to the “purely defensive” nature of a potential security pact suggested by the U.S. Delighted, Chiang even suggested treaty negotiation start “beginning this moment.” At the very least, he urged, the announcement of talks for a mutual defense pact needed to precede New Zealand’s introduction of the resolution on the off-shore island issue, if the conclusion of a bilateral pact was physically impossible by then.\footnote{Ibid., 738-9.}

The tradeoff between Chiang’s cooperation on the resolution of the Taiwan Strait crisis through a UN procedure and a defensive alliance with Taipei, which was supported not only by Taiwan but also by the United Kingdom, was pursued in earnest as official U.S. policy from late October.\footnote{Discussion at the 220th Meeting of the National Security Council, October 28, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series, Box No. 6, DDEL. For the British agreement on the trade off, see The Secretary of State to the Department of State, October 21, 1954, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XIV}, 788-789.} Taiwan’s foreign minister, Yeh, visited Washington and began negotiation with Dulles on October 27. The Nationalist government, which did not want to miss this golden opportunity, repeatedly reassured Washington that it did not have “the slightest intention of making a Treaty with the United States serve as a basis for action against mainland China.”\footnote{Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), October 27, 1954, ibid., 801.} It took a month to finalize the treaty, due to some contentious points related to the offshore islands, which were problematic for American officials since they were located too close to mainland China and very far from Taiwan.
The territorial scope of the treaty and the restrictions on the operations of the Nationalist forces became particular issues of contention, but these problems were resolved by deliberately omitting the off-shore islands from the main text of the treaty. The agreed-upon text vaguely stated that the applicability of the treaty to territories other than Taiwan and the Penghu (Pescadores) Islands “may be determined by mutual agreement.” Generalissimo Chiang, who was generally satisfied with the terms proposed by the U.S. and did not care much about the details, gladly approved Yeh’s concessions on these points.

On November 23, after a month-long negotiation, Dulles and Yeh initialed a treaty text. About a week later, on December 2, 1954, the treaty was signed by representatives of the governments of the United States and the Republic of China.

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195 Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 2, 1954, ibid., 842-851; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 4, 1954, ibid., 855-865; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 6, 1954, ibid., 870-880; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 9, 1954, ibid., 881-882; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 12, 1954, ibid., 887-892; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 16, 1954, ibid., 895-903; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 19, 1954, ibid.; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), November 22, 1954, ibid., 921-926.

196 Accinelli, Crisis and Commitment, 163.


Although it was *quid pro quo*, a win-win deal for both sides, the formation of the alliance was a great diplomatic victory for Generalissimo Chiang, who craved a formal security pact with the United States as the last hope for the survival of his Nationalist regime. In his diary, on December 4, Chiang expressed his appreciation for the defense treaty as the “outcome of ten years of shame and five years of bitter struggle,” describing it as “a ray of hope in the darkness (黑暗中一縷曙光).”200

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The process and outcome of the formation of the US-Taiwanese alliance thus far examined show that the most critical factor in enabling the treaty deal was the 1954 Taiwan Strait crisis triggered by the PLA attack on the off-shore islands. The crisis forced Eisenhower and Dulles, who had been deeply skeptical about the value of a mutual defense pact with Nationalist China, to accept the treaty deal as a reward for Chiang’s cooperation on the resolution of the crisis through a UN procedure. Although the Eisenhower administration emphasized the defensive nature of its alliance with Taiwan, it was a prerequisite condition for the treaty rather than a motivation for it.

**Conclusion**

The available direct and circumstantial evidence analyzed above clearly demonstrates that the U.S. bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan were not the results of, or motivated by, U.S. strategic intentions to control these states through bilateral settings. The alliances with Seoul and Taipei took bilateral forms because they were the results of a piecemeal process of concessions, not of U.S. strategic considerations or a preference for bilateral control, as the powerplay thesis suggests. Historical records of the Eisenhower administration’s policy toward South Korea and Taiwan reveal that key U.S. policymakers, notably President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles, were not interested in the idea of forming alliances with Seoul and Taipei until they were forced to accept those alliances by successive crises on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait. The alliances were formed by the Eisenhower administration as extemporaneous diplomatic measures to deal with these crises, which sequentially compelled American policymakers to accept bilateral security deals by weakening Washington’s bargaining power and imposing severe time constraints. In the case of South Korea, the Eisenhower
administration’s decision to enter into a mutual security pact with Seoul was largely driven by a crisis the South Korean president Rhee Syngman had triggered. Rhee, a shrewd tactician who well understood Washington’s strong desire to end the war in Korea as early as possible, forced the Eisenhower administration to swallow the bitter pill of a bilateral defense treaty by disrupting and endangering the armistice negotiations through brinkmanship diplomacy. In the case of Taiwan, the first Taiwan Strait crisis, caused by the PLA’s bombardment of off-shore islands, provided an opportunity for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to trade his support for a UN-sponsored solution for a mutual security pact between the United States and Taiwan. Contrary to the empirical predictions of the powerplay thesis, no available record of U.S. policy formulation and decision-making shows any consideration that bilateral settings would be a more efficient or effective design for alliance restraint.

These findings do not entirely reject the argument of the powerplay thesis, since it correctly describes that the Eisenhower administration formed alliances with South Korea and Taiwan to restrain those unruly Asian powers. Yet available historical evidence does not support its causal narrative that Washington intended to maximize its influence over Seoul and Taiwan by deliberately choosing bilateral designs. The security arrangements were positive inducements for Rhee and Chiang, reluctantly provided to gain their cooperation with diplomatic solutions to the crises on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait, rather than instruments of negative constraint based on the powerplay logic of bilateral control. American policymakers may have learned the controlling function of bilateral arrangements later, but such a benefit was never considered or recognized when the Eisenhower administration decided to enter mutual security pacts with South Korea and Taiwan.
Chapter 4

Organized Hypocrisy:

The Failure of SEATO, 1955–1977

Introduction

As shown in the previous chapters, the birth of the American hub-and-spokes system was the result of U.S. crisis diplomacy in the early 1950s, as Washington made a series of unexpected concessions on its alliance strategy. The Truman administration, which initially contemplated the formation of a multilateral alliance amid the Korean War, abandoned its original multilateral plan and embraced bilateralism after learning of regional allies’ strong preferences for separate security arrangements. This voluntary concession was possible because the policymakers of the Truman administration did not have a clear, strong institutional preference with regard to the American alliance network in the Asia-Pacific. As a result of this policy shift, the United States created a hub-and-spokes network of alliances with Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand in 1951. Meanwhile, the bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan were an outcome of grudging concessions made by the Eisenhower administration in 1953–4. Although they wanted to avoid any formal security ties with the two reckless anti-communist powers, policymakers of the Eisenhower administration grudgingly added Seoul and
Taiwan to the U.S. bilateral alliance system to end the crises on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait without risking all-out war.

This chapter examines the failure of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) as a potential turning point for institutional change after the establishment of the bilateral alliance system. Initially formed in 1955 by the United States and its allies to address communist threats in Southeast Asia, SEATO lasted 23 years, until its formal disbandment in 1977. Except for the “mini-lateral” Australia-New Zealand-United States Treaty (ANZUS), the treaty organization was the sole multilateral alliance the United States formed in the Asia-Pacific. Although it could have changed the bilateral structure of the U.S. alliance network, surprisingly little attention has been paid to this critical “missed opportunity” in the debate on the American hub-and-spokes alliance system. By investigating why the multilateral alliance of SEATO failed to survive, this chapter examines the causal factors and mechanisms that steered the United States and its regional allies away from this alternative institutional pathway.

Why did SEATO fail to survive? The most apparent answer would be that major geopolitical changes that occurred in the 1970s, notably the end of the Vietnam War and the U.S.-Sino rapprochement during the Nixon administration, killed it. After all, SEATO was disbanded as the United States pulled itself out of Vietnam and normalized its diplomatic relationship with China. Yet a careful examination of SEATO’s history suggests that the strategic events of the 1970s were merely the immediate cause of its failure, the “final blow” that removed the treaty organization’s life support. Although SEATO achieved some successes in presenting the image of a united front against Asian communism and promoting socioeconomic exchanges among member states, there is a consensus among historians and international relations scholars that SEATO failed as a
military alliance.201 The treaty organization was never involved in any actual military operations, and it was unable to take any concerted action through a series of regional crises in Laos and Indochina in the 1950s and 1960s. Several disillusioned and disinterested member states had already left or stopped financial contributions to SEATO even before its abolition.202 Long before its eventual demise, SEATO had been a hollow, incompetent security organization that British Diplomat James Cable described as a “zoo of paper tigers.”203

The treaty organization’s disappointing performance and “hollowness” suggest that SEATO is an example of what Julia Gray called “zombie” international organizations. Unlike normal international organizations that produce output consistent with their mandates and dead organizations that member states choose to disband, zombie organizations continue to operate in some form despite their functional failure and stagnation.204 For more than a decade before it faced its eventual demise in 1977, SEATO remained a dysfunctional security organization failing to work toward its mandated goals.


This comatose state made the United States and other member states abolish the treaty organization with no regrets when the geopolitical situation changed in the 1970s.

Thus, to examine why SEATO failed to survive, this chapter focuses on why it became such a dysfunctional security organization. Instead of duplicating diplomatic historians’ accounts of SEATO’s functional failure, this chapter seeks to provide a theoretically informed analysis of why SEATO became such a zombie-like security organization, destined to perish. Drawing on the theories of dysfunctional international organizations, I test three alternative explanations—(1) faulty design by intention, (2) collective beliefs, and (3) bureaucratic pitfalls—and argue that SEATO was designed to fail by its key member states, who did not want it to function as a strong, capable military organization. The United States, which initiated the creation of SEATO, deliberately chose a suboptimal institutional design to reduce the risk of entanglement and prevent other members’ free-riding. American policymakers never envisaged a strong, NATO-like security organization in Southeast Asia. Instead, they only pursued the minimal goal of presenting the image of a united front against communism, without making specified commitments to the security of the region. The United States therefore not only chose a suboptimal design for SEATO but also contained its institutional development. Several other member states, notably Britain and France, also favored and utilized the treaty organization’s ineffective design to minimize the risks of entrapment and their contributions to the treaty. In this sense, from the beginning, SEATO was organized hypocrisy doomed to fail. In addition, the unanimity decision-making rule adopted to prevent potential entrapment severely hampered effective collective action when regional crises required the organization to undertake military engagements.
The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section reviews potential explanations for the failure of SEATO and their observable implications. The second section analyzes how the United States and its allies designed SEATO and how their faulty design made the treaty organization ineffective and dysfunctional. The concluding section summarizes key findings and assesses the validity of alternative explanations.

**Potential Explanations and Predictions**

*Suboptimal Design by Intention*

The first explanation, which I support in this chapter, is that SEATO became a defunct security organization due to its suboptimal design, intentionally chosen by its member states. Although they agreed to create a collective defense system, key members of SEATO purposefully chose a weak institutional structure and ineffective decision-making rules due to their fear of unnecessary entanglement.

International organizations’ institutional design—organizational structure, rules, and procedures—is a critical factor in determining their effectiveness and vitality. Security organizations are no exception to this rule. The best example of the importance of institutional design is NATO. As several neoliberal institutionalist scholars suggest in their studies on NATO’s persistence, the treaty organization’s institutional depth and intensity—unified command structure and military planning, strongly binding security guarantees, and highly integrated policy coordination and consultation systems—enabled NATO to survive the Cold War and adapt to the new security environment of post–Cold War Europe.\(^\text{205}\) Unlike NATO, SEATO never had such well-developed institutional

structure and suffered from faulty institutional rules and procedures, which hampered the effectiveness of collective political/military actions.206

Why do states design ineffective international organizations like SEATO? One possible explanation is that such design failure is an unintended outcome. Social actors, even when assumed to be rational, often choose suboptimal institutional design because the aggregating processes of their individual preferences can bring about inefficient collective choice.207 The compromises reached by individual actors with different interests and preferences can result in an unintended outcome of ineffective organizational structure, rules, and procedures in the formative phase.208 However, as rational institutionalist scholars suggest, an unintended suboptimal design at the initial stage can be fixed through renegotiations among member states.209

Why then did SEATO’s member states not renegotiate and redesign the flawed design of the treaty organization? This puzzle can be easily solved if the low degree of institutionalization was an intended outcome. In other words, there is a possibility that the member states of SEATO deliberately designed it to be weak. Terry Moe’s study of

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domestic political bureaucracy suggests that political actors, when designing political institutions, can insert institutional elements that hamstring effective collective actions in order to hedge against an uncertain future.\(^{210}\) The same logic can be applied to international politics. In their analysis of the League of Arab States, Michael Barnett and Etel Solingen claim that the Arab League was intentionally designed to be a weak, ineffective regional security organization by its member states, who were worried about the organization’s uncertain political influence over their domestic societies. According Barnett and Solingen, the leaders of Arab states embraced the rhetoric of Arab unity by joining the League but were concerned that the organization might compromise their domestic political authority and sovereignty. Due to these concerns, members of the Arab League deliberately chose a weak institutional design to contain the development and effective functioning of the League.\(^{211}\)

Similar political logic can be applied to explain the suboptimal design of SEATO, where, unlike in the Arab League, the central cause of concern was the risk of entrapment. Most SEATO members were concerned about potential entanglement when they joined, and they thus may have deliberately designed it to be an ineffective security organization with only a symbolic function of deterrence. If this is correct, we would expect to observe the following implications: (1) The majority of SEATO members preferred not to be involved in conflicts in other member states’ territories; (2) these concerned states intentionally chose a weak commanding/planning structure and inserted

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institutional obstacles to the effective functioning of SEATO as an international security organization.

Collective Beliefs

A second explanation, suggested by constructivist international relations scholars, is that collective beliefs held by the SEATO member states hampered its effective functioning. This account agrees with the first explanation in that SEATO suffered from its suboptimal design, but diverges from it by emphasizing the role of ideational and cultural factors in producing such a faulty institutional design.

The most famous, and perhaps most influential, account following this line of explanation is Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein’s claim that American policymakers’ perceptions of collective identity and cultural prejudices hindered the institutional development of SEATO. In their comparative analysis of U.S. regional security policy in Europe and Asia, Hemmer and Katzenstein suggest that the lack of a common collective identity among member states and the Eisenhower administration’s cultural and racial biases against Asian states, rather than a rational consideration of strategic costs and benefits, contributed to SEATO’s low level of institutional development. Although their analysis suffers from a lack of empirical evidence, Hemmer and Katzenstein’s claim is worth examining, given its theoretical plausibility and significant influence on the debate over U.S. security bilateralism in Asia. If their account is correct, we should be able to find the following observable implications: (1) the policymakers of the Eisenhower administration perceived that Asian states did not share a common political/cultural identity; (2) the U.S. policymakers held a condescending view

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stemming from cultural prejudices rather than value-free calculations (e.g., Asian political systems and culture were not sufficiently sophisticated to achieve multilateral cooperation with the United States); and (3) such perceptions of cultural identity and prejudices implicitly or explicitly affected their assessment of the strategic value and feasibility of developing SEATO into a strong, capable collective security mechanism.

Focusing on the role of the collective beliefs held by Southeast Asian states, another group of scholars claims that SEATO’s lack of legitimacy failed the treaty organization. According to Amitav Acharya, Nabarun Roy, and Ji-young Lee, many Southeast Asian states that experienced Western imperialism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries rejected SEATO because they viewed the treaty organization as another attempt to impose a Western imperialist order in the region. As a result, these scholars argue, SEATO became an ineffective security organization with weak regional support. If this account is correct, we should be able find evidence of the following observable implications: (1) Southeast Asian states critical to the achievement of effective regional deterrence and defense did not join SEATO due to their suspicions of the potential imperialist intentions behind the U.S.-led regional security initiative; (2) these regional states’ non-participation significantly hampered the effective operation of SEATO.

Bureaucratic Pitfalls

A third potential explanation is that SEATO’s poor performance was caused by its bureaucrats. Recently, a small but growing literature on the effectiveness and vitality of international organizations has focused on the “rogue agency” of organizational bureaucrats instead of state power and preferences. According to this approach, states delegate authority to the bureaucratic officials of international organizations—the agents—to advance common organizational objectives agreed upon by the states.\textsuperscript{214} However, due to the inherent challenge of monitoring and providing feedback, the bureaucrats can make the organizations dysfunctional by acting in their parochial interests or pursuing their own goals at the expense of delegated organizational missions.

In their pathbreaking studies of dysfunctional international organizations, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore suggest that the officials of international organizations, who tend to develop and maintain their own behavioral logic and patterns, can be an important source of “organizational pathologies,” such as irrationality of rationalization, bureaucratic universalism, normalization of deviance, insulation, and cultural contestation.\textsuperscript{215} This rogue-agency model of dysfunctional international organizations has also been applied to explain the failure or underperformance of UN Peacekeeping operations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.\textsuperscript{216}


\textsuperscript{216} Thorsten Benner, Stephan Mergenthaler, and Philipp Rotmann, \textit{The New World of UN Peace Operations: Learning to Build Peace?} (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2011); Jens L
According to this theoretical logic, SEATO’s dysfunction may have originated from the bureaucratic pathologies of the organization. This predicts the following observable implications: (1) SEATO had a relatively independent bureaucratic body, which enjoyed a certain level of political autonomy; (2) the bureaucratic organization had its own operational logic, principles, and/or culture, which hampered the efficient functioning of SEATO; and (3) the bureaucratic body was insulated from exogenous feedback seeking to fix bureaucratic inefficiencies.

**The Rise and Fall of SEATO**

*“United Action” in Southeast Asia*

SEATO had its origins in the unstable geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia in the aftermath of World War II. Since the late 1940s, the situation in Indochina peninsula had rapidly deteriorated as the French failed to cope with the increasing activities of Ho Chi Minh’s Viet Minh forces. France, which had once resisted American involvement in Southeast Asia, was now desperately seeking it.217 Although they did not fully support France’s effort to maintain its colonial empire in Asia, policymakers of the Eisenhower administration were seriously concerned about the declining French influence in Indochina for several reasons. They believed that the connection between Ho Chi Minh and Moscow was stronger than the Sino-Soviet connection, and they were also

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increasingly worried about the possibility of Soviet intervention in Southeast Asia, potentially a special target of opportunity for a strategic source of food and raw materials.

In addition, American policymakers already believed in an earlier version of “domino theory,” fearing that the loss of Indochina would bring about further strategic and psychological damage. For example, NSC-5405, adopted on January 16, 1954, stated that the “loss of the struggle in Indochina, in addition to its impact in Southeast Asia and in South Asia would. . . . have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interests in Europe and elsewhere.”

As the siege of Dien Bien Phu began in March 1954, it became apparent that the French colonial government in Indochina was destined to collapse. In an NSC meeting held later that month, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said they were witnessing “the collapse or evaporation of France as a great power,” pointing out that “the French had actually reached a point where they would rather abandon Indochina than save it through United States intervention and assumption of French responsibilities.”

Nonetheless, unilateral U.S. intervention was not a preferred option, since the Eisenhower administration did not want to take on France’s position in Indochina. Instead, President Eisenhower was more interested in “a broadened effort to save Indochina” by bringing other states on board to protect Southeast Asia from the communists.

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220 Ibid., 1166-7.
To implement the principle of the “broadened effort” suggested by President Eisenhower, American policymakers came up with the idea of “united action.” On March 29, in his speech at the Overseas Press Club, Dulles publicly stated that the increasing communist challenges in Southeast Asia “should be met by united action.” ²²¹ Although Dulles’s speech did not reveal what that united action would entail, the State Department was already preparing to form a multilateral coalition among Western and Southeast Asian states.

The initial plan, drafted by the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff on March 31, envisaged the United States, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Associated States of French Union (Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam), Thailand, and the Philippines as potential members of a collective security agreement covering Southeast Asia. ²²² Considering their continuing influence over the region and their military capabilities, the inclusion of France and Britain in the coalition was an obvious choice. Australia and New Zealand, two British Commonwealth powers in the South Pacific, were also brought into the coalition to utilize the capacity of ANZUS alliance. The Associated States had to be included due to their proximity to North Vietnam, the primary source of the communist threat in the region. The plan also included as members Thailand and the Philippines, two Southeast Asian powers that already had close ties to the United States, to avoid the potential label of Western imperialism. President

²²¹ The text of Dulles’s March 29 speech can be found in John Foster Dulles, “Threat of a Red Asia,” Department of State Bulletin, April 12, 1954, 539-542.

Eisenhower approved the plan, stating that “the creation of such a political organization for defense would be better than emergency military action.”\(^{223}\)

Dulles flew to Europe several days later to discuss the coalition idea with Britain and France, but gaining the European powers’ support for the united action plan was not easy. Response from London was negative since it believed that a negotiated settlement, rather than a hostile united action, would better help preserve Britain’s influence in Southeast Asia.\(^{224}\) In addition, the British strongly insisted that any coalition excluding neutralist states such as India, Burma, and Indonesia would be interpreted as another Western attempt at imperialism, thereby undermining Britain’s legitimacy and long-term presence in Asia. Paris was pessimistic about the efficacy of creating a regional coalition and was more interested in obtaining unilateral U.S. military support for the fight against the Viet Minh.

Although France later changed its position, supporting the united action proposal due to the worsening military situation in Indochina, Britain remained recalcitrant until the United States made several diplomatic concessions. Since it was devoting a considerable diplomatic effort to the successful settlement at upcoming peace talks in Geneva on the Indochina conflict, London disliked the U.S. plan, which would risk re-escalation and major war shortly before the Geneva Conference.\(^{225}\) Britain finally

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dropped its objection in June 1954, in return for the Eisenhower administration’s support for a settlement at the Conference. Washington and London soon launched a joint study group to flesh out the coalition of Western and Southeast Asian states, then drafted the basic structure of a potential collective security treaty among the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France, Thailand, the Philippines, and other Southeast Asian states, including Burma, Indonesia, and the Associated States (Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam), depending on their willingness and the final arrangement of the Geneva Conference. In the preparatory talks, the British insisted that the multilateral pact should include the so-called “Colombo Powers,” the five neutralist countries (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Indonesia) in South and Southeast Asia. The United States accepted the British demand, realizing that such an expansion would help attract support for the coalition within the region. However, despite sustained diplomatic efforts by the United States and Britain, the Asian neutralists strongly opposed the creation of the U.S.-led regional coalition. With the exception of Pakistan, the Colombo Powers, led by India, formed a common front against the plan. In particular, Burma and Indonesia, which viewed the real intention of the Americans as oppressing the neutralist movement, described it as “Western colonialism in a new and more subtle disguise.”


229 Cheng Guan Ang, Southeast Asia’s Cold War: An Interpretive History (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2018), 76.
had already been developing close ties with China since the India-China joint
announcement of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” in April 1954, actively
assisted China’s anti-SEATO campaign in the region.230

On the other hand, Australia and New Zealand welcomed the creation of a
regional security pact. Australia, which continually emphasized the necessity of a US-led
multilateral security pact and insisted on the inclusion of socioeconomic provisions, was
satisfied with the agreed-upon form of the multilateral treaty.231 New Zealand, which had
considerable concerns about the increasing communist threat in the Asia-Pacific region,
expressed its support for the united action proposal even before Britain, the leader of the
British Commonwealth, changed its position.232

Among the Southeast Asian states, Thailand and the Philippines decided to join
the regional coalition proposed by the United States. With the vivid memory of
unprotected exposure to Japanese imperialism in the early 20th century, Thailand was
more than willing to abandon its traditional policy of neutrality, as Belgium and the
Netherlands had when joining NATO.233 Although it had no immediate concerns about
the conflict in Indochina, the Philippines accepted the invitation to the coalition, hoping
for a stronger U.S. commitment to its security and better relations with other non-
communist Asian countries.234 Following the terms agreed at the Geneva Conference,


232 Ibid., 37.


which precluded the former French Union countries’ participation in any international military alliance, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam did not take part in the coalition.

The most intriguing and surprising member of the coalition was Pakistan. Although it was neither a Southeast Asian state nor a suggested member of the initial U.S. plan, Pakistan was allowed to join the regional coalition due to the Anglo-American agreement to expand the boundaries of the treaty. The primary motive for Pakistan’s participation was its hope to utilize this multilateral pact in its hostile relations with its archenemy—India.  

As the U.S.-led talks for Southeast Asian collective security progressed, France’s bitter war in Indochina ended with a diplomatic settlement at the Geneva Conference in July 1954. After months of protracted negotiations between Western and communist powers, the final accords made in Geneva divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, and France agreed to withdraw its troops to the south. Although the United States accepted the agreements, it refused to sign the Geneva Accords in order to avoid a formal recognition of the People’s Republic of China, one of the key participants in the conference. What especially troubled Washington, which viewed the Geneva Accords as a diplomatic victory for the communist powers, was the fifth clause in the final declaration of the conference. This stated that both sections of Vietnam “shall not constitute part of any military alliance” and also prohibited Cambodia and Laos from joining in “any agreement with other states if this agreement includes the obligation to

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participate in a military alliance.”

This clause was included in the declaration at the insistence of China, which was trying to sabotage the ongoing American effort to build an anti-communist coalition.

Despite this diplomatic tactic on the part of China, the unsatisfactory results of the Geneva peace talks in fact made the United States double down on its efforts to build a collective security pact against the communist threat in Southeast Asia. Policymakers of the Eisenhower administration accelerated the negotiation for the multilateral alliance because they were worried that after Geneva, “the Communists have secured possession of an advance salient in Vietnam from which military and non-military pressures can be mounted against adjacent and more remote non-Communist areas.”

A week after the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, American officials shared a draft treaty of a Southeast Asian security pact with the representatives of Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Thailand. These countries, along with the United States, soon declared that they would hold a diplomatic conference in Manila to form a regional security arrangement.

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On September 8, 1954, after a series of preliminary discussions, delegates from the United States, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty in Manila. The treaty, which was also called the Manila Pact, declared in Article 8 that it covered “the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude.” By doing so, the treaty covered not only the signatories but also Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, which could not join the treaty due to the arrangement made at the Geneva Convention, as “designated states” to protect.

Compared with NATO, the obligations of the Manila Pact were vague and narrow, lacking definite commitment to military assistance in specific circumstances. Unlike the North Atlantic Treaty, which stated that an attack on one party “shall be considered an attack against them all,” the Manila Pact stated that the signatories of the treaty would act to meet common danger “in accordance with their constitutional processes” in the event of an armed attack against the member states and the designated area (i.e., Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam). In regard to threats other than armed aggression, the Manila Pact obliged the signatories to “consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense.” The Philippines and Thailand, which were concerned about the risk of abandonment due to the vague wording, wanted stronger, NATO-type obligations. Yet the U.S. delegation led by Dulles rejected the Asian states’ demand, pointing out that such strong language would not be
approved by the U.S. Senate. The American position was accepted with the support of the other Western delegations.241

Table 1. Security Obligations of the NATO and SEATO Treaties242

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<th>NATO (North Atlantic Treaty)</th>
<th>SEATO (Manila Treaty)</th>
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<td><strong>Article V</strong></td>
<td><strong>Article IV</strong></td>
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<td>The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all, and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.</td>
<td>(1) Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the Treaty Area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory white Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.</td>
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<td>(2) If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any party in the Treaty Area or of any other state or territory to which the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense.</td>
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Potential opposition from the Senate was not the only reason Dulles tried to avoid the stronger commitment clause used in the North Atlantic Treaty. The United States, which had already committed significant amounts of its resources and troops to Europe, “was not prepared to pay the price of a strong coalition” in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{243} What Washington really wanted from the Manila Pact was to produce a symbolic deterrent effect by presenting an image of a united front against communism in Southeast Asia—Dulles called this approach the “Monroe Doctrine formula”—without making specific force commitments.\textsuperscript{244} By intentionally choosing the language of a loose security commitment, the United States tried to avoid potential entanglement and secure its freedom of action in the region.\textsuperscript{245}

After the Manila Pact was ratified by the eight signatory states, SEATO came into force in February 1955. As an international organization, SEATO’s institutional design had two distinctive features: (1) a strict, consensus-based decision-making rule, and (2) weak capacity for permanent organizational bodies. Firstly, at their initial meeting in Bangkok in 1955, the foreign ministers of the member states agreed to establish the Council of Foreign Ministers as the supreme organizational body overseeing SEATO’s activities and passed a rule that any collective decisions or actions “should be taken by unanimous agreement of the members of the council.”\textsuperscript{246} This decision-making rule was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{243} \textit{Pentagon Papers}, VI. A. 1. NATO and SEATO: A Comparison, A-13-14.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Roger Dingman, “John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954,” \textit{The International History Review} 11 no. 3 (Aug 1989), 409-477; Ang, \textit{Southeast Asia’s Cold War}, 74-5.
\item \textsuperscript{245} Green, \textit{By More Than Providence}, 290.
\item \textsuperscript{246} Organization of the Council and Rules of Procedure (Manila Pact), (n.d.), RG 59, A1 1534-6, Regional Conference and Country Files, 1951-1955, U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereafter USNA). In order to improve policy cooperation and consultation among treaty signatories, they also agreed to set up a small secretariat of Council Representatives and create a working group of military advisors to make recommendations to the Council of
\end{itemize}
strongly sponsored by Britain and France, the two European members who did not want to be dragged into unwanted conflicts in Southeast Asia, where their interests were declining. The United States and other member states agreed to adopt the rule without fully realizing its potential ramifications. This rule provided a veto power to each member state, precluding any collective action without the full agreement of all voting members. As revealed later, in the crises in Laos and Vietnam in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the unanimity rule was a strong institutional obstacle to the effective operation of SEATO.

Secondly, the Secretariat General, SEATO’s permanent organizational body, was designed to have minimal capacities. In the first two years after SEATO’s creation, the Secretariat General remained a small administrative office, operated by Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with minimum functions, such as assisting in communication among member states and preparing the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers. This design was pushed by the United States, which only wanted a loose consultative body rather than a robust and capable defense organization. Dulles’s report to the NSC after the 1954 Manila conference well demonstrates the intentions of the U.S.:

[T]he other countries wished [for] the NATO formula because it would provide for building up an elaborate military organization. Most countries wished the treaty to have a permanent organization, but this did not fit U.S. policy, so we had

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247 Regional Issue - SEATO, April 2, 1973, RG 59, A1 5557, Box 4, Subject Files Relating to U.S. Participation in the South East Asia Treaty Organization, 1954-1977, USNA.
avoided a commitment in the treaty to a permanent organization. The treaty only provides that the nations will consult from time to time.  

Asian members of SEATO were deeply dissatisfied with the hollow institutional design intended by the United States. In early 1955, Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States, Syed Amjed Ali, complained that SEATO “lacked strength in that there had been no clear cut agreements as to when action would be taken; how it would and could be taken; and to what extent SEATO members would be supported by the rest of the Free Worlds.” The Filipinos also expressed their disappointment about the sluggish development of SEATO, complaining that their attitude toward the treaty organization was gradually turning into “hostile indifference.” The U.S. diplomats in Bangkok, where SEATO's Secretariat General was located, warned Washington they had found “numerous incidents [that] could be cited as evidence of the waning interest in SEATO on the part of Asian members as a result of the failure of SEATO as an organization to achieve anything concrete.”

Because the Asian member states urged the further development of SEATO’s organizational capacity, the Secretariat General evolved in 1957 into an independent

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248 Discussion at the 214th Meeting of the National Security Council, Sunday, September 12, 1954, Eisenhower: Papers as President of the United States 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series Box 6, DDEL.


251 Need for High-Level U.S. Policy Decision in October on Future of SEATO, Foreign Service Despatch from Embassy in Bangkok (Max W. Bishop) to the Department of State, RG 59, A1 5557, Box 4, Subject Files Relating to U.S. Participation in the South East Asia Treaty Organization, 1954-1977, USNA.
office directed by a Secretary-General appointed by the Council of Foreign Ministers. However, the Secretariat General suffered from a lack of organizational budget and staff—these were smaller for SEATO than they were for the U.S. Information Office in Thailand.  

Also, with regard to personnel policy, the Secretary-General could not directly recruit his staff. Staff members were mostly diplomats or government employees from the member states, who worked only two to three years in Bangkok and then returned to their home countries. Unlike NATO, SEATO’s Secretariat General could not provide its staff with the prospect of promotion inside the organization or salary increments; as a result, most staffers focused more on securing their careers in their home government institutions than on generating and pursuing the SEATO Secretariat General’s organizational objectives. This fundamental limitation in personnel policy made it impossible to build up a pool of experienced and permanent staff and eliminated incentives for organizational efficiency and for staffers to be loyal to SEATO.

As for the military framework, instead of forming a combined command and planning body, member states established the Military Advisers’ Group (MAG) in 1955. Each member state nominated a military adviser to discuss defense issues in the region covered by the Manila Pact, and their mission was to review regional security issues in bi-annual MAG Conferences and make recommendations to the Council of Foreign Ministers. The purely consultative nature of SEATO's military framework was also intended by the United States, as a State Department memorandum written in December 1955 demonstrates:

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253 Ibid., 20-21.
On the military side, the U.S. has been guided by three cardinal negative principles: (1) avoid a combined staff arrangement, (2) avoid combined planning arrangements and (3) avoid a commitment of U.S. forces. Needless to say, this attitude on the part of the U.S. has, to put it mildly, greatly inhibited the military development of the organization.

SEATO was deliberately “unstructured by U.S. preference” from the beginning, as clearly stated in a Department of Defense memorandum:

The history of the development of SEATO thereafter is quite different from NATO's, since the initial policy of the U.S. was to discourage, rather than to assist, the evolution of a permanent structure. SEATO military staff consultations were held frequently, but were attended by relatively low-ranking U.S. officers, carefully instructed on [the] limits of their planning flexibility.254

Another Pentagon memorandum illustrates the reluctant American attitude toward the treaty:

The U.S. desires to make no commitments of U.S. forces for use under the Manila pact. (This view has not been conveyed to the other powers.) With regard to military machinery for the coordination of measures to combat overt aggression,

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the U.S. is opposed to the establishment [of] formal military machinery or of a permanent SEATO staff.255

France and Britain, which were supposed to play essential roles in the coalition as great powers, were also not enthusiastic about the future of SEATO. France was more interested in maintaining its political influence in Southeast Asia than protecting the region from communist threats. Although Paris found its membership in SEATO useful for the expansion of its international influence, it remained a reluctant sponsor of the alliance and maintained a half-hearted stance toward the treaty organization. Britain, which had been continuously skeptical of the security function of the coalition and lacked interests in Southeast Asia from the planning phase, reduced its commitments toward the treaty shortly after the signing of the Manila Pact.256 In July 1956, about a year after the creation of SEATO, British diplomat James Cable made a blunt assessment of the treaty organization’s hollowness:

I would say that the fundamental weakness of SEATO lay in the conflicting, not to say incompatible, motives from which the member Governments originally joined the Organisation. We, for instance, joined to avoid split with the Americans; the French to preserve the presence Françoise in the Far East; the Pakistanis to annoy and secure protection against the Indians; the Thais in the hope that their allies would be ready to fight on the eastern frontiers of Thailand;


and the remainder from strong but confused feelings that something had to be done about South-East Asia somehow and at once. The result has been an embarrassing, ineffective and expensive organisation which in my view at least, is no more of a deterrent to our foes or a reassurance to our friends than would have been provided by a much simpler and cheaper unilateral declaration on the part of the Western powers.257

This weak military framework of SEATO, in fact, failed to satisfy Asian members who desired a robust, NATO-like defense organization. Due to these states' demands and a recommendation from the MAG, which felt the necessity of a permanent meeting place for staff planners from the armed forces of members states, the SEATO Military Planning Office (MPO) was created in March 1957. The MPO, which evolved from ad hoc military planning committees under the MAG, carried out four basic tasks as a permanent organizational body: (1) developing operational plans, (2) gathering and sharing intelligence and information, (3) improving military and technical standardization among member states, and (4) planning joint military exercises.258 However, despite its gradual evolution and expansion, the MPO constantly suffered from a lack of organizational capacity and authority. Its staff and budget were smaller than those of the Secretariat General, its civilian counterpart in SEATO, and the Chief of the MPO had no power over his staff planners, who were only accountable to their home governments.259 Although the MPO developed eight different operational plans for conventional aggression and

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258 Fenton, To Cage the Red Dragon, 74-76.

subversion scenarios in Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam, none of these plans were seriously considered by the Council of Foreign Ministers during regional crises in the 1950s and 1960s. Until its eventual abolition in 1973, the MPO kept developing and revising military plans which no member governments cared about.

*Incompetence of SEATO, and Its Demise*

With its suboptimal design and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the three Western members, SEATO was destined to be an ineffective security organization. During the Laotian crisis of 1959–1962, the first serious regional crisis SEATO had faced since its creation, the treaty organization revealed its incompetence. From the mid-1950s on, there had been growing tension among rightists, neutralist monarchists, and communists in Laos. The communist faction, also known as the Pathet Lao, was backed by North Vietnam, which was then occupying eastern Laos as a transit route to South Vietnam. Although the Pathet Lao first joined the neutralist government in 1957, it was soon driven from power by the U.S.-backed rightists and fled to the safe haven occupied by North Vietnam. When a civil war between the Pathet Lao and the rightist government began in 1959, SEATO was not involved because the Laotian government first tried to address the communist challenge by appealing to the United Nations. Thailand, which was threatened by the increasing activities of the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese communists on its northern border, insisted on SEATO’s intervention. However, in September 1959, SEATO’s Council of Foreign Ministers turned away from the Laotian crisis by stating that the organization was “not meant to affect the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure international peace and security.”

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Although the crisis worsened, the complex nature of the Laotian situation provided the reluctant members of SEATO with a chance to exploit the vague security binding of the treaty organization. Although Article IV (1) of the Manila Pact obliged the signatories to respond to aggression by means of armed attack, Article IV (2) only stated that the member states shall “consult” to “agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense” in cases other than aggression by outside powers. Although the Pathet Lao’s insurgency against the Laotian government was closely coordinated with and supported by the Vietnamese communists, reluctant members, especially France and Britain, interpreted the conflict in Laos as a subversive threat and merely agreed to “consult” with other members on the issue.261

Due to the reluctant members exploiting SEATO’s unanimity rule, the Eisenhower administration, despite sharing Thailand’s concerns, had no means to push the alliance to take any action, apart from announcing unilateral support for the Laotian government. The Council of Foreign Ministers found no evidence of overt aggression by outside communists, and thus failed to take any collective action. SEATO’s inaction continued after President Kennedy took office in January 1961. On January 23, 1961, an inter-agency report of the State-Defense-CIA Task Force on Laos wrote,

Since SEATO was created to act in circumstances such as that now existing in Laos and has not acted, it casts doubt not only on its own integrity but on the reliability of the United States as its originator. The obvious reluctance of the British and French and others to take SEATO action with respect to Laos creates general doubt as to the validity of our case in Laos. SEATO becomes a means

whereby restraint is imposed on us by our allies against action which we might be willing and able to take unilaterally and which might be generally acceptable. . . . If SEATO is not to play an important role in the future, it should be progressively de-emphasized and United States unilateral action substituted for it, i.e., by a bilateral treaty with Thailand and whatever U.S. military dispositions are called for by the circumstances.262

Although President Kennedy continued to seek SEATO’s cooperation for concerted military actions in Laos, the Council of Foreign Ministers only reiterated its hollow warning against the communist group against the Pathet Lao. Britain and France firmly opposed the military intervention pursued by the United States, and the member states eventually reached an unsatisfactory consensus by deciding to call for a diplomatic solution to the Laotian crisis based on the Geneva settlement.263

Deeply disappointed by the impotence of SEATO, Thailand proposed revising the treaty organization’s unanimity voting rule, which had been profitably exploited by Britain and France in keeping SEATO from taking any military action. Although the United States supported the Thai proposal, other Western members, including Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand, opposed it.264 Thailand was particularly concerned


264 Memorandum From the SEATO Adviser, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (Peters) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson), Washington, September 18, 1961; Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to Secretary of State Rusk, Washington, September 26, 1961; Memorandum From the President’s Military
about SEATO's inactiveness because Bangkok, which did not have a bilateral security
treaty with Washington, saw the treaty organization as a substitute for a bilateral alliance
with the United States. Yet the Laotian crisis revealed that SEATO could not live up to
Thailand's expectations due to the strict decision-making rule which made collective
actions almost impossible.

To assuage Thailand’s concern, Washington made a bilateral pledge to protect
Thailand from communist powers by issuing a joint communique between Secretary of
State Dean Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman in March 1962. In the
communique, the United States assured the Thais that its obligation to act in the event of
an armed attack “does not depend upon the prior agreement of all other parties to the
[Manila] Treaty, since this Treaty obligation is individual as well as collective.” In a
meeting held before the public announcement of the communique, Rusk told Thanat that
“the commitments under this Treaty are individual and rest on the United States; they are
not just collective on the SEATO Organization.” Citing U.S. military assistance to South
Vietnam, he explained that the United States was already unilaterally supporting South
Vietnam based on this interpretation of the Manila Pact's security obligations. He further
emphasized that “we did not seek prior agreement of the other SEATO members, but
merely informed them of our intentions.”

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265 FE/SEATO Lewis E. Cleck, Jr., September 7, 1960. RG 59, A1 3121 Box 10, Laos Files,

266 Joint Statement by Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman of Thailand and Secretary of State Dean
Rusk at Washington, D.C. on March 6, 1962, SEATO: 1954-1964 (Bangkok: South-East Asia

267 Memorandum of Conversation: Thailand’s Security and Developments in Southeast Asia,
Due to Thailand’s continued demands, SEATO finally revised its unanimity rule in 1963. However, the revision of the decision-making rule was not enough to enable the treaty organization to function effectively. Although the Council of Foreign Ministers agreed to adopt a majority rule for collective action, it also offered veto power to every member state. Also, due to the Manila Pact’s Article IV (1), which allowed member states to act “in accordance with their constitutional processes,” there was no way to enforce a collective agreement even if a decision was made through a vote.

The disillusioned Kennedy administration began to reduce its commitment to the treaty organization from the early 1960s, although it decided not to abandon SEATO entirely in order to preserve a formal security connection with Thailand. A memorandum written on February 13, 1962, recommended as follows:

SEATO is important today as a device to get Asian people participating if real trouble comes in Asia. We will, however, reduce its political and economic role since it is not broad enough for these tasks. We will leave it with a military planning role in the event of a major war . . . . To implement the above, the following steps will be taken but without mentioning our phase-down intentions to any of our allies.

1. After Council Meeting, gradually decrease scale of Headquarters and other non-military activities.

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268 SEATO Before and After A Vietnam Settlement (by Peter W. Colm), February 18, 1969 RG 59, A1 5557, Box 4, Subject Files Relating to U.S. Participation in the South East Asia Treaty Organization, 1954-1977, USNA.


3. Let Headquarters Bangkok eventually have only Military Planning Office, Countersubversive Section (Advisory Services Only) and perhaps a Secretary General.

4. After above steps have been taken British and French may find it easier to withdraw from SEATO without loss of face. (Such withdrawals would not materially weaken SEATO as a deterrent or an instrument for action; the repercussions, if any, would be largely within the Atlantic Community.)

5. To reduce Headquarters activity.

As the conflict in Vietnam unfolded in the 1960s, the United States chose to utilize SEATO as the legal basis for its intervention in Indochina rather than as the collective security scheme originally envisioned in 1955. Washington justified its war in Vietnam by applying the “individual as well as collective” formula originally devised in the Rusk-Thanat communique. For instance, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed in 1964 stated that “with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty [the Manila Pact], the United States is, therefore, prepared. . . to take all necessary steps.”

Of course, Washington continued its efforts to mobilize SEATO to intervene in Vietnam collectively, but member states disagreed on both the war and the standing of SEATO. Although the MPO kept preparing operational plans and producing policy reports on counter-insurgency strategies, the opposition of Britain, France, and Pakistan meant that the collective security obligation of the Manila Pact was never invoked until the end of the Vietnam War. Some member states, including Australia, New Zealand,

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270 Department of State Bulletin, August 24, 1964.
Thailand, and the Philippines, supported the U.S. war effort by sending their troops to Vietnam, yet their actions were “individual” ones based on the “individual as well as collective” formula which used the Manila Pact as the legal rationale for military intervention in South Vietnam.271

When the Nixon administration decided to pull the United States out of the Vietnam War and amend its ties with China, there was little reason to maintain SEATO, which had long been a hollow, dysfunctional security organization. A State Department memorandum written in December 1972 stated,

As a collective security arrangement, SEATO has lost its “punch”, along with the interest of much of its membership. . . . To the extent that various member governments feel the need of a security link with the US, the British, Australians, New Zealanders, and Filipinos obviously do not consider SEATO to be essential to their own security but rather rely on other multilateral or bilateral arrangements. Only the Thais are wholly dependent upon SEATO for a formal security link with the US. . . . SEATO’s bureaucracy, military planning functions and exercises may have some symbolic value, but generally are of marginal practical value. . . . The current acceleration in the decline of SEATO’s fortunes is clearly a consequence of the present movement toward detente in Asia, and conviction on the part of many that SEATO has outlived its usefulness.272


272 Future of SEATO, Memorandum from Robert W. Moore to Mr. Green, December 22, 1972, RG 59, A1 5557, Box 4, Subject Files Relating to U.S. Participation in the South East Asia Treaty Organization, 1954-1977, USNA.
What delayed SEATO’s abolition was the concerns about abandonment raised by Thailand. Britain stopped its contribution to the treaty organization, and Pakistan and France formally left SEATO in 1973, the year in which the Secretariat General began to reduce its organization and the MPO stopped its military planning activities. After securing a firm American commitment to their security, Thailand and the Philippines finally proposed disbanding SEATO in 1975, and other members happily agreed to “phase out” the organization. After SEATO’s eventual abolition in 1977, the Manila Pact became a de facto bilateral security arrangement, a legal rationale supporting the alliance between the United States and Thailand.

Conclusion

As shown in the empirical analysis, SEATO was a hollow, ineffective alliance doomed to fail long before its eventual demise in the 1970s. It was unable to address regional security challenges, and its poor performance originated in the faulty institutional design intentionally chosen by its member states, including the United States. Although it led an ambitious united action plan to create a united front against communism in Southeast Asia, the Eisenhower administration’s purpose was presenting an image of anti-
communist unity without committing U.S. troops. American policymakers, worried about potential entanglement and free-riding by other member states, deliberately chose an ineffective design and contained SEATO’s institutional development. Other signatories of the Manila Pact who shared concerns about entrapment, especially Britain and France, favored this low degree of institutionalization. For these states, in a sense, SEATO was organized hypocrisy with which they could pursue different national goals without making a strong commitment to the security of Southeast Asia. Although some Asian member states, such as the Philippines and Thailand, wanted to build an effective security organization, their lack of political and military capacities limited their influence over the institutional design and development of SEATO. Furthermore, the rule of unanimity, agreed to by the member states to reduce the risk of entanglement, significantly hindered collective actions when the United States and other states attempted to utilize the treaty organization in regional crises.

Regarding these findings, especially on the U.S. role in hampering the institutional development of SEATO, it is worth noting that John Ikenberry’s “hegemonic autonomy” thesis about the American bilateral alliance system in Asia gives considerable insights into the failure of SEATO. In explaining the origins and persistence of the bilateral structure of the U.S. alliance network in Asia, Ikenberry suggests that the United States intentionally chose the bilateral structure to maximize American policy autonomy in the region.277 His explanation does not exactly match the case of SEATO—the United States was the main initiator of the multilateral security pact—yet its basic logic helps us understand an important point: U.S. policymakers’ concern about American policy

autonomy in the Southeast Asian collective security system functioned as a significant centrifugal force that hindered SEATO from evolving into an effective security organization.

As for the rival explanations of collective beliefs and bureaucratic pitfalls, little evidence seems to support these accounts. First, it is difficult to conclude that the suboptimal rules and procedures originated from American policymakers’ prejudice and cultural bias. Considering the U.S. tendency to prioritize the European and Antipodean members of SEATO in preparing and discussing key strategic issues, it is plausible that American policymakers may have felt some cultural and racial affinities toward these states. However, what matters is whether such factors of cultural identity and cultural prejudice affected Washington’s deliberate effort to minimize the institutional development of SEATO, and little evidence supports this account.

Second, the account focusing on collective beliefs about cultural identity and legitimacy does not seem to provide a satisfactory explanation for the failure of SEATO. It is undeniable that several Southeast Asian states, such as Burma and Indonesia, refused to join the treaty organization due to their bitter memory of Western colonialism and suspicions about American intentions behind the united action plan. However, there is little evidence that their absence compromised the effective performance of SEATO as a regional security organization. Some may point out that SEATO could not be a comprehensive regional security organization because it included only two Southeast Asian states, the Philippines and Thailand. Yet when the Manila Pact was made in 1954, it covered a vast area in the region because Malaysia and Bangladesh were under British and Pakistani rule, respectively. In addition, although it did not include Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam as formal members due to the agreements made at the 1954 Geneva
Convention, the Manila Pact committed itself to the security of these states as “designated countries.” Although SEATO failed to address the crises in Laos and South Vietnam in the 1950s and the 1960s, the failure of collective action was caused by the suboptimal institutional design of the treaty organization, not by its limited membership.

Third, SEATO secretariat’s weak organizational capacity and low level of autonomy suggest that the interpretation based on bureaucratic rogue agency cannot explain the failure of the treaty organization. Due to the deliberate institutional choices made by the United States and other member states, SEATO never had a relatively independent bureaucratic body enjoying political autonomy or integrated command structure that could generate institutional stakeholders pursuing their own goals and interests. Member states of SEATO delegated very little authority to the SEATO secretariat, and the main decisions were made by the Council of Foreign Ministers, a forum of representatives sent by the signatory states.
Chapter 5


Introduction

As the final puzzle, this chapter investigates the persistence of the U.S. bilateral alliance system after the demise of SEATO in 1977. As we saw in the previous chapter, SEATO, which could have changed the bilateral structure of the U.S. alliance system in Asia, failed due to its suboptimal institutional design. The treaty organization failed because of key member states, including the United States, who deliberately hindered SEATO’s institutional development due to concerns about the risks of entrapment and free-riding. Although the 1954 Manila Pact that gave birth to SEATO remains effective, it has become a de facto bilateral security arrangement between the United States and Thailand, which have been using the treaty as a legal basis of their security ties. As a result, the failed experiment of SEATO added another spoke to the existing American hub-and-spoke system rather than changing its bilateral structure.

Since the dissolution of SEATO, neither the United States nor its Asia-Pacific allies have made a serious attempt to change the hub-and-spoke structure or create a new multilateral alliance. The absence of such an attempt suggests that the puzzle of enduring bilateralism in the American alliance system in Asia is what Peter Bachrach and Morton
Baratz once called a “non-decision” question. Studying such a non-events puzzle, which is often phrased as “the dog that did not bark” problem, poses significant analytical challenges because identifying the causes of something that did not happen is especially difficult. Perhaps for this reason, most existing works explaining the U.S. bilateral alliance system in the Asia-Pacific only examine the system’s origins, assuming that the institutional structure of the American bilateral alliance network was crystallized or “locked in” at its creation.

However, such a crude assumption of automatic path dependence does not satisfactorily explain why and how the U.S. hub-and-spoke system’s bilateral structure lasted throughout and after the Cold War, because the framework of path dependence itself does not provide any specified hypotheses that link independent and dependent variables. To explain why specific institutional patterns dominate the political space and persist over time, one needs to theorize and identify the causal factors and mechanisms that solidify or reproduce such dominant, enduring patterns. Although it is

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280 For the exceptions, see Ikenberry, “State Power and the Institutional Bargain,” 49-70; Cha “Powerplay,” 158-196; G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, “Introduction,” 7-14; Michael Mastanduno, “Institutions of Convenience: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Pragmatic Use of International Institutions,” 235-6. Causal factors and mechanisms advanced in these accounts will be discussed and tested in the following sections.


not always easy to identify the causes of non-decisions, as Paul Pierson states, we can examine them through “careful, theoretically grounded, historical investigation.”

That being said, what specific causal mechanisms contributed to the continuity of bilateral hub-and-spoke structure in the American alliance network in the Asia-Pacific? To answer this question, I test four different alternative explanations in this chapter—(1) utilitarian mechanism of path dependence, (2) power mechanism of path dependence, (3) habitual mechanism of path dependence, and (4) rational response to exogenous shocks—and demonstrate that the persistence of the bilateral system was a result of habitual path dependence and the United States and its regional allies’ responses to exogenous shocks and trends. Since the dissolution of SEATO, the United States and its allies maintained the old habit of bilateral security cooperation until the end of the Cold War without reflecting the efficacy of the existing system or exploring institutional alternatives. Yet, the continuity of the bilateral alliance system after the Cold War was a result of their strategic choices address the new challenges. The United States and its Asia-Pacific allies consciously chose to maintain their bilateral security ties as a reliable institutional solution to stabilize the region in the 1990s. And they reaffirmed the relevance of the traditional hub-and-spoke system in their effort to cope with rising China in the 2000s.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section reviews four potential causal mechanisms that may have contributed to the continuity of the bilateral hub-and-spoke alliance system in the Asia-Pacific and identifies observable implications of each causal mechanism. Then, the second section tests the four mechanisms by examining the development of the U.S.-Asia strategic relations in three temporal frames:

(1) the Cold War period after the demise of SEATO (1977-1991), (2) the early post-Cold War period (1991-2000), and (3) the period in which China’s ascendance posed a new security challenge (2000-2016). The concluding section summarizes major findings and evaluates the validity of competing explanations for the continuity of the American bilateral alliance system in the Asia-Pacific.

**Potential Explanations and Predictions**

*Utilitarian Mechanism of Path Dependence: Institutional Linkage*

The first theoretical model of institutional continuity we can apply to the enduring U.S. hub-and-spoke system is the utilitarian mechanism of path dependence based on institutional linkage. The utilitarian model of path dependence focuses on the gradual change in the utilitarian cost-benefit assessment of social actors, which occurs through process of so-called “increasing returns.” Scholars who study the role of increasing returns in solidifying and reproducing social institutions suggest that an institutional pattern that provides increasing benefits over time is less prone to change, since such benefits raise the relative cost of switching to alternative institutional options as time goes by.284 With increasing returns, as James Mahoney states, “it becomes more and more difficult to transform the pattern or select previously available options, even if these alternative options would have been more efficient.”285

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285 Mahoney, 508.
There are various sources of increasing returns such as fixed costs, coordination effects, learning effects, and adaptive expectations. Fixed costs make existing patterns less costly over time because they decrease the cost per unit as output increases. Coordination effects, which are also known as positive network externalities, refer to a situation in which actors obtain increasing benefits as their peers adopt and apply the same institutional rules and routines. Learning effects, which reduce costs by enhancing efficiency, occur when actors benefit from accumulated knowledge and skills learned from repetitive application of specific institutional or behavioral patterns. Adaptive expectations refer to a situation in which dominant products or services become more attractive due to actors’ self-fulfilling anticipation that similar conditions and patterns will continue in the future. Unfortunately, these sources of increasing returns seem to be inapplicable to the American alliance system in the Asia-Pacific, as they largely explain the persistence of behavioral patterns in economic markets.

Yet there is one additional source of increasing return that may help us explain the persistence of the bilateral structure in the U.S. alliance system: the development of institutional linkage. When an institution is closely linked with other institutions and social activities, change in that institution may require significant changes in many other connected institutions and related social interactions. As the volume and density of

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institutional linkages increase, it becomes more difficult to change the given institution due to high transaction costs. In other words, the development of institutional linkages can create an incentive structure that leads states to stay with the existing institution.

Bilateral alliances between the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies, if deeply and widely linked with other national institutions and activities (e.g. designs and operations of government organizations, grand and national security policy, military doctrine and culture, long-term defense planning and weapons system), might have resulted in an unintended outcome of institutional “stickiness” by raising the costs of changing the bilateral structure. In addition, accumulated social investments and institutionalization can create domestic groups that benefit from the existing institutional structure, thereby making them societal constituents who strongly resist potential institutional change.

If this explanation is valid, we would expect to observe the following observable implications: (1) National/regional security policy and institutions of the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies have been developed in close connection with the bilateral alliance system; (2) these institutional linkages have endogenously increased the cost of institutional change; (3) the development of institutional linkages generated domestic interest groups and constituents (e.g. bureaucrats, military, and policy elites) who resist change in the bilateral structure of the alliances.

Power Mechanism of Path Dependence: Intentional Path Maintenance

A “power politics” version of historical institutionalism suggests actors who benefit from the existing institutional structure can deliberately drive continuity and the reproduction of political institutions.288 This model incorporates the concept of endogenous increasing returns as the utilitarian model does, but the key difference here is that actors consciously launch or manipulate them in order to bind other actors to the existing institutional settings, with an explicit preference for status quo. This theoretical logic suggests that the United States and/or its regional allies may have deliberately maintained and solidified the American bilateral alliance system in Asia to maintain or increase the benefits they obtain from the system’s bilateral structure.

More specifically, from this logic, we can draw the following two specific causal mechanisms that may have contributed to the continuity of the U.S. hub-and-spoke system. First, the United States may have realized that the bilateral alliance system had benefits other than the basic function of protecting its Asian allies and consciously consolidated the hub-and-spoke system. Scholars who support the “hegemonic design” account of the U.S. bilateral alliance system such as Ikenberry, Cha, and Mastanduno claim that the United States has benefited from bilateralism because the hub-and-spoke system enabled the United States to preserve its freedom of action, reduce the risk of entrapment, and prevent a balancing coalition against American hegemony.289 According to this logic, Washington might have made conscious efforts to solidify institutional lock-

288 Ikenberry, “History’s Heavy Hand,” 8; idem., After Victory, 50-79; Mahoney, “Path Dependence and Historical Sociology,” 515-517.

in its security cooperation with Asian allies in order to preserve such benefits. If this explanation is correct, we should be able to find the following observable implications:

(1) The United States perceived that the hub-and-spoke structure of its Asia-pacific alliance system provided political benefits in its relations with regional allies, such as greater freedom of action, a reduced risk of entanglement, and an impedance to the emergence of a regional coalition against the United States; (2) the United States consciously developed the institutional linkages between the bilateral alliance system and its allies’ national security institutions to make the hub-and-spoke structure “sticky”; and (3) the United States tried to prevent or impede the development of security cooperation and alignment among the “spoke” countries.

Alternatively, the United States’ Asia-Pacific allies may have learned the benefits of bilateral structure and deliberately driven the institutional consolidation. In fact, these countries have had good incentives to be comfortable with the hub-and-spoke system. Bilateral arrangements have provided these states with stable American security commitment to share the burden of broader regional security at low or no cost. To maintain and increase such benefits, these regional allies may have consciously reinforced bilateralism.

This mechanism suggests the following set of observable implications: (1) the Asia-Pacific allies perceived that bilateral arrangements are beneficial and preferred to maintain such a structure for these benefits; (2) these countries deliberately developed institutional linkages between bilateral alliances and their national policy and institutions so that the United States would continuously adhere to bilateral agreements; (3) These countries were reluctant to develop a serious level of security cooperation with other spokes of the American network.
Habitual Mechanism of Path Dependence

A third theoretical model of institutional continuity that may have contributed to the persistence of the bilateral structure in the U.S. alliance system in Asia is the habitual mechanism of path dependence. Contrary to the first two models, which are based on the logic of consequences that focuses on material interests and expectations, this model emphasizes the logic of habit as an important behavioral motivator of actors’ commitment to institutional continuity and resistance to change.

Although psychologists and social scientists have suggested various definitions of habits, habits can be simply defined as “the unreflective reactions we have to the world around us,” which “simplify the world, short-circuiting rational reflection.” Habitual behaviors are ubiquitous in the social and political worlds, since social actors often economize the cost of searching and processing information by taking accustomed actions instead of making utilitarian cost-benefit calculations or moral assessments. Especially, habits are closely related to actors’ interactions with social and political institutions. Steve Fleetwood notes that institutions “become internalized or embodied within agents as habits via a process of habituation, whereupon the habits dispose agents to think and act in certain ways, without having to deliberate.”


Regarding the continuity of institutional pattern, the logic of habit provides the two specific causal processes that contribute to the persistence of institutions: routinization and cognitive shut down. Firstly, habituation reinforces and reproduces an existing institutional pattern by routinizing it as a regular and taken-for-granted option. By doing so, Zeki Sarigil notes that, “habits lock certain options in, while locking some others out.” Secondly, the habituation of an institutional pattern fosters social actors’ pro-status quo cognitive frames by reducing or eliminating their interests in alternative options. According to Ted Hopf, “infinitudes of behaviors are effectively deleted from the available repertoire of possible actions,” as habits “prevent other behavior by short-circuiting any need to think about what we are doing.”

The logic of habit suggests that the enduring bilateralism in the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific may have been sustained and reinforced by routinization and cognitive shut-down mechanisms of habituation. In other words, it is possible that the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies may have maintained the hub-and-spoke system because they became accustomed to the routinized pattern of bilateral security cooperation, which constituted cognitive barriers to alternative institutional options.

If this explanation is valid, there should be the evidence of the following observable implications: (1) The United States and its Asia-Pacific allies have developed and applied their national and regional security policies based on an established pattern of bilateral security cooperation in their alliance network; (2) in so doing, policymakers in

294 Sarigil, “Showing the Path to Path Dependence,” 230.
295 Ibid., 231.
296 Hopf, “The Logic of Habit in International Relations,” 541.
these countries have neither reflected the efficacy of the bilateral mode of their security cooperation nor considered alternative options or polices outside the established pattern of bilateralism. In addition, any evidence of policy debates or competing voices on the effectiveness of the bilateral structure should be regarded as evidence against the account of habitual path dependence.

*Rational Response to Exogenous Shocks and Trends*

A fourth potential explanation, which serves as an alternative hypothesis to the first three accounts based on the logic of path dependence, is that the persistence of the hub-and-spoke structure is a result of rational responses to exogenous shocks and changes, rather than an outcome of path dependence. According to Andrew Moravcsik, in order to prove the explanations based on the path-dependence logic that earlier decisions and institutional settings have endogenous impacts on future patterns of interactions, one needs to test such explanations against reliable alternative accounts based on exogenous influences.297

In the case of the American alliance system in Asia, an emergence of a new security threat or a major change in regional balance of power— for example, the growth of the Soviet Pacific fleet in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the end of the Cold War, and the rise of China since the late 1990s—can be regarded as such exogenous shocks and trends. Although the bilateral structure of the American alliance system has not changed over time, the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies may have consciously “re-selected” the hub-and-spoke system to address such challenges.

To validate this account, we should be able to find the evidence of the following observable implications: (1) There were significant changes in strategic and military balance (i.e. exogenous shocks) that prompted the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies to review the effectiveness and efficiency of their bilateral alliance system; (2) facing these exogenous challenges, the United States and its regional allies consciously chose to maintain or strengthen the bilateral structure because they perceived the bilateral setting was the most effective institutional setting to address changes in the regional security environment.

**U.S. Alliance System in the Asia-Pacific after the Demise of SEATO**

*The Late Cold War Period (1977-1991)*

After the end of the war in Vietnam and the dissolution of SEATO in 1977, the United States did not envision any structural changes in its bilateral alliance system in the Asia-Pacific until the end of the Cold War. President Jimmy Carter, who came into office in 1977, did not have a clear vision for Asia-Pacific security that could have affected the basic structure of the American hub-and-spokes system. Instead of advancing a holistic, comprehensive security strategy for the region, he vowed to withdraw American troops from the Korean Peninsula and applied his “foreign policy based on moral values” by putting more pressure on undemocratic regional allies, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, to improve their domestic human rights conditions. Carter’s

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idealistic, reformist foreign policy agendas often alarmed and confused U.S. allies in Asia, yet the United States and its regional allies basically followed the traditional pattern of bilateral security cooperation established in the early Cold War era.

Along with its preoccupation with European security issues and the Soviet Union, the Carter administration’s optimistic assessment of the Asia-Pacific security environment led it to pay less attention to the efficacy of the Asian alliance system and to stick with the existing institutional settings. A February 1977 comprehensive force postures study known as PRM-10, which was conducted by the direct order from Carter, recommended to maintain the status quo in the Asia-Pacific:

In the years following the Korean War and the U.S. maintained strong sea and land based forces forward deployed in the Western Pacific to combat Sino-Soviet inspired and supported aggression against a weakened Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and throughout Southeast Asia. The situation today is quite different. . . . As the circumstances in East Asia have changed, the primary U.S. objective in the reason has become a stabilization of the current, relatively favorable balance among the great powers as opposed to containment of a Sino-Soviet threat. . . . The current situation is relatively favorable to the U.S. . . . the Soviets are in check; China persists in its anti-Soviet attitude and military orientation while showing little inclination towards aggressive action against Taiwan; nuclear proliferation incentives in Japan, Korea and Taiwan are not pervasive, North
Korea must take into account powerful U.S. air and naval assets in any decision to attack the South; Japanese-American relations are close and cooperative.300

Against this backdrop, the central theme to dominate the Carter administration’s Asia policy was China—not America’s alliances in the region. Although he had publicly endorsed the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué between the United States and China during his presidential campaign, Carter himself had not been an enthusiastic supporter of the rapprochement policy initiated by the Nixon administration, even early in his term.301 However, Carter soon changed his mind and completed the process of diplomatic normalization with Beijing, which had been stalled during the Ford administration. This shift was induced by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his NSC staff, who passionately persuaded Carter that the United States needed to use the “China card” to counter Soviet moves at regional and global levels.302

By mitigating the threat from China—which had long been the United States’ regional archenemy that had forced Washington to form and reinforce alliances in Asia since the beginning of the Cold War—the normalization further freed the United States from reflecting on the effectiveness of the existing alliance system or its alternatives.

Yet, it should also be noted that the diplomatic normalization with China resulted in one significant change in the American hub-and-spoke alliance system: the termination


of the mutual defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan. To complete the normalization with Beijing, the Carter administration willingly decided to sever formal diplomatic relations with Chiang Ching-kuo’s Kuomintang regime in Taipei, which the administration viewed as “a relatively minor casualty of an important strategic accomplishment.”

Yet the U.S. Congress, enraged by the Carter administration’s unilateral attempt to nullify the mutual defense treaty without consulting the legislative branch, enacted the Taiwan Relations Act. The Act declared that “the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.”

Although the Carter administration abandoned Taiwan, thanks to this legislation, Taiwan was able to maintain informal bilateral security ties with Washington.

The bilateral pattern of security cooperation between the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies continued in the 1980s. President Ronald Reagan, who believed his predecessor’s alliance policy based on moral values seriously damaged the U.S.’s reputation in Asia and weakened its solidarity with regional allies, sought to recover the alliance relations by demonstrating a stronger commitment and loyalty to American allies. One example of the stark contrast between Carter and Reagan was the Reagan administration’s dealings with the authoritarian governments in South Korea and the Philippines. Unlike his predecessor, who caused serious diplomatic frictions with South Korea by blaming the authoritarian Park Chung-hee government’s human rights abuses,

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Reagan formally recognized the new military junta led by President Chun Doo-hwan, a former general who grasped power through a coup in 1979. Reagan even invited Chun to Washington to demonstrate the U.S.-South Korean solidarity, promising that “the United States will remain a reliable Pacific partner [of South Korea] and we shall maintain the strength of our forces in the Pacific area.” He also continued his support for the Philippine’s corrupt undemocratic regime ruled by Ferdinand Marcos, until the People Power Revolution removed him from power in 1987. In contrast, the Reagan administration strictly punished the noncooperation of an ally even if it was a mature democracy. When the New Zealand government refused to allow American naval ships carrying nuclear weapons into its ports in 1985 under its “nuclear free” policy, the Reagan administration suspended the U.S.’s security commitment to New Zealand under the ANZUS treaty.

As tensions with China subsided after diplomatic normalization in 1979, the key American security objective in the Asia-Pacific throughout the 1980s was to contain the Soviet ambition in the region. Especially, policymakers of the Reagan administration focused on the growth of the Soviet power projection capacity in Asia as a major source of military threat that they needed to address. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Soviet


309 Levin, In Search of a Strategy, 3.

Union established a theater-level command in the Soviet Far East to prepare a two-front war in Europe and the Asia-Pacific.\(^{311}\) In addition, the Soviet Union increasingly strengthened its military presence by securing naval facilities in Danang and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and building up its naval forces in the region.\(^{312}\) For example, according to the estimates by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Soviet Pacific Fleet increased the number of its submarines from 70 to 124 and major surface combat ships from 60 to 76 from 1977 to 1981.\(^{313}\)

In addressing the challenge of the Soviet military expansion, the U.S. Asia-Pacific security policy in the 1980s pursued the revitalization of existing bilateral alliances in the region. In the 1982 National Security Decision Directive, known as NSDD-32, the Reagan administration made it clear that the United States would rely more on its traditional alliances and strengthen strategic cooperation with them:

> Given the loss of U.S. strategic superiority and the overwhelming growth of Soviet conventional forces capabilities, together with the increased political and economic strength of the industrial democracies and the heightened importance of Third World resources, the United States must increasingly draw upon the


resources and cooperation of allies and others to protect our interests and those of our friends. There is no other alternative.\textsuperscript{314}

Along with the aggressive buildup of U.S. naval capacity and forward deployment strategy, the Reagan administration regarded the enhanced bilateral security cooperation with Japan as a key element of the new American maritime strategy in the Asia-Pacific.\textsuperscript{315} Whereas the forward-deployed U.S. naval assets would play the role of the “spear” against the Soviet naval forces in the region, the Reagan administration saw Japan as the “shield” that would impede the projection of Soviet power into the Pacific. It would do so by assisting the U.S. anti-submarine warfare and naval operations to close the Tsushima, Tsugaru, and Soya Straits in time of a war.\textsuperscript{316} Promising to elevate Japan’s status to the level of NATO countries in the U.S. security policy, the Reagan administration demanded Tokyo play a more active role in regional security.\textsuperscript{317} Although Japanese leaders did not fully meet their American interlocutors’ expectations on burden sharing, facing the more direct and greater threat posed by the Soviet military expansion, Japan positively responded to the U.S. initiative to revitalize and strengthen the U.S.-Japanese alliance in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{318} The U.S. maritime strategy to contain the Soviet naval


\textsuperscript{317} Green, \textit{By More Than Providence}, 403-4.

\textsuperscript{318} Current Policy No. 374: Japan and the United States: A Cooperative Relationship, John Holdridge, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 1, 1982, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951002890366h; Christopher Hughes and Akiko
power in the Pacific with the help of Japan ended in conspicuous success. In July 1986, after years of a naval arms race and confrontation at sea, the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev finally waived a white flag. Breaking his predecessors’ expansionist policy, Gorbachev suggested talks for reducing naval activities in the region and proposed a maritime cooperation between the Soviet Union and Japan.319

*The Early Post-Cold War Period (1991-2000)*

The end of the Cold War opened up two potential institutional pathways for the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies. First, with the implosion of the Soviet Union, they could explore alternative institutional options in the new security environment. Or they could stick with the traditional pattern of bilateral security cooperation to which they were accustomed, as a reasonable way to respond to the considerable strategic uncertainty caused by the abrupt end of the Cold War confrontation.

At a historic crossroad, the U.S. Asia-Pacific policy under President George H. W. Bush followed the second path. Bush, who had a reputation as an “incrementalist” and “pragmatic conservative,” chose to preserve traditional alliances and institutions, instead of endeavoring to shape a new security order in the region.320 A 1990 Department of Defense report to Congress titled, “A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim,” clearly demonstrated the George H.W. Bush administration’s conservative approach toward the security order in the Asia-Pacific:

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320 Green, *By More Than Providence*, 429-430.
Despite the decades of change that we foresee, our regional interests in Asia will remain similar to those we have pursued in the past. . . . The principal elements of our Asian strategy—forward deployed forces, overseas bases, and bilateral security arrangements—will remain valid and essential to maintaining regional stability, deterring aggression, and preserving U.S. interests.\footnote{Department of Defense, \textit{A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking toward the 21st Century (Report to Congress)} (April 1990, 10.)}

The report, which was prepared to convince Congress of the necessity of preserving the existing U.S. strategic posture in the Asia-Pacific, further explained why the George H.W. Bush administration chose to maintain the traditional bilateral alliances, instead of envisaging a multilateral security framework in the region, as follows:

Our friends and allies in East Asia are reluctant to enter into multilateral consultations on security concerns for a variety of reasons. Foremost is the wide cultural, political and economic diversity among most of the Asia states which makes bilateral security arrangements much more appropriate. In fact, the U.S. has been very successful in maintaining influence, security and stability through its network of bilateral arrangements. . . . [our allies are] reluctant to entertain the concept of a regional security arrangement, although they welcome the strong bilateral relationships the U.S. has with them and with other regional states, especially Japan. As a result of these regional constraints and concerns, we
believe U.S. interests are best served by continuing to work within the context of the bilateral defense relationships we have developed over the years.\footnote{322}{Ibid., 15.}

In short, as Evelyn Goh describes, American policymakers at the time “did not wish to try to fix what was not broken.”\footnote{323}{Evelyn Goh, \textit{The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46.} In a speech in Malaysia in July 1991, Under Secretary of State Robert Zoellick publicly affirmed that the United States would stick with the existing bilateral alliances, emphasizing that the U.S.-led hub-and-spoke system had been “the balancing wheel of an informal, yet highly effective, security structure for more than four decades.”\footnote{324}{“U.S. Engagement with Asia,” Statement by the Under Secretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs (Zoellick), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, July 22, 1991, \textit{American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1991} (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1993), 670.} In a similar manner, in his 1991 \textit{Foreign Affairs} essay titled, “America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community,” Secretary of State James Baker III reiterated a cautious view on the viability of a multilateral security framework in the region. Observing the various ideas of multilateral security cooperation floated by several ASEAN countries, he stated that “we should be attentive to the possibilities for such multilateral action without locking ourselves in to an overly structured approach.”\footnote{325}{James A. Baker, “America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 70, no. 5 (Winter 1991): 5-6.}

Contrary to the George H.W. Bush administration, which maintained a cautious, or skeptical, view on multilateralism, the Clinton administration was more open to exploring multilateral approaches to supplement the American bilateral alliance system in Asia. During his visit to South Korea in 1993, President Bill Clinton publicly expressed
his optimism about multilateral security cooperation, stating that “[s]ome in the U.S. have been reluctant to enter into regional security dialogues in Asia. They fear it would seem a pretext for American withdrawal from the area. I see this as a way to supplement our alliances and forward military presence, not to supplant them. These dialogues can ensure that the end of the Cold War does not provide an opening for regional rivalries, chaos, and arms races.”\textsuperscript{326} Clinton’s warm view on multilateralism was formally restated in the 1995 \textit{United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region} published by the Department Defense, which comprehensively summarized the Clinton administration’s Asia-pacific security strategy. This report, which was also known as the “Nye Report” or “Nye Initiative” named after Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye who led its publication, stated as follows:

> The United States is also committed to contribute to regional security through active participation in new multilateral fora like the ASEAN Regional Forum. Through such multilateral mechanisms the countries of the region seek to develop new cooperative approaches to achieve greater stability and security. . . . A significant new element of this Administration’s Asian security policy has been constructive participation in and support for regional security dialogues. . . . Our participation in these dialogues is an important element of our security engagement in the region.\textsuperscript{327}


The United States endorsed various multilateral dialogues based on this empathetic stance toward multilateralism throughout the 1990s. Clinton proposed to host an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in 1993, and his administration expressed its full support for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which Southeast Asian states initiated to build confidence among regional powers in 1994.\textsuperscript{328}

Yet it should be noted that the Clinton administration endorsed the new regional initiatives for multilateral security cooperation as a supplementary measure, rather than an institutional alternative to the U.S. hub-and-spoke system in the Asia-Pacific. Stressing that the U.S. bilateral alliances would “remain inviolable, and the end of the Cold War has not diminished their importance,” the 1995 Nye Report made it clear that multilateral security forums in the region “will complement, but not supplant, United States bilateral ties in the region.”\textsuperscript{329} In his 1995 \textit{Foreign Affairs} essay, which he wrote as a response to the critics of the Nye Initiative, Nye reiterated the firm American commitment to the traditional hub-and-spoke system. Pointing out that replacing the existing bilateral security architecture with loose regional frameworks would be unpracticable and unrealistic, he wrote that “multilateral activities complement our bilateral ties, but they do not diminish, nor can they replace, these important bilateral relationships.”\textsuperscript{330}

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329 Department of Defense, \textit{United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region 1995}.

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Another important rationale for maintaining the existing system of bilateral alliances was that the formation of a NATO-like multilateral alliance, another institutional alternative to the U.S.-led hub-and-spoke system, could destabilize the Asia-Pacific region by provoking China. In his 1995 essay, Nye explained the potential danger of creating a U.S.-led multilateral alliance as follows:

An analogy to the European institutional framework, however, would be a mistake because the new alliance would be seen as aimed at Russia or China. . . . it is wrong to portray China as an enemy. Nor is there reason to believe China must be an enemy in the future. . . . suppose that we simply posited a 50 percent change of an aggressive China and a 50 percent chance of China becoming a responsible great power in the region. On this hypothesis, to treat China as an enemy would in effect discount 50 percent of the future. Moreover, a containment strategy would be difficult to reverse. Enmity would become a self-fulfilling prophecy.331

This consideration was based on the Clinton administration’s engagement strategy toward China. While Clinton pledged a tougher China policy when he first entered office, his administration soon chose to induce Beijing to take a peaceful path of ascendance and play a constructive role in the region by facilitating China’s integration into the global market and international institutions.332 Explaining the Clinton administration’s

331 Ibid., 94.

engagement policy toward China, the 1995 Nye Report stated that it was “essential for peace, stability, and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region that China is stable and continues to develop friendly relations with its neighbors.” In 1998, the Department of Defense released another comprehensive Asia-Pacific security review reaffirming this point by stating that the United States had “substantial interest in China’s emergence as a stable, secure, open, prosperous and peaceful country.”

American treaty allies in the Asia-Pacific, which had been concerned about a potential decrease of the U.S.’s commitment to the region after the Cold War, eagerly cooperated with the Clinton administration’s policy of reaffirming their bilateral security ties. Although they actively participated in several types of newly emerging multilateral security dialogues focusing on confidence building and “nontraditional” security issues, regarding traditional security challenges of defense and deterrence, American allies chose to maintain their traditional security arrangements with Washington as the backbone of their national security policy. Japan, which the Nye Report labeled as the “linchpin” of the American Asia-Pacific policy, enthusiastically reaffirmed its commitment to an alliance with Washington in the 1996 U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration. The Declaration stressed that their alliance would remain “the corner stone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region.” In the next year, Tokyo updated the Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation, which clearly outlined Japan’s supporting role for the United States in


regional contingencies for the first time. With the continued demand of extended
deterrence on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea also welcomed the Clinton
administration’s reasserted commitment to the bilateral alliance between Seoul and
Washington. Australia, too, agreed to reinvigorate the bilateral ties with the United States
by issuing the 1996 Sydney Statement, which envisioned a broader strategic cooperation
between the two countries.


In the 2000s, as the rapid growth of Chinese economic and military power continued, the
United States and its Asia-Pacific allies had to recalibrate their strategic postures to cope
with the challenge of a stronger and more ambitious China. Since the end of the Cold
War, Beijing had devoted a great deal of effort to prevent the emergence of a belligerent
external environment. It offered considerable economic opportunities to neighboring
countries by using its vast domestic market and great potential for growth. It also actively
integrated itself into regional and international institutions. Simultaneously, however,
China’s increasingly ambitious and assertive foreign policy raised alarm in Washington

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and many capitals in the Asia-Pacific region. Growing economic dependence on China became a new source of vulnerability, and Beijing often exploited it to draw neighboring countries’ cooperation on Chinese policy. The rapid modernization and expansion of Chinese military power began to pose a serious threat to U.S. and allied forces in the region, and China’s increasingly provocative behaviors in the Taiwan Strait and the East and South China Seas made its neighboring countries watch China’s rise with serious concern.

Facing with the challenge of China’s ascendance, Asia-Pacific countries, including U.S. allies, almost uniformly employed hedging strategy toward China by taking diverse policy measures such as engagement, institutional binding, and soft balancing. First of all, through active bilateral political and economic engagement with China, regional powers tried to shape Beijing's thinking and behavior while benefiting from China's economic growth. Along with bilateral engagement, they also attempted to “tie down” China by bringing it into multilateral institutions in the region. The most illustrative case of China’s enmeshment in multilateral frameworks was ARF. While China initially shown uncomfortable attitude when the forum was created, it gradually recognized the role of ARF in regional security cooperation and eventually became an active participant. In addition, to deter Beijing from provocative actions, almost all countries in the Asia-Pacific adopted the strategy of soft balancing. Due to their lack of lack of efficient military might and the concern of provoking China, hard balancing


strategy based on massive military buildup or the formation of an anti-China coalition was not a viable option for Asia-Pacific states. Instead, their balancing strategy took a softer form such as the enhancement of their existing security ties or finding new security partners.

For many Asia-Pacific countries, the most reliable and attractive security partner for a soft balancing strategy was the United States, which could balance China’s growing weight in the region. American allies had a considerable advantage over other regional states: they already had bilateral defense treaties with Washington. These ready-made security arrangements, which did not necessarily present explicit hostility toward China, could be a useful insurance policy that would not overly provoke Beijing. Yet the U.S. allies’ soft balancing strategy based on enhanced security cooperation with Washington required a pre-existing stable Sino-American relationship. Although they hoped the United States would play the role of “balancer” in the region, they did not want an outright confrontation between Washington and Beijing. A Cold War-like rivalry between the two great powers—a nightmare scenario for U.S. allies—would leave those U.S. allies little room to maneuver and force them to choose between the United States and China.

Fortunately for the U.S. allies, the George W. Bush administration’s Asia-Pacific security policy took a balanced approach toward China. Although President Bush promised a tougher China policy when he first entered office, his administration soon


continued and expanded the Clinton administration’s engagement strategy, which now enjoyed bipartisan consensus. Through proactive engagement in various issue areas at multiple levels, the Bush administration invited Beijing to become a “responsible stakeholder” in the Asia-Pacific and international society. In his keynote address to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations gala in New York in 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick explained the Bush administration’s China policy as follows:

[T]he United States welcomes a confident, peaceful, and prosperous China, one that appreciates that its growth and development depends on constructive connections with the rest of the world. Indeed, we hope to intensify work with a China that not only adjusts to the international rules developed over the last century, but also joins us and others to address the challenges of the new century. . . . We now need to encourage China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international system. As a responsible stakeholder, China would be more than just a member—it would work with us to sustain the international system that has enabled its success.

While pursuing engagement with China, as a part of its own hedging policy, the Bush administration also reaffirmed the U.S. hub-and-spoke alliance system in the Asia-


Pacific by tightening bilateral security ties with regional allies. The statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative meeting in 2005 addressed China’s growing military capability and its opaque character, which could pose a serious challenge in the Asia-Pacific. In the next year, the two countries conducted a joint military exercise, which presupposed China as the main threat. In addition, the Bush administration’s Global War on Terror following the September 11 terrorist attack, which is often blamed as a policy that distracted U.S. attention from China and the Asia-Pacific, provided an opportunity to “energize” strategic cooperation with American allies in the region. Australia dispatched combat forces to support the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Japan and South Korea also provided logistical support to American troops. The Global War on Terror reinvigorated the once soured strategic relations with the U.S. allies in Southeast Asia. Thailand, which Washington had long neglected after the U.S. retrenchment from Indochina in the late 1970s, assisted American military operations by providing its naval ports and airfields and closely cooperated with the United States in hunting down Islamic extremists in Southeast Asia. The Philippines also actively cooperated in the U.S. War on Terror by holding joint military exercises and making the 2003 Mutual Logistics Support Agreement in 2003, which expanded the U.S. naval vessels’ access to Philippine ports and facilities. The Bush administration rewarded the Southeast Asian allies’


cooperation by increasing military aid to these countries and elevating their status to “major non-NATO ally” in 2003. Although these efforts did not target China, the strengthened bilateral security cooperation satisfied the Asian allies, who wanted to bolster their alliances with the United States to address the increasing Chinese presence in the Asia-Pacific.

The U.S. hedging strategy—engaging China while maintaining a robust American bilateral alliance system—continued into President Barack Obama’s Asia-Pacific security policy. Facing increasingly assertive Chinese behavior in Asia and the challenge of restoring America’s reputation, which was seriously damaged by the 2008 global financial crisis, the Obama administration advanced a new slogan, “pivot to Asia.” In her 2011 *Foreign Policy* essay, which explained the U.S. pivot, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that “the future of the United States is intimately intertwined with the future of the Asia-Pacific” and the Obama administration’s “strategic turn to the region fits logically into our overall global effort to secure and sustain America’s global leadership.”348 While continuing engagement with Beijing through various measures, including the launch of the U.S.-China Strategic Security Dialogue in 2009, the Obama administration increased American military presence in the Asia-Pacific and expanded its security partnership beyond treaty allies. Along with these initiatives, the traditional hub-and-spoke alliance system remained the key pillar of the Obama administration’s Asia-

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Pacific security strategy. The first Quadrennial Defense Review Report published during the Obama administration made this point clear, as follows:

The foundation of our presence in Asia remains our historical treaty alliances. These alliances have helped maintain peace and stability for more than sixty years, particularly through the continued presence of capable U.S. forces in the region, and we remain steadfastly committed to the security commitments embodied in these agreements.

Kurt Campbell, who previously served as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Obama administration, also explained the centrality of the traditional U.S. bilateral alliances in the pivot strategy. Campbell stressed that the Obama administration’s “first priority has been to strengthen the U.S. alliance that are the foundation of engagement in the region and provide the pillars upon which the region’s sustained peace and security rest.”

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Conclusion

The historical trajectory of U.S.-Asia relations analyzed in this chapter suggests that the United States and its regional allies’ rational responses to exogenous shocks and trends, along with the habitual mechanism of path dependence, contributed to the continuity of the hub-and-spoke structure. More specifically, in different ways at different time, these two causal processes led the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies to maintain their bilateral alliances.

In the late Cold War period, after the unsuccessful experiment of SEATO, the bilateral structure of the U.S. alliance system was maintained as a result of habitual path dependence. The Carter administration, which was preoccupied with diplomatic normalization with China, neither reflected on the efficacy of its traditional alliances nor explored alternative institutional options with regard to its bilateral security arrangements with Asia-Pacific allies. Although Carter tried to influence the domestic policy of authoritarian allies and severed security ties with Taiwan as a result of the diplomatic normalization with China, the basic pattern of bilateral security cooperation with regional allies, except Taiwan, continued without any major changes during his tenure. The Reagan administration, whose Asia-Pacific policy mostly addressed the expansion of Soviet threat in the Asia-Pacific with an aggressive maritime U.S. maritime strategy, did not pay close attention to the overall structure of the American bilateral alliance system either. As a result, the old habit of bilateral security cooperation remained a central pillar of American security policy in the Asia-Pacific until the end of the Cold War.

The end of the Cold War, as a critical juncture, provided the United States and its allies an opportunity to ask whether their traditional alliance system was still relevant in the new security environment. The George H.W. Bush administration, which sought to
minimize strategic uncertainty and prevent chaos, consciously chose to maintain its bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific as a proven solution to preserve regional stability. In their search for a proper regional security architecture for post-Cold War Asia in the 1990s, the Clinton administration and U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific reached a tacit consensus that maintaining their bilateral security ties was still the most reliable way to deal with traditional security challenges of defense and deterrence. Although they were open to creating and expanding multilateral security frameworks, both the United States and its regional allies regarded their supplementary mechanisms for “soft” security issues.

In addressing the new strategic challenge of China’s ascendance in the 2000s, the United States and its regional allies once again discovered the relevance of their existing alliance system. As a part of their hedging strategy toward China, which mixed the policies of engagement and deterrence, the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies found their preexisting bilateral security ties as a reliable but not overly provocative option to deter China’s provocations. Based on this strategic consensus, the Bush and Obama administrations maintained and reaffirmed the hub-and-spoke alliance system in the Asia-Pacific while engaging with China to shape its choices.

Compared to the rationalist explanation and the habitual mechanism of path dependence, the accounts based on utilitarian and power mechanisms of path dependence do not seem to provide satisfactory explanations for the hub-and-spoke system’s persistence. It is undeniable that security policy and institutions of both the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies have been developed in close connection with their bilateral security arrangements. However, as the examples of Taiwan and New Zealand show, such institutional linkages have clear limitations in solidifying the bilateral alliance system. As
for the power mechanism, there is little evidence supporting the proposition that the United States deliberately solidified the bilateral structure to continuously derive “hegemonic” benefits or that regional allies intentionally prevented structural change in the bilateral alliance system.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

To explain the origins and persistence of the U.S. bilateral alliance network in the Asia-Pacific region, this dissertation examined the following questions: Why did the bilateral alliance network emerge in Asia at the beginning of the Cold War? Why did the multilateral alliance of SEATO fail to survive? How did the hub-and-spokes structure last in the tide of history? Answers to these puzzles on the origins of the American bilateral alliance network and its persistence in the Asia-Pacific will contribute to a more accurate understanding of the current world and provide meaningful implications for future studies and policymaking. This chapter concludes the dissertation by summarizing the important findings of the study and highlighting the scholarly and policy implications of this research.

Summary of the Findings

Analyses from Chapter 2 suggest that, in contrast to the hegemonic design thesis which emphasizes the U.S. preference for bilateralism, the original plan of the Truman administration at the beginning of the Cold War was to create a multilateral Pacific Pact with a group of regional powers. Based on available historical records, this study also disconfirms the tyranny of the weak thesis. Records from this period showed that the U.S.
changed its course from multilateralism to bilateralism voluntarily, yielding to the strong preferences of Australia and New Zealand, both of which preferred an exclusive security arrangement. Unlike assumptions made in existing accounts, the Truman administration never had a strong preference for the 1951 Pacific Pact plan. The administration rather viewed the pact merely as an instrumental and substitutable measure to assuage regional powers’ fear of Japan, and its primary goal was to rehabilitate and incorporate Japan into the anti-communist coalition. That said, shifting its alliance policy from multilateralism to bilateralism was easy for the United States, especially once it learned that the pact initiative would fail to allay any such fears and that separate security arrangements would better satisfy Australia and New Zealand. In essence, the hub-and-spokes alliance network was the result of an unforced concession derived from differential intensities of institutional preferences held by the United States and its allies.

While Chapter 2 explained how the Truman administration’s voluntary policy shift led to a series of separate security agreements with Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand in 1951, findings from Chapter 3 further completed this dissertation’s answer to the puzzle of the origins of the bilateral U.S.-Asia-Pacific alliance network. A careful examination of the historical records of the Eisenhower administration reveals that key U.S. policymakers were disinterested in the idea of allying with Seoul and Taipei at the beginning of the Cold War. It was only when they faced successive crises on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait that they were forced to accept the idea of forming alliances with these countries. As the crises significantly weakened Washington’s bargaining power and imposed severe time constraints, American policymakers were compelled to reluctantly accept the bilateral security deals as unprompted diplomatic measures. Records show that a crisis triggered by South Korea’s
president, Rhee Syngman, was the main cause of the Eisenhower administration’s decision to form a mutual security pact with Seoul. Rhee’s brinkmanship diplomacy, based on his keen understanding of Washington’s strong desire to end the war in Korea, severely endangered the armistice negotiations and forced the Eisenhower administration to reluctantly accept the bilateral defense treaty deal. In the case of Taiwan, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek seized his opportunity with the first Taiwan Strait crisis, caused by the bombardment of offshore islands by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Chiang traded his support for a UN-sponsored solution for a mutual security pact between the United States and Taiwan. In contrast to the empirical predictions offered by the powerplay thesis, there is little available evidence that supports the claim that a bilateral setting was strategically preferred by the United States for its efficiency in restraining allies.

Chapter 4 offered an analysis of SEATO and its failure as it provided a potential turning point for the U.S. to change its bilateral alliances to a multilateral system. SEATO was an ineffective, hollow organization doomed to fail long before its formal demise in the 1970s, and its poor performance and inability to address regional security challenges were due to its faulty institutional design. Findings from this chapter demonstrate that SEATO member states, including the United States, intentionally chose such a dysfunctional design. Records show that the Eisenhower administration’s primary intention was to present an image of the anti-communist front, but without the commitment of U.S. troops. Despite their ambitious united action plan to confront communism in Southeast Asia, American policymakers at the time deliberately designed SEATO to be ineffective and intentionally contained its institutional development due to their concerns over potential entanglement as well as free-riding by other member states. This chapter also shows that other signatories
of the Manila Pact, especially Britain and France, which shared the concern of entrapment, preferred this low degree of institutionalization. As these states could pursue varying national goals without any strong commitment to the security of Southeast Asia, this chapter argues that SEATO, in a sense, was “organized hypocrisy.” Some member states, including the Philippines and Thailand, wanted to build a more effective security organization, yet their lack of political and military capacity was insufficient overall to affect the institutional design and development of SEATO. States that wished to minimize the risk of entanglement also intentionally adopted a procedure of unanimous consent, which further hindered any collective action when regional crises required the organization to undertake military engagements.

As the final chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 5 investigated why and how the U.S. bilateral system has persisted since the disintegration of SEATO in 1977. The chapter demonstrated that the persistence of a bilateral alliance structure was the result of two processes, each of which operated at different points of time. Throughout the Carter administration, the U.S. was preoccupied with its relations with China and it maintained a basic pattern of bilateral security cooperation in the region without reflecting the efficacy of its traditional alliances or exploring alternative institutional options regarding its bilateral security arrangements with Asia-Pacific allies. This pattern continued throughout the Cold War under the Reagan administration as well. Reagan, who focused primarily on aggressive U.S. maritime strategy to address the expansion of the Soviet threat in the region, paid little attention to the overall structure of the region’s alliance system. In essence, the bilateral alliance system in Asia persisted throughout the late Cold War period because the U.S. habitually depended on that already established path. The end of the Cold War, however, prompted the U.S. and its allies to revisit their alliance system and question its
relevance in the new security environment. Findings from this chapter suggest that George H. W. Bush’s administration intentionally decided to maintain the bilateral structure as it sought to minimize any strategic uncertainty and prevent chaos. The Clinton administration and the U.S. allies in the region similarly believed that maintaining their bilateral security arrangements was the most reliable security architecture in post-Cold War Asia. The United States and its regional allies found that the new strategic challenge of China’s ascendance in the 2000s further confirmed the value and relevance of the existing design. The bilateral security structure was especially suitable for their hedging strategy toward China with a mix of engagement and deterrence policies, and they found their pre-existing security ties to be reliable but not overly provocative in deterring China’s threat. This chapter finds that both the Bush and Obama administrations reaffirmed and maintained the hub-and-spokes alliance system in the region based on such strategic concerns.

Theoretical Implications

Preference Intensity and the Logic of Unforced Concession

The logic of unforced concession introduced and tested in Chapter 2 provides a novel insight that the outcome of international bargains can be determined by a “non-power” factor. By highlighting the commonsensical but often neglected fact that states do not compete over every negotiation item with the same level of intensity, this dissertation identified a novel mechanism through which preference intensity, not material or situational bargaining power, determines the outcome of international negotiations. Although this dissertation focused on negotiations between the United States and its allies in the early 1950s, the logic of unforced concession could provide a useful framework through which scholars and policymakers can understand and predict the processes and outcomes of international negotiations.
Cognitive Limitations of Policymakers and the Choice of Institutional Design

The empirical findings of Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 present a curious anomaly for the rational design of the international institutions literature. Disconfirming many scholars’ conjectures about U.S. motives behind the creation of the hub-and-spokes system, available records show that policymakers of the Truman administration did not carefully compare the potential transactional and distributive implications of bilateral and multilateral alliance designs. In a similar manner, the Carter and Reagan administrations during the late Cold War period did not reflect on the efficacy of their established pattern of bilateral security cooperation with their Asia-Pacific allies. These findings suggest that, contrary to the basic assumption of the functionalist explanation of institutional designs, policymakers do not always pay attention to the varying institutional costs and benefits when they determine the design of international institutions. In the case of the U.S. hub-and-spokes alliance system, the primary factors that contributed to American policymakers’ inattention to the costs and benefits of different settings were their preoccupation with other policy goals—Japanese peace settlement, diplomatic normalization with China, and deterring Soviet naval power—and their short time horizon. There can be various other potential causes for such disregard, including bureaucratic indifference, lack of appropriate expertise or experience, and the inherent uncertainty of a given issue. Further research on the conditions under which policymakers become indifferent to the potential costs and benefits of different institutional settings would enhance our understanding of the design of international institutions.
**Intentional Design of Dysfunctional IOs**

The failure of SEATO examined in **Chapter 4** also challenges the rational theory of institutional design, which rarely addresses the problem of dysfunctional international organizations made by rational states. Contrary to the rationalist assumption that states choose optimal institutional design to address common challenges they face, as seen in the case of SEATO, the pursuit of individual interests by member states in the formative phase can result in ineffective institutional rules and designs. The rationalist approach avoids this problem of dysfunctional organizations by predicting that ineffective international organizations will be renegotiated by rational states. However, such renegotiations did not occur in SEATO because its suboptimal design was intentionally chosen by its member states, which wanted to remain a hollow, ineffective international organization. Further research on the causes and conditions of such “organized hypocrisy” would help our understanding of the causes of dysfunctional international organizations and the design of international institutions.

**Policy Implications**

*Proper understanding of U.S.-Asia Relations*

The findings of this study also provide important policy implications for our understanding of security relations between the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies. As mirror images, the narratives of hegemonic design and the tyranny of the weak have cultivated simplistic perspectives about the relations between the United States and its allies as either dominated by U.S. hegemonic power or ones manipulated by the oversized influence of regional allies. Yet this dissertation’s findings demonstrate that both views,
which are widely held by scholars, experts, and policymakers on both sides of the Pacific, are based on flawed historical interpretations.

The actual history of strategic relations between the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies examined in this study presents a more complicated picture. As Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 demonstrated, the creation and expansion of the bilateral hub-and-spokes system and its expansion was not initially intended by the United States. Rather, both the choice of the bilateral structure in 1951 and the inclusion of South Korea and Taiwan in the following years were influenced largely by the preferences and strategies of the U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific. On the contrary, as Chapter 4 showed, the failure of SEATO was caused by the U.S. intention to contain its institutional development. Although Asian allies, such as Thailand and the Philippines, wanted the treaty organization to evolve into a more effective, capable security institution, their lack of bargaining power at the time minimized their influence on the United States and other Western allies. Meanwhile, the findings of Chapter 5 show more harmonious interactions between the United States. The persistence of the hub-and-spokes system in the post-Cold War era was not the result of a one-sided pressure or imposition. Rather, it was an outcome of a strategic consensus on the enduring relevance of bilateral alliances between the United States and its regional allies.

All in all, the findings of this study show that a simple framework that emphasizes the hegemonic power of the United States or an oversized influence of small allies does not properly capture the complex nature of the U.S.-Asia security relations. While it is true the United States has enjoyed a preponderance of power in the Asia-Pacific region both in absolute and relative terms, bargaining power is always context dependent and does not necessarily correspond with overall national capacity.
The Future of the U.S. Alliance System in the Asia-Pacific Region

As the last implication, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the American bilateral alliance network will remain intact as the central element of the Asia-Pacific security architecture, as long as the United States and its allies continue their hedging strategy toward China. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the continuity of the U.S. hub-and-spokes alliance system after the Cold War was not a result of path dependence. Rather, the system was “reselected” by the United States and its allies as a reliable and balanced institutional solution to address the new strategic challenges in post-Cold War Asia. Especially, in the 21st Century, both the United States and its Asia-Pacific allies reaffirmed their bilateral alliances as part of their hedging strategy toward China, which mixed engagement and shoring up existing security ties, since their traditional alliances would work as an “insurance policy” without overly provoking Beijing.

These observations suggest that to predict the future trajectory of the U.S. bilateral alliance system in the Asia-Pacific, we need to focus on the evolution of the United States’ and its regional allies’ policy toward China. Especially, the way in which these states assess the efficacy of their hedging strategy toward China will determine their attitude toward a potential change in the U.S. hub-and-spokes system. If the United States and its regional allies continue to find it desirable to reassure China by taking a cautious approach, there will be little change in the basic structure of the U.S. alliance network. In contrast, if the skepticism about cautious hedging increases and they feel the necessity of a “containment” element in their China strategy, the United States and its allies may consider alliance multilateralism as a potential strategic alternative.
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