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Alliance Crisis and Consensus: Western Experience

William P. Bundy

This essay reviews the experience of the Western Alliance since World War II in dealing with crises outside the geographical areas specifically covered in alliance agreements. Obviously, by far the greater part of that experience has concerned the relationship among Nato nations in dealing with crises outside the Nato area. However, I shall make some reference to Japan, which has become an increasingly important partner in the broad alliance and whose association with past crises in East Asia—and today with those in the Middle East—is a significant part of the total picture.

But let us start by going further back into history, as tensions between the immediate geographical areas to which alliances are directed and the interests, concerns and behavior of the participants outside that area are as old as the very formation of such alliances. Thucydides tells the story of Athens' disastrous expedition to Sicily, undertaken in support of a peripheral "ally"—essentially a campaign involving Sparta conducted without substantial support from Athens' Attic allies. The debacle that resulted would perhaps have doomed Athens, but a reality that followed was that the Greek cities previously allied with Athens deserted her in dismay. The lesson is clear: if a lead nation in an alliance truly wrecks itself in an effort outside the treaty area, the alliance itself is likely to come apart.

Moving on to the nineteenth century—when the nations of Europe had developed substantial interests outside their own continent—one is bound to note that the reversal of British policy that led to Britain's withdrawal from the Holy Alliance was in considerable part, as Henry Kissinger puts it, because Britain was "increasingly aware of its extra-European role" and of a range of interests it wished to pursue for itself.¹ Then as a new alliance structure involving France, Russia and Britain began to take shape after 1893, the clearest of these alliance relationships—that between France and Russia—had as a tacit basis the fact that these two nations were not conspicuous rivals

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elsewhere. This was not true of Russia and Britain, still involved in the "Great Game" for influence in Southwest Asia, making an alliance between them not possible. And the entente between France and Britain, from 1906 onward, became possible only after the most acute of their colonial rivalries had been eased after the Fashoda incident of 1898.

So it is clear that, both in entering and preserving alliances, nations have always weighed the importance of the interests that could be served by the alliance in proximate areas against the effect of such alliances on their perceived interests and concerns outside that proximate area. The problem did not become a serious one in the interwar years from 1919 to 1939. Yet the sorting out of French and British interests in the Middle East in 1918-22 was not without friction, the scars of which surfaced time and again, and exerted a marked effect on the relationship between Churchill and DeGaulle during World War II. The recent book by François Kersaudy brings out repeatedly how frictions over Syria, in particular, drove these two leaders apart and even gave rise to bloody incidents relevant to the later tragic history of Lebanon.² And there was throughout World War II a significant latent tension between American pressures to end colonialism, and the desire of the British (especially Churchill) and French to retain or restore their major positions, notably in India and Indochina.

Nonetheless, in the immediate postwar period such frictions came to seem minor or secondary in the face of the perceived Soviet threat. This manifested itself at an early stage outside Europe in the 1946-47 Azerbaijan crisis and in the threats to Greece and Turkey, which until 1952 were themselves outside the area of the 1949 Nato Alliance. And so there came into being a North Atlantic Treaty, perhaps unique in history in the size and importance of its members, in the degree of shared values and institutions, and in the firmness of the Article V commitment (an armed attack against one or more . . . considered an attack against all).

The first real test of that alliance came outside the Nato area in Korea. This was a clear case of conventional aggression in which the Soviet hand was evident. The response was backed by a UN Resolution, and the attack was seen as a quite likely precursor of Soviet military action in Europe itself. And, of course, the heightened sense of the Soviet threat led directly to a massive US military buildup and to the transformation of the Nato structure into a genuine military alliance with US forces deployed in Europe. Thus within two years it undid, as Secretary Dean Acheson's memoirs remind us, what he had specifically told the Senate at the time of the ratification of the treaty.³

So it was natural that the record of allied cooperation over Korea was on the whole excellent. While Britain alone of the major Nato nations sent forces (West Germany and Italy being still disarmed and France preoccupied with Indochina), the war and its essentially American conduct were stoutly

supported—despite misgivings in the period when MacArthur's drive to the Yalu brought in the Chinese and for a time threatened defeat. It is worth recalling, however, how quickly a loose remark by President Truman concerning the authority of field commanders to employ nuclear weapons brought Prime Minister Clement Attlee flying to Washington. This act dramatized an intense and continuing concern among the European allies about any possible use of such weapons in peripheral areas. It perhaps helped to nail down a later progressive evolution in US policy that moved a long way from the original implications of "massive retaliation" worldwide and meant that, notably in Vietnam, the United States never contemplated or threatened such use.

Perhaps it was fortunate that in the Korean War the European members of Nato were apparently not even aware of the veiled threats of nuclear employment conveyed in 1953 to the Chinese, via India. In any event, shortly after the 1953 armistice, America's Nato allies joined in a 16-nation declaration clearly suggesting that should there be a renewal of hostilities in Korea, there might be no limit to the weapons employed. The very fact that it was made shows the degree of cohesion of Nato at the time.

Finally, one should note that in Korea the American conduct of the armistice negotiations was accepted by the allies, but not without rumblings. There was, for example, a brief 1952 foray by Canada into the prisoner-release issue that was holding up the armistice. It is both amusing and instructive to re-read Secretary Acheson's account of how he dealt with this intervention by the country that was his father's birthplace and which he later styled the "stern daughter of the voice of God."⁴ The episode itself was isolated and of little lasting importance, but it foreshadowed an important and continuing strand in the postwar story. Namely, that in situations where one member of the alliance is in a lead role in a crisis outside the Nato area, others (either with sincere official ideas or in response to domestic opinion) feel themselves free to offer helpful advice or mediation that is not always welcomed by the lead actor. Subsequent examples abound: from Suez to Vietnam to the Falklands War.

With the test of Korea successfully passed, and with West Germany and Italy moving to full military partnership, the Nato Alliance in 1953 stood strong. Britain and the United States shared a number of ideas concerning the Middle East, including a brief flirtation with the idea of a Middle East Defense Organization; moreover, there was in 1950 a tripartite agreement with France to limit and balance arms supplies to Israel and the Arab countries. More especially, Britain and the United States collaborated closely from 1951 to 1953 in actions to counter and eventually to remove the perceived threat of Mossadegh in Iran. In Indochina the United States acted vigorously, largely to keep France as a strong partner in Nato itself, to

support the French effort to defeat Ho Chi Minh. The latter was a clear case of the perceived communist and Soviet threat being regarded as paramount, in a colonial situation the United States basically regarded as outdated and unlikely to persist. And of course American support was accompanied by determined, and as usual unwelcome, efforts to get the French to create a non-communist Vietnamese government that would shortly become genuinely independent along with the other nations of Indochina.

Then came the test of 1954, when the siege of Dien Bien Phu abruptly made clear that the French were in deep trouble. President Eisenhower rejected last-minute French pleas for drastic US air action. Then in April and May, John Foster Dulles tried hard to create a basis for a vaguely defined "united action" with Britain, France and the United States at its core. The effort elicited a tart response from Anthony Eden, who complained that "Americans may think the time past when they need consider the feelings or difficulties of their allies."⁵ Britain was not prepared to undertake joint military action, and its attitude played a significant part in negative congressional reactions that foreclosed carrying out what I have never been sure was a firm intent on President Eisenhower's part.

The British reaction was such that even Dulles' notion of a united threat, as a bargaining weapon in negotiation, went for naught and it was left to Pierre Mendès-France to negotiate at Geneva. The manner in which the United States dissociated itself from the process left a significant legacy of bitterness, at least among French officials. In a sense it was Dulles' consolation prize that Britain and France did become founding members of the SEATO alliance in the fall of 1953, although the degree of their commitment was always less than appeared on the surface. Essentially, each sought to placate Washington for the sake of continued cohesion on the main Nato front. In the aftermath the United States moved into the dominant position in support of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, with the French taking a carping back seat while retaining substantial private interests there, a pattern later repeated in the Middle East and in parts of Africa, and not just with France.

The next crisis came in 1956 in the Middle East over Suez. There and in North Africa there had been a running history of more or less private frictions between the United States on the one hand, and Britain and France on the other—such frictions described in Acheson's memoirs became more marked with the advent of Dulles, specifically over Egypt. After that country became independent, the United States undertook support for the Aswan Dam on a bilateral basis, and it was the abrupt cancellation of this undertaking that brought on the 1956 crisis—Anglo-American relations were under a cloud from the outset. Moreover, Nasser's seizure of the Canal was bound to have a much greater effect on British and French interests, and the British (especially Eden) had special feelings of hostility toward Nasser.

Thus the stage was set for a diplomatic minuet in which the parties were at cross purposes all along: the British and French seeking to bring Nasser to heel by concerted pressures and threats (similar to what Dulles himself had attempted in 1954 over Indochina) and the Americans, as the Europeans perceived it, pulling the plug on such essential pressures. From that point onward, the British and French went to great lengths to conceal their plans for intervention from Washington, plans which enlisted Israel as a third partner. There developed a notable breakdown in what had been up to then an almost complete Anglo-American sharing of serious intelligence judgments on all situations. I well recall, for example, that in the CIA estimates shop we had concluded that Egyptian pilots would have no difficulty in keeping the Canal operating (contrary to official and private British views) and we also did an estimate on what would happen if Britain did resort to force—concluding that even a quick victory would in the end mean only that Britain would have to pull out eventually and would have antagonized both Egypt and much of the Arab world in the process. But none of this was shared, in a striking but hardly the only example of this kind of failure of essential communication. Its central role is surely one of the important lessons of the whole period.

The denouement is well known. The tripartite intervention in late October came as a total surprise to Washington and its timing—coinciding both with the Hungarian uprising and with the US presidential election—doubtless made some contribution to the harsh American response. In effect, Britain was cut off at the ankles by an explicit US threat to cease supporting the pound, a dire threat at that time. An expedition that was already extraordinarily ill-planned (largely for reasons of secrecy) never even attained initial British and French objectives, although the Israelis were completely successful in the Sinai. The United States proceeded to take the lead in denouncing the intervention and enforcing early British and French and eventual Israeli withdrawal, while Lester Pearson pursued the Canadian penchant for mediation—this time constructively and to the tune of a Nobel Peace Prize.

It was clearly a nadir in alliance dealings on an extra-Nato crisis, the only case where there was not only criticism and hampering action between major Nato allies but total frustration of two allies by the action of a third. That the intervention came to seem feckless and misguided to most British opinion helped to ease the strain and to prevent it from inflicting deep damage on the cohesion of Nato. But the deeper effect was certainly to accelerate a withdrawal of the British and French from taking responsibility in difficult parts of what later came to be called the 'Third World. "Leave it to Uncle Sam," and the growth of an essentially spectator and critical attitude in much of Europe toward US efforts can be traced in considerable part to Suez.

Yet Washington and London did work closely together in handling the aftermath of the coup in Iraq in 1978—the United States taking the lead in sorting out the situation in Lebanon and Britain acting to shore up Jordan.

France's conflict in Algeria was a different story. There the persistent US criticism of French purposes and methods (including Senators such as John F. Kennedy), with such actions as the reception of Algerian representatives in the United States, annoyed France but played little part in the outcome brought about by the subtle policy of Charles DeGaulle from 1958 to the final French withdrawal in 1962. Again the fact that most of the French public came to see the effort to retain Algeria as hopeless tended to mute hostile feelings toward the United States over the issue.

Then came the Congo crisis that ran from 1958 right through to 1964, again a case of sweeping up after withdrawal from a colonial position. There the United States did become a principal actor, to the intermittent great pain of Belgium, and on the Katanga secession with some criticism from Britain and France. But in the end the outcome seemed tenable and the frictions faded.⁶

Reviewing the period from 1951 to 1965 or so as a whole, one could conclude that there had been indeed recurring frictions and a serious confrontation over Suez. But at the same time this series of crises outside the Nato area did not, I would judge, significantly shake the alliance in terms of its central focus. Perhaps DeGaulle's 1966 withdrawal from the Nato military structure owed something to Suez and to Eisenhower's 1958 rejection of DeGaulle's proposal for a tripartite "directorate" of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, to consult on worldwide matters and if possible act jointly. The fact that London was no more receptive to that idea than Washington may also have contributed slightly to DeGaulle's rejection of the British candidacy for membership in the European Community in 1963 and again in 1967. But the roots of DeGaulle's actions lay much deeper, as any reader of his writings would attest.

What, then, did enable Nato to hold firm? Partly, I think, that there were no serious difficulties or differences over Nato strategy or the division of labor during this time. Indeed, the Berlin Crisis that ran from 1958 to 1962 was on the whole handled with remarkable cohesion and with a unique degree of quadripartite cooperation involving the German Federal Republic as well as the United Kingdom, United States, and France. The alliance simply had to hold together and deal with that Berlin threat, and the successful outcome brought Nato to another high pitch of cohesion in the early 1960s.

And there was another factor, taken for granted at the time, but more noteworthy in hindsight. This was that the members of the alliance were making great strides in the economic field, under a US leadership that was both accepted and seen as wisely handled. This underscored the essential fact that the alliance—from the Marshall Plan onward—had not only the foundation of a common perception of the Soviet threat but a degree of

economic collaboration and interdependence unique among historic alliances. That the economic part of the shared undertaking was a success story right up to roughly 1971 is surely a key reason why alliance cohesion remained generally firm despite the recurring differences over problems and crises outside the Nato area.

In retrospect the period from 1953 to 1961 can be seen to have been characterized by overwhelming US dominance and by a series of crises in which the European interest related in large part to past colonial positions in which individual European countries retained major interests. Broadly speaking, the period from 1961 to 1972 can be seen as a transition period, with US dominance somewhat eroding by the end of that time, and with crises outside the Nato area relating less to the transition from colonialism (with the Congo as a notable exception).

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 resembled Korea in basic respects, although of course in a vastly compressed time frame. In each case the threat came out of the blue and was visibly serious. But unlike Korea the Cuban missile crisis was handled exclusively by the United States. The US response was perceived as wise from the outset, and resulted quickly in visible success. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Nato completely supported what the United States did—although it is amusing to note that the ever-precise General DeGaulle pointedly asked President Kennedy's emissary, Mr. Acheson, whether he was being informed or consulted, with Acheson replying frankly that it was the former. But it was evident that the circumstances had precluded genuine consultation; success carried all before it, including the subsequent withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey, which in effect meant that Nato no longer had intermediate-range US weapons in any part of the Nato area.

As it happened, the Cuban missile crisis virtually coincided with the brief Chinese invasion of India in the fall of 1962. There cooperation between the United States and Britain (the only Nato nation with major South Asian past ties and present interests) was close and effective, with military assistance to India coordinated and agreement briefly reached on a joint program for the future (at Nassau in December 1962). Such cooperation reflected the strong sense at the time of a new Chinese threat to the area. As that sense of threat receded, however, British interest ebbed, and the United States found itself briefly conducting parallel programs of military assistance with both Pakistan and India—in the latter case in increasing competition with the Soviet Union.

Here one must look back for a moment at the original 1954 US decision to arm Pakistan and to take the lead in enlisting that nation in the CENTO alliance. While I do not recall the British ever remonstrating over US policy toward Pakistan—at a time when Britain itself was pushing the CENTO alliance (originally the Baghdad Pact) for the sake of its own Middle East

interests—and while the British did join with others in consortium arrangements for economic aid to Pakistan, the underlying fact was that from 1954 on the United States became the principal Western actor in South Asia and tended to deny the British any significant role there. Moreover, if one sees the United States as to some degree playing the role that Britain had played in the earlier “great game” to bar Soviet expansion in the area, the US embrace of Pakistan both set off predictable frictions between Pakistan and India and (because of the Pushtunistan issues) inhibited US efforts to assist Afghanistan. Again I do not recall significant British criticism of these policies, but they did leave the United States playing a lone hand. This was not without some bearing on the subsequent alliance response to the Afghanistan crisis that emerged in 1978-80.

As for Pakistan and India, Pakistan (almost certainly egged on by China in its brief assertive phase of 1962-65) picked a fight with India over Kashmir in 1965. It suffered an unforeseen debacle that, in hindsight, led directly to the progressive weakening of Pakistan, the 1971 war over Bangladesh, and the emergence of India as the clearly dominant power in the region. But in all of these events there were no significant Anglo-American frictions visible, although, I can well imagine the mutterings among old “great game” hands about the ineptness of American policy, especially the handling of India in 1971.

Vietnam was of course an entirely different story. There the initial British position was heavily affected by the 1963-65 Indonesian confrontation in Malaysia, to which Britain contributed a major force alongside contingents from Australia and New Zealand. In effect, in 1964 and early 1965 there was a perceived division of labor, especially on the part of the Conservative government that yielded to Harold Wilson in October 1964. And in the process, the British—exposed to the full range of US intelligence concerning North Vietnam actions against South Vietnam—came officially to accept the American view that this was indeed essentially a Hanoi aggression against the South.

Yet, even after the Indonesian coup of late 1965 that ended the Malaysian confrontation, Britain quietly but steadfastly declined to participate directly in the Vietnam conflict, as Australia and New Zealand did. This was a source of private pain to Secretary Dean Rusk, my chief at the time, and his irritation and that of President Johnson were hardly eased by a number of opportunistic, ill-timed and apparently politically self-serving peace initiatives by Wilson. But there were always bigger fish to fry in Anglo-American relations and these official US criticisms remained muted.

France, of course, took a different position from the start. DeGaulle bluntly felt that the situation in Vietnam was hopeless (“pourri,” as he told George Ball).⁷ DeGaulle’s Foreign Minister Couve de Murville was equally blunt in private, notably in a talk with Dean Rusk at Manila in April 1964, that any US resort to direct intervention would founder. Moreover, as polls of the

period demonstrate, there had evolved in France a strikingly different view of China from that held in the United States and indeed in most other countries: the French, both generally and officially, perceived China as becoming the great and dominant power in Southeast Asia in a fairly short time frame, and it flowed from this that to attempt to resist China there was to play King Canute. So from 1963 onward the French were not only openly skeptical to sharply critical, but from time to time launched peace initiatives under various "neutralist" labels that seemed to Washington mischievous.

Yet in any overall assessment of Vietnam, even the sharp French differences with US policy had only a slight effect on the outcome and—at least in my judgment—did little to affect behavior in the Nato area itself. (While some have argued that the United States could have drawn more fully on French advice and past experience in Vietnam, I do not believe this deficiency was truly significant.) On the US side, the French and British positions came simply to be seen as a given. Even when criticism of lack of allied support became a significant factor in US decisions in 1967-68, it was primarily the inadequate efforts of Asian allies that were singled out, by Clark Clifford for example, in urging the change in US policy that came after the Tet debacle of the spring of 1968.

The rising tide of public criticism of US policy in Europe, from 1965 onward, came likewise to be accepted. And the reason, I think, was simply that such criticism in effect mirrored, and resounded back and forth with, similar criticism within the United States itself. As with the British over Suez, the fact that one's own policy is increasingly perceived as unwise or worse makes it unlikely that one will blame one's failure on the criticism or even the actions of others. And, to repeat, the most controversial and emotional years over Vietnam—from 1965 through 1970—coincided with a high tide in economic performance and cohesion among the alliance nations. As in the 1950s, economic success and interdependence were a big plus for the alliance throughout the 1960s.

Ultimately, of course, Vietnam was a tragedy with lasting impact on US policy. While the United States did not "truly wreck itself" as Athens had done in the Sicilian expedition, the American failure was surely the beginning of a serious decline in allied confidence in US wisdom. Its impact on subsequent US conduct, the so-called Vietnam syndrome, has remained important and, in the judgment of many, debilitating if not crippling.

In the story of Vietnam, the role and attitudes of Japan deserve special mention. In the 1964-65 period the Japanese government basically shared the US perception of the nature of the conflict. When Prime Minister Eisaku Sato signed a strong communiqué on the subject in Washington in early 1965, he was both sincere and confident that to do so would not hurt him politically. Moreover, Japan benefited considerably from being (as it had been in the Korean War) an important base area for the war. Most of all, the Japanese

were still dealing with their postwar anxieties, preferring a reserved role in foreign policy on all fronts and deferring to the United States. Over time, the Japanese public did become increasingly critical, and such US actions as the use of Okinawa for B-52 missions undoubtedly helped to accelerate Japanese sentiment for the return of that island. But in the main the Japanese simply let things run their course, and there was no perceptible effect on the US-Japanese relationship.

I would like to note one procedural lesson from Vietnam. All through the 1964-69 period, especially in the later stages, the US government was at pains to share its perceptions with its major allies (France perhaps largely excepted). Though almost none of these exchanges could be described as genuine consultation, the fact that our major allies knew what we were thinking and usually had advance notice of special actions was, I think, of great significance in muting official criticism and in assisting allied governments in dealing with public criticism. This may have been especially true in the case of Japan.

Discussion of the Vietnam War inevitably involves US policy toward China. On the basic issue of recognition of the People's Republic and admitting it to UN membership, there were I suppose no true "crises" between 1953 and 1971. But the hard-line US position was clearly not shared by Britain or France, or in time by Canada, and one can readily identify periods of significant friction, for example, when Canada unexpectedly took an initiative at the United Nations in the fall of 1966. But this running criticism of US policy was somewhat muted by the briefly assertive policies of the People's Republic in 1964-65 and then by the Cultural Revolution. That US policy on recognition and UN membership throughout this period was seen as rigid and unrealistic hardly helped overall allied confidence generally, and was at times a running irritation; however, I would not put it stronger than that.

Then in 1971 the United States made a dramatic change in its China policy, symbolized by the Kissinger visit that year. Here was a very clear lesson involving Japan. Nothing could have been plainer over the years than the Japanese fear of being dealt out by a unilateral US rapprochement with the People's Republic. That they were not given advance notice of the US change was a procedural failure that happened to coincide with important changes in US economic policy. The two events gave the Japanese twin "shokkus" that left a mark for years on Japanese-American relations. The lesson in terms of advance notice is all too clear. No nation—especially an ally—ever likes to be taken by surprise, and the reaction can go beyond hurt feelings. This was as true of Japan in 1971 as it was of Margaret Thatcher over Grenada in October 1983.

But it is the tensions that have surfaced since 1972 that have raised our greatest concerns. In this time frame we have seen not only growing divisions within the Nato Alliance (and with Japan) over the handling of

Third World crises, but the onset of important changes in the underlying cement of the alliance in economic terms.

To begin with, the oil crisis that began in 1971 and came to a head in 1973-74 and again in 1978-79, has been profoundly divisive. Apart from the teasing question whether a more united negotiating front could have stemmed the early price rises obtained by Qaddafi in 1971, and then under the Tehran agreement shortly after, the plain fact was that rapidly increasing US demand for oil—under what seemed to Europeans profligate US practices—was instrumental in putting a hitherto weak OPEC in the driver's seat by mid-1973.

The availability of an "oil weapon" then contributed to Anwar Sadat's attack on Israel in October 1973. The Arab oil producers promptly imposed an embargo on oil to the United States and the Netherlands, because of their support of Israel, and the other Nato allies moved by fear of similar action were to deny—with the sole exception of Portugal and the Azores—any intermediate facilities for the movement of US assistance to Israel. An already beleaguered President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger, taken by surprise by the attack itself and hardly to be blamed for it except possibly in terms of intelligence foresight, found themselves faced with what was in effect passive resistance by their Nato allies. The European reaction came as a great shock to them and to much of the American public. However, the US aid did get through, Israel held out and reversed the tide, and a precarious armistice was achieved.

But the crisis was a revelation for Nato. It demonstrated that the allies cared more about their oil supplies than they did about working with US policy, and it thrust the United States even more strongly into the role of sole and key supporter of Israel that it had already assumed after the Six-Day War in 1967. Prior to that war, there had been brief but ineffective efforts to put together an allied naval effort to reopen the Gulf of Aqaba, but in the war itself the allies had cooperated in allowing US aid to Israel to flow freely—which simply underscored the contrast between 1967 and 1973.

In the aftermath, the allies were not unsympathetic to Kissinger's successive negotiations with Egypt and Syria, and there was no renewed Arab-Israeli crisis for a few years. But that of 1973 had clearly revealed the newly divisive effect of Europe's oil dependence and had opened up another latent source of division in the increasingly close ties between the United States and Israel, with which the Europeans felt themselves to have no real connection.

Moreover, over the years that followed the 1971-72 Ostpolitik and détente agreements, there developed a clear and increasingly marked difference between European and American perceptions of the success of these policies. Whereas Europe's trade with the USSR expanded along with important new

ties between West and East Germany, Congress (in the Jackson and Stevenson Amendments of 1974) sharply limited US trade participation. Meanwhile, successive Soviet actions in Angola, Ethiopia and South Yemen and the Soviet arms buildup dispelled the oversold impression that détente would operate to moderate Soviet behavior or to diminish Soviet adventurism in the Third World. Both official and public opinion in the United States became progressively disillusioned with détente, while for the Europeans it seemed a visible success. Their expanding trade also led to important domestic political pressures not to disturb it, notably in the Federal Republic.

There was no true “crisis,” at least in allied terms, over what happened in Angola, Ethiopia or South Yemen. In Angola, an attempted “covert” US intervention may already have been failing before Congress put an end to it, a clear example of the “post-Vietnam syndrome” that ran through US policy from 1973 onward. In conjunction with the debacle in Vietnam in 1975, Angola and later Soviet gains were perceived, in Europe and elsewhere, as indications that the United States had lost its touch in Third World situations. But there was little inclination among the European nations to pick up the slack, although France did act effectively against the brief invasion of the Shaba area of the Congo in 1978.

Then came the Iranian Revolution of the fall of 1978, leading to the departure of the Shah in early 1979 and the advent of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Although major Nato nations, as well as Japan, bought a lot of Iranian oil and were by then heavily involved in projects within Iran, the United States was still by far the dominant Western power in a position to advise the Shah. The relevant American accounts do not suggest that there was much US consultation with other nations, although the British ambassador, Sir Anthony Parsons, was in close touch with US Ambassador Sullivan and apparently shared most of his judgments—including the belief that at least from November onward there was no way to save the Shah.⁸ The Carter administration’s indecisive and divided handling of the crisis can hardly have impressed these other nations, but recrimination was avoided and all the Western nations simply tried to hang on as best they could under the new regime. What the crisis did above all, in allied terms, was to highlight the continued absence of effective cooperation on oil matters. With the oil shortfall just below the seven percent benchmark for action developed in contingency planning by the International Energy Agency, there was a good deal of backing and filling among the major oil consumers but no effective action to prevent the spot market going clear out of control and raising oil prices much further than could have been the case.

When Iran then seized the US hostages in November 1979, the allies totally supported the United States in principle, at the United Nations and later at the World Court. Moreover, when the United States seized Iran’s assets and extended its reach to holdings of US banks abroad, the nations concerned did

not object and the relevant court proceedings were still dragging on when the matter was finally resolved in January 1981.⁹ The allies did agree to limited sanctions against Iran, notably on military equipment, but were not initially prepared to join in more comprehensive measures. The issue came to a head in April 1980, with the Europeans apparently reluctantly persuaded to join in stronger economic measures ill-fated but then came the rescue attempt. It was not a happy experience in allied terms, but the quick failure of the attempt tended to drown out allied recriminations. In the final negotiations, Britain in particular cooperated handsomely.

All in all the Iran crisis and hostage seizure were a messy case in allied terms. There were isolated bright spots—including the Canadian rescue of several of the hostages—but on a broader basis the Nato allies and Japan must have seen themselves sharing in the geopolitical setback and incurring major losses, for which US policy (both at the time and over the years) bore a heavy responsibility.

This background can hardly have been irrelevant to the allied response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. US memoirs make it all too clear that in its preoccupation with Iran the US government never came systematically to grips with the possibility of a Soviet invasion, with Brzezinski firing off intermittent unilateral warnings to the Soviets and the State Department confining its allied consultations to the lesser possibility of increased Soviet military assistance to its beleaguered client regime.¹⁰ This may have changed at the last minute, but basically the invasion took all by surprise and there does not appear to have been even a systematic sharing of intelligence judgments that one surmises must have pointed strongly to the possibility of invasion at least a month before it occurred. This deplorable situation was hardly helped by President Carter's offhand comment that the Soviet action had sharply changed his view of Soviet behavior—a remark universally judged as naive, to put it mildly.

Moreover, it is important to note the Carter administration's uneven record in its dealings with Nato. On the one hand there was an agreement on a conventional military Nato buildup, on the other the "neutron bomb" fiasco, contributing directly to the December 1979 decision for a new Nato missile deployment. Basically, whereas Europeans had come to find Henry Kissinger's strategic mind-set, sophistication and Europe-sensitive style to their taste, many in Europe had been put off by the contrasting style of the Carter administration, with evidence of inconsistency, divergent views and erratic presidential decisions. And there was downright bad feeling between Helmut Schmidt and both Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski (shades of the earlier transition from Acheson to Dulles and of the personal friction between Dulles and Eden). As in all foreign policy, the importance of personality and style can never be ignored.

In the early stages of the Afghanistan crisis, ambiguous European written statements seemed to minimize Soviet motives in the invasion, while the US initial approach was hesitant and included a number of mixed signals. When the Carter administration did decide to press, not for any coordinated responsive action in the area of Afghanistan itself (where its own early offer of renewed aid to Pakistan was rebuffed), but for other “punitive” actions against the Soviet Union, it ran head-on into strong European sentiment that nothing should be done that could disturb the ongoing “détente in Europe.” The result was a most uneven and unconvincing Nato response. Some joined the United States in boycotting the 1980 Olympics but others did not. Considerable initial European support for the partial US grain embargo soon dissipated and there was no willingness to participate in any wider reduction in Soviet contacts, certainly almost nothing in respect to trade.

In sum, the allied response to Afghanistan was another nadir, more widely perceived as such and more serious even than 1956 or 1973. And, in the wake of Iran and Afghanistan, the United States proclaimed the Carter Doctrine and pushed ahead with a Rapid Deployment Force designed to protect the Middle East. There was a general feeling in Europe that US policy tended to see the situation far too much in military terms and too little in terms of political relationships. By December 1980 the issue of “out of area” cooperation in Nato had become a specific and important item on the Nato agenda. Would the other allies “compensate” for any withdrawal of US forces in Europe for a Middle East intervention? Would they “facilitate” the deployment of such a US intervention force? And might they themselves “participate” directly at least to meet some forms of threat? These questions have reverberated ever since in Nato consultations and meetings, with no clear contingency agreement yet emerging.¹¹

And here one must again stress the division between American and European views and interests concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, which had by then widened. The Europeans had welcomed the Camp David Accords of 1978, but when negotiations on autonomy in the West Bank bogged down visibly from late 1979 onward, they were moved to issue the Venice Declaration of June 1980 stressing the rights of the Palestinians. The Venice position—almost the only example of a serious Community statement on foreign policy—was not basically at variance with the position of the Carter administration or of the Reagan administration later, but it did strike a different note and one discordant to American ears. The fact that it was issued at all reflected deep European doubts about the rigidity and objectives of the Likud government in Israel, and frustration over the inability or unwillingness of the United States to affect the Israeli position. Here the Europeans have always seen American policy as being to some degree tied to American domestic political pressures. Likewise major European governments have frequently diverged with the United States in their votes on relevant UN

resolutions, particularly over Israeli settlements on the West Bank. This clear divergence of views, no doubt influenced to some degree by Europe's dependence on Arab oil but essentially much deeper and broader, has now become a serious element obstructing coordination on almost all Middle East matters.

To complete the story of the Carter administration, the outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran in the fall of 1980 was met with divergent but not seriously discordant responses among the Western allies. Most concurred with the US "hands off" approach, while at the same time seeking to preserve significant interests in the warring countries. One exception was France which from the first tilted substantially to the Iraqi side, expanding its existing position as a military supplier to Iraq. Although there was no coordinated allied position, there was a generally shared view that victory for either side would be more serious for Western interests than a stalemate leading eventually to peace. Basically, there was little that the United States or the European nations could do to resolve the situation.

This brings us to the Reagan administration and the record since 1981. Here one must note again the importance of overall relationships, including economics and what are accepted as clear-cut Nato issues.

On the one hand, Europeans have never taken kindly to an evangelical "hard line" from Washington and the President's intermittent pronouncements of this sort (even more than those of John Foster Dulles before him) have struck a jarring note in European ears, as have the initial casual comments concerning nuclear war. Moreover, although US economic policy generally paralleled that of European nations in its attack on inflation, huge US budget deficits and their perceived impact on high interest rates have been a continuing bone in the European throat.

On the other hand, the need not to let Soviet pressure prevent the Nato missile deployment that finally began in late 1983 has forced the Nato nations to work closely together, both minimizing reservations about US negotiating strategy and tending to mute differences over policy in other areas. Moreover, there was considerable compatibility in outlook between the Reagan administration and the Conservative government of Mrs. Thatcher and the Kohl government in West Germany, while François Mitterrand broadly shared US views on the necessity of a firm posture toward the Soviet Union.

In one early case—the initial US near-obsession with Libya—European feelings were plainly opposed to confrontation, and it was perhaps fortunate that a minor shootdown of Libyan aircraft in August 1981 tended to defuse US feelings. At later stages, the United States found itself exerting unwelcome pressure on France to assist Chad against Qaddafi's invasion, and the moderate official British reaction to the Libyan gunplay in London in April

1984 once again underlined that Europeans generally felt they must stay in some sort of working relationship with Qaddafi, for the sake of his oil supplies, however much they may detest him.

In Africa what had seemed a brilliant Anglo-American collaboration in turning Rhodesia into Zimbabwe in 1979-80—with primary credit to Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington—has been dimmed by Robert Mugabe's subsequent behavior. But substantial European differences with US policy toward Namibia were eased by the tentative successes recorded by the US "constructive engagement" approach as of early 1984. Here one might note the ironic contrast between South Africa and Israel. Whereas US ties with Israel and domestic political pressures (at least as perceived by Europe) tend to make US policy lukewarm toward Palestinian aspirations, in South Africa the shoe is on the other foot, with European economic ties to the South African establishment much stronger than those of the United States and with a black and liberal constituency in the United States strongly on the side of meeting black aspirations.

In the Middle East the picture has been uneven at best. While major European nations were persuaded to participate in the Sinai peacekeeping force established in early 1982, negotiations to this end were tortuous and at times strained. And when Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982, European official and public opinion was markedly hostile to Israel's action, while in the aftermath several European governments joined in visible actions to give the Palestine Liberation Organization renewed respectability. This was again not at variance with the US position, confirmed in the Reagan peace initiative of September 1982, an initiative to which the Europeans were sympathetic. But they continue to judge its failure, first in the spring of 1983 and then again in the spring of 1984, in considerably different terms from US official and most US public opinion. Europeans tend less to blame King Hussein and Yasser Arafat (or even Hafiz Assad) and more to see the root of the impasse in the hard-line position of the Likud government in Israel and the inability of the United States to alter that position.

In Lebanon itself, the French, Italians and British participated alongside the US Marines in a multinational peacekeeping force, the French doing so with a will reflecting their own past Lebanon connections. (The terrorist attacks of the fall of 1983 were almost as disastrous to the French contingent as to the Marines.) But it never helps an alliance to have its members participate together in a venture that fails. One cannot judge the degree of recrimination in Europe, although it seems evident that the abrupt US withdrawal of the Marines in early 1984 came without adequate notice or coordination with the participating allies.

A major question, as of mid-1984, concerns support for Iraq and arms supplies to the Gulf nations. In the latter case the United States which had long taken the lead in meeting perceived arms needs of Saudi Arabia and

others, has found itself partially frustrated by congressional (and Israeli) opposition.

France in particular seemed to be pursuing its own course in this area. In addition to being the major arms supplier to Iraq, including the controversial Etendard aircraft with its Exocet missiles, it was apparently bidding for major orders from Saudi Arabia and the smaller states of the Gulf. On the one hand, such action could be seen as a wise way of meeting local needs and evading oversensitive Israeli objections; on the other, it might tend to commit France, at least, more firmly to the Arab side in the event of a renewed crisis between Israel and any of its neighbors.

Any renewed crisis in the Middle East could put the gravest strains on allied unity and cohesion. In the case of the Iraq-Iran war, there has apparently been significant coordinated contingency planning for naval action to keep open the Strait of Hormuz, in which European navies might participate alongside the US Navy. But US efforts to develop cooperative defense arrangements with the Gulf States—notably the expansion of the Rapid Deployment Force (now Central Command) and the abortive efforts of Secretary Haig to develop a “strategic consensus” in 1981—have never enlisted clear-cut European support. As before they tend to see this effort as too concerned with strictly military planning and tending to neglect crucial political relationships, some of course affected by US ties with Israel.

Thus, if a future crisis in the Gulf should go beyond a strictly maritime threat to the Strait of Hormuz, it would be a bold prophet who foresaw a coordinated allied response, and there would be a strong chance of renewed deep differences and recrimination. Significant opinion is already evident in the United States that America is being left to handle, largely alone, a situation where European and Japanese oil dependence is vastly greater than the now-minimal direct US dependence on Gulf supplies. To be sure, European nations now have substantial oil reserves, and likewise, in the global oil market, the United States too could be significantly affected indirectly by a cutoff. Yet there remains considerable feeling that the United States is being asked to take most of the responsibility for pulling European and Japanese chestnuts out of the fire, and there does not seem to the outside observer to be any agreed division of labor.

All in all, the Middle East as of mid-1984 was a witch's brew, not least in terms of its possible impact on alliance relationships. That factor, indeed, was an important additional reason for hoping that some way could be found, perhaps after the Israeli elections of July 1984, to get a genuine Palestinian peace process under way. Otherwise, or even if this should happen, one could too readily imagine scenarios that would turn into nightmares and sharply divide the United States from its major Nato partners and perhaps also from Japan.

Meanwhile Central America itself reached crisis status at least for the United States. As in Vietnam, European criticisms of US policy have tended to mirror parallel criticisms from within the United States itself, but this has hardly made them more palatable to the Reagan administration. The Europeans have apparently come to take a more realistic view of the nature of the communist regime in Nicaragua; yet their reaction to the spring 1984 controversy over mining of Nicaraguan harbors was sharp, including a specific French offer to sweep the mines. The Europeans themselves no longer volunteered to play a role in peace negotiations, but they were watching closely to see whether the regional Contadora process could achieve results, and their impression was that the United States had not been wholly cooperative in that effort.

Central America is of course remote in terms of direct European interests, and recognized as a special US concern. Nonetheless, there are continuing grave doubts both in official quarters and especially in public opinion, and if push should come to US shove, the European reaction would almost surely be sharply negative—unless the US action had the clear support of the key neighboring countries such as Mexico and Venezuela. In sum, the picture concerning Central America, while disturbing, is not remotely at the same level of potential divisiveness as the Middle East.

In both cases, and perhaps especially in Central America, one of the clear lessons seemed to be one that applied almost equally to the American government's presentation of its policy to the US Congress and public—that is, there had never been a clearly articulated statement of just what the US policy and strategy are, and specifically what was contemplated with respect to Nicaragua. A policy of pressure intended to lead to negotiation is always hard to distinguish from one that contemplates (and perhaps even welcomes) the direct use of force, and the distinction is particularly hard to handle for democratic nations with inquisitive media and sensitive public opinions. The fact that the Europeans, like American public opinion, were neither totally persuaded, even in official quarters, of the reality or at least the importance of continued Nicaraguan intervention in El Salvador, nor above all clearly informed (let alone consulted) concerning US intentions was bound to be unhelpful. Even if the lesson cannot be always followed, it is surely plain: if one really wants allied understanding and support, one must be as clear and honest as possible about what one is doing and why.

Finally, let us consider briefly the Falklands and Grenada. Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins have written a remarkable early and authoritative case study of the British side of the Falklands war, including the fairly high degree of support extended by the European Community, the mediation effort of Secretary Haig, and the subsequent material US support for Britain,¹² and on the latter aspect there is Mr. Jenkins' subsequent revealing report in *The Economist*.¹³ To these there is little to add—while Britons were querulous

about the US position at the time, most must surely have come to recognize that the United States in the end came through handsomely. In my judgment the decisive factor in US policy was in part the alliance connection but in larger measure the fact that Argentina's action represented by any standard a case of conventional aggression, whatever the underlying provocation in terms of previous British foot-dragging.

As for Grenada, I cannot myself suppose that the United States would have acted differently under any administration. But the handling of dealings with the British by this one was clearly inept to the point of outright deception—as the Simon Jenkins' parallel report in *The Economist* makes clear—and the effect on Mrs. Thatcher, and her outright criticism, must surely (as Jenkins notes) have played a big part in the negative European reaction at least at the time.¹⁴ Several European nations joined in the General Assembly's condemnation of the US action, while others abstained—and in a few European quarters there were takers for the Soviet attempt to compare Grenada with Afghanistan. As of mid-1984, it may be too soon to assess the ultimate impact of Grenada. My own hunch is that these adverse reactions will tend to recede and that Grenada will not have left serious lasting scars.

Finally, let me briefly examine two proposals for structural change within Nato that are sometimes aired, and then briefly summarize the lessons I would draw from this whole postwar experience. My basic premises are, first, that the Western Alliance has all along been, and remains today, by far the greatest structure of its kind in world history, that its cohesion and effectiveness in the Nato area itself are vital, and that both the maintenance of these and reasonably effective handling of crises outside the Nato area require the maximum attainable degree of allied cooperation on such crises and threats. Second, that the greatest threats to world peace, as well as the greatest possibilities of Soviet gains that could cumulatively alter the basic balance of power in the world, now lie outside the Nato area. Thus, how the Western allies deal with situations outside the Nato area has always been of great importance, and seems overwhelmingly likely to be even more so in the future, above all in the Middle East and contiguous areas.

For this very reason, the suggestion is occasionally made that the geographic scope of the Nato Alliance might be expanded to include the Middle East. This I shall not argue at length, but only say briefly that it reminds me of an old saying of Justice Brandeis: "The way to solve a difficult problem is not to turn one's attention to an impossible one." A "Nato embrace" of the Middle East would surely be highly unwelcome to key nations there and enormously complicate what are already deep and intractable divisions there.

A lesser suggestion, put forward seriously and responsibly in a memorable 1981 pamphlet by the four heads of leading private foreign policy organizations in the United States, Britain, France, and the Federal Republic, would

call for a formal and accepted structure of consultation and review, with stress on these four nations.¹⁶ Such a formal structure, presumably with links to other Nato nations and Japan on a case-by-case basis, has echoes of the old DeGaulle idea of a directorate. But the proposal has already aroused strong negative reactions within Nato. At least on a formal basis, I take it to be a non-starter.

But this has not meant, and should not mean, any lesser concern over the constant need for close consultation among the allied nations specifically concerned with particular problems and areas—again with the Middle East to the fore. The *informal practice* of such consultation—among what might be called “principal nations”—has been in effect in recent years, though the outsider cannot easily judge how close it is or how effective. But it does seem clear to me that it is in this informal direction that the Western Alliance must move.

And this brings me to a quick summary of the lessons that might be drawn. Of these the first and most basic is the importance of central alliance relationships, in the broad sense, both on the security and economic fronts, with much greater emphasis than before 1971 on the importance of the latter. As I have stressed over and over, the economic condition of the alliance makes an enormous difference both in government attitudes and especially in those of public opinion. And while the United States is no longer as dominant as it was in earlier periods, it remains today the essential leader, something more than simply *primus inter pares*.

Second, shared or at least understood perceptions are essential to getting the maximum attainable allied cooperation on crises outside the Nato area. It is extraordinarily hard to have truly common perceptions—notably on the always difficult question of the mix of local and Soviet factors in a given situation—but there is a constant need for unremitting effort to narrow differences and, at any rate, to understand them clearly. Again, the United States is the inescapable leader to this end, although it is almost equally important for the European Nato nations to get their act together much better than they have hitherto done.

On all counts, the importance of personalities and diplomatic style speak for themselves. The Western Alliance is fortunate that it now has individual governments that are each of a conservative-to-moderate stripe, with professional diplomats in close touch and with few of the personality clashes at top levels that have often had a serious negative impact. But such a situation cannot at all be assumed for more than a few years at best.

As in all dealings between democratic nations, the state of public opinion can be a very important factor. In some cases—notably Vietnam—public opinion in individual countries may be almost beyond the control of their governments. But in most cases that are less long-lived or dramatic, public opinion does tend to take its lead from government attitudes.

Finally, there is a need to face frankly the recurrent fact that deference to allied views may on occasion mean that the lead actor in a given situation will have to weigh whether it is better to take stronger unilateral actions with which other allies are not prepared to agree, or to lower the response to a level that commands broad allied concurrence and cooperation. While the natural gas pipeline case of 1982 did not arise over a crisis outside the Nato area, it seems to me that like Afghanistan it argues strongly for the general proposition that it is better to do lesser things in unison than to attempt unilateral action, especially if that cuts directly into the perceived interest of one's allies.

These points may seem simple to the point of being bromides. Yet each has been neglected at frequent points in the postwar story. Ultimately, as I said at the outset, there is bound to be continuing tension between the need for alliance cohesion and the perceived interests and attitudes of individual allies on situations falling outside the Nato area. The trick is not to remove these but to work unremittingly to reduce them to as low a level as possible.

Notes

1. Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 315.
2. François Kersaudy, *Churchill and DeGaulle* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), pp. 146-50, 191-210, 299-301, 397-409.
3. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation; My Years in the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 285.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 700-05.
5. Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 216.
6. George Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern* (New York: Norton, 1982), pp. 222-59, 322-25.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
8. Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Four Critical Years in Managing America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), pp. 328-338; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), pp. 354-398; William H. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran* (New York: Norton, 1981); Ball, pp. 455-62.
9. Robert Carswell, "Economic Sanctions and the Iran Experience," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1981-82, pp. 248-252.
10. Vance, p. 387; Brzezinski, pp. 426-29.
11. I am indebted, for clarifying these terms and the present state of discussions within Nato, to unpublished research and writing by Elizabeth Sherwood, currently at the Brookings Institution in Washington.
12. Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: Norton, 1983).
13. Simon Jenkins, "America's Falklands War," *The Economist*, 3-9 March 1984, pp. 29-31.
14. "Britain's Grenada Shut-out," *The Economist*, 10-16 March 1984, pp. 31-40. See also David Watt, "As A European Saw It," *Foreign Affairs, America and the World 1983*, pp. 525-26.
15. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, "Toward an Overall Western Strategy for Peace, Freedom and Progress," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1982, pp. 45-46.
16. Karl Kaiser, Winston Lord, Thierry de Montbrial, David Watt, "Western Security: What has changed? What should be done?," Council on Foreign Relations (New York), 1981.

