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How Alliances (Mis)Manage Nuclear Proliferation

When we think of nuclear proliferation, the countries American leaders have recently seen as adversaries often come to mind: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. And yet when we take a historical perspective, we see that many American friends and allies have at least considered acquiring nuclear weapons. France and Great Britain even succeeded in developing their own nuclear arsenals. Contemporary efforts made by the United States to reassure South Korea and Japan often serve to stifle their potential appetite for nuclear weapons, since they both face the dual threat of a rising China and a nuclear-armed North Korea. These observations suggest that the connection between alliances and nonproliferation is not straightforward. How can alliances best reduce nuclear proliferation risks? And how have these security institutions curbed the efforts of those allies that have pursued nuclear weapons, if at all?

This chapter develops a theoretical framework of how alliances are useful for preventing nuclear proliferation-related behaviors among their members but less useful for stopping a program once it has started. Five propositions flow from my account. First, military alliances might not keep allies from acquiring nuclear weapons as much as the conventional wisdom suggests. Second, in-theater conventional forces are crucial for making American extended nuclear guarantees credible. Third, the American coercion of allies who started, or were tempted to start, a nuclear weapons program has played less of a role in forestalling nuclear proliferation than assumed. Fourth, the economic or technological reliance of a security-dependent ally on the United States, if utilized, works better to reverse or to halt any ally's nuclear bid than anything else. Put together, these claims suggest one more proposition: that is, deterring an ally from initiating a nuclear program is easier than compelling an ally to terminate a program. In making these claims, I do not offer a unified account that illuminates both the start and stop of an ally's nuclear interest. Indeed, my argument allows for the possibility that nonsecurity motivations could explain why such interest ends.

My framework also allows for greater variability in states' abandonment fears than do existing accounts.

This chapter proceeds by describing first what my book seeks to explain: the nuclear proliferation–related behavior of a treaty ally. I then review current understandings of alliances and nuclear proliferation before developing my own theoretical framework. Last, I discuss my research design as well as several alternative explanations.

Key Definitions

I strive to explain the nuclear proliferation–related behavior of treaty allies. By “treaty allies,” I mean those states that receive a formal security guarantee via a formal alliance treaty. This type of treaty formalizes a “relationship of security cooperation between two or more states and involving mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future.”¹ By “nuclear proliferation–related behavior,” I refer to those nuclear activities undertaken by an ally that deliberately serve to develop an indigenous capacity for producing explosives that use fissionable materials. Sometimes an ally might indeed have an explicit and dedicated nuclear weapons program. Alternatively, an ally might be trying to acquire enrichment or reprocessing capabilities in the absence of proper safeguards or international agreements so that it could one day activate a nuclear weapons program when necessary—that is, the ally is seeking a latent nuclear capability. Table 1 lists all the nonsuperpowers—along with their geopolitical alignments and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) status—known to have nuclear weapons programs or enrichment and reprocessing capabilities.

My dependent variable differs from standard measures used in statistical studies of nuclear proliferation. Drawing on a commonly used dataset, many researchers code nuclear proliferation in terms of whether states do nothing, explore the nuclear weapons option, pursue a nuclear weapons program, or acquire nuclear weapons.² Yet this approach has problems. To begin with, scholars disagree over how to measure nuclear proliferation effort, since distinguishing empirically those states that have “explored” from those that have “pursued” is difficult.³ Rather than using systematic measurement criteria to code states' nuclear activities, datasets often rely on ex post facto statements and secondary sources. The result is that they can include Indonesia on the basis of its leaders' statements but miss such cases as Japan, Italy, and West Germany despite their efforts to acquire reprocessing and enrichment capabilities while deflecting international scrutiny.⁴ Moreover, the states that have acquired the capacity to enrich uranium, to reprocess plutonium, or to do both overlap with the states coded as nuclear proliferators (see table 1). Sometimes states have no intention to acquire nuclear

Table 1 Nonsuperpower nuclear proliferation, 1945–2012

<i>Country</i>	<i>Alignment^a</i>	<i>NW Years^b</i>	<i>ENR Years^c</i>	<i>NPT^d</i>
Algeria	Soviet	1983–2012	1992–2012	D: 1995
Argentina	US	1968–90	1968–73; 1983–89; 1993–94	D: 1995
Australia	US	1956–73	1972–83; 1992–2007	S: 1970; D: 1973
Belgium	US	—	1966–74	S: 1968; D: 1975
Brazil	US*	1953–90	1979–2012	D: 1998
Canada	US	—	1944–76; 1990–93	S: 1968; D: 1969
China	Soviet	1955–2012	1960–2012	D: 1992
Czechia	Soviet/US*	—	1977–98	S: 1968; D: 1969
Egypt	Soviet/US*	1960–74	1982–2012	S: 1968; D: 1981
France	US	1946–2012	1949–2012	D: 1992
(West) Germany	US	—	1964–2012	S: 1969; D: 1975
India	None	1954–2012	1964–73; 1977–2012	Never signed
Indonesia	None/US*	1965–67	—	S: 1970; D: 1979
Iran	US*; None	1976–2012	1974–79; 1985–2012	S: 1968; D: 1970
Iraq	Soviet*	1976–95	1983–91	S: 1968; D: 1969
Israel	US*	1949–2012	1963–2012	Never signed
Italy	US	—	1966–90	S: 1969; D: 1975
Japan	US	—	1968–2012	S: 1970; D: 1976
Korea, North	Soviet/China	1965–2012	1975–93; 2003–12	S: 1968; O: 2003
Korea, South	US	1959–78	1979–82; 1997–2012	S: 1968; D: 1975
Libya	Soviet*	1970–2003	1982–2003	S: 1968; D: 1975
The Netherlands	US	—	1973–2012	S: 1968; D: 1975
Norway	US	—	1961–68	S: 1968; D: 1969
Pakistan	US*	1972–2012	1973–2012	Never signed
Romania	Soviet	1985–90	1985–89	S: 1968; D: 1970
South Africa	US*	1969–1991	1967–2012	D: 1991
Sweden	None	1946–69	1954–72	S: 1968; D: 1970
Switzerland	None	1946–70	—	S: 1969; D: 1977
Syria	Russia	2000–12	—	S: 1968; D: 1969
Taiwan	US; US*	1967–77; 1987–88	1976–78	S: 1968; D: 1970
United Kingdom	US	1945–2012	1952–2012	S: 1968; R: 1968
Yugoslavia	None	1954–65; 1974–88	1954–78	S: 1968; D: 1970

^a * indicates non-treaty alignment. See Herbert K. Tilemma, "Cold War Alliance and Overt Military Intervention, 1945–1991," *International Interactions* 20, no. 3 (1994): 270–277.

^b Years of nuclear weapons (NW) activities from revised 2012 list of nuclear proliferators for Sonali Singh and Christopher R. Way, "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (2004): 866–867, <http://falcon.arts.cornell.edu/crw12/documents/Nuclear%20Proliferation%20Dates.pdf>. Some of these dates are debatable.

^c Enrichment and reprocessing (ENR) plant operation years from Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, "Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 4 (2015): 443–461.

^d S: signature; D: deposit; O: withdrawal. Data from United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt>.

weapons, but they may be pursuing hedging strategies that leave policy options open in the event that their security environment deteriorates further.⁵ Accordingly, because I specify that any effort to acquire enrichment and reprocessing capabilities without proper safeguards or international agreements constitutes nuclear proliferation–related behavior, my definition helpfully excludes benign cases like the Netherlands and Belgium. Of course, being party to the NPT does not always imply peaceful nuclear intentions, but that is for case study research to sort out.

Prevailing Understandings of Alliances and Nuclear Proliferation–Related Behavior

Treaty alliances involve written-down, and often public, pledges to aid an ally following an attack by a third-party aggressor. Accordingly, rational choice perspectives take such alliances to be credible institutions. For one, renegeing on written pledges that are publicly visible damages a state's reputation. By breaking a promise to support an ally, the unfaithful state will find it harder to form new alliances or craft new agreements.⁶ Adversaries could become bolder and challenge the other alliance commitments of the guarantor. For another, violating an alliance treaty can incur domestic costs. Alliance treaties must be shepherded through domestic legislative bodies—a process that usually requires building coalitions and burning political capital. Governments should endure the pain of this process only if they believe in the importance of the alliance for national security reasons. Democracies should thus be the most reliable security partners that states can have. Their leaders are more constrained by their formal agreements to follow through on their promises, whereas autocratic leaders might approach their commitments more cavalierly.⁷ When promises of military support are verbal or tacit, as in the case of informal alliances, the guarantor can disclaim responsibility for the ally without risking domestic backlash or reduced international standing.⁸

Still, alliances should be neither too credible nor too incredible due to what Glenn Snyder calls the alliance dilemma.⁹ Making too strong a security guarantee shields the costs of aggressive behavior for that receiving ally. A moral hazard problem thus arises. From the perspective of the guarantor, it fears entrapment—the risk that it would be dragged into a conflict against its wishes. However, if the guarantor makes too weak a guarantee to an ally, then it could leave the security concerns of its ally unaddressed. From the perspective of the ally, the unreliability of its guarantor makes it fear abandonment when confronted with a threatening adversary. Several solutions for managing this dilemma are available to the guarantor, such as specifying conditions and using precise language in the alliance treaty.¹⁰

One benefit of resolving abandonment fears is a reduced risk of nuclear proliferation. In arguing that states might seek nuclear weapons for reasons

of security, domestic politics, and prestige, Scott Sagan conjectures that a powerful security motive for nuclear interest is the worry that a major power guarantor will not fulfill its commitments.¹¹ Avery Goldstein elaborates on this argument, contending that middle powers like France and Great Britain under bipolarity and anarchy have a strong strategic rationale to discount the protection offered to them by a superpower and to acquire their own nuclear arsenals.¹² Dan Reiter finds that troop deployments can bolster alliance commitments and curb nuclear proliferation.¹³ Similarly, Philipp Bleek and Eric Lorber highlight the importance of security guarantees in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons.¹⁴ Nuno Monteiro and Alexandre Debs claim that strong allies would act on abandonment fears and acquire nuclear weapons.¹⁵ These accounts are unclear as to how strong commitments can prevent proliferation and entrapment risks simultaneously.

This research has generated important insights, but several key issues remain. Formal alliances backed by democratic guarantors like the United States are allegedly very credible, yet many countries aligned with the United States have tried to acquire nuclear weapons (see table 1). As for Goldstein's study, not all middle powers under bipolarity or anarchy succeeded in acquiring nuclear weapons, if they had tried to do so at all. Statistical research has also yielded mixed findings on alliances. One analysis finds that having an alliance with a major dampens the likelihood that a state will acquire (or even consider) nuclear weapons, whereas another notes that "nuclear defenders do discourage a deepening of nuclear proliferation among protégés, but there is not much difference between states possessing or lacking nuclear defenders in terms of the likelihood of having a nuclear weapons program."¹⁶ Nevertheless, a stress test has found that alliances are weakly correlated with different measures of proliferation.¹⁷ We thus need a rigorous and predictive theory that takes a more sophisticated view of how abandonment fears wax and wane. In many accounts abandonment fears are constant, resulting either from the institutional design of the alliance or from idiosyncratic circumstances. Consequently, arguments about abandonment fears causing nuclear proliferation are difficult to falsify. The challenge then involves identifying the conditions under which abandonment fears reach a certain threshold whereby states become especially likely to seek their own nuclear weapons.

How Alliances Affect Nuclear Weapons Interest

In this section, I address the foregoing analytical issues. I first discuss how alliances best reduce the likelihood of states from wanting nuclear weapons. I then describe how guarantors can adjust their alliances in a way that creates proliferation risks. Thereupon I illuminate the challenges that guarantors face in suppressing nuclear interest.¹⁸

HOW ALLIANCES BEST PREVENT NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Because no central government in the international system exists, states have to optimize between arming (internal balancing) and forming alliances (external balancing) to obtain security.¹⁹ Following World War II, when the United States and the Soviet Union were striving to acquire and improve their nuclear capabilities, weaker states came to depend more on alliances for their security. They thus received nuclear security guarantees—a form of extended deterrence whereby the guarantor dissuades an adversary from attacking its ally by threatening unacceptable costs.²⁰ Yet those weaker states could not take their received nuclear security guarantees for granted. Unlike in previous historical periods, alliances in the nuclear age often feature vague commitments regarding collective defense despite the existential stakes involved,²¹ and so states continuously evaluate whether and how their guarantors would aid them in a possible militarized crisis that involves a nuclear-armed adversary. I argue that states determine the credibility of their nuclear security guarantees with reference to their guarantor's strategic posture. Two factors are critical: foreign policy doctrine and conventional military deployments. Of these two factors, conventional military deployments are more important.

Foreign policy doctrine helps allies to understand the security orientation and interests of their guarantor. It allows them to evaluate the extent to which their interests converge with those of the guarantor. If interests converge, insofar as the survival and security of the ally are deemed vital to those of the guarantor, then the guarantee will seem believable.²² However, states do not wish to rely on rhetoric alone: interests can change and even diverge with circumstances. States want to determine whether the guarantor is bearing costs to support the alliance—is the guarantor putting its money where its mouth is?

Hence the importance accorded by the ally to the in-theater conventional military deployments of the guarantor, particularly those on the ally's territory. Such forward basing reflects the degree to which the guarantor is sinking costs into the ally's security. Troops are also hostages that convey commitment—they bind the guarantor in future decision-making so that the guarantor follows through on its promises.²³ These deployments can include ground troops and non-nuclear-armed (perhaps dual-capable) aerial and naval forces. Conventional military deployments matter because they constitute a credible commitment device on the part of the guarantor to respond militarily on its ally's behalf. Any act of aggression against the ally implicates the involvement of the guarantor's armed forces stationed on that ally's territory. The guarantor has "skin in the game" such that it would face pressure to respond if its forward-deployed forces are threatened. This logic existed even before nuclear weapons. Prior to World War I, when asked how many British troops were necessary for augmenting France's security, French

general Ferdinand Foch quipped that “one single private soldier” was sufficient and that “we would take good care that he was killed.”²⁴

Yet a major reason why forward conventional military deployments matter is that they bolster what security experts call *deterrence-by-denial*: they directly raise the cost of war to the adversary. If the guarantor’s conventional forces have the ability to hold off an attack just long enough for reinforcements to arrive, the adversary faces a lower likelihood of winning on the battlefield without using nuclear weapons. Those forward deployments might even defeat the invading force. In contrast, in the absence of such forces, a nuclear security guarantee hinges on *deterrence-by-punishment*—that is, the promise that the guarantor would impose unacceptable costs on an aggressive adversary by way of a devastating nuclear riposte. International relations scholars generally agree that *deterrence-by-denial* is more effective than *deterrence-by-punishment*. Robert Pape argues that successful coercion depends on disrupting the target militarily rather than hurting its population, whereas John Mearsheimer contends that failures in conventional deterrence are likely when the adversary believes a blitzkrieg—or lightning attack—is easy.²⁵ Paul K. Huth offers statistical evidence that denying an adversary the ability to win on the battlefield quickly and decisively enhances deterrence.²⁶

Making *deterrence-by-punishment* strategies believable is difficult precisely because nuclear weapons are involved. Consider how the nuclear balance can shape perceptions regarding the credibility of a security guarantee when we consider only nuclear weapons. If the adversary has nuclear supremacy, whether in terms of more or better nuclear weapons, then it could blackmail the guarantor at the ally’s expense. If the guarantor and the nuclear-armed adversary each possess a survivable second-strike capability, then the guarantor might be tempted to surrender the ally under nuclear parity in order to avoid nuclear devastation. In other words, the security interests of the guarantor and those of its ally become decoupled. Indeed, many American allies engaged in nuclear proliferation-related behavior when Washington was losing or had lost nuclear supremacy over Moscow. In contrast, *deterrence-by-punishment* may be more credible when the guarantor has nuclear supremacy such that it can launch a disarming first strike against the adversary. Under these circumstances, the adversary might not risk armed conflict, even with the guarantor’s ally.²⁷ However, the benefits of nuclear supremacy should not be overstated if both sides incur unacceptable damage in a nuclear war.²⁸ In one analysis, Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd Sechser find that stationing nuclear weapons on an ally’s territory does not bolster deterrence effects, because those nuclear weapons represent sunk costs rather than provide constraints on future decision-making.²⁹ Accordingly, an unfavorable nuclear balance matters to the degree that it would make allies even more attentive to the doctrinal and conventional military foundations of their received security guarantees.³⁰ Unless the adversary can

certainly disarm the guarantor with a bolt-from-the-blue strike without incurring unacceptable harm—an extremely difficult task—the conventional military protection that the guarantor offers its ally remains valuable.

Conventional military deployments also benefit the guarantor because they attenuate the entrapment risks normally associated with strong alliance commitments.³¹ To bolster deterrence of a shared adversary, forward-deployed forces should coordinate their operational planning and engage in joint military exercises with the host government's military. That way they can fight together as an effective, integrated force on the battlefield. Some alliances exhibit tight coordination: the American-led Combined Forces Command retains wartime operational control of the South Korean military, having relinquished peacetime operational control in 1994.³² All things being equal, the greater the depth of planning coordination and integration, the better the guarantor can detect and restrain unwanted behavior by the ally. Moreover, conventional military deployments mitigate some of the weaknesses associated with measures that experts have identified as helpful for reducing entrapment risks. Consider, for example, the use of greater treaty precision and conditions to specify narrowly the circumstances under which an alliance commitment becomes active. Though these tools are helpful by themselves, the guarantor may have difficulty assigning culpability when an unwanted dispute begins. Conventional military deployments can complement these measures, because they monitor certain aspects of the ally's own defense planning as well as its command and control structures. Military attachés could assist intelligence efforts in processing local armed forces' messages and providing human intelligence.³³ During the Cold War, military intelligence units accompanied American and British forward-deployed forces in frontline states like West Germany. Some overseas military installations even served as intelligence bases.³⁴

To be sure, the extent to which conventional military deployments reduce entrapment risks must not be exaggerated. Although "U.S. basing agreements do, of course, limit aspects of a host country's sovereignty," Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon argue that "beyond occasional provisions for joint consultations over security arrangements, [basing agreements] do not generally govern other host-country institutions."³⁵ Indeed, host governments often regain sovereignty rights over time by renegotiating their basing agreements with Washington.³⁶ Furthermore, embassies offer a better resource for intelligence gathering. According to Michael Herman, "Cold War espionage was closely linked with the position of intelligence officers as agent-runners and recruiters, operating from embassies under diplomatic cover."³⁷ At the American embassy in Seoul, for example, foreign service officers and intelligence analysts collaborated in evaluating South Korean proliferation risks. Conventional military deployments have the capacity for reducing entrapment through joint planning and intelligence, but these deployments do not eliminate its possibility.

HOW ALLIANCE ADJUSTMENTS CAN PROVOKE
NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Despite their benefits, forward deployments can be materially and financially costly for the guarantor. They can strain defense budgets and take money out of the domestic economy. To be willing and able to shoulder these costs signifies commitment.³⁸ They are thus sensitive to changes in its strategic posture, whereby the guarantor changes its foreign policy objectives to diverge from those of the ally. Nixon's attempt at rapprochement with China and its effects on Taiwan is one such instance. Alternatively, domestic economic concerns might induce the guarantor to exploit the relatively inexpensive substitution effects of nuclear weapons to replace manpower unilaterally. The Eisenhower administration partly implemented the New Look for this reason.³⁹

Whatever their cause, these changes can adversely affect the security of the ally and stoke abandonment fears, especially if they are major, unforeseen, or unilateral from the ally's perspective. I hypothesize that such changes make recipients of nuclear security guarantees more likely to seek their own nuclear weapon arsenals.⁴⁰ Proliferation seems to be a drastic response, yet it has a strategic logic. When an ally confronts a nuclear-armed adversary, nuclear weapons provide the ally with a deterrent capability so that one day it can resist the coercion of that adversary.⁴¹ In other words, the ally engages in "true self-help" behavior in balancing against the adversary.⁴² Even if the ally decides to pursue a hedging strategy instead by actively developing latent nuclear capabilities, the ally could still position itself in such a way as to gain certain coercive benefits.⁴³

My argument assumes that in engaging in nuclear proliferation-related behavior, the ally has a bona fide interest in obtaining technologies related to the development of nuclear weapons. That is, it is not using the threat of nuclear proliferation as a bargaining chip for extracting new security assurances from the guarantor without any intention to acquire nuclear weapons. Admittedly, states have incentives to represent their resolve and capabilities to get better agreements with friends and enemies in the absence of a world government. Since guarantors like the United States appear to have a strong interest in nuclear nonproliferation, the ally might believe that it could bluff and exploit that interest in order to draw additional assurances.⁴⁴ However, I believe that my assumption is tenable. As one of Aesop's fables warns us, crying wolf is dangerous when no wolves are around. The ally would have to send a nuclear signal loud enough for the guarantor to receive and interpret in the intended manner before responding favorably. Yet nuclear feints are difficult and even dangerous to do effectively: if the signal is too loud, the ally could catch the unwanted attention of an adversary and cause an incident; if too quiet, the signal could have no effect whatsoever.⁴⁵ Finally, the argument that the ally is exploiting the guarantor's interests in nonpro-

liferation is paradoxical. How can uncertainty over the guarantor's future behavior provoke the use of a strategy—nuclear bluffing, in this case—that relies on the ability to predict the behavioral responses of the guarantor?

HOW ALLIANCES MIGHT REVERSE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

The guarantor could lose a lot from the spread of nuclear weapons, even among its allies. Nuclear weapons undercut the ability of the superpower guarantor to project its power and influence as well as to control escalatory dynamics.⁴⁶ Accordingly, when it learns or suspects that its ally might be seeking an independent nuclear deterrent, the guarantor has incentives to thwart such ambitions as quickly and as comprehensively as possible. To begin with, diplomatic relations with affected allies and adversaries are at stake, especially if the guarantor is seen as not doing enough to restrain the proliferating ally. It could even be seen as culpable if its (perceived) inaction benefits the proliferator at the expense of others. Local security dilemmas could subsequently intensify.⁴⁷ Although the ally seeks nuclear weapons to satisfy its defense needs, others could see its behavior as sufficiently threatening that they acquire their own new weapons. As such, the guarantor prefers its ally to dismantle its nonpeaceful nuclear program. It might perhaps wish to monitor all nuclear activities, denying its ally enrichment and reprocessing capabilities as well. Such a comprehensive nonproliferation campaign would address any international doubts about the ally's willingness and ability to restart its nuclear weapons program. How can the guarantor get the nuclear genie back into the alliance bottle?

I argue that pursuing this task is extremely challenging for the guarantor. States that have decided to undertake a nuclear weapons program typically do so recognizing and accepting the risks and costs involved. And so the guarantor is no longer deterring its ally from seeking nuclear weapons. The guarantor is instead trying to compel that very ally to stop its proliferation-related behavior—a harder undertaking, since scholars agree that deterrence is easier than compellence.⁴⁸ Moreover, the alliance bottle is broken and must be fixed first, requiring the guarantor to undo the harm inflicted on the security guarantee that prompted the ally to desire nuclear weapons in the first place. Reasserting security guarantees is challenging when the affected ally has had its faith in its received commitments badly shaken at a time when it faces a hostile threat environment. The guarantor might have to make credible commitments to restore troop levels or to retain existing troop levels. Yet making such commitments believable is difficult when the guarantor has already revealed an interest in limiting them. Alternatively, the factors that led to the unfavorable alliance adjustments in the first place could still exist. The guarantor might have enduring economic problems or irrevocably different foreign policy interests.

Certain proposed alliance solutions are also counterproductive. Military action is one option, but using military force against an ally would lack credibility and make the guarantor look unhinged to its other security partners.⁴⁹ Gene Gerzhoy identifies another option. He claims that threats to abrogate the alliance altogether could compel a proliferating state to renounce having an independent nuclear arsenal.⁵⁰ Yet such threats risk deepening abandonment fears even if they are conditional on the disavowal of nuclear weapons. A paradox also arises: how can abandonment fears trigger nuclear weapons interest but abandonment threats end it? Moreover, terminating an alliance is difficult. Besides, public alliance treaties cannot be removed on a whim: in the case of the United States, a major procedural process that involves Congress and multiple government outfits is necessary for dismantling them. The decade spanning Nixon's overtures to China and the termination of the American alliance with Taiwan is instructive. Finally, if carried out, ending an alliance could have undesirable diplomatic repercussions among other allies. They might begin to fear abandonment themselves, whereas the adversary could perceive a "window of opportunity" to attack.⁵¹

Disruptive, nonmilitary policy instruments hold slightly more promise. One potential avenue available to the guarantor is the extent to which the ally depends on the guarantor for economic growth—that is, how exposed is the ally's economy to the coercion of the guarantor. The higher the ratio of trade with the guarantor to gross domestic product is one metric for evaluating this level of vulnerability. Alternatively, the guarantor might cut off or promise forms of aid that the ally believes is necessary for the ally's goals, be it the maintenance of domestic rule or the viability of its economic programs. The ally could also be susceptible to the manipulation of financial flows that it receives from the guarantor. Monetary sanctions are another tool. By attacking the value and stability of the ally's currency, the guarantor could create inflation, increase debt burdens, and disrupt local economic planning. Alternatively, the guarantor could seize highly valued assets belonging to the ally.⁵² All things being equal, the ally wishes to avoid these types of economic sanctions because it does not wish to experience economic difficulties that weaken its hold on power at home and empower potential opposition groups. It might desire avoiding such hardship if it already faces a hostile threat environment.⁵³ Because it derives more from the relationship than does the guarantor, the dependent ally should be more willing to concede when coerced strongly.⁵⁴ Absent such leverage, the nonproliferation challenge for the guarantor will be severe.

Economic sanctions still have limited efficacy in absolute terms even if they are relatively more effective tools. Robert Pape argues that economic sanctions are ineffective because "pervasive nationalism often makes states and societies willing to endure considerable punishment rather than abandon what are seen as the interests of the nation." Furthermore, states are institutionally adept at working around the sanctions that could be leveled

against them.⁵⁵ Indeed, the ally should anticipate the sanctioning effort of its guarantor, thus factoring this expected cost into its decision to seek nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, complete skepticism over sanctions would be unwarranted. After all, the empirical record of sanctions is highly biased because they are implemented in the hardest cases. Just as it is easier to deter than to compel, the best sanction is one that does not have to be used.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as Daniel Drezner shows, states might infrequently use sanctions against their allies, but when they do, they are more likely to extract concessions from them than from adversaries.⁵⁷ Moreover, the ally might underestimate the likelihood or costs of a sanctioning effort when it decides to embark on a nuclear weapons program. The benefits of such a program could outweigh those potential costs amid a hostile security environment. Finally, and most importantly, sanctions can be especially effective if they directly target the nuclear activities of the proliferator. Sometimes allies also desire nuclear energy in order to sustain economic growth. Rather than threaten to harm the economic interests of the ally directly, the guarantor could block access to the credit, technologies, and resources necessary for developing nuclear power whether for military or for civilian purposes.⁵⁸

So far this discussion presumes that the guarantor has an overriding interest to halt an ally's nuclear interest. Despite the strategic incentives involved for valuing nonproliferation and despite how some scholars postulate that nuclear nonproliferation has been a key pillar of American grand strategy for much of the Cold War and after, I believe that such an assumption is unwarranted.⁵⁹ I argue that interest in the nonproliferation mission depends on whether key decision makers are pursuing foreign policy goals that are complementary or inimical. Sometimes foreign policy goals are complementary with nonproliferation. Consider, for example, a situation in which the guarantor wishes to improve relations with an adversary, either for their own sake or to balance against another adversary.⁶⁰ In so doing, the guarantor might wish to restrain the nuclear ambitions of an ally because the guarantor wants to assure the adversary of its bona fide intentions to cooperate or to prevent that ally from sabotaging the rapprochement effort. However, foreign policy goals can work at cross-purposes with nonproliferation: the guarantor may wish to retrench and thus retract certain military and political commitments. Although the guarantor would prefer not to see nuclear weapons spread for strategic reasons, it might have difficulty striking a balance between reassurance and geopolitical divestment. The ally will recognize that the guarantor is pursuing conflicting foreign policy goals, thereby complicating any nonproliferation effort.

To the extent that an ally does end up renouncing nuclear weapons, my argument is open to the possibility that it does so for multiple, even non-alliance, reasons. To be sure, I do not argue that alliance considerations are unimportant in an ally's decision to reverse its nuclear proliferation-related behavior. Nevertheless, alliance coercion could be one factor among many—it

may not even be decisive for the final outcome. If the ally has adopted a hedging strategy, then it might stop its nuclear activities once it assesses the security environment to be such that nuclear weapons have become undesirable. Alternatively, the ally might find that rejecting international demands for inspections or antinuclear treaty commitments are no longer useful, either because their complaints regarding a nonproliferation agreement have been addressed or because their foreign policy orientation has changed. Finally, the ally might have succeeded in acquiring certain technologies—such as the ability to enrich uranium or to reprocess plutonium—it had always wanted while stopping short of building nuclear weapons. The ally might have simply wished to be in a better position so as to acquire those weapons in the future if international circumstances might necessitate them.

FIVE PROPOSITIONS

Five propositions flow from this discussion. First, alliances are less useful than often presumed with respect to the prevention of nuclear proliferation among their members. Second, in-theater conventional military forces are key for boosting American extended nuclear guarantees. Third, alliance coercion—though it may still be important—has played less of a role in nuclear nonproliferation than some accounts suggest. Fourth, the best tool available to the United States, if it decides to use this tool, is leveraging the economic or technological dependence the security-dependent ally has on it. These propositions ultimately suggest a fifth proposition: deterring a nuclear weapons program is easier than compelling the reversal of one.

Alternative Arguments

Aside from pushing back against the view that American nonproliferation efforts were decisive, I evaluate my argument against several alternative explanations for nuclear proliferation: the adversary thesis, the domestic politics thesis, and the prestige thesis. With respect to why states might renounce nuclear weapons, these arguments do not necessarily rival my own. My skepticism over how alliance coercion can definitively stop actual nuclear programs allows other factors to be influential.

THE ADVERSARY THESIS

The adversary thesis posits that threat emanating from the adversary is alone sufficient to explain nuclear proliferation. To clarify, my theory assumes that an adversarial threat exists, since abandonment fears would have no salience in its absence. Hence the United States could withdraw large numbers of forces from Western Europe in the 1990s without much

risk of nuclear proliferation. Yet some might argue that adversarial threat—irrespective of the guarantor’s own actions—drives nuclear proliferation. When the adversary poses a threat, the ally ratchets up its nuclear weapons activities. When the adversary poses less of a threat, the ally reduces those activities. This alternative argument narrowly reflects Stephen Walt’s assertion that states respond to threats rather than capabilities in making alignment decisions.⁶¹

Both my theory and this counterargument are “realist”: they each see states engaging in nuclear proliferation-related behavior as a response to external stimuli. They also assume conflictual preferences and unitary statehood.⁶² However, my theory is distinct in assuming that states would prefer to depend on their alliances and that adversarial threat is at most a necessary but not a sufficient factor for their nuclear interest. In contrast, the adversary thesis assumes that states believe that their alliances are always unreliable and only serve as a temporary expedient in a self-help world. States react more to the conduct of their adversary than to that of their guarantors.

Of course, a state might view an adversarial threat as more severe when facing possible abandonment by a major power. Conversely, the ally might be more dismissive of the threat if it is adequately assured of its received security guarantees. To disentangle these overlapping variables, I examine how leaders construe their threat environments before substantive changes in security commitments occur. For my theory to be empirically valid, leaders should see the severity of the adversarial threat as a function of the reliability of the alliance support they receive. Alternatively, their evaluations of the adversarial threat should remain unchanged when the guarantor unfavorably adjusts its security commitment made to the ally. If perceptions of the adversarial threat drive nuclear proliferation-related behavior before any such changes, then my argument would be invalid.

THE DOMESTIC POLITICS THESIS

The domestic politics thesis offers a more contrasting perspective on nuclear proliferation. By asserting that international state behavior results largely from internal stimuli, the domestic politics thesis emphasizes regime survival rather than state security. Specifically, as Etel Solingen argues, decisions to acquire nuclear weapons after the NPT entered into force reflect governing leaders’ preferences over their state’s role in the global economy. Outward-looking regimes favor greater integration with the global economy in order to increase their domestic legitimacy through economic growth. They eschew nuclear weapons development because it could reduce their country to pariah status and cause trade-destroying security dilemmas. Inward-looking regimes legitimate themselves through nationalism and thus favor economic self-sufficiency. These regimes are more likely to develop nuclear weapons, since they serve not to deter attack but to rally their

populations, to stir nationalist rhetoric, and to divert attention away from domestic problems.⁶³ The domestic politics thesis thus postulates that nuclear interest is insensitive to changes in the external threat environment. A nuclear weapons program could cease with the emergence of an outward-looking regime. To be sure, Solingen restricts her analysis to the NPT period, but the motivation for doing so is unclear given the perceived fragility of the nonproliferation regime during the 1970s. Governments wishing to engage with the international community might have been disinclined to acquire nuclear weapons even before the NPT was signed in 1968.

THE PRESTIGE THESIS

The final alternative argument is the prestige thesis, whereby leaders do not implement rational and materialist cost-benefit calculations in their nuclear decision-making. Leaders instead might perceive nuclear weapons as being intrinsically valuable, because those weapons confer prestigious status on the states that possess them.⁶⁴ In Jacques Hymans's schema, leaders who are oppositional nationalists are prone to nuclear weapons interest, because they have heightened threat perceptions and exhibit excessive confidence in their country's ability to face adversaries. For this rare type of leader, "the decision to acquire nuclear weapons is not only a means to the end of getting; it is also an end in itself."⁶⁵ Other leaders might hold contrary views—namely, that nuclear weapons are so fundamentally distasteful and immoral that no conceivable strategic situation could merit having them. Such leaders might believe that these weapons could even undermine national prestige. Leaders drawn from societies steeped in antimilitarist norms are more likely to hold such views. These antimilitarist norms could be politically manifest in social movements, large-scale protests, public opinion polls, and even independent media coverage on issues relating to nuclear policy, alliance politics, and the defense industry.⁶⁶ The prestige thesis overlaps with the domestic politics thesis, not least because antimilitarist norms are likely to be salient in democracies, which in turn are likely to be outward-looking.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the prestige thesis allows leaders of inward-looking regimes to vary in their beliefs about the value of nuclear weapons.

THE NONEXCLUSIVITY OF ALTERNATIVE ARGUMENTS

These alternative arguments do not necessarily rival my own framework. I argue that alliances might not be the effective instruments for thwarting actual cases of nuclear proliferation, as they are sometimes heralded for doing. Accordingly, decisions to cease proliferation-related behavior can have different or complex causes.⁶⁸ For example, the ally might desire nuclear

weapons following a perceived breakdown in its alliance but then renounce those desires to mollify its adversary. Alternatively, alliance adjustments might spark nuclear interest, but a change in regime type or leadership could lead to a cessation of proliferation-related behavior. In such instances, alliance coercion might have been not a primary factor in the nonproliferation outcome but at best a secondary factor, especially if the guarantor experiences significant difficulties in obtaining the ally's compliance. Indeed, I generally share Scott Sagan's observation of "nuclear weapons proliferation and restraint have occurred in the past for more than one reason: different historical cases are best explained by different causal models."⁶⁹

Empirical Strategy

The following chapters evaluate how alliances can inhibit nuclear proliferation by investigating the five propositions outlined earlier. Three intensive cases on West Germany, Japan, and South Korea are the empirical core of this book (chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively). Complementing these cases is a set of smaller cases contained in chapter 6. This chapter expands the variation of my study by considering whether and how alliance politics can explain the French and British cases of proliferation success as well as the varying levels of nuclear interest exhibited by Australia, Norway, and Taiwan. Because this complementary chapter strives to determine the external validity of my framework, it does not draw on the same level of theory-testing and deep archival work as the three intensive cases do. Why, then, did I choose the cases of West Germany, Japan, and South Korea for intensive analysis?

These three cases are all most-likely cases for alliance ties to matter for curbing nuclear proliferation risks. Some scholars have called West Germany and Japan "effectively semi-sovereign states," meaning that they have had little foreign policy autonomy in the Cold War so as to render them susceptible to American pressure.⁷⁰ With respect to West Germany and South Korea especially, scholars have even argued that these allies were coerced into renouncing any nuclear interests that they might have had. If alliances are imperfect instruments for managing nuclear proliferation risks in these most-likely cases, then one wonders about states that are less dependent on their relationships with the United States.

Other methodological reasons lead me to prioritize these three cases. The cases of West Germany and Japan together form a *controlled comparative case study* research design. They exhibit important similarities on several key dimensions that plausibly affect their foreign and defense policies. They were both defeated aggressors in World War II and subsequently hosted a large American military presence that was originally an occupying force but

evolved to become “trip wires” against communist aggression. They are also postwar success stories: they became wealthy liberal democracies that provide extensive social benefits to their citizens, who in turn have cultivated strong antimilitarist norms. But despite these similarities, their geographical differences made them diverge in their susceptibility to changes in American grand strategy and force posture. These changes had varying implications for how both states should perceive their received nuclear security guarantees.

Though South Korea owes its existence to a Cold War partition similar to the one that created West Germany, I analyze South Korea for different reasons. For one, South Korea is a *critical* case for my theory because the United States initiated plans for several major troop withdrawals without much, if any, consultations with the South Korean government. Both of these plans for troop withdrawals reflected important changes in American grand strategy and so should provoke the nuclear response that my theory expects. For another, the South Korean case exhibits high values on those independent variables that reflect the alternative explanations. South Korea faced a hostile international environment during the 1960s and the 1970s due to the double threat posed by Maoist China and North Korea. At this time, the nationalist Park Chung-hee led an authoritarian regime in South Korea. Finally, South Korea was a security-dependent ally that also needed economic and technological support from the United States, thus making it highly vulnerable to alliance coercion.

For all three intensive case studies, I rely on extensive archival evidence that I gathered from multiple archives, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* documentary record, and the secondary historical literature. Unfortunately, direct “smoking gun” evidence is often difficult to obtain when researching such sensitive issues of national security as nuclear weapons policy. This problem is especially acute for countries like Japan and South Korea, where ongoing security concerns have made those governments unwilling to be fully transparent on how they dealt with these issues in the past. Although the evidence is sometimes circumstantial, these documents still provide insights into the decision-making process of American leaders and their interlocutions with their allied counterparts.

I structure my analyses in the following manner. I first review the strategic and domestic contexts of each country. I then describe the nuclear proliferation-related behavior that they undertook. Thereupon I examine evidence that alliance adjustments prompted those allies to engage in such activities before considering the alternative arguments. Specifically, I investigate whether abandonment fears animated decisions to ratchet up nuclear proliferation-related behavior so as to determine the validity of the first and second propositions of my argument. The deck is admittedly stacked in favor of the first proposition by examining cases of supposed alliance breakdown. Yet I still assess the alliance explanation against the alternatives to make sure

that the connection is not spurious. After I summarize the findings regarding why allies initiated such actions, my focus turns to why they stopped so as to address the validity of the third and fourth propositions of my argument. I look at how the United States might have used various alliance-related nonproliferation tools—reassurance, nuclear sharing arrangements, abandonment threats, and nonmilitary tools—to compel states into renouncing their nuclear interests. To determine whether allies ended their nuclear interest due to American-led coercion, the evidence must do more than to show that security assurances and economic ties framed the nonproliferation effort. For example, the actions and rhetoric of the ally's leadership should reveal a sensitivity to actual or threatened applications of nonmilitary sanctions, bowing to such pressure by canceling suspicious nuclear programs or adopting stronger international safeguards. Conversely, the guarantor should be hamstrung in its efforts to coerce a much more economically resilient ally. Once I assemble the evidence, I summarize the main findings and consider again the alternative arguments. By checking whether the four propositions all have empirical validity, support is built for the broader argument that deterring proliferation-related behavior is easier than compelling a reversal of it.

This chapter explains how alliances are more effective in deterring potential nuclear proliferation than in compelling nuclear reversals. For the first part of my argument, I emphasize the doctrinal and military infrastructure that supports the security guarantees that allies receive. The original treaty underwriting the partnership does not fully determine the scope of subsequent entrapment and abandonment concerns—indeed, abandonment fears constantly exist. What varies is their intensity. And so guarantors invest in their alliances with varying levels of conventional military commitments and rhetorical pledges. In-theater conventional military commitments also have the benefit of addressing entrapment risks. Nor do democratic guarantors have a unique advantage in credibly extending nuclear deterrence. After all, the stakes are existential: recipients of treaty commitments are looking for more than pieces of paper when they evaluate whether their guarantor would support them in a militarized conflict with a nuclear-armed adversary. They want to see that their guarantor has “skin in the game” and can provide deterrence-by-denial. They are thus acutely sensitive to major and unfavorable conventional military redeployments that the guarantor might make for economic or geopolitical reasons. When such events occur, their abandonment concerns intensify so as to stimulate nuclear proliferation-related behavior. Unfortunately, the guarantor will have difficulty in trying to end such behavior, if it is so inclined to stop it. Of course, no one argues that it is easy, but some scholars do assign special powers to military alliances in curtailing proliferation efforts. In the event that the ally does

CHAPTER 1

renounce nuclear weapons, it could do so for reasons unrelated to alliance coercion. Finally, this chapter describes the alternative arguments and outlines my empirical strategy. Before I turn to the cases, however, a historical overview of American security guarantees between 1945 and 1980 is necessary.