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Review by **Marina Henke**, Northwestern University

“**D**ivided priorities: why and when allies differ over military intervention” by Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer Spindel is an important piece of research. The authors challenge the validity of the claim that weaker allies value their patrons’ hawkish postures in distant conflicts. This claim, first put forward by Glen Snyder in *Deterrence and Defense* (1961), reasons that a patron’s limited foreign interventions make allies feel reassured of their own defense commitment with their patron state: if their benefactor is willing to fight for places of trivial intrinsic and strategic importance, it will surely also be willing to fight for them if the necessity arises.¹

Krebs and Spindel argue that in reality such causal processes as suggested by Snyder (and related work on deterrence and credibility in international affairs) rarely occur.² To the contrary, allies frequently oppose their patrons’ interventionism as they fear that such costly military campaigns will leave their patrons broke and ultimately unable or unwilling to uphold core alliance commitments in the short and even long term (3). As a result, most allies will *not* offer substantial political or material support for the military interventions their patrons launch, nor will they tightly coordinate with them. What is more, if the intervention process is

¹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

² Krebs and Spindel mention the following authors working in this tradition: Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966): 55–57; Bruce M. Russett, “The Calculus of Deterrence,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 7:2 (June 1963): 97-109; Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, “What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980,” *World Politics* 36:4 (July 1984): 496-526; Paul K. Huth, “Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War,” *American Political Science Review* 82:2 (June 1988): 423-443; Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High: Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Frank C. Zagare and D. Marc Kilgour, *Perfect Deterrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

sufficiently protracted, the allies will even explore alternative routes to take care of their own security needs, which often go beyond the alliance.

The authors use evidence from the Vietnam War to illustrate their claims. Examining, in particular, the decision-making processes of West Germany, the UK, Japan, and Australia, they conclude that “rather than reassuring America’s allies, the Vietnam War frayed those relationships (4).”

The weakness of the piece lies in its logical set-up. Krebs and Spindel contend that “to cultivate a reputation for resolve” constitutes a central and often even the most critical motivation to launch military interventions (6). However, this claim cannot be sustained. Without a doubt, successive U.S. governments often used “resolve” (i.e., the domino effect) as a narrative to win U.S. public support for military intervention. A close examination of the literature, however, illustrates that “resolve” was hardly ever the only (if even an important) rationale for intervention behind the scenes. Political scientist Benjamin O. Fordham’s excellent work on the Korean War, for instance, illustrates the critical importance of domestic factors and, in particular, Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s desire to use Korea to gain support for NSC-68.³ In the same vein, Francis Bator masterfully describes the connection between President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society” project and the Vietnam War.⁴ Similarly, Fredrik Logevall’s *Choosing War* recounts how Presidents John Kennedy and Johnson were concerned with their own, rather than America’s credibility, when deciding to go to war.⁵

As a result, Hawkish Reassurance Theory—the authors’ term—is a strawman: if interventions are not primarily motivated by a desire to “show resolve,” how can we then expect that allies join, or support, these interventions on such grounds?

Indeed, my own research on this question suggests that “considerations of resolve” played little if any role in allied decision-making – especially in the two interventions of greatest interest: Korea and Vietnam.⁶ American allies were skeptical from the outset. With regards to Korea, they were willing to support the intervention *politically*—mostly because such support was largely cost-free. Nevertheless, when it came to actual military contributions, many allies showed great reluctance. Why did states then still join the war? Some of them, as Krebs and Spindel rightly point out, pursued their own strategic interests in Korea. Others were coerced into joining. This applies to the British case: Acheson communicated to the British leaders that U.S.-UK relations were in real jeopardy if no ground deployment was forthcoming. The large majority of allies, however, were bargained into the coalition. The United States offered generous side-payments and issue-linkages to lure states into joining the war. The Philippines, for instance, received \$48 million in U.S.

³ Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy, 1949-1951* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

⁴ Francis Bator, “No Good Choices: LBJ and the Great Society/Vietnam Connection,” *Diplomatic History* 32:3 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2008.00691.1.x>

⁵ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁶ Marina E. Henke, “The Politics of Diplomacy: How the United States Builds Multilateral Military Coalitions,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61:2 (2017): 410-424.

financial support for its deployment of approximately 1,500 troops to Korea.⁷ For Thailand, its deployment of approximately 1,200 troops to Korea led to the negotiation of a U.S.-Thai *Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement* in September 1950 followed by an agreement on military assistance in October 1950. With U.S. help, Thailand also received the first loan ever made by the World Bank to any nation in Southeast Asia.⁸ The Ethiopian offer to send approximately 1,200 troops to Korea in August 1950 was tied to a demand by the Ethiopian government to receive U.S. equipment to arm several of its military divisions.⁹ South Africa negotiated an increase in military aid from the United States¹⁰ and also asked the United States to use its influence at the United Nations to avoid an “acrimonious debate” on apartheid as well as to defeat any UN resolution condemning South Africa.”¹¹ Finally, Turkey, Greece, Australia, and New Zealand all wanted to gain defense commitments from the United States in return for their participation in the Korean War.¹² Similar side-payments and issue-linkages were also used during the Vietnam War and have been used in other U.S.-led coalitions ever since.¹³

In summary, Krebs and Spindel make an important and correct claim: allies are not likely to support their patrons’ foreign military adventures. However, the key rationale they present to explain such behavior is ultimately unconvincing. Interventions hardly ever get launched “to cultivate a reputation for resolve” and thus it is not on those grounds that allies determine their support. Those allies that do have their own interest in joining an intervention, do so on their own terms. All others need to be coerced, “bought,” or bargained into the coalition.

⁷ Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations. Republic of the Philippines: Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 1, 91st Congress, 1st session, 1969, 36.

⁸ Frank C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965), 79-80.

⁹ Austin to Acheson, 7 August 1950, and “Memorandum of Conversation: Ethiopian Offer of Assistance to UN Force in Korea and Request for Reimbursable Military Assistance,” 11 September 1950, Box 4306, 795B.5, RG59, National Archives.

¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation of the Secretary of State and the South African Defense Minister, 5 October 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1950, Volume 5, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/d983>.

¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation with G.O. Jooste, 14 October 1952, Acheson Papers, Truman Library, www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/achesonmemos/pdf.php?documentid=71-2_20&documentYear=1952#zoom=300.

¹² Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, 73.

¹³ Marina E. Henke, “Allies for Sale? Payment Practices in Multilateral Military Coalition-Building,” *International Security*, Spring 2019; Marina E. Henke, *Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments, and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

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