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Roundtable Review 15-55

Iain D. Henry, *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence: The United States and its Allies in Asia, 1949–1969*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. ISBN13: 9781501763045.*

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Contents

Introduction by Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Tufts University	2
Review by Brian Blankenship, University of Miami	6
Review by Michael J. Green, US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney	10
Review by Rachel Tecott Metz, George Washington University	14
Response by Iain D. Henry, Australian National University	18

* Free download at <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501765544/reliability-and-alliance-interdependence/>.

Introduction by Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Tufts University

The interdependence of alliance commitments, specifically the notions that the United States must continually demonstrate loyalty to allies and that a failure to back *any* ally (no matter how strategically insignificant or obstreperous) would surely lead other allies to question the credibility of US security guarantees, has long been conventional wisdom among policymakers in Washington, DC, as well as among scholars of alliance politics and deterrence.¹ Distant allies have a deep-seated fear that the United States might abandon them in the event of a regional conflict. Consequently, these states look to the record of the United States' diplomatic and military backing for other allies to draw inferences about continued American support against their own local adversaries.

Iain D. Henry's *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence: The United States and its Allies in Asia, 1949–1969* challenges this conventional wisdom. For weaker allies, the fear of entrapment in an unwanted conflict looms equally large as the fear of abandonment. These states are more interested in the degree of convergence between their own strategic interests and those of the United States; they are less interested in whether Washington demonstrates unwavering loyalty to other allies. Moreover, Henry contends, unconditional support for other allies may exacerbate an observer state's entrapment fears. Under some circumstances, the United States' unwillingness to support one ally may actually enhance the reliability of its security commitments to others. Hence, an ally's perception of the superpower patron's *reliability* based on shared strategic interests lies at the heart of the alliance interdependence dilemma. Henry develops an alliance audience effect theory and tests three hypotheses derived from it to explain the United States' interactions with its allies in the Asia-Pacific, chiefly the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC), the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Japan, between 1949 and 1969.

The three reviewers agree that *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* makes major contributions to theories of alliance politics and interdependence, as well as to our understanding of the history of the United States' alliance network in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War. Rachel Tecott Metz sees Henry's introduction of the reliability concept as a "major contribution in its own right" and notes that his book "moves the field forward by elegantly incorporating basic insights from alliance theory alongside abandonment within the reliability concept." Similarly, Brian Blankenship observes that by "reframing the debate around reputation in international relations from a focus on loyalty and credibility to one on reliability," the book "pushes forward the study of alliance politics" as well as invites scholars and policymakers to rethink their fixation on the United States' reputation for loyalty. Michael J. Green places Henry's book at "the forefront of a new generation of scholars who are putting alliances back at the center of our study of the international relations

¹ See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36:4 (1984): 461-495; Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

of Asia” and praises it for demonstrating that the politics of asymmetric alliances “are much more complicated than realist descendants of Thucydides or Hans Morgenthau ever let on.”

The first hypothesis (H₁) from Henry’s alliance audience effect theory posits: “A state will observe its ally’s behavior in other alliances. If this behavior reveals that the ally’s interests diverge from the observer state’s and thus raises entrapment or abandonment fears, the state will assess the ally as unreliable” (33). In general, all three reviewers conclude that H₁ is plausible, empirically supported in the case studies, and an important corrective to the policy prescriptions derived from deterrence theory—namely that a state’s reputation for alliance loyalty is sacrosanct, highly interdependent, and therefore must be preserved at all costs.

However, Blankenship contends the next two hypotheses actually diverge from the underlying logic of Henry’s theory. H₂ posits that allies will respond to perceptions of unreliability by acting in a way that mitigates the perceived risk, whether abandonment or entrapment. Nevertheless, Blankenship contends that “it goes beyond the book’s theory of allied *perceptions* to make a prediction about allied *action*.” Henry acknowledges that the hypothesis does not predict “*how* states will attempt to mitigate the unreliability of their ally (174).” But as Blankenship notes, there is a wide variation in states’ abilities to mitigate the perceived unreliability of their superpower patron. For example, some vulnerable allies are better able to pursue nuclear weapons acquisition and/or conventional arms buildups than others.

H₃, which posits that partners proactively try to mitigate their allies’ perceptions of unreliability, is even more problematic, according to Blankenship, because it “relies on the assumption that the partner is aware that reliability matters in the way the book asserts it does and that its assessment of how allies perceive its reliability is accurate.” It is conceivable that US policymakers really do believe that a reputation for loyalty to allies matters, even if Henry’s theory holds a reputation for reliability will be (or at least *ought to be*) more valued.

Similarly, Metz finds Henry’s H₂ and H₃ “less novel and less clearly articulated than his first.” For example, Henry claims Washington policymakers are keenly aware of alliance interdependence and may use it their advantage. But Metz notes he does not specify how that awareness actually translates into observable policies. Metz also faults Henry’s account for not more clearly articulating the relationship between alliance audience effects and other potential explanations for the variation in elite perceptions of alliance reliability. In the book’s first chapter, Henry writes that reliability is a function of whether two allies “share convergent interests” on an issue of common concern and “whether they have military capabilities useful for pursuing those interests” (26). But Metz notes the theory solely focusses on allies’ perceptions of US strategic interests, rather than on allies’ assessments of deployed (or at least deployable) US military capabilities in the region. Henry justifies the focus on interests over capabilities by arguing that it is easier for allies to assess US military capabilities than US interests because the former are less susceptible to change quickly or without forewarning. Metz finds both of these points debatable, noting the difficulties that policymakers, intelligence analysts, military strategists, and scholars encounter in assessing the military capabilities of other states (even those of close allies).

Metz notes Henry's choice to hold US military capabilities in the Asia-Pacific constant in order to focus attention on the variation in allied perceptions of US interests, rather than to vary both to test their relative causal weight. The weakness of this methodological design and the case selection is that they preclude testing the relative explanatory power of alliance audience effect theory against alternative theories of alliance perceptions and behavior. But Metz observes that Henry's objective is to establish the plausibility of his alliance effects theory against its two primary competitors—theories from the loyalty camp (broadly derivative of deterrence theory) and the arguments of reputation skeptics, rather than to test the theory's explanatory power against “the full gamut of alternative explanations.” Given the author's objective, the case selection and the research design are appropriate.

Green writes, “in his focus on allies' choices Henry may underplay the most important insight in his study: that Washington really cares what its allies think and that allies are quite clever at getting their way.” For Green, the extent to which US policymakers were willing to shift strategy to reassure allies even during the 1950s and 1960s, a “time of unparalleled American asymmetrical power over those allies,” is itself significant. He continues, “This dynamic explains the durability of the American alliance system, in spite of shocks to alliances such as the Guam Doctrine, the end of the Cold War, Iraq, and the election of Donald Trump.”

The above praise notwithstanding, Green does offer three lines of criticism. First, Henry's case studies, which draw largely on US primary sources to provide evidence of US policymakers' attention to “audience effect” among allies, ignore the ideational and political context that shape allied leaders' perceptions. In other words, allied leaders bring their own ideational and domestic political “baggage” to the table when assessing the credibility of the United States' commitments. Second, treating “allies” as a composite for the purpose of creating a generalizable theory obscures the reality that not all asymmetric alliances are created equal. The strategic importance the United States attaches to a particular ally can vary over time.

Third, Green points out the hazards of extrapolating from the lessons of Asia-Pacific alliance dynamics in the 1950s and 1960s to alliance dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region (a recent amalgamation of the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions) today. Unlike the Cold War, US treaty allies and strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific are today bound together in matrices of bilateral, multilateral, and minilateral frameworks, most notably the Quad (comprising Australia, Japan, India, and the US). Green observes, “The ‘audience effect’ theories of the 1950s and 1960s were very different at a time when strictly separated hubs and spokes have been replaced by networked alliance arrangements that approximate aspects of the collective security of NATO.”

In his response, Henry thanks the reviewers for their engagement with the book and acknowledges the importance of their critiques. In reply to Blankenship's second critique of H3, Henry notes that the case studies show how US policymakers tried to create the impression of equal treatment among allies and that each ally was sensitive to any suggestion of preferable treatment another ally might receive from Washington. Nonetheless, in some cases where an ally had no immediate security options other than the alliance, and therefore, limited leverage with Washington, US policymakers concluded that the ally's

complaints could safely be ignored. Moreover, Henry agrees with Blankenship and Green that states with multiple alliance partners do not view them all as equally important and that those allies know it. That said, Henry counters that while an examination of how such an alliance hierarchy interacts with commitment interdependence would be an interesting topic for future research, it simply beyond the scope of the present book.

In reply to Metz's criticism about insufficient attention to military capabilities in the assessment of allied reliability, Henry concedes that he ought to have given the issue more thought and analysis in the book. But Henry reasserts his suspicion that states can more easily discern each other's military capabilities and likely reliability as an ally, than the relative ordering of each other's national interests.

Henry takes issue with Green's claim that historians would not find his argument about alliance reliability to be "particularly remarkable" and that he (Henry) underplays the book's major insight: "that Washington really cares what it allies thinks and that allies are quite clever in getting their way." On the contrary, Henry notes the case studies show the gap between policymakers' fears about risks to the United States' reputation for loyalty to allies, on the one hand, and Green's more discerning historians, on the other hand. Indeed, debunking the myth that America's reputation as a loyal ally is perennially at risk constitutes the book's major contribution, according to Henry.

The three reviewers agree that Henry's *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the history of the United States' hub-and-spokes alliances in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War, and to theories of alliance management and interdependence, more broadly. Their critiques of the book in this roundtable, as well as the author's responses, suggest various fruitful research avenues for other scholars to pursue.

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Over the past decade, scholarship on reputation in international politics has flourished, moving beyond questions of whether a state's past actions "matter" for how other states evaluate its likely future behavior to finer-grained analyses of the conditions under which reputations form, whether they accrue to states or to leaders, and the micro-foundations of concern about reputation.¹ But despite sustained scholarly attention to the subject of reputation, Iain Henry's *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* still finds a way to make a powerful contribution that future studies will surely grapple with.

The book argues that much of the existing literature on the interdependence of state commitments errs in suggesting that reputation stems from a single, fixed characteristic that all observers view more or less identically.² In particular, Henry's "alliance audience effect theory" takes aim at the idea that allies universally want their partner to display "loyalty"—the willingness to fight on behalf of all of its allies. Instead, allies care much more about displays that suggest their partner shares their interests and will neither abandon them nor entrap them into unwanted confrontations with adversaries. In this way, the book bridges the gap between "reputation skeptics," who argue that reputations do not form, and those who argue that reputation matters in a meaningful, systematic way.³ Reputation does matter, Henry argues, but not in the way that it is traditionally thought to.

The implications of the argument are potentially far-reaching. Most notably, it suggests that states may not necessarily need to worry about fighting for reputation in all cases. Indeed, an ally may in some cases actually prefer that its partner not come to other allies' defense, if doing so has the potential to undermine the ally's own security either by distracting it—see Europe's opposition to the Vietnam War—or by drawing it into conflict.⁴ Moreover, it suggests that allies do not prize signals that alleviate their fears of

¹ Alex Weisiger and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics," *International Organization* 69:2 (2015): 473-95, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000393>; Frank P. Harvey and John Mitton, *Fighting for Credibility: US Reputation and International Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Mark Crescenzi, *Of Friends and Foes: Reputation and Learning in International Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018); Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Who Fights for Reputation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Danielle L. Lupton, *Reputation for Resolve: How Leaders Signal Determination in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020); Joshua D. Kertzer, Jonathan Renshon, and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "How Do Observers Assess Resolve?," *British Journal of Political Science* 51:1 (January 2021): 308-30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000595>; Robert Jervis, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Don Casler, "Redefining the Debate Over Reputation and Credibility in International Security: Promises and Limits of New Scholarship," *World Politics* 73:1 (2021): 167-203.

² Though others have argued that reputation instead adheres to leaders rather than states, while others argue that reputation tends to differ between allies and adversaries. See Lupton, *Reputation for Resolve*; Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

³ On reputation skepticism, see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴ Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer Spindel, "Divided Priorities: Why and When Allies Differ Over Military Intervention," *Security Studies* 27:4 (2018): 575-606.

abandonment above all else, even in highly asymmetric alliances where allies depend heavily on the protection of a great power patron. Instead, if allies primarily fear being entangled in their partner's conflicts, displaying restraint and pursuing reconciliation with adversaries may be the most effective means to reassure them.⁵

The book's theory section concludes with three testable hypotheses. The first is that a state observes its ally's behavior in other alliances in order to learn what those actions communicate about the compatibility of their interests. The second holds that states which gauge their ally to be unreliable will take steps to mitigate the perception of insecurity that comes with it. An ally that fears abandonment will seek to fortify itself and find other partners, while one that fears entrapment will try to distance itself from its partner. The third proposes that states will tailor their own behavior in anticipation of how allies will perceive their reliability, seeking a balanced approach that does not unduly privilege or alienate some allies more than others.

The remainder of the book tests these propositions with a series of impressive case studies drawn from American alliances in the Asia-Pacific between 1949 and 1969, using an extensive array of US archival documents. The first focuses on US decisions to abandon Nationalist China, defend South Korea, and extend alliances to Japan, the Philippines, and Australia and New Zealand (1949–1951); the next two explore US treatment of South Korea and Taiwan (1953–1954 and 1954–1955); and the final two examine the renegotiations over the terms of the US-Japan alliance (1955–1960 and 1967–1969). The case studies convincingly show that allies of the United States, who were looking for signs of unreliability, closely observed how the US acted toward each of its partners in the region. Moreover, the later case studies show that US allies were not single-minded in their search for signals of American resolve, as traditional theories of reputation emphasizing loyalty might expect. Instead, allies frequently worried about the prospect of the United States and themselves being entrapped in conflicts, particularly over Taiwan.

The empirical analysis is perhaps most convincing in these latter cases, where the predictions of traditional reputation theory and those of alliance audience effect theory diverge. The challenging cases are those where the logics of alliance loyalty and alliance reliability make similar predictions—namely those cases in which displaying a willingness to fight for some allies reassures other allies that their partner will defend them as well. In chapter 2, for example, the author convincingly shows that allies saw US behavior toward South Korea and Taiwan as a bellwether for its behavior toward the broader region. But one could argue that the evidence does not definitively prove that allies were concerned more about US interests, as the book predicts, than about the United States' willingness to fight more broadly. This does not undermine the book's central thesis, however, and indeed highlights one of the book's biggest strengths. By presenting evidence from a wide variety of cases—some in which US allies were concerned about abandonment,

⁵ Jiyoung Ko, "Alliance and Public Preference for Nuclear Forbearance: Evidence from South Korea," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15:4 (October 1, 2019): 509–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/ory014>; Lauren Sukin, "Credible Nuclear Security Commitments Can Backfire: Explaining Domestic Support for Nuclear Weapons Acquisition in South Korea," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64:6 (July 1, 2020): 1011–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719888689>.

others where they were concerned about entrapment—the book is able to show both where its theory’s predictions converge with those of conventional wisdom, and where it instead departs from or builds upon existing theories.

Despite the book’s numerous strengths, it is of course not without limitations. In particular, there are two ways in which the book’s theory and hypotheses seem at times to be in tension with each other. First and most generally, the book’s second two hypotheses are less linked to the underlying theory’s core propositions than the first. The second hypothesis proposes that allies will respond to perceptions of unreliability by acting in a way that mitigates the risk perceived (whether abandonment or entrapment). This is quite reasonable enough, but it goes beyond the book’s theory of allied *perceptions* to make a prediction about allied *action*. Allies who perceive their partner as unreliable may vary widely in their ability to act in a way that mitigates the risks they perceive. For example, some allies might be in a better position to arm themselves or pursue nuclear weapons than others.⁶ There may thus be cases where allies perceive unreliability but fail to act in response.

Larger questions arise around the third hypothesis, which proposes that partners will proactively try to mitigate their allies’ perceptions of unreliability. This requires not only a theory of allied perceptions and actions, as hypothesis 2 does, but also relies on the assumption that the partner is aware that reliability matters in the way the book asserts it does and that its assessment of how allies perceive its reliability is accurate. The challenge is that policymakers’ beliefs (or lack thereof) about reliability may be mistaken. A number of scholars have pointed out that policymakers often seem to believe that loyalty reputation matters, even if Henry argues that reliability is the more common concern.⁷ If policymakers fail to consider how allies will view their reliability and instead prioritize displays of loyalty, then hypothesis 3 could be invalidated even if Henry’s claims about the importance of reliability to allies are correct. (Indeed, hypothesis 3 could become more likely to be true in the future to the extent that policymakers read *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence*.)

The second source of ambiguity also relates to hypothesis 3. The book expects that states will in some cases publicly rebuke or refuse an ally’s request in order to send a message to other allies about what behavior it will or will not tolerate. But this prediction seems an uncomfortable fit with the theory insofar as it appears to assume a degree of uniformity among allies—that is, that all allies expect similar treatment from their partner, and that the partner will not want to show favoritism. This presents at least two challenges. The first is that the partner’s level of concern about disappointing its allies is likely to vary across cases. Allies vary in their strategic value, and the partner may be more willing to refuse concessions to a less important ally than to a more important one. Moreover, allies are likely to vary in their ability to pursue the sorts of outside options that their partner opposes, as discussed previously in relation to hypothesis 2. The author

⁶ Brian Blankenship, “Promises under Pressure: Statements of Reassurance in US Alliances,” *International Studies Quarterly* 64:4 (2020): 1017–30.

⁷ Shiping Tang, “Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict,” *Security Studies* 14:1 (2005): 34–62; Yarhi-Milo, *Who Fights for Reputation*.

speculates as much in chapter 4 in discussing the differences in how the United States approached Japanese and South Korean concerns around Taiwan, owing to the latter's more intense dependence on the alliance (113).

Second, assuming that allies will demand equal treatment seems at odds with one of the book's central contentions and core contributions: that allies view situations as context specific and view them through the lens of their (and their partner's) unique interests. For example, Henry claims that US policymakers were careful to avoid cultivating a reputation for being easy to manipulate or gullible (e.g., 185, 189). But if allies are discerning enough to focus on how their patron's actions signal its interests rather than generalized reputation for "loyalty," it is not clear why they could not also discern that it might make concessions to one ally but would not be willing or able to do the same for themselves, or vice-versa.

While these concerns point to the limitations of the parsimonious version of the theory presented in the book, they do not undermine its central contention about the importance of reliability. Indeed, future scholars could build on the book's findings to explore a variety of research questions that could address these concerns. First, given that the book is agnostic about how allies respond to perceptions of unreliability, future research could theorize how states choose from the menu of policy options when facing an unreliable ally. For example, under what conditions will they seek other allies, or independent military arming? Second, future research could study the conditions under which states are willing to make concessions to one ally but not others, despite concerns about precedent-setting and complaints from other allies about unequal treatment. Third, under what conditions are allies more or less likely to see their partner's treatment of one ally as an indication of how it is likely to treat them? The book's focus on interests and reliability rather than credibility and loyalty presents an opportunity for scholars to consider which allies see themselves as having similar interests.

In reframing the debate around reputation in international relations from a focus on loyalty and credibility to one on reliability, *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* not only invites scholars and policymakers to rethink reputation, but also pushes forward the study of alliance politics. The book is essential reading for those interested in either field of study.

Scholarship on US alliances in Asia is coming out of a long winter. The last real spring was in the early to mid-1990s when Victor Cha, Tom Berger, Sheila Smith, and I, among others, used hybrid approaches of history and political science combined with language expertise to explain the dynamics of American alliances and the international relations of Asia.¹ But the Cold War was over and suddenly it was Japan's techno-economic power that seemed to define international relations better than the stuffy alliances negotiated by Truman's envoy and Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in an earlier analogue era. The Japanese economic miracle lost its luster for scholars shortly after that, but by then political science as a discipline was diverging from historiography and regional studies in the pursuit of quantitative analytical rigor, game theory, and Eurocentric data sets that had little relevance or predictive utility in Asia. Liberal institutionalists meanwhile dove head-first into examinations of the region's growing multilateralism, often eschewing realist framing and the importance of alliances. There were exceptions to the trend, like Cha's *Power Play* (2016),² but most professors who sought new scholarship on alliances in Asia for their syllabi returned to work from the 1990s.

Iain Henry is at the forefront of a new generation of scholars who are putting alliances back at the center of our study of the international relations of Asia.³ This is timely given the fact that governments in the United States, Australia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines are now putting alliances and alignment at the center of their national security strategies in the wake of China's coercive turn, waning relative American power, and the failure of multilateral forums that once seemed so promising. And as Henry demonstrates in *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence*, alliances are much more complicated than realist descendants of Thucydides or Hans Morgenthau ever let on.

Henry's primary goal is to unpack alliance interdependence theory, or the idea that third allies will carefully monitor how an ally like the United States treats other allies in the system. This is an important dimension of deterrence theory, which postulates that lack of "loyalty" to one ally will force other allies in the system to hedge or take other options to protect themselves from that worrisome behavior by their major security

¹ See for example: Victor D. Cha, *Alignment despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism," *International Security* 17:4 (Spring 1993): 119-150; Sheila Smith, *Intimate Rivals: Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Michael J. Green, *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Post-War Search for Autonomy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

² Victor D. Cha. *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016). For a review of liberal institutionalist approaches to Asian international relations see: Amitav Acharya, "Theoretical Perspectives on the International Relations of Asia," in David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda, eds., *The International Relations of Asia* (London, Routledge, 2008):57-83.

³ Other examples include Andrew Yeoo, Ayumi Teraoka, and Adam Liff.

partner.⁴ The emphasis tends therefore to be on fears of abandonment. Henry argues that such universalist and binary definitions of “loyalty” versus “disloyalty” miss the fact that allies define their interests in different ways at different times; they are often fearful of entrapment and not just abandonment. Allies may want to see loyalty demonstrated to other allies, but they also want to see that such loyalty has limits when it impacts their own interests. Restraint is as important as resolve.

Thus, as Henry recounts, Japan and Britain tried to constrain the United States from extending security guarantees to Taiwan after the 1955 Quemoy and Matsu Crisis. Britain did so because of fears that the United States would abandon NATO, and for Japan did so because avoiding another war with China was essential to the Japan’s postwar redefinition of the nation. Other cases here similarly demonstrate the wide variations in alliance interdependence theory in the original formulation of the “San Francisco” system of alliances, the revision of the US-Japan alliance in 1960, and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1969. These case studies employ detailed diplomatic archival sources, mostly *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, and effectively reinforce Henry’s main argument that allies judge US actions based on their interests rather than simplistic observations about American loyalty.

Historians would not find this particularly remarkable, of course. Nor would realists who remember that Thucydides made similar observations about the Peloponnesian Wars that have since been obscured by overly simplistic theories of alliance interdependence and deterrence. Nevertheless, Henry does a service to the field by closing that gap, and rightly so.

But if it is unremarkable that allies would act based on their interests rather than on binary definitions of “loyalty,” the agency of those allies and the American responsiveness to it is something remarkable indeed. In his focus on allies’ choices Henry may underplay the most important insight in his study: that Washington really cares what its allies think and that allies are quite clever at getting their way. Again and again in his rich case studies Henry demonstrates that not just State Department diplomats in Asia but even senior officials like the rigid and curmudgeonly Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were ready to change US strategy in order to reassure allies alarmed at how they saw Washington treating one of their own. And this happened not in 2023 when the United States faced a peer hegemonic challenger in Asia, but in the 1950s at a time of unparalleled American asymmetrical power over those allies. This dynamic explains the durability of the American alliance system, in spite of shocks to alliances such as the Guam Doctrine, the end of the Cold War, Iraq, and the election of Donald Trump. It also explains why today Japan, Australia, and Korea are willing to throw their lot in with the United States under the Australia-UK-US agreement on submarine and advanced technology development, trilateral US-Japan-Korea exercises and summits, and the US-Japan-India-Australia “Quad” summits and working groups, despite warnings from the academy and the media about entrapment. Henry demonstrates that after all the anxiety is sorted through, the United States is demonstrably shapeable by its allies and therefore is considered more reliable than not.

⁴ See for example: Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 22; Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36:4 (1984): 461-495.

That was perhaps not what he aimed to prove with this book, but it is an important basis for further work on alliances.

While Henry successfully takes down the “loyalty” frame that is inherent in most alliance interdependence theories, he leaves open a few lines of counterargument worth noting. First, the case studies use primary sources such as *FRUS* to seek evidence of American attention to the “audience effect” among allies without providing full political or ideational context in key instances. For example, the case study on Formosa makes much of Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichiro’s warning that Japan did not want to be entrapped in a war with China without explaining Hatoyama’s own worldview that Japan needed to distance itself from the United States by normalizing relations with Moscow and Beijing. His strategy was an aberration, only briefly and rather comically revived by his grandson Hatoyama Yukio in 2009. In contrast, Kishi Nobusuke came to office after Hatoyama with an ideological view that Japan needed to assert its independence and equality by negotiating a new security treaty in which Tokyo voluntarily accepted US bases for the security of the Far East after having accepted those bases in a 1951 treaty negotiated when Japan was under occupation. Unlike Hatoyama, Kishi was a strong advocate of the alliance with the United States. While fear of entrapment after the Formosa crisis of 1955 was an important factor, it was not the main factor in Kishi’s motivation for revising the treaty. Nor was there the kind of continuity from Hatoyama to Kishi suggested by the book’s slightly myopic focus on the crisis over Quemoy and Matsu. That crisis was an intervening and not a primary variable in Japanese strategic choices.

Something is also lost when “allies” are lumped together for purposes of generalizing theory when in fact not all alliances are created equal. New Zealand’s reaction to the Formosa crisis did not matter as much as Britain’s. And Britain’s did not matter as much as Japan’s. Differences in geography and actual importance to US strategy are critical variables that get blurred in the search for evidence of the alliance audience effect that is ecumenical about the hierarchy of alliances. Yes, there is evidence of that audience effect across different alliances, but a more nuanced appreciation of American priorities would have helped. The United States let the alliance with New Zealand fall off the vine in the 1980s because the alliances with Australia and Japan mattered more and anti-nuclear politics in New Zealand were becoming a threat to the two big alliances. Wellington’s voice did not matter as much as Tokyo’s or Canberra’s to US officials because, as Prime Minister David Lange was reported to have quipped sarcastically, “New Zealand is a strategic dagger aimed at the heart of Antarctica.”⁵

Finally, there is limited utility in applying the lessons of the 1950s and 1960s to alliance theory more generally. Certain aspects of Henry’s advancement of alliance interdependence theory would likely apply today but allies and alliances and the power dynamics in Asia are also profoundly different. US allies in the 1950s and 1960s had far more limited interaction among themselves than they do today. With the

⁵ Cited in James Waite, “Contesting ‘the Right of Decision’: New Zealand, the Commonwealth, and the New Look,” *Diplomatic History* 30:5 (2006), 899. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24915051>.

establishment of trilateral security talks in 2001, Japan and Australia began a pattern of close cooperation on how to shape American strategy towards the region. With the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) in the late 1990s, Japan and Korea developed a platform to urge US action or inaction on North Korea that did not exist during the Cold War. The US-Japan-Australia-India “Quad” similarly provides a minilateral platform for key US allies and partners to work together on regional security and diplomatic challenges. The “audience effect” theories of the 1950s and 1960s were very different at a time when strictly separated hubs and spokes have been replaced by networked alliance arrangements that approximate aspects of the collective security of NATO.

All that said, *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* marks an important turning point in the study of international relations in Asia. Alliances now merit important attention on their own rather than as secondary considerations in theories of deterrence or war and peace. And in order to understand alliances scholars must return to the kind of approach Henry provides, combining deep historical inquiry with theoretical context and methodological rigor. *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* will not be the definitive modern text on alliances in Asia, but it is an important corrective that will improve the scholarship that follows.

Iain Henry's *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* tackles a question of great significance to social scientists and policymakers alike: "How, if at all, are alliance commitments interdependent?" (7). The book begins by critiquing the two prevailing answers to the question. On the one hand, the "reputation for loyalty" camp argues that alliance commitments are indeed interdependent. In this view, US allies closely observe US loyalty—or lack thereof—to other allies. If the United States breaks a commitment to any ally, the United States' other allies will label the United States disloyal, fear abandonment, and behave accordingly.¹ On the other hand, reputation skeptics argue that while allies do assess the likelihood the United States will advance their interests, they do not pay much attention to the United States' other alliance relationships to inform those assessments.²

The stakes of this debate are high. The primary implication of the loyalty camp—the prevailing perspective in Washington—is that the United States must extend itself widely and fight wars for the sake of maintaining its reputation as a loyal ally. In contrast, if allies are not paying much attention to the United States' behavior in other alliances, the United States should feel free to manage each alliance as if in a vacuum, conducting alliance management according only to the interests at stake within that alliance, without concern for spillover to other alliances.

Henry's "Alliance Audience Effect Theory" offers a compelling corrective to these dominant, reductive views. In contrast with the reputation-skeptics camp, Henry argues that alliances are, in fact, interdependent. Allies do closely monitor US interactions with other allies, and view US interactions with other allies as evidence of how the US is likely to interact with them down the road. In an important departure from the arguments of the loyalty camp, however, Henry argues that allies do not actually focus on US loyalty—they focus on US *reliability*.

Henry's introduction of the reliability concept is a major contribution in its own right. He defines reliability "as the degree to which allies agree on the relative value of particular interests and the manner in which the

¹ President Harry Truman, as quoted in Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2; Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967 (a.k.a. Pentagon Papers), Part V. A, vol. 2, Justification of the War—Public Statements: D. The Johnson Administration (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2011), <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/205536-pentagon-papers-part-v-a-volume-ii-d.html>; John Mearsheimer, "Say Goodbye to Taiwan," *National Interest*, 25 February, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/print/article/say-goodbye-taiwan-9931>; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *Washington Quarterly* 34:4 (2011): 32

² Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Ted Hopf, *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965–1990* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

interests should be pursued” (32). The definition is a bit of a mouthful, but the crux of the corrective is the elevation of ally fears of entrapment to their rightful place alongside ally fears of abandonment. US allies might sometimes view US loyalty to other allies as evidence that the US is likely to remain committed to them. Perhaps just as often, however, a US ally might prefer the US be *disloyal* to another ally, because loyalty to that other ally could raise entrapment risks.

Henry lays out his alliance audience effect theory in three hypotheses: first, that US allies monitor US behavior with other allies and update their views of US reliability accordingly; second, that perceptions of US reliability shape alliance behavior; and third, that the United States is aware of alliance interdependence and seeks to navigate it to the United States’ advantage.

The book’s major contribution is the first hypothesis. Observing the overreliance of the reputation literature on deterrence theory, Henry moves the field forward by elegantly incorporating basic insights from alliance theory to elevate entrapment alongside abandonment within the reliability concept. The observation that US allies would sometimes prefer the United States be disloyal to some other ally to minimize entrapment risk is as intuitive as it is novel. This is the marker of a major contribution. It is contrary to prevailing views, intuitive once said aloud, and has important policy implications to boot.

Henry’s second and third hypotheses are less novel and less clearly articulated than his first. It is already widely accepted in scholarship and practice that allies’ beliefs about their protectors’ commitments to them shape their behavior, and Henry acknowledges that he does not predict “*how* states will attempt to mitigate the unreliability of their ally” (174). Henry’s argument that the United States is aware of alliance interdependence, and uses interdependence to its advantage, is also a bit vague—it is not clear how, precisely, Henry expects US perceptions of alliance interdependence to shape US policies. Nitpicking these two hypotheses seems beside the point, however, when the first one alone marks such an important contribution to the field.

Henry could have more clearly articulated the relationship between alliance audience effect theory and other potential explanations of variation in perceptions of alliance reliability and alliance behavior. In particular, Henry’s handling of the argument that variation in US capabilities might shape variation in allies’ perceptions of US reliability and variation in allies’ security policies is rather messy. Henry states that reliability is determined by convergent interests and “military capabilities useful for pursuing those interests” (26). However, the logic of the theory focuses almost entirely on allies’ perceptions of US interests, not capabilities. Henry justifies the focus on interests over capabilities by arguing that it is easier for allies to assess US capabilities than US interests, and that military capabilities are less likely than interests to change quickly or without forewarning (32). Both claims are debatable (military power is

notoriously difficult to assess and capabilities can, in fact, change quickly³), and Henry does not explain how ease of assessment or speed of change should shape variation in allied perceptions of US reliability.

The issue of the role of capabilities in the theory comes to a head in the empirics. Overall, Henry holds US capabilities constant so as to focus attention on variation in ally perceptions of US interests, rather than to vary both to test their relative importance. Perceptions of US capabilities play an interesting role in chapter 6, however, where Henry examines how developments within the US-Japan alliance shaped the Republic of China's (ROC) perception of US reliability. The ROC was concerned about US access to bases in Japan not because US behavior with respect to Japan gave the ROC information about the United States' commitment to the ROC, but because the loss of US bases in Japan might jeopardize the United States' ability to defend the ROC (165). The logic here does not actually require alliance interdependence at all; a cut to the US defense budget, for example, could have had the same effect on ROC thinking regarding US reliability.

More broadly, it is unclear how big a swing Henry aims to make with alliance audience effect theory. How much variation in perceptions of alliance reliability and alliance behavior does Henry intend to suggest alliance audience effect theory explains? The book does not discuss which might matter more for an ally's perceptions of US reliability: US interactions with that ally, or US interactions with other allies. It is not clear whether Henry is suggesting that US interactions with one ally shapes another ally's reliability assessments more than direct alliance interactions, and it would be helpful to know where Henry comes down on the matter, because the answer determines the policy implications that follow. If an ally monitors US behavior in other alliances, but weighs its own interactions with the United States more highly than the United States' behavior in other alliances, then, contrary to the central prescription of the book, the United States might be wise not to weigh alliance interdependence concerns so highly after all.

Henry uses primary sources and process tracing to test the three hypotheses within and across the Asian alliance system from 1949 to 1969. He makes an important empirical contribution in his use of declassified *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) documents and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) documents to shed light on how the United States managed its alliance relationships in Asia.

All research designs and methods choices necessitate tradeoffs, and *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* is no exception. The strength of Henry's most-similar case selection (the cases all involve the same region during the same period) is the ability to hold constant a variety of factors in order to pinpoint precisely how the variable of interest—US behavior in other alliances—shaped allies' perceptions of US reliability and in turn their alliance behavior. The weakness of this case selection is precisely the converse: by holding constant US military capabilities, the regional and global balance of power, nuclear weapons, and the region itself, the research design precludes comparison of the relative explanatory power of the theory against a variety of alternative explanations for alliance perceptions and behavior. This design weakness is

³ Stephen Biddle, *Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

minor, however, because the design is optimal for testing alliance audience effect theory against its two primary competitors: the theories of the loyalty camp and the reputation-skeptics camp. Moreover, Henry's aim appears to be to demonstrate the existence of alliance audience effect theory rather than to compare its explanatory power to the full gamut of alternative explanations.

The primary methodological weakness of the book—and Henry is forthright in acknowledging it—is its reliance on US sources to code the thinking and explain the behavior of US allies. He explains that resource constraints and language barriers precluded collection of documents from US allies that might have shed direct light on allied thinking (10). These are real constraints, and Henry should be commended for his forthrightness. However, his reliance on US archives means that the book codes and explains US *perceptions* of allied thinking, not necessarily allied thinking itself. Henry argues that there is little reason to believe there is a significant delta between US perceptions of allied thinking and actual allied thinking. Given that the evidence for the book's central argument hinges on this delta being minimal, however, it would be worth verifying through future investigation of allied archives. The reliance on US documents shows in the richness of Henry's discussion of US thinking about alliance interdependence—which often highlights complexities such as differences of opinion across US bureaucracies and individuals—compared to a somewhat thinner discussion of US reporting of allies' perceptions of US reliability.

Nevertheless, the methodological strengths of the book are considerable, and Henry ably supports a novel and important argument about alliance interdependence. The methodological limitations of the book are not so much grounds for critique as motivation for additional research on this important subject.

As all excellent books do, *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* generates a number of questions for future research. Does the theory travel outside the period of inquiry, outside Asia, and to alliances that do not involve the United States? Where does Washington's obsession with loyalty come from, and why does it persist despite evidence that allies care as much about entrapment as abandonment? How accurate are US allies' perceptions of US alliance reliability? How accurate are the estimations by US leaders of their allies' reactions to its behavior in other alliances? How are these judgments formed “under the hood”? Are all of the far-flung bits and pieces of US bureaucracy engaged in varying elements of security cooperation with US allies responsive to alliance management direction from the executive? How much should the United States worry about alliance interdependence, relative to its interests within a particular alliance?

This is an important book. Assumptions that the fate of the United States hinges on US loyalty to every ally in every context leads the United States to overextend itself in peace and to fight catastrophic wars. *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* is international relations research at its best: it contains compelling theory, strong evidence, and prescriptions that, if heeded, could steer the United States towards a more prudent foreign policy.

Response by Iain D. Henry, Australian National University

Thank you to Joshua Shiffrin for organizing this roundtable, and Brian Blankenship, Michael Green, Rachel Tecott Metz, and Jeff Taliaferro for their engagement with the book. The reviewers all agree that the book makes significant contributions to our understanding of alliance politics, the interdependence of international commitments, and the history of US alliances in Asia. Metz writes that my idea of alliance reliability “is as intuitive as it is novel...It is contrary to prevailing views, intuitive once said aloud, and has important policy implications to boot.” Blankenship’s review is more critical, but these critiques “do not undermine [the book’s] central contention about the importance of reliability.” He writes that the book reframes “the debate around reputation...[and] pushes forward the study of alliance politics.” Green assesses the book as marking “an important turning point in the study of international relations in Asia...scholars must return to the kind of approach Henry provides, combining deep historical inquiry with theoretical context and methodological rigor.” Given that my idea of reliability and theory of interdependence are so at odds with the conventional wisdom, it is edifying to learn that the reviewers regard the book as a “powerful contribution...[and] essential reading,” “an important corrective,” and “international relations research at its best.” Thanks to financial support from the Australian National University, the book can be downloaded for free at the Cornell University Press website.¹

Below, I first briefly outline my idea of alliance reliability and theory of alliance interdependence, before responding to the reviewer critiques. I then conclude with some thoughts about further research.

The Idea of Alliance Reliability, and the Alliance Audience Effect Theory

The book’s primary contribution is based upon an evolved idea of alliance reliability.² I argue that contrary to theories of deterrence and international reputation, states do not always want their ally to be indiscriminately loyal to its other allies, as doing so may increase the risk of entrapment for the observer state. Instead, the observer state will want its ally’s interests, preferences and policies to be identical to its own. If interests are identical, then the ally will not present the observer state with a risk of abandonment *or* a risk of entrapment, and thus the observer state will regard it as a *reliable* ally. If interests are divergent, and the ally presents the observer state with risks of abandonment or entrapment, then the observer state will regard it as an *unreliable* ally. Sometimes, the desire for allied reliability may even mean that observer state will even want their ally to be *disloyal* to its other allies.

¹ <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501765544/reliability-and-alliance-interdependence/>

² Though the book interacts with many excellent texts, the works of greatest influence on the theory are Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), Gregory D. Miller, *The Shadow of the Past: Reputation and Military Alliances before the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005), and Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Building on this idea, I theorize how a system of alliance commitments might be interdependent if reliability, rather than loyalty, is what states want from their ally. In the book, I propose and test three hypotheses:

H1: “A state will observe its ally’s behavior in other alliances. If this behavior reveals that the ally’s interests diverge from the observer state’s, and thus raises entrapment or abandonment fears, the state will assess the ally as unreliable” (33).

H2: “If a state assesses its ally to be unreliable, it will act to mitigate the specific risk posed” (35).

H3: “A state’s actions will be influenced by the possibility that its behavior in one alliance will affect the reliability perceptions of its other allies” (36).

The first hypothesis elevates the risk of entrapment and assigns it a proper place alongside, and of equal importance to, the risk of abandonment. The second predicts that a state’s fears about an ally’s unreliability will have an impact on the state’s behavior: it will try to reduce the risk of abandonment or entrapment posed by its ally. Finally, the third hypothesis rounds my theory out by explaining the full measure of interdependence I expect to see in an alliance system. I explain that if a state believes that its actions in one alliance will influence its other allies—and that this influence will be determined by assessments of reliability, rather than loyalty—then it can proceed in two different ways. It can simultaneously manage its alliances (in an attempt to reduce the undesired effects of interdependence), or alternatively lean in and embrace unavoidable interdependence, by choosing to set an example in one alliance with the expectation that this will be noticed by—and will influence—other allies. These are options that would not be available if alliance interdependence was, as traditionally believed, underpinned by strict demonstrations of loyalty.

After outlining this theory in the book, I test it against five case studies drawn from the US alliance system in Asia during the first half of the Cold War.

Critiques

Metz and Blankenship both engage with the hypotheses, though Blankenship’s critique is more pointed. He describes my theory as one of “allied *perceptions*” and suggests that H2 goes beyond this to “make a prediction about allied *action*” (italics in the original). He notes that states have varied capacities to mitigate the risks posed by an ally’s unreliability, and “there may...be cases where allies perceive unreliability but fail to act in response.” I find this a little puzzling: while my idea of reliability is about perceptions, the broader theory which builds upon this idea clearly incorporates, in hypothesis 2, the issue of an ally’s actions.

I agree with Blankenship that some states, more than others, will be able to better manage the risk of an ally’s unreliability, but I find it hard to conceive of a situation where, as Blankenship suggests, “allies

perceive unreliability but fail to act in response.” Sometimes all a state can do is consult with their ally in an ineffective attempt to influence its policies, but this is not inaction.

Blankenship’s critiques of H₃ are, I think, more precise and probing. His first is that H₃ relies upon a state correctly realizing that its ally (or allies) desire reliability rather than loyalty. Indeed, a state might try to manage alliance interdependence based on the incorrect belief that loyalty, rather than reliability, is the key force underpinning interdependence. In retrospect, I should have phrased H₃ differently, to make it clearer that my intent was to explore how interdependence could operate differently if the importance of reliability, rather than loyalty, was properly recognized. At any rate, the case studies show that US decision-makers were sometimes able to appreciate this distinction, and acknowledge that not all allies would draw the same conclusions from US behavior. This finding is crucial because it refutes the conventional belief that alliance interdependence, underpinned by the need to demonstrate loyalty, always influences US policy toward loyal intervention on behalf of its allies. Instead, it demonstrates that the US can, in being less than perfectly loyal to one ally, set a useful example that is observed by other allies, and thus Washington can manipulate alliance interdependence to serve US policy ends.

His second critique is that my explication of H₃ implies that allies consider themselves all as equally important and thus deserving of equal treatment, and that this “seems at odds with one of the book’s central contentions and core contributions: that allies view situations as context specific and view them through the lens of their (and their partner’s) unique interests.” As Blankenship notes, it is also at odds with the fact that a state will invariably view some of its allies as more important than others (a point also made by Green).

The case studies show that the US was careful to create the impression of equal treatment among its allies, and that its allies were sensitive to any hint that another ally might receive more preferential treatment. But they also show that in some cases—such as when an ally has no realistic prospects of assuring its security other than the alliance, and thus has very limited bargaining power—an ally’s complaints could be ignored with little risk. I note these exceptions to H₃ in the book, when I describe some conditions under which alliance interdependence would be a lesser concern (113) and when I conclude that I found only “qualified support” for H₃ (172). I agree with Blankenship and Green that a state with multiple allies will not view them all as equally important, and that these allies themselves will realize that they are not equally important to the state, but exploring how this affects alliance interdependence was beyond the scope of the book. The question of how an alliance hierarchy might interact with commitment interdependence is a very interesting topic for future research. Based on the case studies explored in my book, my hunch is that a state with several allies will endeavor to keep any instance of preferential treatment secret, lest other allies request similar concessions. But allies might begrudgingly accept publicly unequal treatment provided that an alliance still improves their overall security.

Metz argues that I did not give adequate weight to issue of military capability. I noted that “military capabilities remain an important influence on assessments of allied reliability” (32), and I do briefly elaborate in footnote 69 (196), but I agree that I should have given the issue more thought and analysis in

the manuscript. That said, I do still suspect that a state's military capabilities, and their influence on assessments of its reliability as an ally, are less variable, and more "knowable," than the relative ordering of its national interests. Additionally, the capabilities acquired and maintained by a state are, to a certain extent, epiphenomenal from how it defines its national interests.

Metz also asks whether I expect a state's assessment of its ally's reliability to be influenced more by events within their bilateral relationship, or the ally's interactions with its other allies. This question could also be easily extended to include the ally's interactions with neutral, adversary or enemy states. I have no reason, now, to think that any category should be identified as more important than the others: a state cannot *know*, with certainty, that its ally is reliable, so it should be alert to any information—from any source—suggestive of unreliability.

Green thinks that historians would not find my argument about reliability to be "particularly remarkable," and that I underplay the "most important insight" of the book: "that Washington really cares what its allies think and that allies are quite clever at getting their way." He writes that "even senior officials like the rigid and curmudgeonly Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were ready to change US strategy in order to reassure allies." However, the case studies I explore show a yawning chasm between the first instincts of US policymakers—who were usually adamant that America's reputation as a loyal ally was perennially at risk—and Green's more discerning historians. Given that this belief persists, I continue to regard debunking it as the book's most significant contribution. Green also understates the degree of allied effort required to influence US policy, and overstates the readiness of US officials to adjust policies in response to allied concerns. As I explain in chapter 5, it took several years for Dulles to accept the necessity of revising the US-Japan alliance, and his initial reactions to the suggestion were quite dismissive and hostile.³ That said, I agree with Green that this book, more than many others, does highlight the ability of US allies to influence Washington. In doing so, it strongly challenges Victor Cha's *Powerplay* theory, and I briefly discuss this in the conclusion (186-7).⁴ To better understand the history, present, and future of the US alliance system in Asia, we need more scholars and scholarship who focus on the views and agencies of the allies. We need to better understand when, why, and how US allies can influence discussions and decisions in Washington.

The reviewers disagree on the applicability of my theory to contemporary circumstances. Metz thinks the book "contains...prescriptions that, if heeded, could steer the United States towards a more prudent foreign policy," while Green is unsure, noting that only "certain aspects" of my theory would apply given "allies and alliances and the power dynamics are...profoundly different." Green is correct that US alliances

³ As Nick Kapur notes, when the possibility of treaty revision was first raised by Japan in 1955, "Dulles just snorted, 'Is the Japan of today powerful enough [to make such a request]?', and rejected Japan's proposal right there on the spot." See Nick Kapur, "Mending the 'Broken Dialogue': U.S.-Japan Diplomacy in the Aftermath of the 1960 Security Treaty Crisis," *Diplomatic History* 41:3 (2017), 489-517.

⁴ See Victor D. Cha "Powerplay Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security* 34:3 (2009-2010): 158-196, and Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

today are more “networked” than during the Cold War, but I think his claim that these “arrangements... approximate aspects of the collective security of NATO” is overstated. The first instinct of US allies in Asia is to look outside the immediate region—to Washington—for security. When they do so, they do not always see what Green describes as a shapeable, “more reliable than not” ally. The constancy and predictability of US interests, and the wise employment of its military capabilities, cannot be guaranteed. And thus US allies will continue to worry about Washington’s reliability: they will remain sensitive to the risks of abandonment *and* entrapment. That they do so is no criticism of the US, but is instead a perennial feature of alliance politics.

Conclusion

I am thrilled that each reviewer regards *Reliability and Alliance Interdependence* as having made a substantial contribution to the field. What next, then, for research on alliance politics? Metz and Blankenship both make several compelling suggestions, which I endorse. I am especially supportive of those questions which focus on peacetime issues of alliance management: alliances, if successful, may never be invoked and tested in crisis, but the idea of reliability can help to explain peacetime alliance dynamics. Perhaps the most obvious area for further research and testing is to examine how the concept of alliance reliability, and the alliance audience effect theory, might operate within larger multilateral alliances. In the conclusion, I briefly examine reliability and interdependence within the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (178-185), but insights of both theoretical and immediate policy importance might be derived by testing these ideas against North Atlantic Treaty Organization case studies.

My goal in writing this book was not to conclude the ongoing debates about interdependence, international reputation, and alliance politics. Nor was it to produce the definitive book on US alliances in Asia: given that these alliances persist, it is not yet possible to see and evaluate them in their full context. Instead, I sought to advance a theory of alliance interdependence that conflicted sharply with both the conventional wisdom of deterrence theory and more recent reputation skeptic scholarship, but better appreciated what states actually want from their allies. In doing so, I also wanted to improve our collective understanding of the US alliance system in Asia: recognizing more clearly and deliberately the concerns of allies, rather than focusing on the imperatives of Washington, DC. These factors will be of critical importance if the great power competition, which now dominates the Asian security situation, results in crises: more than ever before, the US is dependent upon its allies in Asia, and Washington will have to manage these relationships ever more carefully. My book does not provide cookie-cutter approaches to difficult policy challenges, but I hope that it helps scholars and policymakers to ask the right questions about interdependence, and thus more accurately understand the stakes of future crises.