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Jason W. Davidson. ***America's Entangling Alliances: 1778 to the Present.*** Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781647120283 (hardcover, $104.95); 9781647120290 (paperback, $34.95).

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Teachers of United States foreign relations know that the myth of isolationism is strong among their students. The axioms of presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson about steering clear of permanent and entangling alliances hold great power in the discourse of U.S. history. Modern scholarship, though, shows clearly that the U.S. has long engaged in active and often complex foreign relations with the wider world in pursuit of real or perceived national interests: from war and peace with indigenous peoples in North America since the colonial era to missile strikes in the Middle East under modern Republican and Democratic administrations.[1] Many of these actions were often unilateral, but alliances and other agreements with other countries like France in 1778 or Latin American states in 1823 or the United States' twentieth-century coalitions were not unusual. For scholars today, the question is not so much 'did the U.S. entangle itself with others' but 'how' and 'why.'

Jason W. Davidson's *America's Entangling Alliances: 1778 to the Present* is a useful addition to this scholarship and a good tool for teachers and researchers alike. Written from a decidedly political science perspective. Davidson engages in a meaningful way with the more recent standard U.S. foreign relations historiography, especially surveys by scholars and writers like George Herring, Walter McDougall, and Walter Russell Mead.[2] Refreshingly, Davidson makes use of a variety of published primary sources and online archival resources to ground his analysis in an evidentiary record historians will appreciate.

A political scientist by training, Davidson approaches his analysis of U.S. entailment using neoclassical realist theory. Davidson's definition of neoclassical realism is that the theory "argues that in an anarchic international system, states' behavior is driving by the distribution of relative power and threats to security" (11). Using that theory, Davidson sets out to conduct a "comparative study of U.S. alliance decisions covering the entire period since the Declaration of Independence" (6). This is a lot to do in 200 pages, so he had to make some tough decisions about what to include and what narrative connections to make. Nevertheless, Davidson provides a convincing argument that the kind of alliance the U.S. government

[1] See, for instance, Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philips War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philips War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Melani McAllister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[2] George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston: Mariner, 1997); Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (London: Routledge, 2002).

entered into depended on what stage of power the U.S. was in at the time and its leaders' assessment of the threat(s) the U.S. faced.

According to Davidson's framework, there are five power stages that coincide with three kinds of likely alliances: Lesser power/Military Coalition, Regional power/Defense Pact, Great power in multipolarity/Military Coalition, Great power in bipolarity/Defense Pact, and Unipole/Security Partnership. The threat assessments Davidson lays out range from threat to survival during the lesser power stage to stability projection via allies and burden-sharing in the unipole stage. This breaks down as such: In the lesser power stage, the U.S. sought military coalitions because of threats to survival. In the regional power stage, the likely alliance was a defense pact because of threats to security and regional interests. During great power multipolarity, U.S. policy makers sought military coalitions again because the public and congress feared imminent threats to U.S. security. During great power bipolarity, Davidson argues that the U.S. often sought defense pacts again because of perceived threats to the state. Finally, in a period of unipole power for the U.S., policy makers will seek security partnerships for burden sharing purposes and projection of stability.

When looked at with a chronology of U.S. alliances from 1778 to 2019, Davidson highlights an oscillation between military coalition and defense pact until the early 1990s when security partnerships take over, except for when NATO is involved as an important defense pact. Thankfully, Davidson includes helpful charts that make his categorization and the chronology easily digestible. These categorizations are interesting and certainly provide a way of thinking about U.S. development from a small post-colonial state to a dominating world power and how the needs of the U.S. changed over time. To establish his categorization of power, Davidson makes use of the Composite Index of National Capability and the University of Denver's International Futures Project.[3]

Davidson's book then unfolds chronologically examining the disparate alliances and international agreements the U.S. has entered over time. Each chapter focuses on a stage of power and the dominate kind of alliance the U.S. sought. Chapter Two looks at the U.S. as a "lesser" power looking for alliances to secure survival, Chapter Three positions the U.S. as a regional power establishing defense pacts, Chapter Four addresses the U.S. in a multipolar world and its military coalitions, Chapter Five looks at Cold War bipolarity and U.S. defense pacts, and Chapter Six takes on U.S. unipolarity and security partnerships. Some of the key examples Davidson uses are the usual suspects like the alliance with France in 1778, the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, the World War I and World War II agreements, and NATO. Others, like the 1842 Tyler Doctrine with Hawaii or the 1846 Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty make for useful examples using lesser-known formal American engagement with other states. The Tyler Doctrine established a commitment to secure the independence of Hawaii and the Bidlack-Mallarino "entailed a U.S. guarantee of the sovereignty of Gran Colombia (New Granada) and of the international right of transit across the Isthmus of Panama" (50).

Since Davidson does not merely consider formal treaties and alliances, but more informal agreements like doctrines as well, he spends a good part of his introduction establishing his definitions. He is also clear that he is trying to bridge narrative history and purse analysis. At times, though, Davidson could have done more to make a narrative case connecting some of his analysis. For instance, he does not connect the original Monroe Doctrine to Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary. The book also spends very little time on the War of 1898 and how the U.S. became entangled in the Caribbean. While Davidson rightly argues that 1898 was a time when the U.S. government did not think it needed alliances to achieve its ends, that war and its after effects are important to how the U.S. sought engagement and agreements with Latin American countries that continue to have impacts today.

[3] See https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities/national-material-capabilities-v4-0 and https://pardee.du.edu/international-futures-ifs-modeling-project.

For each example of Davidson's power/threat approach, he raises and argues against an alternative explanation of collective identity: the idea that the U.S. government entered into a particular agreement or alliance because of shared values.[4] Davidson does a good job showing that despite U.S. policymakers' pronouncements of equality and democracy, racist attitudes and short-term acceptance of non-democratic governments by allies has been a feature and not a bug in the program of U.S. foreign relations.[5]

This book calls to mind the current debate over U.S. retrenchment, especially during the Trump Administration. Davidson makes clear connections to the debates that have played out in the media about the Trump administration's deteriorating relationships with America's allies and, especially, NATO. Davidson points out, though, that despite Trump's bluster, the U.S. did not pull out of its alliances or treaty obligations. Davidson ends his study by looking forward. He sees an "emerging bipolarity" with China and projects that the U.S. will likely seek new allies (he notes Vietnam and India) to help keep China at bay. (199-200). Last, Davidson writes that "America's future is to remain entangled." (200)

Davidson's book is a clear and concise overview of how and why the United States, since its beginning, has sought out and achieved entangling alliances with other powers in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

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[4] On collective identity, Davidson cites, Thomas Risse-Kappen "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security,* ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 357-399.

[5] On race and U.S. foreign policy see, for example, Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Kramer, "Shades of Sovereignty: Racialized Power, the United States, and the World," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, eds. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 245-270.