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REVIEW BY LUIS SIMÓN, VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

Iain D. Henry's recent article in *International Security*, "What Allies Want – Reconsidering Loyalty, Reliability and Alliance Interdependence," examines whether and how states judge their patron's behavior towards other allies. Henry argues that alliance interdependence —in which what happens in one alliance can affect others— exists but is not determined by any sort of 'innate loyalty.' Rather than loyalty, what allies want to see in a patron's behavior is reliability, i.e., not posing a risk of abandonment or entrapment. "What Allies Want" provides an important contribution to our understanding of alliance interdependence and adds an important perspective to the broader discussion on the impact of reputation and credibility in international security.

Scholars have been long preoccupied with the impact of reputation in international politics. Much of the literature on reputation is linked to deterrence, and the question of whether a state's reputation for resolve enhances its credibility vis-à-vis its adversaries in so-called direct deterrence relationships.[1] Another relevant side of the reputation-credibility-deterrence nexus relates to the problem of extended deterrence, i.e., a patron's efforts to prevent an adversary from attacking its allies (protégés).[2] Early works focused on the centrality of reputation in deterrence, and international politics more broadly. Thus, scholars argued that states might be ready to engage in certain conflicts even when their direct interests were not at stake so as to preserve their reputation vis-à-vis adversaries (or allies), who were allegedly scrutinizing their every move.[3]

The notion that there is some direct or meaningful link between reputation and behaviour has come under intense fire in recent decades. A so-called second wave in the study of reputation is premised on the notion that actors do not acquire reputations and that observers do not rely on their past actions when assessing credibility.[4] Emphasizing psychological

[1] See, for example, Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

[2] Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Jesse C. Johnson and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Defense Pacts: A Prescription for Peace?" *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7:1 (2011): 45-65; Jesse C. Johnson, Brett Ashley Leeds, and Ahra Wu, "Capability, Credibility, and Extended General Deterrence," *International Interactions* 41:2 (2015): 309-336.

[3] See, for example, Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*; Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; Barry Nalebuff, "Rational Deterrence in an Imperfect World," *World Politics* 43:3 (1991): 313-335; R. Harrison Wagner, "Rationality and Misperception in Deterrence Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4:2 (1992): 115-141; Todd S. Sechser, "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power," *International Organization* 64:4 (2010): 627-660.

[4] The three waves are discussed in Robert Jervis, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Don Casler, "Redefining the Debate over Reputation and Credibility in International Security: Promises and Limitations of New Scholarship," *World Politics* 67:1 (2021): 167-203; here 168.

factors, Jonathan Mercer argues that "fighting to create a reputation for resolution with adversaries is unnecessary, and fighting to create a reputation for resolution with allies is unwise."[5] Daryl Press also contends that reputation is not worth fighting for because the credibility of a military threat is ultimately determined by the interests that the state issuing the threat has in a specific crisis.[6] In other words, the fact that a state is (not) willing to fight to defend its interests or its ally/ies in a given crisis tells us very little about whether it is likely to do so in a different crisis.

A third wave of research has pushed back against the second, by insisting that actors can indeed develop reputations and decision-makers use reputation to assess other actors' likely behaviour in the future. Critically, the third wave focuses on delimiting the scope conditions of reputation by trying to ascertain under which circumstances it is likely to be more or less salient, and disaggregating across different types of reputation.[7] Thus, for instance, Roseanne W. McManus argues that a state's reputation for resolve hinges largely on whether its leaders enjoy a strong political position at home and can overcome potential veto players or other domestic political challenges.[8] Challenging the traditionally state-centric study of reputation in international politics, Danielle Lupton argues that reputation should be associated to individual leaders, not states, and that the former can develop reputations for resolve independently from the states they serve.[9] For her part, Vesna Danilovic points to the need to expand the notion of inherent credibility of extended threats to reflect the importance of the ties between a major power and the entire region where a given protégé is located.[10] In her words, even if "a particular state may not have great significance for a major power, it may still be important if it is located in the region of critical strategic importance for the major power's interests."[11] This means that protégés should look at how reputation intersects with other important factors, namely the specific importance that a patron assigns to different regions.[12]

The third wave of reputation scholarship in international security has added much granularity to our understanding of how and under which circumstances reputation and credibility matter, and what this may mean for (extended) deterrence and "assurance," i.e., a protégé's perception of the credibility of a patron's extended deterrence guarantees.[13] To be sure, the third wave is not free of criticism. Notably, Robert Jervis, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Don Casler contend that there is a tendency to

[5] Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 228.

[6] Daryl Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). For another sceptical view, see Ted Hopf, *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965-1990* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[7] Jervis, Yarhi-Milo, and Casler, "Redefining the Debate over Reputation."

[8] Roseanne W. McMannus, *Statements of Resolve: Achieving Coercive Credibility in International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[9] Danielle Lupton, *Reputation for Resolve: How Leaders Signal Determination in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

[10] Vesna Danilovic, "The Sources of Threat Credibility in Extended Deterrence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45:3 (June 2001): 341-369, here 348.

[11] Danilovic, "The Sources of Threat Credibility," 348.

[12] On this see Tongfi Kim and Luis Simón, "A Reputation vs. Prioritization Tradeoff: Unpacking Allied Perceptions of U.S. Extended Deterrence in Distant Regions," Working Paper.

[13] On the differences between extended deterrence and assurance see Michael Howard, "Reassurance and deterrence: western defense in the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs* 61:2 (Winter 1982-3): 309-324. See also David S. Yost, "Assurance and US Extended Deterrence in NATO," *International Affairs* 85:4 (2009):755-780.

focus on situational factors at the expense of dispositional ones, and that the psychological mechanisms that inform the perceptions of deterrees and protégés remain particularly underresearched.[14] Notwithstanding the validity of this point, the third wave's main contribution stands: reputation matters, but the extent to which it does is contingent on a myriad of factors, including psychology, the strategic context or balance of power, as well as domestic politics.

Going forward, one of the areas that arguably offers much potential relates to allied perceptions of the reputation-credibility-deterrence nexus. Allied perceptions are relatively underresearched if compared to adversaries'. Hence the relevance of Henry's "What Allies Want," and other recently published similar articles.[15]

The study of allied perceptions is theoretically and empirically promising as well as policy relevant, perhaps increasingly so. It is theoretically promising because the political and psychological mechanisms that inform an ally's perception of a protégé's reputation are very different from those that affect an adversary's perceptions and calculations. In no small part, this has to do with the fact that a protégé's threats to retaliate against an attack on its home soil are inherently more credible than a threat to retaliate against an attack on an ally. This reminds us of Cold War debates about how, in a nuclear crisis, the United States could hesitate to risk Boston or Washington for the sake of defending Bonn or Paris.[16] Surely, the element of contingency, and the need to look at how reputation-related concerns matter relative to other factors, becomes even more evident in a context of extended deterrence. Scholars could investigate how allied perceptions of reputation relate to the so-called alliance dilemma, i.e. how to strike the right balance between mitigating an ally's abandonment concerns and avoiding the risk of entrapment.[17] Likewise, the reputation-credibility-deterrence nexus may also shed light on the emerging debate about an ally's decision to choose between loyalty to its protégé, hedging (i.e. improving political relations with the challenger or investing in its own capabilities) or exiting (i.e. leaving the alliance and declaring neutrality).[18]

The study of allied perceptions of the reputation-credibility-deterrence nexus is also empirically promising. While research on the impact of reputation in international security is typically U.S.-centric, there is a wealth of other cases that are often left to historians, and actually offer rich empirical material to probe emerging hypotheses on the link between reputation and other situational and dispositional factors. In particular, by expanding our empirical base to examine allied perceptions of reputation in different historical and geographical contexts, and under different configurations in the global and regional balances of power (i.e., multipolarity, bipolarity, unipolarity), we may also be able to ascertain to what extent an actor's psychological disposition may be linked to situational factors. That said, the United States is certainly a most interesting case. Because of its numerous and extensive alliance commitments across multiple regions, U.S. allies have many opportunities to observe U.S. behaviour towards other allies, both in other regions as well as in their home regions. This underscores the policy relevance of research on allied perceptions.

As Russia and China intensify their challenges in Asia and Europe, U.S. allies in each region will face important tradeoffs, which will test their relationships with the Untied States as well as with each other. This became already evident during the Barack Obama administration, when the rebalance to Asia and, later, speculation about a 'pivot back' to Europe following

[14] Jervis, Yarhi-Milo, and Casler. 'Redefining the Debate Over Reputation and Credibility in International Security."

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

[16] See, e.g., Elbridge A. Colby, "The United States and Discriminate Nuclear Options during the Cold War", in Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry M. Kartchner, eds., *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014): 49-79.

[17] On the alliance dilemma see Snyder, *Alliance Politics.*

[18] See Jasen J. Castillo and Alexander B. Downes, "Loyalty, hedging and exit: How weaker alliance partners respond to the rise of new threats," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30 July 2020.

Russia's annexation of Crimea, led U.S. allies in both regions to weigh reputation against prioritization.[19] If anything, this problem became ever more salient under President Donald Trump, who raised questions about the value of U.S. alliances. While President Joe Biden's promise to put alliances at the centre of U.S. grand strategy may be partly reassuring for allies, the question of how to prioritise between regions and allies will arguably remain a challenging one for the United States in the years to come.[20] And that means U.S. allies will need to evaluate reputation against prioritization, among other factors.

Henry's *What Allies Want* provides an important contribution to the study of allied perceptions. Henry takes issue with the assumption that a state's character is "judged through displays of innate loyalty: if a state is disloyal to one ally, then this will create a reputation for disloyalty, which will cause other allies to doubt the state's reliability', and act accordingly by punishing their ally" (45). In his view, states are aware of the contingent nature of reputation, and the fact that their interests are driven by the specificities of a given crisis. Because states are inherently pragmatic, when they observe their patron's behavior in another alliance, all they hope to see is proof that the patron's interests align with their own. In some cases, this will mean they will want the patron to fulfil its commitments to another ally (i.e., to stay loyal). In other cases, however, they will want the patron to stay disloyal, so as to avoid its entrapment elsewhere.

To test his theory of alliance reliability, Henry examines the First Taiwan Crisis. The crisis began in September 1954, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) launched an attack against the offshore island of Quemoy, then controlled by the Republic of China (ROC), and concluded in April 1955, when President Dwight Eisenhower encouraged an ROC withdrawal in exchange for stationing a U.S. Marine division on Formosa, and expanding the U.S.-ROC alliance. Through this case study, Henry shows that even though U.S. decision-makers were worried about being perceived as disloyal to the ROC, other U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific region as well as Europe (notably the United Kingdom) actually encouraged the United States to compel an ROC withdrawal from disputed territories, and thus reduce the risk of conflict with the PRC.

Henry's article represents an important contribution to our understanding of the mechanics of alliance interdependence, not least as it relates to the reputation-credibility-deterrence nexus. Importantly, it offers relevant hypotheses against which new research can be tested. At the same time however, it leaves some gaps. To be sure, Henry convincingly shows that an ally may have good reasons to oppose the patron's commitment to other allies in a crisis situation. However, his theory does not help us to understand a protégé's perception of a patron's commitment towards other allies in peacetime, which is arguably more important to understanding allied perceptions of extended deterrence. Moreover, while the United States signed a mutual defense treaty with the Republic of China in December 1954, the applicability of the treaty to the crisis that Henry studies was left deliberately ambiguous, as Henry himself admits (65). This raises questions about this case's qualification as an alliance-related puzzle, and its broader applicability.

Last but not least, while a patron being unreliable (i.e., by being too timid or too aggressive) in a distant region may be undesirable to an ally, it can be acceptable as long as the patron's resources are available to the protégé. Further research should therefore examine how allies weigh reputation and reliability against other factors (notably prioritization) in peacetime, and do so in the context of existing alliances.

Luis Simón is professor and director at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy of the Brussels School of Governance (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), and director of the Brussels office of the Elcano Royal Institute. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of London and an M.A. from Sciences Po-Paris. He was postdoctoral fellow at the Saltzman Institute for War and Peace Studies (Columbia University). His research has appeared in *Security Studies*, *International Affairs*, the

[19] Kim and Simón, 'A Reputation vs. Prioritization Tradeoff.'

[20] See, e.g., Linde Desmaele and Luis Simón, 'East Asia First, Europe Second: Picking Regions in U.S. Grand Strategy,' War on the Rocks (blog), 7 August 2019.

Journal of Strategic Studies, *Geopolitics*, *Contemporary Security Policy, The Washington Quarterly*, *Survival*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, among other places.