

The Goals and Tactics of the ‘Lesser’ Allies

Introduction

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On July 9, 2016, NATO decided to strengthen its deterrence and defence posture at the Warsaw Summit. The historical decision to establish an enhanced forward presence (EFP) at the Eastern frontier of the alliance was symbolic of NATO’s determination to deter any threat from the East and to defend frontier countries in the Baltic area. Based on this decision, four multinational, battalion-sized battlegroups were deployed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in 2017, in order to play the role of a “trip wire” that would trigger an immediate response. This new deployment reaffirmed the dual purpose of the alliance’s military posture, i.e., to deter enemies and reassure allies at the same time. It is reminiscent of the US forward based system along the NATO border during the Cold War.

We may argue that since the Crimean crisis NATO has been going back to a traditional, Cold-War type military alliance. NATO attempted to highlight the political role of the alliance right after the Cold War. For example, the Alliance’s New Strategic Concept, adopted in November 1991, highlighted NATO’s political relevance in providing a stable foundation for post-communist Europe. NATO’s Strategic Concept of 1999, adopted in Washington D.C., also put more emphasis on the alliance’s relevance in crisis management than in collective defence. The Lisbon Strategic Concept of 2010, adopted after the Georgian crisis in 2008, still called for a continued dialogue with Russia, and declared that it “does not consider any country to be its adversary¹.” In this way, NATO’s policy of “strategic patience” vis-à-vis Moscow was kept almost intact in order to avoid the risk of stimulating further Russian expansionism.

At the Wales Summit of 2014, NATO shifted up a gear to develop its readiness to adapt the new security settings. Russia’s annexation of Crimea and conflicts in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 revealed Russia’s desire for expansionism and aggression and led to NATO’s change of posture from a “Security Community” stressing political cooperation to a more proactive role.

In Wales, NATO approved the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to ensure that the Alliance was ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. It also agreed to “establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a new Allied joint force that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges².” However, the new members of NATO did not believe they had gained

¹ The 2010 Strategic Concept “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68580.htm, para. 16.

² Wales Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales,

enough commitment from the alliance to act for their security. Since VJTF is responsible for both collective defence and crisis management in out-of-area missions, too, the impact for the security of the Eastern Flank of NATO was limited.

As described above, the enhanced forward presence on the Northeastern Flank, enshrined in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, was a watershed of NATO's deterrence and defence posture; the four battalion-sized battlegroups, stationed on a "permanently" rotational basis, were to serve as a "trip-wire" to deter Russia. This initiative underlined the pivotal role of NATO's collective defence, set out in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. In this context, NATO needs to accelerate a concerted process of building up allied military capability to meet new security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic region.

1. Objectives: What can This Project Achieve?

To comprehend NATO's unique decision to strengthen its deterrence and defence posture, we need to re-examine the allied consultation process leading up to the Warsaw Summit.

At the Warsaw Summit, NATO not only declined to embark on a new Strategic Concept that would allow it to adapt to the new security environment after the Crimean crisis, but also admitted the continued need for dialogue and cooperation with Russia. The Warsaw decisions were the result of persistent negotiation and coordination among allies with conflicting interests. As such, they were the result of compromise with and accommodation for the various demands of the allies.

This project aims to perform a comparative study of alliance management, with a focus on the negotiation process leading up to NATO's Warsaw Summit. The contributing chapters shed light on the goals and negotiating tactics of the European NATO member states. In this project, five member countries, i.e., Germany, the UK, France, Poland and Romania, have been selected in order to make a contrast between "Old Europe" and "New Europe."

The basic theme of this project is the goals and tactics of the 'lesser' allies³. The key questions for this study are as follows. What goal did each member state have leading up to the Warsaw Summit? What did each member state expect from the US? How did each member state shape its own goal from a mid-term perspective? How different were their goals? Were the differences caused by geographic factors? To what degree were their demands reflected in the final decision? What kind of tactics did they adopt during the negotiation process, and which ones were successful?

This comparative study of the Junior Partners focuses on how the partners exercise their influence on stronger allies and among allies. This project also attempts to investigate the conditions necessary for 'lesser' allies to have an impact on negotiations. Through this investigation, we can explore

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?mode=pressrelease

³ "Lesser ally" and "junior partner" here mean the weaker states in the asymmetric alliance. Of course, the UK, France, Germany and Japan are great powers but their capabilities are limited compared to their "stronger" and "senior" partner, the United States.

some policy implications for the ‘lesser’ allies, including Japan, to maximize their impact on alliance coordination.

To explore the questions above, this project focuses on five major European countries, i.e., Germany, the UK, France, Poland and Romania. These countries are as strategically important for the US as Japan. Germany, the UK and France have been junior partners from “Old Europe” since the beginning of the Cold War. In addition, Germany and the UK are the “framework nations” of multinational troops for Estonia and Lithuania, with France providing logistical support. Poland and Romania are potential major powers in “New Europe” and beneficiaries of troop deployment.

2. A Framework to Investigate the Tactics of the ‘Lesser’ Allies

The possible negotiation tactics of the ‘lesser’ allies can be categorized into the following seven types based on previous IR studies.

(1) Tactic #1: Being a Loyal Ally

Robert Keohane has pointed out that to be a *loyal ally* is “the simplest role” for the ‘lesser’ allies in dealing with a stronger ally⁴. Showing they are valuable and trustworthy through contributing to the alliance or supporting the operations led by a senior ally is a way for ‘lesser’ allies to gain a greater voice by reinforcing their value in the eyes of the ‘bigger’ ally. For example, the Visegrad Four (V4) countries actively contributed to NATO’s Balkan missions in the late 1990’s in order to gain a good reputation within NATO. As a result, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became the “first wave” of NATO expansion. Thereafter, “New Europe” enthusiastically supported the Iraq War of 2003, both militarily and diplomatically, to show their loyalty to the US and thereby obtain NATO membership. As these examples indicate, ‘lesser’ allies may possibly gain influence by supporting the operations of the alliance and/or a stronger ally, and by winning the reputation of a strategically important partner.

(2) Tactic #2: Asserting Legitimacy

After investigating asymmetric negotiations between the stronger and the weaker negotiating party, William M. Habeeb pointed out that when weaker states make legitimate claims, they can win concessions from the strong since they can gain support from other countries and impose a higher cost on the strong country⁵. How can we interpret this finding in the context of an asymmetric alliance? If claims from ‘lesser’ allies clearly correspond to the objective of the alliance, they will enjoy support, and possibly extract a concession, from the strong, since the other allies would support the weaker allies, regarding their claims as legitimate.

⁴ Robert Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies,” *Foreign Policy*, Vol.2, 1970, p. 167.

⁵ William Mark Habeeb, *Power and Tactics in International Negotiation: How Weak Nations Bargain with Strong Nations*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p. 134.

One caveat is that threat perceptions and the objectives of the alliance become very diverse after the Cold War. In these complex circumstances, it might be difficult for alliance members to share clear objectives; thereafter the legitimacy of a claim, and therefore this tactic, might not be an effective tool.

(3) Tactic #3: Threat of Withholding Support

This tactic involves ‘lesser’ allies influencing their ‘senior’ allies by threatening to withhold their diplomatic and military support if their needs or requests are not complied with⁶. This tactic is especially effective during a crisis since the allies’ assistance is essential even for the superpowers to prevail against an enemy. Obtaining support from other allies can be a source of legitimacy as an alliance leader during peace time, too; losing support is harmful for superpowers in the long term.

Threatening to withhold the provision of “foreign bases” is an effective asset for ‘lesser’ allies to restrain the activities and policies of major powers⁷. Foreign bases act as outposts for a stronger ally to act globally. If a ‘lesser’ ally refuses access to such bases, they may be able to limit the freedom of action of the stronger ally or stop their activities altogether. In addition, a high level of integration and commitment helps ‘lesser’ allies to restrain the stronger. The more integrated the bases are to the strategy of the strong allies, the more influence ‘lesser’ allies gain.

(4) Tactic #4: Blackmail of the Weak

There are two types of tactics regarding Blackmail of the Weak: Brinkmanship and Threat to Defect. While Brinkmanship entails a ‘lesser’ ally threatening to alienate itself from a superpower because of coercion by a potential enemy, the Threat to Defect rather involves autonomous alienation by the ‘lesser’ ally in the absence of coercion by a potential enemy.

Brinkmanship (Utilizing Weakness)

Brinkmanship is a tactic used by ‘lesser’ allies. It involves exploiting the danger that the ‘lesser’ ally might become involved in a conflict⁸. By asserting they might become occupied by potential enemy if not aided sufficiently, ‘lesser’ allies can improve their position vis-à-vis the stronger ally and gain influence. If a pro-alliance local government is collapsing due to the apparent lack of public support, they can apply this brinkmanship tactic by blackmailing a senior ally with threats of losing the ‘lesser’ ally’s support or losing the ally in its entirety to another country.

⁶ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Independence*, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962, p.139; Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 322-329. However, Snyder pointed out that when the restrainer is dependent on the alliance, “the attempt is ineffective” since the stronger ally know the ‘lesser’ ally cannot continue the threat because of the fear of abandonment.

⁷ Liska, pp. 143-146.

⁸ Thomas C Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, 1966, p. 99.

In this respect, this tactic utilizes a “weakness” as a source of power. Especially when they confront an enemy threat, ‘lesser’ allies can exploit their dangerous position and gain a greater voice⁹. However, this tactic would not be credible unless the ‘lesser’ ally was near the enemy, given that the threat of the enemy would decrease with distance.

Threat to Defect (Get Closer to the Enemy)

As Glenn H. Snyder wrote, “an obvious method of restraint” regarding one’s allies “is to threaten defection or realignment.” Thus, client states might threaten to defect unless their demands are satisfied by the alliance leader or the alliance as a whole. From this perspective, this tactic utilizes the threat of alienation including neutralization as a source of influence¹⁰.

The availability of alternatives offers the ‘lesser’ allies’ more influence over the negotiation process. When the ‘lesser’ allies have alternatives including realignment with other states or building up autonomous capability to defend themselves, they are less dependent on the alliance and they have greater say in negotiations, though this kind of situation is not so common because the cost of realignment is significant (especially under a bipolar situation¹¹). However, ‘lesser’ allies can keep stronger allies in check by improving relations with, or getting close to, a potential enemy.

(5) Tactic #5: Warning to Decrease a State’s Credibility as an Alliance Leader

Arnold Wolfers has used the analogy of a “hub and spokes” to describe the US alliance network around the world. This analogy highlights the fact that a danger to any ally would be communicated to the entire network¹². Commitment to one ally affects the credibility of commitment to other allies when the stronger has a “hub and spokes” alliance system.

‘Lesser’ allies could use this kind of linkage among allies as leverage in the negotiation process. If the alliance leader or the alliance itself does not accept an urgent or legitimate request from a ‘lesser’ ally, the other allies might think that their request would be rejected in a similar fashion. ‘Lesser’ allies can gain more influence by pointing out this risk of decrease in credibility and cohesion among the allies as a means to have their demands considered or implemented. Thus, the multilateral network of the alliance gives the ‘lesser’ allies influence at the negotiating table.

(6) Tactic #6: Insisting on Consultation

⁹ “The more the alliance leader feels threatened by the opponent, the greater the bargaining power of the small allies.” Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 22.

¹⁰ Snyder, p. 322.

¹¹ Liska, p. 140.

¹² Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*, Johns Hopkins Press, 1962, 210-211.

Thomas Risse-Kappen has emphasized that the sense of community and consultation norms enables 'lesser' allies to affect the decision of the alliance¹³. If liberal democracies form an alliance, rules of cooperation and various procedures are also built to insure timely consultation. If the consultation norm is codified and institutionalized, consultation procedures must be followed.

'Lesser' allies may be able to use this norm as a source of influence. They can insist on consultation among the allies in order to avoid a negative decision. Through this process, they can impose restraints and limitations by pointing to the various undesirable consequences that will arise if they are not consulted. This is a less provocative or coercive way to affect the course of negotiation than threatening defection or withholding support.

(7) Tactic #7: Forming a Coalition of the 'Weak'

This is a tactic used by 'lesser' allies to influence the negotiation process with a senior ally or among allies by force of numbers. 'Weaker' allies, though less influential when facing a senior ally alone, can try to increase their leverage by building a united front against the alliance leader. If the allies that share interests and objectives form a coalition, they can put pressure upon the stronger ally¹⁴.

A coalition of the 'weak' might develop into a "coalition of the loyal weak" or "anti-stronger coalition of the weak." If the coalition of the 'lesser' allies is loyal to the stronger ally, it might evolve into a coalition of loyal allies. Conversely, if it utilizes the possibility of alienating from the stronger ally as a threat, it might evolve into an anti-stronger coalition. For example, NATO member states and aspirant countries were divided over the Iraq War of 2003 and split into two; namely, the supporting states which signed the "Letter of Eight" and later the letter from the Vilnius group, and the opposing states which criticized the US-led war in line with Russia and China. The former can be regarded as a "coalition of the loyal weak" and the latter as an "anti-superpower coalition of the weak."

The chart below indicates the characteristics of the seven tactics. The horizontal line shows whether the negotiation tactics would be applied independently or collectively. The vertical line shows whether the 'lesser' ally getse closer to or becomes alienated from the superpower.

This classification provides a starting point to study the negotiating tactics of 'lesser allies' in the decision-making processes at the NATO Warsaw Summit. Investigations may reveal which tactics were effective or highlight some new tactics that allow a 'lesser' ally to influence stronger ally or the alliance as a whole.

In the following section, the US policy leading up to the NATO Summit Warsaw will be reviewed,

¹³ Risse-Kappen, pp. 34-37. Snyder also wrote "many alliance treaties explicitly stipulate consultation." Snyder, pp. 320-324, 361-363.

¹⁴ Risse-Kappen, p. 22; Habeeb, p. 133; I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin eds., *Power and Negotiation*, University of Michigan Press, 2002, p.258-259.

and then the goals and tactics of each European ally will be investigated.

Chart : Negotiating Tactics of 'Lesser' Allies

