From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation

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FROM BALANCE TO CONCERT:
A Study of International
Security Cooperation

By ROBERT JERVIS*

INTERNATIONAL anarchy and the security dilemma make co-operation among sovereign states difficult. Indeed, when international politics is viewed from this perspective, the central question is not, "Why do wars occur?" but "Why do wars not occur more often?"[1] We should therefore explore the conditions under which the major states try to gain security through joint efforts. What is important here is that these conditions can be derived from the theory of cooperation under the security dilemma.[2]

The first point is quite obvious. There are no cases of world government, world federation, or even a worldwide pluralistic security community. The closest thing is the concert system, which has occurred only three times in modern history—from 1815 to 1854 (although in its strongest form it only lasted until 1822), 1919 to 1920, and 1945 to 1946. The term "Concert of Europe" is often applied to late 19th-century international politics, but the pursuit of self-interest was not sufficiently transformed to justify this label. The two 20th-century concerts were very brief, and one can argue that they did not really come into existence

[1] For the concept of the security dilemma, see John Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2 (January 1950), 157-80; Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951); Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 83-90. In *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), Kenneth Waltz noted that using anarchy as the starting point implies that it is peace, not war, that needs to be explained.

[2] For general discussions of the problems of cooperation in the absence of supernational sovereignty, see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (January 1978), 167-214; Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). For treatments of this problem from the perspective of international law, see Gerhard Niemeyer, *Law Without Force* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941); Michael Barkun, *Law Without Sanctions* (New Haven: Yale University Press); Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality, and the Relations of States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Following Rules," unpub. (Columbia University, 1984).

at all. At a minimum, there was a short period of extensive cooperation, and many statesmen and observers had at least some hopes for a longer-lasting concert.

The best example we have comes from the years immediately after 1815. In essence, the concert was characterized by an unusually high and self-conscious level of cooperation among the major European powers. The states did not play the game as hard as they could; they did not take advantage of others' short-run vulnerabilities. In repeated plays of the Prisoners' Dilemma, then, each state cooperated in the expectation that the others would do the same. Multilateral and self-restrained methods of handling their problems were preferred to the more common unilateral and less restrained methods.[3]

More frequently, states are restrained only externally, by what others are doing, or by the anticipation of what others will do if they act against the others' interests. This pattern characterizes the balance of power. Under the balance of power, a number of restraints are evinced: no state gains dominance, wars do not become total, unconditional surrenders are rare, the territory of losing states is not divided up among the winners, and usually the loser is soon reintegrated into the system. These restraints arise from the clashing self-interests of the individual states. They will work together to prevent any state from dominating; but because today's enemy may be tomorrow's ally and vice versa, it does not make sense to be too harsh with the defeated state. Indeed, since each member of the winning coalition worries about excessive growth in its partners' power and fears that they may be planning a separate peace with the adversary, there may be competition among the allies to see who can be most reasonable toward the loser. Although the results of these competitive dynamics are restrained as states block each other's ambitions in order to maintain their own power, it is hard to see this situation as mutual cooperation and an escape from anarchy and the security dilemma. In fact, the latter are the very forces that drive the system.

[3] Jervis, "Security Regimes," *International Organization* 36 (Spring 1982), 362-68; Richard B. Elrod, "The Concert of Europe: A Fresh Look at an International System," *World Politics* 28 (January 1976), 159-74; Paul Gordon Lauren, "Crisis Prevention in Nineteenth-Century Diplomacy," in Alexander George, with others, *Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 31-64. Paul Schroeder argues that, contrary to the commonly held view, Metternich did not fit the description of a concert statesman. See Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its Zenith* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 251-66 and throughout. Matthew Anderson argues that Alexander I is the best model of such a statesman who had "a real sense of European responsibilities and a willingness to make sacrifices to meet them." See Anderson, "Russia and the Eastern Question, 1821-41," in Alan Sked, ed., *Europe's Balance of Power, 1815-1848* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 82.

I. Assumptions of the Balance of Power and the Concert

The balance of power normally maintains itself. The fortunes of individual states rise and fall, but the system usually continues. Why does this continuity sometimes fail, and why does a concert system arise? The most obvious clue is provided by the timing of the concerts. They occur after, and only after, a major war fought to contain a potential hegemon. That is not a coincidence; such a war undermines the assumptions of a balance of power system and alters the perceived payoffs in a way that facilitates cooperation.

Although scholars disagree about many aspects of the balance of power, most would concur that the following four assumptions are crucial to its operation.[4] First, there must be several actors of relatively equal power. The minimum number is two (although perhaps one large power can be balanced against several smaller ones). Second, all states must want to survive. They may seek expansion, and usually some of them do. But the condition that is necessary—and usually easy to meet— is that they are not anxious to form a confederation with one another.[5] (These two assumptions do not enter into the rest of the analysis and so can be set aside.) Third, states must be able to ally with each other on the basis of short-run interests. To use Liska's term, there must not be many strong "alliance handicaps."[6] The states cannot be so constrained by ideologies, personal rivalries, and national hatreds that they are unable to align and realign on the basis of what is necessary to maintain their security. Finally, war must be a legitimate instrument of statecraft. That is not to say that it is welcome, but that states believe they can resort to the use of armed force if they believe it to be helpful.

Concert systems form after, and only after, a large war against a potential hegemon because such a conflict alters the last two assumptions and increases the incentives to cooperate. The war weakens the assumption of the absence of alliance handicaps in two ways. First, it leads to unusually close bonds among the states of the counter-hegemonic coalition, even though disputes and hostility within the coalition never disappear. It is hard to form such a coalition in the first place, and even

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[4] For a somewhat different list of criteria, see Inis Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), 90-91.

[5] The frequent argument that the balance of power assumes that states seek to maximize their power is unnecessary and leads to confusion. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 118, 126, and Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Ada Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1983), 514-15.

[6] George Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).

the shared experience of fighting a winning war does not remove all sources of friction. But it does tend to produce significant ties among allies. Probably more important in undermining the assumption of no alliance handicaps—and a factor contributing to the bonds among the allies—is the belief that the defeated hegemon is not a normal state. Under the balance of power, all states are potentially fit alliance partners; none is seen as much more evil than any other. But a war against a potential hegemon alters this belief. France after the Napoleonic wars and Germany after the two World Wars were not seen as similar to other states. Instead, they were thought to be ineradicably aggressive. The supposed causes for this aberrant behavior varied; reasons have been sought in national character and climate, in the importance of an authoritarian family structure, or in geography. Whatever the cause, the consequence is that the defeated state is seen as a potential danger in the future. Thus, even though the victors may reintegrate the losing state into the international system—as the powers did after the Napoleonic wars—a significant part of the purpose of doing so is to continue to restrain it.

The balance-of-power assumption that war is available as a normal policy instrument is also undermined by the conflict with a hegemon. Such a war will be long and destructive because it is fought against a powerful and strongly motivated state, and requires something close to total victory. After such an experience, the winners will be highly sensitive to the costs of war and will therefore be hesitant to resort to armed force unless their most vital interests are at stake. That is particularly true because in most cases the war against the hegemon will have been accompanied by, or will have led to, large-scale social unrest.

Concert systems decay, and indeed only the first of them lasted a significant length of time. Different factors were at work in each of the three periods, but in general the passage of time alters the unusual postwar situation and reestablishes the balance-of-power assumptions. As the memories of the war fade, the bonds erode that helped to hold the blocking coalition together. Friction tends to build as each state believes that it is sacrificing more for unity than are the others. Because of perceptual dynamics, each will remember the cases in which it has been restrained, and ignore or interpret differently cases in which others believe they acted for the common good. Fear of the state that had earlier sought hegemony is also likely to decline over time. Unless it gives continued evidence of unreasonable behavior, the others may well decide that it is not particularly evil or aggressive after all. The painful memories of the enormous costs of war also become dimmer as time

passes, and a new generation, with no first-hand experience of the war, comes to power.

II. Concert Systems and the Security Dilemma

The factors that explain the transformation of a balance-of-power system to a concert and back again can be seen in terms of variables that heighten or ameliorate the security dilemma. Four kinds of factors are important here: changes in the relations between offensive and defensive strategies, changes in the payoffs, changes in the ability to determine what others are doing and to make appropriate responses (transparency and timely warning), and changes in the estimates and predictions of what others will do.

A. OFFENSE-DEFENSE BALANCE

The virulence of the security dilemma is influenced by whether offensive weapons and strategies can be distinguished from defensive ones, and whether the offense is more potent than the defense.[7] Even when the states want to cooperate, they may not be able to when offensive and defensive motivations lead to the same threatening behavior, and when actors believe that it is better for them to take the offensive and strike the first blow rather than to let the other side strike first. Under such conditions, there is no way for states to increase their security without menacing others. When these conditions are reversed, however, mutual security is possible.

This argument has usually been applied to military systems,[8] but the logic holds in the political arena as well. Under the balance of power, offensive and defensive strategies are likely to be similar, and the offense often has the advantage as states can capitalize on the temporary weaknesses of others. Because many wars are short and decisive, there is an emphasis on making immediate gains and avoiding immediate losses. The obvious fear is that the latter will pyramid, and the obvious hope is that the former will set off a positive feedback. On the tactical level

[7] Jervis (fn. 2), 186-214; George Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New York: Wiley, 1977).

[8] Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9 (Summer 1984), 58-107; Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security* 9 (Summer 1984), 108-46; Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision-making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Jack Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28 (June 1984), 219-38; Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the Two World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

as well, offensive strategies are often appropriate. Taking others by surprise is perfectly legitimate, and likely to be efficacious.

Under the concert, the situation is quite different. The expectation that the system of mutual restraint will last means that there is less stress on making short-run gains and less fear of short-run losses. Because states are less likely to take advantage of temporary imbalances, they need not act quickly in the anticipation that if they do not, others will take advantage of them. Indeed, taking advantage of others (that is, failing to cooperate with them when they are cooperating with you) is likely to be self-defeating. It endangers the system and may well be met by negative sanctions from the other members. Under the balance-of-power system, others will oppose this type of behavior only if they believe that doing so is in their immediate self-interest. Under the concert, these calculations are diluted by the states' interest in maintaining a high level of cooperation. Thus, states that are too ambitious and seek excessive gains are likely to be opposed by a broader coalition acting to maintain the concert. In this situation, defensive political strategies are likely to be different from as well as more attractive than offensive ones.

Because a large counter-hegemonic war undermines the balance-of-power assumption that wars are a normal tool of statecraft, defensive strategies gain a further advantage. If war is seen as likely in the near future (as it often is under the balance of power), incentives may be high to undertake a preventive or a preemptive war. The alternative to going to war *now* may not be the maintenance of peace and the status quo, but being attacked later. If conditions are propitious, if the state's alliance structure is intact, if the temporary distribution of power is favorable, then a war is likely in a balance-of-power system, irrespective of the state's general intentions; the state need not seek expansion in order to initiate a war. By contrast, when states think that war can be avoided for a long period of time, even conditions conducive to war are less likely to lead to fighting because the payoffs for not initiating conflict are higher than they are when war is used as a normal policy instrument. Thus, if states are willing to live with the status quo, they are freer to follow defensive policies.

When defensive policies are more effective than offensive ones, states that support the status quo need not seek protection through expansion; when offensive goals are sought by policies that differ from those used to reach defensive ones, it is easier for status quo powers to identify each other. By and large, these expectations are borne out by international politics in the period between the Napoleonic and the Crimean wars. It seems that at that time, two common problems inhibiting cooperation

among status quo states were less pressing. Only infrequently did states have to gain their own security at the expense of that of others, and identification errors were relatively rare—in part because of the differentiation between offensive and defensive postures. These conditions facilitated cooperation both by reducing the number of cases in which status quo powers mistook each other for aggressors and by making states less fearful of the danger that what was intended as mutual cooperation would be seen as appeasement.

B.   CHANGES IN PAYOFFS

The development of a concert system is supported by changes in the payoffs. Games that are structured as Prisoners' Dilemma will vary in the likelihood of leading to mutual cooperation according to the cardinal value of the utility of the various outcomes. Prisoners' Dilemmas in which the payoffs for CC are relatively high and those for CD, DC, and DD are relatively low are more likely to yield cooperative solutions.[9] In other words, cooperation is more probable when mutual cooperation is only slightly less attractive than exploiting the other, when being exploited is only slightly worse than mutual competition, and when the latter outcome is much worse than mutual cooperation. The concert arises largely because the payoffs fit this configuration.

INCREASED COSTS OF NON-COOPERATION

In discussing the post-1815 period, Medlicott argues that "it was peace that maintained the Concert, and not the Concert that maintained peace."[10] There is something to this—the high perceived cost of war was an important factor. But the point should not be pushed too far. Knowing that statesmen want to preserve the peace does not tell us how they would go about trying to reach this goal, or whether they would succeed. Indeed, the standard problem in the security dilemma is that although all actors desire security, the interaction of their efforts produces general insecurity. Nevertheless, their strong motivation to avoid war is probably a necessary condition for the maintenance of a concert. Thus it is important that a war against a hegemon increases the costs of mutual non-cooperation. The former allies know that if they get into heated squabbles with each other, the defeated enemy will take advantage of

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[9] Jervis (fn. 2), 167-86. Note that this is not the same as saying that the chances for cooperation increase as the payoffs for cooperation increase and those for defection decrease. It is equally important that payoffs for outcomes in which one side defects and the other cooperates be moderate—that the former not gain too much or the latter suffer too greatly.

[10] W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone, and the Concert of Europe* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 18.

the splits. Although they are not unwilling to use the former enemy against their former allies (Britain did so with France soon after the Napoleonic wars), disagreements are muted by the fear that if they are carried too far, the war against the hegemon may have to be fought all over again. However, conflict is not entirely out of the question.[11] The very fact that each state knows that the others see war as too costly to be a viable option allows each to use the common interest of avoiding catastrophe as a lever to extract competitive gains. But because the costs of war are high, states have incentives to reduce conflict, and are willing to run substantial risks of being exploited in order to decrease the chance that their policies will lead to unnecessary competition.

Costs of anarchy and revolutions. To the extent that statesmen believe that the previous war was caused in part by anarchy in general, and by economic rivalries in particular, there are additional incentives for cooperation. The views of Woodrow Wilson fit into the first category. Wilson saw the balance-of-power system as one of the main causes of World War I; he concluded that, in order to avoid future wars, greater international cooperation—in the form of the League of Nations—was necessary. Similarly, many Americans believed that the Depression and the economic rivalries of the interwar period were significantly responsible for the rise of Hitler and World War II. U.S. decision makers therefore felt that economic cooperation was important not only for the economic gains it would bring, but also to reduce the chances of a future war.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the incentives for unity were increased by the conviction that wars and revolutions were linked. Each could lead to the other, and so both were dangerous. There were differences of opinion and of interest among the powers on this point: the liberal powers—Britain and France—were both less threatened by unrest and less worried that revolutions would automatically spread. They (especially Britain) opposed the use of the concert to sanction counter-revolutionary interventions because they saw such actions as mere covers for narrow national interests, and because they perceived many revolutions as good, or at least as not evil. Nevertheless, even they feared radicalism in its most extreme forms; this fear produced more of a common basis of understanding than is usual in international politics.

[11] Serious threats of war were made on several occasions. See, for example, the incidents and attitudes discussed in Roger Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot, and the Collapse of the Entente Cordiale* (London: Athlone, 1974), 54; Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827* (London: Cass, 1966), 81-83, 371; Gordon Craig, "The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power," in J.T.P. Bury, ed., *New Cambridge Modern History*, X, *The Zenith of European Power, 1830-70* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 254-57.

States have often welcomed unrest within their rivals' and neighbors' territories because it weakened them.[12] But if the revolutions were likely to spread, they would be a menace to all. As late as 1854, the King of Prussia wrote: "I shall not allow Austria, the incovenient, intriguing Austria, to be attacked by Revolution, without drawing the sword on her behalf, and this from pure love of Prussia, from self-preservation."[13] At that time, states were interdependent in their internal security, which limited their foreign policy goals and means. It limited their goals because the chance of revolution would be increased if they were to defeat another regime too completely, to humiliate it, or even to deny it a share of international influence on which its domestic legitimacy rested in part. A too narrow conception of self-interest would therefore be self-defeating, not because the other would retaliate, but because the other might suffer a revolt. The shared fear of unrest also limited the means of statecraft, in that statesmen in this period largely forswore the tool of fomenting revolutions to undermine unfriendly regimes abroad. The absence in the concert of this common tactic in the balance of power is striking, and contributed to mutual cooperation. Indeed, in one case in which a statesman was believed to have made a threat of creating unrest, others reacted very strongly, arguing that this behavior was both dangerous and a breach of the way the great powers had pledged to act.[14]

Opposition to revolution also facilitated cooperation by forming three bases for reintegrating France into the system. First, the hegemon that had been such a threat could be seen in part not as France, but as *revolutionary* France. Combatting the latter was not inconsistent with establishing good relations with the former. Indeed, the new French regime was as much the enemy of revolutionary France as were the members of the grand coalition. (This logic would also seem to apply to Germany after the two World Wars. Nascent efforts to define the enemy as the old regime failed in 1918 largely because of the pressure of public opinion—a factor that lies outside the structural explanations offered here. They succeeded after 1945, but in a context of competition between the two main powers, a point to which we will return.) Second, France could hope to overturn the Vienna system only by engaging in a large war. Such an effort would require the mobilization of enormous domestic resources, which in turn would call for a revolutionary regime. But that would have been as much of a menace to France's rulers as it

[12] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

[13] Quoted in F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 221.

[14] Temperley (fn. 11), 383-84.

would have been to the neighboring states. Thus, France was to a significant extent self-deterred, and could therefore be trusted—at least to a degree. Third, renewed revolution in France was less likely if France was treated fairly in the international arena. It was therefore important for the other countries to establish the legitimacy and efficacy of the new regime in the eyes of its people.

INCREASED GAINS FROM COOPERATION

The other side of this coin is that fighting a potential hegemon leads to higher postwar payoffs for cooperation among the former allies. First of all, the vital goal of ensuring that the past enemy will not again seek dominance can be reached only by maintaining cooperation. To the extent that this interest leads to cooperation on other issues—for example, trade, scientific and cultural exchanges, joint efforts to deal with common problems—states are likely to have heightened expectations of the benefits of working together on a broad front. Common goals give each state a stake in the well-being of the others: to the extent that they expect to cooperate in the future, they want all to be strong, especially if they think they may again have to contain the former enemy. Far from states' values being negatively interdependent (as is often the case in world politics), they are positively linked: each gains if the other is satisfied, and willing and able to carry out its international obligations.

Furthermore, the experience of fighting the hegemon can produce at least a slight degree of altruism. During the war each of the allies may come to value its partners' well-being—not only for the greater contribution to the common good, but as an end in itself. If this altruism carries over into the postwar period, each state will see added benefits in cooperating because of the expectation that all would gain. There may be a similar effect at the elite level: decision makers in each country may develop sufficient ties with their opposite numbers so that each wants the others to stay in power—a goal to which cooperating with the other states is likely to contribute.

Differences in the potential gains from cooperation help to explain why a lasting concert could be formed after the Napoleonic Wars, but not after World Wars I and II. Because Germany was divided after 1945, maintenance of the coalition was not necessary to ensure that it would not seek dominance again. Indeed, reducing the danger from Germany was the purpose of the Morgenthau Plan originally endorsed by Roosevelt, and is at least partly responsible for the fact that few statesmen in either East or West have given more than lip service to the goal of reunification. In large part, of course, the division of Germany

grew out of the separate occupation zones because of the general dispute
between the United States and the Soviet Union. Had the Allies been
able to cooperate on other issues more safely, Germany might have been
reassembled. Furthermore, dividing Germany was a way of managing
the superpower conflict. Trying to reach joint decisions that would
govern the entire country would have been a source of much greater
tension and dispute than allowing each side to control its sector. Still,
by keeping Germany divided, and thus less of a menace, the Allies
removed one of their major incentives for postwar cooperation.[15] The
main dangers that Germany continued to pose—such as the acquisition
of nuclear weapons by either half, or attempts to reunite—could best
be managed by each superpower acting independently.

Bipolarity and the development of nuclear weapons allowed the
superpowers to limit the danger of war, without a concert. Unilateral
and competitive (rather than joint and cooperative) policies were effective
in safeguarding the American and Soviet core values. After 1815, by
contrast, there was no way any one of the great powers, with the possible
exception of Great Britain, could have maintained its security by acting
alone.

After World War I, Germany remained whole; neither bipolarity nor
nuclear weapons existed to allow the victorious powers to gain security
without cooperation. And yet, a stable concert could not persist, in
seeming contradiction to our theory. Part of the explanation is that the
withdrawal of two of the major states (for idiosyncratic, domestic rea-
sons) meant that it was far from certain that the two remaining powers
could maintain the peace even if they cooperated. Had the United States
and Russia remained in the coalition, the pressures would have increased
on Britain and France to work together. Indeed, many of he postwar
disputes sprang from the fact that Britain would not guarantee France's
security, thus forcing the latter to take strong unilateral measures against
Germany. Britain's offer of such a pact had been conditional on Amer-
ican participation, which was not forthcoming. Cooperation was there-
fore inhibited by factors of domestic politics, and these lie outside the
realm of the theory elaborated here, which is structural.[16]

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[15] As early as May 1946 the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, understood this. He
noted that one cost of keeping Germany divided was that "we should have lost the one
factor which *might* hold us and the Russians together, viz. the existence of a single Germany
which would be in the interest of us both to hold down." Quoted in Alan Bullock, *Ernest
Bevin, Foreign Secretary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 268; emphasis in original.
French strength after 1815 as a source of cohesion of the concert is discussed in Roy Bridge,
"Allied Diplomacy in Peacetime: The Failure of the Congress 'System,' 1815-23," in Sked
(fn. 3), 34-53.

[16] For discussions of how American domestic constraints affected the chances of Soviet-

DECREASED FEAR OF EXPLOITATION

In many cases, the factor most responsible for the lack of cooperation is each state's fear that it will be exploited if it cooperates. After a counter-hegemonic war, these fears are lowered by the transformation of the system. Because all members of the coalition value the maintenance of the concert, there is a good chance that they will defend it. This means that they will provide at least some support and assistance to a state that has been double-crossed. For instance, if State B reacts to State A's cooperation by exploiting it, States D, E, and F can be expected to help A, or, at minimum, not to increase its distress. Thus, there is a "safety net" under the states. Although exploitation is possible, its consequences are likely to be kept within manageable bounds by the reactions of others.

If this type of cooperation is to work, however, there must be more than two major states in the system. The fact that this was not the case after World War II may have contributed to the quick breakdown of cooperation. Even if Waltz's arguments about the greater stability of a bipolar system are correct,[17] it may be harder to maintain a high level of cooperation when there are only two main actors in the system. Although each can use the threat of all-out war to protect its vital interests, the fact that other states cannot do much to decrease the costs of superpower defection increases the two sides' fear of exploitation, and so makes cooperation more difficult to establish and maintain.

Changes in vulnerability. The costs of exploitation decrease as states' vulnerabilities decrease. The security dilemma is especially severe if one defection can destroy a state (for instance, by a surprise attack). If states are strong enough so that a few defections cannot cripple them, they can better afford to take chances on cooperation. The effect of a major war on the costs of later defections is mixed. On the one hand, such a war is likely to exhaust the participants and produce prodigious internal strains; to the extent that states believe that they are too weak to survive if they are forced into a conflict under unfavorable circumstances, the fear of defection and the pressures for preventive war may grow. On

American cooperation after World War II, see Robert Dallek, *Franklin 'D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); John Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); and Alexander George, "Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimacy," in Ole Holsti, Randolph Siverson, and Alexander George, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 233-62.

[17] Kenneth Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964), and Waltz (fn. 5).

the other hand, if the experience of a successful war against a hegemon gives the states a sense of confidence that they can meet challenges, they will be more relaxed about the danger of defections. One reason why a lasting concert could be formed after 1815 but not after 1945 was the weakness of many of the important participants in the latter period. Most of the European states—which were stakes in the game more than they were players—had been broken by the war, and the United States feared that they could easily fall under Soviet influence. Even more important, the Soviet Union was so weak that it could not afford the sort of cooperative arrangements that would open it to Western influence while subjecting it to the danger of a powerful defection.

In many cases, a postwar settlement will make cooperation easier by reducing the states' vulnerabilities. Borders are often changed to correspond with salient ethnic and geographic lines. To the extent that states become more ethnically homogeneous and establish their borders along the lines of natural fortifications like rivers and mountain ranges, they can defend themselves more easily, thereby reducing the costs of defection.

DECREASED GAINS FROM EXPLOITATION

If the states are sometimes pushed to defect because of the fear of the deleterious consequences that will follow if their cooperation is met by the defection of others, they can also be pulled to defect by the positive gains that such a policy can provide. And, in the same way in which the configuration of the postwar world reduces the costs a state will pay if another defects, it reduces the gains that will accrue to the state if it defects itself. The state will have to expect that its defection will meet opposition not only from the particular state it is harming, but also from others in the old coalition. Even if the use of threats and force produces short-run gains, the long- and medium-run effects are likely to be less favorable than they would be under the balance-of-power system. Because of the general commitment to the maintenance of the concert, "bandwagoning" is less likely than it would be under the balance of power.[18]

To the extent that states gain increased security through defection, the transformation that leads to the concert reduces the need to defect because it provides an alternative route to that goal. If members believe that the coalition will remain together and that it can keep them secure,

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[18] *Ibid.*, 125-26; Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9 (Spring 1985), 3-43, and Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

they need not pursue unilateral and competitive measures to improve their own security at the expense of others. Indeed, if states have reason to believe that safety lies in the health of the concert, increasing their security by supporting the concert system does not make others less secure, but has the opposite effect. This incentive was clearly operating after 1815. Although states did not completely trust the concert to provide for their security, they did act on the assumption that one of the best guarantees of their individual interests was the well-being of the established cooperative arrangements.

Another important value to be gained by defection is a change in the status quo. After an anti-hegemonic war, this, too, is less attractive than usual. The winners are likely to be relatively satisfied because they are able to write the peace terms. For the losers, of course, the situation is different. After 1815, France was not wildly dissatisfied because the peace settlement was a moderate one. But that was not the case after 1918, in part because of the increased role of allied public opinion, which demanded a harsh peace. For Germany, the resulting incentives to defect not only made it less willing to join a concert, but also increased tensions among the Allies because of disagreements on how to deal with the situation.[19]

The fact that after 1815 the states had been quite satisfied with the status quo gave the concert great legitimacy in the eyes of the statesmen. They saw it as facilitating the achievement of their most important values. The sorts of cooperative behavior that characterized it therefore became imbued with more than instrumental worth, and the concert and its norms took on a moral value, which in turn increased compliance and self-restraint.

Mechanisms for controlling exploitation. Because of three procedural norms, states found it more difficult or less advantageous than usual to try to exploit others under the concert of 1815. The first was the provision for frequent meetings, which had the further function of increasing transparency. The Quadruple Alliance, which was signed upon the defeat of Napoleon, called for periodic conferences of the states' leaders "for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests, and for the consideration of the measures which ... shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of Nations, and for the mainte-

[19] Factors beyond our structural model have to be taken into account for a complete explanation of the difference between the British and French positions. On this topic, one of the earliest discussions still remains unsurpassed: Arnold Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940). For a discussion of the extent to which France was a revisionist state after 1815, see Roger Bullen, "France and Europe, 1815-48: The Problem of Defeat and Recovery," in Sked (fn. 3), 112-44.

nance of the peace of Europe."[20] Because such conferences could be used
to coerce some of the members and to provide the cover of legitimacy
for narrowly national activities, Britain often refused to participate.
(Recall Canning's famous quip: "conferences are useless or dangerous;
useless if we are in agreement, dangerous if we are not."[21]) But, even
from the English perspective, the conferences were a symbolic affir-
mation of the importance of European interests and European unity,
and constituted a barrier to defection. The fact that the states had pledged
to discuss all major issues jointly made it harder for any one of them
to seek outcomes that were unacceptable to others. Changes in the status
quo were not considered legitimate unless and until the great powers
had assented to them, often by holding a conference. Form and substance
are not unrelated: if states are committed to gaining widespread rati-
fication for crucial actions, they must accept limits on the extent to which
they can hope to make competitive gains.[22]

Related to the system of conferences was the great powers' habit of
negotiating jointly with third parties (especially Turkey). One purpose
was to increase the pressure on the powers with which they were dealing,
a practice that was especially helpful with a recalcitrant and skilled
target such as Turkey. But the increased ability of each of the great
powers to see that the others were not taking advantage of them and
their concomitant willingness to limit their own potential gains was at
least as important. Paul Schroeder has shown that alliances can be a
tool of control.[23] This restriction is not necessarily one-sided: formal
alliances and informal understandings that states will act together can
limit the freedom of action of all the parties. By working together, the
powers ensured that none could steal a march on the others.[24]

The third way in which great powers limited the potential advantages
of exploiting each other was by formal and mutual self-denying ordi-

[20] Quoted in René Albrecht-Carrié, ed., *The Concert of Europe* (New York: Walker, 1968),
32.
[21] Quoted in Temperley (fn. 11), 135.
[22] Thus, in late July 1914, French statesmen were disturbed to learn that Austria and
Germany rejected a role for the other European powers in the dispute between Austria and
Serbia; this indicated a non-cooperative approach and a desire to inflict a settlement that
others would find objectionable. See John Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World
War* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 153. For a discussion of the relationship between cooperative
processes and cooperative outcomes, see Morton Deutsch, "Fifty Years of Conflict," in Leon
Festinger, ed., *Retrospection on Social Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
[23] Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815-1914: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," in
Klaus Knorr, ed., *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Lawrence: University
Press of Kansas, 1976), 227-62.
[24] This is not to deny Hinsley's argument that the British realized that their Continental
partners' habit of demanding too extensive collaboration would make the concert impractical.
Only a somewhat looser arrangement, the British felt, would allow the concert to succeed.
See Hinsley (fn. 13), 202-12.

nances. Many of the treaties signed between 1815 and 1854—especially those involving the relations between great powers and smaller ones— contained a provision by which each of the former forswore any unilateral advantage. Article V of the treaty by which Britain, France, and Russia coordinated their efforts to force Turkey to grant independence to Greece was typical: "The Contracting Powers will not seek, in these arrangements, any augmentation of territory, any exclusive influence, or any commercial advantage for their Subjects, which those of every other Nation may not equally obtain."[25] Similarly, when the powers guaranteed the independence of Belgium, the treaty registered that

> They were unanimously of opinion that the five Powers owe to the interest, well understood,—to their own union, to the tranquility of Europe, and to the accomplishment of [Belgian independence], a solemn avowal, and a striking proof of their firm determination not to seek in the arrangements relative to Belgium, under whatever circumstances they may present themselves, any augmentation of territory, any exclusive influence,—any isolated advantages. . . .[26]

Such words do not totally prevent unregulated competition, and they were repeated so often that perhaps they became ritualistic. But they constituted commitments that could not be broken lightly, and they summarized the spirit of the concert.

C. INCREASED TRANSPARENCY AND TIMELY WARNING

Cooperation is made more likely not only by changes in payoffs, but also by increases in the states' ability to recognize what others are doing— called "transparency" in the literature on regimes. Coupled with the ability to act on this information, transparency can produce a situation in which, in effect, the choices of CD and DC are effectively ruled out. Short periods of defection or exploitation may occur; but if they can be detected and countered, the only real alternatives are CC and DD. Inspection and verification are therefore essential even in the absence of formal agreements.

Concert systems are fairly transparent in part because of a relatively high level of communication among the actors. By and large, these communications are also fuller, franker, and less deceptive than those that characterize normal international politics. Indeed, deception is made more difficult by the increase in the volume and diversity of information exchanged.[27] Extensive communication makes it easier for states to explain how and why they are behaving as they are, and to understand

[25] Quoted in Albrecht-Carrié (fn. 20), 109.
[26] *Ibid*, 69.
[27] R. V. Jones, *Most Secret War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 23-26.

what others are doing. This reduces—although it does not eliminate—misunderstandings that can cause a breakdown; consequently, states have greater confidence that others are not planning to exploit them. For example, many analysts believe that the establishment of the Standing Consultative Commission (S.C.C.) has been one of the most useful outcomes of SALT.[28] Although a few have argued that this forum has been used by the Soviets to abet their deceptions, most believe that a number of potentially disruptive issues were successfully handled through the confidential and relatively frank exchange of technical information. In some instances, one side halted or modified activities that constituted, or could be seen as constituting, a violation of the agreements. In other cases, the United States or the Soviet Union was persuaded that activities it viewed as suspicious were actually permissible.

Under some circumstances—and this may have happened after 1815 but apparently did not with the S.C.C.—all sides gain a useful understanding of the other states' general interests and perspectives. For three interrelated reasons, defection thus becomes less likely. First, if decision makers can determine when and whether others are exploiting them, they will not defect in the mistaken belief that they are responding to others' defections. Second, if they can not only determine what the others have done, but why they are doing so, their confidence in their ability to predict the others' future behavior increases. Third, because they realize that others have a similar ability to detect and understand their behavior, they do not fear that others will defect in the mistaken belief that they themselves have already done so; nor will they defect in the hope that they can escape detection.

After 1815, statesmen realized that a relatively high level of full and honest communication could increase the chances of maintaining cooperation. To this end, they were often willing to forgo the advantages of surprise, and to inform others of what they planned to do even if they knew that the latter would not approve of the action. This was one function of the frequent meetings of the great powers. If each state had a good idea of the others' plans, all could avoid the common trap of exaggerating the threat they believed others to be posing. Furthermore, it could be in a state's interest to give a warning and learn what the response of others would be if it were to act on its intentions. The participants could thus look ahead several plays of the game; if the outcome was worse than mutual cooperation, the first state could decide

[28] Robert Buchheim and Dan Caldwell, *The US-USSR Standing Consultative Commission: Description and Appraisal* (Providence, RI: Center for Foreign Policy Development, Brown University, May 1983), Working Paper No. 2.

to refrain from taking its disruptive action. Such arrangements are not foolproof, of course; not only does the state lose the possibility of taking others by surprise, but it runs the risk that others will exploit it by bluffing or by adopting undesired commitments.[29]

Among states with a relatively high degree of common interests, these costs are outweighed by the facilitation of cooperation that results. Indeed, such a system of warnings can be advantageous even among adversaries. As Van Evera has noted, the pre-World War I German strategy of *faits accomplis*, culminating in a posture in which, unbeknownst to the others, mobilization meant war, deprived both German and Entente statesmen of the ability to make the timely threats that might have avoided war.[30] While German (and Austrian) statesmen were preoccupied with the advantages of taking their enemies by surprise, they overlooked the fact that such tactics also meant that they would learn too late whether or not their actions would lead to world war.

In some cases, transparency mainly means determining what specific actions others are taking. That is not always easy, as the current discussion of whether the Soviets are violating the SALT agreements reminds us; but it is usually easier than deciding whether the others' actions constitute cooperation or defection. The model developed by Downs and his colleagues shows the problems that misinterpretations create for a strategy of strict reciprocity. An examination of many cases reveals that states tend to underestimate the extent to which others are cooperating, the extent to which their adversaries will perceive that they have defected, and the extent to which a disinterested observer would share this judgment.[31] These problems do not disappear during the concert; indeed, their presence is one reason why cooperation tends to dissipate. But, with a high level of communication, it becomes more likely that statesmen will gain an understanding of the others' perspectives, which can help them to interpret the behavior of others and to design at least some of their own behavior so that it is less likely to be incorrectly seen as defection.

Transparency can facilitate cooperation only if the information it provides can be used to avoid or mitigate the consequences of the other's defection. That is the notion of "timely warning" which is invoked in

[29] For instances of deception, especially on Metternich's part, see Schroeder (fn. 3), 46, 82-83, 207, 212, 219.
[30] Van Evera (fn. 8).
[31] See Downs and others, "Arms Races and Cooperation," pp. 118-46 of this collection; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 67-83, 354-55.

arms control arrangements like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
The verification provisions of such agreements cannot prevent states
from taking the forbidden actions, but they can let others know that a
violation is occurring, so that they can take effective countermeasures.

The arrangements of the concert cannot completely meet this re-
quirement but, by providing guidelines for behavior, they help statesmen
determine whether or not others are cooperating. Living up to agree-
ments is a somewhat artificial definition of cooperation, but it is a useful
one, especially when compared to the even vaguer alternative of trying
to determine whether the other's actions have the effect—or were mo-
tivated by the intention—of doing harm. Furthermore, agreements pro-
vide at least a basis for a common understanding, even though there is
almost always room to argue about what they mean and what constitutes
behaving in accord with them. States thus have a bit more confidence
that they will be able to determine relatively quickly whether others are
defecting, which gives them more time to react. Cooperation would also
be facilitated if states were able to react in ways that would protect them
from defections without simultaneously menacing others—in other
words, if a strictly defensive response was effective. Although I argued
earlier that defensive strategies were often possible under the concert,
many contextual factors that cannot be related to the presence or absence
of the concert are also important.

D. CHANGED ESTIMATES OF THE BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS

Whether or not a statesman will cooperate is strongly influenced by
his beliefs about whether others will cooperate. Assuming that he wishes
to maintain good relations and does not think he can defect without
triggering retaliation, he will do what he thinks others will do—that
is, defect if he thinks they will defect and cooperate if he thinks they
will cooperate. The changes we have been discussing widen the chances
of cooperation by increasing the decision makers' estimates of the like-
lihood that others will cooperate. The experience of fighting a potential
hegemon affects the payoffs of others in the same way that it affects the
state's own preferences. Each decision maker knows that all the reasons
why his state is likely to seek cooperative solutions also apply to others
in the system. Furthermore, he knows that the others realize that he
prefers cooperation, thus again reducing the danger that each side will
defect in the fear that the other will do so. Thus, there is the possibility
of a benign circle and a self-fulfilling prophecy of cooperation.

Expectations about the behavior of others are also important in a

different way. Although a state will cooperate only if it thinks the other will, it may defect if it thinks the other has no choice but to cooperate. In the absence of the constraint imposed by the other's threat to reply in kind, the state will be strongly tempted to cheat and to exploit the other. For example, the United States probably did not encourage Soviet restraint when it reduced its spending on strategic weapons between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. Not only was the U.S. far ahead of the U.S.S.R. on most measures of strategic power during most of this era, but the Soviets probably believed that Washington had no choice but to hold down its deployments—first because of the costs of the war in Vietnam, and later because of public opposition. Thus they saw no reason to attribute the American behavior to a commitment to mutual restraint or to believe that American behavior would depend on their own.

To the extent that the transformation we have been discussing has any systematic effect on this dimension, it may be to make cooperation *less* likely. States in the concert system may believe that their partners have to cooperate, that the constraints against going off on their own are so strong that even if the state engages in occasional exploitation, the others will not respond in kind. One reason that good relations between Britain and France did not withstand the strain imposed by a serious dispute over influence in Spain in the late 1840s was that the French Prime Minister assumed that the British elite was not "prepared to contemplate a permanent rupture . . . and that if he took independent action in Spain he would have at most a temporary coolness to contend with." Many Englishmen shared the view of their ambassador to Spain that "the *entente* [was] strong enough to weather a temporary storm and . . . that the French would soon reconcile themselves to the loss of influence in Spain."[32] Similarly, Donald Kagan sees the alliance between Athens and Sparta as part of the reason why the peace treaty between the two states brought only a temporary respite in the Peloponnesian Wars: "It allowed Sparta to continue to ignore its obligations under the peace treaty" in the belief that Athens was unconditionally committed to keeping the peace.[33] The perception that others are cooperating not because they think the state will cooperate but because they have no choice is a common one, and the knowledge that others are strongly motivated to cooperate will reinforce this belief. In showing others that defection is possible, the state must be careful not to lead them to infer

[32] Bullen (fn. 11), 81, 93; also see Craig (fn. 11), 257.
[33] Donald Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 30.

that it is determined to defect no matter what they do. It is difficult but necessary to establish relations that are conditional, and to convince the other side that they will continue to be so.

III. Conclusions

Anarchy and the security dilemma do not prevent a relatively high level of cooperation in the form of a concert system. Such systems are rare, however. Usually, a balance of power prevails. The epitome of the operation of the balance of power is a war fought against a potential hegemon. Ironically, such a conflict undermines two of the crucial assumptions that maintain the system: the lack of alliance handicaps and the availability of war as a normal instrument of policy. The transformation of a balance of power into a concert confirms the theoretical arguments about the conditions that facilitate and inhibit cooperation in anarchy. After wars against potential hegemons, the incentives for the former allies to maintain good relations are unusually high. Even if mutual cooperation is the states' second choice and they would all prefer a situation in which they themselves defected while the others cooperated, the gap between the value of their first and second choices is relatively small. What they would lose if the system broke down into mutual defection and competition, furthermore, is very great because such a configuration could lead to the renewed threat from the potential hegemon, or to a very costly war. Because these outcomes are extremely bad, it is rational for states to run some risk of being exploited in order to avoid them.

Under the concert, not only do the payoffs from two symmetrical outcomes (that is, mutual cooperation and mutual defection) encourage cooperation, but so do the two asymmetrical ones. A state may defect either because it is attracted by the possibility of being able to do so while the others continue to cooperate, or because it is repelled by the fear that its cooperation will be met by the defection of others. The latter danger is reduced both by the state's ability to observe what others are doing and by the nascent collective security system that provides some expectation of support from third parties and so reduces the state's vulnerability to defection. The other side of this coin is that the gains a state can expect to make by defecting are smaller under the concert than they are under the balance of power. If there is a concert, others will be quicker to oppose the state if it defects. Even if its efforts to defect succeed in the short run, they will be self-defeating if they result in the destruction of the system of cooperation. It is also important that

all states realize that these incentives operate for others as well as for themselves, leading to the possibility of sustained mutual cooperation. The chance of bringing this theoretical possibility to fruition is increased by the relatively high level of communication among the states and the concomitantly increased ability of each to determine how others have acted and are likely to act in the future. None of this means that cooperation is easy or automatic, but it does show that when balance-of-power assumptions no longer hold, the incentives shift so that anarchy and the security dilemma no longer provide a powerful stimulus to undesired conflict.