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SECURITY GUARANTEES PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: A REALIST–LIBERAL ANALYSIS

Abstract	*This article examines the structural limitations—such as unequal strategic interests, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and asymmetries in military capabilities—that constrain the effectiveness of security guarantees provided by international treaties. It focuses on how intelligence services, through covert informational mechanisms (e.g., espionage, disinformation, and clandestine influence), shape the credibility (i.e., perceived reliability and deterrent strength) and functionality (i.e., operational capacity to mobilize allies and respond collectively to threats) of collective defense commitments. Grounded in a comparative framework between liberalism and realism, this article analyzes how national interest, power dynamics, institutional trust, and intelligence cooperation intersect to either support or erode treaty-based security mechanisms. To empirically illustrate these dynamics, the article applies its theoretical lens to the case of the "drôle de guerre" (1939–1940), where the failure of France and the United Kingdom to intervene militarily in defense of Poland highlights how strategic restraint and intelligence considerations can undermine formal obligations—even in multilateral settings.* *The article also engages constructivist theory to reflect on how norms, identities, and collective perceptions influence the interpretation and credibility of security guarantees. Furthermore, it assesses the normative and operational need for democratic oversight of intelligence activities within alliances, proposing concrete mechanisms for aligning intelligence services with alliance commitments. Ultimately, the article argues that successful security guarantees rest on a synthesis of power, institutional design, and normative cohesion. By combining structural and ideational explanations, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of why some treaties hold under stress while others collapse. The findings carry significant implications for the design of future security arrangements in a fragmented and increasingly contested international order.*
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Introduction

International treaties that contain collective defense clauses or security guarantees are designed to offer signatory states protection against external threats. However, historical experience has shown that such guarantees are not always honored in practice. This raises a fundamental question: under what conditions do international security commitments become both credible and effective? That is, when can states reasonably rely on alliance obligations to deter aggression and ensure the timely mobilization of allies?

The academic literature in international relations provides contrasting answers to this question. On one side, liberal-institutionalist theories such as those advanced by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye[1] argue that international

[1] R.O. Keohane, J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition,* Little, Brown, 1977, p. 243

norms, institutions, and transparency foster cooperation and mutual trust, thereby reducing the risks of defection and increasing the likelihood that treaty-based commitments will be upheld[1]. On the other side, realist scholars—including Hans Morgenthau[2] and Kenneth Waltz[3] contend that, in an anarchic international system lacking an overarching enforcement authority, states primarily act according to their own strategic interests and will only comply with alliance obligations when doing so aligns with calculations of power and national security[4]. This foundational divide reflects a broader tension between the ideal of collective security and the reality of strategic self-help in global politics.

This dilemma becomes even more complex when considering the role of intelligence services unseen actors that can both bolster security (through early warning and counterintelligence) and potentially undermine commitments (through espionage, covert influence, and strategic misinformation). Intelligence agencies operate through covert informational mechanisms, meaning secret channels of information gathering, influence, and action (e.g. espionage, signal interceptions, clandestine operations). Structural limitations are another factor: these refer to the inherent constraints posed by the anarchic nature of the international system and the unequal distribution of power among states conditions under which no higher authority exists to enforce treaty compliance. In this context, two key criteria emerge: credibility, understood as the perceived reliability and deterrent strength of the commitment, and functionality, defined as the practical ability to coordinate and act effectively. These are further complicated by covert informational mechanisms, meaning intelligence-driven, secret tools of influence such as espionage, signal interception, or covert action—that can either reinforce an alliance by providing early warning and fostering mutual confidence, or weaken it by generating mistrust and subversive behavior. As both theory and historical evidence suggest, intelligence cooperation becomes effective only when it is institutionalized, transparent among allies, and bounded by rules of accountability.

The purpose of this article is to explore how intelligence services influence the effectiveness of security guarantees provided by international treaties, analyzing this issue through the lens of realist and liberal paradigms in international relations. The article combines theoretical analysis with historical case studies to highlight both the potential of intelligence cooperation in supporting collective security and the risks that power dynamics and clandestine actions pose to the observance of international commitments.

The working hypothesis starts from the premise that security guarantees provided through international treaties or multilateral alliances are credible and functional only under clearly defined political and strategic conditions. From a realist perspective, the credibility of these guarantees primarily depends on the alignment of strategic interests among the main actors within the alliance. As Glenn H. Snyder noted, "the credibility of alliance commitments tends to be high, but under extreme conditions—such as the risk of nuclear destruction the commitment may appear less credible to a potential aggressor"[5]. Thus, when a great power perceives its own security as directly tied to the defense of its ally, it is far more likely that formal commitments will be honored. Conversely, in the absence of such converging interests, these commitments remain nominal and vulnerable to abandonment in the face of significant political or military costs.

On the other hand, liberal-institutionalist literature emphasizes the importance of mutual trust, institutionalized norms, and transparency among allies to ensure the stability of commitments. In this logic, effective intelligence cooperation becomes a critical element: the continuous exchange of data, risk assessments, and early warnings contributes not only to the enhancement of joint operational capabilities, but also to the reduction of uncertainty regarding allies' intentions. As Michael Herman states, "intelligence has become a form of international diplomacy in its own right, with permanent networks of cooperation among states"[6]. Intelligence services thus become instruments for strengthening strategic cohesion, if they operate within institutionalized

[1] Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984; M. Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, "American Political Science Review", Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, pp. 1151–1169

[2] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1978, p. 121

[3] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 70

[4] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2001

[5] Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2015, p. 12

[6] Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. p. 273

frameworks with clear rules and communication channels. We therefore propose a compound hypothesis with two interdependent components:

1.Security guarantees are credible only when there is real strategic convergence among the key actors (realist condition);

2.Effective intelligence cooperation, conducted regularly and on a mutually beneficial basis, reinforces this convergence and supports the credibility of the alliance, functioning as a bridge between power-based reasoning and institutional logic.

This approach proposes a partial reconciliation between realism and liberalism, in the sense that the institutional dimension (intelligence sharing) can, under certain conditions, compensate for the complete absence of trust and help sustain commitments even in fluid strategic contexts. James Walsh confirms this subtle relationship by stating that "international intelligence exchange depends on the degree of mutual trust and institutional similarity among partners"[1]. When it comes to security, a fundamental part of national interest, it is essential to understand how and within what limits security guarantees can function.

Since this issue pertains to international relations, it is essential to highlight that understanding the idea mentioned above namely, defining the limits and mechanisms under which treaty-based guarantees function depends largely on the theoretical perspective adopted within the field of international relations.

While there are multiple frameworks for analyzing international relations including multilateralism, the English School, and constructivism this analysis will primarily focus on two dominant paradigms: liberalism and realism. Nevertheless, a dedicated subsection will also address constructivism, to highlight its distinct contributions and contrast them with the assumptions of the two main approaches.

Theoretical Framework: Realist vs. Liberal Perspectives

Liberal-Institutionalist Paradigm: Cooperation, Norms, and Transparency

Liberal and institutional theories offer a more optimistic view, arguing that institutions and shared norms can mitigate the security dilemma and reinforce alliance commitments. From this vantage, *credibility* is not only a function of power, but also of trust, regular communication, and the predictability that institutions provide. Robert Keohane[2] and other neoliberal institutionalists maintain that international institutions (including formal alliances and defense organizations) facilitate cooperation by establishing rules, norms, and forums for information exchange that reduce uncertainty among allies. When states expect long-term interaction and reciprocity, they are more likely to keep their commitments because the shadow of the future makes cheating or defection costly. Transparency is crucial in this view if allies openly share intelligence and assessments about threats, they can reassure each other of their intentions and capabilities, making collective defense arrangements more *functional* in practice.

The liberal perspective starts from the premise that "liberal states appear to have discovered a way to interact among themselves that does not involve military conflict...and brings mutual benefits"[3]. This outlook can be traced back, at least, to modern times and the ideas of Immanuel Kant, who emphasized that "for the purpose of promoting security and the development of liberalism, such states should be provided shelter under a liberal security umbrella"[4].

Liberal theory[5] holds that international institutions, norms, and economic interdependence can foster trust and cooperation, even in an anarchic system[6]. Security guarantees can become effective if they are supported by mutual trust, transparency, and verifiability—core liberal values. Ideologically, liberalism emphasizes the protection of rights and the limitation of state coercion. As James Walsh also notes: "Statists believe that liberty is about quality of life. They believe in a strong central government that provides its citizens with a good life. Libertarians

[1] James I. Walsh, *The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, p. 4
[2] Robert O. Keohane, *Op. cit*., p. 234
[3] Mark D. Gismondi, *Ethics Liberalism and Realism in International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 22
[4] John MacMillan, *Immanuel Kant and the Democratic Peace in Classical Theory in International Relations*, Cambridge Univesity Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 65
[5] R.O. Keohane, J.S. Nye, *Op.cit.*
[6] M. Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, "American Political Science Review", Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, pp. 1151–1169

(…) believe in fundamental rights and limiting the coercive power of the state"[1]. Even in times of threat, the state must remain in service of fundamental liberties.

However, intelligence services add an additional dimension to this duality. According to Michael Herman, intelligence is simultaneously an instrument of early warning and a source of suspicion among states. Within alliances, intelligence sharing becomes a test of trust and a key factor for strategic cohesion. As Herman states: "The increase in international cooperation has generated a mix of ad-hoc exchanges and permanent links. (…) Intelligence has become a form of international diplomacy, with permanent networks of cooperation among states"[2]. He observes that intelligence cooperation has evolved from occasional exchanges to stable liaison networks, with their own rules and parallel diplomacy. James Walsh emphasizes that the politics of international intelligence exchange are shaped by mutual trust, institutional similarity, and shared risks[3].

These informational networks help allies develop common threat perceptions and coordinate responses, thereby buttressing the alliance's overall cohesion. For example, through institutions like NATO's intelligence-sharing frameworks, member states exchange data on potential adversaries, which reduces misperceptions and the likelihood of nasty surprises. Such practices enhance the *functionality* of a treaty by improving allies' capacity to mobilize together effectively when a threat arises. They also enhance *credibility* by signaling unity and preparedness to outsiders; an adversary is less likely to test an alliance if it sees the allies actively cooperating and sharing information in peacetime.

Liberal theorists also highlight the power of norms and legal frameworks. If states internalize norms of collective defense (e.g. the norm that an attack on one is an attack on all, as in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty), then honoring alliance commitments becomes a matter of identity and reputation in addition to interest. Domestic politics and interdependence further bolster cooperation: democracies bound by alliance treaties may face public and political pressure to assist allies, and dense economic or security interdependence raises the costs of letting an ally down.

In sum, the liberal paradigm suggests that with the right institutional design including clear consultation mechanisms, joint military planning, and intelligence cooperation security guarantees can deter aggression and prevent conflict by presenting a unified front. This vision of cooperation is not only strategic but also deeply normative. An exemplary figure today for this way of thinking is John Rawls, with his famous eight principles by which liberal peoples should be guided. His theory of *The Law of Peoples* articulates how mutual respect, transparency, and adherence to just institutions can ground credible and enduring international commitments. In this sense, mutual confidence, fostered by transparency and rule-based interaction, makes collective defense commitments both believable and operationally feasible. The Law of Peoples:

- People are free and independent, and their freedom and independence must be respected.
- People are to observe treaties and undertakings.
- People are equal and are parties to the agreements that bind them.
- People are to observe a duty of non-intervention (except in cases of grave violations of human rights).
- People have the right of self-defense but no right to instigate war for reasons other than self-defense.
- People are to honor human rights.
- People are to observe certain specified restrictions in the conduct of war.
- People have a duty to assist other peoples living under unfavorable conditions that prevent them from having a just or decent political and social regime[4].

These *eight principles* outlined by John Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* encapsulate the moral aspirations of liberal internationalism: a vision in which states (or "people") relate to each other not merely through strategic calculation, but based on mutual respect, legal commitments, and solidarity. Yet not all approaches to international relations share this optimism. To better understand the limits of institutional and normative cooperation, we now turn to the realist paradigm, which offers a more skeptical lens on the dynamics of power, interests, and security

[1] James Walsh, *Liberty in Troubled Times: A Libertarian Guide to Laws, Politics and Society in a Terrorized World*, Silver Lake Publishing, Aberdeen, WA, 2004, p. 3
[2] Michael Herman, *Op.cit*. p. 203
[3] James Walsh, *Op.cit.*, p. 143
[4] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ma., 1999, p. 37

commitments. While liberalism emphasizes international cooperation and norms, realism offers an alternative perspective, focusing on national interests and the balance of power, as we will demonstrate below.

Realist Paradigm: Power and Interests over Promises

Realist theory contends that the effectiveness of international security commitments is ultimately constrained by states' pursuit of national interest and power. In the classic realist view (from Hans Morgenthau onward), states are primarily concerned with survival and relative power; if honoring an alliance becomes too costly or threatens a state's own security, it will be abandoned. Kenneth Waltz's structural realism famously argues that, because the international system is anarchic, states must rely on "self-help" for their security and cannot depend on external authorities to enforce agreements. Alliances are thus seen as temporary marriages of convenience, entered for as long as they serve the major partners' strategic interests. Realists emphasize power dynamics: a security guarantee will be credible only if the key state(s) in an alliance calculate that fulfilling their promise aligns with—or at least does not undermine their own strategic position. Realist scholars from Kenneth Waltz to John Mearsheimer have consistently argued that international commitments are only as strong as the material power and self-interest that underpin them[1]. The realism argues that "in the absence of an overarching authority to enforce rules and guarantee security, mistrust and self-help are the dominant characteristics of the international system"[2]. With its view of the global system as one dominated by anarchy—in which state actors are guided by their own interest in power and dominance, and where moments of balance are only the result of a balance of power—realism finds its philosophical roots in Hobbes's conception of the state of nature as *bellum omnium contra omnes* (*the war of all against all*).

A key representative of this position is Hans Morgenthau, who argued that "the hope of taming international politics through disarmament and the creation of international parliamentary bodies is naïve"[3]. Following the debates sparked by his most important work, Politics Among Nations, Morgenthau formulated a systematic outline of realism in six principles. This systematization was later published as the first part of subsequent editions of the book.

These principles are:

- Political realism maintains that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.
- The most important guiding concept of political realism in the sphere of international politics is the notion of interest defined in terms of power.
- The concept of interest defined as power is an objective category that is universally valid, although its specific meaning may vary depending on the political and historical context.
- Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action... (but) it holds that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in the abstract.
- Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.
- The difference between political realism and other schools of thought is real and profound: the realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere[4].

From a theoretical point of view, a careful analysis of these principles reveals that, in all honesty, they are practically incompatible. Put simply, this incompatibility lies in the moral commitment of the liberal to human rights versus the realist's assertion of the autonomy of the political sphere, regardless of other considerations, including moral ones. As Aristotle noted, for something to be truly contradictory, it must be predicated on the same subject, at the same time, and in the same respect as its contradiction. For example, to say that John is both white and black at the same time and in the same respect such as the color of his skin is a contradiction. However, if one says that he is white-skinned but black with rage, there is no contradiction.

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[1] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 143

[2] Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p.12

[3] Martin Griffiths, Steven C. Roach, M. Scott Solomon, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 51

[4] Hans Morgenthau, *Op.cit*, p. 4-15

In the realm of international relations, both realism and liberalism refer to the same subject in the same respect: they are both interpretive theories (post hoc) and predictive frameworks for action (ante hoc). Nonetheless, the two theories can be applied at different moments in time. One might apply liberalism during negotiations but turn to realism when a crucial decision must be made. Contemporary international relations are marked by the global presence of high-stakes issues, which has led to the emergence of historical and cultural contexts seeking to explain these prevailing interests. Therefore, it is not surprising that a diverse range of intellectual traditions and global visions has developed. Among these perspectives, the most widespread and frequently encountered, at least up to now, are realism and liberalism.

The realist school places states and the international system at the center of its theoretical framework. For realists, international relations are understood as "relations between political units, each claiming the right to administer justice on its own and to be the sole judge in deciding whether to fight or not to fight"[1]. The international system, in the realist view, is anarchic. This structure arises primarily from the competition for power because the actor at the top of the hierarchy is the least vulnerable. The main actor, from the realist perspective, is the state viewed as a rational actor whose primary motivation is the maximization of its own interests. The central concern of realism is national security. On this basis, Edward Hallett Carr stated that the principal error of the League of Nations was rooted in an erroneous assumption: that all the great powers of that era were content with the territorial and political status quo[2].

Liberalism, by contrast, conducts its analysis not only at the international level as realism does, where international relations are separated from domestic politics but also at subnational, national, and international levels. This reflects all the layers that shape global society and interstate relations. Thus, from the liberal perspective, the primary actor on the international stage is not limited to states, as in the realist framework, but also includes international and transnational organizations. This is due to the increasing global interconnectivity, which makes it difficult for states to independently control activities within and beyond their borders. For this reason, addressing a wide range of transnational issues requires cooperation not only among states but also with non-state actors. As a result of globalization, state borders have become increasingly blurred, and power and influence are now distributed among multiple actors—of which the state is only one.

It is worth noting that, in the daily conduct of international relations, both perspectives often intersect. When action is necessary, the initiating state might attempt to involve certain actors or secure the neutrality of others. To this end, it may employ liberal tools, such as the use of multilateral institutions. However, if a state's national interest requires it, and it has the capacity in terms of power, it may ultimately discard the liberal approach and act in a purely realist manner. While the interplay between liberalism and realism continues to shape much of international relations theory and practice, neither paradigm fully accounts for the social dimensions of state behavior. To address this limitation, the following section introduces a third major approach—constructivism—which focuses on the role of norms, identities, and shared meanings in global politics. This note explores how constructivist scholars reinterpret core concepts such as security, alliances, and international obligations, offering a valuable complement (or even challenge) to realist and liberal assumptions.

A Note on Constructivist and Alternative Perspectives

Constructivism as an Alternative Lens. Constructivism emerged in the late 20th century as a challenge to the dominant realist and liberal paradigms in international relations. Unlike realism's emphasis on material power and anarchy or liberalism's focus on institutions and interdependence, constructivism directs attention to the role of norms, identities, and shared meanings in shaping state behavior. As Alexander Wendt famously argued, "anarchy is what states make of it" – the international environment's effects depend on how states interpret and construct it, rather than on an immutable logic of self-help[3]. In his seminal *Social Theory of International Politics*[4], Wendt developed a "cultural theory" of international relations, showing that whether states view each other as enemies, rivals, or friends is a fundamental determinant of their interaction. These relational roles form what he called

[1] Raymond Aron, *Peace and War. A Theory of International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2017, p. 8
[2] E.H. Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016
[3] Alexander Wendt, *Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, "International Organization", Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 391–425
[4] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 89

different "cultures of anarchy" essentially shared ideas about international norms – which shape state interests and even capabilities. In short, identities are the basis of interests in the constructivist view; states do not possess interests independently of the social context and meanings that define their identity. This perspective stands in contrast to rationalist theories that assume states' interests as given or material.

*Core Ideas from Constructivist Scholars***.** The intellectual roots of constructivism can be traced to scholars like Nicholas Onuf, who coined the term *"constructivism"* in international relations. Onuf's *World of Our Making* advanced the idea that the international system is socially constructed through *rules* and *language*. He argues that language does not merely describe reality but plays a constitutive role: "by speaking, we make the world what it is"[1]. In this view, people and states create their social reality through ongoing interaction – *co-constituting* agents and structures such that "society is what it does" and agents and their worlds mutually constitute each other. This means norms and shared understandings are not epiphenomenal; they are fundamental to how international politics functions. Martha Finnemore's work further solidified constructivism by empirically demonstrating the power of global norms. In *National Interests in International Society*, Finnemore showed that what states want – their purported "national interests" – is shaped by international society and its norms. "The fact that we live in an international society means that what we want and, in some ways, who we are, are shaped by social norms, rules, understandings, and relationships we have with others"[2] Finnemore explains these *social realities* are as influential as material factors, for they *endow material realities with meaning and purpose*. For example, states adopted the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian rules *not* because of immediate material gain, but as an expression of shared values about acceptable behavior[3]. Such norms were *constitutive*: they redefined what it meant to be a "civilized" state, even when they did not confer direct strategic advantage[4]. Similarly, Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink note how some norms become so internalized that actors take them for granted as "inherent" a caution that what seems like unchanging structure may simply be deeply embedded social rules[5].

Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore extended constructivist analysis to the realm of international organizations, viewing them as global bureaucracies that wield power through norms and knowledge. In *Rules for the World*, they argue that international organizations are far from neutral tools of states – they are autonomous actors that help construct the social reality of international politics. Bureaucratic organizations have the power to *classify the world, fix meanings, and diffuse norms*. In Barnett and Finnemore's words, IOs "(1) classify the world, creating categories of actors and action; (2) fix meanings in the social world; and (3) articulate and diffuse new norms and principles"[6]. For instance, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) not only assists refugees but also shaped the very definition of who counts as a "refugee" and what obligations states have toward them. This perspective highlights that even concepts like "security," "development," or "threat" are influenced by the categorizations and shared understandings promoted by international institutions. Constructivist scholars thus illuminate how normative and ideational structures ingrained in language, rules, and institutions can shape state behavior in profound ways that neither realism nor liberalism fully capture.

Alliances, Threats, and Security Commitments through a Constructivist Lens. Constructivism offers distinct interpretations of key security concepts such as alliances and threats. Rather than seeing alliances as purely strategic responses to material power (as realists do) or as the institutionalization of common interests (as liberals do), constructivists emphasize the role of collective identity and shared norms in alliance formation and persistence. Alliances are not only contracts of convenience; they can become communities of fate. For example, the North

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[1] Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations,* University of South Carolina Press, 1989

[22] Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 134

[3] *Idem*

[4] *Idem*

[5] David Frederick Lemmons, *Alliances, Shared Identity, and Continued Cooperation*, Appalachian State University, May 2012, Department of Government and Justice Studies, https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/Lemmons,%20David_2012_Thesis.pdf (05.05.2025)

[6] Michael N. Barnett, Martha Finnemore, *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations* in *International Organization*, The MIT Press, Autumn, 1999, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 699-732 in https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mahajan/files/barnettfinnemore1999.pdf#:~:text=Organizations%20scholar,diffuse%20new%20norms%2C%20principles (05.05.2025)

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) can be understood as a security community knitted together by a shared identity and values. Thomas Risse-Kappen argued that NATO's post-Cold War cohesion owes much to a common "North Atlantic" identity among its members – a sense of a transatlantic liberal-democratic community that did not exist before the alliance was formed[1]. This shared identity helped NATO to persist and find new purpose even after its original adversary (the Soviet Union) disappeared. A constructivist would note that members saw each other as friends committed to common democratic norms, which powerfully supplemented the material interests in keeping the alliance. Similarly, constructivist research shows that threats are perceived, not automatic. How a state perceives another – as a friend, rival, or enemy – will determine whether that other's military capabilities are seen as menacing. Wendt illustrates this with the oft-cited observation that 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons, *because* of the friendship and shared understandings the U.S. has with Britain (and the enmity with North Korea). In 1939, France's behavior at the onset of World War II can also be reinterpreted with attention to norms and identity. Realist logic would emphasize France's material hesitancy to launch an offensive against Germany despite its alliance with Poland, citing military calculations. A constructivist, however, might point to France's internalized norms and collective memories after the trauma of World War I – French leaders and society were deeply influenced by pacifist norms and a defensive mindset, which shaped their hesitant fulfillment of alliance obligations. The French *did* honor the alliance in a formal sense (declaring war on Germany due to the norm of commitment), but their strategic paralysis (the "Phony War") reflected an identity of caution and the lingering influence of shared meanings about the horrors of the previous war. In short, concepts like "alliance" and "security commitment" are not just calculations of power or interest; they are social commitments that derive strength (or weakness) from collective understandings. Whether an alliance holds firm in a crisis depends on whether partners share a sense of trust, duty, and common purpose, as much as on tanks and treaties.

Constructivism vs. Realism and Liberalism in Explaining Security Behavior. In a comparative perspective, constructivism offers a fundamentally different explanation for international security outcomes. *Realism* explains state behavior by distribution of material power and fear – for a realist, France in 1939 faltered due to unfavorable power dynamics, and NATO only stayed intact as long as a clear external threat loomed. *Liberalism* points to institutional commitments and domestic politics – a liberal might stress that France's democratic politics constrained rash action, or that NATO endured thanks to institutional inertia and the democratic peace among its members. *Constructivism*, by contrast, shines light on how intersubjective factors drive behavior: France's resolve and restraint were conditioned by prevailing norms and identities (how the French defined their role and the legitimacy of war in 1939), while NATO's endurance is attributable to an evolved collective identity and normative commitment, not simply material interests. Constructivism thus complements and challenges other theories by revealing the often-overlooked ideational causes behind alliances and security decisions. In the realm of international security, where realism sees immutable power struggles and liberalism sees managerial institutions, constructivism sees a world of *possibilities contingent on ideas*. As Wendt put it, international politics can be transformed if states collectively reconceive their relationships – enemies can become friends, threats can be redefined, and alliances can be re-imagined – because the international arena is, ultimately, a world of our making. By emphasizing how changing norms and identities can reshape what states consider dangerous or worthwhile, constructivism provides a rich, alternative understanding that complements the insights of realism and liberalism while explaining aspects of international security behavior that those theories struggle to capture.

Transitioning from Theory to History

With these theoretical perspectives as our interpretive framework, the following section aims to test the working hypothesis through a qualitative analysis of concrete situations in recent history. We will examine illustrative cases in which international treaties containing security guarantees were subjected to significant geopolitical pressure. Whether it concerns the failure to intervene in defense of an ally, the undermining of commitments through covert operations, or the successful cooperation between allies in the face of a common threat, these examples offer an appropriate empirical framework for observing the conditions under which

[1] David Frederick Lemmons, *Op. cit*., p. 97

commitments become effective or, conversely, remain merely symbolic. We will also assess how intelligence services through overt or covert actions influenced state decisions, either reinforcing or weakening the guarantees.

Despite the tensions of the Cold War era, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact established during that time invoked the principle of collective defense: NATO in Article 5, the Warsaw Pact in Article 4. Both stated that "states are jointly responsible for each other's physical security"[1] referencing this principle enshrined in the UN Charter. It is remarkable that two superpowers, locked in a cold conflict, invoked the same principle that was, in theory, supposed to ensure global peace, especially considering that the UN Charter was open to all states (even Germany joined in 1974). In other words, both invoked a fundamentally liberal position. Yet ultimately, "whenever two dominant powers confront each other, each is the primary threat to the other's security, and they cannot be anything but enemies; each, regardless of preferences or intentions, will balance its power against the other"[2]. For this reason, both sought to rally allies under the banner of collective security.

In turn, smaller states attempted to benefit from the situation by securing their own safety. Such mechanisms play a key role in mutual deterrence. The fear of the other's strength encourages restraint. The problem is that any such balance is imperfect, and at any moment, moral hazard can lead to open conflict. A particularly relevant issue is the emergence of power imbalance. This is the moment when each major power reassesses its position. If it calculates that it can avoid losses by sacrificing an ally, and the consequences seem tolerable, it might well decide to do so. This is a clear realist scenario—one in which the pursuit of self-interest and power overrides any other consideration, especially in the absence of a superior authority to enforce treaties and sanction their violation. As Hugo Grotius observed long ago, international law is *sine gladio* "without a sword." Despite later developments, such as the establishment of the International Court of Justice at The Hague or the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the core reality remains unchanged.

In summary, both realist and liberal perspectives converge on the idea that alliances remain credible only under specific conditions. Realist theory stresses that states will honor security guarantees primarily when their vital strategic interests coincide; in the absence of such convergence, these commitments may remain mere rhetoric, easily discarded under pressure. Liberal institutionalism complements this view by highlighting that institutional factor—particularly regular intelligence-sharing, mutual trust, and transparent communication—reinforce alliances by reducing uncertainty and strengthening mutual confidence. Together, these insights support our core hypothesis: that alliance credibility hinges on the alignment of strategic interests among allies and the robustness of their intelligence cooperation. To evaluate this hypothesis empirically, the next section examines a historical case study: the *Drôle de guerre* (1939–40). This episode offers an instructive example of how varying degrees of interest alignment and intelligence cooperation among alliance partners influenced the perceived reliability of their security commitments during this critical phase of World War II.

Historical Case Study: the "Drôle de guerre" (1939–1940)

To test the explanatory power of these paradigms, we now turn to a key historical episode; one of the most striking historical examples of an unfulfilled security guarantee is the episode known as the "drôle de guerre" or "Phoney War." This term refers to the period between the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 and the spring of 1940, when a declared state of war existed among the major powers but with little actual fighting on the Western Front. The events surrounding the fall of Poland in 1939 and the ensuing inaction of its allies (France and Britain) vividly illustrate how the credibility of alliance guarantees can collapse due to strategic self-interest and covert influences.

The Alliance and the Promise: France and Poland had signed a defensive alliance treaty in March 1921, whereby each pledged to support the other in the event of external aggression. This commitment was reaffirmed throughout the 1930[s] in response to the rising threat of Nazi Germany and was meant to serve as a powerful deterrent against German aggression in Central Europe. By 1939, on paper, Poland had the security guarantee of two great powers, France and the United Kingdom (Britain had issued a parallel guarantee to Poland in March 1939). When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, these treaties were invoked. France (and Britain) did

[1] G.R. Berridge, Allan James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2003, p. 41
[2] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 18

declare war on Germany on September 3, 1939, honoring the letter of their commitments. In theory, the collective security mechanism should have sprung into action to defend Poland.

The "drôle de guerre" unfolds: In reality, however, France's response remained extremely limited entering history as the drôle de guerre, literally the strange war. For roughly eight months (September 1939 to May 1940), French forces on the Western Front remained almost completely passive behind the fortifications of the Maginot Line. No significant offensive was launched against Germany to relieve pressure on Poland. As a result, Poland fought alone and was rapidly overwhelmed, partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union by October 1939. During this period, while German armies were fully engaged in the east, the Anglo-French allies made only minimal probes or skirmishes, missing the opportunity to strike a potentially vulnerable Germany. The grand alliance system that was supposed to check aggression failed to function as intended at this critical moment. It is also noteworthy that, in this case, it was once again the Germans who seized the initiative. At the same time, they too contributed to the *drôle de guerre* by allowing, for three weeks, the British to evacuate their troops from France via Dunkirk without launching an attack.

The most important questions concern the Anglo-French attitude. One of them was raised at the Nuremberg Trials, where General Jodl declared: "If Germany did not collapse already in 1939, it is only because the 110 British and French divisions remained completely inactive, despite facing only 25 German divisions"[1] (the rest being deployed on the Polish front). The problem is evident: why did the British and French not intervene? The same question can be asked about the German attitude at Dunkirk. Other questions arise concerning both German and British behavior, such as the case of Rudolf Hess's flight to England in the spring of 1940 (Hess was, after all, the second most powerful man in Nazi Germany). Notably, he remained imprisoned in Spandau until his death, for a long time being its sole inmate.

For all these questions, intelligence services would likely be the only ones able to provide real answers. Yet for now, they seem more interested in obstructing access to a proper answer than facilitating it. In this "chess game" of great powers, we must not forget that two countries—Poland and Norway—had already been occupied by Germany without Anglo-French intervention, despite the commitments made through treaties. It should be noted, as some experts have stated, that "diplomats are connected to intelligence"[2]. For example, the intelligence community gathers information on foreign targets "including reports from various agencies, diplomatic missions, and consulates abroad."[3]. However, situations can be much more complex: "due to concerns that military attachés might engage in intelligence activities, Article 7 of the Vienna Convention stipulates that the receiving state may request in advance the names of such attachés"[4]. We must bear in mind that, in its simplest definition, "intelligence refers to information about a foreign entity—usually, though not always, an adversary—as well as the agencies responsible for gathering such information." What is significant in this definition is the adjective foreign a general qualifier for states, but in the broadest sense, it refers to any entity that might obstruct an intelligent actor from achieving its objectives. This means that even in the era of globalization and integrated markets, national intelligence goals continue to exist; they will be reconfigured but not rendered obsolete.

In this context, we must recognize that just like economic prosperity, military power, effective governance, social cohesion, and competent intelligence services, the evolution of diplomacy impacts a country's foreign policy. Realist Explanations – Interests and Power Calculations: From a realist standpoint, France's behavior can be explained by cold strategic calculus. Simply put, French leaders did not perceive it to be in France's immediate national interest to launch a full-scale attack on Germany in defense of Poland, especially not in 1939 when France was not fully mobilized for a major offensive. The French high command feared a repeat of World War I's devastating offensives and were wary of engaging the formidable German Wehrmacht without adequate preparation. France's overall war strategy at that time favored delay – waiting behind strong defenses in hopes that economic blockade, diplomatic efforts, or perhaps German hesitation might fracture Hitler's resolve or redirect the conflict. In realist terms, France lacked a vital interest in Poland's survival that outweighed the risks to itself. The alliance commitment, while formally agreed, conflicted with France's immediate security priorities. This is a

[1] Arrigo Petocco, *La strana Guerra*, Mondatori, Milano, 2008, p. 6
[2] Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 4
[3] G.R. Beeridge, Allen James*, Op. cit*. p.7
[4] Yehuda Z. Blum, *Diplomatic Agents and Mission in Encyclopedia of Public of International Law*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1986, p. 91

textbook example of what Snyder described: "alliance commitments are credible only to the extent that fulfilling them does not exceed the strategic interest perceived by the guarantor power"[1].

Additionally, France in 1939 faced the grim reality of its own military limitations. French and British forces were numerically strong but not yet fully integrated or deployed for a large offensive; their strategic doctrine was largely defensive. The German Army, meanwhile, had demonstrated terrifying effectiveness in Poland. Realists would argue that power capabilities were misaligned with the treaty's ambitious promise. A collective defense commitment can deter or defeat aggression only if backed by genuine military strength and resolve at the critical time. In the case of the Franco-Polish alliance, the structural limitation was that France and Britain, though formally obliged to aid Poland, were not able to mount a decisive intervention quickly. The treaty guarantee was, in effect, stronger on paper than on the ground.

Liberal and Internal Factors – The Role of Politics and Intelligence: Beyond pure power calculations, France's domestic political context further compromised the alliance's functionality. The late 1930s French government (led by Édouard Daladier) was politically fragmented and war weary. Public opinion in France was deeply scarred by World War I and fearful of another bloodbath. There were also divisions within the French leadership about the greater threat—some politicians viewed the Soviet Union and communism as an equal or greater danger than Nazi Germany, which muddied strategic priorities. It is here that intelligence and covert influences enter the story. Historians have noted that certain members of the French government had dubious loyalties or conflicting ideological leanings. One controversial figure was Pierre Cot, the Air Minister, known for his leftist and pro-Soviet sympathies. Cot had publicly denounced the Munich agreement in 1938 and opposed Nazi aggression, but he was also suspected by some of being under the influence of Soviet intelligence. In fact, later accounts (including intelligence histories) suggest that Cot had been in contact with the Soviet intelligence apparatus prior to 1939. According to research by Richard Trahair and Robert Miller, Cot who "had been in contact with Soviet intelligence apparatus prior to 1939"[2], may have used his position to discourage aggressive French action against Germany at the outset of the war. His reasoning (if the allegations are true) would have been that a strong Germany focused on fighting in the East might indirectly serve Soviet interests, or that a war between Germany and the Western Allies should be postponed.

Whether or not Cot's influence was decisive, this hypothesis underscores how intelligence agencies and ideological alignments can undermine alliance commitments. Covert informational mechanisms were at play: French and British intelligence in 1939 provided assessments that perhaps overestimated German strength and underestimated the prospects of a quick victory, feeding caution. Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes lobbying and espionage – such as purported Soviet influence via figures like Cot – introduced informational noise and skewed decision-making. Rather than sharing a unified, transparent view of the threat (as liberal theory would prescribe), the Allies were plagued by mistrust and mixed signals internally. It is telling that the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park and French intelligence had not yet come fully into their own; the allies lacked clear, shared intelligence that might have given them confidence to act. In liberal terms, intelligence, cooperation and trust among the Allies were insufficient to overcome their hesitation. The result was a paralysis that Nazi Germany exploited.

Outcome and Analysis: In the end, the Franco-Polish alliance of 1921 functioned more as a symbolic guarantee than a real one when tested by war. Poland was left to fend for itself despite treaties promising aid. The drôle de guerre demonstrates that even in a multilateral setting (France and Britain both allied to Poland and to each other), formal commitments can fail if key conditions are not met. Realist factors – the lack of convergent vital interests and the imbalance of military readiness – largely explain the outcome. Liberal factors (or the absence thereof) also mattered: there was little in the way of effective allied consultation or transparency in strategy; the allies did not fully coordinate their war plans or share a joint vision on how to honor the guarantee. Furthermore, intelligence services did not sufficiently facilitate alliance cohesion at this stage – indeed, covert influences might have worked in the opposite direction, encouraging inaction.

In retrospect, the drôle de guerre underscores the importance of both power and information in alliance dynamics. Had France and Britain been more unified, better informed, and resolute (liberal factors), and had their

[1] Glenn H. Snyder, *Op. cit.,* p. 12

[2] Richard C. S. Trahair, Robert L. Miller, *Encyclopedia of Cold War Espionage*, Enigma Books, New York, 2009, p. 67

leadership perceived their own survival to be directly tied to Poland's (realist interest factor), the response might have been very different. This case thus vividly illustrates the interplay of realist and liberal elements in determining whether a security treaty's guarantees hold firm or falter in crisis. Having examined how strategic interests, institutional coordination, and information sharing affect the credibility of alliance guarantees, it is equally important to consider the internal mechanisms that govern intelligence activities. The following section addresses the normative and operational need for democratic oversight of intelligence services within alliances—an essential yet often underexplored dimension of collective security arrangements.

Democratic Oversight of Intelligence Services

Only by ensuring a genuine balance between security and liberty, guaranteed through institutional transparency, can democracies overcome the false dilemma of "freedom or security." Real, lasting security cannot be built outside the framework of democratic principles—because a society without freedom can never be truly secure or stable. As Loch K. Johnson observed, "the existence of secret agencies in an open society is a contradiction and a dilemma for liberal democracies".[1] For this very reason, any sustainable balance must include clear mechanisms for democratic oversight of intelligence.

Societies progress when they reject binary traps like "do you want freedom or security?" Security without liberty is a hollow promise; even slaves had no real security. Intelligence services, while vital to national defense and alliance cohesion, can undermine democratic legitimacy if left unchecked. Therefore, the architecture of international alliances must also include the oversight infrastructure to keep intelligence power aligned with collective values and commitments. A key insight from this article is the double-edged role of intelligence services in collective security. Intelligence cooperation can be a glue that holds alliances together, but unchecked clandestine operations or competing intelligence agendas can also undermine alliances from within. To maximize the positive contributions of intelligence while minimizing the risks, democratic oversight of intelligence services is crucial. In practical terms, this means implementing concrete mechanisms to monitor and guide intelligence activities in line with alliance commitments and international norms:

- Parliamentary Committees: Democracies should empower specialized legislative committees to review intelligence agencies' operations, budgets, and strategies. Such committees (e.g. the U.S. Congressional intelligence committees or the UK's Intelligence and Security Committee) can ensure that secret activities do not stray into undermining allied trust or violating treaty obligations. Regular hearings and reports increase accountability.
- External Audits and Reviews: Independent oversight bodies or inspectors general can conduct audits of intelligence programs, checking for abuse or mission drift. For example, an external review panel might assess whether intelligence-sharing with alliance partners is being conducted robustly and securely, or whether agencies are engaging in unauthorized surveillance of allies (which can seriously erode trust if it comes to light).
- Joint Intelligence Coordination Centers: Within alliances like NATO, members have established coordination units (for instance, the NATO Intelligence Fusion Center and similar bodies) to facilitate sharing. This article recommends expanding such structures and subjecting them to governance by member states collectively. Allies could agree on joint oversight arrangements for any multilateral intelligence-sharing initiatives, ensuring that no single state's intelligence service can covertly hijack the agenda.
- Selective Transparency: While intelligence work is by nature secretive, a degree of transparency can be injected to build public and inter-allied confidence. This might include declassifying and sharing information about past intelligence cooperation successes, or establishing protocols where allies inform each other (at least in general terms) about covert operations that could affect the alliance. For instance, allies might agree to notify one another about any clandestine political influence operations in allied territories, to prevent mutual suspicion. Such selective transparency respects necessary secrecy but avoids destructive surprises.

By instituting these mechanisms, democracies can better align their intelligence services with their diplomatic commitments. Democratic oversight helps ensure that intelligence agencies serve the collective interest (enhancing early warning, countering common threats) rather than narrow or rogue agendas. It also maintains the normative legitimacy of alliances: part of what makes a collective defense pact like NATO strong is the shared belief in

[1] Johnson Loch K. *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, Routledge, London, 2007, p. 12

common values and rule of law. Oversight and accountability in the realm of intelligence uphold those values and prevent the erosion of trust that scandals or unchecked espionage can cause[1].

Building on the normative arguments for democratic oversight, it is now essential to translate these insights into concrete recommendations for current and future security arrangements. The following section outlines key policy implications and institutional lessons derived from the preceding analysis, with particular attention to how alliances can enhance their credibility and adaptability in a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment.

Implications for Contemporary Alliances and Future Treaties

The findings of this analysis have important implications for present and future security arrangements. Modern alliances such as NATO, the European Union's mutual defense clause (Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty[2]), or regional defense pacts in Asia-Pacific (e.g. U.S. alliances with Japan or South Korea) all wrestle with the balance of credibility vs. flexibility. To apply the lessons learned:

Aligning Interests and Capabilities. Alliance planners must continually assess whether member states' strategic interests remain aligned. When divergences emerge, diplomatic effort is needed to reforge consensus. For example, within NATO, differences in threat perception (say, between eastern members focused on Russia and southern members focused on terrorism) require active management so that the alliance's guarantees remain credible to deter adversaries on all fronts. Future treaties should include provisions for regular strategic reviews, ensuring that all parties still agree on the definition of threats and the required responses.

Institutionalize Intelligence Sharing. Building on liberal insights, treaties should formalize intelligence-sharing mechanisms among signatories. A modern collective security treaty might mandate the creation of a joint intelligence task force or a secure communication network for the exchange of sensitive information. This would operationalize the notion that "information is power" shared information is shared power for the alliance. It also helps prevent failures of coordination. For instance, had there been a formal Allied intelligence committee in 1939 assessing German movements, France and Britain might have devised a timelier joint military strategy. Contemporary frameworks like the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance among Anglophone countries show how deep intelligence collaboration can underpin broader strategic trust.

Explicit Conditionality and Triggers. Treaties could be designed with clearer triggers for collective action and predefined responses, reducing ambiguity when crises erupt. One reason the Poland guarantee failed was the vagueness about how and when aid would be rendered. Modern agreements might specify that upon a certain threshold of aggression (e.g. an invasion), allies will within days initiate specific measures (joint air deployments, emergency NATO council meetings, etc.). While some flexibility is always needed, too much ambiguity undermines credibility. Well-defined commitments, perhaps backed by joint contingency plans, improve both the perception and reality of alliance reliability.

Integrate Military Commands and Exercises. Following NATO's model, future multilateral defense treaties should seek some degree of integrated command structure or regular joint exercises. Practical cooperation builds the functionality of the alliance – allies who train together and have interoperable forces can react faster and more cohesively when a threat arises. This also deters adversaries by showing that the alliance is not a mere political statement but a living operational partnership[3].

Address Internal Threats and Subversion. Alliances must also acknowledge the risk of internal subversion or divergent agendas exposed by the drôle de guerre case. Modern adversaries may attempt to undermine alliances from within (for example, through disinformation campaigns or by cultivating sympathetic political figures in member states). Treaties and alliance charters should explicitly encourage members to resist such subversive influences and perhaps even coordinate counter-intelligence efforts. A clause promoting the integrity of the alliance decision-making could be included – committing members to transparency with each other about any external pressures or infiltration attempts they face. This way, allies can confront the problem collectively rather than falling victim to "divide and conquer" tactics.

[1]Johnson K. Loch, *Secret Agencies: U.S. Intelligence in a Hostile World*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996

[2]European External Action Service, *Article 42(7) TEU – The EU's Mutual Assistance Clause,* https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Article%2042(7)%20TEU%20-The%20EU's%20mutual%20assistance%20clause.pdf (05.05.2025)

[3] NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre, *Our Mission* NATO, https://web.ifc.bices.org/about-us (03.052025)

Finally, it is worth noting the importance of political will and public support. No treaty is self-executing; the leaders and citizens of allied nations must believe in the cause and be willing to bear costs for the common security. This speaks to a constructivist understanding – the alliance must form part of the members' national identities or grand strategies. Therefore, maintaining the credibility of an alliance is not just a matter for diplomats and generals, but for societies. Clear communication, solidarity in values, and occasional demonstrations of unity (for instance, humanitarian missions or peacekeeping operations conducted jointly) can solidify the sense that the security guarantee is real and worth upholding.

In summary, international security guarantees can provide great reassurance – but they come with no automatic guarantee of success. Realist forces of power and interest will always set the bounds of possibility; within those bounds, liberal mechanisms of cooperation and oversight can make the difference between an alliance that deters war and one that collapses when tested. The role of intelligence services exemplifies this duality: they are force-multipliers for security when guided by common goals and proper oversight, but sources of intrigue and discord when operating in the shadows without constraint. Future treaty designers and alliance managers would do well to heed these lessons. By ensuring robust democratic control of intelligence, aligning strategic interests, and investing in the institutions that build trust, states can improve the odds that their collective defense pacts will truly function as promised when the moment of truth arrives.

Conclusions

Having explored both historical evidence and theoretical models, we can now draw broader conclusions about what determines the success or failure of treaty-based security guarantees. The analysis of treaty-based security guarantees through both realist and liberal lenses, supported by the historical case of the drôle de guerre, yields several important conclusions. First, realist constraints are very real: no security guarantee can be credible if the fundamental interests and capabilities of the allies do not support it. States will not sacrifice themselves on the altar of an alliance; therefore, aligning mutual interests and maintaining sufficient military power is essential. Second, liberal factors can significantly enhance the credibility and functionality of alliances: institutions that promote transparency, joint planning, and information-sharing can prevent misunderstandings and create incentives for states to stick together even under stress. In essence, power provides the hard skeleton of security guarantees, but cooperation and trust are the ligaments that make the skeleton flexible and strong.

Bridging these perspectives, one finds that successful alliances often require a balance of both: a congruence of strategic interests (realism) and a dense network of communication and norms (liberalism). For instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the Cold War worked in large part because the member states shared a profound common interest in deterring the Soviet Union and developed institutionalized military command structures and intelligence-sharing agreements that bound them together. Credibility in NATO's Article 5 (collective defense clause) came from the presence of substantial American and allied forces in Europe (a tangible commitment of power) as well as from continuous political consultation and joint exercises which signaled unity[1]. Even today, NATO's credibility hinges on both the strategic calculus of its leading powers and the strength of its institutional cohesion.

This article contributes to scholarly literature by linking alliance theory with intelligence studies, showing that both the alignment of strategic interests and the institutionalized sharing of intelligence are necessary for credible treaties. Comparative or quantitative studies of other alliance episodes (for example, from the Cold War period or within contemporary security pacts) could better assess the broader relevance of the interest-alignment and intelligence-cooperation hypothesis. In-depth investigations of intelligence-sharing processes, possibly through archival research or interviews—could also clarify how and when such cooperation effectively supports alliance commitments. By extending the analysis beyond a single case, researchers can further refine the understanding of the conditions under which security guarantees success or failure.

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