



# Keeping Allies in the Fight: Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq

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### Introduction

Winston Churchill famously quipped, “There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them.”<sup>1</sup> Today, the U.S. has the largest network of alliances of any nation. America’s allies provide it with a marked advantage over its adversaries including basing rights, transit points, and a forward presence. Compared to going it alone in a conflict, allies bring legitimacy and help share the burden. Following the Cold War, U.S. allies, particularly NATO members, have deployed troops in support of operations that have lasted years — even decades. Why did they stay engaged for so long? Would they be willing to do the same in future wars, especially if they appear to be unpopular non-existential conflicts like Iraq? How can the U.S. provide political cover to allied decision-makers so that they are better able to justify participation in US-led operations to their domestic audiences? Once a conflict is underw

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## Decision Points

How can the U.S. improve the communication strategies of the Departments of State and Defense vis-à-vis allies, in preparation for allied participation in a potential conflict with China over Taiwan?

How does the one-war standard adopted by the Department of Defense in 2018 impact America's ability to successfully integrate allies into future conflicts?

Should the U.S. seek sources of international legitimacy like UN resolutions and NATO joint declarations before initiating a conflict in which America will need allied assistance?

How can the United States better prepare for early allied withdrawal from military operations in which there is little progress and high costs?