Poast on Henke, 'Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments, and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions'

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Marina E. Henke. *Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments, and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. Illustrations, charts. 258 pp. $23.99 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-5017-3971-2; $47.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-5017-3969-9.

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The words of Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane continue to perfectly capture a core tenet of international relations scholarship: "Achieving cooperation in world politics is difficult."[1] Scholars have long studied how and when states will cooperate, be it in entering into fleeting "alliances of convenience" to counter a threat, to forming international organizations with extensive permanent bureaucracies. These cooperative efforts do not simply happen; they take work, particularly on the part of diplomats. That work is on full display in Marina E. Henke's new book, *Constructing Allied Cooperation*.

Henke's book sheds insight into the construction of cooperation by exploring how the United States creates coalitions to carry out security missions. These security missions range from wartime coalitions to peacekeeping deployments. Some coalition members may become involved because an inherent interest is at stake. But coalitions also comprise states that lack any clear national security interest in the mission. Examples of this are the Dominican Republic being part of the 2003 Iraq War coalition or Turkey's involvement in the Korean War.

There are a host of reasons that states may not wish to be part of a coalition. This means that when the United States tries to form a coalition, it needs to bargain with prospective allies. According to Henke, a favorite bargaining tactic is the "side-payment," an offer of a policy concession (or even just money) in exchange for joining the coalition. Though William Wallace famously referred to such actions as an "ancient and accepted form of diplomacy," it essentially means the United States must beg and barter its way to a willing coalition.[2] Most notoriously, such actions led pundits to label the coalition that invaded Iraq in 2003 the "coalition of the billing."[3]

Critically, it is not enough to simply throw money at a prospective coalition member. US officials must know which buttons to push to get to yes with a state. This is greatly facilitated by US diplomats having deep ties and relationships with key officials of the sought-after country. In other words, the information that diplomats gain from being "diplomatic" can be used to craft packages that make a state willing to sign on to the coalition.

Henke makes such actions evident via extensive case study analysis. In the case of the US efforts to

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form a coalition during the Korean War, Henke shows that despite UN authorization and the seemingly "rightness" of the cause, the United States was initially alone in its willingness to deploy troops. Henke shows that building the military apparatus of the coalition required extensive diplomatic effort: much wheeling and dealing had to happen to secure even a modicum of allied contributions. Hence, the war was largely a US effort, with modest (though still notable) contributions from such countries as Turkey and Britain.

The Darfur case study is especially enlightening. At the time of this crisis, Darfur was held out as a humanitarian tragedy calling for a solution. It received much attention in the United States and by human rights advocates around the globe (sparking, for example, celebrities like George Clooney to advocate the cause). The United Nations called for the deployment of peacekeepers to help stem the crisis. Even then, states were reluctant to deploy troops. The United States had to beg and barter in order to induce states to commit troops to the effort. Indeed, Henke's chapter, which draws from extensive interviews with officials involved in the mission, sheds great insight into how coalitions are built: creating them is a long process involving diplomatic patience, deft bargaining, and memos. Lots of memos.

Henke's emphasis on diplomatic embeddedness as facilitating the distribution of side-payments is important, as other scholars have recently shed light on how states, specifically the United States, use side-payments to form coalitions. For instance, both Sarah E. Kreps's *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War* (2011) and Scott Wolford's *Politics of Military Coalitions* (2015) claim that offering side-payments and making concessions are critical to securing a coalition. Wolford, who is a formal modeler, has a game theoretic treatment of the process in chapter 3 of his book. Kreps's book makes extensive use of the concepts of "side-payments," "quid pro quos," and "concessions" as tools the United States uses to form military coalitions. In this sense, the use of such instruments by the United States to form coalitions is well established. But Henke's contribution is in showing the diplomatic processes (often built over years) required to bring about a successful exchange.

A key reason the book is valuable to scholars is that it builds on and extends the work of two giants in the field of international relations: Patricia A. Weitsman and David A. Lake. Henke delves into a key question raised by Weitsman's last book, *Waging War: Alliances, Coalitions, and Institutions of Interstate Violence* (2013): what are the strategic and military results when political reasons, not military reasons, dictate the prosecution of coalitional wars? Henke shows how constructing war-fighting coalitions, regardless of existing institutional arrangements (for example, an existing alliance treaty), is nearly always a matter of politics and bargaining, not military necessity. Henke's book also nicely builds and extends the analysis from Lake's *Hierarchy in International Politics* (2011), particularly on the role of material (that is, economic and military) hierarchy in forming coalitions. Henke shows that such hierarchies are relevant when diplomatic channels (which Henke labels "diplomatic embeddedness") are actualized. Moreover, the interactions through these channels show how hierarchy matters: hierarchy does not matter from a coercive standpoint or as a form of authority that must be acknowledged but because the junior partner knows that the dominant state has "goodies" to offer.

While I found much of the book's material persuasive, I did wonder how to view Henke's theoretical mechanisms in light of her empirical evidence. Henke's key explanatory variable, diplomatic

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embeddedness, is the count of all bilateral and multilateral institutional ties the United States has with a foreign country at the date of intervention. More precisely, states that have more agreements and more joint international organization memberships are more “embedded.” In the quantitative analysis, this seems to place “act of cooperation” on both the right-hand side (number of diplomatic ties) and left-hand side (participate in a coalition) of her regression model. Hence, one could read the results as showing that states with a tendency to cooperate with the United States will continue to cooperate with the United States. This is not unimportant to show, but it is unclear if knowledge of acceptable side-payment offers is driving the finding. Of course, one could say that unpacking evidence of the precise mechanism is the purpose of the qualitative evidence. Indeed, that evidence, based on documents and interviews, superbly illuminates the thinking of diplomats. But the evidence does not show that the number of opportunities for diplomatic interaction (that is, diplomatic embeddedness) is doing the work of identifying the side-payments required to seal a deal. Instead, the evidence shows how personal ties between certain individuals can influence diplomatic outcomes. These ties might be forged by years of interactions and interactions in different venues. But it is difficult to determine if the personal connection between the two diplomats or if the number of diplomatic opportunities (or if one is feeding into the other) is doing the work.

But these questions should not detract from the larger point: if you wish to understand the inner workings of coalition creation, this is the book for you. Diplomats do not write memos for the sake of memos. They do not engage in customs and protocols to be polite. They do this work to know what countries want. This knowledge, in turn, can be used to gain coalition partners. At a time when the Department of State has been devalued, this book helps to demonstrate exactly when maintaining a deep and extensive diplomatic staff around the globe is of keen US national security interest.

Notes

[1]. Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions,” *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (1985): 226.

[2]. William Wallace, “Issue Linkage among Atlantic Governments,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 52, no. 2 (1976): 163.

[3]. Laura McClure, “Coalition of the Billing—or Unwilling,” Salon.com, March 13, 2003, https://www.salon.com/2003/03/12/foreign_aid/.

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