

# 1 INTRODUCTION

EVEN AS U.S. HEGEMONY reached its zenith in the late 1980s, the alarm of American decline was sounded in many influential circles. The volume of this alarm has grown in recent years, with the collapse of the financial system in 2008 and the rising economic power of China in the past decade. The declinist arguments pervading scholarly and policy-making circles focus a great deal on the economic components of U.S. power. Yet comparisons of economic or even military capabilities worldwide fail to account for the institutional dimension. Contemporary coalition warfare reveals that U.S. military might remains unrivaled and will be difficult for any other great power to match for some time to come. This has to do with the institutions of violence—not just with the technology, capability, and level of professionalism and training of the U.S. military, although these are essential ingredients of American hegemony as well.

Military alliances provide constraints and opportunities for states seeking to advance their interests around the globe. The two decades following the end of the Cold War are instructive in this regard. The active engagement of the United States and its partners in many corners of the world illustrates the distinctive nature of waging war in the contemporary age. War, from the Western perspective, is no longer—not that it ever was—a solitary endeavor. Partnerships of all types serve as a foundation for the projection of power and the employment of force. These relationships among states provide the foundation upon which hegemony is built.

The institutions of violence that promote U.S. interests include the web of military alliances that the United States has constructed worldwide. They include the coalitions that the United States culls in the face of crises. In addition,

## 2 INTRODUCTION

they consist of the joint and unilateral command structures that span the globe. Together, these effective weapons of war augment U.S. fighting capacity and solidify the country's position as a global hegemon.

My argument here is not that military alliances provide a straightforward capability-aggregation effect. I have written extensively elsewhere that this is far from true. In this book, too, I show that allies may be a strategic liability in wartime. However, what does emerge here is that institutions of interstate violence serve as ready mechanisms for employing force. They are not always well designed, nor do they always augment fighting effectiveness as well as they could. They sometimes act as drag on state capacity. However, the net benefit of this web of partnerships, agreements, and alliances is great—it makes rapid response to crisis possible and facilitates countering threats wherever they emerge. As such, these institutions of interstate violence are facilitators of the realization of capability and a critical component of hegemony for the United States. My examination shows how and to what degree alliances and coalitions serve as vehicles for projecting U.S. power.

The purpose of this book is to determine which sorts of institutional arrangements lubricate states' abilities to advance their agendas and prevail in wartime and which components of institutional arrangements undermine effectiveness and cohesion, and increase costs to states. Not all institutions are the same—some provide more legitimacy than others, and some provide more efficient avenues for achieving goals. The two decades of trial and error from the Gulf War to Libya provide answers as to which arrangements foster fighting effectiveness and which inhibit the ability to prevail in wartime.

### REALIST INSTITUTIONALISM

This book develops the theoretical approach of what I call realist institutionalism. Institutions are arenas through which states advance their goals and manifest their capabilities. Power matters tremendously. Institutions of war affect the operational execution of war: the way in which a mission is prosecuted and the cohesion and effectiveness of the fighting force brought to bear. In the study of contemporary warfare, it is not enough to say that power prevails; practitioners still have the difficult task of integrating forces, planning, and executing military operations because democratic warfare is multilateral. *Institution* “may refer to a general pattern or categorization of activity or to a particular human-constructed arrangement, formally or informally organized. . . . [Institutions] can be identified as related complexes of rules and norms, identifiable in space

and time.<sup>1</sup> Rules that govern institutions or are embedded in them are essential to understanding those institutions' form and function. Institutions provide rules that prescribe behavior, constrain activity, and shape expectations.<sup>2</sup> Both military alliances and coalitions that are constructed to prosecute wars are institutions in this regard—they are a general pattern of activity, a humanly constructed arrangement formally organized with identifiable norms and rules for achieving participating states' objectives. There are principles, processes, and mechanisms. Thus, throughout this book I identify alliances and coalitions as institutions of war or interstate violence.

The analytical questions regarding multilateral versus unilateral operations or whether or not institutions matter in world affairs do not address the fundamental question of institutional design. Scholarship on multilateral warfare asserts the dichotomy and primacy of multilateral versus unilateral war fighting. Scholarship on the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) assesses the importance or diminishing role of alliances in the contemporary age. Realist versus liberal literatures question whether or not institutions matter. Yet, in the end, these questions detract from the quest to understand which institutional mechanisms work in advancing state goals, power, and the ability to succeed in wartime. Viewing alliances and coalitions through the institutional lens they warrant allows us to generate important insights about their function in peacetime and war.

Realist institutionalism is unromantic: states are not preoccupied with moral command or moral imperative, with doing the right thing for the right reasons (witness Rwanda). States may, however, seek legitimation and international sanction for their actions; doing so may enhance their standing in the system.<sup>3</sup> States seek to exercise power in the Dahlian sense; that is, to get others to do to their bidding, actions their targets would not otherwise undertake.<sup>4</sup> Institutions serve as vehicles for states to promote their agendas. Institutions augment power not by simply adding the power of others to their own, but rather through achieving ends that not only are rational but also enhance the power, soft or otherwise, of states.<sup>5</sup> This is why states will bypass a global organization if it is noncompliant. For example, the Gulf War slowed down the U.S. path to its goals and made the pursuit of those ends more challenging through a cumbersome multilateral apparatus, but it facilitated the ability of the United States to get others to do as it wished. By the time the UN sanction was forthcoming, the United States had already dispatched troops to Saudi Arabia, was already mobilizing, and would likely have proceeded with or without the UN authorization.

#### 4 INTRODUCTION

Well-established institutional structures may be overly rigid in advancing state objectives—more flexible and adaptable ad hoc institutional arrangements may be better suited for wartime application. Yet enduring institutional structures facilitate joint training, joint exercises, joint procurement, and familiar routines that may reduce the obstacles posed by friendly fire and interoperability that plague all multilateral war-fighting endeavors. The use of NATO over the course of the past two decades—fighting in Kosovo, peacekeeping in Afghanistan, and protecting civilians in Libya—allowed this deeply entrenched institutional structure to become more robust and permeable. From Kosovo to Libya, NATO undertook changes in the ways it approached war prosecution, particularly in regard to its decision-making structure but also in regard to procurement as well as its strategic mission and vision for the future.

Multilateral war-fighting frameworks benefit from a long history and established relationships, but they must also be flexible and adapt well to changing scenarios and demands. This is an essential difference between peacetime and wartime alliances, although the unintended consequences of both are the same: intertwining of command structures, joint operations and exercises, collective strategy, and forward planning all serve to inhibit member states from contemplating war with each other. Interests and strategies for pursuing those interests become interconnected.

The other side of enduring alliances and globe-spanning partnerships is that they advance a more ambitious agenda with more responsibilities and interests driven by partner states rather than just one's own strategic aims. Put another way, one's own strategic aims become enmeshed with the goals and strategies of others, with the potential to become entangling alliances, just as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson cautioned.

#### **THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS OF WAR-FIGHTING CAPABILITY**

The norm of multilateralism is entrenched in the American way of waging war. As the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report indicates, “Our experience of operating as part of multinational coalitions in long-duration conflicts has demonstrated the importance of continually fostering long-term relationships with allies and partners.”<sup>6</sup> Two decades of interventions have revealed the enduring importance of institutions of interstate violence. Some components of waging war multilaterally advance the strategic aims of partner states; other mechanisms inhibit efficiency in important ways.

Decision-making structures that foster clear chains of command and communication facilitate effectiveness in prosecuting wars. Structures that favor more egalitarian processes, such as consensus, inhibit efficiency and effectiveness. Long-standing institutional arrangements, such as those embedded in NATO, with emphasis on joint exercises, training, and transparency, reduce the likelihood of major interoperability challenges and friendly fire. Further, these relationships may not be as plagued by the alliance security dilemma, or intra-alliance threats, which coalitions, especially large ones, may experience. The size of an institution matters as well—small coalitions will experience fewer challenges than will the more unwieldy large ones that may require substantial work to maintain cohesion and fighting effectiveness. In other words, not all institutions of interstate violence are equal in their ability to prevail in wartime. There are both substantial costs and substantial benefits in the multilateral approach to interventions.

Allies may serve as strategic liabilities to states, even more in wartime than in peacetime. There will always be interoperability challenges, heightened threats of friendly fire, more cumbersome decision-making structures, more constituencies to satisfy, more burden-sharing conflicts, more intra-alliance or coalition bargaining that may produce additional costs. This is true in the absence of any guarantee of a legitimacy dividend. Which components of multilateral war fighting advance state objectives and which augment costs? Fears of abandonment and entrapment may mediate alliance and coalition activity, and less efficiency in war prosecution may result as well. And yet, having a broad foundation upon which power capabilities may be translated into the effective use of force is a critical benefit of waging war multilaterally.

### **INSTITUTIONS AND U.S. HEGEMONY**

An important implication of viewing institutions as instruments of state power is that the arguments in the field regarding the continuation or decline of U.S. hegemony should prominently feature its institutions of war. Yet despite how consequential these institutions are for advancing U.S. objectives and projecting its power, declinist arguments focus most on economic indicators, though military capabilities and spending are often a component as well. The scholars who argue that the era of American hegemony will continue for a long time further neglect an assessment of these important vehicles of U.S. military might. The past two decades of active U.S. interventions and coalition and allied warfare dramatically underscore the centrality of the web of institutions advanc-

ing American interests. These include its military alliances that span the globe, such as NATO and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security (ANZUS) Treaty, but also its command structures that represent deeply institutionalized frameworks of combat readiness that are unique worldwide. In any assessment of whether or not a great power such as China can anytime soon reach the level of the U.S. military must detail not only the military arsenals of the great powers in question, not only the economic indicators of growth, military spending, or even technological prowess in the area of weaponry, but also the standing readiness of these militaries to confront and combat threats as they arise.

There is no dearth of literature that addresses the extent to which the United States is or is not in decline. Almost from the moment of the Soviet implosion and the advent of unipolarity, scholars and practitioners have debated the future of American hegemony. These arguments gained even more traction in the aftermath of 9/11, in the age of American adventurist interventionism, and in the advent of global recession in 2008.<sup>7</sup>

Jack Snyder wrote in 2003 that the Bush doctrine of preventive war in Afghanistan and Iraq would culminate in imperial overreach and U.S. decline.<sup>8</sup> Charles Kupchan argues that the United States and the West are past their zenith and will ultimately be eclipsed by rising powers such as China and India, although ultimately the twenty-first century will be dominated not by any one country but rather by a plurality of ideologies and cultures:

The collective strength of the West is, however, on the way down. During the Cold War, the Western allies often accounted for more than two-thirds of global output. Now they represent about half of output—and soon much less. As of 2010, four of the top five economies in the world were still from the developed world (the United States, Japan, Germany, and France). From the developing world, only China made the grade, coming in at No. 2. By 2050, according to Goldman Sachs, four of the top five economies will come from the developing world (China, India, Brazil, and Russia). Only the United States will make the cut; it will rank second, and its economy will be about half the size of China's. Moreover, the turnabout will be rapid: Goldman Sachs predicts that the collective economic output of the top four developing countries—Brazil, China, India, and Russia—will match that of the G-7 countries by 2032.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fact that Kupchan repeatedly makes the critical point that U.S. hegemony emanates from the liberal democratic order and web of alliances, he does not take the argument to its logical conclusion by asserting the need

for such institutional readiness to project power. The United States derives its power from its associations with other Western democratic states; yet the power of the developing nations Kupchan invokes derives from the economic output of the rising countries alone. Christopher Layne, too, invokes the rising power of China, India, and Russia in his assessment of U.S. decline, its inability to manage the international system effectively, and the end of Pax Americana.<sup>10</sup> Arvind Subramanian invokes economic indicators in anticipation of China eclipsing the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the most important voices in the overlapping communities of scholarship and policy making echo these concerns regarding the decline of the United States' power, even though there are important, nuanced differences. For example, Fareed Zakaria argues that the United States may maintain its military hegemony even as it declines economically. David Calleo argues that regardless of the U.S. position, the perception of unipolarity has culminated in problematic foreign policy for the United States around the globe.<sup>12</sup>

Another key strand of argument surrounding the future of U.S. power is the narrative of the rise of China.<sup>13</sup> These fears are not pervasive only in the academic literature; they are also widely held views of international affairs by publics around the world.<sup>14</sup> A Pew survey in the spring of 2011 found that most Americans had a positive view of China, though most also expressed concern regarding China's economic growth and its increasing power relative to the United States.<sup>15</sup> As seen in Table 1.1, a Pew study from July 2011 shows that the publics of fifteen of the twenty-two countries queried expressed the view that China will replace or has already replaced the United States as the most powerful country in the system.<sup>16</sup>

The alarming economic indicators suggesting American decline and China's rise may be interpreted differently, however. As Ezra Klein points out, economic growth is hard to look at in a vacuum. What constitutes growth in one country impinges on heightened well-being in another.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as Joseph Nye indicates, even if China's gross domestic product surpasses that of the United States, its per capita income will not match that of the United States for a very long time. And even if American hegemony wanes in relative terms, it may well still stand above the rest for the foreseeable future.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the economic arguments cut both ways. Daniel Gross argues, for example, that the post-recession economic trends are, in fact, favorable to the United States and its future, as well as to the rest of the world. He points out effectively that economic growth cannot be assessed as a zero-sum game.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 1.1** Public opinion on the rise of China

	<i>Will China replace the United States as the world's leading superpower?</i>			
	<i>Has already replaced U.S. (%)</i>	<i>Will eventually replace U.S. (%)</i>	<i>Total: Has replaced or will replace U.S. (%)</i>	<i>Will never replace U.S. (%)</i>
United States	12	34	46	45
France	23	49	72	28
Spain	14	53	67	30
Britain	11	54	65	26
Germany	11	50	61	34
Poland	21	26	47	31
Russia	15	30	45	30
Lithuania	11	29	40	40
Ukraine	14	23	37	36
Turkey	15	21	36	41
Palestinian territories	17	37	54	38
Jordan	17	30	47	45
Israel	15	32	47	44
Lebanon	15	24	39	54
China	6	57	63	17
Pakistan	10	47	57	10
Japan	12	25	37	60
Indonesia	8	25	33	46
India	13	19	32	17
Mexico	19	34	53	31
Brazil	10	27	37	47
Kenya	7	37	44	43

SOURCE: Pew Research Center. "U.S. Status as World's Superpower Challenged by Rise of China: U.S. Favorability Ratings Remain Positive." July 13, 2011. Accessed 7/9/2012. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2059/-superpower-china-us-image-abroad-afghanistan-terrorism>.

The idea that the United States is in decline has important strategic consequences. As Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent argue, retrenchment may be a useful policy to manage the reduced relative capability of great powers.<sup>20</sup> Yet the profound difference between the web of institutions that translate U.S. capability to actuality and the imperial powers of the past does warrant a slightly more cautionary approach. The implicit assumptions about decline



and retrenchment could be self-fulfilling; the United States dismantles its entrenched institutional framework to save money, which may improve economic indicators but undermine U.S. ability to translate military power to reality in the event of need. Friedman and Mandelbaum assume that U.S. decline stems from inattention to China's rise on various fronts, and that to preserve U.S. power, a rediscovery of American innovation, ingenuity in thought, and action needs to occur. The government must promote a strong domestic economy, private enterprise, an emphasis on education, and third-party competition as examples of the way forward.<sup>21</sup>

Recent arguments cite reasons for both optimism and pessimism about the future of American power. Robert Kagan, for example, is optimistic that the United States will sustain its hegemony and argues that its decline would culminate in more war and conflict;<sup>22</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, in contrast, is more pessimistic, citing the U.S. financial meltdown, interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise of China, and the political activism in the Middle East as profound challenges to prolonged American power. He sees the need for redoubled effort to regain and sustain U.S. standing.<sup>23</sup>

While the declinist arguments generally center on ebbing of U.S. military and economic power and the rise of other countries such as China in comparison, the optimists' touchstone is American ingenuity, adaptability, and innovation.<sup>24</sup> The implicit assumptions that govern the literature on U.S. decline or sustained hegemony are the most important component of the arguments—they reveal what strategists believe are the most important components of power in the system, be they gross national product, the level of debt, military spending, or a culture of adaptability and innovation. The locus of the problem gives rise to the solutions as well. American overreach requires retrenchment; too much military spending demands reduced military spending; too little military spending demands increased military spending; economic decline requires fiscal conservatism and nurturing of entrepreneurship.

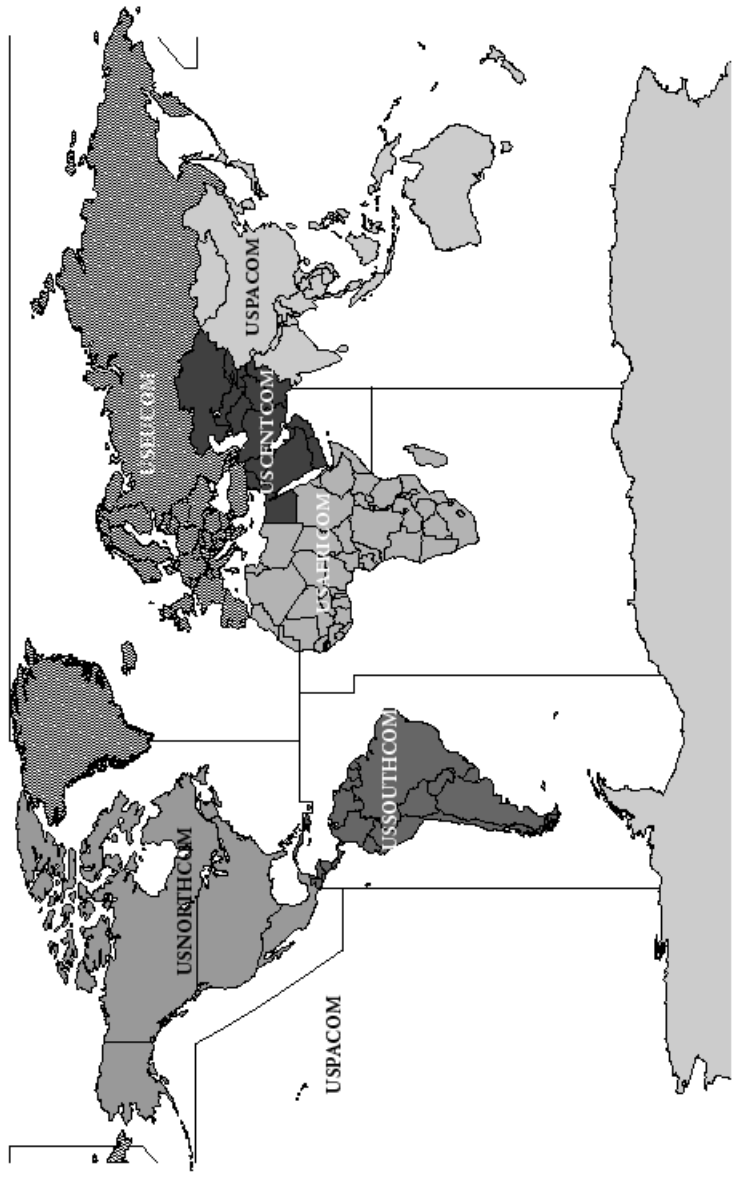
The argument here suggests that examining static indicators alone does not lend itself to understanding the full picture of U.S. power. There are important elements of military power that can be assessed objectively and analyzed. Yet it is equally important to explore the mechanisms through which that power may be realized. The web of institutions constructed to serve as conduits of American military might around the globe provide a unique dimension for exploring the future of U.S. hegemony. The United States literally rules the world via its command structures in all regions of the world and its alliances, which

allow it a military presence far beyond its borders. In other words, basing does matter—it is easy in the contemporary age to view geography as playing a diminishing role at a time when technology closes the physical gaps. Yet in regard to the deployment of troops, responding to crises, and executing missions far from the homeland, location matters, and geography is highly consequential. In this way, the U.S. advantage over a country such as China is quite significant. As Yan Xuetong notes:

America enjoys much better relations with the rest of the world than China in terms of both quantity and quality. America has more than 50 formal military allies, while China has none. North Korea and Pakistan are only quasi-allies of China. The former established a formal alliance with China in 1961, but there have been no joint military maneuvers and no arms sales for decades. China and Pakistan have substantial military cooperation, but they have no formal military alliance binding them together.<sup>25</sup>

Beyond alliances, the United States has a unified command structure that circles the globe. When the United States needed to respond to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, it had U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) at the ready to adapt to the mission. When the United States was called on to respond to the growing abuses by Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, it had U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) to use as the first line of defense. These existing institutions, coupled with advanced military technology and a highly professional, well-trained, and well-educated military give the United States a military edge that cannot be captured by straightforward assessments of capability, spending, or economic indicators alone. Map 1.1, the Unified Command Plan for the United States in 2011, illustrates the U.S. command structure worldwide.

As institutions are conduits of power, as they promote the realization of potential capability to actual exercise of influence in the military sphere, it is essential to know which institutional mechanisms serve to advance the strategic ends in question and which constrain the exercise of power. This is the central mission of this book—to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which institutions in the security realm facilitate the actualization of military power and of the ways in which they detract from or undermine war-fighting effectiveness. To realize this goal, in the next chapter, I examine the strategies of war prosecution, the different institutional types of war-fighting instruments, and the different mechanisms that inhere to those institutions that promote achieving strategic ends and to those that inhibit the ability to prevail in military conflict.



**Map 1.1** Unified Command Plan, U.S. 2011

**SOURCE:** Department of Defense, Unified Command Plan. Last update as of April 27, 2011. [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2009/0109\\_unifiedcommand](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2009/0109_unifiedcommand). See also <http://www.army.mil/info/organization>. Both accessed 7/11/2012.

### **THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN HEGEMONY**

In the absence of assessing institutions of war fighting, no true understanding of military might is possible. These institutions of interstate violence translate military capability into leverage or fighting effectiveness. They include military alliances as well as the command structures the United States has in place worldwide. These components of state power mean readiness in execution. U.S. technological prowess and its unparalleled military arsenal distinguish it as a hegemon. Its hegemonic foundation is provided not only by the B-2 bombers or precision bombs or unmanned aerial vehicles and other advanced weapons of war, but also by the strategic understandings it has with partners worldwide. This ensures that the United States has access to bases around the world, thus fostering its readiness to address threats wherever they arise. The U.S. command structures embodied in CENTCOM, AFRICOM, U.S. European Command (EUCOM), U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), and U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) serve to ensure rapid deployment and readiness for combat in the event of a crisis or threat.

The web of institutions standing ready for the United States to wage war is thus an important component of the country's reach and hegemony. Any country seeking similar dominance would need not only the technology and capability of the United States but also its worldwide preparedness to launch war quickly and effectively. Although we tend to downplay the importance of geography in a world tightly knit by technology, when launching a war, where the targets are matters. The fact that the United States undertook missions over Libya with stealth bombers from Missouri is an exception. Geography does matter, and this example illustrates that technology does as well. In the past two decades most interventions, including that in Libya, required a closer basing of assets to execute the missions. Worldwide cooperation, even among noncombatant states, was central. It underscored the importance of the institutions of interstate violence as well as the interstate relationships that underpin those institutions. These are both central components of the foundations of state military power.

### **OUTLINE OF THE BOOK**

In the following chapters I explore in more detail the notion that institutions advance the strategic ends of states in key ways while constraining efficiency in others. The next chapter lays out in detail the arguments regarding alliances and coalitions, as well as unilateralism, bilateralism, and multilateralism more

generally. I advance the notion that alliances and coalitions are essential elements of pursuing state ends and preserving state power in the international system. More specifically, I outline a realist institutionalist agenda and the role these institutions of interstate violence play in the future of U.S. hegemony. I then discuss the central questions of institutional mechanisms prevailing in multilateral warfare—the use of alliances versus coalitions; the decision-making structures brought to bear; the interoperability, friendly fire, and burden-sharing challenges experienced; the internal balance of power and internal leverage and their effect on the way in which the coalition or alliance operated, as well as the way in which the alliance security dilemma manifests; how size affects cohesion, effectiveness, and costs; and the conditions under which multilateralism yields legitimacy. These are the central components of institutions of interstate violence that culminate in the key costs and key benefits of employing them.

In Chapters 2–7, I use specific cases to examine the core questions of the book regarding realist institutionalism and the mechanisms of institutions that advance or detract from efficiently achieving the strategic aims of intervention. I analyze these questions in the context of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield, Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Stabilization and Assistance Force in Afghanistan, Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war in Iraq, and Operation Odyssey Dawn and Operation Unified Protector in Libya. Each case has distinct lessons as well as important generalizations for contemporary multilateral war fighting. An overview of the findings and implications is presented in Chapter 8, the conclusion.

The mission of this book is to embed the study of wartime alliances and coalitions into the scope of institutional analysis, in order to better understand how these institutions serve as vehicles to actualize power, the ways in which they hamper power realization, and the extent to which they advance U.S. hegemony.