

An Examination of The Alliance System and Its Effective Attraction in Conducting Modern Diplomacy

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Received 27-08-2024

Revised 28-08-2024

Accepted 02-10-2024

Published 04-10-2024



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Abstract:

The quest to maintain a balance in interstate relations, achieve collective security, and mutual support in case of war led to the formation or the emergence of the alliance system. As such, the alliance system was an unsteady and delicate system of interstate relation which started in Europe during the period of the evolution of state formation roughly between 1500 and early 1900. Although the alliance system sometimes prevent war, it was used most times to tilt the balance of power in favour of the allies. Consequently, the alliance system began to define several activities in the world ranging from economic, social, political, to cultural life. Attempts have been made to examine the alliance system and its effective attraction in conducting modern diplomacy. The study was carried out with the aid of secondary sources and internet materials. The result of the findings in this study shows that the main idea underpinning the alliance system was collective security for it was believed that since all the major European powers had strong allies, a major war could not break out since an attack on one power would lead to a counterattack not only by that country, but their allies. The paper concludes that the alliance system has had an effective attraction in conducting modern diplomacy.

Keyword: Alliance System, Europe, Entente, Diplomacy

Introduction:

Diplomacy has from time immemorial existed within and among humanity. As such, diplomacy is an indispensable element in any reasonable relation between man and other men, and between a nation and other nations.¹ Consequently, the maintenance of international relations depends on the act of conducting negotiations between two people or, more broadly, two nations. Of course, the main purpose of diplomacy is to accomplish a certain goal, which could be to improve ties between two

countries or to avert war and violence. This therefore places diplomacy at a focal point in international relations as without it, much of the world's affairs would be abolished, international organizations would not exist, and above all the world would be an anarchical space steeped in a constant state of war. As a result of this, diplomacy has been used since the beginning of humanity and in every corner of the world for the preservation of the international system as without it, many nations

¹ Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 4.

would not be able to live in harmony or conduct successful negotiations.

But then again, since nations, especially those in Europe, were always at rivalry with one another, there was therefore a dire need to form a system which will checkmate national rivalries or the rivalries between nations. Consequently, the quest to maintain a balance in interstate relations, achieve collective security, and mutual support in case of war led to the formation or the emergence of the alliance system. Thus, the alliance system is an agreement between countries to join forces or work together to achieve a certain goal. In doing this, the allies make promise to protect the other country against nations who are not in the alliance. Moreover, modern alliances allow for cooperative action between two or more sovereign governments and are often defensive in character, requiring allies to unite in the event that one or more of them is attacked by a different state or coalition. Allies can be informal most of the time, but they are usually formalized by a treaty of alliance, in which the sections defining the *casus foederis*—the conditions under which an ally is required by the treaty to assist a fellow member—are the most important.²

In recognition of the foregoing point of fact, this paper shall therefore examine the alliance system and its effective attraction in conducting modern diplomacy. To this end, this paper shall give a definitional analysis of diplomacy, to be followed by an overview of the alliance system. Next is an examination of the alliance system and its effectiveness in conducting modern diplomacy. The curtain of this paper shall be drawn with the conclusion which a synopsis of our main findings.

Definitional Analysis of Diplomacy:

Diplomacy has perhaps been in existence since the beginning of civilisation. Starting with the idea that

it is a system of organized communication between two or more parties will make understanding it the simplest. More crucially, although it may be useful to think of diplomacy as a component of foreign policy, it should not and cannot be equated with it. This is because nation-states formulate foreign policies in order to further their own national interests. These activities and the methods it employ to accomplish its objectives are what ultimately determine these interests. On the other hand, a state's interactions with other states are regarded as an expression of its foreign policy. Usually, diplomacy is used to facilitate contacts between members of the administration.³ What then is diplomacy?

Diplomacy is the established method of influencing the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence.⁴ It is the art and practice of conducting international relations by negotiating alliances, treaties and agreements bilaterally, trilaterally or multilaterally, between states and sometimes international organization and between polities with varying status such as those of monarchs and their princely vassals.⁵ By this definition, the term diplomacy connotes the conduct of international relations by negotiation and dialog or by any other means to promote peaceful relations among states. Besides this, diplomacy is also a set of practices, institutions, and discourses which is crucial for the basic understanding of the historical evolution of the international system and its evolving functional and normative needs.⁶

Furthermore, diplomacy is the deployment of one's dexterity to secure advantage for one's nation or organization. Put differently, diplomacy is a tact or subtle skill deployed in dealing with people so as

² David G. Haglund, "Alliance." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 12 Nov. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/alliance-politics>. Accessed 1 May 2021.

³ Stephen McGlinchey, "Diplomacy," Jan 8, 2017, <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/08/diplomacy/>. Accessed 2 May 2021.

⁴ Sally Marks, and Chas W. Freeman, "Diplomacy." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14 Dec. 2020,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy>. Accessed 1 May 2021.

⁵ M. M. Usman, "Trends in World Diplomacy: What is Diplomacy?" *Lecture Note* (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy, 2021).

⁶ Noe' Cornago, "Diplomacy" in Lester Kurtz (Editor-in-Chief), *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Elsevier Inc., 2008), pp. 574-580.

to avoid hostility or settle hostility.⁷ Herein, it is logical to point out that it is this communicative dimension which gives diplomacy its enduring and cross-cultural relevance as well as its value as a way of representation, mutual recognition, and negotiated exchange among organized social groups and this, in turn, places diplomacy as an essential tool required to operate successfully in today's international system. Simply put, diplomacy is used in every part of the world for the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of the international system.

Along these lines, diplomacy forms an indispensable element for any peaceful and efficient change in the international arena and this stems from the fact that it deals with representing a state's interests and conducting negotiations or discussions designed to identify common interests as well as areas of disagreement between the parties, for the purpose of achieving the state's goals and avoiding conflict.⁸ In this case, negotiations between two representatives are a key component in diplomacy and this is because in doing so, the representatives find a common interest. In line with this, Geoff R. Berridge opines that negotiation can produce the advantages obtainable from the cooperative pursuit of common interests; and it is only this activity that can prevent violence from being employed to settle remaining arguments over conflicting ones.⁹

To add to the foregoing, information collecting happens to be the main focus of diplomacy, followed by the identification and assessment of the receiving state's foreign policy objectives. In this way, the goal of diplomatic agendas is to obtain information. Once the information is returned to the country that received it, a Foreign Ministry reviews it and decides what foreign policy should be implemented. Moreover, diplomacy ensures that

two countries' political, economic, and cultural links grow.¹⁰ For instance, after the Second World War, countries such as the United States and Britain directed their foreign policies towards the annihilation of communism. In recent times, the US State Department has been speaking to foreign audiences on politics, security, and values in an effort to foster an atmosphere that is open to US national interests. Furthermore, "each year, the State Department sponsors over 40,000 educational and cultural exchanges, involving both foreign visitors and American citizens traveling domestically."¹¹

By furthering the interests under its purview, diplomacy aims to improve the standing of the state, country, or organization it represents in the eyes of other countries. Consequently, diplomatic endeavours aim to optimize a faction's benefits without the peril and cost of employing force, and ideally without inciting animosity. Diplomacy is heavily bent toward negotiation to achieve agreements and resolve difficulties between states. Its goal is to maintain peace, though not always. Even during times of peace, diplomacy can entail using military force to impose unilateral solutions to disagreements or threatening economic or other punitive actions as a kind of coercion. On the other hand, diplomacy typically aims to foster goodwill toward the state it represents and cultivate relationships with other states and peoples that will guarantee their neutrality or cooperation.¹²

In a nutshell, war can break out when diplomacy fails, yet diplomacy can still be helpful in times of conflict. This is due to the way it manages the transitions from peaceful protest to peaceful discussion, from ultimatum to retaliation, and from conflict to peace and harmony with other governments. Diplomacy shapes and maintain the alliances that prevent or start wars. It upends rival

⁷ M. M. Usman, "Trends in World Diplomacy: What is Diplomacy?"

⁸ See Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1983), p. 1.

⁹ G. R. Berridge, Maurice Keens-Soper & T.G. Otte, *Diplomatic Theory from Machiavelli to Kissinger* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 1.

¹⁰ Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States*, p. 2.

¹¹ "Diplomacy: The U.S. Department of State at Work." *Bureau of Public Affairs, June 2008*. Jan 20, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/107330.htm>. Accessed May 3, 2021

¹² Sally Marks, and Chas W. Freeman, "Diplomacy." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

coalitions and maintains the passivity of potentially hostile nations. It orchestrates the end of war and builds, fortifies, and maintains the peace that ensues from hostilities. To sum up, diplomacy aims to create an international system that supports more state collaboration and peaceful dispute resolution.

An Overview of the Alliance System:

In international relations, the alliance system is a formal agreement between two or more states for mutual support in case of war. Modern alliances allow two or more sovereign governments to act jointly and are typically defensive in character, requiring allies to unite in the event that one or more of them is attacked by a different state or coalition.¹³ It could be seen as a negotiated and signed political, military, or economic agreement involving two or more countries. Military alliances often involve pledges made by signing governments to support their allies in the case of hostilities or attack. The alliance document contains an outline of the terms of this support. They can include everything from military mobilization and a declaration of war against the aggressor to financial or logistical support, such as the provision of supplies or weapons.¹⁴

Furthermore, the alliance system was a network of treaties, agreements and *ententes* that were negotiated and signed prior to 1914. As such, alliances result from states' attempts to maintain a balance of power with each other. No state is able to create a long-lasting hegemony over all the others in a system made up of several medium-sized nations, as has been the case in Europe since the Middle Ages, mostly because the other governments form coalitions against it. Europe's geopolitics, which had long been a mash-up of political intrigues, territorial and ethnic rivalries, and paranoia, produced the pre-war alliance network in many ways. For example, France and England were longstanding rivals whose rivalry

frequently broke out into open combat in the 14th and early 19th centuries. There were disagreements between France and Russia as well as between the French and Germans. But then, alliances provided European states with a measure of protection as they served as a means of guarding or advancing national interests while acting as a deterrent to war. Alliances were particularly important for Europe's smaller or less powerful states.

Consequently, it could be inferred that the alliance system was an unsteady and delicate system of interstate relation which started in Europe during the period of the evolution of state formation roughly between 1500 and early 1900. During this period, Europe created the most powerful combinations of political, military, economic, technological, and scientific apparatuses that the world had ever seen. Accordingly, the alliance system was put in place in different nations in Europe to maintain a balance of interstate relations. As a result of this, the alliance system sometimes prevented war and was mostly used to tilt the balance of power in favour of the allies.¹⁵

It is worthy to note that the aim of forming alliances was to achieve collective security since having alliances with other powerful countries deterred your enemies from attacking you. Hence, if a country started a war with one nation, it would have to fight all its allies as well. National disputes frequently led to the formation of coalitions; when one nation perceived danger by another, it frequently sought to forge ties with other countries.¹⁶ National disputes frequently led to the formation of coalitions; when one nation perceived danger by another, it frequently sought to forge ties with other countries. For example, the several attempts by French King Louis XIV (1643–1715) to rule all of continental Europe resulted in the creation of a coalition against France and the eventual War of the Grand Alliance; Napoleon's plans were also thwarted by a number of alliances

¹³ David G. Haglund, "Alliance." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

¹⁴ Jennifer Llewellyn & Steve Thompson, "Alliances as a Cause of World War I", *Alpha History* (August 9, 2017), https://alphahistory.com/worldwar1/alliances/#What_is_an_alliance. Accessed May 3, 2021.

¹⁵ M. M. Usman, "Trends in World Diplomacy: What is Diplomacy?"

¹⁶ The Alliance System before 1900, https://www.allsaintsacademydunstable.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/02._the_alliance_system_before_1914.pdf. Accessed May 3, 2021

formed against him; and the Church's and the monarchs' significant positions in Europe prompted the formation of various alliances against them. Strongly associated with the Westphalian state system and the European balance of power, alliances have taken shape on other continents and in other eras. Thus, in keeping with the axiom that "the enemy of one's enemy must be one's friend," governments were required to pursue alliances in order to obtain support and help from distant powers against the threat posed by neighbouring ones.

All things considered, the alliance system was a major driving force behind the First World War, drawing countries into confrontation and conflict with one another even though it did not actually require them to go to war in 1914. Notably, Europe was split into two opposed camps on the eve of the war: the Allied powers, which included Russia, France, Great Britain, and the United States, and the Central powers, which were mostly made up of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Turkey. This bipolar system had a destabilizing effect since conflict between any two members of opposing blocs carried the threat of general war. In due course, a dispute between Russia and Austria-Hungary in 1914 quickly drew their fellow bloc members into the general conflict that became known as the First World War (1914–18). When the United States gave up its long-standing isolationism and sided with the Allies in 1917 as one of several "Associated Powers," the result of the war was all but decided.¹⁷

An Examination of the Alliance System and its Effectiveness in Conducting Modern Diplomacy:

It is crystal clear that the alliance system was born out of woes and conflict chiefly in Europe between kings, queens, lords, and city states that compete with one another. However, there is no naysaying the fact that Europe was anarchical and steeped in conflicts, rivalries, and woes as evident in the quarrels between kings and their barons, disputes between the Church and the states, and then clashes

between lords and their peasant workers. Despite the destructive nature of these conflicts, there existed some kind of order and freedom out of the disorder and dynamism that promoted change and advancement.

Importantly, the legacy of colonialism in Africa retarded the development of collective-defense schemes, but elsewhere in the developing world alliances played a critical role in the evolving regional balance. For example, in the 1865 – 1870 Paraguayan War, the Triple Alliance of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay devastated Paraguay, reducing its territorial possessions as well as its population by about 60 percent. Ideology typically had little bearing on the establishment of these coalitions until the Cold War in the latter part of the 20th century. For instance, in 1536, Francis I, the Roman Catholic king of France, allied with the Muslim Suleyman I of the Ottoman Empire to oppose the Catholic Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, because Charles's territories nearly encircled France. Similar to this, in order to combat Nazi Germany during the Second World War (1939–1945), the United States and Great Britain formed an alliance with the communist Soviet Union.

On another note, the French Revolutionary Wars from (1792 – 1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) put Great Britain and France in the role of perennial adversaries, both forging alliances with other powers. As a result, Paul W. Schroeder contends that the anti-Napoleonic coalition of 1813–1814 proved to be a turning point in international relations because, following the war's end in 1814 and the Vienna Settlement of 1815, the four main group—Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia—decided to establish their alliance on a peace footing. The Holy Alliance, which was initially composed of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, added glitzy rhetoric to the idea that the Quadruple Alliance would ensure European peace by closely monitoring France and working together to thwart any threats to global balance on the continent. According to Schroeder, a coordinated effort by the

¹⁷ David G. Haglund, "Alliance." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Great Powers to protect the rights and reciprocal duties of all sovereign states, regardless of size, replaced the traditional balance of power strategy. The group of five Great Powers became known as the Pentarchy after France was taken over in 1818. A de facto prerogative of the Great Powers amid a Europe of autonomous states with varying degrees of strategic influence, the Pentarchy deliberated over issues pertaining to the circumstances of smaller states and determined how to resolve them.¹⁸

The goal of European leaders following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815 was to bring stability and normalcy back to the continent. The intention of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was to avert wars and revolutions while also defining national borders and instituting an unofficial diplomatic system. The congress system held up for a while before beginning to falter in the middle of the 1800s. Imperial interests, changes in government, a series of revolutions in 1848 and rising nationalist movements in Germany, Italy and elsewhere saw European rivalries and tensions increase again in the mid-1800s. Arguably, national tensions and rivalries have made alliances a common feature of European politics, however, the alliance system became particularly extensive in the late 1800s.¹⁹ Even at that, many of these alliances were negotiated in secret or contained secret clauses, adding to the suspicion and tension that existed in pre-war Europe.

What is more, a new phase of alliance building in Europe was reached in the late 19th century, when hatred between Germany and France polarized Europe into two rival coalitions. On the one hand, the creation of Germany in 1871 out of the many smaller Germanic states had been opposed by France, resulting in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 – 1871. The Germans attacked France and forced them to sign an

embarrassing peace agreement. This implied that France and Germany detested each other. On the other hand, the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire in Eastern Europe was crumbling and so, Russia sought to take advantage of this to expand west into the Balkans, and Austria-Hungary wanted to prevent Russian expansion. By 1910, most of the major states of Europe were divided amongst themselves and this made them belonged to one or the other of these great opposing alliances. The roots of this division reached back over thirty years and its origins can be traced to Bismarck's foreign policy from the 1870s to 1890 and can only be made clear with to Bismarck's complex alliance systems.²⁰

By 1900, the Great Powers in Europe were beginning to divide themselves into two separate groups. One major reason for this was the growth in power of Germany and its rivalry with other powers, particularly France. But prior to this period, Germany was a collection of small, independent states. Otto von Bismarck, the nation's renowned chancellor, united these states into a single nation on January 18, 1871. Wilhelm I, the King of Prussia, was crowned Emperor (or Kaiser in German) as part of the unification process. Likewise, Germany won a war against France in 1871. Alsace and Lorraine, two of France's border regions, were given to Germany by the Germans in exchange for a 200-million-franc compensation payment. The Germans were aware that France would seek retribution at any opportunity. Bismarck forged deals with other nations to stop this from happening, ensuring that France would never have partners with whom to battle Germany in the future.²¹ This therefore opened the doors of the Dual Alliance.

When Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire signed a pact in 1879 pledging to support one another in the event that Russia attacked either

¹⁸ Paul W. Schroeder, *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft. Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), pp. 37-57.

¹⁹ Jennifer Llewellyn & Steve Thompson, "Alliances as a Cause of World War I"

²⁰ "Alliance System." *Encyclopaedia of Modern Europe: Europe 1789-1914: Encyclopaedia of the Age of Industry and*

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²¹ See Klaus Hildebrand, *German Foreign Policy from Bismarck to Adenauer: The Limits of Statecraft*. Translated by Louise Willmot (Boston: Unwin Hyman 1989).

country, the Dual Alliance was born. Also, they pledged to maintain ‘benevolent neutrality’ in the event that any nation invaded one of them. This meant that if, for example, France attacked Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire would side with Germany, but would not actually fight. But then again, both Germany and Austria-Hungary were worried about Russia but for different reasons. Germany, under emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II, was worried that Russia and France will team up to surround and attack them while Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary was worried about Russia’s influence in the Balkans.²² From here, the alliance welcomed Italy which then led to the triple alliance.

In 1882, Italy joined the alliance thereby making it the Triple Alliance. As a new country, Italy sought to expand its borders by seizing any opportunities presented by European issues in the Mediterranean or the Balkans. This would be considerably easier with strong allies like Austria-Hungary and Germany. However, despite joining the alliance, Italy was still anxious to maintain good relations with Britain and France even though Britain and France remained, for the most part, diplomatically isolated during this time, with the former choosing to pursue a policy of “splendid isolation” and reaping the benefits of being the world’s largest imperial power.²³ It is important to point out that the complex tripartite alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was motivated chiefly by anti-French and anti-Russian suspicions and sentiment. If two foreign nations attacked one of the three signatories to the Triple Alliance, or if France attacked Germany and Italy, then the other two had to defend the other two militarily.²⁴

At this point, it is crucial to draw attention to the fact that the alliance between Russia and France in 1894 was another alliance that shaped European politics and diplomacy at the turn of the century. Originally, France and Russia were not natural allies, and this is because Russia was ruled by an

autocratic monarch (the Tsar) whilst France was a democratic republic. This made the signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance to be an unexpected development that thwarted Germany’s plans for mainland Europe. Berlin became enraged with the alliance and changed course to become more assertive in its foreign policy. As a result, friendly relations between the two imperial powers were re-established by the alliance between France and Russia.²⁵ In essence, it was a reaction to France’s isolation caused by the Triple Alliance. Notably, France and Russia were brought together by their mutual dislike for Germany and Austria-Hungary. The idea underpinning this alliance was to create a balance of power between the German-Austrian-Italian alliance and the Russian-French alliance. With this alliance, France and Russia promised each other military assistance if the other was invaded. This was therefore called the ‘Dual Entente.’

At this time, it becomes very necessary to probe why Britain was not part of any alliance or *entente* and then to further inquire where it comes in. To address this puzzle, it is important to clarify that Britain was an island and had the strongest navy in the world which implies that there was little or no chance of being invaded. Besides, Britain was wealthy and highly industrialized, and its navy and empire gave it a strong global trading position. As a result of this, the British were mostly concerned with running their vast global empire. These issues showed that the British did not feel the need for allies. But then again, in the early years of the 20th Century, Britain ended its isolation from European events and became involved in the alliance system. This was mainly because of the growing power of Germany which aimed at gaining an empire of their own, which they felt was necessary if Germany were to become a great world power. Also, Germany supported the Boers who were fighting the British in South Africa. And so, Germany started expanding its armed forces, especially its

²² The Alliance System before 1900.

²³ See P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain, 1900–1940: Entente and Estrangement* (London: Longman, 1996).

²⁴ Jennifer Llewellyn & Steve Thompson, “Alliances as a Cause of World War I”

²⁵ See George F. Kennan, *The Fateful Alliance. France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 109-124.

navy which in turn made Britain to feel that its naval supremacy and global empire were being threatened.²⁶

As a result of the foregoing development, Britain signed an agreement with France in 1904 thereby bringing about what was called the *Entente Cordiale*, that is, the friendly agreement. This agreement was not a full alliance, but it showed a warming of relations between France and Britain. Britain and Russia inked a second similar pact in 1907. The Anglo-Russian Entente was this. A number of issues, including the status of colonial colonies in Asia and the Middle East, were settled by the Anglo-Russian *Entente*. There was no military support or commitment involved. The Triple Entente was established by these agreements between Britain, France, and Russia. Significantly, because Britain was not committed to providing military support to either France or Russia, the *ententes* did not have the same weight as the alliance between Germany and Austro-Hungary. However, the three *Ententes* that took place between 1904 and 1907 were significant because they signalled the end of British separation and passivity.

At the end of the First World War, by founding the League of Nations, which functioned as a collective security pact requiring all of its members to act in unison to defend any individual member or members against an invader, the Allied victors hoped to secure the post-war peace. However, a collective security agreement differs from an alliance for it is more inclusive in its membership, the target of the agreement is unnamed and can be any potential aggressor, including even one of the signatories, and then, the object of the agreement is the deterrence of a potential aggressor by the prospect that greater power will be organized and brought to bear against it. The League of Nations became obviously ineffective by the mid-1930s after its members declined to use force to stop aggressive acts by Japan, Italy, and Germany.

Interestingly, Japan, Italy, and Germany quickly came together to establish the Axis, an aggressive coalition that fought against the defensive coalition led by the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Great Britain during World War II for global hegemony. The victorious Allies established the United Nations (UN), a global institution based on the ideals of collective security and intergovernmental cooperation, following the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945. The UN existed relatively unsuccessfully, however, with the vigorous military alliances formed by the United States and the Soviet Union along high-pitched ideological lines after the war. In 1949, the United States and Canada merged with Britain and other western European countries to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and in 1955, the Soviet Union and its central and eastern European satellites formed the Warsaw Pact following West Germany's accession to NATO. The Cold War rivalry between these two alliances, which also included other treaty organizations established by the United States, for example the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, the Central Treaty Organization, and the ANZUS PACT, stopped with the Soviet Union's ruin and the termination of the Warsaw Pact in 1991.²⁷

From the discussion so far, one can say that unlike most multilateral agreements today, the alliances and *ententes* were formulated behind closed doors and only revealed to the public after a treaty has been signed. Some parties even conducted negotiations without informing their other alliance partners. For instance, the German chancellor Bismarck initiated alliance negotiations with Russia in 1887 without informing Germany's major ally, Austria-Hungary. Some alliances also contained 'secret clauses' that were not officially announced or placed on record. Several of these secret clauses only became known to the public after the end of World War I. The secretive nature of alliances only heightened suspicion and continental tensions. An added factor in the

²⁶ Andreas Rose, *Between Empire and Continent. British Foreign Policy before the First World War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), pp. 273-305

²⁷ David G. Haglund, "Alliance." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

outbreak of war were changes to European alliances in the years prior to 1914. A clause inserted into the Dual Alliance in 1910, for example, required Germany to directly intervene if Austria-Hungary was ever attacked by Russia. These modifications were apparently small but they further strengthened and militarised alliances. It is controversial whether these changes increased the chances of war or simply reflected the rising tensions of the period. As the historian Hew Strachan put it, the main issue was that by 1914, “nobody was prepared to fight wholeheartedly for peace as an end in itself.”²⁸ This implies that by 1914, people go to war in order to achieve specific interests.

Conclusion:

This paper has attempted an examination of the alliance system and its effective attraction in conducting modern diplomacy. As such, one can decipher from the discussions thus far that alliances had been a fixture of Europe’s international system for centuries as they were used to manage Great Power politics. No doubt, alliances could bolster cooperation among all or at least most of the Great Powers, as in the case of the Quadruple Alliance, which would form the basis of the European Pentarchy. It is also candid to highlight that alliances could become instruments designed to wage war as in the case of France and Prussia. But then, after 1871, the alliances of the Great Powers provided some sense of security in an age that was still shaped by the concept of war as a legitimate and potent political tool. Consequently, the formalized treaty-based defensive alliances and Britain’s less formal alignment with France and Russia on the basis of agreements about colonial issues reshaped the structure and face of international relations and this changed rapidly as a result of economic, social, and cultural developments.

To this end, it becomes plausible to say that the impact of the alliance system as a cause of war is often overstated. Even though alliances did not, as

is often argued, make war inevitable, these pacts and treaties did not disempower sovereign governments or drag nations into war against their own will as the authority and final decision to mobilise or declare war still rested with national leaders. By this, it was the moral commitment to these alliances that was the telling factor. To wrap up, it is pertinent to note that the key idea in the alliance system was collective security for it was thought that since all the major European powers had strong allies, a major war could not break out since an attack on one power would lead to a counteroffensive not only by that country, but their allies too, hence, the stakes were just too high. Beyond a reasonable doubt, it is therefore worthwhile to conclude that the alliance system, following the foregoing discussion, has had an effective attraction in conducting modern diplomacy.

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²⁸ Jennifer Llewellyn & Steve Thompson, “Alliances as a Cause of World War I”

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