

## WRITING TO LEARN #1: THE FUTURE OF NATO

### PS160 Introduction to World Politics

Professor Barbara Koremenos

Over the past years, there have been high-level discussions about the possibility of the United States (US) weakening its commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The issue has caught the attention of both US allies and adversaries. As a new analyst in the US State Department, you are to write a policy brief (i.e., 600-700-word article) in which you discuss the *benefits/costs of maintaining the alliance* and *the effects simply talking about our level of commitment to the alliance* has on the probability of a state like Russia threatening a NATO member.

This policy brief will be shared with high-level bureaucrats and has the potential to reach Air Force One. Your role is to provide the best *scientific advice* about both maintaining the alliance and the implications of speaking negatively about it — that is, your arguments should be supported by sound scientific theory and/or empirical evidence; partisanship has no place in this policy brief (See below for example from lecture). Additionally, outline the potential risks of ignoring your advice — e.g., in the context of trade, if the United States were to enact tariffs, other countries would be likely to reciprocate, thereby engendering a trade war. Finally, highlight in bold those implications you believe are most important for someone on Air Force One to notice and comprehend in a five-minute briefing.

In your memo, address the following:

- 1) The definition of an alliance and what type of alliance NATO is characterized as;
- 2) The specific interests that brought together members of NATO and the role of the United States in NATO's creation and maintenance;
- 3) How alliances establish credibility and what makes NATO more or less credible than other alliances;
- 4) The effect of a credible alliance on the likelihood of war;
- 5) The ways in which NATO has changed since its inception and how these changes affect the likelihood of war;
- 6) The benefits/costs of maintaining the alliance as well as the implications rhetoric about weakening/abandoning the alliance has on other countries – both US allies and US adversaries;
- 7) The risks of ignoring your advice.

In your response, make sure to use course vocabulary to support your answer. To help with this, your only sources should be course lectures and the course textbook (so no outside sources). To acknowledge your sources, please include a references section at the end of your brief that lists either the lectures and/or the textbook as appropriate. There is no need to use in-text citations, remember that the analysis and your response should be in your own words.

For help with formatting the sources in the references section of your brief, please see [OWL Purdue Formatting Books](#) (including textbooks) and [OWL Purdue Citing Common Sources for lectures](#).

**Class example of using scientific reasoning:**

Recall the class lecture and slides on what nonpartisan/scientific means in the context of such analyses. The following example illustrates the science underpinning US-USSR/Russia arms control:

- Game theory tells us that tit-for-tat as a strategy to enforce cooperation works only when behavior is visible.
- Hence monitoring the behavior of your adversary is critical if arms control is to be a Pareto-optimal outcome.
- Such monitoring has indeed been part of bilateral arms control agreements.
- Moreover, under arms control agreements, nuclear weapons have been reduced significantly, and no wars have been fought between the superpowers.

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## Peer Review Assignment

### Peer review guidelines

- Print and read over your peer's entry to get an overview of the piece.
- Read the essay more slowly keeping the rubric in mind.
- Highlight the pieces of text that let you directly address the rubric prompts in your online responses.
- In your online responses, focus on larger issues (higher order concerns) of content and argument rather than lower order concerns like grammar and spelling.
- Be very specific in your responses, referring to your peer's actual language, mentioning terms and concepts that are either present or missing, and following the directions in the rubric.
- Use respectful and professional language whether you are suggesting improvements to or praising your peer.

### Peer Review Questions

Q1: Comment on the completeness of the alliances section of the memo. Does the memo provide a definition of alliances and discuss how alliances establish and affect credibility? What could be improved in this section?

Q2: Comment on the analysis related to NATO. How well does the memo both explain the changes to NATO over time and make the case for why or why not NATO should be weakened or abandoned? Does the memo provide a stance with supporting evidence based on theories and concepts learned in class? Does the memo address the role that rhetoric plays in the situation?

Q3: Comment on the writing style of the memo. Does the memo come across as based in objective and theoretical understanding (so not partisan)? Is the memo concise and focused in terms of content and words? What could the writer do to improve their memo?