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Combining Hard and Soft Power to Gain Access: Lessons from NATO's Success

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Abstract: The emerging great power rivalry is causing grave concern amongst policymakers, who fear China's growing military and economic expansion at the expense of the US and its allies. By focusing narrowly on material sources of power, however, these worries largely ignore the emerging role of soft power or what E.H. Carr labelled "power over opinion" for influence over partners, which sometimes result in tangible security benefits such as operational access, basing, and overflight rights. To change perceptions of the benefits of cooperation, major powers may leverage the information tool of statecraft to alter the preferences of domestic actors, such as politicians, military officers, or the general public. In order to better understand the logics by which major powers gain access, this paper explores a case of NATO's successful use of soft power for material benefit: the attainment of overflight privileges in Eastern Europe for the air campaign against Serbia in 1999. By understanding NATO's success, the alliance can better leverage the effective combination of economic and soft power to compete in today's challenging international system.

In September 2019, Taiwan suffered two major political losses as the South Pacific nations of Kiribati and the Solomon Islands ended diplomatic ties with the increasingly isolated Asian nation. China's One Nation policy requires that states choose between the People's Republic of China or Taiwan, and both of these small Pacific nations favored the massive mainland over the small island nation. Later in May 2021, reports surfaced that Chinese officials promised to restructure a Kiribati airstrip on the Kanton Atoll, which onlookers feared would be used for military purposes. This report followed others that revealed China's growing geopolitical ambitions, to include its first overseas military base in Djibouti and negotiations with Cambodia to build additional facilities at Ream Naval Base.[1] China's leaders deny expansionist motivations, yet historical great power behavior predicts that China will continue to seek bases to access vital materials and resupply its military protecting these resources.[2]

The competition for foreign access, basing, and overflight (ABO) privileges is commonplace in practice, yet under-examined in the proliferating literature on great power rivalry. Theories of deterrence take ABO for granted: deterrence by denial assumes that military troops and hardware are stationed overseas, while deterrence by punishment presumes that aircraft are authorized to fly over and re-supply on foreign territory. The field of geopolitics is rife with arguments that territory drives political decision-making, yet falls short of investigating why countries are willing to give up parts of their precious sovereignty in a competitive international system.[3] The intensity of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 was a product of the

[1] "Update: China Continues to Transform Ream Naval Base," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 12, 2021, Update: China Continues to Transform Ream Naval Base | Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (csis.org).

[2] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Chapter 3. See also Miles Kahler, "External Ambition and Economic Performance," *World Politics* 40, No. 4 (Jul 1988), 419-451.

[3] For a survey, see Zhengyu Wu, "Classical Geopolitics, Realism, and the Balance of Power Theory," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, No. 6 (2018): 786-823.

geographic proximity of Soviet basing and access to the US homeland, yet Cuban acceptance of foreign offensive systems (at its own peril) is both assumed and puzzling.

Since the end of World War II, the benefits of American hegemony and access are often taken for granted, but this advantage is likely to decline in the future. The US enjoys, by one count, over 800 military bases abroad and access to territory and airspace that ensure the US military can reach all parts of the world.[4] The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) 30 members and dozens of partners improve America and the West's operational reach, yet acquiring overseas bases and operational access is no small feat. Even if civilian and military leaders agree that stationing American troops would be mutually beneficial, the need to overcome political opposition is often present. Requests for access may be rejected, even by allies: Turkey's parliament denied its territory for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, while Spain's parliament voted to close the US Air Force's Torrejon Air Base in 1988. Conversely, access may be granted by non-allies: Romania and Bulgaria authorized NATO to use its airspace in *Operation Allied Force* 1999, an important case of NATO's soft power influence for hard power gain.

Largely through transactional economic statecraft, Chinese leaders are attempting to buy access in the Pacific Island region to improve its military reach in the ongoing great power rivalry. Yet NATO's influence in the 1990s reveals that access sometimes relies on the skillful use of soft power or what E.H. Carr labelled "power over opinion". In addition to security and economic incentives, NATO should leverage the information tool of statecraft to convince foreign politicians, military officers, and public audiences that cooperation is beneficial for the partner and shape the environment in its favor.[5] This persuasion may result in material benefit, explored below through NATO's acquisition of overflight privileges in Eastern Europe for the air campaign against Serbia in 1999. By understanding NATO's successful use of soft power for hard power gain, the alliance can posture for the evolving geopolitical competition.

The Power to Gain Access

By its nature, access and basing rights allow one country to use the sovereign territory of another, a feature of statehood that countries jealously guard. There are several routes to access, most notably through threats, transactions, and attraction. One way to distinguish routes to access is to apply classical realist E.H. Carr's three forms of power: military power, economic power, and power over opinion.[6] Militarily, one state could invade and demand the use of these bases (such as the Soviet Union against the Warsaw Pact), or convince the target state that the security threat of a mutual adversary necessitates the forward presence. Economically, a state

[4] David Vine, Base Nation: *How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015), Chapter 8.

[5] On the use of military organizations to construct more favorable environments, see Kyle J. Wolfley, *Military Statecraft and the Rise of Shaping in World Politics* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021); Kyle J. Wolfley, "Military Power Reimagined: The Rise and Future of Shaping," *Joint Force Quarterly* 102, No. 3 (2021): 20-27.

[6] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: MacMillan Press, 1981).

may offer aid as a "carrot" for cooperation, or threaten the "stick" of sanctions if the target country refuses to comply. Finally, a country could attempt to influence the minds of the leaders, soldiers, and public opinion by emphasizing its culture, political values, or legitimacy in foreign policy. Despite the conventional wisdom that this form of power is less important the others, Carr argues that power over opinion is "not less essential for political purposes than military or economic power, and has always been closely associated with them."[7] Carr's experience in the British Ministry of Information during the interwar period led him to believe that political persuasion was necessary in the modern era of mass communication, which increased the number of individuals whose opinion was "politically important."[8]

Though Carr focused his discussion on wartime propaganda to sap an adversary's morale while maintaining one's own, another aspect of Carr's power over opinion is similar to Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power," a term he coined in 1990 that has been lauded by some and derided by others. Nye argues that soft power is the ability to get the outcomes one prefers through attraction rather than coercion or payments and is a hallmark of America's post-Cold War foreign policy.[9] Yet critics argue that soft elements of US power—the universality of the English language, magnetism of American universities, and strength of Silicon Valley—are largely uncontrollable by governments and have failed to replace hard military power in international politics.[10] These critiques go too far by assuming that soft power is a replacement for—and not, as Carr argued, complementary with—hard power. Moreover, these arguments set too high a standard: soft power can be useful short of preventing war between rivals or turning enemies into friends.[11]

A more productive understanding of soft power would investigate how neutral states choose between great power rivals or why states perceive one another as friend or foe. For instance, when states assess threats, they look not only at material capabilities, but also the social interactions and intentions of the adversary. Britain and France possess far more nuclear weapons than North Korea, yet the former pair of states are friends of the United States, while North Korea is foe.[12] Some realist scholars acknowledge that alliance-formation is not only about balancing against the most resource-rich state, but the one with aggressive intent, acknowledging the role of perception in threat assessment.[13] Because the determination of ally versus adversary relies on social perceptions, soft power changes how states view each other and whether cooperation will be useful or not. Soft power is not limited to democracies where voters are the target of public diplomacy: reflecting on the origins of modern propaganda, Carr argues that Nazi Germany's power over opinion had an equal place with its military and economic

[7] E.H. Carr, 132.

[8] Carr, 133-145, quote on 133.

[9] Joseph Nye, "Soft Power: The Origins and Political Progress of a Concept," *Palgrave Communications* 3, 17008 (2017): https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.8.

[10] Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2016). See also Christopher Layne, "The Unbearable Lightness of Soft Power," in *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 63-94.

[11] See, for instance, Cohen, 16 and

[12] Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, No. 1 (1995): 73.

[13] Stepehen Walt, *Alliance Formation.*

power during the 1930's.[14] Moreover, he notes that Soviet leaders were effective in leveraging power over opinion by convincing the allies not to intervene in its civil war and increasing the number of adherents through the first international propaganda organization: Communist International.[15]

If power is the ability to get others to do (or want) what you want, then acquiring ABO relies on the deft use of soft power to build long-term partnerships without promises of protection or payments. Short of invasion, convincing a former adversary or even neutral state to abdicate parts of their sovereignty requires legitimacy and persuasion. During the Cold War, "spheres of influence" implied that superpowers relied on power over opinion to keep partner states under their control (as well as threats of intervention, in the case of the Soviet Union). Today, observers may take for granted the intense cooperation and integration between Western and Eastern European states, yet during the 1990s most Eastern European politicians, military officers, and publics were not ready to allow the former adversary to place troops on their homeland.

The divisions between these types of power—especially the line between hard payments and soft persuasion—is not always clear and the overlap is apparent in business marketing. Instead of only offering cheaper prices for goods, private firms invest heavily in marketing to influence the minds of potential consumers to improve its brand and convince the consumer that its product is attractive. Some businesses engage in philanthropy not only to benefit society, but also to improve perceptions of their brand which, if successful, will increase their bottom line.[16] Applying this analogy to international politics, states may couple economic aid with strategic communication and public diplomacy to convince the target state's population that cooperation is beneficial and long-term. Promises of financial aid surely have a transactional character, but playing the role of a benevolent, trustworthy state is likely to have longer-run impacts than a simple "purchase" for access. Ultimately, a smart state would combine several approaches to achieve its desired outcome and the case study below reveals how NATO attempted several approaches to achieve overflight rights for war in the late 1990s.

NATO's Acquisition of Access in the Kosovo Air Campaign

When Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic ordered the killing of ethnic Albanians in January 1999, NATO leaders met to determine to how the alliance would respond. Two months later in March, nineteen NATO leaders agreed to intervene through aerial bombings designed to compel Milosevic to halt the ethnic cleansing waged against Albanians. The 78-day air campaign ended with Milosevic's concession and military scholars disagree as to whether the air campaign alone compelled Milosevic's surrender. Some argue that the campaign represented a rare case of successful coercion through air power, while others contend that the threat of a ground invasion

[14] Carr, 143.
[15] Carr, Twenty Years Crisis, 137-138.
[16] Conor Clarke and Michael Kinsley, *Creative Capitalism: A Conversation with Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Other Economic Leaders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

and growing domestic instability were the factors that changed Milosevic's mind.[17] Regardless, in order to make both air and ground threats credible, NATO required expanded access to bases, territory, and airspace that could only be accomplished by persuading former adversaries to comply. As the use of airspace and airbases on NATO territory became insufficient in the campaign to coerce Milosevic by mid-April, NATO leaders requested that Eastern Europe increase access for military operations. By April 1999, former Warsaw Pact states—and recently ascended NATO members—Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland offered or provided basing rights for allied aircraft. Aspiring allies Bulgaria and Romania also contributed: Bulgaria permitted allied aircraft to transit its airspace and Romania provided NATO air controllers access to its NATO-compatible radar coverage system, which was procured through the Warsaw Initiative, a feature of the Partnership for Peace program.[18]

The roots of access for the Kosovo campaign can be located in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program, which was launched in 1994 in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and emerging crisis in the Balkans. The purpose of the program was to create security relationships between NATO and former European communist states with the hope that these interactions could reduce remaining Cold War tensions and be leveraged in future multilateral humanitarian missions (as well as prepare select countries for potential NATO membership). The practical aspects of PfP were military exercises and workshops hosted by the Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany. As US Secretary of State Christopher Warren remarked about the program: "There can be no better way to establish a new and secure Europe than to have soldiers from Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and the other new democracies work with NATO to address their most pressing security problems."[19] The military exercises took place on both sides of the former Iron Curtain: the first exercise was hosted in Poland, while the second took place in Louisiana.[20] Former Warsaw Pact states Bulgaria and Romania hosted PfP exercise "Cooperative Determination" on their territory, respectively in 1995 and 1996.[21]

NATO leaders viewed PfP as a necessary vehicle for European security because despite the end of the Cold War, animosity between East and West remained. A 1995 RAND report revealed that senior Polish officers were skeptical of the program because of PfP's insistence on changing doctrine and the rejection of self-sufficiency in favor of dependency on allies. The same report also credits the PfP with softening the German public's views on building military relationships with the former communist East.[22] As late as 1997, some Czech polls indicated

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[17] See for instance, Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower: NATO's 'Victory' in Kosovo Revisited," *International Security* 34, No. 1 (2009): 83-112; Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, "Kosovo and the Great Air Power Debate," *International Security* 24, Vol. 4 (2000): 5-38.

[18] NATO PfP, GAO, 14.

[19] Warren Christopher, US Department of State Dispatch, 4.9, U.S. Government Printing Office, (March 1, 1993): 119.

[20] For an extensive discussion of NATO's Partnership for Peace exercises, see Kyle J. Wolfley, *Military Statecraft and the Rise of Shaping in World Politics* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021), Chapter 4.

[21] For a more in-depth discussion of NATO's Partnership for Peace, see Wolfley, *Military Statecraft and the Rise of Shaping in World Politics*, Chapter 4. See also NATO - News: 1995 PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE EXERCISES , 07-Jun.-1995

[22] Thomas S. Szayna and Ronald D. Asmus, *German and Polish Views of the Partnership for Peace* (Santa Monica: RAND Arroyo Center, 1995), 15, 22, 38-39.

that more than half of public opinion would say "no" to NATO accession.[23] As two senior officials in the NATO Political Affairs division during early PfP development argue, PfP was part of a broader attempt by Western Europe to extend security institutions and make cooperation more palatable to its Eastern neighbors.[24] Reflecting on the first year of Romania's participation in PfP, Romanian Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Teodor Melescanu argued that the program, "is an excellent conduit for improving relations with our neighbors, particularly through the positive impact military collaboration has on general bilateral relationships."[25]

When NATO leaders decided to intervene through *Operation Allied Force* in March 1999, ABO beyond NATO members' territory were necessary for allied bombings to be successful. However, the alliance ran into obstacles as the operation's legitimacy was in question: the mission was not formally sanctioned by the United Nations, was opposed by Russia, and involved aircraft from only 13 of NATO's 19 members. For the first four weeks of the bombing campaign, 6,000 NATO sorties struck military and industrial sites in Serbia in an attempt to halt Milosevic's ethnic cleansing. Despite these operations, the Serbian government reinforced thousands of army and police into Kosovo and increased its use of aircraft and helicopter to target Albanians. To increase pressure on the Serbian government, NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Wesley Clark argued that roughly 300 additional aircraft would be required as allied air bases—including those in Italy—were becoming overcrowded.[26]

At the start of the air operations on March 24, 1999, the Bulgarian government granted NATO use of its airspace; however, it opposed any airstrikes or ground assaults originating from its territory. On April 19th NATO officials requested unrestricted access to Bulgaria's airspace, which the president and parliament understood would increase Bulgaria's involvement in aerial bombings against Serbia and would likely be opposed by its public. According to a Congressional Research Service report, Bulgarian public opinion polls at the time indicated that the majority opposed NATO air strikes and the Socialist Party staged anti-NATO rallies in Sofia.[27] Two days later, Bulgarian prime minister Ivan Kostov said his country would grant NATO a 90-mile band of airspace along its Western border with Serbia and Macedonia, though its constitutional court and parliament would be required to endorse it.[28] When the measure came to parliament, the debate lasted five hours and the minority former communist party offered stiff resistance.[29]

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[23] Gheciu, *NATO in the 'New Europe,'* 123.

[24] Michael Ruhle, and Nicholas Williams, "Partnership for Peace: A Personal View from NATO," 66-70.

[25] Teodor Melescanu, "Partnership for Peace: A Romanian Point of View," Twelveth NATO Workshop on Political-Military Decision Making, Dresden, Germany, June 18-22, 1995, Minister of State & Foreign Affairs Teodor Melescanu...Partnership for Peace: A Romanian Point of View (csdr.org).

[26] Steven Lee Myers, "Crisis in the Balkans: In Kosovo; Serbs Reinforcing Troops in Kosovo Despite Bombing," *New York Times,* April 20, 1999.

[27] Karen Donfried, "Kosovo: International Reactions to NATO Air Strikes," *Congressional Research Service,* April 21, 1999.

[28] "Newsline—April 22, 1999," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* April 22, 199, Newsline - April 22, 1999 (rferl.org).

[29] John Tagliabue, "Crisis in the Balkans: Repercussions; Bulgarians Bet Future on a Link to NATO," *New York Times,* May 12, 1999.

Despite the domestic opposition to air strikes, the president and some politicians agreed that Bulgaria had no other choice but to assist NATO.[30] On May 8th, the Bulgarian parliament agreed to grant NATO aircraft use of its airspace for strikes against Yugoslavia with a 154 to 83 vote in favor following long and acrimonious debate. Outside parliament, thousands rallied for and against the decision, supporting the opposition which was led by the Socialist party of former communists. Supporting the measure, Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mihailova argued, "Those who vote against (granting NATO access to Bulgaria's airspace), apart from the moral issue of silent complicity, will vote for prolonging the conflict and against a united Europe. Such a vote will erase Bulgaria from the economic and political map of Europe."[31]

Romanian leaders were also in a difficult situation, given the historical ties to Yugoslavia and opposition to Kosovo's independence as a similar secessionist movement in Transylvania was brewing. Romanian President Emil Constantinescu initially sought a diplomatic solution short of war; however, when talks failed, his government argued that "Romania considers that a NATO intervention for putting an end to the conflict is both necessary and legitimate."[32] At the outset, Romania authorized NATO to operate in its airspace for limited, "emergency" use since the country shared a treaty with Yugoslavia that prohibited the use of airspace by a third party. After bombings commenced, public opinion polls revealed a drop in support for Romanian ascension to NATO from 67 to 52 percent. In April, NATO officials requested unrestricted use of Romanian airspace, which required a parliamentary vote. On April 22nd, the parliament voted 225 to 21 (with 99 abstentions).[33] Interestingly, both Romania and Bulgaria denied overflight permissions to Russia, which it would use to resupply troops its deployed to Pristina following the NATO air campaign.

After touring Kosovo border crossings into Macedonia, British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke before the Romanian parliament on May 4th, 1999 to persuade the Romanian people to continue allowing NATO's operations through its airspace. He argued that the only appropriate action for an emerging democracy such as Romania was to take a firm stance against Milosevic. He compared Serbia to Germany in 1945, lauding the latter country for democratizing and joining NATO only ten years after the fall of the Third Reich. Blair acknowledged that Romanians felt the effects of the airstrikes more intensely than Britons, but appealed to the public to endure in its fight to end ethnic violence in Europe. In addition to promises to campaign for Romania's admittance to the European Union, Blair promised economic aid to offset the drop in oil exports and blocked trade along the Danube River.[34]

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[30] Karen Donfried, "Kosovo: International Reactions to NATO Air Strikes," *Congressional Research Service,* April 21, 1999.

[31] Jan de Weydenthal/Stoyanka Kancheva, "Yugoslaiva: Bulgaria Grants NATO Access to Airspace—Grudingly," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* May 9, 1999, Yugoslavia: Bulgaria Grants NATO Access To Airspace -- Grudgingly (rferl.org)

[32] Steven Lee Myers, "Crisis in the Balkans: In Kosovo; Serbs Reinforcing Troops in Kosovo Despite Bombing," *New York Times,* April 20, 1999.

[33] Joseph Fitchett, "Romania and Bulgaria Approval Will Allow Campaign to Expand: NATO Gets Right To Use Airspace Bordering Serbia," *New York Times,* April 21, 1999.

[34] "Blair: Cast out Milosevic," *BBC News,* May 4, 1999, BBC News | UK Politics | Blair: Cast out Milosevic.

On June 9th, 1999, Milosevic finally surrendered. A month later, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana wrote an op-ed for a Romanian newspaper thanking the Romanian people for its steadfast support of NATO operations in Kosovo, including the use of Romanian airspace.[35] He also pointed out that Romania was the first to join the Partnership for Peace program. Romania and Bulgaria continued to host the rotating "Cooperative Key" PfP exercise on their territories: Romania's Mihail Kolganiceanu airbase in 2000 and Bulgaria's Graf Ignatievo airbase in 2001 and 2003.[36] The evidence above—though tentative and in need of further research—of NATO's ability to acquire additional ABO privileges in states with some political opposition reveals how leaders can combine economic aid with soft power to achieve material benefits. The discussion and conclusion below compare China's narrow use of economic power to improve its access in the Pacific Island region and how NATO can combine forms of power for access in the future.

Conclusion: Comparing China and NATO's Attempts at Access

China's economic statecraft is gaining widespread attention and the islands of Kiribati are emerging as a focal point for basing competition. Kiribati is located 3,000 km southwest of Hawaii and is near the US Marshall Islands, which US hosts missiles test sites. In 1997, China placed a satellite monitoring station on the South Pacific Island—rumored to be its first satellite station outside of mainland China—raising concern amongst US defense officials, who worried about China's ability to interrupt communications and monitor rocket launches from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.[37] In 2004, Kiribati's President Anote Tong, whose party recently rose to power, cut diplomatic ties with China and shifted its alignment with Taiwan. However, the countries resumed diplomatic ties in 2019 after Kiribati ended ties with Taiwan. Interestingly, Kanton (with a runway set to be repaired for commercial purposes by China) was used for bombing raids by American planes during World War II. In 2019, the Solomon Islands also cut formal diplomatic relations with Tawain and recognized China.

China claims that because Taiwan is a province of China, it has no right to create formal ties with other sovereign countries. Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu claimed that Kiribati's pivot was the result of Chinese promises for commercial airplanes and ferries. Taiwanese government officials interpreted this move as an attempt to diplomatically isolate Taipei and convince its population that the government was incapable of exerting influence abroad, undermining the ruling Democratic Progressive Party in favor of the China-friendly opposition.[38] China is already providing some of its scarce Sinopharm vaccine to the Solomon

[35] NATO Secretary General, "Opinion Editorial," NATO News Articles, July 7, 1999, NATO News Articles: Op-Ed SecGen, 7 July 1999.
[36] Dorinel Molodovan, Plamen Pantev, and Matthew Rhodes, "Joint Task Force East and Shared Military Basing in Romania and Bulgaria," Marshall Center Occasional Papers (September 2009), No. 21, Joint Task Force East and Shared Military Basing In Romania and Bulgaria | George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies (marshallcenter.org).
[37] "Chian Eyes US Military in S. Pacific," *Chrisitan Science Monitor*, October 30, 1997, Vol. 89, Issue 235.
[38] Yimou Lee, "Taiwan says China lures Kiribati with Airplanes after Losing Another Ally," *Reuters*, September 20, 2019, Taiwan says China lures Kiribati with airplanes after losing another ally | Reuters.

Islands as part of its "Health Silk Road" initiative.[39] It appears that Chinese leaders are beginning to understand the importance of improving its image abroad through generous aid.

The brief discussion of NATO's and China's efforts indicate that although both actors leverage economic and soft power to increase access abroad, NATO appears to emphasize values such as democracy and human rights while China appears—at the moment—to favor economic incentives. Over its history, NATO officials had to grapple with the dilemma between establishing bases for operational necessity and promoting democracy abroad. During the Cold War, the US negotiated with dictators such as Spain's Franco, Portugal, and the Philippines to ensure access for deterrence against the Soviets. Alexander Cooley argues that despite the allure of a long-standing dictatorships, democracies are more likely to honor stationing commitments in the long run.[40] Moreover, through an empirical study of US operational access requests from 1945-2014, a RAND study in 2015 determined that access permission is more likely when the US mission is considered legitimate, the host nation was an "enduring partner," and host-nation domestic opposition was low.[41] Thus, a tentative generalization suggests that NATO's attempts to emphasize values through information and public diplomacy are likely to be more effective than China's use of short-term economic transactions.

At the same time, soft power alone is likely insufficient—even British Prime Minister Tony Blair promised economic aid to offset Romania's loss of revenue—and a combination of economic and soft power will likely work best. For instance, in an effort to undermine Chinese economic statecraft through the Belt and Road Initiative, the US, Australia, and Japan announced an initiative to fund the first undersea cable to connect Kiribati, Naura, and the Federated States of Micronesia to the internet. Not only will this project provide an economic boost to the region, but these nations are likely to view this deal as more legitimate and trustworthy than what China has offered through Huawei. As the Australian Prime Minister's office released statement notes, "This is more than an infrastructure investment… It is a further demonstration of our shared commitment to quality, transparent, fiscally sustainable, catalytic infrastructure partnerships with, and between, Pacific nations."[42] This project follows one in 2018 in which the Australian government offered $200 million subsidized undersea fiber optic cable to Papau New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, which blocked a similar effort by China's Huawei.[43] In other words, economic and soft power are complementary and are best implemented together.

Given China's efforts to expand and Russian intervention in Ukraine, the race for ABO continues today and NATO officials should explore the causes and consequences of access competition. Recently, US officials secured access to two airports in eastern Slovakia and

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[39] Laura Keenan, "The Lion and the Mouse: The Need for Greater U.S. Focus in the Pacific Islands," *Strategy Bridge*, September 2, 2021.

[40] Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 2005), 79-92.

[41] Stacie Pettyhohn and Jennifer Kavanah, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to the U.S. Overseas Military Presence, 1945-2014*, RAND.

[42] Senator the Honorable Marise Payne, Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Improving East Micronesia Telecommunications Connectivity," December 12, 2021, Improving East Micronesia telecommunications connectivity | Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister for Women (foreignminister.gov.au).

[43] Chris Duckett, "Australia Using Foreign Aid to Lock Huawei out of PNG-Solomon Islands Subsea Cables," June 12, 2018, Australia using foreign aid to lock Huawei out of PNG-Solomon Islands subsea cable | ZDNet.

announced the construction of three Norwegian airfields and one naval base.[44] Although this construction would not include separate American bases, this announcement was surprising given Norway's long resistance to foreign bases in peacetime or the stockpiling of nuclear arms.[45] Russian officials have long charged that NATO expansion is causing the intense security dilemma in Eastern Europe, and NATO officials should understand that ABO 'success' for the alliance may signal an offensive 'threat' to Russia.[46] Thus, scholars and practitioners would be wise to more thoroughly investigate the causes and consequences of access competition.

[44] "Slovak Government Approves Defence Treaty with United States," *Reuters*, January 12, 2022, Slovak government approves defence treaty with United States | Reuters.

[45] "Norway to Allow U.S. Military to Build on Its Soil in New Accord," *Reuters*, April 16, 2021, Norway to allow U.S. military to build on its soil in new accord | Reuters.

[46] Dmitri Trenin, "What Putin Really Wants in Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, December 28, 2021, What Putin Really Wants in Ukraine | Foreign Affairs.