

# Making Sense of Multilateralism

## Definition

- Three or more Independent States
- Taking Actions
- To pursue common interests or goals
- On a Temporary or Continuing Basis

## History

- Greek City State Alliances (Delian and Peloponnesian Leagues) 479 BCE
- Continental Congress 1774
- Congress of Vienna 1815
- League of Nations 1919
- European Theater of Operations (vs. Pacific Theater) 1942

## Post World War II

- United Nations 1945
- Cold War Regional Security Alliances
  - NATO 1949,
  - SEATO 1955-77,
  - Warsaw Pact 1955-91
- Technological and Commercial Development Alliances
  - International Civil Aviation Organization
  - International Monetary Fund
  - International Atomic Energy Agency
  - World Intellectual Property Organization
  - World Meteorological Organization
  - World Health Organization
  - Numerous Others
- Regional Trade and Political Agreements
  - European Coal and Steel Community 1948
  - NAFTA 1994

## Post Cold War / Post American Age

- New Issues replace great power competition in world interest (Briefing Book):
  - Nuclear Non-Proliferation
  - Climate Change
  - Global Economic Stability
  - Economic and Human Development
    - Poverty, Hunger, Health
    - Life, Liberty, Pursuit of Happiness – Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya
- The Decline of the United States vs. The Rise of the Rest. (Video)

## Problems with Multilateralism

- “Omnipotent” nations (and their citizens) resist coalitions.
- Burdens are often unequal.
- Multilateral coalition decision-making is messy.
  - No Open Meetings Law at NATO.
  - Need for Common Interest limits applications and narrows focus.
  - Continuing Consensus on details is problematic.

## Benefits of Multilateralism

- There are no “omnipotent” nations.
- The “Rise of the Rest” makes resistance to Unilateralism more effective.
- Modern Communications and Transportation make interdependence the norm and Isolation less practical.