



# Alliance Curse: How America Lost the Third World

*Hilton L. Root*

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In *Alliance Curse*, Hilton Root illustrates that recent U.S. foreign policy is too often misguided, resulting in misdirected foreign aid and alliances that stunt political and economic development among partner regimes, leaving America on the wrong side of change. Many alliances with third world dictators, ostensibly of mutual benefit, reduce incentives to govern for prosperity and produce instead political and social instability and economic failure. Yet again, in the war on terror and in the name of preserving global stability, America is backing authoritarian regimes that practice repression and plunder. It is as if the cold war never ended. While espousing freedom and democracy, the U.S. contradicts itself by aiding governments that do not share those values. In addition to undercutting its own stated goal of promoting freedom, America makes the developing world even more wary of its intentions. Yes, the democracy we preach arouses aspirations and attracts immigrants, but those same individuals become our sternest critics; having learned to admire American values, they end up deploring U.S. policies toward their own countries. Long-term U.S. security is jeopardized by a legacy of resentment and distrust. *Alliance Curse* proposes an analytical foundation for national security that challenges long-held assumptions about foreign affairs. It questions the wisdom of diplomacy that depends on questionable linkages or outdated suppositions. The end of the Soviet Union did not portend the demise of communism, for example. Democracy and socialism are not incompatible systems. Promoting democracy by linking it with free trade risks overemphasizing the latter goal at the expense of the former. The growing tendency to play China against India in an effort to retain American global supremacy will hamper relations with both—an intolerable situation in today's interdependent world. Root buttresses his analysis with case studies of American foreign policy toward developing countries (e.g., Vietnam), efforts at state building, and nations growing in importance, such as China. He concludes with a series of recommendations designed to close the gap between security and economic development.

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