



Crisis Diplomacy

Constructing Alliances

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Importance of Alliances

- **Biggest crises involve more than two states**
- **Allies shape balance of power**
- **Credible alliance commitments can deter conflict**

Questions about Alliances

- 1. Who will states seek out as allies?**
- 2. Why make formal alliance commitments?**

Walt on Alliances

Central question: Who will states seek out as allies?

Three models of motivation:

- Power politics**
- State similarity**
- Foreign aid (or bribes)**

Power Politics

States choose allies so as to maximize their own security or power.

- *Realpolitik* dominates**
- Allies depend on nature of threat**

Two Forms of Power-Politics Alliance

Balancing: To ally against the biggest threat.

Bandwagoning: To ally alongside the biggest threat.

Theory of Balancing

- **States seek to maximize their own security**
- **Deterrence is most likely to succeed when power is balanced**

Therefore, states build balancing alliances.

Theory of Bandwagoning

- **States seek to maximize their own security**
- **States prefer not to attack their own allies**

Therefore, states bandwagon.

Balancing versus Bandwagoning

- **Effects of making a threat**
 - **Balance: lose allies**
 - **Bandwagon: gain allies**
- **Composition of wartime coalitions**
 - **Balance: fairly even**
 - **Bandwagon: overwhelming superiority**
- **Battle results**
 - **Balance: lose battles → gain allies?**
 - **Bandwagon: lose battles → lose allies?**

Balancing versus Bandwagoning

The premises aren't incompatible—so why opposite conclusions?

Stag Hunt and Multiple Equilibria

		Jack	
		<i>Stag</i>	<i>Rabbit</i>
Alice	<i>Stag</i>	Alice: eat stag Jack: eat stag	Alice: go hungry Jack: eat rabbit
	<i>Rabbit</i>	Alice: eat rabbit Jack: go hungry	Alice: eat rabbit Jack: eat rabbit

Walt's Argument

"Balancing should be preferred for the simple reason that no statesman can be completely sure of what another will do" (p. 29).

State Similarity

States ally with those most like them.

- Main example: ideology (e.g., NATO, Warsaw Pact)**
- Could also be culture, language, regime type, etc.**

Theory of Ideological Alliances

- **Similar ideology → similar interests**
- **States won't fight if their interests don't clash**

Therefore, states build ideological alliances.

Power Politics versus State Similarity

- **Duration of alliances**
 - **PP: unstable**
 - **SS: stable**
- **When changes in alliances happen**
 - **PP: when new threats arise**
 - **SS: domestic turmoil**

Foreign Aid

Small states sell their allegiance to the highest bidder.

Theory of "Bribe" Alliances

- States (or leaders) seek to maximize wealth**
- War victory is worth paying for**

Therefore, states under threat bid for allies, and the highest bids succeed.

Problems with the Bribe Theory

- **Doesn't explain: whose support to bid for?**
- **Economic logic is sketchy**

Bribes and Balancing

- **Imagine both sides roughly balanced**
- **Small change could make major difference**
- **Why not bribe someone to switch?**
- **And once they switch...**

For Next Time

- **Read Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" and Leeds et al., "Reevaluating Alliance Reliability"**

Image Sources

— Seesaw sign: Colin Whittaker, via **Flickr**