Crisis Diplomacy

Keeping Alliance Commitments

March 12, 2015

Recap: Questions about Alliances

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

The Puzzle of Formal Alliances

A formal alliance pact is neither *necessary* nor *sufficient* for one state to give military aid to another.

Roles of Formal Alliances

1. Commitment
   —Ensure allies come through in case of war
2. Signaling
   —Demonstrate commitment to the world
   —Deter potential attacks

A Basic Model of Alliances

The Players

— **Three states:** A**,** B**, and** C
  — A **and** B **at war**
  — C **potential ally of** A
— C**'s choices:**
  — **Stay out**
  — **Fight alongside** A

Under what conditions will C **decide to fight?**

A Basic Model of Alliances
Spoils of War

— **Value of winning war:** $v > 0$

— C**'s share of the spoils**

   — A **loses:** 0

   — C **stays out and** A **wins:** $s_{out} \times v$

   — C **fights and** A **wins:** $s_{fight} \times v$

A Basic Model of Alliances
War Outcomes

— **Probability A wins**
   — C **stays out:** p_{out}
   — C **fights:** $p_{fight} > p_{out}$
— **What C expects to get**
   — **Stays out:** $p_{out} \times s_{out} \times v$
   — **Fights:** $p_{fight} \times s_{fight} \times v$

A Basic Model of Alliances
Costs

— **Cost C pays**
  — **Stays out:** k_{out}
  — **Fights:** k_{fight}

A Basic Model of Alliances

The Choice to Fight

State C chooses to fight if:

$$(p_{fight} \times s_{fight} \times v) - k_{fight}$$
$$> (p_{out} \times s_{out} \times v) - k_{out}$$

How Can Formal Pacts Increase Commitment?

— **Raise chance of joint victory:** p_{fight}

— **Raise ally's share of the spoils:** s_{fight}

— **Reduce ally's cost of fighting:** k_{fight}

— **Raise ally's cost of staying out:** k_{out}

Signaling and Deterrence

For C to successfully deter B by threatening to ally with A:

1. B must believe the threat
2. B must rather stay home than fight a coalition of A and C

How Can Formal Pacts Deter Aggression?

— Raise perceptions of commitment
   — Show allies have shared interests
   — Raise actual degree of commitment
— Raise chance of joint victory

Measuring Commitment Success

Leeds et al. ask:

Do **states usually follow through on formal alliance commitments?**

Data Collection

— Unit of analysis: an alliance that is tested
  — War occurs
  — Participant is a member of an alliance
— Variable of interest: alliance reliability
  — Which sides did the other partners take?
— Time period: 1815–1944

Operationalizing Alliance Reliability

An Easy Way

1. Find countries with formal military partnerships with country at war
2. Code based on which side they took:
   —Partner's side → Success
   —Other side → Failure
   —Stayed out → Abstention

Easy Way Results

TABLE 1
Replication of Sabrosky (1980)

	Fights Alongside (Honors),		Remains Neutral (Abstains),		Fights Against (Violates),		Total
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Data reported in Sabrosky's Table 6-3, 1816-1965; Singer and Small (1966) alliance data	48	(27)	108	(61)	21	(12)	177
Data reported in Sabrosky's Table 6-3, 1816-1944; Singer and Small (1966) alliance data	43	(28.3)	89	(58.6)	20	(13.1)	152
1816-1944 replication with COW alliance data (version 2.1, June 1996)	51	(27.3)	121	(64.7)	15	(8.0)	187
1816-1944 replication with ATOP data	63	(29.4)	129	(60.3)	22	(10.3)	214

NOTE: ATOP = Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions; COW = Correlates of War.

Operationalizing Alliance Reliability

A Harder—But Better—Way

1. Find countries with formal military partnerships with country at war
2. Actually read the terms of the partnership
3. Code based on whether the terms were upheld
   —Upheld → Success
   —Violated → Failure
   —Did not apply → N/A

Leeds et al.: Main Results

TABLE 5
Alliance Reliability, ATOP Data, 1816-1944

Alliance Commitment Honored,		Alliance Commitment Violated,		Alliance Does Not Apply	Total
n	(%)	n	(%)	(n)	(n)
82	(74.5)	28	(25.5)	104	214

NOTE: ATOP = Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions.

Should States Bluff More?

Even if both sides only intend to stay neutral, why not call it a defense pact?

Limitations

—Selection bias: the more credible the commitment, the less likely to be tested

—No explanation of *variation* in commitment success

For Next Time

— Read Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics" (JSTOR)
— Second short paper prompts to be handed out

Image Sources

— German troops crossing the Soviet border in Operation Barbarossa: **Wikimedia Commons**
— Alliance reliability results: Leeds et al. (2000)