Democracy, Elections, and Alliance Treaty Depth

Abstract

Why do states form deep alliance treaties, which reinforce military support promises with commitments of defense coordination and cooperation? I argue that democracies often use treaty depth to increase alliance credibility because depth is less vulnerable to electoral scrutiny than unconditional military support. Opposition politicians cannot easily criticize treaty depth to weaken incumbents' standing with voters, and leaders can claim that depth facilitates more efficient defense spending, so democratic leaders use treaty depth to generate credible commitments. Unlike depth, the potential costs of military intervention due to unconditional support are easy for voters to grasp, so opposition politicians can exploit these alliance commitments for political gain. Thus, greater electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member increases treaty depth but reduces the probability of unconditional military support. I test this claim on offensive and defensive alliances from 1816 to 2007 and illustrate the theoretical mechanisms by examining NATO. I find that electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member increases treaty depth, and reduces the likelihood of unconditional military support. The argument and findings provide insight into the connection between domestic politics and the design of international institutions.

1 Introduction

Why do states make deep alliance treaties? Deep alliances formalize extensive defense cooperation by using additional military policy coordination and cooperation in to supplement promises of military intervention. While shallow alliances offer arms-length military support, deep treaties lead to closer ties between alliance members. Key sources of depth include an integrated military command, military aid, a common defense policy, basing rights, international organizations, and companion military agreements, and half of all offensive and defensive alliances[1] include at least one source of depth (Leeds et al., 2002). Despite the prevalence of alliance treaty depth, we have little idea when states add depth to their alliances, especially in relation to other means of establishing credible intervention commitments like unconditional military support.

Understanding the sources of deep alliances is worthwhile for two reasons. First, depth shapes alliance credibility and the distribution of military spending among alliance members. Costly commitments in deep alliances increase the credibility of military support promises (Morrow, 1994), which then encourages non-major power members of deep alliances to reduce military spending (Alley, 2020). Second, the process behind alliance treaty depth may provide more general insights into international institution design. Members of international organizations often use costly commitments to support cooperation. For example, some trade agreements use third-party dispute settlement mechanisms to enforce agreements (Smith, 2000), or institutionalize formal monitoring arrangements (Dur, Baccini and Elsig, 2013). Understanding when and why states employ close or arms-length cooperative commitments is therefore worthwhile.

In this paper, I explain why states make deep alliance treaties by simultaneously considering depth and unconditional promises of military support. I argye that although treaty depth and unconditional military support are both costly ways states can increase alliance credibility, they have different consequences for electoral politics in democracies. Democratic leaders use treaty depth

[1] Treaties that promise active military support.

to establish credible alliance commitments while managing criticism by opposition politicians who seek to replace them in office by weakening their standing with voters. Because elected leaders face replacement if the opposition earns enough support from voters, incumbents prefer less transparent policies that limit opposition criticism (Kono, 2006). Treaty depth has limited transparency, as the costs and benefits are hard to articulate to voters in accessible ways. Unconditional promises of military support establish credibility by committing to military intervention regardless of circumstances. The potential consequences of military intervention from these blanket commitments are easy for opposition politicians to explain to voters.[2] Therefore, I expect that electoral politics leads democracies to design deep and conditional alliance treaties. Democratic influence over alliance treaty design is most pronounced when a democracy is the most capable alliance member, as the preferences of the leading state have more weight.

I test the argument with a statistical analysis of offensive and defensive alliances from 1816 to 2007 and then examine the theoretical mechanisms in the context of NATO treaty design. To assess the association between electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member and treaty design, I use bivariate models that adjust for correlated errors in separate treaty depth and unconditional military support equations (Braumoeller et al., 2018). This approach emulates the seemingly unrelated regression approach of Fjelstul and Reiter (2019) and accounts for unobserved correlations between different aspects of alliance treaty design, which facilitates more accurate inferences. I find consistent evidence that greater electoral democracy in the alliance leader increases treaty depth, but decreases the probability of unconditional military support.

This paper contributes to knowledge of alliance treaty design and how domestic politics affects alliance choices. Democracy affects alliance politics in many ways (Lai and Reiter, 2000; Gibler and Wolford, 2006; Mattes, 2012*a*; Warren, 2016; McManus and Yarhi-Milo, 2017). Connecting

[2]Mattes (2012*b*), Chiba, Johnson and Leeds (2015) and Fjelstul and Reiter (2019) argue that democracies often make conditional alliance commitments so leaders can avoid paying audience costs from future treaty violations. I discuss the similarities and differences between this future audience costs framework and my electoral politics argument in the argument section.

domestic electoral institutions and treaty depth adds to this scholarship and addresses an important gap. The process of alliance treaty negotiation and design is understudied (Poast, 2019), and there is little research on treaty depth because the nascent alliance treaty design literature emphasizes conditions on military support. Existing research identifies entrapment concerns (Kim, 2011; Benson, 2012) and democratic alliance membership (Mattes, 2012*b*; Chiba, Johnson and Leeds, 2015) as two sources of conditional obligations.[3]

Two studies of alliance treaty design examine similar concepts to treaty depth, but both have important limitations. First, Mattes (2012*b*) finds that members of symmetric bilateral alliances where one partner has history of violation are more likely to use military institutionalization to increase treaty reliability. This paper makes an important contribution, but it does not discuss the relative advantages or disadvantages of issue linkages, military institutionalization and conditional obligations in the argument, only analyzes bilateral alliances, and uses an ordinal military institutionalization measure by Leeds and Anac (2005) that understates variation in treaty depth. Second, while checking the validity of a latent measure of costly alliance obligations, Benson and Clinton (2016) find that foreign policy agreement, major power involvement and treaty scope increase depth. Benson and Clinton define depth as how costly alliance obligations are in general, however, so their latent measure of depth includes secrecy and issue linkages and captures a broader concept than defense cooperation. Furthermore, neither study explains why states prefer different sources of alliance credibility, or accounts for correlation between depth and conditions on support.

Therefore, we still do not understand why alliance members employ treaty depth, especially given multiple ways to establish credible commitments. To address this lacuna, I consider how domestic political institutions shape who scrutinizes leaders' foreign policy decisions and how. Although treaty depth and unconditional military support increase alliance credibility, depth is less vulnerable to electoral criticism, so democratic leaders prefer depth. Thus, leaders strategically

[3]Fjelstul and Reiter (2019) supplement research on support conditions by arguing that democracies use incomplete alliance contracts to limit audience costs.

employ different foreign policy tools to limit criticism within their institutional context (Hyde and Saunders, 2020).

There are two primary implications of my argument and findings. First, they add important nuance to existing claims that democracies prefer limited alliance commitments (Mattes, 2012*b*; Chiba, Johnson and Leeds, 2015; Fjelstul and Reiter, 2019). Even as democracies screen the breadth of conditions on military support, they form deeper alliances in other ways. I also use immediate electoral considerations to explain limited conditions on support, rather than future audience costs of treaty violation. Furthermore, the findings add to the rich literature on domestic politics and international cooperation e.g. (Downs and Rocke, 1995; Fearon, 1998; Leeds, 1999; Mattes and Rodríguez, 2014). Just as democracies reassure partners with deep alliance commitments, electoral politics may push democracies to undertake strong international commitments with less electoral salience.[4]

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I lay out the argument and hypotheses. Then I summarize the data and research design. After this, I describe the results and detail U.S. alliance treaty design considerations in NATO negotiations. In the final section I summarize the results and offer some concluding thoughts.

2 Argument

In this argument, I first situate treaty depth in a general alliance politics framework. After that, I offer a general explanation of how treaty depth and unconditional military support increase the credibility of alliance commitments. Based on differences in electoral criticism of these two sources of credibility, I then explain why democracies often use treaty depth, but are less likely to offer unconditional support.

Alliances are self-enforcing contracts or institutions where states promise military intervention

[4]For example, in environmental agreements, democracies may prefer soft law commitments (Böhmelt and Butkutė, 2018), but other aspects of these agreements may be deep and less salient.

(Leeds et al., 2002; Morrow, 2000). When faced with external threats in an anarchic international system, states form alliances to aggregate military capability and secure their foreign policy interests (Altfield, 1984; Smith, 1995; Snyder, 1997; Fordham and Poast, 2014). Alliance participation has several costs and benefits. Beyond the benefit of possible military support, alliances also clarify international alignments (Snyder, 1990) and support economic ties (Gowa, 1995; Li, 2003; Long, 2003; Fordham, 2010; Wolford and Kim, 2017). The costs of alliance participation include opportunism and lost foreign policy autonomy (Altfield, 1984; Morrow, 2000; Johnson, 2015). Opportunism in alliances has three forms; abandonment (Leeds, 2003; Berkemeier and Fuhrmann, 2018), entrapment in unwanted conflicts (Snyder, 1984), and free-riding (Morrow, 2000).

To form an alliance, states must have similar foreign policy interests (Morrow, 1991; Smith, 1995; Fordham and Poast, 2014), especially in their war plans (Poast, 2019). The treaties that formalize promises of military support take many forms (Leeds, Long and Mitchell, 2000; Leeds et al., 2002; Benson, 2012; Benson and Clinton, 2016). Treaty design shapes the costs and benefits of treaty participation and addresses potential opportunism. In the face of abandonment concerns, alliance members use formal commitments to increase the credibility of military intervention promises, as the costs of the alliance commitment provide indications of reliability (Morrow, 2000). Treaty depth and unconditional promises of military support are two costly ways to add credibility, but they work in different ways.

Unconditional alliances promise military intervention no matter how or where an ally is fighting. These promises generate credibility in a way that increases the risk of entrapment, however. If an ally invokes a treaty when a state would rather stay out, states must choose between fighting in an unwanted war, or paying the reputational (Gibler, 2008; Crescenzi et al., 2012) and audience (Fearon, 1997) costs of violating their obligations. When alliance members fear divergent allied interests will create this entrapment or violation dilemma, they constrain military support to specific circumstances (Kim, 2011; Benson, 2012).[5] Conditional alliances limit promises of intervention

[5]Such deliberate alliance design means clear instances of entrapment are rare (Kim, 2011; Beckley, 2015).

to particular regions, conflicts, or instances of non-provocation (Leeds, Long and Mitchell, 2000). Conversely, offering unconditional military support indicates more shared foreign policy interests and less fear of entrapment. Under unconditional commitments alliance members hazard the costs of fighting, entrapment or treaty violation in more circumstances, which adds credibility.

Treaty depth offers another way to establish credibile commitments. In a deep alliance, states supplement military support promises with commitments of peacetime cooperation like bases, military aid, policy coordination and formal institutions. For example, Treaty of Lisbon between European Union members reinforces defensive support promises with commitments to a common defense policy and funding a European Defense Agency. Depth adds to the perceived reliability of an alliance by providing opportunities for states to fulfill treaty obligations in peacetime (Morrow, 1994). Implementing deep treaty obligations is a sunk cost signal of commitment. Observing that alliance members adhere to peacetime promises suggests that they will also honor promises of military support.[6]

Therefore, depth and unconditional military support are two options when states want to increase the credibility of their alliance commitments. Here, I identify when states prefer treaty depth to unconditional military support using domestic political institutions, which shape the foreign policy audiences that hold leaders accountable (Hyde and Saunders, 2020).[7] In democracies, voters are leaders' key audience. Because depth has few electoral consequences, but unconditional military support can generate effective criticism by opposition politicians, I expect that alliances with democratic leaders will be more likely to have high depth and conditional military support.

[6]Leeds and Anac (2005) find that alliances with high military institutionalization are less likely to be honored in war, which contradicts my argument that depth increases credibility. This finding has two limitations, however. First, observed challenges to an alliance may indicate lower credibility (Smith, 1995), so there is a selection problem with these estimates, which Leeds and Anac acknowledge. Second, their inferences depend on an ordinal measure of alliance treaty depth that limits variation in depth. When I employ a continuous latent depth measure in Leeds and Anac's model of alliance fulfillment in offense and defensive alliances, the depth coefficient is positive. I find similar results with another model of alliance fulfillment in war using data from Berkemeier and Fuhrmann (2018). See the appendix for details.

[7]Prospective alliance members could also make an arms-length alliance commitment with neither depth nor unconditional military support, or use treaty depth to address time-inconsistency problems with unconditional military support.

2.1 Democratic Alliance Leadership and Alliance Treaty Design

There are three key actors in this argument: incumbent leaders, voters, and opposition politicians. Incumbent leaders are responsible for alliance treaty design and want to remain in office. Voters are the selectorate, or the set of actors from which a potential leader must assemble a coalition of supporters to hold office (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2002). Leaders create a coalition by providing goods to voters, so voters are interested in how foreign policy decisions affect their well-being. I assume that voters have limited foreign policy information and are not especially sophisticated consumers of foreign policy news and arguments.

Opposition politicians want to replace the incumbent in office. In addition office-seeking motivation, the opposition has different domestic and foreign policy preferences, inasmuch as the parties reflect social and ideological cleavages (Leeds, Mattes and Vogel, 2009). Attitudes towards different foreign policy goals and instruments depend on ideology and distributional considerations (Milner and Tingley, 2015; Fordham, 2019). Thus, the opposition may prefer different treaties or no alliance commitments at all, if their ideology discourages international engagement or their constituents do not benefit from alliance participation. To take office and implement their preferred policies, the opposition must convince enough voters that they will provide more and better goods than the incumbent. One way opposition politicians can change who voters support is by informing voters of the costs and consequences of incumbent policies. Effective critiques must overcome voters' limited foreign policy sophistication and clearly connect incumbent policies with voter well-being.

To maintain their standing with voters, leaders can employ policies that reduce exposure to opposition criticism. To this end, democratic leaders may use less transparent policies to achieve their foreign policy goals. Trade policy, where democracies often rely on non-tariff trade barriers, is one example of reduced foreign policy transparency. Kono (2006) argues that democratic leaders use non-tariff barriers instead of tariffs to reduce electoral scrutiny on their policies.[8] Even for

[8]See Rejali (2007) and Stasavage (2004) for two other claims that electoral politics may push democracies to-

economists, the costs of non-tariff barriers are complex and difficult to estimate, so it is difficult for opposition politicians to criticize these trade restrictions. Tariffs, on the other hand, translate directly into consumer prices in ways that are easy to understand and use in short, memorable electoral attacks. The complexity of non-tariff barriers makes them less vulnerable to electoral scrutiny, so democracies engage in "optimal obfuscation" and substitute non-tariff barriers for tariffs.[9]

A similar reliance on less electorally transparent policies leads democracies to design deep alliance treaties. Like any source of alliance credibility, adding depth to alliances is costly, but any costs of these arrangements for voters are hard to express in useful electoral critiques. Treaty depth is complex- it often includes multiple overlapping obligations like bases, joint planning and international organizations. Furthermore, the costs of treaty depth occur in peacetime, making it harder to disentangle from other aspects of peacetime foreign policy. Depth increases a state's foreign obligations, but the exact burden of bases, international institutions and other sources of depth on voters is hard to measure.

Experts do discuss the peacetime costs of alliances, but these debates are not accessible to voters. To use a well-known example, foreign policy professionals in the United States disagree vehemently about the costs of US alliances e.g. (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth, 2013; Posen, 2014; Brands and Feaver, 2017). Cost estimates of US overseas bases alone range from $100 billion (Vine, 2015) to $24 billion. These calculations are further complicated by cost offsets by US partners like South Korea, Japan and Germany, which are notoriously difficult to quantify (Lostumbo et al., 2013). This discussion of the costs and benefits of US alliances in peacetime shows that assessing deep alliances is complicated and uncertain, which makes the costs of treaty depth less transparent for voters.

wards policy obfuscation. Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland (2011) claim that democracies disclose more transparent economic data, however.

[9]Baccini, Dur and Elsig (2015) extend this argument to the design of preferential trade agreements by arguing that democracies are prefer flexible preferential trade agreements regardless of how much trade liberalization is required to ensure that they can respond to protectionist demands.

Democratic leaders can also dampen opposition criticism by selling deep alliances to voters through claims that depth facilitates more efficient defense spending. Kimball (2010) argues that states like democracies with larger minimum winning coalitions may form alliances to "contract out" defense spending and provide more public goods. Leaders can assert that in deep alliances with policy coordination and cooperation, specialization in military capability and efficiency gains will limit increases in defense spending, thereby leaving more resources for other valuable goods. How much deep alliances encourage more efficient defense spending is uncertain, however, so these claims further muddle the cost-benefit calculations.

Due nebulous costs and potential benefits, deep alliances are not useful fodder for electoral criticism. To criticize a deep alliance, opposition politicians must devote substantial time and resources to explaining its consequences to voters. This high cost of informing voters discourages opposition politicians from criticizing treaty depth. Thus, democratic leaders can use treaty depth to generate credible alliance commitments while limiting electoral criticism.

Unconditional military support is a more electorally transparent source of alliance credibility than treaty depth. The costs of unconditional military support are easy for voters to grasp, so opposition politicians can exploit unconditional alliance commitments for electoral advantage. Promising military intervention without any limits increases the risk that voters will bear the costs of fighting in wars on behalf of allies. Automatic obligations of intervention are an easy target for opposition politicians, who can claim that the alliance risks costly entanglement in far-flung conflicts. This is a more memorable and useful critique than an uncertain estimate of the peacetime costs of deep alliances. Voters can understand how an unconditional alliance could lead to wars they would fight in or pay for. Although the costs of unconditional military support are not realized unless the alliance is invoked, they are memorable. When the opposition wants to weaken an incumbent by criticizing alliance commitments, highlighting entrapment concerns is fruitful.[10]

[10]Due to limited foreign policy information and sophistication, voters are unlikely to anticipate the entrapment-violation dilemma in future intervention decisions under unconditional support, and opposition politicians do not need to use this dilemma to undertake effective criticism.

Promises of military support are also salient because military interventions and crises capture public attention. Baum (2002) shows that even otherwise inattentive individuals often receive information about foreign policy crises through entertainment news. As such, alliance obligations that raise the specter of war are more prominent.

Because voters can easily grasp the potential consequences of entrapment through unconditional military support, and pay attention to international conflict, opposition politicians have low costs from using it to criticize incumbents. To avoid opposition criticism, incumbents will avoid making such a transparent and salient alliance commitment. Democratic leaders are therefore less likely to offer unconditional military support in order to manage electoral concerns.

Electoral democracy pushes leaders towards less transparent alliance obligations such as treaty depth. Selecting leaders through elections makes leaders accountable to voters. This in turn creates incentives for opposition politicians to criticize leaders' foreign policy decisions to win over voters. For criticism to work, opposition politicians must also have a meaningful chance of replacing the incumbent (Hyde and Marinov, 2012). Under full electoral democracy, foreign policy decisions can weaken leaders standing with the public, and increase their risk of losing office.

Of course, democracies may not get what they prefer in alliance negotiations. More capable states have greater influence on alliance negotiations (Mattes, 2012*b*), because their partners lose out on foreign policy benefits without their participation. The most capable state is often the alliance "leader," and their preferences carry more weight. Therefore, to understand how democracy shapes alliance treaty design, I conceptualize democratic influence in terms of the political institutions of the most capable alliance member.[11] Increasing electoral democracy in the leading alliance member will lead to deep alliances with conditional obligations.

Because depth is a less transparent form of reassurance to voters, democracies will often design deep alliance treaties. Therefore, electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member at the

[11]Emphasizing the influence of the largest state is further supported by evidence that the preferences of powerful capital-exporting states drive the design of bilateral investment treaties (Allee and Peinhardt, 2014).

time of treaty formation will increase treaty depth.

> TREATY DEPTH HYPOTHESIS: GREATER ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN THE MOST CAPABLE ALLIANCE MEMBER AT THE TIME OF FORMATION WILL INCREASE ALLIANCE TREATY DEPTH.

I also expect that democratic alliance leadership will reduce the probability of unconditional military support, because these obligations are transparent for voters. This second claim complements existing arguments and findings, as Mattes (2012*b*) and Chiba, Johnson and Leeds (2015) both show that democracies are more likely to design conditional alliances. Electoral democracy in the most capable member when the alliance formed should reduce the probability of unconditional military support.

> UNCONDITIONAL MILITARY SUPPORT HYPOTHESIS: GREATER ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN THE MOST CAPABLE ALLIANCE MEMBER AT THE TIME OF FORMATION WILL DECREASE THE PROBABILITY THAT THE ALLIANCE OFFERS UNCONDITIONAL MILITARY SUPPORT.

Mattes (2012*b*) and Chiba, Johnson and Leeds (2015) attribute democratic states' preference for conditional military support to higher audience costs. Audience costs occur when voters punish leaders for violating international commitments, and hold so long as the public is paying attention to the foreign policy issue (Slantchev, 2006; Potter and Baum, 2014) and prefers compliance (Chaudoin, 2014; Kertzer and Brutger, 2016). In this argument, democratic leaders make limited commitments that are easier to fulfill in anticipation of removal from office from violating international commitments.[12] Limiting alliance commitments through conditional military support reduces audience costs because it is easier for democratic leaders to claim that the conditions for

[12]I use the term audience costs to label this argument as it deals with the costs of violating international commitments. See Hyde and Saunders (2020) for a more general framework of domestic constraints on foreign policy.

intervention were not met (Fjelstul and Reiter, 2019), or that new information eliminates intervention obligations (Levendusky and Horowitz, 2012).

The electoral politics argument and audience costs arguments both emphasize voter attitudes, but differ in what voters disapprove of. In an audience costs argument, leaders fear that later treaty violations will weaken their future electoral support, and reason backwards from this to alliance treaty design. Electoral politics emphasizes what alliance commitments leaders can make without jeopardizing their current standing with voters. In the electoral politics argument, voters dislike unconditional military support itself, not a future violation of alliance commitments to avoid entrapment.

Both the audience costs and electoral politics mechanisms could be present in democracies. Once a state makes an alliance commitment, leaders could face audience costs for breaking their commitment, assuming that the public prefers intervention to violation. Electoral politics probably has more weight in alliance treaty design for two reasons. First, immediate electoral concerns are likely more pressing than a longer horizon of future violations during alliance treaty negotiations, especially as leaders discount the future. Alliances have a longer time-horizon than international crisis bargaining, which is the focus of most audience costs research. The longer time frame of alliance politics raises the importance of leadership turnover in democracies. Unlike in a crisis, leaders who design an alliance may not pay the audience costs of violation and may therefore discount future audience costs. Audience costs could even fall to successors from competing political parties. As a result, leaders might make costly alliance commitments to precommit their successors to the alliance (Mattes, 2012*a*). Leadership turnover in democracies threatens international cooperation, because new leaders may have different supporters and preferences (Lobell, 2004; Narizny, 2007; Leeds, Mattes and Vogel, 2009). Leaders could force their successors to pay higher costs for breaking the alliance through unconditional promises of military support or treaty depth.

Second, coming to an agreement that is acceptable to key domestic constituencies is necessary to make a treaty in the first place. In a two-level game with international and domestic constraints

(Putnam, 1988), leaders must find an agreement that satisfies immediate domestic political constraints. This makes future audience costs of violation a secondary concern.

How can we distinguish between the audience costs and electoral concerns mechanisms? Although the two arguments make the same prediction about unconditional military support, they lead to divergent predictions about treaty depth. If voters punish violations of international commitments and democratic leaders fear these audience costs, then democracies should prefer shallow alliances, which are easier to fulfill. Violating deep alliance treaty provisions is another possible source of audience costs, which democratic leaders would anticipate and avoid through shallow commitments. As Chiba, Johnson and Leeds (2015, pg. 980) write, "domestic costs can make democratic states wary of engaging in agreements requiring broad and/or deep cooperation." Though this statement was motivated by the negative relationship between democracy and unconditional obligations, it captures how the audience costs logic might apply to treaty depth. Thus, evidence about the relationship between democracy and treaty depth should differentiate between the future audience costs and electoral politics arguments.

My argument uses electoral politics to explain why democracies often form deep alliances. What about autocracies? There is substantial variation in how autocracies select leaders. For example, in single-party states, leaders rely on support from domestic elites, which affects their foreign policy decisions (Weeks, 2014). Elites in single party states are a smaller and better informed group than the public in democracies, however. In general, no autocratic selectorate has the same limited foreign policy information as a democratic electorate. Single-party and military regime leaders face an informed elite, and personalist leaders rely on a small selectorate. Therefore, assuming that all autocracies are equivalent, relative to democracies is sufficient for testing the electoral politics argument.[13]

I expect that democratic alliance leadership will increase treaty depth and reduce the likeli-

[13]Examining heterogeneity among autocracies in alliance treaty design is an interesting subject for future research, however.

hood of unconditional military support. This argument also provides crucial insight for research design. Because treaty depth and unconditional military support both provide credibility, they are likely correlated. The argument is agnostic about the order in which states choose these credibility sources, as leaders consider both sources of credibility in the course of alliance negotiations. Therefore, the research design uses bivariate models of depth and unconditional support to account for correlations between these two processes. In the next section, I describe my test of the association between democratic alliance leadership and alliance treaty design. I first describe the key variables in the analysis, then provide more detail on the estimation strategy.

3 Research Design

To examine whether democracies prefer deep and conditional alliances, I employ data from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project (Leeds et al., 2002). The analysis focuses on the design of 289 alliances with either offensive or defensive obligations.[14] First, I measure depth and conditions on military support in these alliances with active military support.

I measure treaty depth with a semiparametric mixed factor analysis of eight ATOP variables (Murray et al., 2013). This measurement strategy has two advantages. First, unlike other measures, this approach captures the full spectrum of variation in defense cooperation across alliances. This latent variable approach is more flexible than an ordinal measure (Leeds and Anac, 2005) and more focused on defense cooperation than another latent measure (Benson and Clinton, 2016).[15] Besides matching my conceptualization of treaty depth, the estimator relaxes distributional assumptions about the correlation between the factors and latent variable, making it more flexible and robust than other factor analytic models. Added flexibility from the semiparametric component aside, this model is a standard mixed Bayesian factor analysis. Based on the argument, I fit the model with

[14]Results are robust to adjusting for non-random selection into alliances. See the appendix for details.

[15]See the appendix for results with measures by Leeds and Anac (2005) and Benson and Clinton (2016), which lead to similar inferences. I also discuss the relative advantages of my measure in more detail.

a single latent factor, and the results corroborate this expectation.[16] An eigenvalue decomposition of the posterior mean correlations between the observed variables suggests that one latent factor explains most of the observed variation in the different sources of treaty depth.[17]

My depth measure is essentially a weighted combination of ATOP's defense policy coordination, military aid, peacetime integrated military command, formal organization, companion military agreement, specific contribution, wartime subordination and basing rights variables. The weight of each variable is estimated by the measurement model, so it is driven by the data. All eight variables increase alliance treaty depth, but defense policy coordination and an integrated command add the most to depth, as shown in the top panel of Figure 1. Thus, policy coordination and formal organizational ties are the primary sources of treaty depth.

These factor loadings are sensible. Defense policy coordination, peacetime integrated command structures and formal organizations all draw alliance members into closer peacetime defense cooperation. The other variables do not require as much direct cooperation, with the potential exception of bases. Although bases are costly, they also serve multiple functions and may not require as much direct cooperation. In addition to deterrence and increasing alliance credibility, states often use basing obligations to project power, so bases are used for other purposes besides promoting cooperation between allies, while the other factors provide for more direct cooperation.

The measurement model predicts the treaty depth of each alliance using the factor loadings. The bottom panel of Figure 1 summarizes the posterior distributions of the latent treaty depth measure for every alliance in the data. There is substantial variation in alliance treaty depth. Around half of all alliance treaties have some depth, and depth varies widely across alliances. In the analysis, I measure treaty depth using the mean of the latent depth posterior for each alliance. The posterior mean captures the central tendency of latent treaty depth, and I show in the appendix that results are robust to accounting for uncertainty in the latent measure.

[16] This is a confirmatory factor analysis, not an exploratory analysis.

[17] Also, a model with one latent factor converges, while a model with two factors does not converge. Such model-fitting difficulties can indicate misspecification.

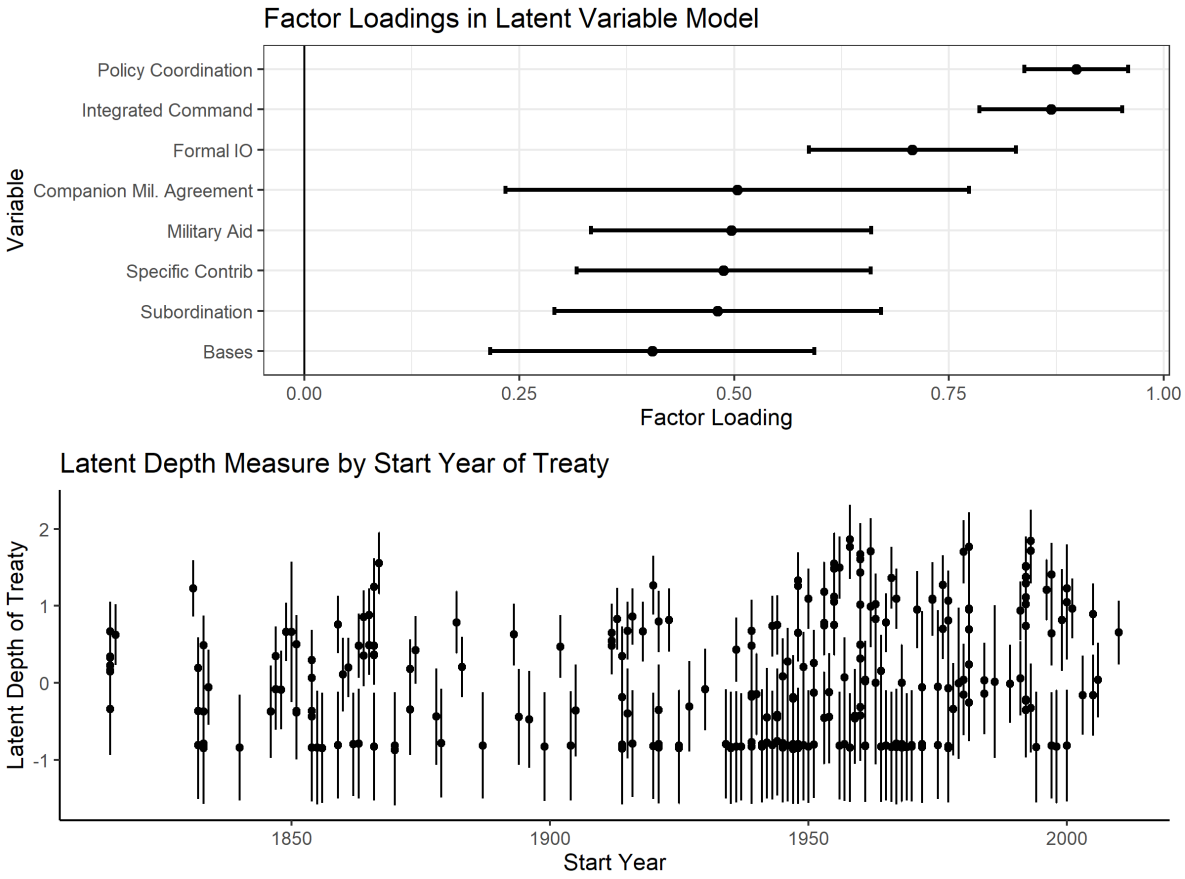

Figure 1: Factor loadings and posterior distributions of the latent alliance treaty depth measure. Estimates from a semiparametic mixed factor analysis of offensive and defensive ATOP alliances from 1816 to 2007.

The other outcome variable is a dummy indicator of unconditional military support. Using ATOP's information on whether defensive or offensive promises are conditional on specific locations, adversaries, or non-provocation, I set this variable equal to one if the treaty placed no conditions on military support. 123 of 289 alliances offer unconditional military support.

The key independent variable is an ordinal indicator of electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member during the year of alliance formation. I use the the Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED) (Skaaning, Gerring and Bartusevičius, 2015) to measure electoral democracy. This ordinal measure assesses the extent of electoral democracy in a country based on six components and ranges from zero to six. States with minimally competitive multiparty elections for executive and legislative roles and universal suffrage have an index score of six. Other states without elections, competition, or suffrage score lower on this scale.[18] I rely on this measure for two reasons. First, unlike some measures of democracy, the LIED scale focuses on electoral democracy, so it measures the key concept of my argument. Furthermore, the order of the scale places competitive elections before full suffrage, in contrast to other measures of electoral democracy, which give participation and electoral institutions equal weight. Widespread participation is only meaningful if leaders face some risk of removal through elections. I then code the alliance leader as the state with the largest composite index of national capabilities (CINC) score (Singer, 1988), and measure their LIED score in the year the alliance formed. The LIED of the most capable state therefore emphasizes the influence of the most capable alliance member and the prevalence of electoral democracy in that state.

Democracy has other components as well, and executive constraints are especially important in foreign policy (Milner and Tingley, 2015). I adjust for executive constraints in the analysis, because constraints are positively associated with electoral democracy. I set an executive constraints dummy equal to one if the executive constraints concept in the Polity data codes a state as having

[18] In the appendix, I report findings with a dummy indicator of whether the most capable state has a LIED score of four or higher in place of the ordinal measure, which produces similar inferences.

executive parity or subordination to other branches of government. 85 of the 289 alliances have such executive constraints on the leader of the most capable state.

3.1 Estimation Strategy

I use several bivariate statistical models to examine how democratic political institutions affect treaty depth.[19] Two factors encourage this research design choice. First, my argument expects that the data-generating processes behind treaty depth and unconditional support are related. Bivariate estimation also accounts for correlated errors because common unobserved factors may affect depth and conditionality (Braumoeller et al., 2018). This modeling approach emulates the seemingly-unrelated regression model of Fjelstul and Reiter (2019), who note that different alliance treaty design decisions are correlated. Independent univariate models assume that alliance treaty design decisions are uncorrelated, if this assumption is violated, biased estimates may result. My approach here is analogous to the well-known bivariate probit model, but it is not fully recursive, because I do not include depth or unconditional military support as endogenous predictors.[20] Instead, this model assumes that states make decisions about depth and conditions on military support at the same time.

To predict unconditional military support, I use a binomial model with a probit link function. Modeling depth is more complicated because the latent measure is skewed. To facilitate model fitting, I rescaled latent depth to range between zero and one and modeled it with a beta distribution.[21] The flexibility of the beta distribution helps predict mean latent depth.[22] The alliance leader democracy measures are the key independent variables in both these model specificaitons.

[19] Bivariate refers to a model means two outcome variables, not a model with one independent and one dependent variable.

[20] A fully recursive model requires two instruments for identification, and valid instruments are hard to find in alliance politics.

[21] I also considered log-logistic, Dagum and inverse Gaussian distributions for the outcome, but AIC and residuals showed that the beta distribution gave the best model fit.

[22] Using a beta distribution for the depth outcome also facilitates fitting models that account for uncertainty in the latent measure, which I include in the appendix. I also include univariate skew-t and skew-cauchy models of treaty depth without any transformation in the appendix, which find broadly similar results.

In the beta and probit models, I control for several correlates of treaty design and democratic institutions of the alliance leader. Key controls include dummy indicators of asymmetric alliances between non-major and major powers and symmetric alliances between major powers (Mattes, 2012*b*)[23] as well as the average threat among alliance members at the time of treaty formation (Leeds and Savun, 2007). I also control for foreign policy similarity using the minimum value of Cohen's κ in the alliance (Häge, 2011). I draw on the ATOP data (Leeds et al., 2002), to adjust for for asymmetric treaty obligations, the number of alliance members and whether any alliance members were at war. To capture the role of issue linkages in facilitating alliance agreements (Poast, 2012), I include a dummy indicator of whether the alliance made any economic commitments.[24] I adjust for a count of foreign policy concessions in the treaty, because concessions facilitate agreement in alliance negotiations (Johnson, 2015). Last, the model accounts for the role of time and the international context by using a non-linear smoothed term for the start year of the alliances to captures shift in the prevalence of deep or unconditional alliances over time.[25]

I use a generalized joint regression model (GJRM) (Braumoeller et al., 2018) to combine the probit and beta specifications in a bivariate model. This flexible estimator takes the probit and beta models and employs non-linear smoothed terms for threat and the start year of the alliance while estimating error term correlations. Adjusting for unobserved correlations between depth and unconditional military support ensures accurate inferences about democracy and other covariates. GJRM uses copulas to model correlated errors in multiple equation models, which makes it more flexible than parametric models and facilitates causal inference. Copulas are distributions over functions, and they relax potentially problematic assumptions about the shape of the correlation in the error terms. Because controlling for error term correlations is crucial for inferences about

[23]This leaves symmetric alliances between major powers as the base category for these two binary variables.

[24]In the appendix, I implement a trivariate model of treaty depth, unconditional military support and issue linkages, because issue linkages also increase treaty credibility (Poast, 2013). This model still finds a positive relationship between electoral democracy and depth.

[25]I also check whether findings about democracy are driven the United States. See the appendix for results with an additional control for U.S. membership, which are similar to the inferences below.

correlated data-generating processes, considering a flexible set of functions to capture the error distributions ensures that the results are not an artifact of parametric assumptions. I fit models with every possible copula, and selected the best-fitting model using AIC, conditional on that estimator having converged.[26] The student-t copula maximizes model fit.

A third equation in the GJRM estimator models heterogeneity in the error term correlations, which is important because depth and unconditional support could be positively correlated in some alliances, and negatively correlated in others. The argument also provides some insight for specifying this part of the model. If electoral democracy induces leaders to use depth in place of unconditional military support, electoral democracy should encourage negative error correlations. Conversely, if executive constraints encourage attempts to precommit successors with costly alliance commitments, constraints should make the error term correlation more positive. Non-democracies might instead forgo both depth and unconditional support, or form alliances where depth complements unconditional obligations. Correlations in unobservable factors between treaty depth and unconditional promises of military spending could also vary with the international context. For example, Kuo (2019) shows how European politics encouraged the proliferation of secret alliances before World War I, and similar processes of emulation and diffusion may operate over time. Last, multilateral alliances are likely to encourage deep and conditional obligations, as members hedge against entrapment and coordinate through treaty depth. Therefore, I use the start year of the alliance, the number of members and democratic institutions to predict. To address the start year of the alliance, I include a smoothed term for the start year of the alliance in the error term equation.

In summary, the GJRM model is a general and flexible way to simultaneously model different aspects of alliance treaty design. Like the measurement model, it uses a semiparametric approach to relax potentially problematic assumptions about the distribution of underlying correlations. It also allows me to model the two outcomes with appropriate distributions. Before presenting in-

[26]GJRM uses maximum likelihood estimation, and diagnostics for the gradient as well as the information matrix suggest that the models behind all inferences in the paper and appendix converged.

ferences from this model, however, I discuss some descriptive statistics. I then use the bivariate GJRM model to estimate how electoral democracy and executive constraints affect alliance treaty design, followed by robustness checks with alternative measures of electoral democracy. The next section summarizes the results.

4 Results

I find that electoral democracy in the most capable alliance member leads to deep and conditional alliance treaties, starting with descriptive statistics. Treaty depth and electoral democracy in the leading alliance member are positively correlated. Moreover, Figure 2 shows that average electoral democracy among the most capable member is greatest among deep and conditional alliances. In Figure 2, each quadrant corresponds to a combination of treaty depth and conditionality. To divide the continuous latent depth measure in two, I classified deep alliances as treaties with a latent depth score above the median value. On average, conditional and deep alliances have the highest electoral democracy in the most capable member. Conversely, unconditional alliances with little depth have low average electoral democracy.

These descriptive results do not adjust for potential confounding factors, however. I now report the results of a bivariate model of depth and unconditional military support in Table 1. This table presents results from both equations of the GJRM.[27]

These estimates are broadly consistent with the argument. As electoral democracy increases, alliance leaders are more likely to form deep alliances, and less likely to offer unconditional military support. Executive constraints has the opposite effect on alliance treaty design. First, I find that executive constraints decrease treaty depth, which may reflect foreign policy constraints by other government actors with more foreign policy information than voters. Second, domestic institutions with executive parity or subordination increase the probability of unconditional military

[27] I mark smoothed terms with the letter s.

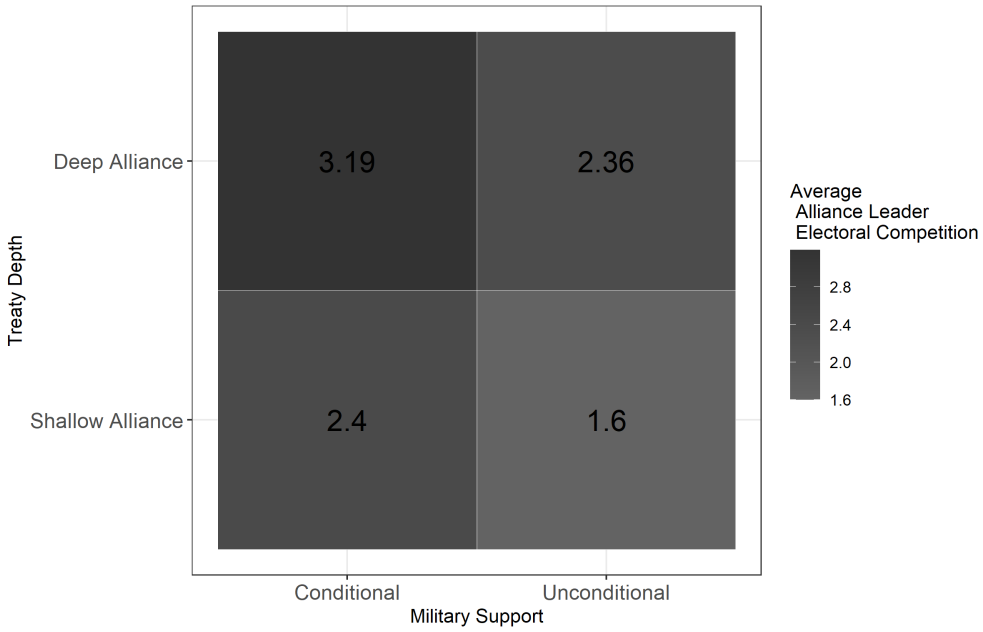

Figure 2: Average electoral democracy score of the most capable member at the time of alliance formation across four groups of alliance from 1816 to 2007. Divisions between alliances based on unconditional military support and treaty depth. Darker quadrants mark higher average electoral democracy for that group of alliances, and the text in each box gives the precise value.

	Uncond. Mil. Support		Latent Depth	
	Estimate	Std. Error	Estimate	Std. Error
Executive Constraints	0.7999527	0.2586244	-0.3261589	0.1899146
Lexical Index of Democracy	-0.1731923	0.0487755	0.0959430	0.0386793
Economic Issue Linkage	0.1285117	0.1690285	-0.1126297	0.1341622
FP Concessions	-0.0825892	0.0795391	0.0128694	0.0661751
Number of Members	-0.1392637	0.0233697	0.0316344	0.0141233
Wartime Alliances	-0.6912033	0.1836950	-0.0377874	0.1687670
Asymmetric Obligations	-0.1901903	0.1890448	0.2844494	0.1724515
Asymmetric Capability	1.5219549	0.2982458	0.5252695	0.2170661
Non-Major Only	2.2484581	0.3068160	0.1044143	0.2083990
FP Disagreement	0.4266455	0.2313056	0.3240165	0.2014606
s(Mean Threat)	7.7478269	124.7478875	1.0000048	24.9656885
s(Start Year)	6.4781470	129.9064357	4.9620243	33.8646476
(Intercept)	-1.4686890	0.3025291	-1.4048811	0.2724714

Table 1: Results from joint generalized regression model of treaty depth and unconditional military support in offensive and defensive alliances from 1816 to 2007. All smoothed terms report the effective degrees of freedom and the chi-squared term. The unconditional military support model is a binomial GLM with a probit link function. The treaty depth model is a beta regression. I model the error correlation between the two processes with a T copula.

support.

Inferences about the control variables in this model are also interesting. More alliance members and asymmetric capability both increase depth. Asymmetric alliances and symmetric non-major power alliances are more likely to include unconditional military support than symmetric major power alliances. I also find that alliances with more members or a member at war when the treaty formed have a lower probability of unconditional military support. Last, threat and the year of alliance formation increase unconditional military support and treaty depth, largely in a non-linear fashion.

To assess the substantive impact of elections, I estimated the difference between different levels of electoral democracy and no democracy using simulated coefficient vectors from the model. In the scenarios, I held all other variables at their mode or median and set executive constraints to one. I then varied the lexical index of electoral democracy across its full range and predicted treaty depth in seven hypothetical alliances. Figure 3 plots the difference in predicted treaty depth or

the probability of unconditional military support between six hypothetical alliances ranging from nominal to full electoral democracy and a baseline scenario with no democratic institutions.

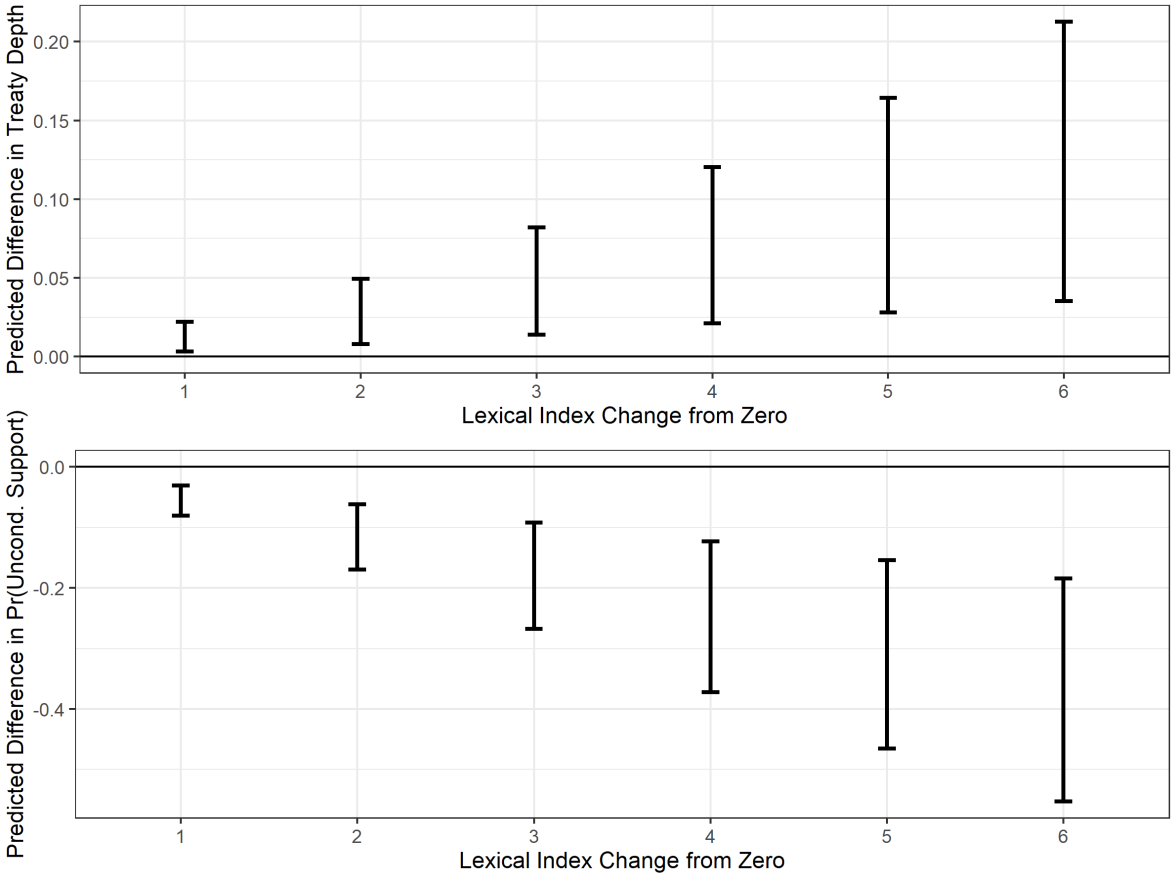

Figure 3: Predicted difference in treaty depth and the probability of unconditional military support relative to a hypothetical alliance where the most capable state has no electoral democracy. Each scenario plots the estimated difference in treaty depth. All other variables held at their mean or median, expect for executive constraints, which is equal to one.

Greater electoral democracy has a clear substantive impact on alliance treaty depth and the probability of unconditional military support. Moving from no elections to a lexical index score of three, where a states has legislative and executive elections, adds between .01 and .08 to treaty depth, and decreases the probability of unconditional military support by between .09 and .28. Full electoral democracy has a larger effect on both depth and unconditional military support. Alliances where the most capable state has full electoral democracy have between .04 and .21 more depth,

all else equal. The decrease in the probability of unconditional military support is more uncertain, as it ranges from near -.18 to -.55. As rescaled depth and the probability of unconditional support both range between zero and one, these are meaningful substantive effects, though the magnitude of the electoral democracy effect is very uncertain.

Figure 3 shows that the extent of electoral democracy affects alliance treaty design. When alliance leaders face electoral scrutiny, they are more inclined to form deep alliances with conditional military support. The above results depend in part on correlated errors between depth and unconditional support. In the GJRM model, the error term correlations are a function of democratic institutions and the international context. I now describe inferences about the error term correlations between treaty depth and unconditional military support.

Contrary to my expectations, democratic institutions do not shape the magnitude and direction of the error term correlations between treaty depth and unconditional military support. Table 2 summarizes the estimates from the error term equation, which uses a smoothed term for the start year of the alliance and democratic institutions to predict the unobserved correlations between depth and unconditional military support. These estimates are on the scale of a parameter θ which captures the strength of the association of the errors. Both democratic institution coefficients are in the expected direction, but neither can be reliability distinguished from zero. Instead, the smoothed term for start years indicates that the relationship between depth and unconditional military support varies widely over time. The number of members also has a negative effect on the error correlations. The results in Table 2 suggest that the error term correlation is not a fixed quantity. Rather, changes in the international context shape how treaty depth and unconditional military support are connected in alliance treaty design.

I find that increasing the lexical index of electoral democracy increases depth but decreases unconditional military support. There are other ways to operationalize electoral democracy, however. I now show that my results are largely robust to changing the measure of electoral democracy.

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	p-value
Executive Constraints	0.8190942	0.6836838	1.1980601	0.2308936
Electoral Democracy	-0.0179937	0.1299139	-0.1385048	0.8898415
Number of Members	-0.0280371	0.0300563	-0.9328195	0.3509132
s(Start Year)	7.9076932	8.4816153	62.2854436	0.0000000
Intercept	-0.3042886	1.3288257	-0.2289906	0.8188762

Table 2: Error term correlation equation estimates from a joint generalized regression model of treaty depth and unconditional military support. Estimates are on the scale of θ, which is then converted into a Kendall's τ correlation coefficient.

4.1 Alternative Measures of Electoral Competition

Other democracy measures emphasize the presence of open and competitive elections. As such, these measures should generate similar inferences about the connection between democratic institutions and alliance treaty design. In this section, I assess three such measures, including one that conceptualizes democratic influence in terms of the proportion of alliance members with high electoral democracy.

The first measure of electoral competition is an dummy measure based on the Polity data's executive recruitment concept. When the most capable alliance member has competitive elections, I set this dummy variable to one, and zero otherwise. 72 alliances have a leader with electoral competition, according to the Polity criteria.

The other measure of electoral democracy builds off of the concept of polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), which includes both contestation and electoral inclusiveness. Polyarchy relies on both the opportunity and freedom of actors to compete in elections for leadership, as leaders must address voters' preferences to avoid being removed from office. It places more weight on inclusive participation in politics beyond elections than the lexical index of democracy, however. To measure polyarchy, I use the polyarchy measure of electoral democracy from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Teorell et al., 2016). As with the lexical index of democracy, I measure polyarchy in the most capable alliance member in the year the treaty formed.

I then fit the same bivariate models of treaty depth and unconditional military support, and

replaced the lexical index of electoral democracy with the polity and polyarchy measures. I also changed the copulas if needed to maximize model fit and added a dummy indicator of open political competition from the Polity data to the polity model, because such competition is positively correlated with electoral recruitment of leaders. All of these models retain the executive constraints variable from Polity, as this variable is correlated with electoral competition and alliance treaty design.

As a further check, I translated my electoral democracy measure into an alternative conceptualization of democratic influence— the proportion of democracies in the alliance. Chiba, Johnson and Leeds (2015) use the proportion of democracies as their key independent variable, and code this variable as the share of alliance members with a Polity score above 5 when the alliance formed. A greater proportion of electoral democracies should also increase alliance treaty depth, as democratic concerns have more weight, and the leading state is more likely to be democratic. I express the proportion of electoral democracies as the share of alliance members with a score of four or higher on the electoral index of democracy. I also control for the share of alliance members with executive constraints. Because democracies cooperate more with one another (Leeds, 1999), the proportion measures are positively correlated with the democratic institutions of the most capable alliance member.

In Figure 4, I plot the substantive impact of moving from the minimum to the maximum of the two electoral competition measures and the proportion of alliance members with high electoral democracy. As in Figure 3, these substantive effect calculations hold all other variables in the model constant, and I fix executive constraints to one. Each figure in the plot contains three estimates— the predicted outcome with the key independent variable at its minimum value, the same predictions with the variable at its maximum, and the difference between the two scenarios.

Results with proportion of alliance members that have high electoral democracy partially match my hypotheses. The predicted difference in treaty depth between the low and high extent of electoral competition among alliance members ranges between .03 and .34. More alliance mem-

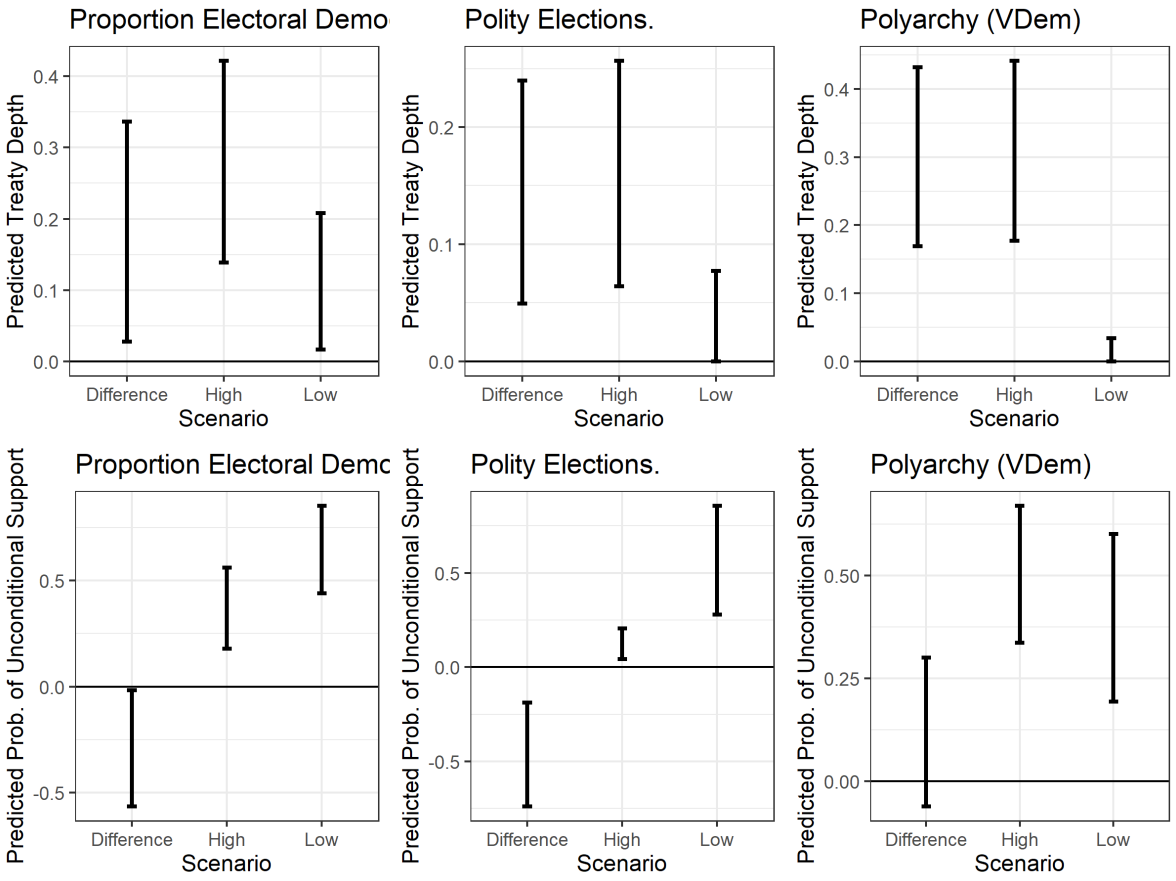

Figure 4: Predicted treaty depth and probability of unconditional military support in offensive and defensive alliances from 1816 to 2007, all else equal besides an indicator of electoral competition. For each measure of electoral democracy, this figure shows the estimated treaty depth or probability of unconditional military support when electoral democracy is at maximum or minimum, along with the difference between the two scenarios.

bers with high electoral democracy is also consistent with a reduced probability of unconditional military support.

Inferences about the association between the polity measure of electoral competition and alliance treaty design are also consistent with the argument that elections lead to greater alliance treaty depth. Moving from no electoral competition to competition increases depth by between .03 and .24, which is a large effect relative to the range of rescaled treaty depth. The same shift in electoral competition reduces the probability of unconditional military support by between .2 and .74, so the magnitude of that effect is more uncertain.

The Varieties of Democracy polyarchy measure gives slightly different inferences. As expected, greater electoral democracy increases treaty depth by between .17 and .43. There is no clear difference in the probability of unconditional military support, however. The polyarchy coefficient behind these substantive estimates is positive, but not clearly so. This finding could be explained by the way the Varieties of Democracy project weights freedom of information and association, as well as electoral competition and suffrage. The polyarchy measure is a complicated weighted average that penalizes weaknesses in freedom of information and association for electoral democracy more than other measures. Thus, polyarchy places more weight on political participation in general than the other measures of electoral democracy. Aggregation choices in composite indicators of democracy may therefore affect overall inferences about the relationship between democracy and institutional design.[28]

The results of these statistical models imply that democratic institutions impact alliance treaty design. Electoral competition pushes alliances members to employ treaty depth, but reduces the probability of unconditional military support. To illustrate the theoretical process more directly, I now examine the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

[28] See the appendix for results with the Polity measure of democracy, which are broadly consistent with my findings here.

4.2 NATO Treaty Design

I use NATO to show the theoretical mechanisms for two reasons. First, the process behind NATO applies to multiple alliances, as other US alliance treaties have similar designs. Second, NATO is the most important alliance in international politics, as it has a crucial role in the structure of international relations by tying the United States to Europe. Because NATO is an exceptionally durable and consequential alliance, understanding how the treaty formed is worthwhile.

After World War II, the United States sought a way to protect Europe from the USSR. Despite acute security concerns, criticism from opposition politicians led the United States to offer conditional military support. As Poast (2019) details, NATO members disagreed over how to define the North Atlantic area, especially with reference to France's Algerian colony and Italy, as the North Atlantic area was a key condition on military support. Furthermore, active military support from NATO members depends on domestic political processes.[29] Isolationists in the US Senate feared that an alliance would force automatic intervention, bypassing the power of Congress to declare war and engaging the US in unwanted conflicts (Acheson, 1969, pg. 280-1). Therefore, Article V of the NATO treaty states that if one member is attacked the others "will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, *such action as it deems necessary* (emphasis mine)." Military support was and is not guaranteed by Article V, and US policymakers used this limited commitment to sell NATO to the public. In a March 1949 press release to the public, Secretary of State Dean Acheson said that Article V "does not mean that the United States would automatically be at war if one of the nations covered by the Pact is subject to armed attack" (Acheson, 1949). This claim and the emphases of the press release show that promises of military support were salient to the US public, which was a key rationale for limited promises of military support.

Military support from Article V did not assuage European fears that if the Soviets invaded, the United States would abandon them. To increase the credibility of NATO, the United States took

[29] Benson (2012) calls this commitment a "probablistic" obligation.

other measures. A 1951 presentation by Dean Acheson to Dwight Eisenhower argued that European allies "fear the inconstancy of United States purpose in Europe. ... These European fears and apprehensions can only be overcome if we move forward with determination and if we make the necessary full and active contribution in terms of both military forces and economic aid" (Acheson, 1951, pg. 3). To start, the US supported the Atlantic Council, an international organization and the main source of depth in the NATO treaty. The United States used the Atlantic Council to coordinate collective defense and increase the perceived reliability of the alliance. By investing in the Atlantic Council and related joint military planning, the United States addressed European fears of abandonment. For example, US officials thought that the British Foreign Minister viewed US provision of a supreme commander in Europe as "a stimulus to European action" in NATO (Acheson, 1950).

Policymakers then used defense cooperation with allies to justify NATO participation by arguing that it would facilitate more efficient defense spending. In an interview with NBC on March 29, Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup argued that "One defense program is cheaper and more effective than a dozen national programs. It entails the pooling of information, a joint defense strategy and a pooling of military resources for defense." This claim was meant to assuage concerns that NATO would reduce the US "peace dividend" after World War II.

NATO also illustrates that executive constraints might limit treaty depth. Many Senators also opposed military aid to Europe (Acheson, 1969, pg 285). Thus, legislative constraints on the executive branch reduced the formal depth of NATO relative to what many ambassadors preferred (Acheson, 1969, pg 277), which matches the statistical inference about executive constraints and treaty depth. Bilateral agreements on troop deployments thus became another instrument of reassurance. In 1950 the Germans formally requested clarification on whether an attack on US forces in Germany would be treated as an armed attack on the United States- and US policymakers said that it would (Acheson, 1969, pg. 395). These bilateral arrangements and basing rights are not

covered in the NATO treaty, but they added substantial depth.[30]

In NATO, electoral concerns and anticipation of opposition criticism led the United States to offer conditional military support, but did not inhibit deep military cooperation, which helped reassure European allies. Limits on the promises of military support were a salient part of public discussions in the NATO treaty, while the Atlantic Council had a smaller role in public discourse, and policymakers attempted to sell such cooperation as source of efficient defense spending. The Atlantic Council and associated bureaucracy are the formal core of substantial defense cooperation. NATO negotiations show how a democratic alliance leader used treaty depth to reassure their allies, rather than unconditional military support. In the next section, I summarize some implications of the results and offer concluding thoughts.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

In summary, the findings from the statistical models generate fairly consistent evidence for the hypotheses, and the NATO illustration suggests that the theoretical mechanisms are plausible. Across multiple models and measures, electoral democracy is positively correlated with treaty depth. Because depth is a less transparent source of alliance credibility, democratic leaders use depth to increase the credibility of alliance commitments, while avoiding more transparent credibility sources like unconditional military support.

My argument and evidence have two limitations. First, I only examine variation in formal treaty design. This omits treaty implementation, which can diverge from the formal commitment. Formal treaty depth often reflects practical depth, but it may understate some differences between alliances. Changes in realized alliance depth are a useful subject for future inquiry, but will require extensive data collection. Second, I examine 280 alliances, so the sample size is limited. Inferences from small samples can be more sensitive to model and data changes.

[30] This reveals a potential limitation of the statistical models.

Shortcomings aside, this paper has four implications for scholarship. First, alliance treaty design is often driven by domestic political considerations. Attempts to remain in office and avoid opposition criticism in electoral politics encourage democratic leaders to design deep alliance treaties with conditional promises on military support.

Second, different aspects of alliance treaty design are related (Fjelstul and Reiter, 2019). As states attempt to make credible alliance commitments, they can employ a range of treaty obligations. Furthermore, the connection between depth and unconditional support varies with the international context. Thus, studying individual aspects of alliance treaty design in isolation leads to incomplete portrayals of the treaty design process.

Third, democracies do not make fully limited alliance commitments with conditional obligations and no depth. Even if democracies impose conditions on military support, treaty depth adds costly obligations. As a result, democracies make robust alliance commitments in one way, and limited commitments in another.

Last, some of the lessons from this work might apply to the design on international institutions in general (Downs and Rocke, 1995; Martin and Simmons, 1998; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001; Thompson, 2010). In the same way that democracies use depth to support allies while managing electoral politics, democracies may undertake deep international commitments in ways that limit electoral scrutiny. The same mix of limited core obligations and deep cooperation may characterize other international institutions with democratic leadership.

The findings raise at least two questions for future research. For one, they address debates about whether democracies make more credible commitments. Even if conditional military support reduces the credibility of democratic alliances, treaty depth has the opposite effect. The net effect of democracy on alliance credibility therefore includes conditions on military support, treaty depth, and the direct effect of democratic institutions and domestic politics. These three mechanisms may have competing or conditional effects, which could explain mixed findings about the credibility of democratic commitments (Schultz, 1999; Leeds, 1999; Thyne, 2012; Downes and

Sechser, 2012; Potter and Baum, 2014). Future research should combine the components of democracy and democratic alliances to asses the net effect of democracy on credible commitment in international relations.

Scholars should also consider how alliance treaty design varies across different types of autocracies. The extent and sources of political competition in autocracies varies widely. Differences in who selects leaders and what information those actors have about foreign policy (Weeks, 2008) may help explain alliance treaty design. For example, personalist leaders with few public or elite constraints on their foreign policy may design alliances with depth and unconditional military support. Single party states where leaders face an informed elite may prefer fully limited commitments with shallow and conditional obligations.

In conclusion, electoral democracy encourages democracies to use treaty depth to increase the credibility of their alliances. Deep alliances reassure democracies' alliance partners while limiting electoral criticism of alliances. By shaping leaders' foreign policy audiences, domestic political institutions influence how states build credibility into alliance treaties.

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