Birds of a Feather

DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND ALLIANCE CHOICES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

RANDOLPH M. SIVERSON
University of California, Davis
JULIANN EMMONS
University of California, Los Angeles

An examination of the alliance choices of democratic states between 1920 and 1939 and between 1946 and 1965 is undertaken to answer the question, do democracies have a tendency to ally with each other more than they ought to according to probability? The analysis of the data indicates that during the first period there was an initial tendency for democratic states to ally with each other at a higher rate than probability indicates should have been the case, but that the overall level of democratic alliances decreased as the rate of their existing alliances dissolved and democracies sought other types of partners. During the period from 1946 to 1965 alliances between democracies were formed and maintained at much higher rates than probability indicates should have been the case. Further analysis demonstrates that this effect is probably not significantly affected by either the effects of previous wartime alliances or geography.

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations.

— *Woodrow Wilson*
War Message, April 2, 1917

The goal of this research is to add to our understanding of the relationship between democratic political systems and their foreign policies. More spe-

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cifically, we seek to advance a partial explanation for the improbable lack of warfare among nations with democratic political systems. After briefly reviewing the existing empirical research on the lack of war among democracies, we will turn our attention to another aspect of foreign policy, amity. We demonstrate that in the period from 1920 to 1965, and particularly between 1946 and 1965, democracies have been biased toward each other in their alliance choices. We conclude with speculation about the source of this bias and its consequences.

WAR AND DEMOCRACY

The idea that democracies might be more pacific in their foreign policies is widely recognized to have originated with Kant's idea of a "perpetual peace" among nations with republican forms of government. According to Kant: "If the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise" (Kant 1970).

However, as Doyle (1983) explains, it is not just the constraints of the citizens that curtail war, but it is also the respect for international law that grows from the constitutional laws governing republican regimes: "Domestically just republics, which rest on consent, presume foreign republics to also be consensual, just, and therefore deserving of accommodation" (Doyle 1983, 230).

There are a few aspects of this line of thought that merit brief consideration. First, as it has now become recognized, there is relatively little empirical support for any broad assertion that democracies are generally more peaceful than other forms of government. For example, several early studies of the relationship between democracy and war involvement failed to find any pattern that distinguished democracies from other forms of government in their war behavior (Haas 1965; Small and Singer 1976; Chan 1984; and Weede 1984); that is, democratic nations had about the same level and type of war involvement as did other types of political systems. Democratic political systems were not noticeably less likely to fight in wars, nor were they, in general, less inclined to initiate wars than other types of political systems.

The second observation is a refinement of the first. Whatever their overall rate of war participation, it is now fairly clear that democracies are strongly disinclined to have wars against each other. The strongest, clearest most extensive data in support of this observation are found in a recent paper by Maoz and Abdolali (1989). Using several careful, well-explicated research

designs, they explore the impact of democratic political systems upon war participation across several levels of analysis. Many of their findings are consistent with earlier research on the broad patterns of democracy and war involvement, but their finding that is of most interest in the present inquiry is that, despite differences in time period and power, democratic political systems not only tend to have fewer disputes between themselves than probability indicates they "ought to," but they actually fight wars with each other at a rate of zero. It has been argued that democratic political systems are sufficiently rare in the international system that their probability of going to war against each other should be low (Mearsheimer 1990). Such an argument appears incorrect, because the marginals of Table 3.1.4 (p. 22) in Maoz and Abdolali's (1989) article indicate that probabilistically there should have been somewhere around 16 wars between the democracies in the data set.

Finally, there is evidence that democratic political systems are growing in number. Although the increase has been irregular and subject to some reversals (and could certainly be reversed again in the future), Gurr's (1974) basic data on polity persistence indicate that there has been a long-run increase in the number of democratic political systems between 1640 and 1972, the period covered by his data set. More recent data, collected by Freedom House (Gastil 1989), using different criteria than those of Gurr, also depict an increasing number of democratic nations.

Another related feature of the findings of Maoz and Abdolali (1989) merits attention. From their data it is apparent that although democracies do indeed have militarized disputes with each other, their Tables 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 (p. 22) demonstrate that the disputes do not escalate to wars of sufficient magnitude to be included in the Correlates of War data. More specifically, not one of the 73 serious disputes between democracies eventuates in a war with more than 1,000 battle fatalities. Moreover, although these disputes are present, they are significantly less frequent at every level of conflict than probability indicates they ought to be.[1] In short, democratic nations seem to have particular ability to manage conflicts among themselves so that disputes have outcomes less than significant war.[2]

1. What we mean by "ought to be" is very simply that expected value for the democratic versus democratic conflicts under the chi-square statistic is consistently larger than the observed value.

2. To be sure, it has been argued that the absence of war among democracies is not an accurate description of the facts. For example, Mearsheimer (1990) argues that Wilhelmine Germany was either democratic or quasidemocratic. To be sure, Germany had a relatively free press and an elected legislature, the *Reichstag*, but that body was ineffectual in controlling the executive. *Imperial* government was vested in the hands of the Chancellor, who was appointed by the Emperor. Although Chancellors often sought to build legislative coalitions, they could govern

Is this really so? Is the conflict behavior of democratic nations different toward other democratic nations because of the nature of their political institutions or is it due to something else? At least one line of reasoning argues that the lack of warfare among democracies is not related to their form of government, but rather to the fact that most democracies are subject to the hegemony of the United States, bringing about a sort of *pax Americana* (Weede 1987). This argument is certainly not implausible. To the extent the United States is concerned with maintaining a viable coalition to deter or contain the Soviet Union, it necessarily must have a high interest in preserving relative peace among its allies. Still, there are certain empirical problems with this argument. First, Maoz and Abdolali (1989) record no war between democracies for the considerable period of time prior to the point the United States began to participate significantly in world politics. Second, none of the United States' *democratic* allies have fought each other in the era of American hegemony, but nondemocratic allies of the United States have fought wars and, more significantly, a major war was undertaken by Argentina against the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands. Further, even when the United States was a regional hegemon it was unable to restrain wars among nations within the region, for example, the Chaco War and several wars in Central America early in this century. Finally, not all of the world's democracies are allies of the United States (e.g., Sweden, Austria, India, Ireland, Finland), and, to some degree, these nations might be regarded as beyond the enforcement of hegemony. Only one of these nations has fought in a war recently and that was democratic India against nondemocratic Pakistan. In view of the above, it is a little difficult to explain the absence of war as the result of only the extension of United States' hegemony.[3]

AMITY AND ALLIANCE

Here we examine the question of democracy and war from a slightly different point of view and look not at conflict, but at amity. Is it possible that

without the support of the *Reichstag* and sometimes did. Moreover, the German Empire was dominated by Prussia, which had about two-thirds of the population of Germany. Prussia had a complicated three-tier electoral system that effectively limited the effects of political participation. Also note that the Prussian Minister of the Army was the Imperial Minister of the Army. For a description of Germany's political system prior to World War I, see Wehler (1985).

3. It may be of interest to note that Spain was not allowed into NATO, presumably an instrument of American hegemony, until a democratic government was installed after the death of Franco and the subsequent constitutional changes. This argument will not go too far, because Portugal was a long time member of NATO and decidedly nondemocratic in its politics.

democracies fight less because they have less to fight over? Put differently, do democratic states have foreign policy positions sufficiently similar to each other that conflict is less likely to begin with, and if it does occur, less likely to escalate? Is less bargaining necessary to close the gap in the policy positions between them than is necessary between democracies and other types of political systems?

International disputes occur when nations have conflicts of interest that they are willing to pursue against the other party. If the policy positions of two parties are not greatly different, then it may be possible for relatively modest concessions or adjustments to resolve the problem. In addition, it is possible that if the nations recognize their common policy positions on more important issues than those in dispute, the minor differences may never be raised for fear of damaging the larger areas of agreement.

Several theories of foreign policy assign significance to the nature of a nation's political system as a determinant of its foreign policy. For example, Rosenau's (1966) typology of comparative foreign policy assigns importance to whether a nation's political system is "open" or "closed"; from Rosenau's discussion it is not difficult to see that by "open" he has in mind relatively democratic or polyarchic political systems.

Additionally, there are indirect suggestions that democracies have common foreign policy interests. For example, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Deutsch et al. 1957) is written as if the democratic political systems of that area had a natural set of shared interests. Ray (1989) evokes similar assumptions, but more explicitly, when he discusses the possibility of a democratic security community, a topic to which we now turn.

How can we measure the extent to which democracies actually have similar policy positions? Any nation's foreign policy is, of course, composed of positions on many issues, all of which could require separate measurement. Here we focus on a single indicator of foreign policy, national security, a policy arena often regarded as being of either singular or overriding importance. This is particularly true of *realpolitik*, where the security concerns of the nation are usually seen as dominating all others.

In the international system, nations typically have two ways of managing their national security.[4] First, they may rely on themselves and, in the face of

4. There is at least one other method by which nations try to gain security. They may choose to isolate themselves by deliberately reducing their contact with other nations either operationally or politically. Sometimes isolation may be provided by geography, as in the case of the United States throughout most of the nineteenth century. However, in a world which transportation technology has made smaller, isolation is usually pursued by such things as restricting or reducing trade, technology transfers, and cultural exchanges and memberships in intergovern-

an uncertain environment, choose to augment their armaments so as to provide more security. Second, if decision makers face a substantial threat and/or the amount of internal resources available for adding to their military is constrained, they may seek to ally themselves with other nations whose interests they share. It is commonly recognized that alliances indicate a community of interest, but it is less commonly recognized that this community of interest may signify common foreign policy positions. This is particularly true of military alliances, where commitment to an alliance may often entail risk as well as security (Altfeld 1984).

What do theories of alliance formation say about the impact of domestic political structures on the predispositions of nations to ally with each other? In terms of traditional theories having their roots in realpolitik or balance-of-power concepts, the answer to this question is, remarkably little. The same is true of more recent theories derived from game-theoretic concepts. Theories derived from the realpolitik tradition deal with alliance formation by stressing the overriding importance of power in the pursuit of security (Osgood 1968; Liska 1962; Morganthau 1959). When a theorist indicates that domestic political arrangements may have a role in alliance policy, it is commonly related to the need for internal political stability (Liska 1962). It is relatively unusual for traditional theories to assert directly that either domestic political institutions or ideology have an important role in alliance formation, and even rarer for democracies to be singled out as having a significant affinity for each other's policies. Some theorists have gone so far as to deny the effect of shared values, national attributes, or political systems in the formation of alliances. Consider the following from Liska (1962, 11-12): "Alliances are formed primarily for security rather than out of a sense of community." Liska, however, is willing to admit that similarities between states may have a role in alliance formation, but only insofar as these can be used by elites to justify an alliance domestically (pp. 61-62). Given the general tenor of traditional theories, it is probably not going too far to say that realpolitik models would be undermined to some degree by a finding that shared democratic institutions significantly influence alliance choices between states.

Although these traditional theories have continued in various ways to shape a considerable amount of alliance theory, some more recent theorizing

mental organizations (K. Holsti 1982). The number of nations choosing this policy is usually small relative to the other choices which are made. Note, however, the number of democracies that have chosen to be politically neutral (e.g., Sweden, India, Austria), with Switzerland going so far as to refuse to join some international organizations where sides are taken along political lines.

and observations suggest that shared values and institutions may play a role in alliance formation and duration. There are, in general, two explanations for this. The first, perhaps best articulated by Dinerstein (1965) and Osgood (1968), is that security concerns still predominate in the alliance choices of states, but that the lines of cleavage separating the members of the international system have become ideological. Consequently, the sources of threat to various states have become constant rather than constantly shifting as they did in the balance of power era.

Second, a more refined version of this line of theory is found in Russett's (1968) attempt to draw on small group research in social psychology to delineate the conditions under which sociocultural similarities will increase the chances for an alliance between nations. Russett's research here is speculative rather than definitive, but he posits that in alliance choices power and similarity variables will interact with each other so that, for example, peacetime alliances emphasizing the production of public good through mutual cooperation will more likely be influenced by similarity than wartime alliances with a zero-sum payoff.

What is the evidence on the manner in which nations make choices? There is relatively little systematic evidence on this point and that which exists is fairly fragmentary. In looking at major power alliance choices between 1816 and 1913, Duncan and Siverson (1982) found that a model of sequential random choice (i.e., there were no special, enduring relationships between nations) fit the observed data quite well. But they also noted the existence of a modest perturbation in which the United Kingdom and France, the two most democratic major power regimes over this period, had a slight tendency to ally more than they should have when measured against the baseline. Russett's (1971) investigation of alliance partners in the period from 1920 to 1957 indicates that several shared national characteristics, such as a common religion and racial stock, played a role in shaping choices, but the data did not include variables which would capture similarities of political systems.[5]

Given this perspective, we wish to inquire whether or not democracies have a tendency to ally with one another more than probability indicates they "ought to." There is, in other words, a null hypothesis stating that alliances among democratic nations should be equal to their random probability of forming.

5. Although the data are relatively crude, an earlier analysis by Tuene and Synnestvedt (1965) speculates that democratic nations may have a general tendency to enter into alliances with each other.

THE DATA

In order to explore the relationship between democratic political systems and alliance choices it was initially necessary to use only two types of data, both of which are generally available. First, for each nation we need to determine its type of political system. For this purpose we draw on Gurr's (1974) typology of nations. Gurr divided nations into the following types: highly democratic, democratic, anocratic, highly anocratic, autocratic, or highly autocratic. This classification reflects a polity's average score on a number of regime characteristics, including executive selection and independence, level of political competition, bureaucratic centralization, and scope of government. In the following analysis we have collapsed these regime types into two categories: (1) nations that are either democratic or highly democratic and (2) all others.

No doubt, these categorizations of polity type do not fully assess changes in regime on the perceptions of other states, which is fundamental to a complete theory of international foreign policy identification and alignment. There are, however, two factors which render this situation less problematic than it might be otherwise. First the alliances formed during the time periods covered in this study, which we will identify below, are almost exclusively among those nations that have remained more or less politically stable throughout those periods. Second, sensitive to the problem of inaccurate measurement of political type, we tested Gurr's data against Bollen's (1980) annual data measuring democracy on a functionally continuous scale (i.e., 1-100). For the two years contained in Bollen's data (i.e., 1960 and 1965), the correlations between these data and Gurr's is fairly high (1960: $r = .82$; 1965: $r = .83$). Because Bollen's data reflect the extent to which a nation may be considered democratic rather than whether or not it is actually a democracy or not, we regressed Gurr's measures on Bollen's, which yielded a significant slope ($p < .001$) for both years (1960: $b = .068$; 1965: $b = .067$), with little error in predicting Gurr's measures from Bollen's.

The second data set we use is the Singer and Small alliance list compiled for the Correlates of War project. The alliances included in the data are those between recognized nations which are written and have been ratified. This last point is particularly pertinent because in a democracy, treaty ratification typically, but probably not universally, requires some form of broad political agreement, such as legislative approval.[6]

6. Because the alliances contained in this data all involve mutual pledges, such unilateral promises as the British guarantee of Belgian territory or the Japanese-American Security Agreement are not included.

In order to determine if democracies allied with each other more than they ought to, it was necessary to determine the baseline to which the democratic dyads that formed alliances could be compared. The method of doing this is fairly simple, as is the model from which it is generated. We are interested in whether or not democracies choose other democracies more than they should according to probability. When a democracy enters into an alliance, it may join into partnership with either another democracy or a nondemocracy. Using dyads as the units of analysis (so as not to violate the independence assumption that would be involved in looking at the choice of each nation), for each year in which a democracy entered an alliance, we determine the total number of nations (as given in Small and Singer 1982) and the total number of democracies (as given by Gurr).[7] From these two numbers it was easily possible to find the total number of possible democratic dyads that could form and the total number of possible mixed dyads (i.e., democratic with nondemocratic).[8] Then we determine the percentage of democratic dyads of the total of democratic dyads and mixed dyads. Turning to the alliance list, we determine the total number of democratic and mixed dyads, the number of allied democratic dyads and then the democratic dyads as a percentage of that total. Other things being equal, the percentage of allied democratic dyads should be very close to the percentage of democratic dyads in the population of nations. For example, if there are 100 nations, 10 of which are democracies, there would be 945 possible democratic and mixed dyads of which 45 would be democratic and 900 mixed. Consequently, the baseline against which actual democratic alliance choices should be compared is 4.8% of the dyads (i.e., 45 of 945).[9]

7. The two lists of nations were not identical. Gurr's list contained a few nations not present in the Small and Singer list. In these instances, because alliance is our dependent variable, we eliminated the cases not contained in the latter's data.

8. As noted, we record all alliances as pairs. Consequently, if four nations formed a single alliance, we decomposed the alliance into six pairs and recorded the governmental types constituting these pairs. This procedure makes the data analysis much more tractable, but it is not without at least one problem: a four-nation alliance composed of two democratic and two nondemocratic nations would generate one democratic dyad, but is it fair to think that data from this kind of a grouping provides evidence of an affinity among democratic governments? Perhaps not, but absent information on the exact reasons for the formation of each alliance, we can at least reasonably believe that these nations shared policy interests. Our position is not that democratic nations will never have interests in common with nondemocracies, but rather, that in the long run their interests may have sufficient convergence to show a deviation toward each other.

9. There are two other points about the creation of this baseline that need to be discussed. First, it differs from the method used by Maoz and Abdolali in that we do not include in the computation of the baseline dyads that might form among nondemocratic governments. Our purpose differs from theirs. They sought to determine if democracies differed in their conflict behavior from other forms of government; obviously, this requires a comparison with the other

The analysis that follows will cover two separate periods of time, 1920 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965. Earlier data were not used because the number of democratic political systems was sufficiently small before 1920 that the formation of alliances between democratic polities was infrequent. In addition, it was not until 1920 that voting rights in many democracies were sufficiently broad that the "consent of the citizens" to which Kant refers would have included a sizable proportion of the population.

DATA ANALYSIS

We approach the data analysis by looking at the choice patterns of democratic political systems when they entered into an alliance. We then examine data for each year in which a democratic polity entered into an alliance with any nation regardless of its type of government. We record whether the nation with which it entered into an alliance was democratic or nondemocratic.[10] Using the method outlined in the previous section, and summing the results across all years in each of the two periods, we compare the number of democratic dyads that formed against the baseline for the probability of their formation. Table 1 displays the data resulting from our procedure for the years such alliances were initiated in the periods between 1920 and 1939 and 1946 and 1965; we do not, of course use data from the beginning of World War II until its end.[11]

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forms of government. Our purpose is simply to ask whether or not democracies formed more alliances with each other than would be expected on the basis of chance. We have no interest in whether or not other forms of government aligned with each other at any particular rate, although such a question might be perfectly appropriate for another purpose. Second, when an alliance formed between two nations we did not subtract that dyad from the next year's pool. It could reasonably be argued that once an alliance formed the dyad should be subtracted on the improbability of those nations entering into another alliance. However, recall that the Correlates of War alliance data set contains three different types of alliances (i.e., defense, neutrality, and entente); a dyad that forms at one level can readily create another alliance on another level, or, for that matter, choose to extend or expand an existing alliance. For these reasons, we left them in. However, for an assessment of what happens if they are taken out, see note 12, below.

10. There may appear to be a subtle bias in the data. By looking only at the alliances that actually form, we do not directly capture the alliances that do not form; in other words, if a nondemocratic nation attempts to create an alliance with a democratic nation but is rejected, perhaps because its policies are unacceptable to the democratic polity, then the failure is not recorded, although it is just as valuable a piece of evidence as the alliances that do form. Two things need to be said about such an observation. First, no data exist on failed alliance attempts, and although such a data set would be valuable, the difficulties of gathering it are obvious. Second, to some degree the models we use, no matter how elementary, suggest that any gap existing between the baseline and the observed alliances may be attributable to, among other things, failures of alliance.

11. We include alliances formed in the first eight months of 1939, but no data are included from 1945.

TABLE 1
Observed and Possible Democratic and Mixed Alliance Dyads, 1919 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965

Alliance Type	*Observed*	*Possible*
1919-1939		
Democratic	10	3,757
(percentage)	(10.3)	(20.1)
Mixed	87	15,013
(percentage)	(89.7)	(79.9)
Total	97	18,800
1946-1965		
Democratic	129	8,524
(percentage)	(35.2)	(19.6)
Mixed	238	34,898
(percentage)	(64.8)	(80.4)
Total	367	43,422

Turning first to the period from 1920 to 1939, we may note that of the 97 alliances formed by democracies only 10 were solely between democratic governments; the overall rate of democratic with democratic alliance formation was 10.3%. During this time the total number of possible democratic with democratic and mixed dyads was 18,800 of which 3,787 (or 20.1%) could be exclusively democratic. The clear conclusion of this analysis is that in the interwar era democracies allied with each other at about half the rate we would expect from the baseline.

The data from the post-World War II era show a dramatically different pattern. Here we find that of the 367 dyads which included at least one democracy, 129 (35.2%) were exclusively democratic. The baseline consists of 8,524 possible entirely democratic dyads in a total of 43,442 possible democratic and mixed dyads; this is 19.6%. Unlike the earlier period, in the time between 1946 and 1965, democracies allied with each other at almost 80% more than the rate they would have by chance.[12]

12. In note 9, we note that after an alliance formed we do not subtract that pair of nations from the group of possible dyads. In fact, several democracies did form more than one alliance and had more than one alliance in place at the same time. The United States and the United Kingdom, for example, were allied both in NATO and SEATO from their inception. Although the overall number of such double alliances is small, in order to assess the possibility that they might inflate the observed number of democratic alliances, we examined the data again using only the first observation of a dyad as long as that alliance was in force. The findings shift only very slightly, so that the observation of democratic alliances during the period from 1946 to 1965 is only about 65% greater than expected rather than the almost 80% first observed.

The previous analysis gives rather mixed support to the hypothesis that democracies have a predisposition to enter into alliances with each other. We now undertake a second test that will explore a slightly different aspect of democratic alliance behavior. The data summarized in Table 1 reveal that significant number of alliances formed among democratic nations. This happens to be particularly true in the early years of each of the two periods shown in the table. Alliances do not, however, continue to be formed between democracies at the same rate as time passes. This would seem to be suggestive of either one of two things. First, other motivations for alliance formation take over and democracies simply loose affinity for each other as their interests diverge. Alternatively, it may be that once formed the alliances are satisfactory, endure, and that other alliance activity is hence less necessary. Which, if either, of these two possibilities is operative?

In order to examine this question we consider the proportion of alliances in each year. First, we determine the total number of theoretically possible democratic and mixed dyads and then the total number of observed allied democratic dyads and the total number of observed allied mixed dyads. It is then possible to determine for each year the extent to which there were more or less democratic nations who were allied with each other than would be expected on the basis of probability.[13] This forms a yearly baseline.

Table 2 reports the results for both periods. For ease of interpretation, these results are graphed in Figures 1 and 2, for 1920 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965, respectively. The results show that once formed alliances among democracies tended to endure over fairly long periods. Figure 1 shows, for example, that democratic dyads were present in greater numbers than they ought to have been from 1920 until 1932, whereas in the post-World War II era, as shown in Figure 2, democratic dyads began forming in significant numbers in 1947 and remained present in a significantly greater proportion than expected throughout the period for which we have data.

These results indicate that democracies do indeed appear to form and maintain alliances in numbers greater than expected on the basis of probability. The data, however, are not without their problematic aspects, and, moreover, there are some obvious competing explanations that must be considered. Let us begin with the latter.

At least four alternative explanations must be considered: (1) United States' hegemony, (2) geographic proximity, (3) positive wartime experi-

13. There is a cautionary note needed here. This procedure requires that we know not only the starting date of an alliance, but also its ending date. The end of an alliance is generally not as easy to locate as its beginning. We rely on the dates given in the Correlates of War data set, but recognize that they may be subject to some uncertainty.

TABLE 2
Proportion of Democratic Dyads Existing
for Each Year 1920 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965

Year	*Percentage Expected*	*Percentage Observed*
1920	22	50
1921	22	50
1922	23	50
1923	23	57
1924	23	56
1925	23	56
1926	22	42
1927	22	38
1928	21	29
1929	21	29
1930	21	25
1931	22	27
1932	21	20
1933	20	19
1934	18	17
1935	18	17
1936	16	9
1937	17	7
1938	17	7
1939	16	8
1946	23	00
1947	23	12
1948	31	20
1949	23	45
1950	21	41
1951	21	48
1952	23	48
1953	22	49
1954	21	48
1955	21	47
1956	22	46
1957	22	46
1958	22	46
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1962	20	45
1963	20	35
1964	20	35
1965	20	34

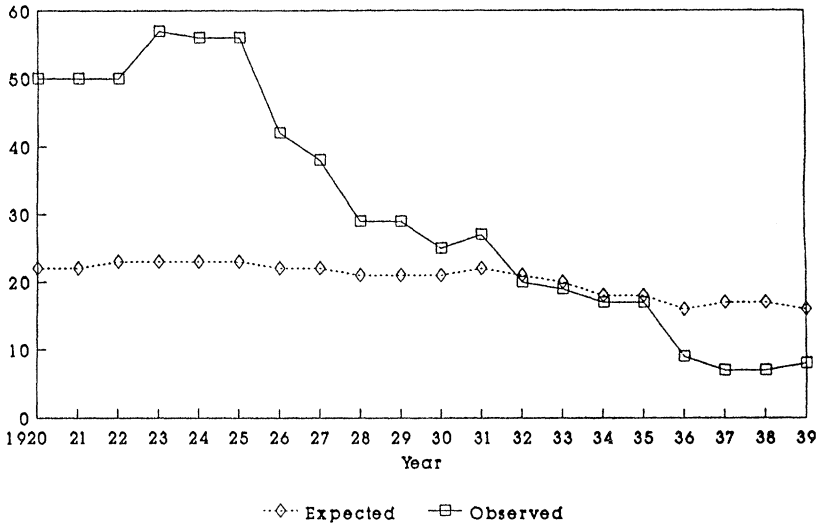

Figure 1: Democratic Alliances from 1920 to 1939

ences, (4) the possible impact of alliance-prone great powers being democratic. Let us consider these in turn. It might be argued that the development and persistence of the bias in democratic alliance choices is purely a function of United States alliance policy, which, as part of the Cold War, attempted to gather as many nations as possible into the American orbit. This assertion is not, on the face of it, unreasonable, but two observations may be made about it. First, the United States was not active in alliance politics in the 1920s, so that pattern is wholly without reference to the United States. Second, the United States was not significantly involved in alliances prior to 1949 and the formation of NATO. The democratic alliances of 1947 and 1948 were formed without American participation, and although it gave encouragement, it did not directly participate. We will return to this discussion below.

A second objection might be that all the data reflect is the presence of many alliances among geographically contiguous nations that happen to be democratic, and, hence what we are measuring is really geographic proximity and its effect on alliances rather than the democratic natures of the political systems. There are two responses to this observation. The first is that theories of alliance are even less developed in their description of the effects of

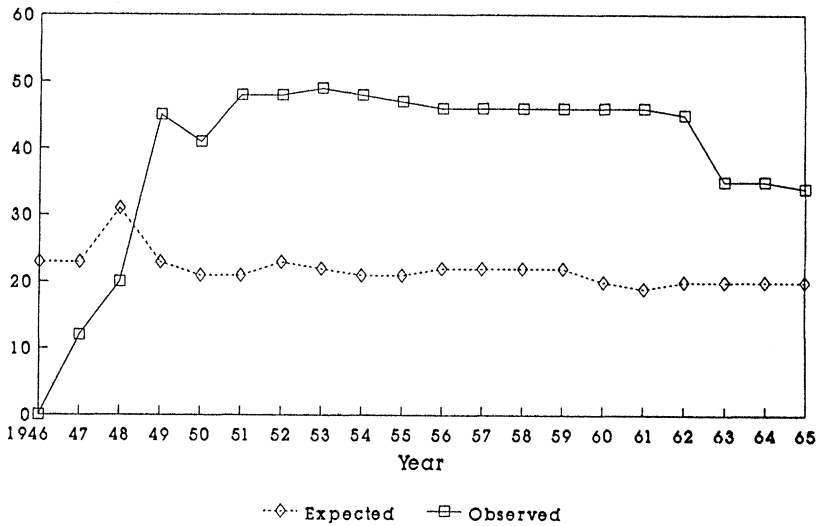

Figure 2: Democratic Alliances from 1946 to 1965

geography on alliance choice than they are on the effects of types of political systems. In searching through the many propositions collected by Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan (1973) about alliance formation, very few assertions are to be found about the impact of geography on alliance behavior, and most of those are fairly general, contradictory, or uncertain about the effect of geographic proximity on alliances (Waltz 1987, 23-24). Second, it is possible to examine the alliances between democratic nations to determine the extent to which they actually were contiguous. Table 3 displays the cross-tabulation of mixed, democratic, and nondemocratic alliances with contiguity for 1920 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965. Although there does appear to be a slight bias for democratic alliances to form between contiguous nations, its magnitude is sufficiently small that neither part of table reaches statistical significance, although the data in the 1946 to 1965 period come close.[14]

14. In this test, contiguity is broadly defined to include a common frontier, separation across less than 200 miles of water, or a common imperial frontier. The data are described in Siverson and Starr (1990).

Strictly speaking, this is not quite the correct way to test for the possible effects of contiguity. The correct way would involve a comparison of the contiguity of all democracies with other

TABLE 3
Contiguity by Political System for
Alliance Dyads 1919 to 1939 and 1946 to 1965

	Mixed	*Democratic*	*Nondemocratic*	*Total*
1920-1939				
Noncontiguous	60	5	144	209
(percentage)	(67)	(50)	(69)	
Contiguous	29	5	66	100
(percentage)	(33)	(50)	(31)	
Total	89	10	210	309
chi-square = 1.507				
p = .471				
1946-1965				
Noncontiguous	199	98	677	974
(percentage)	(84)	(76)	(83)	
Contiguous	38	31	133	202
(percentage)	(16)	(24)	(17)	
Total	237	129	810	1,176
chi-square = 5.035				
p = .100				

Another alternative explanation for the pattern of alliances among democracies might be found in the fact that many of these alliances were formed among members of a victorious coalition in a just concluded war. As a matter of empirical observation, this is partially correct, but the accuracy of the observation is not an explanation for the alliances formed unless there is a general tendency for those nations which fight in a winning wartime coalition to enter into postwar alliances.[15] In order to evaluate this possibility, we examined all wars prior to 1914 in which the winning side (as defined by the Correlates of War project) consisted of more than one nation and recorded whether or not the members of the winning coalition entered into an alliance of any kind with each other within five years of the war's end. Of the 37

democracies and nondemocracies. We could then compare the observed alliances against the population base. However, the needed data are not yet available in the proper form.

15. It might also be noted that the assertion of victorious coalitions turning into alliances is denied on theoretical grounds by Riker (1962), who argues that wartime grand coalitions tend to break up following the end of the war and other coalitions will then form. From our point of view, it is the choices made in these coalitions that are important.

TABLE 4
Power Status and Alliance Choices of Democracies, 1946 to 1965

	Observed	*Possible*
Democracy with democracy		
Major-Major	8	60
(percentage)	(2.2)	(1.4)
Major-Minor	55	1,602
(percentage)	(15.0)	(3.7)
Minor-Minor	66	6,862
(percentage)	(17.9)	(15.8)
Democracy with other		
Major-Major	0	108
(percentage)	(0)	(2.5)
Major-Minor	38	4,379
(percentage)	(10.4)	(10.8)
Minor-Minor	200	30,411
(percentage)	(54.5)	(70.1)
Total	367	43,422

dyads that had an opportunity to form a postwar alliance between 1848 and 1913, only three actually did.[16]

Finally, it is known that major powers tend to be alliance prone, to have more than their fair share of alliances (Siverson and Duncan 1976). If most of the major powers are democratic, could the results shown in the second half of Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 2 be due to a tendency of the democratic major powers to enter into a relatively large number of alliances with each other? To answer this question we divide the 1946 to 1965 alliance data

16. If our data base had included the Napoleonic Wars, then we certainly would have found the grand coalition that formed among the victors (and the French Bourbons) at the end of that war. Although it included a formal alliance, the coalition is typically known as the Concert of Europe. Looked at from this direction, it might be argued that it is only following very large wars that the victors form a coalition. This would, of course, help explain some of our findings, but why this might be the case is not immediately clear except insofar as the horrible costs of these wars may have made it desirable for decision makers to subordinate the differences that divided them to the common need to avoid further losses. Such an argument is not necessarily inconsistent with most of our analysis, because it would explain the alliance, but not who gets in the alliance and who gets left out. After all, the Concert of Europe included the French, who lost the war, while the Soviets, obviously enough, were not included in the democratic alliances that formed after the two world wars of this century. Moreover, if democratic political systems have fewer differences among themselves, the formation of alliances would be facilitated.

for democratic nations into those which formed between (1) major powers, (2) major powers and minor powers, and (3) minor powers only. We then compute the baseline for possible alliances in the same manner as we did above. The results are shown in Table 4.

The first point that may be noted in Table 4 is the pattern for the democratic major powers to ally with each other just about as much as we should expect from the baseline. The 2.2% shown is hardly different from the 1.4% baseline expectation. In fact, most of the table shows reasonably close correspondence between the observed proportion of alliances and the baseline expectation. There is, however, one important difference shown in the data. It is clear that democratic major powers formed considerably greater numbers of alliances with democratic minor powers than the baseline suggests should be the case. The baseline expectation is 3.7%, but the observed percentage is 15.0—over 300% more than we should expect. Clearly, to a considerable extent, the affinity of the democratic major powers for the minor power democracies is largely responsible for the bias noted in the earlier analysis. However, also note in Table 4 that the democratic major powers showed no particular proclivity to enter into alliances with nondemocratic minor powers. The bias, in other words, is not due to any generalized tendency for major powers to form alliances, but rather for democratic major powers to protect the weaker democracies. Also note the tendency for the democratic minor powers to ally far less than they should with nondemocratic minor powers.

Although we may conclude that the pattern of alliances between democratic political systems is probably not due to geographic proximity, successful previous war experience on the same side, or the alliance proneness of major powers, it would be going too far to say that none of these factors was without influence in the choices made by nations in their alliances. But we can say that the general tendency for democratic nations to overally with each other is not generally attributable to these factors.

There is another aspect of the data that requires evaluation, and it forces us to reconsider the possible effects of United States hegemony, but from a slightly different perspective than the one we discussed above. Figures 1 and 2 depict patterns in which alliances are formed between democracies in greater proportions than one would expect on the basis of chance, but after World War I, as time passes, this proportion decreases, while it holds steady in the period following 1945. In the case of the data for the period from 1920 to 1939, the oversubscription of democratic alliances begins in 1920 and persists until roughly 1931. Between 1932 and 1935 the number of democratic alliance partners is about what one expect, but in 1936 it drops sharply below what is expected. Put simply, the over abundance of democratic

alliances lasts twelve years and then ceases. Clearly, this evidence is not fully in accord with what we expect. What then is to be made of this?

There are least two things to note about the period following 1932. First, the number of democracies dropped and the alliances often stayed intact. Second, and perhaps more important, proclivities that democracies may have had for each other began to vanish in the mad scramble for security that preceded the outbreak of World War II. Nations, particularly democracies, were so desperate for security that alliances were tried that previously would have been unthinkable. For example, Great Britain, in a last-minute attempt to forestall Hitler, attempted to negotiate an alliance with the Soviet Union. British distaste for such an arrangement is shown in a statement by Chamberlain's Foreign Office Permanent Undersecretary of State, Sir Alexander Cadogan, who said that the military and political advantages of a alliance with the Soviet Union had to be weighted "against the disadvantage of associating ourselves openly with Russia." He concluded: "The advantage is, to say the least, problematical." (Colvin 1971, 200). In part, because of attitudes such as this the alliance was never consummated.[17]

The period from 1946 to 1965 is not only less difficult to consider, because for almost all of this period democratic nations were allied with each other far more than one would expect if democracy did not make a difference, but it also provides a significant contrast. The interesting question is, why does the post-World War II affinity of democratic governments for each other persist, whereas that of the earlier period declines and disappears?

It is easy, but possibly still instructive, to explain the persistence of the mutual affinity of democratic governments for each other in the period after 1945 on the basis of the mutual threat these governments perceived from the Soviet Union. If so, then why did the fascist threat fail to unify the democracies of the world in the period following 1933? A plausible answer to this question may be found by returning once again to the topic of American hegemony.

One of the most productive ideas in contemporary international relations theory for understanding alliances is that of collective goods. This is not the place to rehearse the full theory, but we may note that among its key points is the assertion that public goods alliances are most likely to persist when

17. Slightly earlier, when Anthony Eden, who had been forced out of his position as Foreign Secretary, suggested to his successor, Lord Halifax, that an alliance should be sought with the Soviet Union, Halifax replied, "they are not my kind of people. Absolutely no rapport with them whatsoever" (quoted in Mosley 1969, 243). The British, of course, ultimately did try to negotiate a military agreement, but when the Poles balked at the prospect of allowing Soviet forces access to Germany across their territory, the British chose Poland. Stalin chose Hitler.

there is a leader that is willing to make up for free-riders by overpaying for the alliance. That in the face of the Soviet threat the United States has been willing to overpay for NATO, and possibly other alliances as well, is not a novel observation. Nor is it novel to recall that under the leadership of Chamberlain the United Kingdom refused to take on a position of leadership against the fascist threat. What may be novel is a comparison of these two situations as a possible explanation for the collapse of collective security among the democracies of the world prior to World War II. British acquiescence to the installation of a fascist government in Spain, the death of democratic governments – first in Austria and then in Czechoslovakia – and its unwillingness to support the French did nothing to maintain collective security.

CONCLUSION

The ideas we pursue here are not that democratic nations will automatically ally with each other, that democracy is the only reason for nations to ally, or that security concerns and power are irrelevant to national calculations about alliance choices. Our question is more modest: do democratic regimes have a *bias* toward each other that is greater than chance? In view of the analysis and discussion above, the answer to this question appears to be, yes, but .... To be sure, the behavior of the democracies in the late 1930s is problematic, regardless of whatever we say about hegemonic leadership. However, by expanding our discussion somewhat, we may conclude on a slightly more positive note.

The original empirical fact that motivated our interest was the lack of war between democratic regimes. We now return to that observation to raise a final point in the joint context of democracy, war, and alliance. As part of his expected utility theory of international war, Bueno de Mesquita (1981, 160) examines the extent to which allies go to war against each other. He concludes that "wars between allies are about three times more likely than one would expect from the distribution of bilateral military agreements." From his data, this conclusion is as inescapable as it is surprising.

We now have three facts which taken together form an interesting observation: (1) allies have a higher propensity for war against each other than is expected; (2) democracies have a higher propensity to ally with each other than is expected; *but* (3) democracies do not fight each other. This final point, stands in stark contrast to the logical conclusion that obviously follows from the first two points.

The research will not end the puzzle, but the propensity for alliances among democratic political systems, even if somewhat uneven, does serve to (1) shed light from a different direction on the observation that democratic political systems do not go to war against each other, and (2) strongly suggests that the reasons for this may perhaps be found in the nature of democratic foreign policy and apparently not in other possible confounding variables.

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