



Alliances and Collective Security

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POLI 150

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- Prompt 5 due tonight.



Today's Class

- Alliances and Crisis Bargaining
- NATO
- UN and Collective Security
- UNC Conflict Research



How do international institutions influence interstate war? What conflict research has been published recently at UNC?



Key Terms

- International Institutions
- Alliances
- NATO
- Collective Defense
- Collective Security
- UN



Anarchy and International Institutions

- The international system is anarchic.
- In spite of this, we frequently observe cooperation between states on a variety of issues: security, economic, environmental, etc.
- This cooperation is frequently facilitated by **International Institutions**: a common set of rules shared among states that structure their interactions in specific ways.
- This lecture focuses on the impact of these institutions on interstate war.



- **Alliance:** institution that helps member states cooperate on their security policy and in the event of a war.
- Alliances include states with compatible security interests.
- They frequently describe standards about how states will behave if conflict arises between a non-member and member(s).
- Ultimately, alliances form out of common security interests.



Alliance Subtypes

Alliances can vary by whether they are...

- **Bilateral vs. Multilateral:** between two or more than two states.
- **Offensive vs. Defensive:** states cooperate to attack another vs. states defend each other in case of attack.
- **Asymmetric vs. Symmetric:** between states with a power disparity or states with relatively equal power.



Alliance Subtype Examples

- NATO: multilateral, asymmetric, defensive.
- US and South Korea: bilateral, asymmetric, defensive.
- Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: bilateral, symmetric, offensive.



Why Enter Alliances?

- Why do states form them?
- We've said they form due to common security interests, but what does that mean?
- Most commonly, answers appeal to the “balance of power:”
When two states fear the rise of a threatening state, banding together may allow them collectively to still be stronger than that other state.



Why Enter Alliances?

Alliance motives can also vary by a state's power or position in the international system.

- Weak state may gain protection from powerful rivals.
- Strong state can signal its resolve to defend a weaker but strategically important state.
- States can combine resources to allow for more effective defense.
- Can subdue conflicts (for example, Greece and Turkey in NATO).
- Can formalize a sphere of influence (for example, the Warsaw Pact).

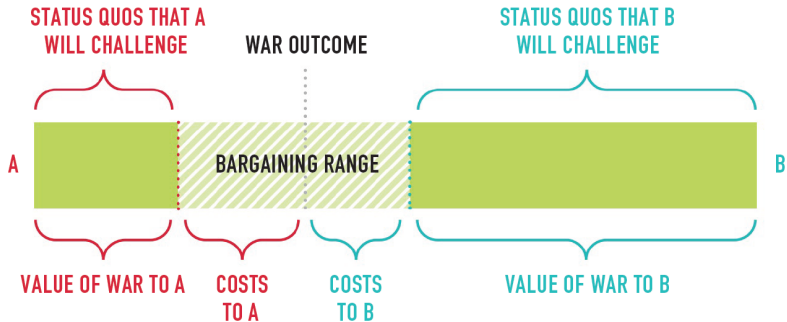


Alliances and the Bargaining Model

- The impact of an alliance can be felt at numerous points in the bargaining model.
- By working together in a conflict, alliances may change the location of the war outcome x .
- Additionally, by working together, they may also decrease the costs c for the allies or increase the costs c for the opposing side.

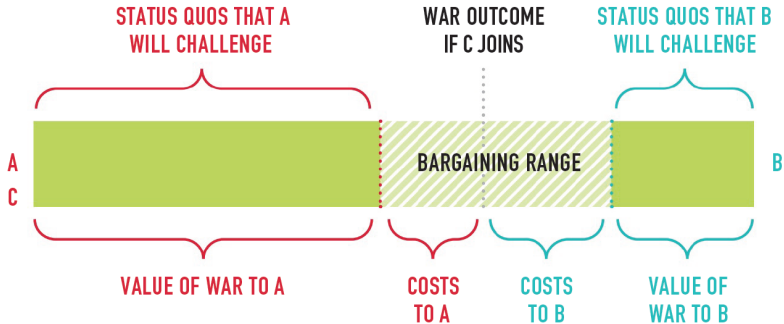


Bargaining in War





Bargaining in War with an Ally





Bargaining and Alliances

Alliances impact the bargaining range through all of the following mechanisms:

- Shifting the expected outcome of war in favor of the allies.
- Increasing the opponent's costs of war.
- Sharing the costs of war between allies, decreasing them.



Alliance Information Problems

- Thus far, we have assumed both sides believe that an ally will fight if necessary.
- **This implies that alliances should reduce the probability of war.**
- Why? A potential foe should look at the alliance and conclude that the costs of war will certainly be higher, while the chances of victory will be lower.
- But, in the real world, do states always have complete information about alliances? **No.**



Allies and Incomplete Information

- Alliances fundamentally exist in a world of incomplete information.
- States never know, until the war actually starts, whether allies will actually join the fighting.
- However, in any alliance, the allies have incentives to misrepresent the state of the alliance: even if one side doubts that its allies are trustworthy, it will represent them as such to a potential adversary.
- Why might an ally fail to honor its commitments? War is costly and victory is never certain.
- Any potential adversary knows this, and thus may doubt the sincerity of any alliance claims.
- **Incentives to misrepresent abound here.**



Allies and Incomplete Information

This implies that an *effective* alliance must do two things to deter conflict:

- 1 Increase the chance that allies will fight together above what it would be without an alliance.
- 2 Make opponents more certain that the allies will fight together than they would be without an alliance.

How can alliances do this? **Put differently, how can alliances become credible?**



How can alliances become credible?

- Stationing troops together and engaging in joint exercises, increasing combat effectiveness.
- Increase costs of abandonment: tying interests together or bringing in reputation costs.

Alliance credibility shares substantial similarities with solutions to incomplete information in the bargaining model, especially strategies of tying hands.



Joint Military Exercises



Jung Yeon-Je/AFP/Getty Images



Example: US and South Korea

- Approximately 28,000 US troops stationed in South Korea.
- Frequent military exercises involving these troops and their South Korean counterparts.
- These exercises make coordination and cooperation easier, decreasing costs if a war occurs, while also serving as a tying hands strategy. How?
- If North Korea ever invades South Korea, they will likely be forced into attacking US troops, which would certainly bring the US into the war.



Too Much of a Good Thing?

- Is it possible for alliances to be detrimental to peace?
- **Moral hazard:** Expected alliance support increases the power of states, who may make greater demands during crisis bargaining due to this anticipated support, potentially shrinking the bargaining range.
- **Entrapment:** the risk of being dragged into an opportunistic war by an ally.
- Alliance treaties can try to address this via purposefully vague language.



Alliance Outcomes

- Despite incentives to misrepresent incomplete information, and the costs of war, alliance obligations are fulfilled about 70% of the time.
- That said, do they actually prevent conflict?
- Example 1: WWI and WWII
 - Presence of dense set of alliances meant that any local conflict could suddenly draw in many unrelated states.
- Example 2: Cold War
 - Despite the world again being aligned into two competing camps (NATO and Warsaw Pact), we did not see any direct conflict between the major powers.
- The verdict: sometimes, if the alliances aren't multipolar, they can prevent conflict.



Alliances: NATO

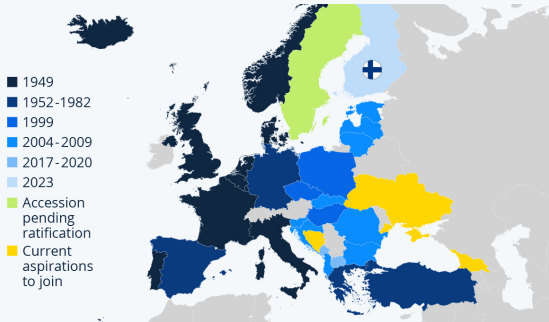
- In the American context, NATO is the most obvious (but not only) alliance the US has.
- **NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization. A multilateral defensive alliance formed by the US post-WWII.
 - Warsaw Pact formed by the USSR to balance against NATO itself.
- Original purpose: containment of the Soviet Union.
- Currently at 31 members. (Newest member: Finland.)



NATO Members and Evolution

Finland Becomes 31st Member of NATO

European countries by year they joined NATO



Map excludes the United States and Canada, both founding members of NATO.

Source: NATO



statista



NATO and Article 5

- Article 5 of the NATO charter is the **collective defense** provision.
- Article 5 states that all signatories are to treat an attack against one ally as an attack against all allies.
- Key deterrent of Soviet aggression and a driver of peace during the Cold War.



NATO Post-Cold War

- After the Cold War, analysts thought NATO would crumble like the Warsaw Pact, due to a lack of purpose.
- However, NATO has intervened in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya. Its mission has shifted towards one general security cooperation.
- NATO membership has continued to grow.
- NATO expansion has incorporated 10 former members of the Warsaw Pact.



- US Presidents have, historically, emphasized the importance of NATO and America's commitment to the alliance.
- Famously, Trump declined to explicitly endorse Article 5 at a NATO summit in 2017.
 - **What does this imply for the alliance's credibility?**
- Biden's tenure has been a return to the status quo, with recent NATO growth spurred by Russian aggression.



Collective Security: the United Nations





Collective Security Organizations

- **Collective security organizations:** institution(s) formed around an interest (presumably) common to all states - global peace.
- In a CSO, members pledge to aid any state that is attacked by any other state, treating an attack against one state as an attack on all.
- In theory, this means that any potential aggressor should be deterred by the collective might of all other countries.
- This should then incentivize peaceful negotiation rather than war.
- Example: the UN.



CSOs vs. Alliances

This just sounds like a very large alliance. What's the difference?

- Alliances are by nature exclusionary: they include a set of allies who (hopefully) credibly signal to specific rival states that these allies will fight together.
- CSOs are inclusive: by definition they include all states, appealing to their common interest in avoiding the costs of war, but without being focused on any specific rival.



Challenges to Collective Security

- Theoretically, all members have common interests in international peace and avoiding the costs of war.
- Practically, divisions exist.
- CSOs face two potential issues:
 - 1 Collective action problem
 - 2 Joint decision-making problem



CSOs and Collective Action Problems

- World peace is a public good.
 - A state will benefit from it even if they contributed nothing towards it.
- **Free rider problem:** military intervention against an aggressor is costly, and the benefits of peace accrue to states that don't contribute to that intervention. **If so, why contribute your state's military to the effort?**
 - If every state thinks this way, there is no intervention and the CSO fails in its purpose.
- Solution: interventions occur when strong states have an interest in the conflict outcome, such that they are willing to pay the costs of providing this public good.

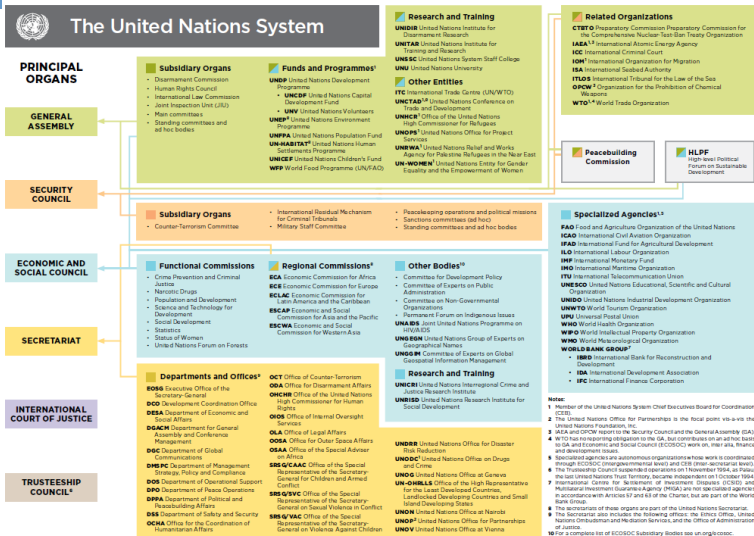


Joint Decision-Making Problems

- Universal membership may also create a problem.
- Suppose all states are members of the UN, but not all states have the same preferences over preventing all conflicts.
- This may lead to different levels of willingness to act in a crisis (or even to stall action in a crisis).
- How can an organization solve this problem of different preferences? The UN's institutional structure is one solution...



UN Organization





UN Institutional Structure

- **General Assembly:** All UN members have one vote, generally on budgets for specialized UN agencies with specific missions.
- **UN Security Council:** 5 permanent members (“P5”) and 10 rotating members with 2-year terms.
 - P5: US, UK, France, Russia, (People’s Republic of) China.
 - Every member of the P5 has veto power over any resolution.
 - By majority vote, the UNSC decides if international aggression has happened and how to respond to it.



UNSC and Security Outcomes

- What does the structure of the UNSC imply? That the P5 will use their veto to defend themselves and their client states from actions they don't like.
- Examples:
 - Russia has blocked several resolutions condemning the killing of civilians in the Syrian civil war.
 - US has blocked several resolutions condemning the killing of civilians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- This general phenomenon is called **policy bias**.



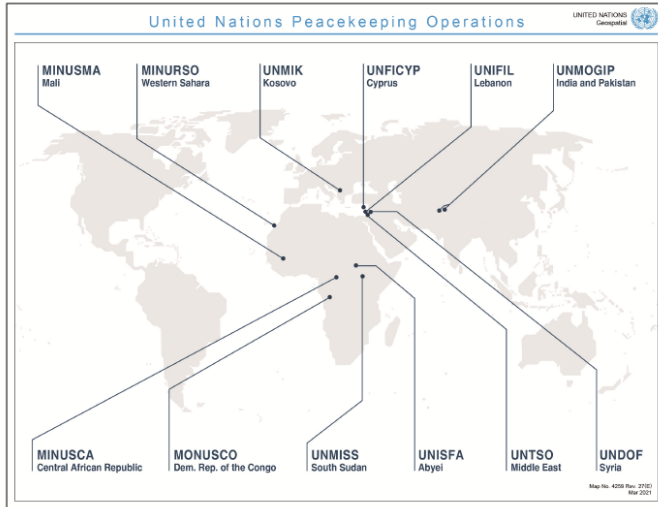
Types of UNSC Actions

- **Peace enforcement:** intervention in an active conflict to force an aggressor to stop. This authorizes the use of force against the aggressor by the international community.
 - Only three examples: Korean War, Gulf War, 2011 NATO intervention in Libya.
- **Peacekeeping:** resolves commitment problems between two potential opponents by providing impartial monitors for a disputed area, ceasefire, transition to elections, etc.
 - These monitors raise the costs of aggression not only by informing potential targets but also because an aggressor usually needs to harm neutral peacekeepers in order to get to their opponent.



2023 Active Peacekeeping Missions

30 June 2023





Collective Security: A Success Story?

- By their nature, successful collective security actions tend to be “quiet:” stories of international harmony, successful rebuilding, etc. tend to get less coverage than disasters.
- On average, UN peacekeeping has been quite successful.
 - Examples: El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Cambodia
 - These successes frequently involve disarming rebel groups, integrating former rebels into society, and organizing elections to help political system recover.



Collective Security: A Success Story?

- UN peace enforcement is a different story.
- The UN only imperfectly deals with the collective action problems surrounding peace enforcement.
- Most obvious failure to engage in peace enforcement is the Rwandan Genocide.
- 1992 breakup of the former Yugoslavia was another failure, as a UN peacekeeping force was unable to prevent Serbian massacres of Bosnian Muslims. NATO intervention eventually ended the conflict.



Summary

- Institutions such as NATO can be a source of peace through credible deterrence.
- The UN is most successful when strong states agree, and when at least one strong state takes an interest in the conflict and is willing to pay costs.
- While the UN has limits, is it better than nothing?



Central Question 2

What conflict research has been published recently at UNC?



Key Terms

- Market power politics
- Strategic delay
- Grey zone tactics
- Salami expansion
- Petrodollar system



Market Power Politics

- This chapter (and the rest of the book) is concerned with how and when states engage in territorial expansionist behaviors.
- **Market power politics theory argues that competition for market power gives states incentives to expand their territory or prevent other states from expanding.**
- However, since WWII, a norm of international respect for settled borders has (generally) prevailed.
- This leads to constraints on a state's actions.



- If a state's goal is to expand its market power by expanding its territorial control, what might constrain its actions? Two factors:
- **Economic interdependence:** sufficient dependence on a globalized economy, which would be disrupted by open conflict, can dissuade states from open conflict.
- **International institutions:** states may anticipate that the dispute resolution mechanisms would lead to an outcome that would be suboptimal from a domestic political standpoint.



Constraints

- In situations of extremely low constraints, states may simply go to war to grab economically desirable territory.
- In situations of extremely high constraints, states will be forced to accept peaceful settlements, even if they are suboptimal.
- This theory is most concerned with situations where there is a mixture of high and low constraints.
- In these cases, states can use a tactic of **strategic delay**.



Strategic Delay

- **Strategic delay:** purposeful postponement of a violent or non-violent settlement of a dispute with the goal of trying to achieve a more preferable outcome in the future.
- This delaying tactic gives states time to implement **gray zone tactics:** not the overt use of military force, but also not behavior traditionally accepted within international diplomacy.
 - These tactics let states slowly pursue their territorial claims over time, while avoiding major armed conflict.
- Grey zone tactics frequently involve **salami expansion:** small, cumulative steps each of which is too minor to fight over, but at their culmination leads to an outcome that would have triggered conflict if carried out all at once.



The End Goal

- The overarching goal of states engaging in this behavior is to use this expanded territorial control to increase a state's **market power**, allowing it to extract higher profits (“rents”), especially if an industry is state-controlled.
- This is desirable for several reasons:
 - Increased state revenue
 - Domestic political stability (if resource is vital for daily life)
 - International bargaining power
- This theory focuses on “hard commodities,” which are natural resources like oil, gas, or rare minerals.



Petrodollar System

- **Petrodollar system:** the sale of petroleum in US dollars.
- The majority of petroleum and related products are sold in USD.
- Why? One consequence of the US going off the gold standard in the 1970s.



Formal Model

- If the host state is participating in the petrodollar system by producing and exporting oil, this helps America's economy by keeping the dollar valuable.
- Given the economic benefits of a strong dollar, this means the US has rational incentives to protect such an economic system.
- This can involve the US sending military aid to oil producers ("host states") to ensure their security, as a destabilized or failed state will no longer participate in the global petrodollar system.



Formal Model: Moral Hazards

- Say that host state has a terrorist problem.
- If it receives military aid to increase its security, this decreases its incentives to bargain with or eliminate the terrorists. Why?
 - **If the terrorism stops, so does the flow of aid.**
- This aid strengthens the government such that its leaders are able to stay in power (particularistic benefits), while the costs of an ongoing terrorism campaign are borne by the general population.



Formal Model: Moral Hazards

- This incentive structure is especially helpful to the host state if it is engaging in the kinds of corruption and human rights abuses that normally lead to aid being suspended.
- In response to any threatened decrease in aid, the host state can argue that it is in America's economic interest to keep the state functional, as this way its participation in the petrodollar system continues.



Formal Model: The Take-Away

- US military aid for fighting terrorism does not actually decrease the amount of terrorism, but instead prolongs it, while also serving US interests in stability of the petrodollar system.