



Alliances and Collective Security

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POLI 150

8 February 2024



- 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

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- 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.



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- 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

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- **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

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- Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: bilateral, symmetric, offensive.



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- Why do states form them?
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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.



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- Can formalize a sphere of influence (for example, the Warsaw Pact).



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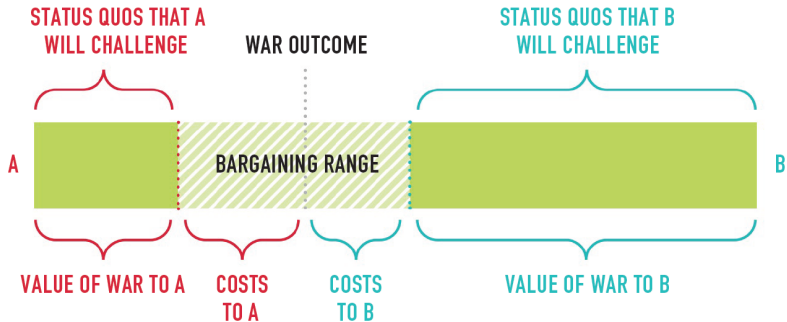


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- By working together in a conflict, alliances may change the location of the war outcome x .
- Additionally, by working together, they may also decrease the costs c for the allies or increase the costs c for the opposing side.

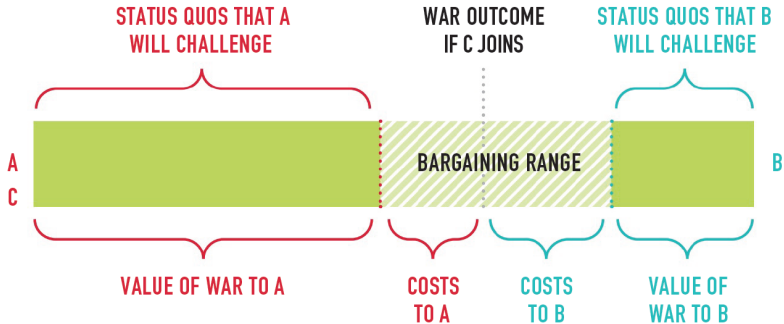


Bargaining in War





Bargaining in War with an Ally





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- 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.



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- 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.**



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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?

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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



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- Frequent military exercises involving these troops and their South Korean counterparts.
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- 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?

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- Alliance treaties can try to address this via purposefully vague language.



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- 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.



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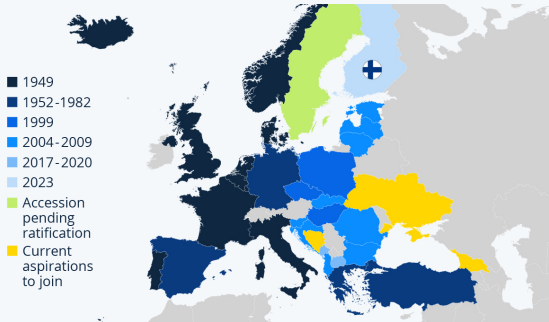
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- Currently at 31 members. (Newest member: Finland.)



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



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- 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.



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- Biden's tenure has been a return to the status quo, with recent NATO growth spurred by Russian aggression.



Collective Security: the United Nations





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- Example: the UN.



CSOs vs. Alliances

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- 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

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 - 1 Collective action problem
 - 2 Joint decision-making problem



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- **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.



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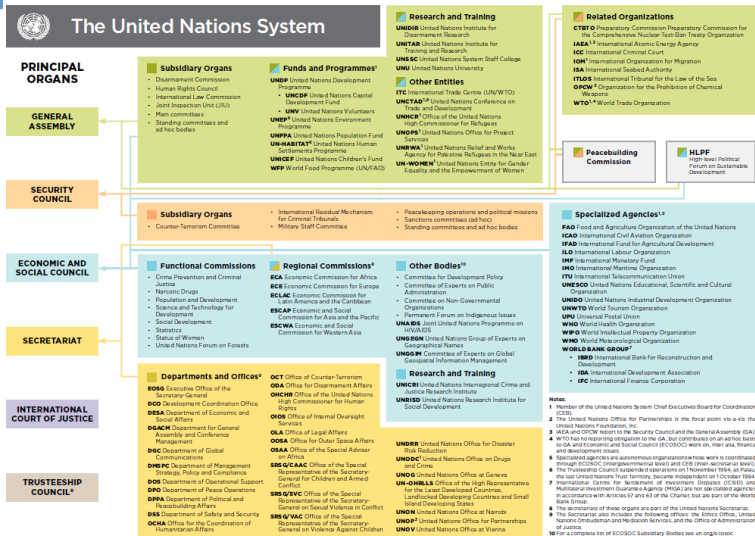


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- Suppose all states are members of the UN, but not all states have the same preferences over preventing all conflicts.
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- How can an organization solve this problem of different preferences? The 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.
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 - By majority vote, the UNSC decides if international aggression has happened and how to respond to it.



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- 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

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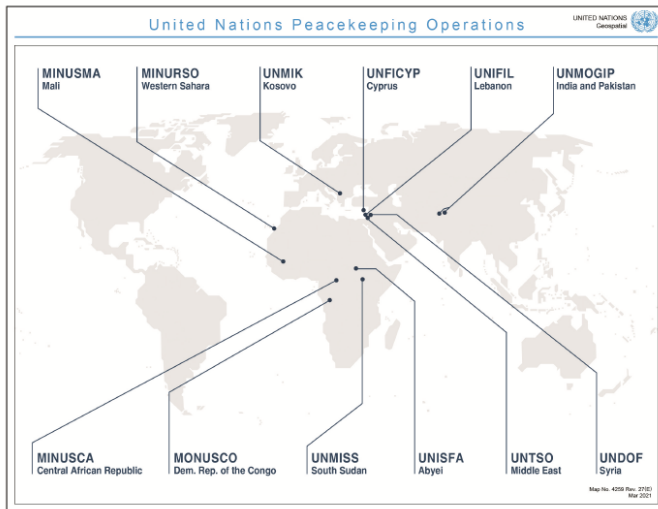
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2023 Active Peacekeeping Missions

30 June 2023





Collective Security: A Success Story?

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- 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.



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- 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.



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- 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

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- **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.



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- **Economic interdependence:** sufficient dependence on a globalized economy, which would be disrupted by open conflict, can dissuade states from open conflict.



Constraints

- 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.



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- 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**.



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 - 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

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- 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.



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- 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

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- 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.



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 - **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.



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- 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.