1 Introduction

Alliances have long formed a central concern of International Relations. These partnerships are a key method by which states produce and enhance their security in an anarchical international system (Walt, 1987; Schroeder, 1976), and they have been charged with maintaining stability through the preservation of the balance of power. (Waltz, 1979) Alliances have also been identified as a critical element in the construction of international order (Keohane, 1984; Ikenberry, 2001), organizing, coordinating, and regularizing relations between states on military, security, and even economic and social affairs. This has generated a voluminous body of work assessing the purpose and credibility of alliance commitments. The latter subject has motivated much of the recent work on the effectiveness of allied military action and how states can successfully signal their intentions to both allies and adversaries.

But despite the centrality of these institutions, my research suggests that scholars have missed two critical issues, both related to their organizational form. First, the major cleavages in alliance institutional characteristics cannot be explained by our current theories. We should expect that a partnership’s purpose would be reflected in its provisions and coordination mechanisms. For example, states worried about intra-alliance conflict would probably desire strong mediation and arbitration rules. A partnership focused on combating a common enemy may specify troop and materiel contribu-
tions, as well as the conditions under which war will be declared. The data presented below reveals that no single approach can provide an adequate explanation for the diversity of alliance institutional forms, that alliances (especially large ones) often serve multiple purposes simultaneously, and that their provisions are often left intentionally flexible and even vague. Consequently, International Relations as a field still does not have a clear view of the primary organizational, and therefore purposive, cleavages between alliances. This, I argue, lies in their membership (roughly, bilateral versus multinational) and their level of institutionalization (weak or extensive policy coordination).

Second, alliance purposes and character appear to have changed over time. Generally speaking, states are including fewer details and more ambiguous commitments in their treaties. The modal form of these security partnerships are bilateral, consultative agreements with few substantive commitments. Provisions on integrated command, dispute resolution, troop contributions, and even specifying threats have all declined over time. And yet, at least up until the end of the Cold War, states have been remarkably “choosy” about their partners, with the average state – conditional upon having an alliance – participating in only a couple of these partnerships. The puzzle, then, according to the credible commitment approach, would be determining how states are sending costly signals in an era of declining institutionalization.

Therefore, my key questions of interest are:

1. How can we characterize the main institutional divisions between alliances, and what explains why states push for one organizational form over another?

2. How have alliance organizational forms altered over time, and how can we explain this evolution?

I suggest that two forms of security interdependence – threat diffusion and issue complexity – drive the variation of and changes in alliance organizational form. The answers to these questions will help us understand what drives institutional change and how countries structure alliances to generate individual security benefits and pockets of interstate order. That is, the more a given threat is likely to expand, the more states it will affect, and the greater an alliance’s membership. In addition, the more complex the threat, the more likely that action in one policy or issue area will affect others. States therefore institute greater degrees of security cooperation to
deal with possible externalities and spillovers. The answers provided by this approach are particularly important given renewed policy concerns over alliances, stability, and regional order as the U.S. and other countries deal with the potential military rise of China.

The remainder of this chapter will briefly review the relevant theoretical literature, then present evidence further elucidating the puzzles described above. I will then turn to my theory of security interdependence, including a discussion of the wider theoretical import of this approach. The chapter will conclude with a tentative outline of additional chapters that will make up the dissertation.

2 Review of Literature

My research responds to two strands of the alliance literature: a state’s goals and purpose in entering into a security partnership and, to a more limited extent, the credibility of its commitments. The first strand, as mentioned, has led to extensive debate amongst scholars. This is in part because it touches upon the possibility and durability of state cooperation within an anarchical international system, thus dovetailing with some of the IR paradigm wars. Researchers have proposed three general approaches to understanding state purpose in forming an alliance: capability aggregation, internal restraint, and hierarchy/dominance. Despite the differences in these approaches, they each conceive of an alliance as an agreement, formal or informal, “among independent states to cooperate militarily in the face of potential or realized military conflict.” (Leeds and Anac, 2005)[4] That said, they present fundamentally divergent prescriptions about alliance purpose and behavior, with the differences hinging upon which state(s) presents the motivating security challenge, as well as what cooperative steps the alliance partners should and do take.

The second strand sees scholars exploring the credible commitment problem, which is inherent to security cooperation. Since warfighting is costly and those costs are often unevenly distributed across security partners, states may have situation-specific incentives to renege on their commitments. As a result, scholars have typically defined alliance success according to whether or not a state honors its obligations, as well as the variables which enhance the likelihood of fulfillment. While both areas of study have made important contributions to our understanding of allied security behavior, I contend
that they have each missed key empirical regularities which, taken together, suggest that our models of these partnerships require major refinement. It is therefore worthwhile to briefly outline the theoretical topography of both these research areas.

2.1 Theories of Alliance Purpose

Taking the three alliance types in turn, the capability aggregation model is arguably most well-known amongst student of IR. Two countries face a common external state threat and combine their military forces against it. It is most closely associated with realism, with Waltz (1979) in particular discussing the importance of these types of alliances for preserving the balance of power. Waltz (1987) pays greater attention to perceptions, suggesting that states balance against threats rather than the more systemically-oriented or even objective power balance. Christensen and Snyder (1990) also leverages perceptual variables, suggesting that, in a multipolar setting, state evaluations of the offense-defense balance determine whether a country “buck-passes” a threat to its alliance partners or whether it is “chain-ganged” into facing the common enemy.

A second approach, internal restraint, argues that some security partnerships are established to mitigate military conflict between and internal to alliance partners. Indeed, Bueno de Mesquita (1981, 160) notes that “wars between allies are about three times more likely than one would expect from the distribution of bilateral military agreements.” Weitsman claims that security partnerships can alleviate the problems generating this conflict, as “there is no better means of transparency, no better guarantee of keeping the peace, no better way of facilitating trust [although the] resulting alliance may not be terribly cohesive.” (Weitsman, 2004, 23) Bearce, Flanagan and Floros (2006) more fully specify the causal mechanism behind this argument, suggesting that alliances facilitate inter-member information exchange. This in turn mitigates incentives to misrepresent during crisis bargaining, which can lead to war. (Fearon, 1995) However, Schroeder (1976) offers an alternative motivation for the creation of a restraining alliance. Rather than provide information, states establish these types of alliances to gain direct access to their partner’s military decision-making process. Under these *pacta de contrabendo*, “Frequently, the desire to exercise such control over an ally’s policy was the main reason that one power, or both, entered into the alliance.” (Schroeder, 1976, 230) Ikenberry (2001) builds upon this
framework to demonstrate how different hegemonic powers established (or failed to establish) institutions for managing international stability and order.

Finally, a third approach expands on this issue of internal control, concentrating on states of highly differentiated military capability. This inequality means that the weaker ally is much more dependent upon the partnership for its security than the other. Moreover, the weaker state contributes fairly little, if anything, to its associate’s security. Synthesizing previous work (Vital, 1982; Handel, 1990; Gasiorowski, 1991; Job, 1992; Sylvan and Majeski, 2009), Lake (2009) argues that this member must instead offer “autonomy” benefits, wherein it cedes sovereign decision-making power over military, foreign, and/or economic policy. This leads to alliance dynamics different from those found in the first two models. For example, these partnerships are often formed to protect the weaker party’s regime from both external aggression and internal political opponents. Consequently, treaties may spell out asymmetric obligations for the partners, as well as language justifying intervention in the weaker party’s internal affairs. (David, 1991; Gibler, 2009)

2.2 Theories of Alliance Credibility and Effectiveness

A central risk in all of these models is carefully defining the conditionality and limits of allied action to reduce opportunistic behavior by one’s partner. Snyder (1984), for example, identifies the mirrored problems of abandonment and entrapment. Fighting a mutual enemy is costly, but those costs are often distributed unequally amongst partners. In certain situations, an ally may gain little benefit from upholding its end of an alliance, while suffering high costs. It therefore faces strong incentives to abandon its partners once a war begins. Conversely, under entrapment, a state could determine that it can achieve sizable benefits from going to war, even if its partners would prefer not to. It therefore ratchets up the costs of reneging, in the hopes of dragging the alliance into a conflict and increasing the likelihood that it gains the perceived benefits from fighting. Consequently, states must carefully demarcate the limits of combined action and clearly signal their intentions to avoid both of these pitfalls, while their allies must calculate to what extent they can trust these signals, either out of concern over abandonment or to see just how large of an engagement they can entrap their partner(s) in.
Within the last decade, scholars have increasingly examined these commitment challenges. Despite the advantages of informal alignments (Lipson, 1991), this type of agreement leaves political leaders with few ways to determine whether or not partners are telling the truth and will honor their promises. As a result, Smith (1995) and Morrow (2000) both suggest that domestic ratification of security treaties can be used to publicly demonstrate a country’s resolve and thereby deter enemies and reassure allies. Fearon (1997) identifies two additional mechanisms based on the costly signaling logic: using audience costs to tie hands and sinking resources and funding into an alliance prior to any conflict. He finds that states tend to have better success deterring opponents with the first method. Dovetailing with this logic, Siverson and Emmons (1991) and Leeds (2003) argue that democracies are more likely to uphold their commitments. Furthermore, Miller (2003), Crescenzi et al. (2009), and Mattes (2010) each suggest different ways in which concerns about reputation impel states to fulfill their obligations, although Press (2004/5) accords this factor less weight than a state’s immediate power capabilities.\(^1\)

As a whole, certain states appear to possess several avenues by which they can demonstrate their resolve and war-willingness. Despite that, Sabrosky (1980) and Siverson and King (1980) maintain that the credible commitment problem is so great that only a quarter of states uphold their stated obligations. However, using more fine-grained data, Leeds, Long and Mitchell (2000) increases that number up to almost 75 percent. Nevertheless, the fact that a quarter of all allies renege on their promises – despite using the mechanisms listed above – suggests that commitment problems and signaling strategies form a critical state security concern.

### 3 The Puzzle

The theories discussed above have implications for the organizational form and processes of security partnerships. Each of the alliance purpose models, for example, would suggest that states should establish specific and differing decision making mechanisms and treaty obligations. The expectation from

\(^{1}\)Bensahel and Moeller have separately advanced an alternative definition of credible commitment and alliance success which bears mention. There, battlefield performance defines effectiveness, and they each explore how particular alliance institutions or dynamics contribute to the combined warfighting capability of two or more state militaries. (Bensahel, 2007; Moeller, 2013)
the research on commitment problems is that states, if they enter into security partnerships at all, should establish strong and credible mechanisms to signal their intentions. And yet, the predictive power of these approaches is highly limited. For example, using Leeds’ Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) dataset, (Leeds et al., 2002) the hierarchical models appear valid only for specific time periods. Asymmetric obligations – as an indicator of this relationship – were a relatively prominent feature of security partnerships from around 1854 to 1920. However, they dropped off substantially as a characteristic of alliances after that, even as many more cooperative agreements were being signed. (See Figure 1.) In addition, provisions for domestic intervention have largely ceased to be a characteristic of security agreements since the mid-1860s. (Figure 2.)

![Percentage of Alliances with Asymmetric Obligation Provisions](image)

**Figure 1: Percentage of Alliances with Asymmetric Obligation Provisions**

For the internal restraint model, strong majorities of alliances possess consultative provisions in almost all years in the dataset (65.8 percent overall). However, formal mediation and arbitration mechanisms to reduce intra-alliance conflict have only been a prevailing feature from 1815-1832, 1857-1868, and 1914-1946. Since the end of World War 2, these provisions have been present in less than 25 percent of all security partnerships. (See Figure 3.) As a result, although many alliances possess consultative provisions, they typically lack clear and credible means to resolve disputes. In addition, compounding the puzzle for credible commitment arguments, even the commitment for states to consult with one another largely lacks institutionalization: 57.9 percent of partnerships with consultative provisions have
no named coordinating organization or even regularized inter-governmental meetings.

Finally, for the capability aggregation approach, Bensahel (2007) argues that allies require policy coordination to deal with the challenges of (and potentially the tradeoff between) member political cohesion and combined military effectiveness. This can include the creation of common warfighting
strategies and even integration of military command. Moreover, in light of the credible commitment problem, we might expect to see political leaders either identifying the target of their security partnership or carefully defining individual troop and materiel contributions. However, only about 15.24 percent of alliances identify the targeted state (Figure 4), while the percentage of alliances detailing allied contributions (Figure 5) has dropped below 20 percent since the 1920s. In addition, wartime integration of states’ military command has declined as a percentage of alliances over time (Figure 6), although longer-term, peacetime coordination (Figure 7) has not necessarily replaced that feature.

Figure 4: Percentage of Alliances Specifying a State Threat

This search for a single, guiding alliance purpose ignores that many security partnerships serve multiple military, political, and foreign policy goals simultaneously. For example, the U.S.-ROK alliance arguably embodies all three partnership types. It serves to defend both countries from the threat posed by North Korea, is used by the U.S. to restrain aggressive action by the South Koreans, and (perhaps more controversially) involves the surrender by Seoul of significant portions of its foreign policy autonomy. This point is also borne out in the “bundling” of institutional characteristics. 23.7 percent of alliances specifying troop and material contributions also possess formal mediation procedures to resolve disputes (compared to only 16.7 percent out of all alliances). Similarly, 24.4 percent of alliances with asymmetric obligations also detail their contributions, compared with only 11.4 percent overall.
Reinforcing this point is another pattern emerging from the data. As demonstrated in the graphs above, all the institutional mechanisms have decreased in prevalence over time. Similarly, the treaty language in security partnerships has become more ambiguous. For example, early alliances had very specific contribution requirements and conditions. The 1653 alliance between France and the Swiss cantons stipulated that, if invaded or attacked,
France could ask for between 6,000-16,000 Swiss soldiers. (Gibler, 2009, 5) These troops could be dismissed at the French king’s discretion or at the end of the war, although they could not be used at sea. The alliance terms also detailed soldier salaries, the supply of armaments, and other provisions including the reinforcement of previously-signed treaties. Likewise, the 1701 alliance between Portugal and Spain carefully delineated the two conditions under which the alliance could be invoked. (Gibler, 2009, 43) By contrast, NATO leaves decisions about invocation and the nature and amount of assistance up to the individual member. It does not contain provisions on meetings, the appropriate level of ministerial involvement, aid packages, or arbitration and mediation bodies. The Warsaw Pact was a similarly vague document, with the two most specific provisions being the foundation of a unified command and a coordinating consultative body. Even then, it left out such details as how often the bodies will meet and what ministerial level should attend. This state of affairs is all the more puzzling in that it is commonly thought that combined operations (those between two or more allied countries) require greater coordination and linkages throughout the chain of command to increase effectiveness, particularly with modern weaponry. (See for example FM 100-5, Chapter 5.) There appears instead to be a general trend towards more institutionally flexible alliances, although this serves as a major puzzle for the credible commitment literature.\(^2\)

\(^2\)On a related note, Wallander and Keohane (1999) has discussed the importance of
In sum, the literature leaves us with little theoretical traction in determining and understanding the major cleavages in state preferences over alliance institutional forms, how these forms have changed over time, and due to what pressures. To address these issues, it is best to elaborate on two modal points from the analysis above. First, alliance institutions do not differ based on the purposive theories outlined above. Instead, their structure and organization varies according to whether they are institutionalized at all. The majority of alliances include some kind of consultative provision, but most (62.6 percent) lack any sort of formalized meeting procedures, timetable, or designation of participants. The second point concerns membership size. Of the 538 security partnerships in the ATOP dataset, 3 82.9 percent are bilateral. In addition, the average membership size of an alliance has fallen over time. (See Fig. 8.)

![Figure 8: Average Number of Members Per Alliance](image)

The dominant impression from the data is that most alliances are fairly limited agreements: bilateral, typically consultative in purpose, and usually lacking in supporting organizations and/or bureaucracies. Surprisingly,
however, the small size and weak institutionalization of these partnerships do not seem to make them “cheap” (low cost due to low benefits). States instead appear to be quite “choosy” about their security partners. Conditional upon having an alliance, the average number of alliances a country participates in has held fairly steady over time, as seen in Fig. 9. Moreover, 80.5 percent of alliances have required domestic ratification, with the proportion increasing over time. If alliances were merely “scraps of paper,” we might expect that states would sign many more of these relatively costless agreements. (Fortna, 2003) This presents a problem for the credible commitment literature. What benefit do states gain from bilateral consultative agreements that could not be taken up by ad hoc meetings and telephone calls? Why are they being so selective about such seemingly low cost agreements?

Figure 9: Average Number of Alliances per State, Conditional upon Having an Alliance

Moreover, despite the prevalence of these simple security partnerships, the most notable and recognizable alliances in history (and the ones which make up much of the cases in IR research) tend to be multinational, multilateral ones. The alliance purpose literature conceptualizes a multinational commitment as simply the additive aggregation of many dyadic ones, and the same motivating purpose is assumed to drive all the states. And yet, from

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4These would include the Quadruple (and later Quintuple) Alliance of 1813, the Quadruple Alliance of 1834, the Triple Entente of World War 1, the Grand Alliance in World War 2, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization of American States, and the Warsaw Treaty Organization.
the data, multinational alliances possess higher rates of integrated command, extensive strategic planning, and permanent coordinating bureaucracies. A possible argument to explain away this difference is that multinational partnerships simply require greater coordination. However, that fails to address two points. First, what does a specifically multinational alliance add that could not be accomplished through a network of bilateral ones? Arguably, for example, the U.S. has used its “hub and spokes” system in East Asia to contend with sizable security threats. Second, we might expect that the higher coordination costs for multinational alliances would screen out poorer, less capable states. And yet, major power status, military expenditure, and GDP are all negatively correlated with multinational alliances, albeit weakly. Perhaps even more important, major power status and national power (as defined by the COW dataset’s CINC score) are very weakly correlated with alliances possessing coordinating organizations (0.008 and 0.025, respectively) and negatively correlated with those establishing permanent bureaucracies (-0.202 and -0.178, respectively). Multinational partnerships appear to be fundamentally different from their bilateral counterparts, but these differences cannot be explained purely as a matter of logistical and organizational scaling.

To crystallize the discussion and formalize my dependent variable, the main divisions in alliance organization – and the primary choice variables for states – lie on two dimensions: membership size and institutionalization. The former component asks: “How wide should the membership of an alliance be?” As a rough division, should it be bilateral or multinational? The latter component I define as the extent and degree to which an alliance possesses mechanisms for policy and behavioral coordination among its members. Again, it can be roughly divided into low versus high institutionalization, with the first including consultation of low frequency, among relatively junior government officials on very tightly circumscribed areas of common interest, and including only limited technical, financial, and/or material assistance. High institutionalization encompasses such actions as frequent, high-level consultation, particularly on a wide range of issues; joint military exercises; coordination on strategic and operational planning; and the establishment of a permanent coordinating bureaucracy. Taken together, these dimensions form a 2x2 matrix (Table 1, where the numbers in parentheses are the average percentage of that alliance type across the entire dataset.). Figure 10 shows how these institutional forms have varied over time, while Table 2 lists some illustrative examples of each.

I define a state’s preferences over these institutional dimensions as its al-
Table 1: Dependent Variable: Alliance Organizational Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Membership, Low Institutionalization (68.8 percent)</th>
<th>High Membership, Low Institutionalization (9.5 percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Membership, High Institutionalization (12.3 percent)</td>
<td>High Membership, High Institutionalization (7.4 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Variation in Alliance Types, 1815-2003

Alliance organizational strategy. The next section will outline my theory explaining these strategies in terms of choice and change:

1. **Choice**: What factors determine the alliance organizational strategy a state adopts?

2. **Change**: How have state preferences over alliance organizational strategy changed over time? Why we have seen a decline in certain institutional mechanisms, as well as a drop in average membership size?

Table 2: Examples of Alliance Organizational Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Membership</th>
<th>Low Institutionalization</th>
<th>High Institutionalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multinational</td>
<td>Lithuania-Ukraine Entente; Bolivia-Ecuador Consultative Agreement</td>
<td>U.S.-ROK; U.S.-Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holy Alliance; Arab League</td>
<td>NATO; Warsaw Pact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Security Interdependence and Alliance Organizational Strategy

4.1 Explaining Institutional Form: Geographic and Issue Interdependence

Answering these questions requires reconceptualizing two key elements in our prior theories on alliances: the nature of threat and the theories’ dyadic microfoundations. For the first, all of the alliance theories deal with threats, with the key distinction being where the threat emanates from. However, the term “threat” is typically left unspecified. I define it as actors or conditions with the capability and intent to harm or coerce a state’s political, economic, or societal organization, institutions, and/or autonomy. Security, then, is created when political leaders mitigate or eliminate these threats, primarily through – but not restricted only to – military means.

For the second point, current alliance theories can each be boiled down to a dyadic relationship dealing with the presence of some common threat. Two states cooperate to obtain security from some challenge, and they could not successfully or more efficiently acquire this security were they to act alone. Moreover, security interdependence, defined as the existence of potential mutual cost from a threat and therefore mutual benefit from military cooperation, is fairly constrained. States assist each other with security problems because that assistance eventually rebounds and benefits oneself, either due to an explicit exchange of benefits or because one partner occupies some strategic position of interest to the other. However, the gains from cooperation are assumed to accrue only to the two participating states.

However, there is no inherent reason why bilateral military cooperation should produce only bilateral gains. The nature of security interdependence can create the potential for multinational or even systemic improvements from two state’s policy coordination. For example, in the debates surrounding the creation of NATO, Truman administration officials repeatedly em-

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5 In the capability aggregation model, it comes from an external third party. For ally restraint, the threat is internal to the alliance, while under hierarchical models, states can be threatened by domestic opponents or even the collapse of the hierarchical relationship itself.

6 Note that, while most alliance theories conceive of threat as in military terms, my definition can encompass non-military challenges. For example, while the Holy Alliance coordinated and employed military means, it was formed against the threat of democratic revolutions and uprisings.
phasized that French-German security cooperation would reduce military tensions between the two countries. But it would also contribute in greater European stability. That, in turn, could improve Europe’s collective response to military and political pressure by the Soviet Union and its allies. In addition to the wider benefits accruing from bilateral security cooperation, this example also illustrates how the creation of an internal restraint alliance (France-Germany) would assist a capability aggregation partnership against the USSR. However, the externalities that security interdependence creates can lead to the familiar free-riding problem. France withdrew from integrated NATO command in 1966 secure in the knowledge that any conventional Soviet attack would first have to overcome NATO forces in West Germany. Unlike, say, Italy, Germany, or Norway, withdrawal from the alliance’s command structure would result in a much smaller loss of French security, as interdependence would have ensured that Paris was protected regardless of its participation.

Consequently, a state’s alliance organizational strategy emerges from two imperatives. The first is the desire to capture security externalities that emerge from a cooperative response to common threats (from whatever source). The second is the desire to mitigate or prevent exploitative behavior on the part of one’s partners or potential partners by carefully delineating the limits of allied cooperation and action. In other words, alliance organization strategy defines an excludable but non-rivaled “club good” (Buchanan, 1965), driven by two key characteristics of a threat: its capacity for diffusion and its complexity. This in turn leads to two forms of security interdependence, the first of which I call geographic interdependence. This is a measure of how far a given threat will extend from its source, how many states are affected or endangered by it, and how widespread the response can or must be. Geographic interdependence serves as a precondition for two elements of an alliance’s structure: whether it exists at all and its membership size. In the absence of mutual security gains born of common threat, there is little incentive for one state to assist another militarily. However, the wider the potential geographic diffusion of a threat, the more states that can gain security benefits from military cooperation, thereby accounting for variation in the size of alliance membership.

State participation in an alliance can be prompted by geographic interdependence in two ways. First, there is threat projection, defined as a threat’s geographic reach through specific channels within a given time frame. A common example of this is military power projection. A country possessing only short-range missiles and limited logistics capacity can pose a threat solely
to its immediate neighbors. If it procured ICBMs, long-range bombers, and a blue water navy, however, it could pose a challenge to far more states. This increased range would raise the common security interests of those threatened states and thereby enhance the gains from cooperation, either with each other or with their militarily acquisitive common neighbor. That said, threat projection is not reducible to military capability, as many state threats are non-military in nature. The Holy Alliance was previously mentioned as an example of this, but much of NATO’s early work focused on providing military aid packages to alleviate European budget constraints. This would strengthen their economies and constrain the power of Communist political parties.

Second, the response to a threat can impel security cooperation. High geographic interdependence suggests that a state will need to close off multiple lines of attack. If terrorists, for example, attempt to use planes as suicide bombs, then it does the U.S. little good to shutdown flights from particular safe havens. The attackers could simply fly to, say, Germany and carry out their operation from there. Instead, the widespread means by which this threat can diffuse compels the U.S. to coordinate security procedures with all countries with incoming flights. Alliance membership decisions operate under a similar logic. France pushed for Italian membership into NATO to place a buffer (in the form of an alliance commitment) between its border and a possible Soviet line of advance. In addition, economies of scale in security production (Lake, 1999; Bensahel, 2007; Moeller, 2013) can add additional incentive for states to cooperate militarily. The achievement of increasing returns makes it comparatively easier to respond to a given threat, if the necessary costs can be paid. The U.S. pushed for founding North Atlantic Treaty membership for Norway, Iceland, and Portugal because those countries could serve as essential transport hubs for American materiel going to Europe.

Incorporating any single state into an alliance will pose individuated costs and benefits based on geographic interdependence. Political leaders, when considering the creation or expansion of security partnerships, will weigh the net effects of improving an applicant’s security against what benefits that cooperation can generate for his/her country. Close proximity to an overwhelming threat, domestic political fragmentation, degraded infrastructure, poor policy implementation capacity, cultural or socioeconomic incompatibilities: Any of these could pose crippling costs to military cooperation with another state. At the extreme, the challenges could prove costly enough to scuttle any partnership, or some potential members could simply gain
greater benefit by rejecting security cooperation and being a threat in and of themselves.

The second aspect of security interdependence, which I term issue interdependence, captures the complexity of the threat. Certain security challenges are relatively simple, in that they can be halted via policy in a single issue area. In these cases, their alliance does not require extensive coordination or communication mechanisms. Representatives of the relevant national bureaucracies can agree upon terms of cooperation and direct their subordinates in the chosen policy. There is little need to create alliance-level coordinating bodies, as the policy responses do not spillover into other issue areas and create externalities which can disrupt cooperation. As an example, the Quintuple Alliance merely asked its participants to consult in the event of an international crisis. Threats to European stability could be met by individual national militaries using their own equipment and protocols. The primary matters to be settled were which states would participate in a given operation, the outcome desired, and the compensation, if any, to be given to the chosen intervener(s). In all, relatively “simple” threats – those requiring policy responses in one or only a few issue areas – could be met with weakly institutionalized alliances.

By contrast, other threats pose far more complex challenges for states, as they require policy responses and administrative adjustments in multiple issue areas at once. Moreover, in certain circumstances, actions taken in one issue area will have (potentially negative) spillover effects in one or more others. Institutions in the form of coordinating rules and bodies are therefore needed to find agreement on how to adjudicate competing policy priorities and tradeoffs amongst alliance partners, as well as create mechanisms to limit the costs of exploitative behavior by individual members. For example, NATO eventually came to view the Soviet Union as a multiplex threat requiring political support to non-Communist parties in Europe; financial assistance to ailing European economies; economic coordination amongst

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7I define an issue area as a group of policy problems which share one or more core traits, and therefore are typically handled by a defined and persistent body of actors, problem-solving approaches, and institutional machinery. (Brewer, 1992)

8The idea of institutions emerging to deal with policy spillover is fairly common in IR theory. Wallander and Keohane make a similar argument to mine based on the idea of “issue density” (Wallander and Keohane, 1999, 31-2), although the same underlying concept has been applied to understand regional economic integration (Schmitter, 1969, 1970), the rules by which the GATT/WTO promotes free trade (Bagwell and Staiger, 1999), and the logic behind issue linkage strategies in international negotiations. (Lowi, 1964, 1972; Zimmerman, 1973; Potter, 1980)
the Atlantic states to maintain sufficient military forces; coordination on training, equipment, and strategic plans; basing and overflight rights; intelligence sharing; and the use of nuclear weapons. Administrative bodies or working groups were established to provide institutionalized contact between the relevant national representatives, to enable specialized NATO bureaucrats to execute alliance-wide policy, and to allow states to coordinate their efforts across these many areas. As with many international institutions, alliance bodies and rules help to structure member expectations, to provide mechanisms through which competing interests can be bargained over, and to enable states to develop coordinated approaches to new challenges. Externalities can be managed through negotiated side payments or procedural changes. In doing so, these bodies give shape to the partnership's club good, outlining its geographic borders and the limits of policy coordination and military action as it will affect both alliance members and third parties (like potential new partners).

Responses to security challenges can also create domestic challenges for political leaders, adding to a threat's complexity. First, the alliance's procedures can conflict with the bureaucratic or political powers of domestic bodies. For example, a key issue in American deliberations over the North Atlantic Treaty's wording was whether Article 5 would automatically trigger a declaration of war, usurping Congress' powers and possibly handing them to the Executive. Second, certain domestic actors may have acute preferences about providing security guarantees to particular states. While not a formal alliance, Mearshiemer and Walt have discussed the role of Jewish-American lobbying groups in explaining American support for Israel. Similarly, Nixon - when considering the shift in recognition from Taiwan to China - worried about the power of domestic groups, particularly the Taiwanese diaspora. On the flip side, the Cuban diaspora arguably has a strong role in preventing a thaw in U.S. relations towards that country. Finally, some domestic groups dislike the (perceived or real) loss of state autonomy and policy flexibility. This was most notably seen in the traditional American aversion to “entangling alliances,” as well as De Gaulle's antipathy to NATO in the 1960s. The political power of all these groups can impose certain costs on government leaders seeking to conclude security partnerships with other states. Moreover, current and potential allies may fear that these domestic divisions can undermine the alliance, either in whole or in part. France was left out of certain meetings debating the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty due to the Communist Party's influence in the French political system. Institutionalized negotiating fora and internal coordinating organizations can
help to resolve these political tensions by delimiting the scope of alliance commitments, providing multiple arenas for policy debate to avoid strategic dangers, and tweaking rules and procedures to avoid domestic political sensitivities.

In short, higher levels of issue interdependence lead to a state preference for greater intra-alliance coordination and institutionalization. Whereas geographic interdependence determines whether sufficient mutual interest is present for a security institution to exist, as well as its membership size, issue interdependence delineates the rules, benefits, and costs of membership, giving shape to the alliance’s club good.\(^9\)

### 4.2 Explaining Changes in Alliance Organizational Form

We can use this framework of security interdependence and alliance structure to explain changes in state preferences over alliance organizational strategy over time, as fluctuations in the relative frequency of particular alliance forms reflect the changing nature of threats facing states. In addition, this approach can also account for the general decline in the appearance of certain types of coordinating mechanisms. One noteworthy trend from the graphs above is that, when formal mediation and arbitration procedures become a prevalent feature of alliances, specification of contributions and threats decline. Fig. 11 combines the relevant graphs for easier comparison, and it suggests a certain “flip-flopping” in the time periods when a capability aggregation model versus an ally restraint one might be more relevant and appropriate. While the pattern generally holds, starting in the early to mid-20th century we see a relatively steady decline in the presence of these coordinating mechanisms. This would initially seem like a challenge to my theory. With the increasing complexity of modern military threats (Biddle, 2004), why would we see a general decline in alliance coordination mechanisms?\(^9\)

Closer examination of the data, however, reveals that alliances are not be-

\(^9\) At this juncture, it is important to note one potential problem with my theory. The two forms of security interdependence may not necessarily be independent, making it difficult to isolate the specific effects from each type. It is certainly possible that distance (as a loose proxy for geographic interdependence) reduces both threat projection as well as its complexity. It may require fewer policy levers to effectively address a more distant threat. Alternatively, alliances may need to water down their provisions and obligations in order to incorporate new states, or heavy coordination requirements could deter states from participating.
coming less institutionalized. Rather, states are shedding “specific assets” (particularly in multinational, highly institutionalized alliances) and instead are establishing more general and flexible coordinating groups to take the place of the provisions described above. (Wallander, 2000) These bodies are then setting up whatever ancillary institutions may be necessary. (Fig. 12) I propose that, although past threats have demonstrated high complexity, the pace of technological change was such that political leaders could reasonably determine the necessary policy mechanisms when negotiating the alliance treaty. In line with my theory, however, modern threats have attained such complexity that states require much more flexible, “general assets” that can adapt and cope with multifaceted challenges, particularly when the appropriate policy responses are not known ex ante.

A final theoretical point on credible commitment should be addressed. While state obligations and promises are subject to the credible commitment problem, higher levels of institutionalization and greater membership can both help deal with this challenge. Institutions can raise the cost of defection
and the gains from cooperation, while wider membership increases substitution costs. That is, it may be relatively easy for a country to find an appropriate substitute for the security it gains from a bilateral alliance. In a multinational one, that same country would find it much more difficult to identify transposable partners or renegotiate its commitments with every single member.

In light of this, it may be less clear how low membership, low institutionalization alliances (the upper-left hand quadrant of Table 1) can meet these same challenges. While the benefits from security externalities are limited, the credible commitment logic would suggest that states must still pay some cost to demonstrate that they will not renge on their promises. Moreover, as described above, states are apparently quite selective about these agreements and want them to be visible and known.

The costs are paid, I argue, in three ways. First, these security partnerships are just as public as their larger or more institutionalized counterparts, and a higher percentage have required domestic ratification, serving as a costly

Figure 12: Percentage of Alliances with a Permanent Bureaucracy or a Named Coordinating Organization
signal of intent. (Morrow, 2000; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001) It is notable that, within this subset of alliances, secret ones have double the violation rate of their public counterparts. Second, these simple alliances could form the basis for additional non-military and non-security agreements, raising the costs from defection. (Gowa, 1995) And finally, due to their generally public nature, the alliances are often "positional:" They can solidify expectations about a state’s behavior towards a major power or alliance block, thereby cutting off opportunities for security cooperation with competing countries or blocks. The pre-existing network of alliances, and a state’s declared relationship to particular portions of it, can raise opportunity/substitution costs such that these simple alliances can still serve as credible commitments. (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001, 784) In addition, this network limits the available positions that states can take, in keeping with the low average number of alliances that states participate in. This may also account for the persistent drop in average membership size we see after major international wars, as states reshuffle their alliances to deal with new sources of security interdependence.

5 Theoretical Advances and Additional Implications

Three additional points bear mention. First, note that the alliance purpose approaches can each be subsumed under this theory. My argument is agnostic about the source of threat, which is the primary dividing line between these arguments. However, geographic interdependence captures those threats from a common source or internal to an alliance, while issue interdependence can encompass the domestic threats that often motivate hierarchical models. Instead, I focus on the potential diffusion and complexity of threats, which provides greater theoretical leverage in exploring how state interests delimit the geographic and institutional boundaries of security partnerships. The previous theories, for example, say little about why states do not simply dump all their alliance commitments into a single grand coalition. My theory can explain where those physical and functional boundaries are, both in the creation of an alliance and as the partnership changes in response to emerging or receding security challenges.

Second, while my research centers on alliances, the approach is potentially applicable to other forms of security cooperation, and in this way, follows on
insights from Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001). For example, nuclear cooperation has displayed bilateral (the SALT and START treaties), multilateral (the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), and small group forms (the Limited Test Ban Treaty). It is plausible that they reflect the different diffusion threats that participants face. NPT members, for example, share a common interest in preventing the spread of nuclear material for military purposes, as well as information sharing on safe, civilian use of atomic power. The SALT and START reductions of American and Soviet nuclear stockpiles naturally interested many other states. However, the monitoring, verification, and sustained political support necessary for these treaties meant that other states would gain little security benefit from direct participation unless they too had enormous stockpiles of strategic weapons.

Finally, geographic and issue interdependence could be used to explain a variety of other outstanding questions in alliance dynamics and state behavior. To start, the current literature provides little traction for differentiating the strength and nature of ties within an alliance. Arguably, France’s withdrawal from NATO’s integrated command, for example, had greater military, political, and social repercussions for its immediate European neighbors than for the U.S. Cha (2000) notes that greater U.S. interest in its East Asian alliances serves to restrain conflict between Japan and Korea, who would otherwise engage in more frequent political conflict. By specifying the individual state security dependencies (on an alliance or even on particular partners within an alliance), we can more easily visualize how, say, unilateral action by one member will have variable effects on the other partners. This can be used, for example, to model the alliance “shock” that would occur if one member reneged or defected on its commitments. This approach can also account for how the remaining members adapt to that abandonment, as well as how institutional levers are used to bring errant partners back into alignment with the alliance. Finally, my research may be able to address a rising policy concern. Currently, many states are militarily and politically tied to one dominant power (the U.S.), but are increasingly tied economically to a rising one (China). A key policy question is determining if, when, and under what conditions these “stretched” states will abandon the support of the U.S. in favor of the benefits from China. The key issue is substitution cost, and by unpacking the factors that lock countries into particular alliances, we can perhaps understand when states may reach a tipping point and switch partners.
6 Conclusion

The following chapter will provide statistical evidence supporting my theory, drawing on spatial econometrics to answer most of the theoretical questions and two-mode social network analysis for the question about low membership, low institutionalization alliances. Data availability should not be too much of a concern, and I will primarily draw upon Leeds’ ATOP dataset, supplemented with figures from COW, the Penn World Tables, and relevant geographic databases. The key challenge lies in identifying suitable and independent proxies for my explanatory variables. While I have toyed with the idea of including a simple formal model, I ultimately concluded that it would add little that had not already been covered by the literature on bargaining and negotiations. My theory would determine a state’s ideal points, but the actual institutional result should align with previous work on the determining importance of bargaining strength and substitution costs. However, I would greatly appreciate any suggestions if this conclusion is in error.

Subsequent chapters will use case studies to elucidate my causal mechanism and verify the importance of my independent variables. At the moment, I plan on conducting two paired comparisons, the first on a pair of pre-20th century cases and the second comparing NATO and U.S. commitments in East Asia. For NATO, I will explore the challenges around its initial formation, particularly the debates over which states should be invited, as well as competing conceptions of the alliance’s role and function in individual state security policy. I will also explore how NATO has adapted its organizational structure to changing threats in the post-Cold War environment. Finally, I would provide a third qualitative chapter tying the comparisons together and fleshing out my time trend argument.

I would appreciate any and all comments and suggestions on this draft theory chapter, which can be sent to rkuo@princeton.edu.
References


