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Political System Similarity and the Choice of Allies

DO DEMOCRACIES FLOCK TOGETHER, OR DO OPPOSITES ATTRACT?

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Does the nature of a nation's political institutions influence the types of countries with which it allies? Some previous research has suggested that democracies tend to ally with other democracies. This study reexamines alliance patterns by assessing the broader linkage between regime type and alliance partnership. The authors present a refinement of previous research designs, using new data from Polity III and the updated correlates of war (COW) alliance data sets to analyze all alliances from 1815 to 1992. The bipolar alliance structures of the cold war (NATO and the Warsaw Pact) appear to be aberrations in their strong ideological content. In general, there is very little correlation between alliance dyads and regime type. Surprisingly, democracies are *less* likely to ally with one another than highly autocratic regimes. Regimes of most types seem to prefer to ally with partners of dissimilar type. The authors conclude that this is due to so-called gains from trade within alliance dyads.

At its simplest, alliance formation may be seen as a two-stage process—each state's decision to seek an alliance and each state's selection of a partner or partners.¹ We do not dispute that states in the first stage look primarily (or perhaps entirely) at questions of threat and security. Once the decision is made to seek an alliance, however, does domestic politics play a role in choosing a partner? We examine this question by

1. We acknowledge that in the two-stage process we describe, neither stage is truly independent. For the time being, however, it may serve to conceive of alliance formation in this manner and pursue a general model at some future date.

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looking at data on alliances from 1815 to 1992. We assess the ability of two contrasting models of alliance behavior to explain our observations. We then present a test that distinguishes between hypotheses drawn from the two models.

One hypothesis is that politically similar states are biased toward selecting each other as alliance partners. States with similar regimes share in common domestic political institutions, issues, and ideologies that may make them more compatible counterparts. Democracies should be particularly prone to ally together due to either political affinity, domestic public pressure, or a shared sense of threat (Doyle 1986). Extension of the Kantian argument about liberal peace suggests that joint democratic alliances provide greater benefits to their members. By extension, autocracies also are expected to show a predisposition to coally.

Another possibility is that politically *dissimilar* states bias in favor of selecting each other as alliance partners. This could be due to so-called gains from trade within alliance dyads. Gains from trade occur when two or more parties sell, exchange, or barter goods or services in which each possesses a comparative advantage. In the context of alliances, this means that partners may have something to offer each other beyond security aggregation that cannot be easily obtained without allying. The possibility that gains from trade influence alliance decisions has been suggested by recent literature, although the concept has yet to be applied in the context of domestic regime type.

LITERATURE

Surprisingly little serious attention has been given to the relationship between domestic politics and alliance choice. The alliance literature traditionally has argued that security concerns dominate all aspects of alliance politics. Some recent research, however, has suggested that the motives for alliance formation are far more diverse. In particular, new studies have begun to examine the impact of a variety of nonsecurity variables on the decision to ally, on the durability of alliance ties, and on the choice of alliance partners.

Traditional research on alliances has operated in the realist paradigm "in which [it is argued that] the need for security dominates, even compels alliance choices" (Siverson and Starr 1994, 147). A second, recent, and less comprehensive body of literature has focused on the trade-offs inherent in alliances (Altfeld 1984; Conybeare 1992, 1994a, 1994b; Morrow 1987, 1991, 1994; Sorokin 1994a, 1994b, forthcoming). Exchanges between alliance members are not strictly limited to the aggregated provision of security. Stylized goods such as wealth or autonomy also trade hands through the medium of an alliance.

Both Altfeld (1984) and Morrow (1991) have pointed out that the majority of alliances are not made up of collections of powerful nations but are asymmetric, in which a large state and one or several small states combine. Obviously, the increased security provided by minor nations is not likely to be of substantial benefit to the safety of a great power. The alliance must exist to provide different benefits to dissimilar members. Both Altfeld (1984) and Morrow (1991) have argued that asymmetric

alliances provide trade-offs for members between security and other items, such as increased autonomy or wealth. Morrow (1991) has tested several empirical predictions from a formalized asymmetric alliance model. The central finding of the research was that alliances between large and small nations are more stable and durable than alliances between nations of similar size and capability. Gains from trade thus play a substantial role in explaining observed alliance behavior.

Other efforts have focused on the trade-offs states appear to make between alliances and the provision for self-protection through the purchase of arms. Conybeare (1994a) and Sorokin (1994b) examined the possibility that states “mix” arms and alliances to optimize certain strengths and weaknesses inherent in each approach. Conybeare (1992) extended the insight made by Snyder (1984) that states in alliances face trade-offs between the dangers of abandonment and entrapment. States may optimize alliance “portfolios” by choosing a range of security partners with different propensities toward risk.

Setting aside the question of what makes a state decide to seek an alliance,² several authors have attempted to explain how states choose among various potential alliance partners. Barnett and Levy (1991, 370) suggested that domestic politics can influence alliance choices in many ways:

States may shun alliances in general because of domestically generated preferences for isolationist policies, and they may reject certain states as potential alliance partners because of ideological differences, religious considerations, or exclusionary trade or financial policies that are driven by domestic interests or ethnic politics.

Siverson and Starr (1994, 158) established that “regime changes produce shifts in alliance portfolios.” Their research is admirable in that it examined both the decision whether to seek an alliance and the next stage of choosing (or switching) alliance partners. However, their research method did not allow for a thorough examination of either stage of the alliance process. Although this was not a problem for Siverson and Starr’s research question, examining an association between alliance formation and regime type requires a design that can distinguish between alliance seeking and the choice of an alliance partner.

It is often said that birds of a feather flock together. Indeed, with respect to alliances, anecdotal evidence suggests that a state may seek an alliance partner with a political system similar to its own.³ It is no accident, the argument goes, that the United States and the United Kingdom have an alliance, both being liberal democracies.⁴ Walt (1987, 181) defined this argument, which he termed *ideological solidarity*, as the “tendency for states with similar internal traits to prefer alignment with one another to alignment

2. See Lalman and Newman (1990) and Thompson, Duvall, and Dia (1979). For a discussion of whether the number of alliances in the system is random, see Li and Thompson (1978), McGowan and Rood (1975), Midlarsky (1981, 1983), and Siverson and McCarthy (1982).

3. Note that this is not the main subject of Barnett and Levy (1991, 370). They used a case study to evaluate the propositions that domestic politics influence the ability of leaders to apply resources to national defense (which influences the decision whether to seek an ally to counter a threat) and the possibility that leaders may seek external alliances to counter internal regime threats.

4. One could argue that *trade* actually drives alliances between similar political systems. For the opposite causal story (i.e., alliances lead to economic trade), see Gowa and Mansfield (1993).

with states whose domestic characteristics are different." Using what he described as a "focused comparison and a statistical-correlative analysis" (pp. 11-12) of 36 alliances, Walt found that the ideological solidarity hypothesis is only weakly supported and that ideologically similar states may align with each other due to some other variable affecting them both (e.g., the same external threat). However, the generalizability of his conclusions may be limited by a small sample size and a narrative-inductive approach to theorizing.

A different approach was employed by Siverson and Emmons (1991), who attempted to test directly the impact of joint democraticness on alliance choices. Pairing data from Polity I on the democraticness of regimes with the correlates of war (COW) alliance data sets, they concluded that (for the period from 1946 to 1965) democracies were biased toward allying with each other.⁵ In contrast, Siverson and Emmons reported that democracies were not biased toward joint alliance during the interwar years (1919 to 1939).⁶

Siverson and Emmons (1991) sought to address the impact of political system similarity on the second stage of the alliance formation process. However, their research design did not allow them to accurately distinguish between the two stages. First, they identified the number of observed democratic-democratic pairs in both the alliance data and the system as a whole. Second, they used the percentage of observed democratic-democratic pairs in the system to derive the proportion of alliance pairs expected to be democratic-democratic dyads. Finally, they compared the estimated proportion to the observed value. Siverson and Emmons (1991) found that there were fewer democratic pairs in the interwar years than expected and more democratic pairs in the post-World War II period than expected. They concluded, "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" (p. 285).

Thompson (1995, 18-34) attempted to check the results of Siverson and Emmons (1991) by using a different data set on regime type and a longer time frame (the period from 1830 to 1986). However, he also compared the number of actual democratic-democratic alliances to the number expected, calculated by the number of democratic states in the system.

This approach assumed that democracies are no more or less likely to form alliances than other types of regimes (i.e., regime type does *not* influence the choice to seek an alliance).⁷ Thus Siverson and Emmons (1991) and Thompson (1995) implicitly assumed that the sample of countries seeking alliance was randomly selected from the population of all countries, and no factors (such as threats and the ability to counter-threats) influenced the decision to seek an alliance. This is particularly problematic, given that both pieces investigated the proposition that democracy has a significant effect on the later stage of choosing an alliance partner.

5. For a discussion of the impact of this argument on realist theory, see Spiro (1994, 79-81).

6. This is Siverson and Emmons's overall characterization of the interwar period (1991, 295). They note, however, that the first half of the interwar period showed a bias *toward* democratic-democratic alliances, and the second half of the period showed a bias *against* such alliances (1991, 298, 302-3).

7. Bolks (1995) provided a more thorough examination of the link between regime type and the tendency to seek alliances.

Suppose that all types of countries do not seek to form alliances (stage 1 in our conception of alliance decision making) to the same degree, and instead democracies are less (or more) likely to seek alliances than other regimes.⁸ We would then be overestimating (or underestimating) the number of expected democratic alliance dyads. The approach used in previous research thus suffers from the danger that we might impute preferences about alliance partners (stage 2) that are really due to variance in the propensity to form alliances (stage 1). Researchers seeking to understand alliance behavior through empirical observations face a difficult problem. States encounter a large number of strategic concerns that systematically influence their decision making. Tests of the effect of regime type on alliance formation must either control for these “selection effects” or operationalize hypotheses in such a way that the effects of selection do not compromise the results.

There is a second related problem with the approach. Suppose that states do not prefer to ally with other states of similar regime type but instead prefer alliances with dissimilar regimes. Now suppose that either different numbers of various regime types exist or that there is a differing propensity among types to seek alliances. We would not then expect the number of states of differing regime types seeking to form alliances to be uniform. With a relatively large number of democracies seeking alliance partners in the post-World War II period, for example, many democracies might have been forced to choose as partners other democratic regimes. A substantial number of democratic-democratic alliances would have resulted not because democracies preferred to co-ally but because relatively few regimes of other types had sought alliance partners.⁹ Statistical analysis would indicate a correlation between regime types but would be theoretically misleading. The likelihood that a democratic state would ally with another democratic state would increase, but again we would not know whether this was due to an affinity for similar regimes among those choosing to ally or an affinity for alliances among those of certain regime types. Thus the conclusions this literature reaches could be the result of other factors not related to the argument that democracies are biased toward allying with each other.

Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992) also were interested in assessing the validity of claims of a democratic-democratic alliance bias. To test this possibility, they examined the similarity of alliance portfolios held by regimes of similar type. They compared democracies and nondemocracies to see if democracies have more similar alliance portfolios. Counter to predictions, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992, 151-52) found that democratic dyads are no more likely to hold similar alliance portfolios than nondemocratic dyads. The result challenges the notion that democratic alliance behavior is systematically different from the behavior of nondemocracies, but it does not directly assess whether states consider regime type when choosing alliance partners. The test is unable to distinguish between a world in which states of all types choose allies because of their domestic political structures and a world in which alliance choices are purely motivated by security concerns.

8. For example, U.S. isolationism and British and French appeasement before World War II.

9. Indeed, the efforts of the United States following World War II to establish collective security arrangements were so aggressive that some have referred to this period as “Pact-o-mania.”

THEORY

Although not often recognized, the question of the relationship between regime type similarity and alliance partner choice is really composed of two elements. First, is there a relationship between regime type and the choice of allies? Second, is this relationship positive or negative? In other words, do birds of a feather flock together, or do opposites attract? It has generally been assumed that if any relationship has existed between regime type and alliance formation, that relationship must be positive. The modest amount of previous research has presented the argument for why states might wish to ally with similar regimes. In this section, we outline the case for why states prefer to ally with their opposites.¹⁰

Systematic differences in the behavior of regimes by type occur in at least two significant ways. First, democracies, by definition, impose constraints on their leaders that are absent in autocracies. Domestic institutions and constituents inhibit rapid, precipitous action by a democratic leader on behalf of an ally. Use of force, even to fulfill alliance commitments, must be explained and justified. Democratic institutions ensure that the public must be rallied before leaders can take military action (Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett 1993). In addition, popular preferences may weigh against meeting alliance commitments. The public may not approve of military action, and a democratic leader's efforts on behalf of the ally then will imperil the government (Fearon 1994; Smith 1996). In contrast, autocrats can act without mustering public opinion (at least initially). Autocrats may choose to keep their public uninformed or bias reporting in such a manner that citizens are bound to support the decision to meet alliance commitments.

Second, democratic leaders generally spend less time in office than their autocratic counterparts (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995, 1996). This should exacerbate the differences mentioned earlier. States considering alliances are no doubt concerned that potential partners will abandon their commitments in times of crisis (Snyder 1984; Sorokin 1994a, 1994b). Allies do have conflicting motives. Making good on alliance commitments can be a costly and unpopular proposition. On the other hand, a reputation for coming to the assistance of allies influences a state's ability to establish preferable international institutions. The value of such a reputation to individual leaders will vary depending on leaders' expectations of what they will be able to recoup. For leaders of democracies, the shorter term in office equates to expectations of fewer rewards for international reliability.

For democracies, reputation amounts to a problem of public goods (Olson 1971; Sandler 1992). A reputation for keeping alliance commitments benefits the state. If a state is seen as a reliable alliance partner, it will then also be a more desirable alliance partner. Still, the problem for democracies is that the reputation of the state is in the temporary trusteeship of a series of chief executives. Although it may be in a leader's interest to make good on alliance commitments, it may not. The investment made by

10. Presentation at this point in the article of the gains from the trade model does not follow the exact progression of our research. We suspected the need for an alternative model to "birds of a feather" only after performing correlational tests detailed later in the data and analysis section.

previous leaders in the credibility of a democracy is hampered by the fact that they will not be able to benefit as greatly from their own efforts. In addition to the competing concerns of domestic and international constraints, democracies are hampered because national prestige is seen as less intimately entwined with the promises of specific leaders. Autocrats, on the other hand, are both direct beneficiaries of a strong reputation (because leaders stay in office longer) and indirect beneficiaries (because leaders are more closely associated with the state).

For democracies, once the decision to support an ally has been made, greater resources are supplied to the effort. Public support translates into public activity on behalf of the military effort. Because this public support is necessary for military action in democracies, the public support and resulting public activity will (on average) be larger than in autocracies where leaders decide for themselves whether to use military force. Democratic leaders also have incentives to continue military efforts for some time once public support has been marshaled. Such leaders stake their domestic reputation on winning the military efforts. If these efforts go poorly (and assuming leaders have private information about the state of the war), democratic leaders will more likely choose to continue fighting rather than suffer at the polls (Fearon 1994; Smith 1996).

Thus different regime types bring different qualities to alliances. Democracies require public support for international interventions and will be slower to mobilize for such interventions. Once public support is mobilized, however, democratic states are likely to be durable fighters. Autocratic regimes, on the other hand, are not dependent on the will of the people to begin fighting. However, autocracies are always vulnerable to internal dissent. This is true not only because of the centralized elite-dominant nature of autocratic systems but also because the method of removing autocratic leaders often involves bullets rather than ballots.

We do not know for certain whether leaders are cognizant of these systematic differences in the behavior of regimes, but their alliance decision making would clearly benefit from such knowledge. From this perspective, politically asymmetric alliances have the advantage of combining the complementary qualities of democratic and autocratic partners. A democracy, seeking an alliance partner, should be expected to choose an ally that is able to mobilize quickly in its defense. An autocracy, similarly, should be expected to seek allies that have a reputation for long-term commitment. Among those countries seeking alliance partners, we expect opposites to attract.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We used as our population the universe of alliance dyads in the period between 1815 and 1992. This approach had a number of advantages. First, we included the maximum number of cases over the longest possible period of time available. We hoped in part that this would have allowed us to account for general trends rather than short-term fluctuations in alliance formation. Second, we attempted to assess the validity of inferences made in Siverson and Emmons (1991) about the modal behavior of alliance-seeking nations. Because any period could be asymptomatic, we included

as long a span of time as possible. Third, it was not clear that restricting analysis to any segment of the data available would have been free from the criticism that such an approach is arbitrary. We further believed that the combination of a large sample and an improved research design controlled for security concerns and the tendency for the distribution of capabilities to vary somewhat over time.

Our research design attempted to control for factors leading to the decision to seek an alliance (threat, security, arms, etc.). As we have already suggested, we conceived of these factors as occurring in a previous stage of alliance decision making. We also sought to control for two major factors that may influence the choice of alliance partner (contiguity and threat). The prevailing factor that remained a possible influence was political system similarity.

One might argue that the actions of the first stage are somehow predicated on regime type. Indeed, we made this argument in the previous section. Certain regimes might be more or less likely to seek alliances than others. Such an argument is not likely to have a significant impact on our analysis, however. Because we did not confound the effects of both stages, we were able to make inferences about the effects of regime type on the second stage, independent of any effects that occurred in the first stage.

As we already have suggested, the correlation of regime types in alliance dyads may be closely associated with the distribution in the sample of regime types seeking alliances. For this reason, it would be desirable to pay careful attention to the underlying distribution of states seeking alliances. Of course, this is unobservable. What we can do is examine the distribution of regime types that achieve alliances to determine whether the distribution has any unusual characteristics. For example, if the sample is skewed or distributed bimodally, researchers will be unable to distinguish between states seeking alliances with similar or dissimilar regimes based on correlational analysis alone. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of regime types of states seeking alliance is bimodal. In addition, regime types are not uniformly distributed through time. Because the number of democratic states expanded greatly in the postwar period, we can expect that the number of alliances involving democratic participants also has been heavily weighted toward recent decades.

One might also assert that security concerns influence the choice of alliance partners. Certain types of political regimes may be systematically more powerful militarily than others. This is likely to be the case because democratic states have a tendency to be more affluent than nondemocratic states (Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994). Although individual states are likely to consider size and capability when choosing among possible allies, it is not clear that such influences constitute trends in the data. Classical alliance theory emphasizes the need to aggregate capabilities through alliances and thus implies that states should prefer bigger or militarily more capable partners. The newer alliance literature, however, presents an equally plausible argument that states seek alliances with weaker or militarily less capable states. In other words, there is no reason a priori for states of any given regime type to prefer one potential partner over another strictly on the basis of capabilities.

The proximity of nations also may affect the choice of an alliance partner. To account for the possible effects of geographic contiguity, we removed from the data set all countries that have common borders, are separated by less than 200 miles of

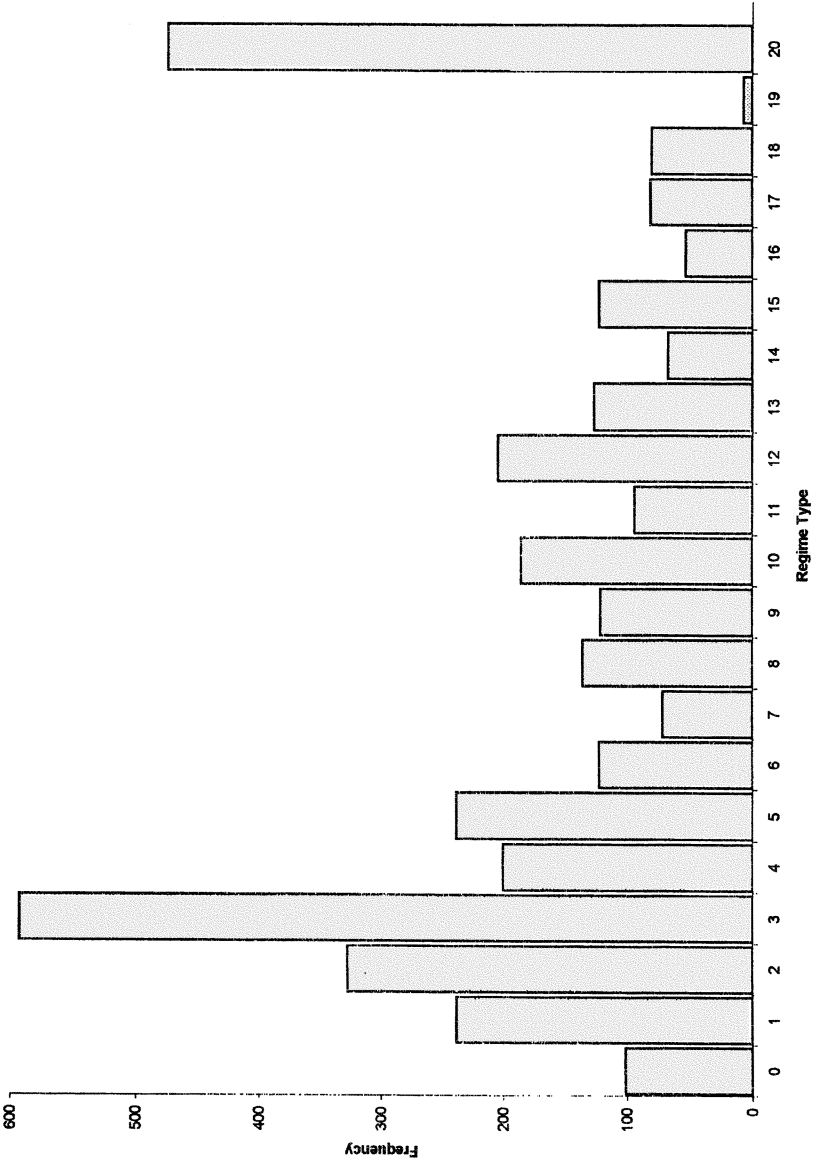


Figure 1: Frequency Distribution of Regime-Type Scores

water, or have colonial possessions that are contiguous or within 200 miles by water (Siverson and Starr 1991; Starr and Most 1976).¹¹

Some aspects of threat may influence the choice of an alliance partner. Because certain regime types tend to cluster together (e.g., democracies in Europe, autocracies in Africa), states seeking alliances may find that their choices are limited to neighbors of similar type. This could be a damaging criticism of the research design used here and elsewhere. The tendency would be to spuriously enhance correlation of regime types in alliance dyads. One mitigating approach used here and in previous research into alliance partner choice is to control for contiguity. Controlling for contiguity as we do, however, is unlikely to resolve this problem entirely, because regional factors are not completely discounted by removing contiguous states from the data set.¹² Yet the lingering effects of contiguity would likely bias the results *against* our conclusions. If states by necessity choose to ally with states in the same region, correlational analysis would tend to indicate that states of similar regime type are biased toward allying together. As we will show, our research indicates that the opposite is true—states are biased toward allying with dissimilar states. Thus contiguity does not impair our results.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

DATA

For information on alliances, we used the updated COW alliance data set to supplement the original COW alliance data (Small and Singer 1990). For data on political system similarity, we used the newest version of the Polity data set (which includes yearly indicators of the level of autocracy and democracy in each country).¹³ Following the instructions of Jagers and Gurr (1995), we replaced that portion of the Polity II data set (Gurr 1989) that has been updated by the Polity III data set. According to Jagers and Gurr, the Polity III data set is an improvement over Polity II in four aspects: it corrects data entry errors, it uses new coding rules for the entire period (not

11. For a discussion of the literature on geography and war, see Gleditsch (1995). Lemke (1995) discusses ways of accounting for geography with respect to South America. Surprisingly, our results hardly change when contiguous dyads are left in the data set.

12. We believe this problem could be addressed by employing a measure of geographic *distance* rather than by removing contiguous dyads. Eventually, a completely specified model of alliance formation will include a metric indicator of proximity and the difficulty in traversing that distance. Because this has not been attempted in previous alliance research and is not the focus of this article, we leave this item to future research.

13. It is reasonable to suggest that our analysis should be limited to periods in which a substantial number of democracies exists. We do not see using data that cover large parts of the 19th century as a problem in our analysis. Tests of association do not depend on the sample size. If regime type influences alliance formation, the number of cases of a particular regime type present in the sample should not have a noticeable effect on reported results. For example, if democracies in the 19th century all had allied together, then the correlation between regime type and alliance partnership would be very high, regardless of the number of democracies present in the system. On the other hand, if democracies seldom co-ally, then the correlation will be low whether or not most states can be described as democratic. Indeed, significance tests are actually more difficult for small samples.

just the 1972-1986 period, as was the case in Polity II), it is “more responsive to short-term fluctuations in the levels of democracy and autocracy” (p. 472), and it includes data up to 1993.

We reworked the autocracy and democracy scores in the Polity data sets to get a variable for regime type that ranges from 0 to 20.¹⁴ We chose to use this 21-point index rather than dichotomize the data as Siverson and Emmons (1991) and others had done. First, assigning some cutpoint for distinction between democratic and nondemocratic regimes of course had to be quite arbitrary. Second, dichotomizing the data reduced variance and therefore the information available for analysis.

REPLICATING THE RESULTS OF SIVERSON AND EMMONS (1991)

For each alliance in the COW data set, we examined the correlation of the political systems (operationalized by our regime score) for each dyad of the alliance during its first (i.e., formative) year. Assessing the correlation of regime types by dyad allowed us to test the similarity of alliance pairs that were actually formed. Testing the first year of the dyad gave the best indication of the nature of the two political systems at the point at which the decision for partnership was made. Testing correlation of regime type at other points in the alliance may have been misleading in part because of the “stickiness” of institutions and the tendency for functioning partnerships to overcome some of the differences that may develop later. The results of that correlation (and all others for this study) are presented in Table 1.

Our results reconfirm both findings of Siverson and Emmons (1991). For the period from 1919 to 1939, the correlation (Pearson's r) is $-.0048$, and the relationship is not significant ($p \leq .472$).¹⁵ For the 1946 to 1965 period, the correlation is $.3983$ and highly significant ($p \leq .001$). Thus we agree that political system similarity appeared to be much more important in alliance choices after World War II.

FURTHER TESTING

Siverson and Emmons tentatively concluded from these findings that the interwar years were an aberration and that democracies overall have a bias toward allying together (1991, 304-5). One difficulty with such a conclusion is that it is not really clear from their data which period is the aberration and which is the trend. Rather than attempt to discern the trend from the two periods covered by Siverson and Emmons, we expanded the analysis to a much longer period. We tested the claim that the interwar period was an anomaly by extending the analysis back to 1815 and forward to 1992.

14. The Polity data sets include (for each country year) data on autocracy (where 0 is least and 10 is most autocratic) and data on democracy (where 0 is least and 10 is most democratic). We inverted the autocracy scores about 5, so 0 would be most and 10 would be least autocratic. Our regime type variable is the sum of the Polity democracy score and the inverted autocracy score. Thus a country with the most democratic, least autocratic system would score 20, and the country with the most autocratic, least democratic system would score 0.

15. Note that significance tests may not be particularly informative because the data are bimodally distributed. Reported correlations are unaffected by the underlying data distribution and are the real focus of our analysis.

TABLE 1
Correlations between Alliance Choice and Political System Similarity

Time Period	Correlation (Pearson's r)	$p \leq$	Number of Alliance Dyads
1919-1939	-0.0048	0.472	219
1946-1965	0.3983	0.001	817
1815-1992	0.2477	0.001	1,726
1815-1939	0.1276	0.016	286
1946-1992	0.4026	0.001	877
1946-1992 without NATO, Warsaw Pact	0.2049	0.001	756
1815-1992 without NATO, Warsaw Pact	0.1313	0.001	1,605

NOTE: The number of cases in the periods from 1815 to 1939 and 1946 to 1992 does not equal the number of cases in the period from 1815 to 1992 because of the 563 dyads not included from World War II.

At first, our expanded analysis appeared to support Siverson and Emmons's conclusion. The correlation between regime type and alliance partnership for the period between 1815 and 1992 is .2477 ($p \leq .001$), which indicates that political system similarity has moderate explanatory power. However, segmenting the data into time periods led us to a different explanation. For the period between 1815 and 1939, the correlation is .1276. Although we can reject the null hypothesis that the regime types of allies in the period were not correlated ($p \leq .016$), political system similarity does not provide much explanatory power. The data from the postwar period, however, are *so* significant that it appears that the postwar years bias the overall data. For 1946 to 1992, $r = .4026$ ($p \leq .001$).

Why is the postwar period different? We speculate that the ideological nature of the cold war left a unique imprint on alliance choice. To test for this, we removed the dyads from two alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. For the period between 1946 and 1992, the correlation drops to .2049 ($p \leq .001$). Removing 13.8% of the cases (from 877 to 756) drops the correlation by 49.1%. We also found that NATO and the Warsaw Pact dominated the alliance data overall. After removing those two alliances from the 1815 to 1992 data set, the correlation is .1313 ($p \leq .001$). Thus taking out 7% of the cases reduces the correlation by 47%.

On the whole, the validity of the "birds of a feather" hypothesis is limited by its dependence on the cold war alliance framework. The overall correlation between regime type and alliance partner choice is weak; although statistically significant, the relationship is substantively insignificant. In the next section, we test our alternative theoretical approach that opposite regime types co-ally.

TESTING GAINS FROM TRADE

To get a clearer picture of the relationship between democracy and alliance choice, it will help to examine the data in finer gradations. Table 2 is a frequency table listing all dyad pairs contained in the alliance data. Figure 2 represents Table 2 in a more intuitive, graphic form. Each entry in the table identifies the number of dyads of a given pairing of regime types. If regimes of a given type (including democracies)

TABLE 2
 Frequencies of Alliance Formation among All Regime Types,
 1815-1992 (regime categories summarized)

<i>Count</i>	<i>0-2</i>	<i>3-5</i>	<i>6-8</i>	<i>9-11</i>	<i>12-14</i>	<i>15-17</i>	<i>18-20</i>	<i>Row Total</i>
18-20	63	75	42	67	55	37	104	443
15-17	44	65	22	22	29	8 ^a		190
12-14	73	110	38	47	15 ^a			283
9-11	62	79	54	33 ^a				228
6-8	57	73	16^a					146
3-5	199	178						377
0-2	59 ^a							59
Column total	557	580	172	169	99	45	104	1,726

a. Significantly below the mean in its category. These values fail to support the hypothesis that regimes of similar type prefer to co-ally, while failing to reject the hypothesis that regimes prefer to ally with regimes of dissimilar type.

prefer to ally with one another, then the long on-diagonal entries should be larger than entries above or to the left of them. That is, regimes of similar types should be choosing to ally together. As an example, look at the bold, italicized category for type 6 to 8 regimes in Table 2. The value for most similar regimes, (6 to 8) by (6 to 8), is 16, but every other value in the bold, italicized region of the table is higher. This is not consistent with the hypothesis that regimes flock together. In fact, in five of the seven categories, the values on the long diagonal are lower than almost all other values in their respective categories. The implication is that regimes prefer to ally with dissimilar regimes. Birds of a feather prefer not to flock together. Instead, it seems opposites attract.

A more precise way to assess if this is happening is to determine whether each value on the long diagonal is significantly different from what it would be if regime type had no effect on alliance choice. If regime type were independent of alliance choice, the number of cases in any given entry for each category would be about the same as any other entry within that category. If the hypothesis that regimes prefer to ally together is correct, the entries on the long diagonal should be larger than the average for the category. If regimes prefer to ally with dissimilar regimes, the long diagonal entries should be smaller than the mean. We tested the null hypothesis that the long diagonal entries are at least as large as the average. Entries on the long diagonal that have ^a fail to support the null hypothesis at the .05 level. In Table 2, five of the seven entries fail to support the null hypothesis.

Table 3 gives the frequency distribution of regime type combinations for the alliance data, excluding NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Again, the corresponding figure provides a more intuitive representation of the data. When we compare Figure 3 with Figure 2, we see that removing NATO and the Warsaw Pact dramatically reduces the number of dyads in the most democratic-democratic entry, (18 to 20) by (18 to 20). Few highly democratic alliances remain. In both figures, the numbers of non-democratic alliance pairings are high. In Table 3, six of seven entries on the long diagonal fail to support the null hypothesis at the .05 level. What is most surprising is that highly

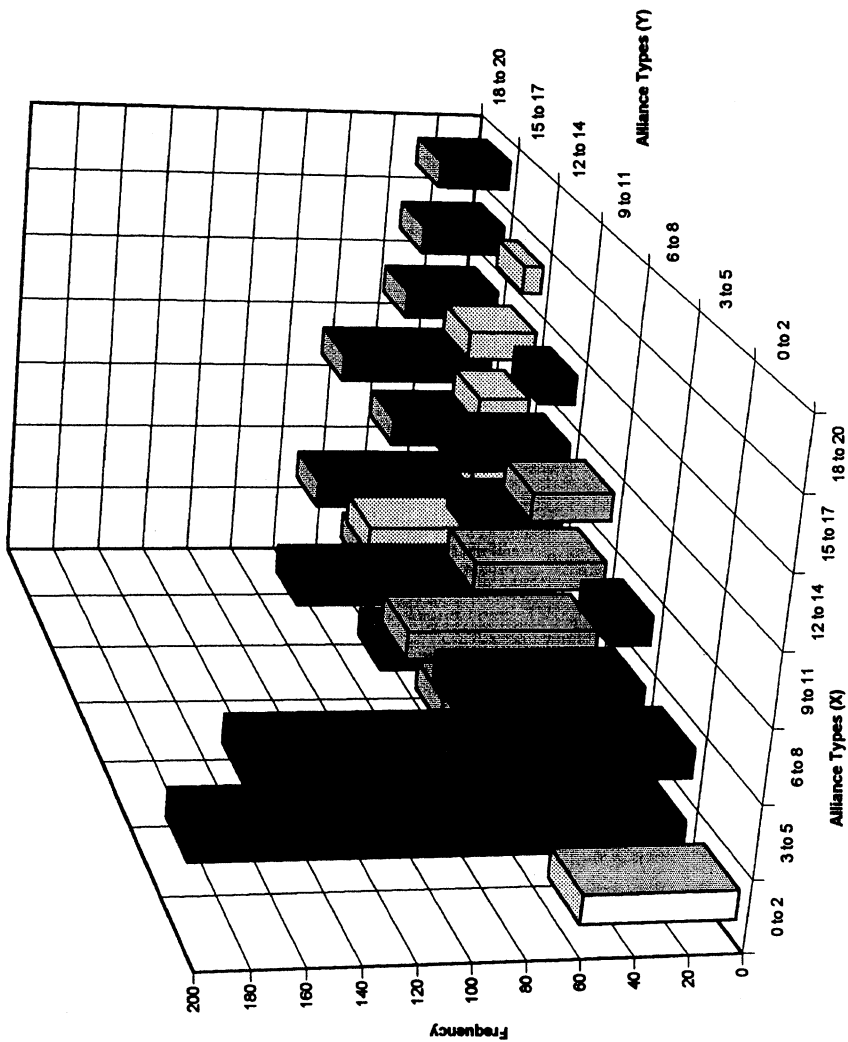


Figure 2: Frequencies of Alliance Formation among All Regime Types, 1815-1992 (regime categories summarized)

TABLE 3
 Frequencies of Alliance Formation, 1815-1992
 (NATO and Warsaw Pact censored, regime categories summarized)

Count	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20	Row Total
18-20	51	74	42	67	41	36	31 ^a	342
15-17	44	65	22	22	29	8 ^a		190
12-14	72	110	38	47	15 ^a			282
9-11	62	79	54	33 ^a				228
6-8	57	73	16 ^a					146
3-5	189	170						359
0-2	58 ^a							58
Column total	533	571	172	169	85	44	31	1,605

a. Significantly below the mean in its category. These values fail to support the hypothesis that regimes of similar type prefer to co-ally, while failing to reject the hypothesis that regimes prefer to ally with regimes of dissimilar type.

nondemocratic nations seem to prefer to ally with other nondemocracies. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the (3 to 5) by (3 to 5) category is larger than the columns in other (3 to 5) entries above it and about the same size as the one entry to its left, (0 to 2) by (3 to 5). Here, birds of a feather are flocking together.

But why? Just as Morrow (1991) pointed out that states of differing size benefit from association through alliances and "gains from trade" in security goods, and Conybeare (1992) noted that a portfolio of differing alliance partners allows optimization of the trade-offs between abandonment and entrapment, we now speculate that alliances between regimes of differing political persuasion offer their members the benefits of trade-offs between the strengths and weaknesses inherent in different political systems. Indeed, this appears to us to be the only explanation consistent with our observations.

In Figure 2 it might be argued that the presence of a large number of cases for entries (18 to 20) by (18 to 20) lends some support to the birds of a feather hypothesis. But this result is time bound and limited to a single alliance. When NATO is removed from the data, as in Figure 3, the (18 to 20) by (18 to 20) entry becomes *smaller* than the six other possible entries in its category.

It also might be argued that although democracies do not flock together, autocracies do, even when the Warsaw Pact is removed from the data. Entry (3 to 5) by (3 to 5) is large, indeed larger than most of the entries in Figure 3. However, the (0 to 2) by (3 to 5) entry is larger than the (3 to 5) by (3 to 5) entry, and the (0 to 2) by (0 to 2) entry is smaller than the (0 to 2) by (3 to 5) entry. This must be explained by a preference of (0 to 2)'s and (3 to 5)'s *for each other*. In other words, states whose regime type puts them in the (0 to 2) entry seek alliance with states of regime type in the entry (3 to 5) over alliance with their own type.

Highly autocratic and highly democratic regimes choose to ally together in Table 2, and many highly autocratic regimes ally together in Table 3 simply because there are large numbers of these regime types in the data. The relatively small number of

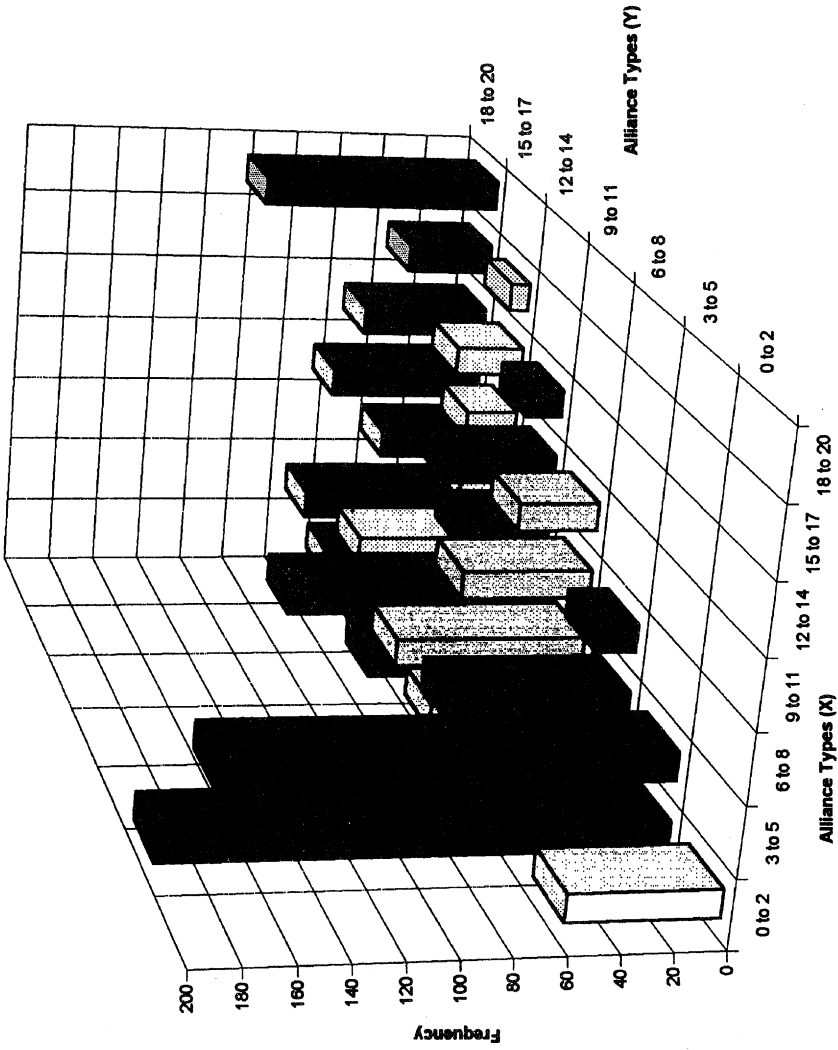


Figure 3: Frequencies of Alliance Formation, 1815-1992 (NATO and Warsaw Pact censored, regime categories summarized)

“desirable” dissimilar alliance partners is taken, and all that is left to choose from are states of similar regime type.

CONCLUSION

First, although our data corroborated the specific results of Siverson and Emmons (1991), we cannot support their conclusions. Extending analysis of alliances throughout the period from 1815 to 1992 fails to support the contention that the interwar period was asymptomatic of alliance formation. Instead, it appears that the superpower-led alliances of the cold war period were more ideological in nature than alliances have been throughout the past 180 years. That the cold war produced atypical alliance formation is not a notion new to this study. Our results, however, substantiate anecdotal arguments to this effect.

Second, we can lend little support to the compelling notion that democracies are more likely to choose each other as alliance partners. Although statistically significant in the aggregate, the positive correlation between regime types is so modest that it provides minimal predictive power. At most, it may be the case that regimes of similar type prefer each other as alliance partners for primary or major alliances in bipolar systems only. Thus to speculate on the structure of future alliances requires some knowledge of the systemic distribution of power (Thompson 1995).

Third, additional analysis of the hypothesis from the gains from trade model demonstrates a strong tendency for regimes of most types to prefer alliances with dissimilar regimes. According to the model, this tendency inherent in alliance formation is the product of trade-offs with various types of regimes. Autocratic regimes have little difficulty mustering the initial impetus for a military contest but may come forward with less robust assistance. Democracies may be hesitant initially to engage in violence on behalf of an ally but are likely to show a robust response once their populations are aroused and mobilized to the task.

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