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Alliances, Institutional Design, and the Determinants of Military Strategy

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This paper argues that the institutional design of alliances is a crucial but often neglected factor in the study of military strategy. Highly institutionalized alliances are found to be a strong determinant of a state's choice of strategy, while other forms of alliances turn out to have little impact. I posit that the level of institutionalization exhibits this effect because of the greater number of channels through which leading states can influence the strategies of their smaller allies and coordinate overall alliance strategy. By incorporating this externally driven process, the results also begin to call into question several previously cited factors affecting the choice of military strategy.

Keywords military strategy, alliances, international institutions

Introduction

Alliances remain one of the most widely researched types of institutions in international relations. Yet, as some scholars have recently remarked, rigorous empirical studies of the causes and consequences of variation in the design of international institutions are relative sparse, especially with regards to alliances (Koremenos, Lipson, & Snidal, 2001; Leeds, 2003). Several formal models suggest that more institutionalized alliances should perform better than their less institutionalized counterparts across a wide range of outcomes (Smith, 1995; Morrow, 2000). These predictions have not been borne out in recent empirical work, which finds that greater institutionalization may paradoxically lead to worse performance, at least for an alliance's reliability when invoked by war (Leeds & Anac, 2005).

I seek to add to this debate by examining the impact of alliance institutionalization on national military strategy. Military strategy remains one of the most important determinants of success in war and is thus a key factor not only for the warfighting capacity of states and by extension alliances, but also in their ability to deter potential military challenges (Mearsheimer, 1983: 7; Biddle, 2004: 190). Despite its centrality to the field of international relations, research on the determinants of military strategy remains largely rooted at the domestic level. This paper aims to bridge these two bodies of literature by emphasizing the role of external institutions in the development of national military strategy. Employing a quantitative analysis of a random sample of national military strategies used in previous research (Reiter & Meek, 1999), I find that highly institutionalized alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Warsaw Pact, provide a range of channels through which more powerful states can exert greater influence over the military strategy of their partners. Alliances with lower levels of institutionalization, on the other hand, are

no more likely to influence the choice of an ally's military strategy than are cases where no military ties exist. Moreover, once alliances are taken into account the significance of previously cited domestic factors, such as democracy, begins to be called into question. This suggests the need for further work to examine the relative role of international and domestic factors for how states organize and employ their militaries.

The paper proceeds in the following five parts. The next section provides a background to existing research on the determinants of military strategy. I then propose a theory linking the degree of alliance institutionalization to the potential for powerful states to influence and coordinate the national military strategies of their allies. This is followed by an outline of the research design along with the presentation and discussion of the quantitative analysis. The discussion section that follows then evaluates alternative explanations for the sources of military strategy and the purported alliance results, in particular the role of external threats and democracy. The final section then offers some concluding remarks and thoughts for future research.

Background

Military strategy, as with similar terms such as military doctrine, is often employed in a number of ways to refer to various aspects of military-related activities.¹ At its most basic level, strategy refers to the general way the military is employed rather than the total quantity of troops and materiel a state possesses, or the particular political objectives sought through war. In this paper, military strategy is defined as the general principles guiding the use of conventional military forces for the overall planning and execution of armed conflict. Strategy can be distinguished from lower-level activities, such as the focus at the operational level on individual battles and campaigns, or the tactical level's attention to the use of individual soldiers and small troop units (Millett, Murray, & Watman, 1988: 5–19). Different sorts of military strategies have been categorized in a variety of ways. I will rely on the maneuver-attribution-punishment classification since past research has shown this distinction to be a consistent factor in explaining the initiation, duration, and outcome of interstate wars, with maneuver strategies generally being more successful than the alternatives (Mearsheimer, 1983; Stam, 1996; Reiter, 1999). This typology also has important advantages over alternatives such as the widely used offense-defense distinction. In the case of offense-defense, individual historical examples are often difficult to categorize clearly and the framework suffers from the additional problem of blending together political ends with the particular military means employed (Reiter & Meeck, 1999: 366–367).²

In contrast, the maneuver-attribution-punishment typology refers to practices that can be used for either offensive or defensive political purposes. Under this system, each category

¹For the purposes of this paper, the terms military strategy and military doctrine are used interchangeably.

²It should be noted that the maneuver-attribution-punishment typology has also been criticized for glossing over certain differences in the use of force, as well as charges of subjectivity in its coding (Biddle, 2004: 18–19). Biddle's alternative "modern system" approach indeed offers a greater degree of nuance along with incorporating both tactical and operational elements (Biddle, 2004: 35–48). These benefits come with a cost, however, since he offers no direct measure for variation in the use of the modern system. Biddle relies instead on a series of country-war dummies as proxies for force employment, but both he and critics note that these variables also likely reflect other important factors, such as regime type, learning, and alliances (Horowitz & Rosen, 2005: 445). Along with offering a more direct measure, past research has demonstrated that the maneuver-attribution-punishment typology captures meaningful variation in a wide range of war-related outcomes. Taken together, this suggests the typology remains useful even though it is important to keep in mind concerns over other possible drawbacks.

centers on a different overall tendency in the general planning and execution of the use of military force. Maneuver strategies, such as the German blitzkrieg of WWII, emphasize mobility over brute firepower with a desire to avoid set-piece battles in order to disrupt the command, control, and communication infrastructure necessary for the adversary to function effectively (Stam, 1996: 52–53). Attrition strategies, which are often identified with the Western front during WWI, instead involve meeting opposition forces head-on in either one or a series of confrontations where the objective is to directly destroy the troops and materiel of the adversary. In contrast to both maneuver and attrition, punishment strategies do not seek to directly defeat the adversary's military forces so much as to break the resolve of their population as a whole through such measures as counter-civilian bombing or guerilla warfare (Reiter & Meek, 1999).

Irrespective of the particular method of classification, studies of the determinants of national military strategy have focused to a great extent on domestic factors. Organization theory has been employed to argue that organizational routines and related pathologies lead militaries to prefer offense-oriented strategies (Snyder, 1984: 30–34). More recent revisions instead stress the role of the particular organizational culture of the armed forces, which may vary across countries and over time (Kier, 1997: 30–32). Other research incorporates some external elements, such as the severity and nature of foreign threats, but even here the effect of international forces is conditioned in large part by a state's civil-military relations (Posen, 1984: 233–236).

Much of the work on the determinants of military strategy has also relied on the use of single or comparative case studies. While this approach has the advantage of providing a great deal of contextual knowledge for closely evaluating specific causal claims, it suffers from more limited generalizability. In one of the only quantitative analyses to date, Reiter and Meek identify broader patterns in the determinants of military strategy and find many of the existing theories wanting, in particular the organizational and civil-military arguments (1999). They instead argue that other domestic factors, especially the level of industrialization and democracy, strongly condition whether or not a state adopts maneuver rather than the alternative strategies. The authors also begin to incorporate external factors by finding that a state's direct historical experience in war with a particular strategy can influence subsequent doctrinal decisions. However, learning need not occur only in the shadow of war, but may also develop in other contexts. The following section presents a theory examining the effects of alliances on the spread of military ideas and practices among members with a particular emphasis on the leading role played by more powerful states.

Theory

An underlying assumption in most existing studies is that decisions regarding the military strategy of each state are largely independent. While independence in decision making is perhaps a more plausible claim for great powers like the United States or Russia, it is less likely that smaller states are making choices in the absence of any external influences. The independence assumption also largely discounts one of the central debates in the field of international relations for well over the last two decades concerning the role of international institutions (Keohane, 1984; Mearsheimer, 1994–1995). Work has gradually shifted away from the question of whether or not institutions matter to instead investigate how and in what ways institutions differ and ultimately influence state behavior (Sprecher & Krause, 2006). Alliances, and the ties they create among members, are one set of institutions that are likely to challenge the notion that states make doctrinal decision independently from one another.

An alliance is defined here as a formal agreement between two or more states to cooperate in some form when faced with an actual or potential military conflict. Earlier

work focused for the most part on the role of alliances in aggregating the capabilities of members in order to balance or bandwagon against the power or threat posed by one or several other states (Waltz, 1979: 122–127; Walt, 1987: 5). Along with this traditional external function, scholars have also observed that alliances can be a useful tool for managing relations among members (Schroeder, 1976). For instance, military ties can act as a valuable source of information and leverage for partners to prevent one another from escalating a dispute into a war either with each other or with a third party (Bearce, Flanagan, & Floros, 2006). These internal dynamics of alliances are not necessarily limited to the diplomatic sphere, but may also have implications for military planning and practices more generally.

Research on intra-alliance military issues is by no means a recent area of inquiry. Existing work tends to focus on various aspects of the size and distribution of military expenditures, or the number of personnel deployed, rather than the ways in which these forces are actually employed. For instance, a large body of work has examined the issue of burden sharing within alliances, but largely disregards the possible influence of states over the actual military practices of their partners (Olsen & Zeckhauser, 1966). Those studies discussing military coordination do so more in terms of technological and defense production benefits that result from economies of scale rather than with regards to military strategy per se (Lake, 1999: 44–52).

Given the importance of military strategy for the outcome of wars, alliances thus seem to be a likely candidate for coordinating the national military strategies of member states, and in particular provide a potentially valuable opportunity for more powerful states to disseminate their preferred practices to smaller allies. The historical record provides no simple relationship between alliances and the coordination of allied military strategies. Even in instances of large external threats, such as the First and Second World Wars, states on both sides generally failed to develop a shared strategic outlook or common set of practices (Matloff, 1986). In one of the most widely regarded studies on alliances, Holsti et al. argue that coordination problems are in fact so pervasive and costly that alliances often represent net diseconomies of scale, whereby an alliance's overall capabilities are often less than the sum of each member's individual contributions (Holsti, Hopmann, & Sullivan, 1973: 22).

Coordination difficulties appear rooted to a large extent in the internal dynamics of alliances. Although allies may form their agreement based in part on the threat posed by a third party, they must nevertheless often remain wary of the future intentions and actions of their own partners. Recent research has also shown that states may form an alliance in an attempt to manage the reciprocal threat each poses to the other rather than simply to combat a common external adversary (Weitsman, 2004: 21). In both cases, states can never be certain of the current or future intentions of their partner, which consequently suggests they have strong incentives to avoid becoming dependent on the ally, or transfer military knowledge that could later be used against them. Powerful states may be loath to invest in the military quality of an ally only to see it later turn against its original benefactor. On the other hand, smaller states may be hesitant to expend limited resources on changing their doctrines, especially if the new doctrine makes them more dependent on cooperation with other allies for their defense during wartime. Creating more institutionalized commitments and structures are mechanisms through which allies may be able to overcome these concerns (Ikenberry, 1998–1999). While far from foolproof, institutional mechanisms can help assuage some of these fears by creating a venue where members can voice and manage their concerns as well as provide more predictable routines for their interaction. Mitigating concerns over the future behavior of other members is likely, in turn, to make states more willing to coordinate and adopt similar military strategies, such as around the leadership position often occupied by more powerful states within the alliance.

Along with alleviating uncertainties over the motivations of their partners, greater alliance institutionalization has the added likely benefit of improving the communication and transmission of the practical knowledge necessary for a powerful state to encourage allies to adopt a given military strategy. Maneuver is potentially a very effective strategy, but it is also highly complex and difficult to operate successfully, which helps in part to explain its rarity compared to attrition. Because speed and mobility across a constantly changing battlefield are prioritized, maneuver requires a great deal of decentralization of authority and initiative to lower command levels, highly developed communications systems, and a mastery of combined arms warfare. Alliances may help to overcome the steep learning curve associated with this strategy by providing a more structured forum for existing maneuver proponents to pass on the necessary knowledge and practices to their partners. Greater institutionalization also provides mechanisms, such as integrated commands or joint exercises, through which lead states can more directly influence and monitor the military strategies of their allies.

In terms of managing intra-alliance uncertainties, transferring knowledge, and monitoring behavior, more institutionalized alliances are likely to perform better in providing powerful states additional sources of influence over their allies than less institutionalized agreements. Focusing on variation in the design of alliances challenges a good deal of existing work, which assumes alliances are organized and operate in essentially the same manner (Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell, & Long, 2002). By not considering the ways in which alliances may differ, it is perhaps not surprising that several recent studies fail to find a consistent effect for alliances on a range of national policies (Fordham & Asal, 2007). An examination of historical cases reveals that the level of institutionalization indeed has varied a great deal across alliances. Many alliances, such as the frequent and shifting agreements among the nineteenth century European great powers, contained few if any mechanisms for extensive interaction among allies in military planning and training. On the other hand, NATO involves a dense network of channels to facilitate close cooperation among members and provides a leading role for the United States.

Several classification systems exist that attempt to measure various facets of an alliance's level of institutionalization. For the purposes of this paper, I employ the framework from Leeds and Anac, since it is the most specific with regards to the military aspects of alliances (2005). Their concept of military institutionalization relies on the provisions agreed upon by the parties as set out in the text of the alliance treaty document.³ This approach is likely to exhibit some noise since not all treaty provisions are actually implemented. Also, the parties may subsequently develop institutional arrangements not reflected in the original agreement or later official revisions. However, employing treaty texts is a good starting point for identifying variation in alliance design and has the advantage of providing an *ex ante* measure of institutionalization that reduces possible issues of endogeneity.

The Leeds and Anac framework considers a wide range of provisions affecting the institutionalization of an alliance. Of course, not all provisions are equally likely to result in similar levels of institutionalization, which consequently affects the relative coordination potential of an alliance. An integrated command structure, or a common defense policy among allies, is perhaps the most likely and direct avenue through which powerful states may be able to disseminate and coordinate doctrinal issues among their allies. The stationing of troops overseas represents a similar means of influencing member state strategy not only through the direct coercive leverage such troops provide, but also in a more socialized manner by creating a denser network of interpersonal contacts, which can increase the willingness and capacities of host states to adopt new policies (Atkinson, 2006). On

³Another measure the authors examine is the formality, or public nature, of the alliance's commitment. Since this variable is less closely related to the internal military dynamics of an alliance, it is not considered for the purposes of this paper.

the other hand, less formal provisions, such as ad hoc contacts among military officials, intergovernmental as opposed to fully integrated and hierarchical organizational bodies, as well as arms sales or technology transfers, may be expected to have less of a direct impact on the doctrinal decisions of secondary member states.

Putting possible differences in the nature of provisions aside for the moment, alliances including these types of arrangements are more likely to provide a firmer basis for states to encourage certain military practices among their allies. The discussion up to this point leads to the following general claim: *more institutionalized alliances are likely to increase the influence of powerful states within the alliance and lead to greater coordination in the national military strategies of allies around the strategy of the powerful state.*

This claim, however, needs to be considered in light of the contending view that small states may be able to wield disproportionate influence within an alliance. In his study of NATO, Risse-Kappen argues that a common liberal democratic identity among member states fostered shared norms of consultation, compromise, and equality that led to greater European influence over U.S. foreign policy (1995: 12–13). While not dealing specifically with conventional military strategy, he examines several instances where European allies impacted U.S. decision making, such as the nonuse of nuclear weapons in the Korean War, as well as the switch by NATO to the doctrine of flexible response in the use of nuclear weapons in the 1960s (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 58; 187). With regards to these cases, European opposition to the use of nuclear weapons in Korea was certainly evident, but it is not clear this played a greater role in U.S. decision making than growing norms over nonuse within key circles of the U.S. executive (Tannenwald, 1999). In a similar manner, while allies may have influenced elements of the doctrine of flexible response, it is widely contended that the primary thrust in initiating these changes in the first place originated with the United States itself (Sandler & Hartley, 1999: 38).

Smaller powers can sometimes exert a great deal of influence compared with their size in institutional forums, but others scholars argue this potential is generally more limited in its extent and scope in alliances due to the often asymmetrical dependence of small states on the protection of larger members (Morrow, 1991). Practical considerations also come into play in matters pertaining specifically to military strategy, since smaller states often possess fewer absolute resources to invest in their militaries compared to larger powers. Small states may thus be more likely to devote scarce military resources to remain consistent with common alliance requirements rather than create duplicate forces for alternative national strategies. Debate over the relative influence of small states within alliances nevertheless remains far from settled. Given the concerns in this paper for military strategy as the general orientation of a state's armed forces, the operating assumption that large states are considered the main drivers of changes in strategy appears to be a reasonable first step, though it should by no means represent the final statement.

Assessing the claim that alliance design shapes the influence of powerful states over member strategies also presents some empirical difficulties, since military strategies are not evenly distributed across states. Given the complexities inherent in employing maneuver, as well as some of the difficulties of relying primarily on punishment, attrition is by far the most common choice of strategy among states. Observing cases where alliance members all employ attrition does not present compelling evidence of coordination in strategies, since it is just as likely this pattern is the result of each state independently selecting the most common strategy. The alternative approach chosen here is to focus on alliances involving certain key great powers that are known practitioners of the less common strategy of maneuver. As it has been commonly argued that powerful states are often a main source of influence on the military practices of smaller states (Resende-Santos, 1996), this is a promising alternative approach to adopt. Finding that allies of these more powerful states also employ maneuver

strategies would lend greater support to the alliance argument. Germany during the WWII era would be an ideal candidate since it probably remains the most well-known early user of maneuver. However, testing a German alliance effect involves several problems. First, the time period during which Germany was a great power practitioner of this strategy is only from the early 1930s to 1945 under the Nazi regime, which provides a very short window of analysis. Second, German alliances during this period were not highly institutionalized and thus provide little variation in the central independent variable of interest.

For these reasons I choose to focus instead on the United States and Russia, since both were principal proponents of maneuver strategy throughout the mid- to late- twentieth century and both also exhibited a high degree of variation in the institutionalization of their alliances. Should coordination in allied strategy occur, it is most likely to develop around the practices of these leading powers within their respective alliances. Focusing on the role of the United States and Russia leads to the first hypothesis to be examined that considers the effects of alliances writ large:

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

States that are members of a U.S. or Russian alliance are more likely to adopt maneuver strategies than nonallies.

Any purported claim of an alliance effect needs to be balanced against the conventional view that domestic factors are the main determinants of national military strategy, such as the material support provided by a country's level of industrialization, or the political support provided by its level of democracy (Reiter & Meek, 1999). By similar reasoning, direct lessons from past wars should matter far more than whether or not the participating country was party to an alliance at that time, or subsequently partnered with other states after the conclusion of hostilities. If these factors are the primary drivers of the decision making of states, then *H1* should not hold up since membership in an alliance should confer no inherent advantage or disadvantage in the selection of a given military strategy.

Returning to the proposition that alliances may in fact have an impact on national military strategy, the effect of the U.S. and Russian influence is likely to be even more marked in cases of highly institutionalized alliances. As the coordination argument suggests, more institutionalized arrangements provide a greater number of channels through which the lead powers can influence the practices of their partners. For the United States, NATO is a case in point where the potential for U.S. influence is evident in a large network of foreign military bases, as well as the alliance's integrated command structure whose supreme commander has always come from the United States. The Warsaw Pact provides a similar case with respect to Soviet Russia. The dense complex of institutional links between member states, along with the overarching leadership position occupied by Russia, likely provided the latter with a strong source of leverage for transmitting particular military practices to member states.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact, of course, were far from identical alliances (Lake, 2001). As Holsti and colleagues observed, NATO should be seen as more of a "pluralistic" alliance because of the more fragmented and consensual nature of its authority structures, while the Warsaw Pact is better viewed as a "monolithic" alliance in light of its more hierarchical authority structure and coercive past (1973: 166–171). However, as Ikenberry and Kupchan have argued, great powers often use a mix of both coercive and social mechanisms in manipulating the policies and beliefs of other states (1990). While leading powers may rely on a variety of methods to influence the military strategies of allies, highly institutionalized alliances should facilitate the functioning of both coercive and social practices. This leads to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

States that are members of a more institutionalized U.S. or Russian alliance are more likely to adopt maneuver strategies than states that are members of a less institutionalized U.S. or Russian alliance.

In a similar manner to *H1*, the domestic and learning arguments would expect the particular design of an alliance to have a minimal bearing on the doctrinal decisions of other states. Whether a state was a member of a higher or lower institutionalized alliance should have little or no effect compared with the state's domestic attributes or lessons from past wars.

In sum, alliances provide several potential channels through which leading states can transfer military practices to their allies and ultimately coordinate their national military strategies. Highly institutionalized alliances are likely to increase this coordination potential by mitigating concerns over the intentions of other members and improving the ability to transfer or impose knowledge and best practices. The effect of alliances needs to be balanced against alternative explanations, in particular the role of domestic factors and learning from past events, which expect alliances will exhibit no significant effect on decisions concerning military strategy. The following section seeks to evaluate the validity of these hypotheses and the alternatives.

Research Design and Empirical Results

The analysis begins with a data set first used in the work of Reiter and Meek, which represents the only systematic quantitative analysis to date of the determinants of national military strategies (1999). The dataset is composed of a random sample of 190 country-year observations during the period from 1903 to 1994. They employed a random sample design in part because of the large time commitment and difficulties involved in the coding of military strategy. The dependent variable Maneuver is dichotomous and takes on a value of 1 if a state adopts a maneuver strategy in a given year and 0 otherwise. Reiter and Meek ran a variety of specifications, but their main model found that only indicators for democracy, industrialization, and direct historical experience were consistent determinants of military strategy. A brief description of each of these main explanatory variables is provided in Table 1.

Using these variables as a baseline model, I incorporate a number of additional variables to test the hypotheses of the alliance argument presented above. In order to evaluate *H1*, "U.S. Ally" and "Russian Ally," are dummy variables representing whether a state has any sort of alliance with each respective country in a given year. Since the hypothesis predicts that states will adopt maneuver when either their U.S. or Russian ally was a proponent of this strategy, only U.S. or Russian alliances in the post-WWII period are coded 1 with all others coded 0. Earlier alliances involving these two countries were coded 0 given that neither the United States nor Russia were practitioners of maneuver strategy before this period. Observations for the United States or Russia were coded 0 for their respective alliance variables since by definition each country could not be allied to itself. Repeating the analysis with the U.S. and Russian observations coded 1 to reflect membership in the relevant alliance does not substantially alter the results.⁴ Coding for the alliance variables was based on version 3.0 of the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) data set (Leeds et al., 2002).

For *H2*, U.S. and Russian alliances are distinguished by their level of institutionalization. A number of different measures are employed to test this hypothesis. Alliance Institutionalization is a categorical variable based on a variant of the measure from Leeds and Anac which uses provisions from ATOP alliance treaty texts (2005). The variable ranges

⁴Supplementary results are available from the author.

TABLE 1 Description of variables in the Reiter and Meek model

Variable name	Variable description	Variable type	Source
Maneuver	Adoption of maneuver strategy	Dummy (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Reiter and Meek (1999)
Democracy	Democracy-Autocracy score	Continuous (-10, 10)	Polity III
Industrialization/Steel production	Steel production (thousands of tons)	Continuous	COW
Direct experience*	Lesson from use of maneuver in war during previous 25 years	Categorical (1 = positive; 0 = none; -1 = negative)	Reiter and Meek (1999)

*More specifically, a state receives a 0 if it fought no wars in the previous 25 years, its wars were draws, or it used the same strategy as its opponent. It had a positive lesson if it won with maneuver against an attrition opponent, or lost with attrition against a maneuver opponent. A negative lesson occurs if a state wins with a non-maneuver strategy against a maneuver opponent, or loses using a maneuver strategy against a non-maneuver opponent. If contradictory lessons were learned from multiple wars, coding is based on the lesson learned from the bigger war, which in all relevant cases was a world war (see also Reiter and Meek, 1999: 376).

from 0 to 3, with 0 meaning no alliance and 3 meaning a highly institutionalized alliance. If a state possesses multiple alliances with either the United States or Russia, then the alliance with the highest level of institutionalization is used for the relevant alliance variable. An alliance is considered highly institutionalized and receives a coding of 3 if the treaty agreement contains any of the following provisions, since these are expected to greatly increase the influence of the United States or Russia over their respective allies: foreign troop or base placements; a peacetime and wartime integrated command; or a common defense policy. An alliance is coded 2 for mid-level institutionalization if it provides for any of the following more moderate arrangements: peacetime contact among military officials; the creation of any formal intergovernmental military organization; provision of military training or technology; and specific plans for contribution levels or subordination of forces in the event of conflict. An alliance is coded 1 for low-level institutionalization if none of these provisions are mentioned. States that are not allies of the United States or Russia are given a coding of 0.

As a second measure, a set of dummy variables is also created for each of the institutionalization levels (Low, Medium, and High) for U.S. and Russian alliances with the absence of an alliance representing the baseline category in both cases. This provides for the possibility that the effect of an increase in the degree of institutionalization on adopting maneuver is not additive as assumed with the categorical measure.

The third and final measure to examine *H2* focuses on two well-known and highly institutionalized cases of U.S. and Russian alliances. Two dummy variables are employed, NATO and Warsaw Pact, where each takes on a value of 1 if a state is a member of the relevant alliance, and 0 otherwise. In a similar manner to the general alliance variables, U.S. and Russian observations are coded as 0, though again it should be noted the results do not change substantially if they are coded as 1 instead. Correspondingly, Non-NATO U.S. Ally and Non-Warsaw Pact Russian Ally are dummy variables that take on a value of 1 for those states that are an ally of the United States or Russia, but not members of NATO or the Warsaw Pact where applicable, and 0 otherwise. For illustrative purposes, Table 2 provides

TABLE 2 Correlations of independent variables

	Polity	Steel	Direct Experience	NATO	Warsaw	U.S. Ally	Non-Nato Ally	U.S. Institutionalization	Russian Ally	Non-Warsaw Ally	Russian Institutionalization
Polity	1.00										
Steel	0.21	1.00									
Direct experience	0.07	-0.15	1.00								
NATO	0.33	0.11	0.08	1.00							
Warsaw	-0.14	0.01	-0.01	-0.04	1.00						
U.S. ally	0.22	0.00	0.06	0.43	0.01	1.00					
Non-Nato U.S. ally	0.06	-0.06	0.02	-0.11	0.03	0.85	1.00				
U.S. institutionalization	0.25	0.02	0.07	0.58	-0.01	0.95	0.71	1.00			
Russian ally	0.12	0.22	0.03	0.26	0.38	0.26	0.14	0.26	1.00		
Non-Warsaw Russian ally	0.19	0.24	0.04	0.29	-0.05	0.28	0.14	0.28	0.91	1.00	
Russian institutionalization	0.12	0.18	0.04	0.28	0.63	0.28	0.15	0.29	0.92	0.70	1.00

a correlation matrix of all the independent variables, though the institutionalization level dummies are excluded for ease of presentation. Because of the degree of multicollinearity between several of the alliance variables, they are run in separate models.

In order to ensure the results from incorporating the alliance variables are not due to any other changes in the general research design, the same procedures used by Reiter and Meek are followed. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, a probit specification is employed using the same sample and baseline independent variables. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.⁵ Model 1 replicates the primary explanatory model from the original Reiter and Meek analysis. As expected the results show that democracy, steel production, and direct experience are all positively associated with the probability of selecting maneuver and statistically significant at a level of five percent.

The next four models incorporate the various alliance measures.⁶ The results are generally supportive of the alliance argument. Model 2 includes the general alliance variables and provides modest support for *H1*, since the U.S. variable is positive and significant while the Russian variable falls just outside of standard levels of significance ($p = 0.8$).⁷ The alliance measures from Model 2 disregard any differences in institutionalization between alliances, but it is precisely with this variation where *H2* expects the greatest effects for alliances to appear. Model 3 incorporates the categorical U.S. and Russian institutionalization measures. In contrast to the second model, both U.S. and Russian alliance variables are positive and statistically significant. An increase in institutionalization for either a U.S. or Russian ally is positively associated with maneuver.

Model 4 provides a more nuanced picture by distinguishing among the three categories of alliance institutionalization. The low institutionalization dummy variables are unfortunately dropped from the analysis for both the United States and Russia because each perfectly predicts failures in the dependent variable, in other words, cases of non-maneuver. The results indicate that only highly institutionalized alliances are strongly associated with maneuver, while neither medium-level measure comes anywhere near to reaching statistical significance. The medium-level U.S. measure is actually slightly negative, though given the large standard error of the coefficient this is by no means a strong cause for concern. Finally, Model 5 examines two well known cases of highly institutionalized alliances and provides further support for *H2*. Allies of NATO or the Warsaw Pact are highly likely to select maneuver, while U.S. and Russian allies outside of these alliances do not exhibit the same propensity to adopt this strategy.

Of equal interest are the effects of the baseline independent variables after incorporating alliances into the analysis. Both steel and historical experience remain relatively robust across all of the models. On the other hand, democracy does not appear to fare as well, since once any of the alliance measures are incorporated it ceases to be statistically significant. This result initially seems to suggest that international institutions in the form of alliances may be just as important for military strategy, if not more so, than domestic institutional variables.

Returning to the overall results, Table 4 provides a better idea of the substantive impact of alliances on the choice of military strategy. For ease of presentation only the results for the

⁵All results are generated using Stata 8. A do-file replicating the models in Table 3, as well as all robustness and specification tests, is available from the author.

⁶Likelihood ratio tests indicate the inclusion of the alliance variables is justified.

⁷Past research has shown that results can sometimes be sensitive to the particular alliance dataset employed (Leeds et al., 2002). In order to address this concern, the Correlates of War (COW) alliance dataset was used as a robustness check (Gibler & Sarkees, 2004). The results do not change substantially when using COW instead of ATOP. The results also do not change when limiting the definition of alliances to only offense or defense pacts for ATOP, or to defense pacts in the case of COW.

TABLE 3 Probit analysis of the determinants of maneuver

	(1) Baseline Reiter and Meek Model	(2) US and Russian Alliances	(3) Alliance Institutionalization	(4) Alliance Institutionalization Level Dummies	(5) NATO and Warsaw Pact
Democracy	0.035 (0.019)*	0.023 (0.020)	0.016 (0.021)	0.023 (0.024)	0.013 (0.023)
Steel production	7.116e-05 (1.960e-05)**	6.380e-05 (1.790e-05)**	6.228e-05 (1.772e-05)**	6.163e-05 (1.841e-05)**	5.378e-05 (1.711e-05)**
Direct experience	1.604 (0.530)**	1.616 (0.546)**	1.720 (0.559)**	1.894 (0.573)**	1.663 (0.556)**
U.S. ally		0.666 (0.323)*			
Russian ally		0.518 (0.364)			
<i>Alliance institutionalization</i>					
U.S. ally			0.379 (0.135)**		
Russian ally			0.370 (0.179)*		
<i>Level of alliance institutionalization</i>					
High (U.S.)				1.788 (0.473)**	
Medium (U.S.)				-0.528 (0.611)	
Low (U.S.)				<i>a</i>	
High (Russian)				2.005 (0.706)**	

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 3 Probit analysis of the determinants of maneuver (continued)

	(1) Baseline Reiter and Meek Model	(2) US and Russian Alliances	(3) Alliance Institutionalization	(4) Alliance Institutionalization Level Dummies	(5) NATO and Warsaw Pact
Medium (Russian)				0.807 (0.751)	
Low (Russian)				<i>a</i>	
NATO member					2.063 (0.597)**
Warsaw Pact member					1.702 (0.716)*
Non-NATO					0.400 (0.380)
U.S. ally					-0.118 (0.511)
Non-Warsaw Pact					-1.910 (0.222)**
Russian ally					
Constant	-1.595 (0.163)**	-1.904 (0.217)**	-2.042 (0.232)**	-1.980 (0.231)**	
Model chi-square	43.48** (3 df)	51.93** (5 df)	59.62** (5 df)	73.84** (7 df)	63.85** (7 df)
Pseudo R ²	0.31	0.37	0.43	0.53	0.46
Log likelihood	-47.93	-43.76	-39.91	-32.80	-37.80
Observations	187	187	187	187	187

^aThis variable was dropped from the model because it predicts failures in the dependent variables perfectly. If the two cases in which this is the case are dropped from the model, the results do not change significantly. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors for the coefficients. * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$ (all significance tests are one-tailed).

TABLE 4 Estimated substantive significance* of independent variables on maneuver

Variables	Reiter & Meek model	U.S. and Russian Alliances	Alliance Institutionalization Level Dummies
Democracy	0.12	0.05	0.05
Steel production	0.94	0.97	0.96
Direct experience	0.59	0.47	0.56
U.S. ally		0.11	
Russian ally		0.09	
High institutionalization			
U.S. ally			0.47
Russian ally			0.54
Medium institutionalization			
U.S. ally			-0.02
Russian ally			0.18
Baseline probability	0.09	0.05	0.04

*Values represent the absolute change in the probability of adopting maneuver associated with a change from the minimum to the maximum of a given independent variable. For the baseline probability, democracy (-0.439) and steel production (3764) are held at their means, while direct experience and the relevant alliance variables are set to 0.

baseline, general alliance, and institutionalization level dummy models are reported. Each value in the table represents the absolute change in the probability of choosing maneuver when moving from the minimum to the maximum value of a given independent variable, while holding all other continuous variables at their means and dichotomous variables at 0.⁸ The effect of the general alliance variables is quite modest at 11% for the United States and 9% for Russia. Distinguishing alliances by their level of institutionalization, however, reveals that highly institutionalized alliances have a very strong effect of around 50% on the choice of maneuver, while lower levels remain more modest and for the United States is slightly negative. In the case of the baseline variables, the impact of both steel and historical experience remain relatively consistent, while the effect of democracy is more than halved once alliances are taken into account.

In sum, the substantive effects presented in Table 4 generally reinforce the findings from the regression models. Once alliances are incorporated the role of democracy appears to be reduced, though the effect of steel production and direct experience remains relatively robust. As expected by the alliance argument, the effect of alliances on military strategy turns out to be conditional in nature unlike the assumption underlying *H1* that all alliances are created equal. Consistent with *H2*, highly institutionalized alliances like NATO or the Warsaw Pact lead members to coordinate their military strategies around the maneuver practices employed by their U.S. or Russian benefactors, while this effect is largely absent in the case of less institutionalized counterparts.

Discussion

The findings from the quantitative analysis suggest alliances play a large role in the formation of military strategy. Through various mechanisms of coercion and persuasion, highly

⁸The simulated probabilities of choosing maneuver were generated using the Clarify software program (Tomz, Wittenberg, & King, 2003). As a result, the probabilities for Model 1 deviate slightly from the original Reiter and Meek paper (1999: 380), but the substantive difference is minimal.

institutionalized alliances appear to have the potential to act as devices for spreading military practices and coordinating the national strategies of member states around the leadership of more powerful states. This should not be taken as the final statement, however, since several alternative interpretations could potentially yield similar results.

First, in the case of Model 5 from Table 3, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact were formed in an era of bipolarity and intense superpower competition. The level of external threat a state or group of states faces is a commonly cited determinant of military strategy (Posen, 1984: 59–67), but it may also provide an explanation for the degree of alliance institutionalization. According to this logic, the level of alliance institutionalization may simply be epiphenomenal and a function of the severity of threat an alliance faces rather than an explanation in its own right. Facing more severe threats, the United States and Russia would be more likely to encourage their allies to adopt maneuver strategies and, in the process of doing so, also more likely to form highly institutionalized alliances to facilitate this task. Taken together, this suggests that alliances are at best an intervening variable, or at worst irrelevant, in the determination of national military strategies.

Incorporating measures for the degree of external threat would presumably negate the alliance findings if alliance design is indeed largely a function of threat. Though not reported here because of space constraints, incorporating several measures for threat used in the original Reiter and Meek analysis revealed no strong relationship with the degree of alliance institutionalization.⁹ Moreover, including these variables in the main regression models above does not substantially change the alliance findings, and the effects of the threat measures are fairly inconsistent overall. While far from conclusive, the results caution against completely dismissing the independent impact of the design of alliances on national military strategy.

A second and equal issue of concern is the potential confounding effects of democracy and alliances on military strategy. This is less of an issue for Russia, but more problematic with respect to the United States, and NATO in particular, given the latter is historically one of the most notable alliances of democracies. The quantitative results suggest that once alliances are taken into account, the effect of democracy is greatly weakened. However, as Table 2 from above indicates, alliances and democracy are correlated, especially for NATO ($r = 0.33$). The decline in the effect of democracy may not reflect the greater role of alliances, but may simply be the result of multicollinearity between the two variables that may be hiding the underlying role of regime type on both alliances and military strategy. In a similar manner to the case of threats, the observed alliance findings may simply be concealing the fundamental role of regime type.

Two mechanisms in particular stand out that might account for both the primary effect of democracy and the observed findings for alliances. First, democratic states may be more likely to ally together and, because of their purported propensity to select maneuver strategies, also more likely to form maneuver-based alliances. Second, alliances may be a facilitating factor in U.S. democracy-promotion activities (Gheciu, 2005). According to this view, once states ally with the United States they subsequently become more democratic and thus more likely to select maneuver strategies on their own accord. While these two mechanisms are plausible, research suggests the empirical merits of both remain far from settled.¹⁰

⁹These measures were the number of neighbors a state borders, participation in militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) with multiple opponents in the previous five years, and the number of MIDs in a given year. Full results are available in supplementary tables from the author.

¹⁰For debates over the role of regime type on the propensity to ally, see Siverson & Emmons, 1991 and Simon & Gartzke, 1996. On contrasting views regarding the success of U.S. democracy promotion through alliances, see Reiter, 2001.

TABLE 5 NATO members

Country	Year	Polity	Steel	Direct experience	Maneuver
UK	1960	10	24694	None	No
Norway	1962	10	488	None	No
Belgium	1967	10	9716	None	Yes
UK	1970	10	25539	None	Yes
Netherlands	1970	10	5042	None	Yes
Turkey	1976	9	1457	None	Yes
UK	1977	10	22274	None	Yes
Norway	1979	10	924	None	Yes
UK	1983	10	14987	Positive	Yes
Luxemburg	1991	10	3379	None	Yes

Given that the existing literature lacks any firm answers for sorting out the relative effects of democracy and alliances, what does the relevant data suggest? An examination of cases drawn from the dataset used in the earlier quantitative analysis provides a good starting point, since it is a random sample and should not suffer from any inherent sources of selection bias. Table 5 presented above lists all the cases of NATO states in the dataset, along with their values for the baseline explanatory variables. The values suggest support for both the democracy and alliance arguments, since there is a high degree of association of both variables with maneuver. Of course, the alternative view argues the alliance has no independent effect at all, but rather the high level of democracy common to NATO members accounts for each state's adoption of maneuver.

One way to begin to assess these two different interpretations is to compare cases of states that share similar values on the relevant independent variables except for alliances. For instance, if NATO is playing no role at all, then states with similar attributes to those of NATO members should be expected to exhibit a similar tendency to select maneuver. Table 6 lists all post-WWII European states in the sample with moderate to high levels of democracy and which could be considered a plausible comparison group to NATO countries.¹¹ The results compared to Table 6 are striking. None of the non-NATO European observations involve a state possessing a maneuver strategy. While the states in Table 6 generally have lower levels of steel production than NATO members, this distinction largely disappears if the United Kingdom is excluded. Other than the cases of Finland in 1950 and the United Kingdom in 1983, the remaining states in both groups turn out to be democracies with low to moderate levels of steel production and no historical lessons from maneuver. The overall similarities between the states in Tables 5 and 6 other than their respective membership in NATO provide a further indication that alliances play a role in the choice of military strategy.

In sum, an examination of several historical cases suggests that alliances remain a factor influencing the selection of maneuver strategies when the lead state in the alliance is also a proponent of maneuver. Though by no means conclusive, democracy does not appear to exhibit the same degree of consistency in accounting for the choice of strategy. Of course, the case that remains to be explained from the discussion above is that of the United States itself. Democracy may indeed be exerting a more substantial direct effect on the initial U.S. decision to employ maneuver. However, the finding that Soviet Russia, in

¹¹To select the sample I use Reiter and Meek's dichotomous coding of a democracy as any country with a Polity score greater than 3 (1999: 378).

TABLE 6 High democracy non-NATO European countries

Country	Year	Polity	Steel	Direct experience	Maneuver
Luxemburg	1948	10	2453	None	No
Finland	1950	10	102	Negative	No
Switzerland	1951	10	144	None	No
Switzerland	1953	10	157	None	No
Sweden	1954	10	1861	None	No
Ireland	1974	10	110	None	No
Switzerland	1977	10	656	None	No
Austria	1984	10	4870	None	No
Cyprus	1989	10	0	None	No
Romania	1992	4	5614	None	No
Finland	1994	10	3840	None	No

particular given its role within the Warsaw Pact, was also a major proponent of maneuver questions the existence of any overarching effect for democracy. Subsequent research may indeed show that democracy was a crucial factor in the formation of U.S. military strategy, but this should not negate the broader argument presented here that alliances are a major facilitator for powerful states to promote and coordinate military practices across a wider range of states.

Conclusion

This paper addressed the question of whether alliances influence the choice of national military strategy. The results suggest not all alliances are created equal and that institutional design matters a great deal. Only in highly institutionalized alliances do members tend to coordinate their national military strategies and adopt the strategy of maneuver employed by their U.S. or Russian benefactors. Less institutionalized alliances, on the other hand, appear to lack the mechanisms to overcome issues of uncertainty and effectively transfer the knowledge and practices necessary for adopting maneuver. While several alternative factors commonly accepted in the literature remained robust, such as industrialization and direct historical experience, the effect of democracy appears weakened, though this finding remains far from conclusive. The results suggest that international institutions should at least be considered as closely as domestic institutions when studying military strategy. The overall findings also indicate several possible avenues for further inquiry.

First, considering the primary purpose of this paper was to evaluate the general viability of an alliance-based explanation, a more detailed examination of the functioning and relative strength of specific institutional mechanisms is an area calling for further research. For instance, foreign bases provide a setting for close contact between military officials from different backgrounds to share knowledge and practices. These advantages need to be balanced against the backlash bases often create in host countries, which may hinder the home state's overall influence (Cooley, 2005). Examining the conditions under which these various mechanisms are more or less likely to operate would have the additional benefit of contributing to the growing literature on the military and political effects of specific provisions within alliance agreements.

Second, alternative factors like democracy and external threats were largely viewed in this paper as competing explanations, but future work might also consider possible areas of complementarity with the ultimate aim of providing a more integrated framework for explaining the formation of military strategy. For instance, past work on the internal

functioning of alliances has often focused on the role of domestic social structures and international norms (Risse-Kappen, 1995). This work could benefit from examining more explicitly the influence of institutional design on relations among democratic allies and vice versa. External threats are also far from constant and may influence not only the formation of alliances, but also how alliances of different institutional design may perceive and react to changes in threats over time. Many of these questions could benefit from the collection of cross-national time-series data on national military strategies, which would provide the opportunity to more closely examine changes in military strategy associated with changes in the explanatory variables of interest. The costs and difficulties of collecting such data would likely be quite large, but would be matched by the promise of moving beyond the initial findings of this paper.

Third, interrelationships between various independent variables also points to the possibility to consider more closely a reciprocal relationship between alliance design and military strategy. States that are prone to adopting maneuver may choose to form highly institutionalized alliances to help coordinate the implementation of this more complicated strategy. Institutionalized alliances, in turn, may mitigate the costs and obstacles in adopting maneuver and increase the likelihood that states would subsequently adopt this strategy compared with the situation where each acted individually. This issue points to the more general need to pay closer attention to how the terms of alliances are negotiated in the first place and the consequences for the ways in which alliances subsequently operate.

Finally, this paper dealt primarily with conventional military strategy and only briefly touched on issues of nuclear weapons. Much of the existing literature on nuclear weapons and conventional military strategy largely disregards the role of the other, though links between both uses of force certainly exist (Powell, 1990; Biddle, 2004). For instance, Waltz has argued that the possession of nuclear weapons does not make military conflict between nuclear states impossible, but rather shifts conflict down to lower and more conventional levels (2003: 114–115). Nuclear weapons may influence not only whether conventional force is used, but also how it is used and what particular strategy is pursued. While nuclear weapons did not alter the general commitment of the United States and Russia to maneuver principles during the Cold War, it is likely these weapons did influence the particular orientation of maneuver at the operational and tactical levels. The maneuver-attrition-punishment typology remains a useful, albeit broad, measure of military strategy in this regard. Developing and systematically examining more fine-grained measures of the use of military force may ultimately help reveal closer connections to the particular case of nuclear weapons. Such an approach may also provide greater insight into the functioning and military consequences of alliances more generally.

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