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The democratic states were uncertain about how to interpret their obligations to Czechoslovakia. They did, however, finally pursue their treaty obligations with Poland in quite certain terms. Meanwhile, the Germans and Soviets were experimenting with dramatic shifts in their positions toward one another. Ultimately, of course, the Nazi–Soviet pact proved worthless. The democratic states, on the other hand, maintained the basic shape of their commitments to one another despite very high international and domestic costs.

Contrary to the pessimism of many analysts, foreign policy issues do seem to have played an important role in American electoral politics.[25] This role has not led to either the extremes of chaos or paralysis that the critics of democratic foreign policy have predicted. The policy views of the public in aggregate have been reasonably stable and well-connected to the exigencies of external events.[26] When we look at the issue of policy stability from an empirical angle, the reality seems to be that democracies can maintain stable equilibrium policies.[27]

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The Stability of Democratic Leadership

A central fact of the constraints on government power in the modern liberal democracies has been limitations on the tenure of government leaders. *** Regular leadership change is an important element in thinking about the relationship between democracy and commitment. Henry Bienen and Nicholas Van de Walle have shown that the leaders of democratic states do tend to have shorter tenures than the leaders of nondemocratic states.[28] Those who would enter into commitments with democracies must face the possibility that a new leader will be less inclined to honor previous commitments. The United States faces the prospect of major leadership change every four years. In parliamentary systems, the government could fall at any time. Some kinds of agreements surely will survive across governments, but it is plausible that the myriad small understandings that condition relations between states might be threatened by a new administration. ***

The simple fact that leadership change is more frequent is not, however, necessarily a negative factor for commitment. Again, a comparative

[25] Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989.
[26] See Page and Shapiro 1991; Holsti 1992; and Nincic 1992.
[27] See Russett 1990; and Page and Shapiro 1991.
[28] Bienen and Van de Walle 1991.

perspective is important. Democratic leadership changes are *regularized* as well as being regular. The ability of democratic states to make smooth leadership transitions can help improve the stability of commitments. Indeed, Riker argues that rapid elite circulation can itself stabilize policies.[29] Nondemocratic states that do not have effective means for making leadership transitions may have fewer leadership changes, but those changes may be accompanied by greater shifts in preferences and policies. *** The transition from Presidents Carter to Reagan pales in comparison to the change from the Shah of Iran to Ayatollah Khomeini, from Mao Tse-tung to Deng Xiaoping, from Joseph Stalin to Nikita Khrushchev, or from Leonid Brezhnev to Mikhail Gorbachev.

Finally, it is important to remember that the juridical nature of liberal democracy gives current leaders the power to commit future leaders. Political power in liberal democracies rests abstractly with the office and is limited by juridical principles, rather than resting with specific individuals or being unlimited. Thus, future leaders are bound by the domestic legal environment to honor the treaty commitments of their predecessors. ***

The Stability of Democratic Institutions

While the political life of individual leaders may be relatively short and unpredictable in liberal democracies, domestic political institutions themselves are considerably more stable. As I have argued above, liberal democracy requires that majorities be able to commit to stable institutional arrangements that codify minority rights and constraints on majority powers. To the degree that democratic states possess institutional stability despite regular and regularized leadership change, it should be easier for them to enter into commitments. Stable civil service bureaucracies that handle foreign affairs, for example, help ensure some degree of policy continuity. ***

The Distinctive Preferences of Liberal Democracies

*** In responding to the traditional critique of democratic foreign policymaking, we also need to look at the kinds of values democratic states bring to bear in thinking about international commitments in general. It is common for analysts of the liberal democratic states to focus on their political culture. This line of argument sees something distinctive about the ideas and values that are held by democratic publics. ***

[29] Riker 1982.

Tocqueville made a number of assertions about the distinctive preferences that would emerge in democratic political culture. *** He viewed these preferences as largely inimical to effective foreign policy commitments and sustained international involvement in general.[30] Isolationism is a characteristic frequently attributed to democratic states. To the degree that democratic states turn inward, they will pay less attention to their international obligations and may thus prove less reliable. But this logic is not definitive. At least two other possible connections between isolationism and international commitments are possible. First, following Machiavelli's argument, an isolationist turn may make states take less account of the need to abandon a commitment that begins to conflict with their interests.[31] Second, the isolationist state may be inclined to make only those commitments that involve truly vital national interests and thus are more likely to be honored.[32]

The Role of Law in Liberal Democracy

Tocqueville also suggests that respect for law is a critical component of democratic political culture.[33] *** The internal practice of liberal democracy requires a basic respect for legal commitments. More recently, some have argued that these internal norms are also reflected in preferences over external policies.[34] While the force of law in democratic foreign policymaking is still being argued, international commitments and domestic legal commitments do seem to be connected. For example, international law has long been expressly incorporated into the domestic legal order in the Anglo-American legal tradition and has spread to most of the other major liberal democracies as well.[35] In relations between states, legalism and the reputation of a state for reliability do seem to have at least significant rhetorical appeal in democratic polities. Whether the respect for law emerges from practice, from ideology, or from some other primitive of inclination, if democratic peoples hold legal norms to be of some overarching legitimacy, then this will increase their sense of the binding nature of international commitments.[36]

[30] Tocqueville [1835] 1969, 1.2.5.13.
[31] Machiavelli [1530] 1970, 1.59.
[32] I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this second point.
[33] Tocqueville [1835] 1969, 1.2.6.4.
[34] Doyle 1983, 230. See also Dixon 1994; and Maoz and Russett 1993.
[35] von Glahn [1965] 1992, chap. 3.
[36] For a discussion of the effect of transnational legal arrangements on liberal democracies, see Burley 1993. On the relation between domestic dispute resolution procedures and international relations, see Dixon 1993.

Democratic Interdependence

Tocqueville identifies a third source of distinctive preferences in liberal democratic states pointing to the effects of "interdependence." *** Liberal economic orders that lead to increased trade and other associations between their citizens will naturally make them more interdependent. This logic follows closely Kant's argument about the pacific union of democratic states, based on the free flow of people and goods.[37] Tocqueville suggests interdependence as a basis for the lack of war between democratic states: "As the spread of equality, taking place in several countries at once, simultaneously draws the inhabitants into trade and industry, not only do their tastes come to be alike, but their interests become so mixed and entangled that no nation can inflict on others ills which will not fall back on its own head. So that in the end all come to think of war as a calamity almost as severe for the conqueror as for the conquered."[38] *** A third-party attack on an ally might be almost as severe a calamity for the interdependent ally as it is for the attacked state. Thus, interdependence can increase the credibility of commitments between states faced with an outside threat.

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The Institutional Resources for Democratic Commitments

Liberal democracy makes it more likely that interdependent interest groups will be able to push the larger society to take their interests into consideration. The role of interest groups with vested interests in international commitments not only reflects on the distinctive preferences of liberal states but also points to the role of their internal institutions in strengthening commitments.

The Multiple Levels of Democratic Domestic Politics

The notion of liberal democracy as a system of majoritarian and juridical limits on government action is suggestive of Robert Putnam's recent argument that two-level games are a useful analog for many aspects of international politics.[39] In his model, state leaders must negotiate in the international arena and then return home to sell commitments in the domestic arena. *** If foreign policy is dependent on public approval,

[37] Kant [1794] 1991, 50. For a recent review of the notion of a cosmopolitan international economic order see Neff 1990.

[38] Toqueville [1835] 1969, 2.3.26.

[39] Putnam 1988.

and if public preferences are either distinct from leader preferences or are constantly and dramatically changing, then the state will have difficulty making the credible commitments it would otherwise choose. In this regard, Putnam makes a particularly interesting distinction between voluntary and involuntary defection from cooperative schemes. As with Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations or Jimmy Carter and the second strategic arms limitation talks treaty, democratic leaders can enter into international agreements in good faith but then find themselves unable to implement the agreement because of democratic constraints on their power at home.

This, however, is not a sufficient consideration of the role of domestic constraints. Walter Lippmann worried in *The Public Philosophy* that democratic states would be frozen into undesirable policies by the inability to mobilize public support for change.[40] This is also the basis of Machiavelli's assertion that democratic states are less likely to break treaties, even when they have strong incentives to do so.[41] By this logic, the same factors that make it difficult for democratic states to enter into commitments also make it harder to get out of them. ***

Domestic politics will be particularly effective at increasing the ability of democratic leaders to make commitments that accord with the interests of a strong domestic constituency. *** The United States can make effective commitments to Israel even without a formal alliance because it has a substantial domestic audience that will monitor and enforce that commitment in the domestic arena. *** Germany's somewhat reticent acquiescence to the 1994 round of the Basel convention banning all exports of hazardous wastes *** will be closely monitored not only by the other parties but also by Germany's own environmental activists. Thus, the combination of interdependence and a strong voice for domestic actors has the potential to increase significantly the ability of democratic states to make commitments when the interests of other states are shared by significant domestic groups.

The Transparency of Democratic Domestic Politics

The multiple levels of democratic policymaking take on particular significance because democratic political systems are relatively transparent. Without the ability to observe what the government is doing and the freedom to express and organize alternative political views, the

[40] Lippmann 1955, 18–19.
[41] Machiavelli [1530] 1970, 1.59.

liberal notions of limited government and political competition would be meaningless. It is very difficult, however, to discriminate against external actors in providing transparency to internal actors. *** Any embassy can subscribe to the major newspapers that provide day-to-day investigative services on the policymaking activities of the democratic state. *** Outsiders can observe linkages between commitments made to them and commitments made to the domestic audience. When a democratic leader makes a public commitment to a specific course of action, deviation from that course might bring domestic as well as international repercussions. When President Bush vowed to remove Iraqi troops from Kuwait, the Iraqis should have known that that vow would bear on the ensuing election as well as on the international situation.

Recent work at the interstices of economics and political science has shed new light on the relationship between social organization and the ability of states to make commitments to domestic audiences. Two particularly interesting examples of this literature are Douglas North and Barry Weingast's interpretation of the Glorious Revolution as an exercise in recasting a constitution in order to increase the ability of the state to make commitments and François Velde and Thomas Sargent's similar interpretation of the French Revolution.[42] In these pieces, the respective authors argue that democratic institutions can increase the ability of the state to make commitments to large numbers of domestic actors. *** In the international arena, the ability to link external commitments transparently with internal commitments will allow democratic states to draw on domestic audiences to aid their international credibility.

Thomas Schelling points to the importance of political costs for enhancing the credibility of international commitments.[43] He focuses on incurring political costs within the international system itself. But similar benefits can be derived from incurring these costs at home if they can be adequately observed from outside. The linkage between external commitments and internal political costs is represented formally in James Fearon's work on the role of audience costs in international interactions.[44] When democratic leaders send signals in the international arena that bear domestic costs at home, those signals will have more credibility than would similar signals that bear no significant domestic costs. All

[42] See North and Weingast 1989; and Velde and Sargent 1990, respectively.
[43] Schelling 1966, 49.
[44] Fearon 1990.

states face some domestic costs for their international actions, but democratic states may be distinctive in the degree of domestic accountability. *** Statements and actions may create domestic expectations that will lead to audience costs or electoral punishment if a leader fails to carry out an international commitment.

Making credible international commitments is difficult at best for all states. I have argued here that, contrary to the traditional image of unreliability, democratic states should be relatively effective at making international commitments. The task now is to turn to some empirical attempts to assess the overall ability of democratic states to make commitments and to abide by them.

EMPIRICAL SOUNDINGS: DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE BEHAVIOR

Alliances are the most salient form of commitment behavior in the current international system. States join formal alliances in order to indicate both to their alliance partner and to other states that the level of commitment between the two states is greater than the level of commitment that would be expected based simply on observed international interests. *** If democratic states are unreliable because of shifting majority preferences, we would expect to see this reflected in the length of time that they are able to maintain alliances.

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The analysis of alliance commitments is also appropriate to the degree that alliance commitments are an indicator of international community. Drawing on Kant's essay *On Perpetual Peace,* Michael Doyle's explanation for the liberal peace turns on a natural community of liberal states:

> Since morally autonomous citizens hold rights to liberty, the states that democratically represent them have the right to exercise political independence. Mutual respect for these rights then becomes the touchstone of international liberal theory. When states respect each other's rights, individuals are free to establish private international ties without state interference. Profitable exchanges between merchants and educational exchanges among scholars then create a web of mutual advantages and commitments that bolsters sentiments of public respect. These conventions of mutual respect have formed a cooperative foundation for relations among liberal democracies of a remarkably effective kind.[45]

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[45] Doyle 1983, 213.

Some empirical work on the question of democratic alliance behavior has been done. Ole Holsti, Terrence Hopmann, and John Sullivan included a polity variable in their 1973 analysis of alliance politics.[46] Their conclusions about democratic alliance behavior are mixed. In their survey of all alliances between 1815 and 1939, they find that ideological similarity disposes states to ally with each other and leads to some increase in the length of alliances, although they conclude that after alliances are formed, the impact of ideological differences is minimal.[47] They also find some areas of democratic distinctiveness in their case study work. For example, looking at the differences between Chinese and French defection from their respective alliance systems in the 1950s, they argue that in pluralistic polities, intra-alliance disputes tend to be confined to a narrow range of issues, while in nonpluralistic polities, intra-alliance disputes tend to spill over into all issue-areas.[48] In an argument that echoes the Kantian hypothesis, the mechanism they posit for this effect is basically the influence of complex interdependence, which creates a large number of nongovernmental ties between pluralistic states.

Randolph Siverson and Juliann Emmons, in a recent analysis that focuses specifically on democratic states, confirm with more rigorous statistics the observation of Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan that ideologically similar states are more likely to form high-commitment defense pacts rather than lower commitment entente or neutrality pacts (as coded by the Correlates of War Project).[49] They show that at the dyadic level there is a strong tendency for democratic states to form alliances with each other at a greater rate than would be expected from the null model assumption that alliance formation should be independent of ideological orientation.

My goal here is to expand on these results with an attempt to assess the relative durability of democratic and nondemocratic alliances. The statistical analysis of Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan is largely limited to contingency table analysis. In this article, I focus on the case of democratic states to confirm the rather tentative relationship they describe for the relationship between alliance duration and ideological affinity. By using more sophisticated techniques for analyzing duration data, I am able to provide a more nuanced assessment of the effect of shared democratic norms on alliance duration.

[46] Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan 1973.
[47] Ibid., 61–68.
[48] Ibid., 160–61.
[49] Siverson and Emmons 1991.

The Data: Measuring Democracy and Measuring Alliances

Two kinds of data are required for this analysis: data about polities and data about alliances. *** I have used Doyle's coding of liberal regimes and the coding of alliances from the Correlates of War Project.[50] ***

For my purposes here, the democracy measure is reasonably straightforward. It is not necessary to resolve the significant debates about the meaning of these terms in political philosophy and comparative politics in order to advance propositions about the implications of liberal democracy for foreign policy and international relations. Even the problematic distinction between "liberal" and "democratic" retreats in importance in the face of the empirical reality that the two phenomena have been highly coincident in modern history. There is a relatively clear set of states that have been regularly labeled as either "democratic" or "liberal." While one might disagree about some cases on the edges, the results I report here are not sensitive to small definitional changes. ***

The conceptual problems surrounding the measurement of alliances are more immediately serious. *** One particularly vexing conceptual issue is whether alliance behavior should be analyzed with the alliance as the unit of measurement or with the dyad as the unit. *** Conceptual arguments are valid in both directions. A focus on formal treaties would lead us to concentrate on the alliance as the observation: how long treaties are in force would be the most relevant question. If, however, we are interested conceptually in the underlying relations between individual countries, we will need to turn to the analysis of dyads. A focus on the alliance as the unit of observation also runs into problems when multiple treaties reflect the same relationship. For example, while a single treaty unites the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, the Warsaw Pact countries cemented their relationship with a large number of bilateral treaties. The use of treaties as the unit of observation would bias the data toward this kind of multilateral relationship. The use of dyads as the unit of observation would give extra weight to multilateral treaties. Both biases present serious problems. In both cases, multilateral alliances lead to problems in assessing the relationship between individual states when formal relationships end because of a falling out between other alliance members. *** My approach is to statistically test both kinds of data. The fact that the findings are reasonably robust with both data sets increases our confidence in the results.

[50] See Doyle 1983; and Singer and Small 1966, respectively.

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Translating the Singer–Small data to the alliance level from the dyadic level is more complex than it might appear on first blush. The decisions I have made in this regard are not always transparent and thus bear some discussion. Should we count the West European Union as a different treaty than NATO? Is the Rio Pact with Cuba a different alliance than the Rio Pact without Cuba? I have used two different kinds of decision rules, and the results seem reasonably insensitive to these coding variations. First, I tried to identify the individual treaties and gave them their longest life, regardless of new members coming and going (reduced model 1). Second, I identified starting and ending dates in the dyadic data set and collapsed the data around these values (reduced model 2). The first method tends to overcount multilateral alliances that use bilateral treaties, such as the Warsaw Pact. The second method overcounts multilateral alliances that have more changes over time, such as NATO or the Arab League.

Multilateral treaties are also problematic for coding the democracy variable when they include states with different political systems. My focus in this article is on relationships between democratic states, so I have chosen in both of these reduced data sets to decompose treaties that have mixed democratic and nondemocratic members. Thus, for example, I code NATO as three observations: a relationship between democracies, a relationship between democracies and nondemocracies, and a relationship between nondemocracies. Interestingly, this affected only six alliances, including three nineteenth-century alliances involving Britain, France, or Italy in their democratic periods, NATO, the Rio Pact, and the Arab League (which included Lebanon when it was coded as liberal).

International Alliance Behavior and Democratic States

Figure 3.1 tracks the average number of alliance relationships for democratic and nondemocratic states for each decade between 1815 and 1965. *** Before 1870 there were very few democratic states, and those states had decidedly fewer alliance relationships of any kind than the nondemocratic states. After 1870, the curves for the democratic and nondemocratic states follow one another very closely. From 1870 until 1920, alliance relationships were at a fairly low level for both democratic and nondemocratic states. Finally, in 1920 a strong trend began toward an increasing number of alliance relationships. The significant changes over

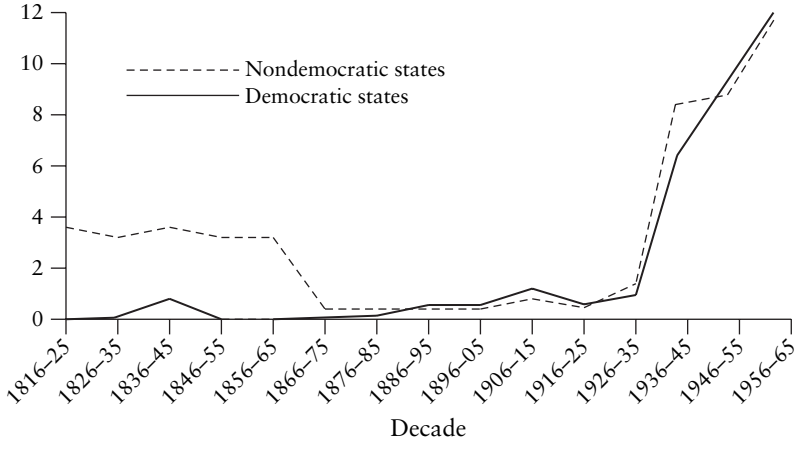

FIGURE 3.1. Average alliance density per decade, 1816–1965.

time support the notion that alliance norms have evolved over the past two centuries.[51]

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Figure 3.1 is, of course, a simple representation of the relationship between alliances and democracy with no controls for confounding factors. On its face, this pattern would give the most support to the expectation that domestic regime type should not make much difference in international behavior in general and in the ability to make commitments in particular. These results do not support the idea that democratic states should be more alliance-prone, but neither do they support the more often expressed concern that democratic states cannot make credible commitments. Democratic states find just as many alliance partners as nondemocratic states. *** Either Salisbury was wrong or something has changed since he suggested that democratic states cannot keep their promises and thus will have trouble entering into alliances. At a minimum, democratic states are finding other states that are at least willing to sign the papers.

*** The question in which we are most interested is not simply how many alliance relationships democratic states enter, but rather what level of commitment those relationships represent. We can move one analytic step closer to this more fundamental issue by considering the length of time that democratic and nondemocratic alliances tend to last.

[51] On the evolution of alliance norms, see Kegley and Raymond 1990.