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Introduction

> [M]uch the greater part of the study of the authoritative allocation of value is reduced to the study of coalitions.
>
> William H. Riker
> *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, p. 12

Military cooperation is ubiquitous in international politics. States have a long tradition of signing treaties of alliance for collective defense, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as actively fighting wars together, like the coalitions that twice faced Napoleonic France in hopes of preserving the European balance of power. They have colluded to conquer and partition their neighbors, as provided for in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and they have built coalitions to threaten war lest targets change their policies, from the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait in 1990 to ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999. In fact, fully 40% of interstate wars in the past two centuries have been multilateral (Sarkees and Wayman 2010), and while only about one-quarter of international crises since the Second World War have seen coalitions form on at least one side (Wolford 2014a), the United States has built coalitions of varying sizes to support nearly half of its own uses of force since 1948 (Tago 2007), and almost all since the end of the Cold War (Kreps 2011). Yet despite their pervasiveness, to say nothing of their popularity with contemporary great powers, we still know little about how military coalitions and the efforts taken to hold them together affect patterns of international war and peace.

The occurrence and expansion of armed conflict are of enduring interest to students of international relations, all the more so when states cooperate militarily: coalitions have been integral to some of the most destructive events

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in international history, and multilateral wars are among the longest, bloodiest, and widest-ranging in their implications.[1] In the twentieth century alone, two world wars redrew the global political map as rival coalitions fought on a nearly apocalyptic scale for the domination of continents and oceans, eliminating and creating both individual states and entire international orders and fundamentally altering the power relationships in the international system. In the following decades, bloody aftershocks in the divided countries of Korea and Vietnam, each born of rivalries forged in the disintegration of the Second World War's victorious coalition, saw the United States fight alongside new coalition partners to preserve the Cold War status quo against communist-led attempts to overturn it. Even conservative estimates suggest that these four wars killed nearly 30 million combatants, to say nothing of tens of millions more civilians, in a death toll that would scarcely have been possible had not states cooperated to wage war on one another.[2]

Nonetheless, wide-ranging systemic wars are the exception, not the rule. Coalitions and military cooperation are also prevalent in the smaller-scale conflicts that account for the vast majority of wars, as well as in the crises, tensions, and militarized disputes that precede them. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, coalitions of varying sizes have participated in two American-led wars against Iraq (1991 and 2003), as well as multilateral interventions in the former Yugoslavia (1995, 1999), Libya (2011), and Iraq and Syria against the self-styled "Islamic State" (2014). Of course, coalitions do not simply fight wars. Before crises escalate to full-scale violence with armies clashing on the battlefield, fighters and bombers filling the skies, and navies facing off at sea, states cooperate to make collective threats of war, hoping to achieve their aims peacefully without having to make good on those threats. For every crisis that boils over into war, coalitions achieve their aims by coercing their desired concessions short of violence in numerous others, just as the vast majority of coalitions manage to keep their conflicts localized rather than precipitate globe-spanning conflagrations. Finally, acting with "friends and allies" is often not only useful militarily but also good politics at home and abroad (Chapman 2011, Chapman and Reiter 2004, Lai and Reiter 2005, Nye 2002). As such, in the post–Cold War era, multilateral action has become the "default" for American foreign policy (Kreps 2011), whether it involves active cooperation in the

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[1] See Slantchev (2004) and Shirkey (2012) on the link between the number of actors and war duration and severity, respectively.

[2] Total battle deaths across these four wars as calculated by the Correlates of War project (Sarkees and Wayman 2010) are 27,144,464, but this total omits the civilian toll in each conflict, as well as deaths in related conflicts: the Japanese invasion of China, the Chinese Civil War, the Nomonhan campaign, and the Indochina War. Hastings (2012, p. 646), for example, reports 60 million deaths, soldiers and civilians alike, as a conservative estimate for the Second World War alone, and recent estimates indicate that military deaths in the First World War have also been underestimated, placing the updated total around 10 million (Prost 2014).

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application of military force, the formal support of international institutions, or both.

For all their ubiquity, it should not be surprising that coalitions produce a diverse set of political outcomes, from successful – that is, peaceful – coercion to the outbreak of war, and from localized conflicts against isolated targets to wide-ranging confrontations that draw neighbors and distant powers alike into counter-coalitions. These patterns raise two obvious questions. First, how do military coalitions shape the probability of war and the prospects for peace? Next, when do coalitions provoke counter-coalitions and the expansion of conflicts? To answer these questions, I argue that we must begin with a prior understanding of when and with whom states choose to build military coalitions in the first place, especially the means by which such cooperation is negotiated, secured, and preserved. By understanding *how* states negotiate the terms of and secure military cooperation, we can develop a better understanding of the consequences of that cooperation for patterns of international war and peace.

Joining a coalition is inherently costly, from the upfront expenses of mobilization and war to the opportunity costs of abandoning more immediate priorities. Quite apart from divergent assessments of the value of the prize for which they fight, coalitions also disagree internally over the distribution of the costs and risks of war, which inevitably fall differently across their members. Even on the Western Front in the First World War, British and French national priorities led to intramural clashes over the distribution of effort, territory, and casualties (Hastings 2013, Herwig 2011, Philpott 2014); as a leading scholar of the period puts it, “Clausewitz’s famous dictum about politics and war applies in struggles between friends as well as in conflicts with enemies” (Philpott 2011, p. 235). The costs of cooperation ensure that partners must be compensated in return for their assistance. Cooperation is transactional, and settling on the terms of working together, or the price of cooperation, is often the primary challenge faced by would-be coalition partners. This compensation may be direct side payments, influence over the spoils of victory, indemnities and reparations, or compromises over military and bargaining strategies – none of which a coalition-builder would like to yield or change if it can avoid doing so. In the following chapters, I show that such compensation, whatever form it takes, can have profound implications for both whether states cooperate *and* how they go on to conduct coercive diplomacy against their enemies. In other words, the terms of cooperation that facilitate the construction and maintenance of military coalitions can then go on to have second- and third-order effects on the probability of war and the expansion of conflicts to include other belligerents.

This book addresses three intimately related problems using a combination of theoretical and empirical models, as well as newly coded data on coalitions in international crises. First, and fundamentally, it outlines the conditions under which states build coalitions in the shadow of war and what partners they

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choose, explaining cooperation not solely in terms of shared interests but also in terms of how compensation can be used to overcome divergent interests. Second, it explores how the choice of partner affects the escalation of disputes to war, in particular how preserving cooperation among one's own coalition partners affects the processes of making military threats and signaling resolve to an opponent that doubts a coalition-builder's willingness to fight. Finally, it analyzes how the prior choice of partners affects the expansion of conflicts to draw in other states, identifying when coalition-building touches off balancing responses and the formation of counter-coalitions, as well as the conditions under which victorious coalitions disintegrate and come to blows over the terms of the peace just secured. Throughout, I trace the effects of two crucial factors – military power and foreign policy preferences – on each stage of this process, showing how they can advance our understanding of the role of coalitions and military cooperation in the patterns of war and peace that define international relations. I also use the logic of the theory to shed light on the success (and failure) of American-Turkish coalition negotiations in 1991 and 2003, the signaling challenges facing the United States in the 1961 Berlin Crisis and the 1999 Kosovo War, as well as the responses of third parties to the two American wars against Iraq and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

1.1 RETHINKING MULTILATERALISM

At its core, this is a book about international cooperation. However, where the majority of work on the topic explores the role of formal institutions such as alliances or international organizations in preserving peace, eliminating trade barriers, or resolving policy disputes (e.g., Gowa and Mansfield 1993, Keohane 1984, Morrow 2000, Oye 1986, Rosendorff 2005, Russett, Oneal, and Davis 1998), my focus is on cooperation in the form of military coalitions, purpose-built for an ongoing or imminent crisis, which may be formal *or* informal. Cooperation on the home front, of course, is a requisite for waging war; armies must be raised, supplied, fielded, and commanded, and success at each stage of this process requires that individuals, often very large numbers of them, overcome numerous, potentially severe collective action problems (Wagner 2007, ch. 3,4). Yet cooperation does not stop once states have put the economy on a war footing, raised armies, trained pilots, and put ships to sea; they often aggregate their military power by making threats of collective military action or, when those threats fail, by fighting in common cause to compel their opponents to do their will. As I argue later in the book, whether and how they secure this military cooperation can have wide-ranging – and often surprising – implications for patterns of international war and peace.

Cooperation between states is the result of "mutual adjustment" (Keohane 1984, p. 13), whereby states coordinate erstwhile-divergent policies, taking actions they otherwise would not, in order to achieve some common goal

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(*ibid.*, p. 52).[3] While cooperation is costly, it produces goods that would be difficult or impossible to produce in its absence. Traditional approaches to international relations tell a number of different stories about international cooperation, particularly the military variety. Some structural realists are famously skeptical of the feasibility of international cooperation in general and balancing coalitions in particular (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 212), even as others assert that states tend to cooperate in the recurrent formation of balancing coalitions against the powerful (Waltz 1979) or threatening (Walt 1987).[4] On the other hand, states often remain neutral in the face of rising threats, staying on the sidelines and hoping to shift the burden of preserving the balance of power on to other like-minded states (Christensen and Snyder 1990, Powell 1999), a compelling indication of the costs entailed in cooperating militarily alongside coalition partners. Nonetheless, as attested to by the emergence of coalitions in interstate crises and wars, states often *do* cooperate militarily for a variety of reasons, only some of which are related to rising threats to international order. Understanding the origins, politics, and consequences of the "diplomacy of co-belligerency" (Fowler 1969, p. 4), ubiquitous in its frequency and oftentimes infamous in its consequences, is the central theme of this book.

In the chapters that follow, I make the case for both refining and expanding the scope of the analysis of military cooperation. I refine the traditional mode of analysis by choosing a deliberately narrow definition of military coalitions, one centered on cooperative actions in discrete international crises. At the same time, this narrower unit of observation expands on the traditional empirical scope, allowing for a consideration of both allied and nonallied forms of cooperation, as well as states other than great powers. Thus, rather than identifying (a) opportunities to balance, bandwagon, or pass the buck in the face of threats to the balance of power, as do many structural realist accounts (Christensen and Snyder 1990, Mearsheimer 2001, Walt 1987, Waltz 1979), or (b) formal promises to fight together in treaties of alliance, as is the case in most quantitative work (Leeds 2003a, 2003b), I examine choices over coalition formation in the context of international crises. In other words, I analyze strategic decisions to cooperate in the context of ongoing crises, where the participants need not (but may) be allied, and where the issues at stake need not (but may) be tied to the processes of great power politics.

Focusing on the international crisis – a period of heightened tension in which general deterrence has broken down and where war is possible, but not inevitable, between two or more states (Wilkenfeld and Brecher 2010) – offers several advantages for the study of military cooperation. First, though

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[3] Keohane distinguishes cooperation from a situation of harmony, in which states' policies serve each other's mutual purposes with no adjustment – a situation both uninteresting and, especially when it comes to cooperating in the costly endeavor of interstate war, highly unlikely.

[4] They may also cooperate by bandwagoning, hoping to accommodate themselves to the powerful or share in the spoils of victory (Schweller 1994).

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of smaller scale than great power conflicts and system-ordering general wars, crises are also far more common, making for a larger sample of opportunities for cooperation and, as a result, potentially stronger inferences. Second, despite the diversity of issues over which they arise, international crises are structurally similar events, in that each participant in a crisis confronts a common series of questions: How much help do I need? How much am I willing to pay in return for it? And is there anyone out there willing to help for an acceptable price? Thus, a crisis-specific analytical focus brings into sharper relief the basic transactional nature of international cooperation and coalition-building, as well as the onset of war and the expansion of conflicts. Third, as I discuss at greater length in Chapter 2, the approach has empirical advantages, as the crises that drive states to build coalitions in the shadow of war are useful for identifying a large number of discrete cases in which cooperation and its absence, not just in terms of taking the same side militarily but also concessions and policy adjustments, are easy to define and identify.

More broadly, this book helps clarify the distinction between two types of multilateralism: military and diplomatic. While a large body of research – to say nothing of popular discourse – collects only the latter (Chapman 2011, Nye 2002, Thompson 2006, Voeten 2005) or some combination of the two (Kreps 2011, Tago 2007) under the single heading of "multilateralism," my focus is squarely on the military variety, where states contribute materially (or threaten to do so) in a cooperative application of military force. As I argue in Chapter 2, the two processes are interrelated, though analytically and empirically distinct. Diplomatic multilateralism, which derives from the sanction or approval of international institutions, can facilitate military cooperation, easing fears of expansionism in states that might otherwise refuse cooperation (Voeten 2005). However, extant scholarship that focuses on diplomatic multilateralism does not explain why states choose the military partners they do – if they choose any at all – when faced with an international crisis, either with or without the support of international institutions. Rather, developing an understanding of partner choice, as well as the subsequent crisis behaviors linked to it, requires an understanding of the processes of bargaining, compensation, and cooperation between coalition members that I develop in Chapter 3.

Given the gulf between their potentially dire consequences and their prominence in the historical record, coalitions and military cooperation should play a large role in how we answer some of the most enduring questions about war and peace in international politics. Thus far, this role has been too small. As I argue in Chapter 2, there is a paucity of answers to the puzzles of cooperation, war, and conflict expansion that can apply directly to the context of coalitions and military cooperation. Such answers as we have are not based on a strong theoretical foundation that reflects the transactional nature of military cooperation, and this poses significant obstacles to a useful understanding of the role of military coalitions in everyday international politics. Advancing our understanding of the role of military cooperation in international relations, I argue,

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requires a unified theoretical and empirical approach that integrates a theory of cooperation, one that acknowledges the centrality of securing and preserving costly military cooperation, with complementary theories of both (a) crisis bargaining and war and (b) alignment decisions and conflict expansion.

1.2 THE ARGUMENT

The book's primary argument is that untangling the relationships between military cooperation, war, and conflict expansion requires an understanding of the key political dynamics that define any coalition: the negotiation and maintenance of military cooperation. This requires new theoretical models, combining the underlying transactional theory of military cooperation with models of coalition formation, crisis bargaining, and alignment decisions, as well as a unique empirical strategy that introduces new data and units of analysis. At the center of the story is the notion that states choose coalition partners by weighing the expected costs of securing and maintaining their cooperation against the potential military benefits of acting multilaterally, while their partners weigh the benefits of proposed compensation against the costs of joining and, potentially, fighting alongside other states as part of a coalition. As a result, the concessions or compromises made to ensure cooperation, particularly when they affect crisis bargaining strategies and the durability of coalitions, can have implications for the escalation of crises to war and the expansion of ongoing conflicts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, coalitions are crisis-specific phenomena. They exist when states make threats of collective military action – generally, war – against a target state lest it change its behavior or make some desired policy concession. Thus, whether coalition partners ultimately fight together depends first and foremost on whether their targets reject their demands. This requires defining "coalition" as an autonomous concept, distinct from other forms of military cooperation. Coalitions are not alliances, incomplete contracts concerning behavior in war that may or may not be activated or honored in a given crisis (Benson 2012, Morrow 2000), nor are they instances of diplomatic multilateralism, where other states or institutions offer political support but need not participate militarily (see Kreps 2011). Rather, military coalitions involve short-run, crisis-specific decisions over military cooperation for which treaties of alliance and widespread diplomatic support are neither necessary nor sufficient. In addition to fleshing out this concept of coalitions, Chapter 2 also introduces a new dataset of coalitions and their participation in international crises on which the empirical models of subsequent chapters are based, then conducts some preliminary empirical analyses to determine whether and how coalitions differ from states acting alone. In particular, it shows that coalitions see higher rates of both crisis escalation and expansion than do states acting unilaterally, but a pair of decomposition analyses also shows that these differences cannot be explained solely with reference to their uniquely high levels of military power. Coalitions, in other words, cannot be usefully understood as mere aggregations of power.

After Chapter 2 establishes the facts to be explained and the puzzles to be solved, the theoretical models of Chapters 3–5 show that two key variables, military power and diversity in foreign policy preferences, interact to shape outcomes across each stage of this process of military multilateralism: (a) coalition formation, (b) crisis escalation, and (c) conflict expansion. The last stage depends on expectations about a war-winning coalition's subsequent durability, which I also subject to empirical analysis. Fundamental to each stage of the process is the maintenance of costly military cooperation in the face of incentives to refuse or defect, a challenging goal made more difficult by the inherent diversity of preferences among states in the international system. States differ in their evaluations of the status quo, valuations of the stakes of a given conflict, tastes for risk, and willingness to bear costs, meaning that would-be coalition builders must compensate partners for participation in the inherently costly enterprises of crisis bargaining and military coercion. Throughout the process, the costs of securing military cooperation and the willingness of a lead state to pay those costs influence whether states cooperate to form coalitions, whether they can achieve their goals peacefully, and whether their conflicts expand beyond their initial participants.

To develop the theory, I begin with a highly stylized model of coalition formation and crisis initiation built around the basic insight that securing costly military cooperation in crises requires compensation. Then, I analyze increasingly complicated models of crisis escalation and expansion, exploring the challenges of military cooperation in the context of the theory's two primary concepts – the distribution of preferences within the coalition and its aggregated or relative military power. The first pairing of theoretical and empirical models, presented in Chapter 3, focuses on coalition formation and shows that states in a crisis face a trade-off between enhancing their military prospects and making costly concessions to ensure a potential partner's cooperation. While states prefer partners with preferences similar to their own, they become decreasingly selective the more a given partner enhances their military prospects, building coalitions around increasingly diverse sets of preferences – a diversity that will go on to have some surprising effects on both crisis escalation and conflict expansion.

The models in Chapter 4 integrate the process of coalition formation and compensation with crisis bargaining and costly signaling, allowing me to explore how the formation of diverse coalitions affects the ability to send credible signals of resolve.[5] The key insight is that the costs of war may fall unequally across coalition members, which makes some potential partners hesitant about participating in overly costly wars. When a lead state risks losing a

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[5] Chapter 4 uses the theoretical model of Wolford (2014b), but the empirical model and case discussions are unique to this book.

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partner's cooperation if it threatens an intolerably costly war, it chooses escalation strategies that weigh the demonstration of resolve against the maintenance of military cooperation. I show that, when targets are strong, irresolute coalition leaders will be deterred from bluffing, preserving both military cooperation within the coalition and peace with its opponent. However, when targets are relatively weak, resolute coalition leaders may knowingly mask their resolve, preserving a partner's cooperation despite the fact that leaving the opponent's information problem unsolved raises the chances of war. Therefore, the presence of coalition partners can encourage either peace or war, depending on how their desire to restrain the lead state affects threat-making and signaling decisions in crises; in fact, attempts to rein in the lead state can reduce the expected costs of war while simultaneously making war more likely.

Chapter 5 presents models that show how military power and preference diversity interact in the final stage of military multilateralism, affecting the expansion of conflicts through the provocation of balancing and the durability of victorious coalitions after wars.[6] Third-party states are frequently concerned about threats posed to them by the victors of ongoing conflicts (Powell 1999, Voeten 2005, Walt 1987), so to the extent that coalition members are more threatening together than apart, third parties are particularly concerned with whether a coalition involved in a conflict today will stay together and threaten additional states in the future. As I argue later, the calculations of future threat differ when a coalition – as opposed to a single threatening state – is involved. Balancing, however, is costly and risky, and third parties must weigh the chance to defeat or split coalitions against the uncertain threat posed by their members in the future. In a process unique to multilateral contexts, a coalition's revealed foreign policy preferences help outsiders form judgments about coalitional durability and, by extension, threats posed by coalitions in the future. Just as they did in the previous models, power and preferences again interact, such that an increasing diversity of coalitional preferences discourages the expansion of conflicts when coalitions are powerful. However, such diversity actually facilitates expansion when coalitions are weaker. This model also generates predictions over the durability of coalitions following victory in war, and I use additional data to show that, as predicted, homogeneous coalitions tend to maintain postwar cooperation longer than more diverse coalitions.

Chapter 6 closes the book with a summary of the project's contributions to the literatures on international conflict and cooperation, particularly how a focus on military cooperation can shed light on fundamental questions about military conflict, cooperation, and the sustainability of postwar peace. It also includes discussions of avenues for future research on the topic of military multilateralism, including how coalition-building differs by the relative share

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[6] The theoretical model is a generalization of the game analyzed in Wolford (2014a), while the empirical models and case discusions expand substantially their counterparts in the original article.

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of public and private goods at stake, the differences between allied and non-allied coalitions comma and a consideration of the theory's implications for American foreign policy. Taken together, the book's pairings of theoretical and empirical models paint a richer picture of military cooperation than existing theories allow, and each step of the modeling process builds on the former by leveraging a common set of concepts and assumptions. By tracing the effects of military power and preference diversity through the entire process of military multilateralism, it shows that the presence of coalition partners can either encourage or discourage both war and the expansion of conflicts. Coalitions are at times more prone to war than are states acting alone, at times less; at times better able to keep their conflicts localized, at times worse than states acting alone. They are, in a very real sense, more than the sum of their parts. Further, the approach adopted here makes these comparisons without first begging the question of why coalitions form in the first place, providing a more consistent theoretical account than extant work does to support the hypotheses that are derived and tested empirically in each chapter.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Questions of military cooperation, the outbreak of war, and the expansion of conflict sit at the core of international relations theory, because all three phenomena play enduring and constitutive roles in shaping the ebb and flow of what we recognize as international politics (Braumoeller 2012, Bull 1977, Wagner 2007). I have argued that scholarship too often pays short shrift to the role played by processes of military cooperation in both war and conflict expansion, and drawing out the links between coalitions, war, and the spread of military conflict is worthwhile in its own right. However, in addition to explaining specific patterns related to military cooperation, the book touches on several other important themes.

Most obviously, it highlights the relationship between concepts that too often sit on opposite sides of what is, in a very real sense, a false dichotomy: conflict and cooperation. Without cooperation, the armies with which wars are fought – indeed, the states that fight them – could scarcely exist (cf. Wagner 2007), and yet the study of international conflict very often abstracts away from the role of coalition partners, whether potential or actual, in explaining the outbreak of war. Most empirical studies of international conflict are strictly dyadic (see, e.g., Bennett and Stam 2004).[7] However, the approach taken here, which identifies coalitions by their participation in specific international crises, pushes our understanding of the link between cooperation and conflict several steps further. Ultimately, this book shows that "cooperation" is multifaceted

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[7] To be fair, the potential for allied intervention does emerge in some treatments of dispute initiation (Leeds 2003b, Werner 2000).