

# Preventing Coups and Seeking Allies: The Demand and Supply of Alliances for Coup-Proofing Regimes

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## Abstract

Prevailing accounts of alliance formation emphasize either external threats or domestic politics, without an explicit consideration of how the two factors might interact. Instead, this paper theorizes about a specific type of interaction: coup-prevention strategies in nondemocratic regimes and external threats. Through quantitative analyses using the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) and the State Security Forces (SSF) data, we find that “coup-proofing” reduces the probability of alliance formation when potential allies are under high external threat and that this effect is driven by the coup-proofing regime’s reduced capability to defend their allies, rather than the regime’s increased vulnerability to aggression. Furthermore, we find evidence for the interactive relationship at the negotiation stage of alliance formation. Upon entering an alliance, a coup-proofing regime facing a higher level of external threat offers more policy concessions to the ally, whereas an ally under higher threat could make fewer concessions to the coup-proofing regime. Our study highlights the way nondemocratic domestic political institutions can interact with external threat to shape states’ alliance behavior.

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# 1 Introduction

How do nondemocratic institutions affect alliance formation? A defining feature of authoritarian politics is the constant risk of a leader's forcible removal from power. Particularly in the post-WW2 era, coups d'état present serious threats to leaders across authoritarian states and immature democracies. Incumbent leaders can enact a number of "coup-proofing" policies—promoting officers based on loyalty or creating counterweights to the military—to insulate their regimes from military coups. Yet such internal remedies often draw resources away from the regular military and subsequently harm the state's ability to fight and deter external threats. A defensive alliance with another state could provide a solution to this "coup-proofing dilemma" by providing deterrence or active military support in the case of an attack. But a demand for an alliance does not necessarily mean it will meet an alliance supply. Under what conditions can such a regime attract alliance partners?

While a long tradition in International Relations scholarship studies when alliances are likely to form, the prevalent view posits external threats as the primary determinant (Walt 1985; Leeds 2003; Leeds and Savun 2007; Johnson 2017). But this perspective becomes complicated when we acknowledge that leaders may consider internal threats when making alliance decisions. As such, important gaps remain in our understanding of the domestic sources of alliance formation. Much of the existing research on this topic focuses on how domestic political constraints shape alliance credibility, with domestic constraints typically defined as regime type (Gibler and Wolford 2006; Chiba, Johnson, and Leeds 2015). Scholars suggest that democracies are better able to form alliances than autocracies because democratic institutions and audience costs make alliance commitments credible (Lai and Reiter 2000; Leeds 1999). By contrast, scholars know relatively little about the effects of nondemocratic domestic politics, which is characterized by threat of violence between leaders and elites.

To address this gap, we develop and test an argument about the relationship be-

tween alliance formation and coup-proofing, one of the most common strategies leaders adopt to address coup threats.<sup>1</sup> We focus on counterbalancing, a common coup-proofing method that creates one or more parallel armed forces independent of the state military organization. A regime that employs counterbalancing has strong incentives to create defensive alliances to compensate for the military weakness, increasing the probability that an alliance forms. However, the external threat environment for the involved states moderates this relationship. We propose two separate mechanisms: concerns over entanglement and aggregate capabilities. When a coup-proofing state (State A) exists under high external threat, potential allies are discouraged from forming an alliance due to entanglement concerns. But when external threats for a potential ally (State B) are high, counterbalancing decreases their valuation of an alliance due to concerns about costly deterrence failure and asymmetric burden sharing, discouraging alliance formation. When external threats are low, both of these concerns are reduced, making alliance agreements relatively more likely. Together, our argument advances a nuanced understanding of the effects of counterbalancing on the formation of alliances.

Earlier studies on internal threats pointed to the trade-off between arms and alliances to explain how internal threats might influence alliance decisions, but they do not provide systematic evidence as to why and how internal threats matter. Barnett and Levy (1991) argue that internally insecure states may use alliances as substitutes for arming because alliances can offset domestic military spending, thus allowing the leaders to re-allocate resources to counter internal threats. David (1991) proposes a theory of “omnibalancing,” in which leaders form alliances to balance against both internal and external threats. However, these studies lump the risk of coups and insurrection in the same broad category of internal threats and do not theorize how alliances can help regimes address separate types of threats. In addition, their qualitative case studies focus on “Third World” states’ decisions to align with the U.S. or the Soviet Union, raising

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<sup>1</sup>Replication materials will be made available on the journal website.

concerns about generalizability.

Recent work by Edry, Johnson, and Leeds (2021) provides a fresh perspective by suggesting that the risk of rebellion creates a demand for consultation pacts. Meanwhile, Brown, Fariss, and McMahon (2016) emphasize the other type of internal threat: coups d'état. However, while they find that regimes ruled by minority ethnic groups tend to form more alliances, they find mixed evidence for the role of coup-proofing. In sum, these studies identify how internal threats may generate a demand for alliances from the threatened state, but they do not address the ability of a threatened state to secure an alliance.

We contend that the existing explanations tell only half of the story about the impact of internal threats—specifically, coup risk—on alliance formation. An internally insecure state that pursues coup-proofing, drawing resources away from the military, may very well desire an alliance to compensate for the subsequent battlefield ineffectiveness. We call this the “demand-side” aspect of alliance formation. We suggest that there is one important complication to this demand-side perspective in light of broader scholarship that highlights strategic calculations of alliance-seeking states, which we refer to as the “supply-side” aspect of alliances. Scholars from this tradition highlight varying levels of costs states are willing to pay to gain benefits from an alliance (Johnson 2015; Grant 2013). If a state expects that the costs of an alliance exceed the benefits, the state’s willingness to form an alliance will decrease (Horowitz, Poast, and Stam 2017; Snyder 1984; Morrow 1993). Therefore, there is reason to believe that coup-proofing and its weakening of the military should induce concerns about high costs, thus lowering the regime’s likelihood of being chosen as an ally.

Below, we lay out the logic and implications of the demand- and the supply-side perspectives. We then test our hypotheses quantitatively with a sample of dyads that include at least one nondemocracy between 1960 and 2010, using the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) dataset (Leeds et al. 2002) and the State Security

Forces (SSF) dataset (De Bruin 2020). A dyadic research design allows us to examine the influence of coup-proofing on alliance formation and test two separate mechanisms that could uphold the relationship. To further probe the relationship, we then estimate a hurdle model to examine the policy concessions made upon forming an alliance. The empirical results provide strong support for our argument and illustrate how the proposed mechanisms influence alliance formation. Higher levels of coup-proofing are positively associated with alliance formation except for when potential allies face high threats, in which case alliances are less likely to form. This is largely due to concerns over asymmetric burden-sharing, but entanglement concerns remain present and are often addressed during alliance negotiation.

Our study makes two principal contributions. First, we clarify the relationship between coup-proofing and alliances. We provide stronger quantitative evidence that a coup-proofing regime may want to sign more alliance agreements, while addressing a key question of how a militarily weakened regime could do so. Our findings demonstrate that the degree of external threat might determine the difference between whether the demand or supply of alliances wins out for a coup-proofing regime. Second, we show how internal and external threats interact to affect alliance decisions. While it is recognized that leaders consider complex threat environments in making alliance decisions (David 1991), alliance studies that incorporate this insight are uncommon. Our study recommends a more comprehensive analysis of alliance formation that considers the broader threat environment rather than a single source of threat. More broadly, our findings illustrate not only how domestic-level variables may affect international cooperation but how they might interact with international variables to produce heterogeneous effects on international outcomes.

## 2 Coup-Proofing and the Demand and Supply of Alliances

How does a state's internal security arrangements affect its propensity for forming alliances? Existing work on coup-proofing and alliance formation has not yet provided convincing evidence, in part because it neglects competing logics of the relationship between a coup-proofing regime's *demand* for an alliance and its ability to secure the *supply* of an alliance. We must address this complication to answer the question of whether and how states' desire for internal security leads to alliance formation. This point is intuitive; for an alliance to emerge, supply must meet demand.

In this section, we discuss how coup-proofing affects the demand and supply of alliances. We then introduce the supply-side argument and explain why we must account for external threats in studying the relationship between coup-proofing and alliances. Rather than studying each perspective in isolation, we develop a theory about how coup-proofing and external threat jointly shape the value of a coup-proofing state as an alliance partner. In doing so, we take our cue from the view that arming facilitates alliances (Horowitz, Poast, and Stam 2017), as well as Talmadge's (2015) argument that leaders consider both international and domestic threats when structuring their military organizations.

We apply these insights to the supply of alliances. Coup-proofing the military is analogous to reducing internal arming because it reduces the military's operational capabilities. Coup-proofing may thus signal low value to potential allies, but how it is interpreted by other states may vary based on the relevant threat environment. The interaction between internal and external security is crucial for balancing the competing logics of demand and supply. In inferring the costs and benefits associated with forming an alliance, the broader context of coup-proofing matters. Figure 1 visualizes the theoretical expectations, detailed below.

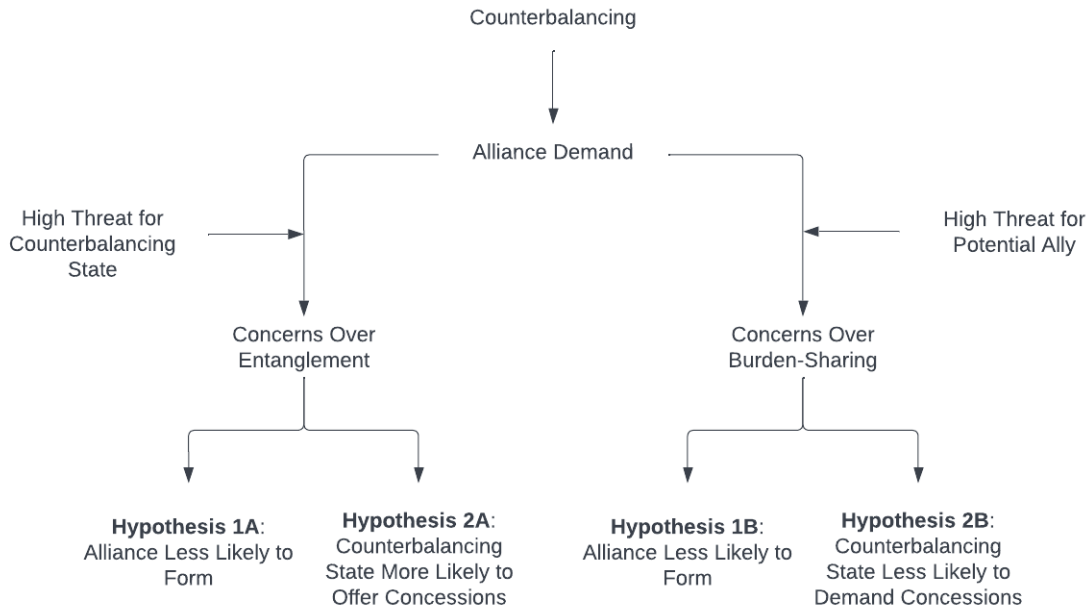


Figure 1: Theoretical Logic

## 2.1 Coup-Proofing and the Demand for Alliances

Coups present a great threat to nondemocratic regimes (Svolik 2009). While every regime needs defense against international adversaries, regimes under the threat of military coups face the “guardianship dilemma,” in which a military strong enough to fend off a foreign adversary is simultaneously strong enough to overthrow the regime (McMahon and Slantchev 2015). One common strategy to address the dilemma is to “coup-proof” one’s military by purposefully undermining its capacity to launch a successful coup (Quinlivan 1999; Belkin and Schofer 2003; De Bruin 2018).

In particular, many regimes under coup threat divide their armed forces into rival groups or create parallel security forces that directly report to the political leadership, a common practice known as counterbalancing (Böhmeit and Pilster 2015).<sup>2</sup> Leaders typically fill the ranks of the parallel forces based on ethno-religious ties rather than

<sup>2</sup>Counterbalancing is effective (De Bruin 2018). Other strategies include promoting officers based on loyalty, reducing training quality, restricting information, and personal bribery (Reiter 2020). While these strategies fit within our theory, we focus on counterbalancing for parsimony and better measurement.

competence to ensure their loyalty (Quinlivan 1999; Böhmelt and Pilster 2015). Consequently, any coup plotters within the military must consider a potential fight against independent armed forces loyal to the leadership. Counterbalancing thus reduces the likelihood of a successful coup by creating counterweights that will forcefully resist a coup attempt (De Bruin 2018), as well as generating coordination obstacles within the military (Powell 2012).

However, counterbalancing diminishes the battlefield effectiveness of military forces, and it likely does so more dramatically than other coup-proofing methods (Reiter 2020). Horizontal and vertical coordination is critical to any military operation, and counterbalancing undermines the military's communication and information capabilities (Talmadge 2015, 2016). In addition, Quinlivan (1999) argues that counterbalancing forces take priority over the regular military in resource allocations, leading to a "monopolization of capabilities inside the parallel military." Since counterbalancing forces are unlikely to participate in battle, the overall military effectiveness will be reduced. The organization of the Iraqi armed forces during the Iraq War is illustrative. Although Iraq had a sizable army, due to Saddam Hussein's preoccupation with internal security, its military consisted of forces that served redundant functions, with communication among them severely restricted (Hosmer 2007). Moreover, the elite Iraqi Republican Guard was not allowed to move without written permission from the regime leadership during the course of war (Duelfer 2004).

Coup-proofing thus places coup-threatened regimes in a difficult position. Leaders may insulate themselves from an internal threat with counterbalancing, but this will diminish their ability to handle external threats. Moreover, leaders may manipulate external threats to create a rally-around-the-flag effect. Piplani and Talmadge (2016) find that prolonged inter-state wars reduce the risk of coups, but coup-proofing simultaneously lowers a state's likelihood of winning inter-state wars (Narang and Talmadge 2018). In short, coup-proofing regimes have every reason to prepare for an interstate conflict, but



counterbalancing reduces their ability to successfully engage in one.

This position should generate a strong demand for military alliances from the regime. In particular, by requiring member states to intervene in a military conflict, defense pacts can provide deterrence against potential adversaries (Leeds 2003; Johnson and Leeds 2011).<sup>3</sup> This demand-side argument frames arms and alliances as substitutes. Regimes under internal threat cannot safely select to arm internally because that would empower the military, the domestic actors that are most likely to initiate a coup (McMahon and Slantchev 2015). Forming a defensive alliance, meanwhile, constitutes an additional level of security that is less dependent on increasing the strength of the armed forces. Thus, an internally threatened regime's sensible choice – in the dichotomy between arms and alliances – might be to form defense pacts.

## **2.2 Coup-Proofing and the Supply of Alliances**

The previous section discussed how counterbalancing increases the demand for alliances, from the perspective of the regime that practices it. The demand for an alliance does not guarantee a supply of potential allies, however. Since states are likely to be strategic in alliance decisions, they will choose to form an alliance if they expect to gain positive net benefits from it. Defense pacts, in particular, involve higher costs than other types of alliance arrangements due to the obligation for military intervention (Leeds et al. 2002). Our supply-side perspective examines how coup-proofing influences the strategic calculus of potential allies. Specifically, we argue that coup-proofing lowers the value of the regime as an ally, discouraging alliance formation.<sup>4</sup>

Coup-proofing may reduce the supply of alliances through two related but distinct

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<sup>3</sup>Our theoretical explanation is limited to defense pacts, as opposed to other alliance arrangements, such as consultation pacts or nonaggression pacts. We therefore use the terms “alliance” and “defense pact” interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup>We maintain the distinction between coup-risk and the actual policy of coup-proofing in this section. For example, the CIA described Syria as a “coup-prone cockpit of inter-Arab politics,” in the 1950s and 1960s (CIA 1973, p.1), but Syria formed a defense pact with Egypt in 1966 and did not engage in overt counterbalancing until 1968.

mechanisms. First, by undermining military effectiveness, coup-proofing might increase the probability that the alliance obligation will be invoked, a phenomenon referred to as *entanglement*.<sup>5</sup> The issue of entanglement has been central to the study of alliance management (Snyder 1984), but it carries relevance to alliance formation because concerns about costly military intervention can reduce the *ex-ante* willingness to form an alliance. From other states' standpoint, an alliance with a coup-proofing regime comes with a higher likelihood of entanglement. Since fractured militaries should be more likely to invite aggression from adversaries than robust ones, potential allies may be concerned that a coup-proofing regime will be more likely to invoke the alliance, embroiling them into costly conflicts. Of course, states must accept some risk of entanglement to form an alliance at all (Kim 2011). But states seeking mutual defense partners might find the heightened entanglement risk particularly troublesome due to uncertainty about whether their military assistance will be reciprocated. The state that expects to provide assistance first would feel more vulnerable to defection. The 1935 Franco-Soviet pact was criticized by French officials who believed it offered far more to Russia in the event of German attack; prior to the agreement's formation, the French Deputy Chief of the General Staff reported on Russian military deficiencies (Dreifort 1976), much of which resulted from counterbalancing (Reiter 2020, p. 327).

Second, coup-proofing might diminish the alliance's efficacy in the eyes of the potential ally. A defense pact is valuable to a state to the extent that members' aggregate military capabilities deter or defeat potential adversaries. Morrow (1994) argues that alliance-seeking states consider how much military power their potential alliance partners can provide to produce effective deterrence. The more likely deterrence is expected to fail, therefore, the less likely an alliance is to form. Assuming deterrence success is a function of power; states will want alliances whose aggregate power is greater than that

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<sup>5</sup>We distinguish entanglement from a related concept *entrapment*. A state is entrapped when its ally behaves aggressively to provoke an attack. Entanglement occurs simply when a state is called upon to provide military assistance per the alliance obligation and is a more common occurrence (Kim 2011).

of adversaries. An alliance with a coup-proofing regime will have a relatively higher probability of deterrence failure because the regime would only make a marginal contribution to aggregate power, discouraging potential allies.

Coup-proofing also raises the costs of fighting and leads to concerns about asymmetric burden sharing. If deterrence fails, the coup-proofing regime's weakened military will be less able to provide an adequate defense. In addition to increasing the overall likelihood of a military defeat, the allied state must now expend more resources to overcome the adversary. Concerns about the costs of fighting will be particularly serious when the coup-proofing state is called upon to provide assistance because counterweights tend not to participate in combat. As noted above, coup-proofing leaderships tend to keep their elite forces near the state's capital to protect themselves and are unlikely to deploy them overseas.<sup>6</sup> During the October War with Israel, Syria made the catastrophic decision to keep its best armored units behind the front lines under the control of its security forces (Kerr 1973, p. 687; Quinlivan 1999, p. 158). In sum, if a state chooses an alliance by comparing the security benefits of having the ally to the costs of providing security for the ally (Morrow 1991), coup-proofing might make the regime that adopts it a less attractive alliance partner, all else equal.<sup>7</sup>

Outside observers should recognize the potential for entanglement and insufficient aggregate power caused by counterbalancing. Our argument centers on counterbalancing not only because counterbalancing is particularly detrimental to military effectiveness compared to other mechanisms (Talmadge 2015; Reiter 2020), but also because counterweights and their detrimental effects should be more observable by other coun-

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<sup>6</sup>We stress that counterbalancing identifies a novel dynamic not captured by simple measures of power like military expenditures or the military's size. The allocation of resources is as important as the overall investment.

<sup>7</sup>A caveat to this argument is that states strong enough to deter or defeat threats might still find it acceptable to ally with coup-proofing states. As such, our theory may be more relevant to symmetric alliances—where allies with roughly equal power exchange security benefits—than to asymmetric alliances, where major powers may not expect to gain security from minor power allies (Morrow 1991). This is not to say our argument is only applicable for symmetric alliances, however. Considering that burden-sharing and free-riding problems are endemic to alliances with unequal power relationships (Horowitz, Poast and Stam 2017), coup-proofing may also discourage the formation of asymmetric alliances.

tries. For example, Syria's creation of new counterweights under Hafez al-Assad were led by close family relations, entailed specific names—the Defense Companies and the Struggles Companies—and used distinct insignia and uniforms. In short, the creation and maintenance of counterweights is public and prominent. By contrast, other forms of coup-proofing, such as promotion based on loyalty, command channels, or poor training, may not be as readily observable. A 1972 United Kingdom diplomatic review observed that Syria's "ineffective paramilitary forces" diminished the military's actual capabilities, presaging their inefficiency in the 1973 October War (British Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1972, p. 5). Thus, while our theoretical logic could apply to other coup-proofing mechanisms that reduce military capacity, we expect counterbalancing to have the most consequential effect.

Moreover, although coup-proofing regimes might have various techniques at their disposal to restore military efficacy, such as increasing military spending, they may not offset the negative impact of coup-proofing on alliance formation. This is because creating counterbalancing units effectively increases military spending and the size of the military personnel. Without a highly visible policy such as conscription (Horowitz, Poast and Stam 2017), it would be difficult for potential allies to determine how much of the observed increases in military expenditure of a coup-proofing regime should be attributed to restoring military efficacy rather than maintaining counterweight forces.<sup>8</sup>

### **2.3 Reconciling the Two Perspectives**

When it comes to coup-proofing, the supply and the demand of alliances lead to competing predictions about alliance formation. Weak military capabilities brought about by counterbalancing should generate a demand for alliances by the coup-proofing regime. But that same military weakness should also raise concerns about entanglement and in-

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<sup>8</sup>To address this possibility empirically, we control for changes in military spending and the size of the military personnel between year  $t$  and  $t-1$ , using the components of the CINC scores. The results are in keeping with our expectations, and our findings remain the same. The analysis is reported in Appendix.

sufficient aggregate power, thus diminishing the alliance supply. How might these two perspectives be reconciled? We argue that the level of external threat surrounding each potential alliance partner moderates the effect of counterbalancing and determines the balance between the demand and supply for alliances. The two supply-side mechanisms of entanglement and aggregate capabilities emphasize the level of threat affecting the coup-proofing state and potential ally, respectively.

A high external threat for the *coup-proofing state* should increase the risk of entanglement.<sup>9</sup> All else equal, the greater external threat, the higher the chance of an interstate conflict, or at least, the perception of a conflict's likelihood. Purposely weakening one's own military through counterbalancing further endangers the regime's security and its ability to defend itself. Prospective alliance partners will perceive a particularly high likelihood of entanglement. This should decrease the willingness of potential allies to enter into a defense pact with the coup-proofing state.<sup>10</sup> In the lead-up to the First Congo War—a conflict in which Zaire's elite counterweights were inauspiciously kept from the front-lines—Mobutu attempted to form an alliance with Sudan (Reyntjens 2009, 111). But no defense pact formed and Sudan, while ideologically supportive of Zaire, managed to avoid substantial military entanglement (Tamm 2016, 153). If the coup-proofing is situated in a more secure international environment, however, alliance suppliers would perceive a lower risk of entanglement despite the regime's weakened military, as they may not expect to provide military assistance.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, a high external threat for the *potential ally* should exacerbate concerns about aggregate capabilities. States facing higher external threat will be more depen-

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<sup>9</sup>The logic for this mechanism assumes that coup-proofing does not directly change external threat or the interest of other states for defending the regime.

<sup>10</sup>As with coup-proofing, we assume that outside observers can observe roughly when another state is experiencing a high level of external threat. That is, states are able to recognize how powerful their neighbors are and if the countries are on generally favorable terms. It was no secret that Saddam's Iraq existed in a high threat environment, or that India and Pakistan have long engaged in a near-constant level of threat between each other.

<sup>11</sup>We use the term "likelihood" in a relative sense. That is, other states will perceive the likelihood of entanglement to be higher for an alliance with a coup-proofing state relative to an alliance with a state that does not coup-proof.

dent on their alliance partners for security. If given a choice, therefore, highly threatened states will select partners that will maximize the alliance's military power. Since coup-proofing states add less to aggregate power, states under high threat should be reluctant to ally with them. Meanwhile, states under low threat may still pursue alliances with less secure states to obtain policy concessions, such as basing agreements, favorable trade deals, and some control over diplomatic relations (Morrow 1991; Pressman 2008). Relatively secure states may also create alliances to protect existing trade relations (Fordham 2010). Here, potential allies are less concerned about aggregate military capabilities and therefore more willing to ally with a coup-proofing state.

After gaining control of Syria through a coup, Hafez al-Assad created numerous counterweights to insulate himself domestically. This came at the cost of military effectiveness, a trade-off outside observers recognized (British Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1972).<sup>12</sup> Assad, despite gaining Sadat's personal trust and forming a more amicable Syrian-Egyptian relations than the previous regime (Rubinstein 2015, 156), did not form a mutual defense pact with Egypt as his predecessor had in 1966. Subsequently, Egypt refrained from defending Syria from Israeli strikes prior to the October War.<sup>13</sup> In the words of the British Foreign Office, Egypt "showed no sign of lifting a finger (or a MIG) to help Syria," (British Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1973, 5). Here, the mutual threat of Israel shows how the two mechanisms can overlap: Syria, if attacked, could have entangled Egypt, or—in the event of an attack on Egypt—failed to adequately contribute to mutual defense. We therefore do not treat these mechanisms as mutually exclusive.

Each mechanism's logic highlights the interaction between counterbalancing and external threat. A coup-proofing regime's increased demand for alliances may come to

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<sup>12</sup>Sadat himself later acknowledged Syria's ineffective military in conversations with Soviet leaders during the October War (el Sadat 1977, 259).

<sup>13</sup>According to Anwar Sadat's later memoirs, the Egyptian military did not begin planning the joint offensive until December 1972; prior to that, it emphasized a defensive strategy (el Sadat 1977, p. 237). Indeed, Egypt was actively search for formal alliance partners in the lead-up to the October War (Barnett and Levy 1991).

fruition, but only if the relevant external security environment diminishes ally concerns about potential alliance costs. If the external security environment exacerbates these concerns, coup-proofing states may struggle to form alliances.

These theoretical expectations are summarized as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a/Entanglement concerns:** The higher the level of external threat State A faces, the more coup-proofing diminishes State A's ability to form an alliance.

**Hypothesis 1b/Aggregate capabilities concerns:** The higher the level of external threat State B faces, the more coup-proofing diminishes State A's ability to form an alliance.

The above predictions focus on alliance formation, but do not consider how alliance design decisions can accommodate preferences that stem from the supply and demand of alliances. Alliance obligations can be designed to be more or less stringent (Mates 2012b) or offer more or fewer policy concessions (Johnson 2015). A coup-proofing regime, aware of its deficiencies as a partner, can offer generous policy concessions to attract allies. For example, it could allow its military to be subordinate to an ally's in the event of war, or promise non-security cooperation benefits like favorable trade relations. The proper alliance design may therefore satisfy concerns over entanglement or the aggregate capabilities of the alliance. Despite French concerns over Russian capabilities, the 1935 Franco-Soviet Pact did form, albeit with limitations that curbed the alliance's obligations and effectiveness (Dreifort 1976). Here, we briefly detail the logic behind each mechanism as applied to alliance design.

The context behind each mechanism suggests separate ways in which the coup-proofing state can "sweeten the pot" for potential allies. First, potential allies' entanglement concerns may prompt the coup-proofing state to offer more generous terms during alliance negotiation. Increased side benefits can draw in an ally despite the en-

tanglement risk. And, given that the coup-proofing state is seeking to offset its internal military deficiencies in the face of a high external threat, the regime's high demand for an alliance should increase its willingness to offer such concessions. Libya under Muammar Gaddafi, diplomatically isolated after its 1980 invasion of Chad, attempted to normalize relations with Morocco in 1981. However, Gaddafi's refusal to renege Libya's support of the Polisario Front halted progress toward a formal agreement (Deeb 1989, 30). But after creating the People's Security Force, a new counterweight, in 1983, Gaddafi acceded to Morocco's conditions, forming a mutual defense pact in 1984.

Second, other states' concerns over aggregate capabilities may motivate the coup-proofing state to accept fewer concessions from potential allies. Absent coup-proofing, one would expect a potential ally under high external threat to offer more concessions given the assumed entanglement risks. But a coup-proofing state is in no position to demand such concessions given its own liabilities and internal demand for an alliance. The potential ally can thus offer fewer side benefits than it would normally provide to a non-coup-proofing ally. In short, the entanglement mechanism suggests that the coup-proofing state will offer more side benefits while the aggregate capabilities mechanism suggests that it will demand fewer.

Both logics maintain the interactive relationship between coup-proofing and external threat. We predict that entanglement concerns are highest when the coup-proofing state faces a high external threat; thus, the coup-proofing state should offer the most concessions under this interaction. But when the coup-proofing state allies with another state under high external threat, it should demand fewer concessions. The predictions on design may compete with those concerning formation. For example, if a coup-proofing state can effectively assuage entanglement concerns with more side benefits, then said concerns will not prevent an alliance from forming as Hypothesis 1 predicts. Alternatively, entanglement concerns may make alliance formation unlikely, but—in the rare instance in which an alliance does form—additional side benefits are still required from



the coup-proofing state. In this case, both entanglement hypotheses may find support. We therefore treat our formation and design predictions as overlapping hypotheses that are not necessarily competing.

The theoretical expectations concerning alliance design are summarized as follows:

**Hypothesis 2a/Entanglement concerns:** The higher the level of external threat State A faces, the more coup-proofing increases the number of concessions State A offers to alliance partners.

**Hypothesis 2b/Aggregate capabilities concerns:** The higher the level of external threat State B faces, the more coup-proofing decreases the number of concessions that State A demands from alliance partners.

### 3 Research Design

#### 3.1 Unit of Analysis and Dependent Variable

We test these hypotheses quantitatively, using directed dyadic-years as the unit of analysis, in which State A is the potential coup-proofing regime and State B is the potential ally.<sup>14</sup> We use directed dyads to address our theory's specific predictions about external threat to State A and State B.<sup>15</sup> Testing our hypotheses thus requires separate measures of external threat for each state in a dyad. Second, we need to identify dyads where at least one side has the potential to coup-proof. Our theory is most relevant to nondemocracies. Established democracies, which have little incentive to coup-proof, are outside the scope of our analysis. Following this theoretical prior, in each dyad, State A is restricted to be

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<sup>14</sup>The dyadic data are built using the "PeaceScencer" R package developed by Miller (2021).

<sup>15</sup>In Appendix, we use a monadic design as a robustness check and find that coup-proofing regimes facing higher external threats are less likely to form alliances. We note, however, that the monadic design provides a partial test of our theory since it does not allow us to identify potential allies and their external threat.

a nondemocracy, and State B can be of any regime type.<sup>16</sup> Nondemocracies are defined as states whose Polity2 scores are 6 or lower.<sup>17</sup> Our analysis covers the period between 1960 and 2010.<sup>18</sup>

Our dependent variable codes whether the dyad forms a defensive alliance in the given year. The data on defensive alliances come from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project (Leeds et al. 2002), which provides information about alliances formed between 1815 and 2018. We only consider defense pacts—alliances that obligate military assistance should one member of the alliance come under attack—as our theory concerns strategic considerations about military assistance from and to coup-proofing regimes. Alliances that do not include defensive obligations, such as consultation pacts and neutrality pacts, would not trigger such considerations. We also focus on bilateral alliances where concerns about entanglement and aggregate capabilities should be more prominent. Potential allies should be less concerned about including coup-proofing states as members in a multilateral alliance where the security burden is shared.

### 3.2 Independent Variables

We identify two primary independent variables for the analysis: *counterbalancing* and the level of *external threat*. The State Security Forces (SSF) dataset, which includes information on 365 security forces in 110 randomly selected states between 1960 and 2010, provides the data on counterbalancing (De Bruin 2020). While other measures of internal security forces exist, the SSF dataset holds the advantage of explicitly measuring the presence of security forces designed to counterbalance, that is, armed groups un-

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<sup>16</sup>To ensure this design does not bias our findings, we also use the full sample of dyads that encompasses all regime types. Doing so does not change the pattern of main findings.

<sup>17</sup>Polity2 scores for states in transition years are prorated, and interregna are coded as a 0. States under foreign occupations are dropped.

<sup>18</sup>The temporal domain is limited due to the data availability for our main independent variable. The data on counterbalancing begin in 1960 (De Bruin 2020). We stress that this scope is still larger than an existing measure of counterbalancing, which covers 1967-1999 (Pilster and Böhmelt 2011).

der state control that exist outside the formal military's command structure. We label these groups as counterweights. Our primary independent variable, *counterbalancing*, is a logged count of existing counterweights in State A in the given directed-dyad year. We assume that a larger count indicates a higher level of counterbalancing and thus a lower level of military effectiveness. We follow prior research in log-transforming the count of counterweights because we do not expect each additional counterweight to have equal impact on the regime's military effectiveness (De Bruin 2018).<sup>19</sup>

Next, to construct the measures of external threat, we follow measures created by Leeds and Savun (2007) and Mattes (2012b). External threat to each state in a dyad year is operationalized as the sum of CINC scores of all potential adversaries in the state's politically relevant international environment (PRIE) Maoz (1996). A state's PRIE is made up of states that are directly or indirectly (i.e. through colonial holdings) contiguous or major powers. Within the PRIE, potential adversaries are identified by subsetting by non-allies whose S-scores are below the mean of S-scores for all politically relevant dyads from 1816 to 2010.<sup>20</sup> The S-score measures compatibility in security interests in a dyad based on the states' alliance networks (Chiba, Johnson, and Leeds 2015). We assume that if the similarity of security interests between two non-allied states is below the global average, there may be a potential for conflict. This measure holds the advantage of accounting for both the capabilities and intentions of potential adversaries in a state's politically relevant international environment (Leeds and Savun 2007).

### 3.3 Model Specification and Control Variables

We estimate logit models due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable. To test our hypotheses, we estimate two sets of models. The first set includes an interaction between *counterbalancing* and *external threat* to coup-proofing regimes. The second set in-

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<sup>19</sup>Using the raw count does not change the pattern of findings.

<sup>20</sup>We use the ATOP data to identify allied dyads. A dyad is allied if they share defense pacts, offense pacts, consultation pacts, or neutrality pacts.

cludes an interaction between *counterbalancing* and *external threat* to potential allies. We lag these interaction terms and their constitutive terms by one year to ensure counterbalancing and external threat actually precede the formation of alliances. This setup is necessary to address potential reverse causation, in which defense pacts facilitate coup-proofing (Boutton 2019). It also accounts for the possibility that states may take some time to negotiate alliance treaties.

In our analysis, we control for dyad-level and state-level factors that may affect both alliance formation and coup-proofing. At the dyad level, we control for shared defense pacts between a given dyad as defense pacts may enable autocratic leaders to coup-proof their regimes by relieving concerns about external threats (Boutton 2019). We therefore use the ATOP data to include a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the two states in the dyad share bilateral or multilateral defense pacts, and 0 otherwise. Scholars also suggest that regime similarity facilitates alliance formation (Lai and Reiter 2000). Indeed, dyads of states with similar regime types often share common international identities as well as security interests (Gartzke and Weisiger 2013). States that are closely aligned may be less concerned about entanglement risk or burden sharing than states that are only loosely aligned. We thus control for regime difference by measuring the absolute difference between the Polity2 scores of the two states in the dyad.

For state-level factors, we focus on potential coup proofing regimes' domestic political characteristics. Since coup-proofing is likely to occur under an increased threat of a coup (Belkin and Schofer 2003),<sup>21</sup> any observed effects of coup-proofing on alliances might be due to increased coup risk, rather than the act of coup-proofing itself. We use data from Powell and Thyne (2011) that collect information on coup attempts between 1950 and 2010. Our binary measure *recent coup* is coded 1 if a military coup, regardless of its outcome, occurred in State A in the last five years, and 0 otherwise. In addition, nondemocratic regimes that have recently taken power may have a stronger motivation

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<sup>21</sup>Sudduth (2017) provides an important caveat to this assumption.

to form alliances and coup-proof the military to lessen domestic instability. We consider this possibility through a binary variable *new regime* that records whether State A experiences any regime change in the past five years based on Polity2 data.<sup>22</sup> Finally, military juntas may form relatively few defense pacts while engaging in little coup-proofing, given that the military itself constitutes the state government. To account for this, we use the Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) dataset on autocratic regime types to include a binary variable for *military regimes*.<sup>23</sup> Summary statistics for all variables are provided in the Appendix.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.4 The Influence of Coup-Proofing in Alliance Negotiation

The above design on alliance formation seeks to provide evidence for Hypotheses 1a and 1b. This section presents a similar, yet distinct design to test Hypotheses 2a and 2b. To test these predictions, we construct a new dependent variable measuring the number of foreign policy concessions made by alliance members. In doing so, we follow Johnson (2015) in coding ten foreign policy concessions that restrict interactions with third parties, commit to certain behaviors of peace and cooperation, and surrender certain decisions over policy-making. But before policy concessions can be decided, two states must choose to form an alliance. Since our theory expects coup-proofing to also influence alliance formation, standard models may incur selection bias. Like other studies of alliance design (Chiba, Johnson and Leeds 2015), we recognize that this is not a traditional sample selection problem. Rather than presenting itself as a missing value, the second stage—the number of policy concessions provided—is logically undefined in

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<sup>22</sup>Specifically, we use the *byear* variable, which “signifies the beginning of a new regime and the ending of a regime change” (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2002)

<sup>23</sup>We only include “pure” military regimes and exclude military-personalist hybrids. We consider these hybrids personalist because in these regimes, the control over policy is likely in the hands of an individual dictator rather than the military institution.

<sup>24</sup>Like the main independent variables, most control variables are lagged one year following our theoretical assumption that a state’s past political characteristics determine current alliance formation. Variables *recent coup* and *new regime* are not lagged because they are already measured over time.

the absence of an alliance (Vance and Ritter 2014). We therefore implement a hurdle model (i.e. a two-part model) that tests how many policy concessions potential allies agree to provide, given that two states have agreed to form an alliance with at least one concession (Cragg 1971).<sup>25</sup>

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Alliance Formation

Table 1 shows the results of four logistic regression models. All models include clustered standard errors at the dyad level to account for dyadic dependencies. The base model (Model 1) and the model with controls (Model 2) test Hypothesis 1a. The main variable of interest in these models is the interaction between *counterbalancing*,  $A$  and the *external threat*,  $A$ . We should expect the interaction to have negative impact on alliance formation if the entanglement hypothesis correct as a greater external threat to the coup-proofing regime increases entanglement risks for potential allies. The variable fails to reach statistical significance at the 5% level in both models. We therefore conclude that there is not enough evidence for the hypothesis that coup-proofing leads to lower probabilities of gaining alliances due to potential allies' entanglement concerns.

In Model 3 and Model 4, we find evidence for Hypothesis 1b. If regimes practicing coup-proofing are less likely to gain alliances because they only make marginal contributions to mutual security, we should see a lower likelihood of defense pacts forming as the external threat to potential allies increases. Here, the key variable, *counterbalancing*,  $A$ :*external threat*,  $B$ , is negative and statistically significant. Both constitutive terms are positive and significant. Taken together, these results support the aggregate capabilities hypothesis. Regimes with higher levels of counterbalancing can form alliances with

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<sup>25</sup>We also estimate Heckman probit models, which can be found in the Appendix. The results suggest a similar pattern for policy concessions, but we maintain that Heckman models incorrectly specify the two-stage relationship.

Table 1: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies

	Defense pacts			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Counterbalancing, A	1.678*** (0.577)	0.436 (0.582)	2.468*** (0.530)	3.493*** (0.685)
External threat, A	0.410 (2.416)	-5.030* (2.832)		-2.696*** (0.820)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	-1.077 (1.930)	2.018 (2.175)		
External threat, B		-3.212*** (0.936)	6.086*** (1.857)	5.758** (2.462)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B			-3.781** (1.470)	-7.668*** (1.897)
Shared defense pacts		4.414*** (0.413)		4.325*** (0.386)
Regime difference		-0.099*** (0.038)		-0.106*** (0.037)
Recent coup, A		-0.335 (0.306)		-0.313 (0.306)
New regime, A		-0.691** (0.304)		-0.667** (0.313)
Military regime, A		-1.366* (0.724)		-1.316* (0.730)
Constant	-9.977*** (0.677)	-7.871*** (0.634)	-11.665*** (0.693)	-11.410*** (1.092)
N	505403	420551	505403	420551

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

states that face little external threat, but less so with states that experience high levels of external threat.

The marginal effects plots in Figure 1 show the interactive relationships indicated in Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b. In the left plot, external threat to coup-proofing regimes appears on the horizontal axis, while the right plot describes external threat to potential allies. Each plot illustrates the marginal effect of counterbalancing on defense pacts over the whole range of external threat. On the left panel, the confidence band is

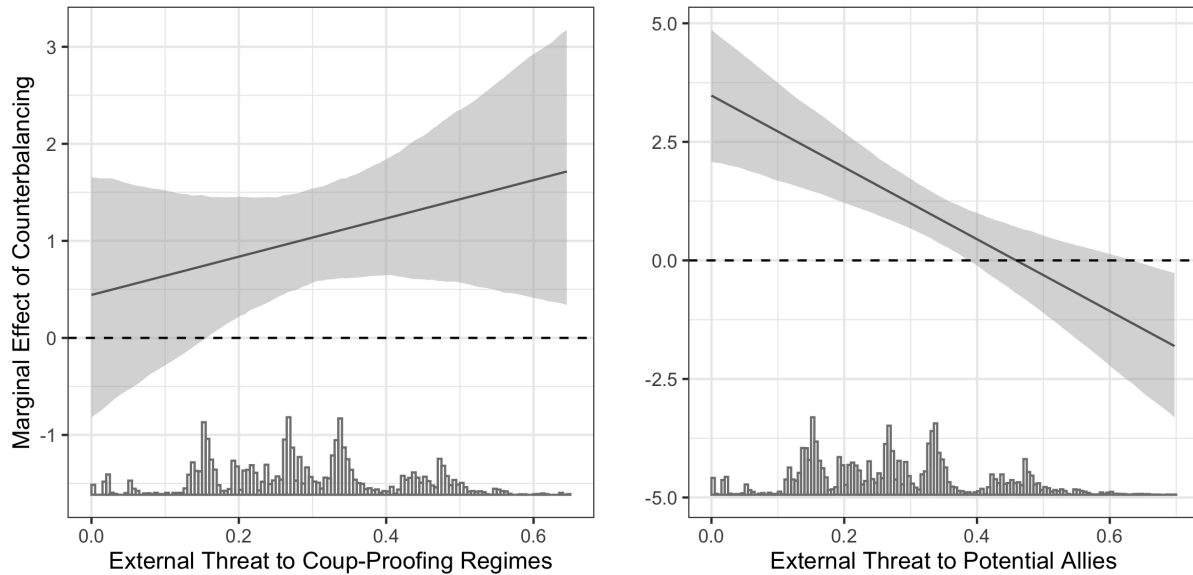


Figure 2: Marginal Effects from Interactions with External Threat

above zero for most values of external threat but this is not an evidence for an interactive relationship. The statistically insignificant interaction terms in the regression results (Model 1 and Model 2) suggest that the effect of counterbalancing does not depend on external threat to the regime. On the right plot, counterbalancing has positive effects on alliance formation when allies' threat is near the mean (0.27). As threat increases, however, the marginal effect decreases and becomes indistinguishable from zero, suggesting that counterbalancing does not make alliances more likely at above-average levels of threat. As external threat rises further, the marginal effect eventually becomes negative and significant. In keeping with Hypothesis 1b, this suggests that coup-proofing regimes become less likely to create defense pacts due to other states' concerns about insufficient aggregate power of the alliance.

Figure 2 plots predicted probabilities of alliance formation across the entire range of external threat to potential allies, evaluated at three different values of the log-transformed counterbalancing measure: zero, the mean (0.78), and one standard deviation above the mean (1.28). These three values represent, respectively, no counterbalancing, moderate levels, and high levels of counterbalancing. The plot shows that when potential allies



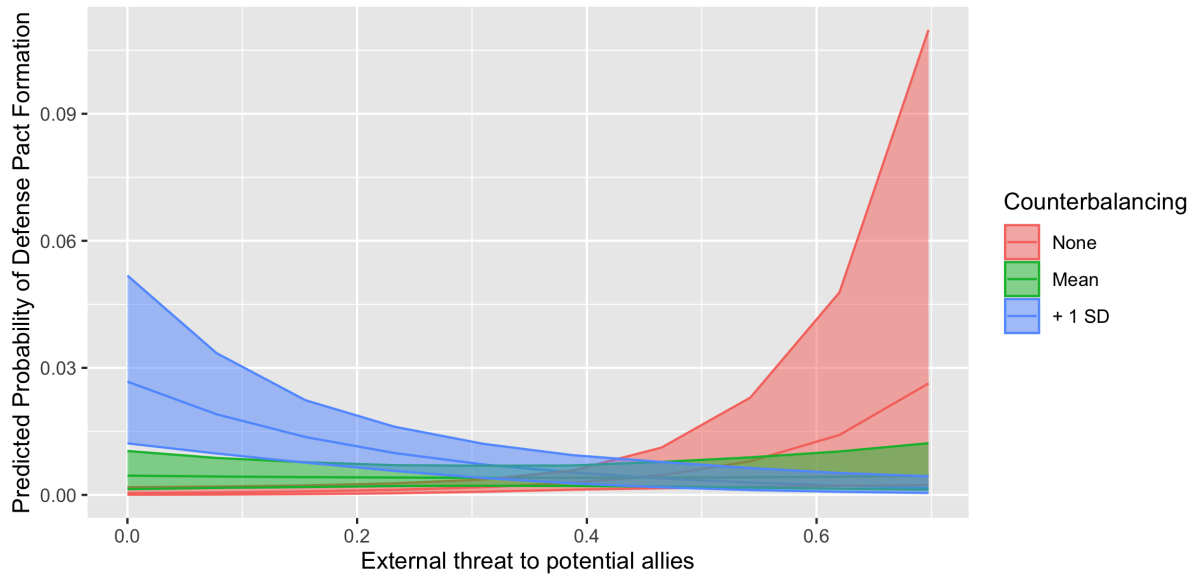


Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities of Defense Pact Formation

face low external threat, regimes pursuing higher levels of coup-proofing are more likely to form defense pacts than moderately coup-proofed regimes and regimes without any counterbalancing. When allies' threat is zero, for instance, the probability of alliance formation for regimes with no counterbalancing is near zero, whereas regimes with a high level of counterbalancing have a 2.5 percent probability of forming alliances. This result may be intuitive because in the former case, there should be no demand for alliances from either side. In the latter, the coup-proofing state may be willing to make concessions large enough to make the alliance worthwhile for other states.<sup>26</sup>

However, in keeping with our prediction, the pattern reverses as potential allies' external threat increases. Coup-proofing regimes become increasingly less likely to form alliances, even more so when the level of counterbalancing is high. On the other hand, for regimes with no counterbalancing, the probability of defense pacts increases with allies' external threat. Also note that in contrast to the clear downward curve for high counterbalancing (the blue curve), for moderate counterbalancing (the green curve), the

<sup>26</sup>Below, we elaborate on this hypothesized relationship between concessions and alliance formation with coup-proofing regimes.

curve is largely flat regardless of allies' external threat. We interpret this outcome as moderately coup-proofed regimes simply being unattractive allies. Their militaries may not be weak enough for the regimes to offer non-threatened states concessions to form alliances, and at the same time they are not strong enough for threatened states to rely on as allies. Finally, the results preempt the possible alternate argument that states facing high external threat would still be willing to ally with coup-proofing regimes because a marginal contribution to aggregate capabilities is better than no contribution at all. If this argument is true, the probability curves should take similar shapes regardless of whether the regime employs counterbalancing. As Figure 3 illustrates, this logic does not seem to play out: the coup-proofed military may be too fractured to expect any meaningful assistance from.<sup>27</sup>

## 4.2 Alliance Negotiation

The above results provide evidence for our predictions regarding alliance formation, with the strongest evidence favoring the "aggregate capabilities" hypothesis. Here, we present the results for our tests on the influence of coup-proofing on alliance negotiation and design. As reported in Table 2, we estimate separate hurdle models for each of the two hypotheses.<sup>28</sup> To examine the influence of entanglement concerns (Hypothesis 2a), the first model includes the interaction between coup-proofing and the coup-proofing regimes' external threat. The dependent variable is the number of concessions agreed by State A. The second model tests the effect of aggregate capabilities concerns (Hypothesis 2b) by including the interaction between coup-proofing and the ally's external threat. The dependent variable in this model is the number of concessions agreed by State B. The results support both hypotheses. In Model 1, the interactive term is positive and sig-

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<sup>27</sup>It is worth highlighting again that our empirical focus is on bilateral alliances. States concerned about allies' marginal contribution to collective defense might have incentive to form multilateral alliances, where by definition multiple states pool their capabilities. Our contention is that coup-proofing will discourage the formation of bilateral alliances because there is only one ally to rely on.

<sup>28</sup>We only report second-stage results here. The first-stage results are included in the Appendix.

nificant, suggesting that higher levels of coup-proofing lead to more policy concessions when coup-proofing regimes form alliances in a high threat environment. In Model 2, the negative and significant interactive term indicates that the greater allies' external threat, the fewer concessions the coup-proofing state receives from the allies.

Table 2: Effects of Counterbalancing and External Threat on the Number of Foreign Policy Concessions, Conditioned by Forming Alliances with at least One Concession

	Concessions, A		Concessions, B	
	Model 1		Model 2	
Counterbalancing, A	-0.237	(0.646)	3.845***	(0.880)
External threat, A	-8.697***	(2.832)	-2.814**	(1.221)
External threat, B	-3.680***	(1.247)	5.899*	(3.283)
Shared defense pacts	5.557***	(0.449)	5.378***	(0.440)
Regime difference	-0.093***	(0.034)	-0.103***	(0.034)
New regime, A	-0.828***	(0.311)	-0.759**	(0.311)
Recent coup, A	-1.019**	(0.478)	-0.989**	(0.479)
Military regime, A	-0.830	(0.743)	-0.794	(0.743)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	4.726**	(1.902)		
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B			-8.055***	(2.456)
Constant	-7.921***	(0.846)	-12.723***	(1.208)
N	420551		420551	
Log Likelihood	-524.896		-523.420	

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

These results hold interesting implications for each mechanism's prevalence. Whereas the entanglement concerns did not have significant effects on other states' decisions to form an alliance with a coup-proofing regime (see Table 1), upon negotiating an alliance,

those same concerns led to more policy concessions from the coup-proofing regime. Together, these findings suggest that coup-proofing regimes may reduce entanglement's negative effects by using policy concessions to make the alliance more valuable to allies. The second mechanism is supported by inverse results. Potential allies appear to consider the aggregate strength of the alliance when deciding whether to ally or not (see Table 1). But this factor also translates to the negotiation stage. When states enter an alliance with a coup-proofing regime, they could offer fewer policy concessions than they would have done with an ally that has an intact military. Therefore, coup-proofing regimes appear to also offset concerns over the alliance's aggregate capabilities by accepting fewer policy concessions from allies. Yet, our results on alliance formation cast doubt on this as an effective solution, as alliances are unlikely to form under these conditions in the first place.

## 5 Robustness Checks

We implement a series of robustness checks. All results are reported in the Appendix. First, we include year fixed-effects to account for temporal dependencies. Second, we use rare events logit to address the concern that standard logit models generate biased coefficients when applied to low-probability events (King and Zeng 2001). The analyses yield largely similar results. For our results on alliance design, the hurdle models use the same dependent variable, count of concessions, for the first part (0 or 1) and the second part (how many more concessions were provided), treating dyads with no alliance formation as zeros rather than missing values. We therefore estimate Heckman selection models as an alternative, which limit the second stage sample to dyads that do form alliances. The results for the entanglement mechanism remain similar, but the interaction between counterbalancing and external threat to State B does not achieve statistical significance when full controls are included. While we previously cautioned

against the Heckman specification, these results provide further evidence that the entanglement mechanism occurs during the negotiation stage while the aggregate capabilities mechanism features more strongly in the formation stage.

To ensure our findings are not driven by particular coding decisions, we re-estimate the logit models using alternate designs and measures. First, similar results are obtained when we use the full sample of available directed dyad-years without restricting State A to be nondemocracies.<sup>29</sup> While our theory mostly concerns autocratic regimes and immature democracies, this robustness check demonstrates that our findings are not an artifact of our research design. Second, we use a raw count of counterweights as the independent variable to measure the impact of additional counterweights. Third, we use the creation of new counterweights as an alternate measure of counterbalancing. If counterbalancing signals a regime's military inadequacies, potential allies should recognize this upon the creation of a counterweight and subsequently hesitate to form alliances. The variable is equal to 1 if a new counterweight is created in a given year and 0 otherwise. Finally, we use a more restrictive regime type measure that defines nondemocracy as a state with a Polity2 score of 5 at most. As reported in the Appendix, these models all produce largely similar results.

In addition, while our measure of external threat captures changes in a state's overall security environment, states might seek alliances to balance against specific adversaries. To address this concern, we reproduce our findings in Appendix using two alternate threat measures. We first consider past history of conflict by creating an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 if a state has experienced any militarized interstate dispute (MID) in the past five years. We also consider rivalries using a variable counting the number of strategic rivalries a state has in a given year (Thompson and Dreyer 2014). Using these alternate measures produces largely similar results to our main findings, but we find evidence for the entanglement mechanism when we use rivalries as the inde-

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<sup>29</sup>This alternative model includes an additional variable that controls for joint democracy. Democracy is measured as a state with Polity2 scores of at least 7.

pendent variable. We interpret this result as rivalries being a particularly salient threat. When a coup-proofing regime gains a rival, this might considerably increase potential allies' concerns about entanglement, making the regime an unattractive ally. Together, these robustness checks should increase our confidence that the relationship we find are not spurious correlation.

## 6 Conclusion

It is well established in the literature that external and internal threats drive the formation of alliances. Although scholars have recognized the possibility states will face both types of threats simultaneously (David 1991; Talmadge 2015; Edry, Johnson, and Leeds 2021), it is still not well understood how states' overall threat environments influence alliance dynamics. This paper addresses this gap through the logic of the demand and supply of alliances. By focusing on how nondemocratic leaders coup-proof their regimes and how international actors react to the coup-proofing, we show that internal and external threats can jointly influence the formation of alliances. A higher level of counterbalancing is associated with an increase in the probability of creating a defense pact, but only with states that are externally secure. Externally threatened states do not find coup-proofing regimes as valuable alliance partners due to concerns about inadequate aggregate power. These findings are largely robust to different measures of coup-proofing, various model specifications, and the inclusion of key control variables.

This paper makes several important contributions. At its most fundamental, this paper adds to the growing scholarship on the domestic politics of international cooperation. In the realm of alliance politics, variation in regime type has proven to be the most popular domestic explanation. But this explanation focuses primarily on democracies and audience cost mechanisms. We expand the literature by studying how internal threats and nondemocratic domestic institutions impact alliance formation. Beyond test-

ing the influence of internal threats systematically, we also remind readers of the complicated interaction that stems from the domestic determinants of alliance formation. Domestic factors can both incite demand and signal future behavior simultaneously, a consideration for future work on the domestic politics of international cooperation.

Additionally, while there is a rich literature on alliance design, to our knowledge, no work has examined the role of nondemocratic institutions or internal threats. Our research thus highlights interesting variation in alliance design in terms of policy concessions. Moreover, it is commonly believed that security interests determine the formation of defense pacts. But our findings imply that alliance negotiators could possibly make the alliance under discussion more attractive to the other side by offering more or accepting fewer concessions, a possibility worth investigating further in future research.

Our study suggests fruitful avenues for future research on domestic explanations for alliances that incorporate international threats. One is the effect of other types of internal threats. Here our interest is in coup-proofing, and counterbalancing in particular, but leaders may also consider the risks of civil war or mass uprising. Unlike coup-proofing, addressing these threats requires a strong military, which could affect the aforementioned arms-versus-alliances trade-off in the opposite direction. A second question relates to regime type. We focus on nondemocracies, but regimes of different types may respond to external threats in different ways, and observers might draw different conclusions about their reliability. Future work should explore these possibilities.

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## 7 Appendix

Table 3: Summary Statistics

variable	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.
cbcount1.l	505,403	1	1	1	0	9
concessions1	114	2	2	1	0	9
concessions2	114	2	2	1	0	9
def	754,286	0	0	0	0	1
gwf_military1.l	673,093	0	0	0	0	1
lnbccount1.l	505,403	1	1	1	0	2
new_reg1	753,775	0	0	0	0	1
newcb1	505,403	0	0	0	0	1
prev_def	754,286	0	0	0	0	1
recent5_pt1	754,286	0	0	0	0	1
reg_diff.l	663,148	7	6	6	0	20
threat1.l	754,286	0	0	0	0	1
threat2.l	754,286	0	0	0	0	1

Table 4: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies. Year fixed-effects models.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	0.801 (0.620)	3.722*** (0.702)
External threat, A	-4.984* (2.910)	-2.768** (1.092)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	1.754 (2.276)	
External threat, B	-3.675*** (1.221)	5.089** (2.587)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-7.595*** (2.014)
Shared defense pacts	4.571*** (0.417)	4.485*** (0.403)
Regime difference	-0.099*** (0.031)	-0.108*** (0.031)
Recent coup, A	-0.572* (0.294)	-0.574* (0.297)
New regime, A	-0.471 (0.304)	-0.466 (0.304)
Military regime, A	-1.265* (0.731)	-1.218* (0.739)
N	420551	420551

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 5: Effect of Coup-Proofing on Defense Pacts. Rare Events Logit.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-7.688*** (0.796)	-11.451*** (0.955)
Counterbalancing, A	0.327 (0.641)	3.572*** (0.722)
External threat, A	-5.408* (2.628)	-2.689* (1.065)
External threat, B	-3.234** (1.116)	6.079* (2.632)
Shared defense pacts	4.388*** (0.297)	4.292*** (0.289)
Regime difference	-0.095** (0.029)	-0.103*** (0.029)
Recent coup, A	-0.299 (0.336)	-0.277 (0.337)
New regime, A	-0.677* (0.271)	-0.649* (0.270)
Military regime, A	-1.137 (0.733)	-1.088 (0.733)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	2.353 (1.931)	
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-7.941*** (2.039)
AIC	1180.228	1168.754
BIC	1289.721	1278.247
Log Likelihood	-580.114	-574.377
Deviance	1160.228	1148.754
Num. obs.	420551	420551

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Table 6: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies. Full sample.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	1.016*	3.292***
	(0.524)	(0.572)
External threat, A	-3.159	-2.293***
	(2.528)	(0.820)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	0.794	
	(1.924)	
External threat, B	-2.858***	4.678**
	(0.897)	(2.144)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-6.607***
		(1.652)
Shared defense pacts	4.037***	4.005***
	(0.387)	(0.365)
Joint democracy	-3.335***	-3.238***
	(1.102)	(1.071)
Regime difference	-0.072**	-0.075**
	(0.035)	(0.034)
Recent coup, A	-0.388	-0.378
	(0.312)	(0.312)
New regime, A	-0.553**	-0.559**
	(0.265)	(0.269)
Military regime, A	-1.321*	-1.296*
	(0.719)	(0.723)
Constant	-8.640***	-11.233***
	(0.616)	(0.921)
N	637723	637723

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 7: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies. Count of Counterbalancing as an Alternate DV.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	0.057 (0.133)	0.916*** (0.140)
External threat, A	-4.858*** (1.649)	-3.198*** (0.814)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	0.741* (0.402)	
External threat, B	-2.981*** (0.968)	1.939 (1.579)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-2.038*** (0.488)
Shared defense pacts	4.444*** (0.412)	4.373*** (0.396)
Regime difference	-0.104*** (0.039)	-0.112*** (0.038)
Recent coup, A	-0.380 (0.309)	-0.375 (0.308)
New regime, A	-0.729** (0.303)	-0.707** (0.312)
Military regime, A	-1.444** (0.726)	-1.414* (0.728)
Constant	-7.506*** (0.387)	-9.494*** (0.633)
N	420551	420551

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.



Table 8: Effects of New Counterweights on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies. New Counterweights as an Alternate DV.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
New counterweights, A	0.520 (2.147)	2.527*** (0.692)
External threat, A	-2.436** (1.170)	-2.385** (1.087)
New counterweights, A:External threat, A	0.072 (6.483)	
External threat, B	-3.533*** (1.111)	-3.183*** (1.150)
New counterweights, A:External threat, B		-8.010*** (2.033)
Shared defense pacts	4.485*** (0.419)	4.476*** (0.416)
Regime difference	-0.109*** (0.042)	-0.113*** (0.042)
Recent coup, A	-0.452 (0.310)	-0.443 (0.309)
New regime, A	-0.770** (0.304)	-0.802*** (0.301)
Military regime, A	-1.708** (0.728)	-1.696** (0.729)
Constant	-7.512*** (0.403)	-7.606*** (0.434)
N	420551	420551

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 9: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Conditional on External Threats to Coup-Proofing States and Potential Allies. Alternative Democracy Coding.

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	0.418 (0.634)	3.328*** (0.733)
External threat, A	-4.948* (2.986)	-2.920*** (0.802)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	1.715 (2.439)	
External threat, B	-2.785*** (0.840)	5.822** (2.505)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-7.467*** (1.983)
Shared defense pacts	4.338*** (0.411)	4.266*** (0.384)
Regime difference	-0.108*** (0.040)	-0.114*** (0.039)
Recent coup, A	-0.341 (0.306)	-0.321 (0.305)
New regime, A	-0.582* (0.304)	-0.546* (0.315)
Military regime, A	-1.417* (0.727)	-1.371* (0.733)
Constant	-7.801*** (0.669)	-11.158*** (1.147)
N	385506	385506

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 10: Effects of Counterbalancing and External Threat on the Number of Foreign Policy Concessions Agreed by State A, Conditioned by Alliance Formation

	Dependent variables:		
	Defense pacts	Concessions, A	Concessions, A
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Counterbalancing, A	0.175 (0.189)	-3.844*** (1.460)	-1.499 (1.448)
External threat, A	-1.443* (0.744)	-12.700*** (4.122)	-8.098* (4.568)
External threat, B	-0.855*** (0.330)	5.573*** (1.734)	4.816* (2.836)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	0.471 (0.570)	11.916*** (3.186)	7.113** (3.048)
Shared defense pacts	1.253*** (0.083)		1.891 (3.057)
Regime difference	-0.027*** (0.008)		0.144 (0.088)
Recent coup, A	-0.057 (0.096)		-0.608 (0.717)
New regime, A	-0.214*** (0.081)		
Military regime, A	-0.364* (0.186)		2.160 (1.373)
Constant	-3.352*** (0.231)	4.592* (2.450)	-2.404 (9.814)
N	420551	420551	420551
$\rho$	0.491	-0.052	0.491
Inverse Mills Ratio	0.843 (2.617)	-0.091 (0.377)	0.843 (2.617)

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Parameters are estimated using Heckman's probit. Standard errors in parentheses.

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 11: Effects of Counterbalancing and External Threat on the Number of Foreign Policy Concessions Agreed by State B, Conditioned by Alliance Formation

	Dependent variables:		
	Defense pacts	Concessions, B	Concessions, B
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Counterbalancing, A	1.011*** (0.217)	3.672*** (1.414)	2.721 (2.924)
External threat, A	-0.918*** (0.323)	1.422 (1.683)	-0.598 (2.792)
External threat, B	1.593** (0.768)	14.087*** (4.429)	7.328 (6.177)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B	-2.209*** (0.623)	-8.200** (3.931)	-3.302 (7.222)
Shared defense pacts	1.243*** (0.083)		3.740 (3.327)
Regime difference	-0.029*** (0.008)		0.141 (0.104)
Recent coup, A	-0.053 (0.097)		-0.891 (0.769)
New regime, A	-0.208** (0.081)		
Military regime, A	-0.371* (0.192)		1.534 (1.560)
Constant	-4.284*** (0.277)	-5.230** (2.303)	-13.023 (12.849)
N	420551	420551	420551
$\rho$	0.864	0.175	0.864
Inverse Mills Ratio	2.443 (2.870)	0.327 (0.384)	2.443 (2.870)

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Parameters are estimated using Heckman's probit. Standard errors in parentheses.

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 12: Effects of Counterbalancing and External Threat on the Number of Foreign Policy Concessions Agreed by State B, Conditioned by Alliance Formation. First-Stage Results.

	Concessions, B	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	-0.213 (1.001)	0.460 (0.607)
External threat, A	0.931 (2.159)	2.181*** (0.816)
External threat, B	3.544*** (0.892)	4.493** (2.036)
Shared defense pacts	-0.670** (0.325)	-0.799** (0.319)
Regime difference	0.080*** (0.024)	0.081*** (0.023)
New regime, A	0.259 (0.304)	0.297 (0.302)
Recent coup, A	0.451 (0.304)	0.380 (0.304)
Military regime, A	-0.127 (0.444)	-0.267 (0.470)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	0.937 (1.833)	
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-0.843 (1.638)
Constant	-0.899 (1.220)	-1.607** (0.797)
N	420551	420551
Log Likelihood	-524.901	-523.430

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Table 13: Conditional Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Controlling for Changes in Military Spending and Military Personnel

	Defense pacts	
	Model 1	Model 2
Counterbalancing, A	0.626 (0.538)	3.157*** (0.605)
External threat, A	-4.465* (2.584)	-3.171*** (0.839)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, A	1.158 (1.880)	
External threat, B	-3.030*** (0.866)	5.056** (2.369)
Counterbalancing, A:External threat, B		-6.950*** (1.777)
Shared defense pacts	4.405*** (0.403)	4.320*** (0.380)
Regime difference	-0.105*** (0.038)	-0.112*** (0.037)
Recent coup, A	-0.381 (0.334)	-0.378 (0.342)
New regime, A	-0.688** (0.306)	-0.687** (0.312)
Military regime, A	-1.329* (0.726)	-1.288* (0.730)
Change in military expenditure, A	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)
Change in military personnel, A	-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)
Constant	-7.998*** (0.627)	-10.894*** (0.955)
N	402308	402308

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 14: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Using Alternate Measures of External Threat

	Defense pacts			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Counterbalancing, A	1.289*** (0.387)	2.401*** (0.463)	1.867*** (0.300)	1.654*** (0.304)
Recent MID, A	-0.149 (0.620)	-0.478** (0.235)		
Recent MID, B	0.162 (0.243)	2.236*** (0.685)		
Count of rivalries, A			0.550*** (0.203)	-0.220** (0.097)
Count of rivalries, B			0.009 (0.092)	0.524*** (0.143)
Shared defense pacts	3.838*** (0.366)	3.872*** (0.369)	3.928*** (0.378)	3.927*** (0.376)
Regime difference	-0.106** (0.042)	-0.108** (0.042)	-0.116*** (0.041)	-0.114*** (0.041)
Recent coup, A	-0.429 (0.320)	-0.424 (0.320)	-0.402 (0.308)	-0.373 (0.305)
New regime, A	-0.671** (0.314)	-0.663** (0.310)	-0.732** (0.310)	-0.715** (0.310)
Military regime, A	-1.343* (0.726)	-1.310* (0.724)	-1.377* (0.721)	-1.363* (0.724)
Counterbalancing, A:Recent MID, A	-0.303 (0.502)			
Counterbalancing, A:Recent MID, B		-1.815*** (0.513)		
Counterbalancing, A:Count of rivalries, A			-0.660*** (0.181)	
Counterbalancing, A:Count of rivalries, B				-0.467*** (0.127)
Constant	-10.052*** (0.507)	-11.405*** (0.823)	-10.732*** (0.532)	-10.477*** (0.518)
N	420551	420551	420551	420551

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the dyad (in parentheses).

A is the potential coup-proofing state. B is the potential ally.

Table 15: Effects of Counterbalancing on Alliance Formation, Using a Monadic Design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Defense pacts
Counterbalancing	1.120*** (0.408)
External threat	6.198*** (1.693)
Recent coup	-0.310 (0.227)
Change in military personnel	-0.002** (0.001)
Change in military expenditure	-0.00000** (0.00000)
Existing defense pact	0.743*** (0.252)
New regime	-0.011 (0.185)
Polity2 score	-0.017 (0.017)
Counterbalancing:External threat	-3.172** (1.609)
Constant	-5.417*** (0.442)
Observations	3,028

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01