

LEARNING THE TRADE: STATES, LEADERS,  
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

by

MATTHEW CHRISTOPHER MILLARD

DOUGLAS M. GIBLER, COMMITTEE CHAIR  
STEPHEN BORRELLI  
DENNIS M. FOSTER  
DERRICK V. FRAZIER  
SUSAN G. SAMPLE

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## ABSTRACT

I argue that conflict can best be understood as a learned practice that constrains states interacting peacefully or conflictually with other states in the international system. Vasquez (1993/2009) proposes that conflict is a learned behavior that emerges from a prior pattern of interactions. And if Senese and Vasquez (2008) are correct that we can understand behaviors such as alliances, arms races, rivalries, territorial disputes, and a non-democratic polity as increasing the probability of conflict, I maintain that we can understand the steps to war as learned behaviors. In other words, I maintain that alliances, arms races, and disputes in the presence of rivalries are learned behaviors. To provide evidence for this claim, I build a matrix of all available alliance texts from 1891-1995 and demonstrate why some states make strategic choices to copy prior alliance texts. Next, I argue that the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States can be understood as a learning event, as each move by a side during an arms race reveals intentions, motivations, and values. Finally, I argue that evidence of diffusively learned conflict behavior can be found by examining states in rivalries and their interactions with non-rivalrous dyads. I find evidence to support my claim that the behaviors associated with the steps to war argument are learned behaviors.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

$\geq$	greater than or equal to
$\leq$	less than or equal to
*	p-value $\leq .05$
**	p-value $\leq .01$
***	p-value $\leq .001$
S.D.	Standard Deviation
CINC	Composite Index of Military Capabilities
MID	Militarized Interstate Dispute
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
COW	Correlates of War
N	Sample Size
CI	Confidence Interval

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## CHAPTER 1: LEARNING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Foreword

In international relations, many scholars since the 1970s have in some way been responding to Waltz (1954; 1979) and his claim that the international system is anarchic. By his own indictment, Waltz (1954; 1979) in *Man, the State, and War*, and a *Theory of International Politics*, examines international politics from the context of a systemic view (war, or anarchy), and not at the individual or state-level of analysis, claiming that states pursue their own self-interest in an anarchic system. However, alternative ways of looking at the world are becoming more common than in previous years and include domestic (institutional) models of the constraints placed on leaders in autocracies and democracies alike (for instance, Morgan and Campbell 1991; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Weart 1994; Fearon 1994; Palmer, London, and Regan 2004; Peters 2011), and individual level models that emphasize background experiences and the free agency of individuals (Jervis 1976; Jervis 1989; Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009; Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015; Gerring, et al 2014). In this vein, I offer an alternative view of how behaviors associated with conflict spread to other actors in the system. I argue that accounting for the process by how states and leaders learn from their interactions with one another and diffuse violence to other actors in the system is an important addition to understanding conflict processes.

I maintain that the individual-level of analysis is crucial to understanding the development of conflictual behaviors between states. Recent work by Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015: see below) is encouraging in moving the discussion back to the individual leaders and

their impact on the practice of relations between states. Invariably, this illustrates the agency-structure problem. This problem is properly defined as whether structure or agency matters more in political or social outcomes. In other words, what is doing the work: individuals or the institutions they have built?<sup>2</sup> In studies of international relations, the emphasis is generally placed on the systemic level of interactions or the state-level attributes of actors, such as democratic nature, the material power of the state, or other more immediate concerns.

Likewise, most of the major approaches in international relations treat the state as a rational, unitary actor. While this may be useful in its parsimony, it certainly misses the nuances of competing institutions within a state or even competition within those individual institutions. It is therefore problematic to treat states as organizations with unitary, collective goals. On the other hand, it is impossible to measure the individual goal of each of those state-level actors and their relationship with the international system. For my purposes, I rely on an approach that accounts for both the state-level attributes of actors and the leaders of the state head of government) to explain how states and their leaders learn from previous interactions or from the experiences of others. However, can we think of the way in which leaders of states learn the same as which states in general learn?

I argue that understanding how leaders and the organization of the state learns is an important component to understanding international relations in both conflict and peace studies. I define learning as events that a state or a leader has previously been involved in or seen others involved in that directs the course of similar events in policymaking.<sup>3</sup> Central to this is my claim

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<sup>2</sup> Though the structure of international politics is minimal compared to the domestic structures that exist in most countries of the world, a lack of structure can also be understood to be a structure of either choice or accident. The decision not to have institutions as formalized as at the domestic level can be understood as a type of structure, albeit a very weak structure. And, according to Waltz (1979), the international structure is inherently anarchic.

<sup>3</sup> While much debate exists within the social psychology world regarding how to measure and define learning, I rely on measuring observable changes in behavior because a cognitive approach to learning, for my purposes, is unobservable and unmeasurable. In using this definition, I rely heavily upon Reiter's (1996: 19-20) definition of

that the process by which states and their leaders learn is by observing others and from their own experiences. I further maintain that this mechanism is diffusive in nature. That is to say that states learn not only from their own experience but also from the experience of others that have gone before them. What is further important to note about this definition is that learning is defined in terms of previous experiences states have engaged in and, in the absence of these experiences,<sup>4</sup> they are able to copy the behavior of other states (and this mimicking behavior is assumed to be a form of learning).

As the psychology of learning literature points out (see below), learning can occur even when there is no external evidence of that learning. Different schools within the discipline have argued this point and, while a valid one for the field of psychology, I must instead rely only on an argument of learning that has evidence of an external behavioral change or shift.

Throughout this argument, I maintain that the context of states' relationship with one another matters and is often an omitted variable in other studies of peace and conflict. While studies of peaceful interactions are undoubtedly important to international politics, I focus my argument on behaviors that are frequently associated with conflict. Additionally, I argue that a state's interactions with other states will influence their relationships with other states precisely because of this learning mechanism. States or leaders that have been exposed to conflict are likely to learn that it is a useful or acceptable foreign policy strategy and are thus more likely to diffuse these lessons in their interactions with other states in the international system. They are thus likely to respond to violence with violence against the perpetrator<sup>5</sup> and they are more likely

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learning, which is "learning means the application of information derived from past experiences to facilitate understanding of a particular policy question". Inherent in this definition is the word "application", which necessitates an evidentiary-based explanation of a change in behavior.

<sup>4</sup>This is properly termed "observational learning".

<sup>5</sup> Which illustrates not learning per say but responding to violence with a similar level of violence, which would arguably be the rational course of action. However, if I demonstrate that this behavior diffuses to the relationship with other actors, I demonstrate that the use of conflict has been learned and applied elsewhere.

to use violence in their interactions with other states. This demonstrates that the lessons learned from one set of interactions can be used to inform another set of interactions.

To do this, I provide evidence that states are likely to copy from previous alliance texts that are temporally or geographically proximate, illustrating the diffusive nature by which alliance texts are constructed. I also argue that the arms race between the US and the Soviet Union can be understood with this framework of learning. In fact, we can think of arms races as providing information with each move by each actor. With each move, the other state updates their known information about another and predicts what they think will happen with their own policy response. In arms races, the diffusion is both internal between the actors and external, as states or their leaders can call upon previous experience or their interactions with other states to guide them in interactions with other states.<sup>6</sup> Finally, I provide evidence that states exposed to the high levels of conflict in rivalries are likely to extend these lessons of conflict to states that they are not involved in rivalries with.

The value added by this approach is that it does not rely on the paradigms to “dictate” the findings. Additionally, this framework explicitly relies on the historical context of the relationship between states to make the claim that states and leaders rely on past experiences to guide them in present policy considerations. Next, by looking for evidence across arms races, alliances, and disputes in the presence of rivalries, I demonstrate the robustness of this argument by finding evidence across many different areas of the conflict process literature.

Furthermore, this learning framework is an important mechanism behind the steps to war argument. If Senese and Vasquez (2008) are correct that we should conceptualize these

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<sup>6</sup> Additionally, we should assume that arms races are not solely driven by external factors such as international political competition. Instead, domestic factors can also be used to account for the dynamics of how arms races begin (for instance, Hill 1978).

behaviors as increasing the probability of war, then we should also ask why states have learned to interpret aggressive behavior and apply that behavior elsewhere. I maintain that this type of behavior does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, those violent interactions relay information that those states have learned from. As I claim, states learn to use conflictual behavior because they are accustomed to it if they have experienced it. And finally, if they are more willing to use force (as chapter five suggests), then this mechanism can explain how violence can diffuse to other actors in the international system. Rather than simply relying on the immediate foreign policy interests at stake, this framework shows how states interact with one another and learn from those interactions and, in turn, use that knowledge to interact with other states.

### Theory of Learning

The theory of how individuals, organizations, and communities learn incorporates knowledge from a broad swath of academic disciplines. Here, I address some of the more prominent theories and approaches that are useful for me in conceptualizing and operationalizing my claim that states learn from both their own interactions and others' interactions and use this information to make decisions about current policy questions. This rationale is what leads me to define learning as events that a state or a leader has previously been involved in or has seen others involved in that directs the course of like events in policymaking.

In discussions regarding this topic, I assume that both states conceived of as organizations and their individual leaders will both learn from prior experience. However, I assume that leader level learning will be the most difficult to provide evidence for, as it is most likely to play a greater role only before state organizations have been formally empowered by necessary experience to have learned from those prior experiences. As an example, every head

of government brings with them a background of experience before they became the leader of a state. However, state organizations, particularly those found in new states in the international system, are assumed to have less experience.<sup>7</sup> This means that the role of the individual leader in those states with less experience will have a greater role to play in impacting state policy. Given these difficulties, I will instead focus my claims largely on state-level learning.

For social psychology, individual lessons are vital and not easily changed unless new and contradictory experiences occur. But in thinking about the state, we must also consider how we may think of the state as an organization composed of individuals. For organizational theory, bureaucracies operate under the stipulation of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), which are based upon experience, and thus constitute learned behaviors. These SOPs direct individuals and organizations as to what reaction is appropriate for a given action and thus formulate a kind of “standardized” learning.

Organizational theory is particularly fruitful here, as one of its greatest contributions is that organizations are closely reliant upon their history (Rieter 1996: 30). However, this also means that events must occur first before states as organizations can create the necessary SOPs to deal with policy problems. Therefore, bureaucratic structures have “red tape”, or SOPs, to deal with like problems in a similar way. We can then therefore think of SOPs as using one’s history to construct procedures to deal with like problems. This is properly termed adaptive rationality (Huber 1991: footnote 42: 30). In the context of organizations, then, the collective way that organizations interpret the past is what counts for current policymaking and future planning, not so much individual interpretations, though those individual interpretations are

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<sup>7</sup>This is not to say that those states that are newer to the international system under operationalizations that are inherently biased towards the Western state system do not have experience. For instance, a state such as Ethiopia is not considered to be a member of the international system until 1898. In fact, Ethiopia’s rich history goes back, much, much farther and is instead due to how sovereignty and statehood is defined from a Western perspective.

likely to matter more in the initial stages of statehood or when the state develops new institutions to deal with new problems. This information acts to direct future similar actions. These SOPs are adopted because it has been determined from experience that given a certain criteria a, behavior b should follow suit. However, this assumption is first predicated on criteria a (or a similar like event) occurring first.

Reiter (1996) goes so far to claim that “the state itself can be conceptualized as an organization” (19), but this conceptualization is problematic for several reasons. First, it assumes that states and their organizations are unitary actors. We know that within each state, different organizations and constituencies exist that compete against one another for power or for the success of their own goals. Second, it also assumes that actors are rational. Of course, rationality can be conceptualized as situationally dependent or fixed, though both assumptions are problematic (for instance, Caplan 2011; Levy 1997; Snidal 2002). Third, to assume states are organizations assumes that they share the same goals. Likewise, we know that goals over time can change and that goals for various actors within those organizations can be different or even conflictual. However, for the purposes of this argument, I will treat the state as an organization and will occasionally introduce elements of organizational theory in the context of state leaders and the impact they have on individual decisions. To deal with the concerns mentioned above, I will also look at the leader-level of analysis as a second-order effect to construct my argument, though I suspect that the role of the leader will be greatest in states with little prior experience with a particular behavior or a state with less time in the international system. As head of government, the leader has a disproportionately large say in foreign policy and international relations, particularly as new policy areas arise and state capacity does not yet have a formal way of dealing with those issues or when the state is new to the system and, therefore, the

organizations lack the prior experience that older organizations possess. Thus, while domestic constraints are different across various political systems, such as a Westminster style parliamentary government versus a presidential system, we can approximate the leader's role in the foreign policy process and the effect of his/her learning on the outcome of policy.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2012) maintain that “learning has always gone on in organizations” (42). In this respect, then, we should assume that states, as organizations of political entities, will have mechanisms in place to ensure that political objectives are met in a manner that maximizes those objectives. But in many respects, these mechanisms must become standardized in SOPs, which emerge from experience. And in thinking about organizational learning, Argyris and Schon (1978) define organizational learning as taking place: “when members of the organization act as learning agents of the organization, responding to changes in the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting and correcting errors in organizational theory-in-use, and embedding the results of their inquiry in private images and shared maps of organization” (16). Thus, while it is problematic to assume the state is an organization, it is useful in seeing the individuals and the organizations themselves as entities that learn from their experiences.

As Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2012) point out, it is the individuals within organizations who are doing the learning (43). But in this learning, they are doing so in service to the organization. Therefore, even when we analyze the individual level of analysis, it is assumed that the individuals' learning is in service to the organization of the state and must be contextualized in terms of broader state-based learning. In terms of the state as an organization,

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis (2015) do not find evidence to support the claim that women are any more or less willing to take risks (measured as willingness to start a Militarized Interstate Disputes). This is precisely because the number of female heads of government is not large enough to make statistical claims as to the role of gender in risk-taking behavior in international relations.

we assume that the head of that organization is the head of government and beneath him/her is an apparatus that is directed to carry out the goals of the political entity.<sup>9</sup> Second, we should realize that the cognitive processes going on within the mind, when an individual maintains that they are learning something are difficult to detect and are for the purposes of this argument, non-falsifiable. Instead, we must look for evidence of behavioral patterns rather than non-falsifiable claims to have “learned some lesson” in their practice of foreign affairs.

As discussed, we can conceptualize the state as an organization more broadly. While there currently and historically has been very loose structuration between states, we can think of the interactions between states (both positive and negative) as a loose form of community-based learning. Thus, the lessons one learns from one state may be applicable to one’s interactions with another state, predicated on the assumption that those two states are similar along some given criteria. And these criteria are learned from previous interactions with that state. So in a scenario where state A conducts some interaction with state B, they contextualize this interaction as it relates to previous interactions. But in the absence of these previous interactions, state A will rely on information regarding how state B interacted with state C or in state A’s interaction with state C. States failing to contextualize their relationships with either their own histories or the histories of other states are thus more likely to be “selected” out of the system. One leg of this argument relies, then, upon how state A learns from state C to interact with state D.

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<sup>9</sup> While it should be noted that not all individuals within an organization share the same goals, particularly in a political entity, we must simplify this assumption in order to make broader claims about the behavior of states and the individuals who labor for those organizations.

## Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences

While one tends to think of the theory of learning emerging from the education field, the best origins of a theory of learning come to us from the field of psychology (Smith 1998) precisely because of its testable (and quantifiable) assumptions (49-51). The social psychology literature can provide a fruitful venue for direction in understanding how individuals think and interact with one another in the context of international relations. Though some scholars may be correct in their claims that, due to international anarchy, humans are “pushed out of the picture” of international relations, the social psychology literature can provide useful insight into how the state as a goal-directed organization and individuals respond to stimuli from one another in a variety of scenarios. Perhaps the best-known body of work in foreign policy concerning how leaders learn from their interactions with one another comes with Robert Jervis’ *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Relations* (1976). Here, Jervis examines the psychological aspects involved in decision-making by heads of government and how those perceptions (or misperceptions) about cause and effect result in policy choices. In this work, human agency does have a role in the practice of relations between states, even though it is constrained by domestic organizations or international anarchy. In terms of this dissertation, I also maintain that an individual leader’s policy aspirations are also constrained, though these domestic constraints are lowest when the state first enters the international system or a new issue area emerges and the state as an organization does not have the necessary experience to address the policy concerns.

Ormrod (2012) defines human learning as “long-term change in mental representations or associations as a result of experience” (4). Some question as to whether human behavior is fundamentally rooted in nature or nurture (Hogben 1933; Plomin and Bergeman 1991; Plomin

1994; Ridley 2003). However, most scholars acknowledge that human learning is more complex than that, taking components from nature (such as genetics), as well as nurturing (experience).

One of the first noticeable movements, or paradigms, in the social psychology and learning literature was the behaviorism movement. The behaviorism movement within the psychology of education literature argues that individuals are subject to external stimuli and have reinforced behavior from the experiences of these external stimuli (UNESCO 2015). Smith (1998) strips this approach to its essentials, claiming behaviorism “asserts that all learning is simply the establishment of habits” (57) conditioned upon stimuli that are positive or negative. Thus, behaviorism is concerned with a poking or prodding, or cause and effect between an external event as positive or negative and the response by the actor.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that under this conceptualization of learning, learning is only assumed to have occurred when there is a measurable behavioral change or adaptation by an individual. Thus, the action does not occur solely within the “black box” of the mind but is, instead, characterized by external actions that exhibit this change in behavior. A frequent criticism of this approach is that behaviorism is not learning at all but, rather, conditioning by stimuli from “chained responses” (Smith 1998: 58). Behaviorism is thus assumed to be a paradigm concerned only with mimicking behavior. For others, observational learning (mimicking) is assumed to be an important form of learning (for instance, Bandura 2008; Schneeweis & Winter-Ebmer 2007). In this context, observational learning is assumed to come not from experience but observing the experience of others.

Moving past this early scientific theory of learning, constructivism and socio-constructivism within the education field can tell us a good deal about how states and individuals

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the best known example of this paradigm is Pavlov’s dog. In this scenario, the presence of a technician (rather than the food itself) stimulated salivation on behalf of the dog because the dog began to associate that technician with food.

learn to interact with one another. Constructivism in the learning literature holds that individuals learn by interacting with events due to the continued interactions. In this understanding, individuals are participants in the production of knowledge, as are their instructors, who in this approach are equally participants rather than merely being “knowledge transmitters” (UNESCO 2015). Thus, learning is assumed not to be visible from a change in behavior, as in the behavioral paradigm.

A variant of constructivism in learning research is socio-constructivism, which holds that individuals learn to interact with one another within the context of those events or interactions. To put this into an international relations perspective, Wendt’s (1995) argument that the United States should not care about Britain’s acquisition of nuclear weapons is a learned behavior because the United States has learned, given the context of past interactions, that Great Britain poses no threat, whereas North Korea does pose a grave threat, given past interactions. Thus, while constructivism in psychology acknowledges that individuals are participants in the production of knowledge, socio-constructivism holds that the context of interactions in a social setting is important criteria for judging how individuals learn.

Both constructivism and socio-constructivism in the psychology of education literature have important overlaps with the constructivist paradigm in international relations. Namely, things such as identity matter in determining how states and leaders interact and learn from one another. And if identity has a role to play in how states interact with one another, this implies that identities must be learned through continued, repeated actions, which is appropriately termed history. In particular, those experiences that are more recent or are formative events are more likely to be remembered.

As Reiter (1996) illustrates, those concepts that are the most vivid are the concepts that are most likely to be remembered and instructive to individuals (27-28). This, in turn, makes the lessons from important events more likely to be remembered. Additionally, events that are not vivid or important to the individual or organization are likely to be forgotten in the inverse of the learning mechanism (Smith 1998: 54-55).

For socio-constructivism and constructivism, learning fundamentally involves a change or modification in behavior, even if it is not observable. Therefore, learning is understood as an event that occurs within the mind and may or may not have measurable external behaviors. Thus, these paradigms do not view learning as a series of chained responses or causes and external effects. One can learn without any outward manifestation of change. Under either approach, the assumption is that when direct experience is lacking, other information is utilized to provide information about what behavior should occur. At the individual level, if someone does not have experience with a given topic, they are therefore more likely to rely on a similar issue area to inform them as to what behavior relates best to the interaction of which they have limited experience. Similarly, when leaders or states are lacking in experience, they will rely more heavily on those behaviors that they most closely associate with being useful to them in the practice of international politics.

Following this logic, temporal proximity is likely to matter immensely for the lessons that humans take from interactions (for instance, see Ormrod 2012: 38; Soderberg, et al. 2015). The greater the temporal distance between interactions or “lessons”, the higher the probability that both states and their leaders will have to look elsewhere to inform them as to what course of action they should pursue. Temporal proximity must therefore be considered an aspect of vividness in international politics. However, when discussing international politics, it is

naturally assumed that individual leaders' preferences will be lower as the state's organization gains capacity and experience from prior events, meaning that evidence for learning from prior interactions will be greatest at the state-level of analysis. As evidence of this, a leaders' time in the international system will be assumed to be lower than the states' time in the international system and, therefore, so will ones' exposure to prior interactions. This naturally means that evidence for state-level learning will be both greater and have a larger effect on policy outcomes. For behaviorists, temporal length is the enemy of making causal connections. The longer the gap between the stimuli and the response, the more difficult it is to make causal claims and the more difficult it is to see evidence of learning. We should expect this effect to also be the case for the state-level of analysis.

#### Rewards, Punishment, and Learning from Experience

This necessitates a move from the behavioral approach and takes us into the cognitive approaches of psychology. Cognitive science now tells us that mental representations of stimuli are responsible for the response to those stimuli, even when those stimuli might not be directly observable, as in behaviorist approaches (for instance Ormrod 2012: 41; see also Bouton 1994; Forsyth and Eifert 1998, and McDonald and Schoenbaum 2009). Here, we begin to peer inside the black box of human behavior and look for evidence of change that might not be clearly exhibited in behavioral (or outward) manifestations of change. As research has found (Kimble 1961; Spence 1956; Mackintosh 1983; Miltenberger 2011; Sloman 2009), conditioning effects the behavior of individuals. In terms of positive conditioning (sometimes called instrumental conditioning), individuals (and, we can assume, states) are more likely to behave in a manner that they think will illicit beneficial consequences for themselves. Learners should, in keeping

with rational choice theory “gain more than they lose by changing their behavior” (Ormrod 2012; 84). Akin to rational choice theory, people engage in a cost-benefit analysis (Eccles and Wigfield 1985; Feather 1982; Friman and Poling 1995; Perry and Fisher 2001) to determine which lessons they take from an event.<sup>11</sup> Under the behaviorist approach, learning is only assumed to have occurred when measurable behavioral changes occur. For the cognitive approaches, learning is instead assumed to occur even if there is no external behavioral change.

Thorndike (1935) finds that even in animals, positive conditioning (rewards) strengthens the effect of getting something right (or succeeding), whereas negative conditioning (punishment) does little to dissuade unwanted behaviors. In terms of international relations, then, leaders and states would seek to maximize the rewards to themselves and minimize the negative consequences of actions, though these negative consequences would, over time, have little effect in dissuading a type of unwanted behavior.

Experience with prior rewards or punishment are likely to matter greatly in how states and their leaders come to make policy decisions. Prior experience matters more than observational experience because the events were directly experienced, and therefore easier to identify, than the lessons other states or leaders may have opined. Similarly, the rewards and punishments from another’s actions are less likely to be fully appreciated when compared to the punishments or rewards from ones’ own prior experiences. Within international politics, we can think of there being rewards and punishments for a given set of actions. As for positive reinforcers, those rewards that are material in nature are more likely to illicit the behavior that the actor thinks are most likely to bring about that good. For instance, when a leader engages in

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<sup>11</sup> It is critical to note that the problems associated with rational choice theory, which is well-documented by scholars across a variety of fields. What Ormrod (2012) means here is not that individuals methodically calculate the costs and benefits to each action, but rather that they approximate these calculations with rough approximations of what one expects to gain or lose from a behavior.

a MID for a physical good such as territory, which authors have found to be one of the most likely reasons as to why conflict occurs (see, for instance, Gibler 2007; Vasquez 1995; Vasquez and Henehan 2001), they are more likely to take risks than they would in the event that the good would be non-material, or of low salience, such as shipping rights, freedom of navigation, etc. We should therefore assume that both states and leaders wish to maximize rewards to their states and minimize the costs, or punishments, their behaviors illicit. We should thus assume that states and leaders are motivated by what they gain from an interaction. But gaining from an interaction is concerned with potential future awards. However, experience helps to inform states and their leaders what those rewards looked like, based on prior experience. These rewards are most likely to be recognized by the state as an organization than by a leader himself because the leader is most likely motivated by other concerns, as selectorate theory demonstrates (Bueno de Mesquita 2005).

Additionally, social reinforcers exist, which can encourage a state to behave in a certain way. When states interact positively with a liberal, democratic state, they are likely to garner social prestige or good will with other democratic states (for an illustration of this process, see Mitchell 2002; also, Mclaughlin Mitchell and Hensel 2007). However, since these goods are often intangible, they must be accompanied by material goods that incentivize positive behavior. In this manner, then, the lessons of these interactions are more likely to “stick” than those lessons in which the only benefit is an intangible social good.

Similarly, negative reinforcers in international politics take several varieties that are likely to impact how states and individuals behave. One such negative reinforcer that would illicit a response from a state or leader is the removal of a stimuli that was previously given to a state. As an example, a state that is in a long-term alliance with another state and then suddenly

loses that alliance while also feeling threatened has a few options open to them: find a new ally or begin to build arms either in preparation for war against a specific foe or begin a general, non-directed arms buildup.<sup>12</sup> If the leaders of the state think that the previous alliance was useful and that alliance shortcomings (such as, for instance, credible commitments on behalf of allies; see Morrow 1994; Morrow 2000; Leeds 2003; Leeds, Long, and Mitchell 2000; Leeds 1999) outweigh the benefits (cheap and quick), they will feel compelled to build up their military to deal with those shortcomings and prepare for potential conflict.

Of course, other negative reinforcements can be utilized in international relations, but these often breed hostility or can, over time, eventually result in bigger problems for the international community. For instance, states that lose in war and are heavily punished by another state or group of states have a “call to arms” with which they can use to reconcile their claims domestically. As an example, the German far right (along with Hitler) both maintained a stab-in-the-back claim (*Dolchstoßlegende*) that Germany did not lose the war and had instead been betrayed into losing territory, prestige, and plunged into financial ruin by traitors inside and outside Germany. This helped lay the domestic groundwork (and later international) for claims to restitution of lost territory and a dispersed national population. Likewise, one could make a similar claim about contemporary Russia in the Baltics and other former Soviet states.

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<sup>12</sup> While realists often maintain that alliances are a response to fear, it is well established that not all states ally when they should be fearful of another state nor do states ally solely because they are fearful of another state. Instead of choosing to ally or initiate an arms buildup against another state, actors may instead respond by doing nothing or opening up lines of rapprochement with the other state.

## Learning by Observing Others

Crucially, cognitive science tells us that individuals “can learn by observing others’ behaviors and the consequences that result” (Ormrod 2012; 112).<sup>13</sup> As described above, this is properly termed observational learning. However, we should assume that the role of observational learning will be lower than that of experiential learning because it did not directly affect the observing party, meaning that the lessons are not as vivid as the observed party. Pitcher, Hamblin, and Miller (1978) argue for an understanding of violence as a diffusive learning process, whereby perpetrators of violent acts learn from observing others that they can get what they want by acting in a similar manner. In this case, clearly, there is not an outwardly observable change in behavior because there was not a starting point in which the individual (or state) exhibited the behavior in the first place.

As I claim above, states lacking in experience with another state or behavior must have a schema that guides them in an interaction with that state. In the absence of this organizational experience, policy can either be reliant upon what the leader has learned or upon what the state or leader learns from observing others. This schema, then, acts as a shortcut to information and informs states how interactions can be viewed in the context of the history with another actor. One way on which to build that schema (when direct experiences with another are minimal or otherwise on the periphery) is by observing others’ interactions.

While the information gained from this observational learning is assumed to not be as accurate as having direct information about the state in question, this information acts as a proxy for how a state should interact with another supposed similar object. Below, I address how a

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<sup>13</sup> In the author’s own experience, having an older brother who was close in age during childhood provided an excellent cognitive learning opportunity. When the older brother was punished or rewarded for something, the author would absorb those lessons (to the extent that they were observed) and could thus either avoid the behavior that elicited the response in the first place (when negative) or engage in the behavior if it was positive.

state can use this information, as well as direct information about the context of the relationship with another state, to formulate the policies to interact with that state.

### Theory

If we assume that states are goal-oriented actors that are “pulled” in different directions by domestic and international events, as well as by human individuals, we can assume that states understood as organizations will learn from their previous interactions. As humans make up those who are both leaders and members of states and institutions, one must assume that if a diffusive updating or learning process is not occurring, then individuals and state behavior, and subsequently international politics, are static, unchanging spheres based solely upon interests.<sup>14</sup>

However, if we assume that states are not static black boxes and that the practice of relations between states is in constant flux due to their internal and external experiences, then we assume that states have learned to behave towards one another based on their shared histories. With social beings, we must also assume that perceptions matter immensely. Thus, it is more proper to say that the *perception* of learning specific lessons from interactions is what really matters in the conduct of international relations (for instance, Jervis 1976). If we assume that the world of relations between states is not a static environment, then we must assume that the environment in which states and leaders exist is changing and that both entities adjust their relations with one another as new information is gained. Broadly speaking, I term this the learning process.

For the purposes of this body of work, **I define learning as events that a state or a leader has previously been involved in or has seen others involved in that directs the course**

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<sup>14</sup>This is a central claim of political realism. That political events should be pursued if they are in line with the political interests of the state in question.

**of similar events in policymaking.**<sup>15</sup> Similarly, learning is assumed to occur through two mechanisms: learning by observing and learning by experience. My definition of learning is important because it causally links the past with present and potential future actions. Second, I agree with Reiter (1996) that the learning process is not merely observations of other states or third-party actors. Instead, the learning process also must be viewed for what leaders and states learn from their own experiences with one another. They do not merely learn by observing others' actions, but also by contextualizing their own interactions. In other words, learning is both experiential and observational. Additionally, this conceptualization of learning assumes that in learning there is a specification of goals. That is to say that learning serves a purpose external to learning for learning's sake. Instead, learning in international relations can be understood as a shortcut to achieving a desired outcome by relying on previous experiences<sup>16</sup> to guide or inform behaviors. This therefore assumes that learning is behavioral. For learning to occur, there must be an external change in behavior that is predicated on the link to prior behaviors.

Furthermore, the last part of this definition is important. To learn a lesson without implementing it is problematic for several reasons: 1.) cognitively, it is impossible to know if the state or even a leader actually ever "learned" anything or is just making a post-hoc judgment of having learned something; 2.) it makes a normative judgement call that it was the "right" decision based off the events; 3.) the causal link between actions and lessons is broken; 4.) if the lesson was not implemented, then the lesson was either not vivid enough or not recognized at all. It is therefore problematic to solely rely upon the use of constructivist<sup>17</sup> or socio-constructivist

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<sup>15</sup> This definition is taken, in part, from Reiter (1996: 19-20). Similarly, I look towards Ormrod (2012: 4) for inspiration in defining learning.

<sup>16</sup> Experiences which the state or individual experienced first-hand or saw others' experience.

<sup>17</sup> Constructivist as it refers to the psychology of learning literature.

understandings of learning because they are difficult to measure in the context of the state conceived of as an organization.

Importantly, this definition includes the concept of a difference in behavior because of experience. Experience is the key component here because, for the purposes of this argument with respect to alliances, arms races, and MIDs, we can measure their (both the states' and leaders') previous exposure to the types of behavior that underlie those interactions. By the definition of cognitive psychology, it is more difficult to measure change because, as the paradigm stipulates, concepts and ideas about how the world or phenomena work might have changed, but these might be mental impressions that have changed, rather than just behavior.

However, the reliance on a socio-constructivist psychological understanding of learning in interactions between states is important because we can see external evidence that can be measured if we also consider the behaviorist assumptions regarding a change in behavior. As with other fields dealing with latent concepts that are often unobservable, I claim that a social-constructivist understanding of learning in international relations is important because it maintains that the nexus of interactions between states (namely, their history), as well as their temporal and geographic proximity influences the relationship between the states. With the addition of the behaviorist assumption that we must be able to measure external responses and a modification of behavior, we have a clearer view of the learning process in international relations. Thus, a marrying of the socio-constructivist and behaviorist understandings of learning are necessary for understanding how states learn to contextual their prior histories and their policies with other states.

We can also assume that, as states are made up of hierarchically-organized individuals and organizations who are constantly interacting and learning from the world, these learning

experiences should be externalized and exhibited by states, and that we can in turn find evidence of learning. I therefore maintain that the personal experiences of leaders (Jervis 1976; Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015; Horowitz and Stam 2014) and the collective experiences of states permit those leaders and states to acquire certain understandings of how they *perceive* the world works. This, in turn, affects their behavior with respect to other states and the world views that they hold with respect to human and social interaction. It is also important to note, though, that the causal arrow can point both directions. Experiences of states and leaders can affect the behaviors they chose to take and these cumulative behaviors in turn affect the experiences that states undergo while also strengthening the role that those organizations will play in future interactions with other states. These institutions are strengthened because after experiences they develop SOPs to deal with like problems in the future.

My core argument is that states and leaders in competitive frameworks learn to behave conflictually with other states because they perceive to have learned from experience (experiential learning) that these behaviors work for a given set of behaviors. In the absence of these interactions, they rely on the experiences of others (observational learning) or similar events to inform them in the decision-making process. This understanding of the historical process by which states engage one another is important for understanding the lessons states learn from one another.

Inherent in this theoretical claim is that individuals or states that do not learn from their interactions with other states are “selected” out of the system, by domestic or international political defeat or resignation. Additionally, my theory is centered on the claim that there is material gain to encourage leaders to learn specific lessons. For instance, in making an alliance, the formal document that underpins that agreement is crucial to forming an enduring alliance that

will maximize the material gain to the actor. We can examine these alliance texts for evidence that states copied previous texts. In an arms race, neither side wants to conceivably escalate the arms race but instead wants certain policy outcomes. In other words, escalation or de-escalation can be vehicles to obtaining those outcomes, yet they are very different strategies.<sup>18</sup> Finally, in disputes we should expect more violence if the state in question is or has been involved in a rivalry with another state precisely because they have experienced this high-level political competition. Because of this exposure to violence, those states are more likely to use violence to accomplish their goals. In this case, conflictual behavior is seen to diffuse to other actors in the system.

Next, I maintain that there are internal and external incentives for both leaders and the state to learn from previous interactions.<sup>19</sup> In a democratic polity, the internal incentives are directly tied to electoral outcomes. A leader who pursues an unpopular or unsuccessful foreign policy strategy can be removed from office (Bueno de Mesquita 2005). External incentives in learning can take on negative or positive dimensions. Negative examples of failing to learn include removal of the regime, sanctions, or other punitive measures. Positive incentives include future alliances, concession on demands, favorable trade agreements, acquisition of territory, etc.

This argument claims that leaders primarily take knowledge from their interactions with other leaders in the international system and in the absence of interactions, they rely on other states' interactions as indicators of acceptable behavior and personal experiences and the nature of their domestic rise to power. These two modes of learning are generally understood as

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<sup>18</sup> Contingent, of course, upon such things as a cost/benefit analysis of the inputs and gains of each action.

<sup>19</sup> The behaviorism movement within the psychology of education literature argues that individuals are subject to external stimuli and have reinforced behavior from the experiences of these external stimuli (UNESCO 2015). This external stimuli, or series of interactions, acts as the incentive for how leaders perceive their counterparts and governs their interactions.

experiential and observational. In experiential learning, one learns from experiences. In observational learning, one learns by observing others. It is assumed that both the state and the leader can learn both from experience and from observation but that experiential learning is the most path by which states learn the best lessons in conducting relations with other states because experience with rewards or punishment is assumed to be greater than external observations and assessments regarding rewards and punishments for the actions of another.

This necessitates a “state/leader dyad” in which actors absorb information from their interactions with one another and, in turn, the states and leaders reciprocate a similar style of interactions with one another. This behavior occurs for one of two reasons: 1.) they see it as a way to counter the other state/leader or; 2.) it is viewed as a legitimate way for states to behave. States and leaders then use this background knowledge as a basis for their policies with other states and leaders. In particular, the observational process of learning is greatest for both new leaders and new states in the international system as they learn from their interactions with other states.<sup>20</sup> Both states or leaders that are newer to the international system will be more likely to learn with an observational learning mechanism (at least initially), since the requisite experience is lacking.

Mechanically, states or leaders that predominately interact with other democratic states or leaders are more likely to absorb the lessons associated with democracies.<sup>21</sup> For instance, there exists much support for the conclusion that democracies tend to geographically or regionally cluster (O’Loughlin, et al 1998; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garret 2006; Gleditsch and Ward 2006;

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<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that leaders of newer states in the international system or new leaders are any less “capable” in any way than other leaders. It simply means that they are more likely to draw upon information from other events rather than their direct experience with another leader or state (assuming that experience is minimal or non-existent).

<sup>21</sup> These leaders would also be more likely to engage in purely cooperative frameworks, such as bilateral or multilateral trade agreements, extradition treaties, third party mediation of conflicts, etc.

Gleditsch 2002). One shortcoming of this approach is that these analyses are exclusively confined to institutional or systemic level explanations. There are multiple explanations as to why democratic regimes exhibit a geographic clustering effect, which largely mirror the institutional and systemic approaches. But it also is likely that the interactions between leaders with one another on a personal level also have a role to play. Though institutional and systemic explanations of democracy like this are noteworthy, scholars should not discount the role of human agency of individual leaders in being the genesis of such causal outcomes. As an example, José Figueres Ferrer, the former rebel leader of Costa Rica turned president, disbanded the Costa Rican military and established a democracy in a region surrounded by autocratic regimes (see Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015). Thus, while the military was used for repressive control of its citizens and focused on quashing internal dissent, abolishing the military removed the oppressive apparatus against citizens while also encouraging neighboring states to not view Costa Rica as a threat.

In contrast, for states or leaders who predominately interact with autocratic regimes or have negative interactions with other states or leaders (particularly over salient stakes such as territory), they will be more likely to learn that force is an acceptable or necessary foreign policy strategy. This will thus be exhibited in the policy choices pursued, particularly in inherently competitive frameworks such as alliances, arms races, and Militarized Interstate Disputes. These competitive frameworks should offer the most evidence that leaders learn from previous interactions with leaders and from their own personal and domestic backgrounds. Below, I outline the theory of why leadership attributes, domestic political attributes, and international systemic interactions matter for leaders and the choices they make in interacting with other states.

## International Interactions

Most important of all to my theory is the claim that the prior interactions between different states determines what course of action they will pursue in relation to one another or other states. When a state has had a series of negative interactions with other states or otherwise exists in a “bad neighborhood” (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2005), it is more likely that they have learned from those experiences to reciprocate that behavior. On the flip side, a state in a “democratic neighborhood” will be more likely to absorb the lessons of behaving in a cooperative manner. It is thus possible to look at alliance formation, arms race initiation, and dispute initiation and escalation among states in rivalries for evidence of this type of learning behavior. States that have engaged in such previous behaviors are more likely to continue to behave in a similar fashion in the future if they are successful (Nevin 1996). By the same logic, states that have never engaged in alliances, arms races, or disputes will rely on information they know from other states that have been in similar situations.

Nevin (1996) finds that states that engage in war are likely to learn from their history and, from this, are more likely to select into entering a war. In fact, he claims “I argue here that war making has been selected by its consequences in much the same way as the biological characteristics of species of the behavior of individuals” (Nevin 1996: 99). Findings in both datasets he examines show that as the numbers of wins increases (over losses), the initiation of a new war over time decreases. Similarly, losses are eventually mitigated against by a win before the loss. And these attributes are largely cultural when it comes to deciding to become involved in conflict (Nevin 1996: 99).

Similar to Nevin (1996), Singer and Small (1974) find that states that are victorious in war are more likely to engage in a future war. Nevin (1996) finds that “a preceding win

neutralizes the effect of a subsequent loss” (105). Within the social psychology literature, avoidance learning holds that individuals shy away from a type of behavior that has proven to be both painful (either physically or otherwise) and costly or has not otherwise been a productive experience (Lovibond, Saunders, Weideman, Mitchell 2008). Thus, states that have had bad experiences with the resort to physical confrontation should be less likely to use such approaches in the future. In contrast, states that have been successful in militarized pursuits should be more likely to pursue those avenues in future interactions.

Both studies illustrate my first point above: there is a selection process involved in learning in international relations. States or their leaders that do not learn from their experiences with other states (particularly in learning the norms associated with conflict) are thus selected out of the system in an evolutionary manner. Thus, there are internal and external incentives to learn from previous interactions with other states or, in the absence of these interactions, to learn from other states in similar circumstance or to rely on similar domestic information to guide policy choices.

Leaders who exist in these competitive interactions with other states and back down are more likely to be “selected out” of conflict for several reasons. First, they could be selected out of the system due to defeat. Second, they could choose to not behave conflictually with another and thus lose the dispute but remain in power. Third, they could be removed by domestic constituencies unhappy with the distribution of goods (for instance, see Bueno de Mesquita 2005). Fourth, states could begin to adopt policies of rapprochement and cooperation with one another, making conflict less likely. But by choosing to behave conflictually with one another, states and their leaders both construct a system of norms and reify that system, making it difficult to “escape” the spiral of conflict.

Whereas Mitchell (2002) finds evidence that a preponderance of democracies in the international system encourages non-democracies into behaving like democracies with respect to third-party conflict intervention, I hypothesize that in relations between states that are engaged in competitive frameworks, we are more likely to see states learning within that conflictual framework. Previous scholarship has often omitted the prior interactions or experience with conflict, thus leading to a problem of spuriousness. As I argue above, this experience gained from previous interactions is important (though not determinative) of the probability that a state will use conflict in the future to better achieve its goals.

This learning framework is important because the mechanism of diffusive learning pushes leaders to select different policies for different states and different histories. The learning mechanism is an important causal variable in why leaders behave in a certain way and must be considered in inquiries in international relations. In fact, as researchers from a variety of perspectives and traditions have argued, history and context matter (for instance, Reiter 1996; Schelling 1966; Wendt 1995).

In fact, Vasquez (1993/2009) has gone so far to argue six points about war. His first point of these is that war is a learned behavior (42). In addition to this, Vasquez (1993/2009) claims that “war is a product of interactions and not simply systemic conditions” (42). Thus, if Vasquez is correct, war is a learned behavior that emerges from the context of the relationship between the actors involved. And if one accepts Senese and Vasquez’s (2008) steps to war argument,<sup>22</sup> a natural outgrowth of this is that the behaviors associated with an increased

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<sup>22</sup> In this argument, the authors provide a framework for which war is understood to emerge probabilistically from behaviors such as alliance formation, arms races, the political nature of the states, and rivalries. Wars, then, are considered to be the end result of a long-term process.

probability of war are learned behaviors. Every move, then, up the staircase to war is a learned behavior from the state's prior interactions.

Given this, in alliances we should expect to see states and leaders evaluate their current alliances in the context of the lessons they learned from previous documents and frameworks. It is not irrational to assume that states and leaders operating within a learning framework would look to their past (Reiter 1996) for examples of which alliance networks provisions worked for which problems. States and leaders would then be more likely to “self-plagiarize” both these previous texts and the provisions they contain, creating similar alliance networks elsewhere. As Gibler (2009) has found, the occurrence of formal alliances between states is a rare phenomenon, for a variety of reasons. For example, one could envision states such as the US and Great Britain as being “allies”, even if there was no formal document linking the two states together. The shared history and political goals of the two states makes it almost certain that they would be “natural allies”. By the same token, it is difficult to envision an alliance ever occurring between otherwise dissimilar states, though evidence demonstrates that this does happen.<sup>23</sup> As I will demonstrate below, I also find evidence to support my claim that arms races and disputes in the presence of rivalries emerge from a similar learning experience.

### State and Leader Levels of Analysis

While conflict process scholarship has largely focused on the role that the state plays in international relations, I focus on both the role that the state and the individual leaders have on the role of learning in international relations, though the majority of this analysis is confined to

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, the 1939 pact between the Soviet Union and Germany. In this case, both states had dissimilar political goals and philosophies but the immediate issue of neutrality (and the secret provision of the division of Poland) were in their immediate interests.

the role of state-based learning. In particular, I assume that evidence for state-based learning will be easiest to come by. However, I do maintain that the head of government does have a role to play in learning in international relations. Specifically, I claim that the role of a state's leader will be greatest when the state is newest to the international system because the state has yet to fully develop all the necessary institutions and mechanisms to deal with policy problems. And since state institutions act both as a way for the state to execute policy and to control and focus individuals towards a single goal, it takes time to develop this capacity. As demonstrated in the Polity data, the length of time a state has been democratic matters precisely because it allows the state to develop the necessary institutions to ensure that democracy becomes rooted in the domestic system. However, I maintain that the role of the individual leader of a state with respect to learning in international relations will be relatively small when compared to the state's capacity for learning.

We should thus expect to see evidence of state learning to be greatest when we see states with strong institutional capacities because as the organizational literature has demonstrated, SOPs develop out of prior experience with like behaviors. This allows for two things to occur: first, it directly affects the formation of policies to deal with similar behaviors in the future. As an example, a state that has had a war in its immediate past is more likely to be capable of fighting a similar war more effectively in the future because it has developed the necessary policies, procedures, and capacity to wage war. Second, the development of SOPs allows the bureaucratic structure of the state to specialize and formalize the rules of conducting policy, meaning that specific tasks are handled by specific individuals, agencies, or bureaus that have the greatest familiarity with the behaviors. This leads to specialization within the various branches

of government, meaning that processes and procedures emerge from a culture of organization that is formalized by the organization developing the SOPs.

In the absence of these highly centralized and formal institutions, individuals (either the head of state or other government officials) can exert greater control over the production of policy by the state. If the adaption of SOPs plays a role in formalizing institutions to deal with specific problems, the lack of these formal SOPs means that individual leader entrepreneurs can exert greater control over the policymaking process. This is likely to occur when the state is either new or the organization formed by the state is newly created or has been given a new mandate. One domestic example of this process in the United States is the Environmental Protection Agency. Formed by Richard Nixon in 1970, the original commission created a list of recommendations that were then sent to Congress (EPA 2018). This prompting by Nixon then led the US Congress to form the EPA, giving it more powers than what Nixon favored. With these powers, the EPA began to expand its regulatory reach over the next several decades, expanding past the original eight recommendations outlined by the commission (EPA 2018). And as the organization became more formally established, it took on greater responsibilities in areas it previously did not have and the role of the individual heads of the organization became less important than the role of the entire organization.

This case is illustrative of a few points important for my argument. First, the role of the leader was initially large. The formation of the EPA was initiated by the actions of Congress, but these emerged as a response to the moves by Nixon to empower a committee to make recommendations on environmental protection policies. Thus, when the institution was formally created by Congress, it sidestepped the role of Nixon and gave greater powers to a separate

organization (albeit controlled by the executive branch).<sup>24</sup> Likewise, as the institution grew and gained formal powers, institutional capacity and objectives grew. And with the expansion of more formal powers, the organization learned which informal powers it could use to expand its power into areas where it previously did not have authority.

As mentioned earlier, in the absence of these meaningful interactions, leaders must have some other schema that acts as a background mechanism to guide their interactions with other leaders. I argue that experience matters and leaders, much like states, without a reservoir of previous international interactions, not only does uncertainty increase (Rider 2013), but so does observational learning. Thus, a leader's observations of other states' interactions with one another will likely provide information for other interactions. In other words, states or their leaders without a large background of prior experience of a particular behavior are likely to rely more on observational learning because it is the closest proximate explanation of how states or leaders can accomplish their goals. This type of behavior is likely to mimic the same way in which the state learns from prior experience and observations of other states' experiences, though it is assumed that leaders' role in the production of policies that emerge from history will matter less than the role of states.

For those leaders or states that predominately interact with autocratic regimes or have negative interactions with other states or leaders (particularly over salient stakes such as territory), the lessons that they learn will be that force is an acceptable or useful foreign policy strategy. This will thus be exhibited in the policy choices they pursue, particularly in inherently competitive frameworks associated with the steps to war argument (Senese and Vasquez 2008),

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<sup>24</sup> While this example is illustrative of the bureaucratic politics model as understood in the American experience, I maintain that similar processes are utilized even in non-democratic states. However, the implicit assumption is that the more autocratic a state is, the more likely it is that the organization is beholden to the power of the individual leader.

such as alliances, arms races, and MIDs. These competitive frameworks should offer the most evidence that leaders learn from previous interactions with leaders and from their own personal and domestic backgrounds.

Given that learning by states is the most likely route for finding evidence of learning, I must first rely primarily upon how states conceived as organizations learn from prior experience (experiential learning) or the experience of other states (observational learning). Thus, the primary level of analysis for this dissertation must be the state-level of analysis. However, as I have claimed, it is also likely that the role of the leader will be greater when state capacity or experience is lower. Therefore, leader learning has a role to play in how the state learns from prior experience, particularly in the early years of a state. It is thus necessary to consider the leader-level of analysis as well. While these two levels of analysis may seem difficult to account for in the same argument, since each state has a leader, the leader variables associated with learning can be added on to the unit of analysis as a separate set of variables. In the alliances section, I will consider how the length of time a leader has had in office as well as a leader's prior alliance making affects his propensity for copying other alliance texts. Given that alliances are the "quick" way of preparing for war (Vasquez 1993: 176) and due to the formal and direct ties between the two states, it is assumed that leaders will have a greater impact in building these relationships than the role they play in arms races or disputes. However, I explicitly assume that the state-level of analysis will be the primary level of analysis to examine for evidence of learning. Likewise, in the arms race chapter I will demonstrate how the state-level of analysis between the Soviet Union and the United States lead to the mutual decision to construct the other state as a political opponent. However, I will demonstrate that the views of détente held by the

Carter administration were antithetical to the way in which both the US and USSR state apparatuses viewed the other state and that this clash helped to speed up the end of détente.

### Mechanism of Learning

As a mechanism, this learning process in international relations works in a manner consistent with findings in the field of psychology. Individuals within the state bring in a conception of how the world and politics works. These ideas are shaped by genetics, family, friends, teachers, associates, history, location, and identity, and experience, among other things. But if an event, such as war, were to happen in which the state's understanding of another state were to radically be confronted, the state's understanding of that essential building block would undergo an existential challenge. To deal with the inconsistencies the external events have with an internal perception (schema) in which one views the world, the state as an organization would then have to assimilate the new information, accommodate this information with the old paradigm, and come to some sort of equilibrium between one's view of the world and the new reality. The paradigm in which the state filters the external realities of the world would undergo an existential crisis. This existential crisis will then result in one of three outcomes: 1.) the new information is reconciled with the fundamental schema (reconciliation); 2.) the new information is ignored and the old schema, in the mind of the leader, is kept intact, regardless of the inconsistencies (ignore); 3.) a completely new paradigm/schema is born (inception). However, the paradigm or schema with which one views or filters information about the world is not the mechanism of action. Instead, the process by which one comes to adopt a perspective or schema of a phenomenon comes from experience or relating similar experiences to supposed like events. This process is the learning mechanism. And this mechanism can come from either having

experienced the prior interactions (experiential learning) or learning from others' interactions (observational learning).

This process highlights a problem identified in the literature: “when adults draw conclusions and inferences about real-world events, they may over rely on their existing knowledge about the world-thus having the same difficulty in separating logic from reality that children in concrete operations do” (Ormrod 2012: 301; also, Kuhn and Franklin 2006; Halford and Andrews 2006). Similarly, children often apply lessons learned in one area but not in other areas that might be related or where important lessons can be applied, a problem that might be similar to how leaders at all levels can fail to apply lessons (see for instance Piaget 1940; Chapman 1988; Brainerd and Reyna 2003; and Kuhn and Franklin 2006).

The case of World War I and how both military and political leaders assumed a quick victory is illustrative of this phenomenon. Leaders were quick to resort to war because they were supremely confident, and they had a particular notion of how wars were fought, and this was their understanding of how the past had worked. It is claimed by some historians that European leaders did not see the changes that industrialization of warfare had on experiences such as the American Civil War (for instance, see Luvaas 1988). Thus, in August of 1914, their understanding of how the new war would operate was based on an outdated understanding of how war worked in a non-industrialized, largely non-nationalist (since Napoleon and the balancing under the concert system) setting. But since the advent of the internal combustion engine, rapid fire machine guns, poison gas, the steam engine, and large nationalist-based and highly motivated armies, the “old” way of conducting war was gone forever. The states and individuals that emerged on the other side of history in November 1918 had to deal with the reality of the “new world” that had been constructed out of the experience in the trenches of

Europe. Whereas interests in 1914 for Germany might have been more material based or about prestige, the concerns of Weimar Germany in the 1920s were about the survival of the German state and nation. But by March and April of 1932 with Hitler's rise to power, the interests Germany would pursue had been supremely changed by a man whose schema and understanding of the world was profoundly shaped by the defeat of Germany on the battlefield and the humiliation that came with Versailles.

As this example illustrates, these lessons have enduring characteristics. Once individuals begin to pursue goal-directed behaviors, these material pursuits take on an immaterial quality known as object permanence (Ormrod 2012: 294). That is to say, once the goal is no longer before the individual (it has either been obtained or has eluded capture), the lessons learned continue when the objective can no longer be physically seen. It is from this grasping after the material in which paradigms emerge. An idea of how something has worked in the past directs an individual as to how it shall work in the future, based upon supposed irrefutable "truths", even in the absence of the exact same goal.

In the context of alliances, states and their leaders learn the lessons of past alliances and what they perceive worked for their state in previous interactions (experiential learning) with other states or, in the absence of these interactions, they will look to the experience of other states (observational learning). It is possible, then, to examine these documents and shed light on what lessons states and their leaders learned from other formal alliances, whether with their state or another state. Of course, implicitly, there is a selection effect occurring. While it is possible to see which texts leaders recycle (i.e., these lessons worked), it is much more difficult to see instances in which formal alliance documents were not reused and did not work. But in looking at these alliance texts, we can examine how states learn by seeing (observational learning) and

learn by doing (experiential learning). We can see when states and leaders copy their own prior texts and when they learn by observing other states and copying those alliances.

In arms races, Schelling (1966) also claims that in selecting into arms races, states have a prior negative history that makes enhanced competition in an arms race more likely. States look at their history with another state and the context of the current relationship within a dyad (the latter of which is not independent of the former) and decide to pursue policy prescriptions that are logically in line with these perspectives. States have thus essentially “learned” lessons from both their own previous individual and state-level interactions and a logical outgrowth of this negative action would be to “prepare” for war, in much the same way that Vasquez (1993) finds that making alliances is a way of preparing for war (176; also, 280). The states and leaders, therefore, have a high degree of trust in their ability to credibly deter the other state by building up arms. Rider (2013) further maintains that arms races can be conceptualized as “product(s) of uncertainty” revealing information about each side with each move (2013: 580). Furthermore, there are certain latent variables within a dyad that indicate when two states are likely to race one another. And this uncertainty can be minimized when more information is revealed through experience. However, given the lengthy time associated with arms races (given that arms races are the “slow” way of preparing for war), it is likely that the state-view of learning will have a greater role to play than the leader-level view of lessons learned from prior interactions. Also, given the fact that arms races are lengthy processes, it is highly likely that leaders will undergo a maximum of one arms race during their tenure.

Likewise, in MIDs, or disputes that fall short of war, states make their decisions to engage in a MID with another country (or set of countries) not simply based off “raw” interests,

but on a pattern of interactions with other states.<sup>25</sup> I maintain that states in rivalries or states with rivalries in their historical experiences will be more likely to use conflictual behavior to solve their problems with other states because they have been exposed to conflict and they thus use this reservoir of experience to guide them in interactions with non-rivalrous states. Thus, we see evidence of diffusion of conflict from one actor to another in the international system. This is particularly important because we see that in deep-seated rivalries (some of the most violent interactions between states), a similar degree of conflictual behavior “filters down” to other interactions in international conflict.

To support my theory, I will operationalize my argument in three areas. First, I will look at alliances and how states build formal agreements and how they learned from previous alliance documents, particularly their own prior texts. Second, I will conduct a case study of the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States to determine how the sides learned to treat each other with hostility. Third, I will look at MIDs and how states that are involved in rivalries externalize this conflictual behavior to states they are not in rivalries with.

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<sup>25</sup> This is in keeping with Vasquez’s (1993/2009) larger argument that “war is a product of interaction and not simply systemic conditions” (42). In other words, disputes emerge not just because of the systemic conditions or the actual issue at the heart of the dispute, but because the states have the capacity and understanding of the dispute in the context of the state’s relationship with the other state.

## CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT LITERATURE

### Conflict Literature

As I will demonstrate below, many studies of international conflict processes neglect to include variables that consider the historical relationship between actors and how this characterizes the relationships between those states. I maintain that the historical context of those relationships is important because it provides information about other states and how those states should be dealt with. Below, I address some of the literature as it relates to alliances, arms races, rivalries, and disputes, in the hope that I will illustrate how previous scholarship has often omitted the context of the relationships between states and how this context is important in the context of how states learn from those interactions.

### Alliances

Formal alliances, or agreements between at least two states, are generally understood to be of three varieties: defense, neutrality/non-aggression, or entente (Gibler 2009). At their core, “an alliance is a formal contingent commitment by two or more states to some future action” (Gibler 2009: xlix). Alliances can thus best be understood as coordination agreements between parties and signaling mechanisms to third parties about the level of commitment to a party in the treaty (Niou and Ordeshook 1994).

A traditional realist understanding of alliances is that they are about a balance of power and a means with which to enforce such a concept (Waltz 1979; also, Morgenthau 1947: 193). Of this, rationality is a fundamental belief about how the world works (for instance, see Glasser

2000). After all, “equality of power was believed to promote peace because it was thought that no sane leader would risk a war if there was a 50 percent chance of losing: war comes with preponderance, that is, when a state has an easier chance of winning” (Gibler 2009: 1).

Morgenthau (1947) understands alliances as “a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system” (175). For him, alliances are merely understood as a way in which states balance against one another and are bound together by a set of a “community of interests” (Morgenthau 1947: 193-195).

For Waltz (1979), balancing can take two forms: internal or external. In bipolar arrangements, balancing tends to be internal (a focus on internal growth, such as the military or economy; for instance, see the discussion below on arms races). External balancing, on the other hand, is more likely to occur in multipolar arrangements. Waltz (1979) then uses the example of France and Russia’s 1894 alliance to illustrate how states will try to appear to be more similar to gain an ally. In keeping with the time of his writing (the Cold War), Waltz makes a distinction with bipolar arrangements: when two predominate states exist as hegemons, they do not need to rely on alliances, as it is not a partnership among equals, but among powerful states and weaker states. Accordingly, alliances matter under two conditions: “(a) if the alliance affects the decision of the allies to intervene on one another’s behalf in the end of war, and (b) if it allows states outside the alliance to determine that the allies will intervene to support one another” (Morrow 2000: 67).

Within multipolar systems of power, realists typically emphasize buck-passing and chain-ganging as alliance strategies, both of which inhibit the efficiency and effectiveness of alliances. Buck-passing is an approach where states in alliances “rely on one another to bear the burden of ‘checking’ the rising power; in this ‘under-balancing’, the rising hegemon remains

unchallenged” (Croucher 2013), which Schweller (2006) seems to confirm. Chain-ganging, on the other hand, is in some ways the opposite (see Waltz 1979: 165-170). In chain-ganging, realists argue that states will overbalance and over-prepare to face their enemies and offer virtually unconditional support.<sup>26</sup> Thus, one state (usually the more powerful) has an interest in going to war, whereas the weaker alliance states do not. However, since they are all bound together by a formal alliance, they are mutually pledged to join one another in war.

On the other hand, Reiter (1996) points out there is often a problem with the way in which realists come to this simple formulation: the lessons of history. He argues that states learn from the lessons of history and apply these lessons to the current global environment (3). Reiter (1996) also goes on to correctly claim that history is something that is largely absent from the realist paradigm (4). Furthermore, he argues that this learning from history (and the decision on whether to choose allies after a large systemic war or not (such as World War I), is best seen with democracies, which are more likely to learn from formative events and translate these lessons into public policy (183-188). Under Reiter’s (1996) formula, alliance strategies are learned by alliance partners as calculations from their history and are applied in the hope that these lessons are correctly understood in the context of the current rivalry. This implies, and seriously undermines, the realist logic that alliance formation behavior is either an emergent behavior from human nature or international structure. Instead, if Reiter (1996) is correct, alliance behavior and the structure of what those alliances and texts look like is highly likely to emerge from a dynamic interaction between states (defined as a learning process).

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<sup>26</sup> One could, in theory, argue this with the NATO alliance. Though initially conceived to balance the Western capitalist states against the socialist Eastern bloc dominated by the Soviet Union, the only time in which Article 5, the most important section, has been invoked was shortly after the attacks of 9/11. It is noteworthy in that the invocation came almost a full decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union and was directed against a non-state group that was afforded protection in a sovereign state.

It is also thought that alliances diminish the problem of uncertainty (for instance, Gibler 2009: 1), as states clearly (and formally) lay out who they will support under what conditions. For instance, in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the standards are set out by which an attack against a member state is defined and the obligation of the other member states to come to the defense of that state. Crescenzi, et al (2012) likewise observes that “in both, the decisions of the central actors are made in relatively anarchic, competitive environments characterized by limited information” (261). The decisions, then, of leaders that are made in limited information environments must be partially based on their understanding of their own history of interactions not only with the state or leader in question, but with other states and leaders in the entire system. Thus, the decision to ally is taken within the context of one’s relationship with others.

As mentioned above, alliances also hold more promise than diminishing short-term political uncertainty. To a realist, they hold the possibility of not only serving short-term need,<sup>27</sup> but also the goal of securing allies in future political situations. In fact, Crescenzi, et al (2012) find “that a reputation for upholding one’s agreements significantly improves the likelihood of membership in a future alliance” (259). The fact that states make alliances with one another in the future exhibits to other leaders the willingness of a leader to back up their promises made on paper with the sword. Vasquez (1993) goes so far as to claim that alliances can even be understood as a type of institution in which rules are formalized and emerge from repeated interactions (94-95). Thus, from both Crescenzi et al (2012) and Vasquez’s (1993) perspective, we see that a learning game does emerge from interactions that occur within alliances. States or leaders are determined to be trustworthy or untrustworthy, based on what others have learned

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<sup>27</sup> For example, see Kissinger (1994: 122). Bismarck was willing to sacrifice any moral imperative or loyalty in order to forge alliances with many of the major states within late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe in order to draw closer to each state and better control events as the occurred.

from them in the past. Furthermore, this ability of states to learn from previous alliances is not confined to their own alliances. Instead, they may also look to other alliance structures to provide information to them about how to build their own alliances. Alliances, then, are an important mechanism where we should look for learning.

### Arms Races

According to Diehl (1983), arms race are “a process involving competitive interaction, manifested by rapid increases in military spending and weaponry” (207). States that are unable or unwilling to engage in alliances can instead turn to building up arms when they feel threatened. Fundamentally, arms races are a response to fear (for instance, Thucydides 1910; Morgenthau 1947; Baldwin 1958). Logically, then, states seek to deter opponents, via spoken or implied actions (Schelling 1966: 10) by clearly signaling intentions to “teach” one’s opponent what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors are not in the context of the arms race. Naturally, then, reputation matters because otherwise the signals of an intent to deter an opponent are either ignored or not recognized as deterrence. If this happens, an arms race can quickly result in either political defeat without war or a political defeat from war. Fundamentally, the logic of interactions in an arms race rests upon learning from the other side’s behavior and responding to it with behaviors that are thought to achieve a state’s political objectives.

Closely related to the arms race literature throughout the 1960s-1980s is the deterrence literature, which claims that arms races are fundamentally about deterring ones’ enemies. In Morgan’s (1983) formulation, deterrence is “the threat to use force in response as a way of preventing the first use of force by someone else”. Similarly, Huth and Russett (1984) identify

two types of deterrence: general and immediate. However, it is impossible to measure general deterrence because, by definition, it is unobservable. Immediate deterrence is often observable because it is in response to a direct threat and is clearly visible.

Of course, other selection effects exist which mean that it is impossible to get the full picture of when deterrence works or does not work. As Fearon (2002) points out, the problem with the deterrence literature and the probability of conflict initiation is fundamentally flawed because states select into conflicts in which deterrence has a large or no probability of being observed. In other words, the decision to enter conflict or a policy of deterrence is a fait accompli that stems from their shared history with one another and their relative parity. Thus, as states learn to hate and compete with one another, they are highly likely to engage in either deterrent behavior or confront the other state in a conflict. Similar to what Reiter (1996) points out for the alliance literature, Fearon (2002) points out that the deterrence literature and the steps to war is selecting on cases where the behavior is most likely to be observed. However, in the decision to deter one's opponents by building up arms, there is an implicit assumption that the state and its leaders have faith in the logic of deterrence to credibly deter the opposing state.

Another problem that has been frequently identified in attempting to deter one's opponents is the spiral of the security dilemma. States, feeling insecure, arm themselves to defend against future aggression. The target state, seeing these actions, begins to arm itself, thinking that the other state is building an offensive capacity against them.<sup>28</sup> As an example of the security dilemma, the topic of missile defense is an excellent case study. The United States, seeking to protect its territory and allies, desires to install a missile defense system. However, the successful instillation of such a system would undermine the deterrent value of another

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<sup>28</sup> For instance, see Morgenthau (1947). Also, Gibler, Rider, and Hutchison (2005).

state's nuclear weapons. This then makes them feel insecure and encourages them to find ways to mitigate against missile defense or create their own capabilities, which can spark a new arms race or result in a preemptive attack. Statesmen can learn to deal with the security dilemma only if their opponents are well-understood from previous interactions and both sides also recognize the threat of a spiraling arms race.

Fundamentally, this security spiral illustrates an important concept. Learning is happening with each move downward on the security spiral. Each move made by one actor provides information to the other actor that can either be correctly or incorrectly picked up on. States then use this information to make decisions about what their next action will be. However, the problem is that this spiral increases the probability of war (Wallace 1982: Sample 1997).

In contrast to the security dilemma is the preparedness hypothesis: that is, that to avoid war, one must prepare for war. However, Wallace (1982) finds that arms races which are accompanied by a corresponding MID or crisis are more likely to end in war. Diehl (1983), on the other hand, attacks Wallace's (1982) assertion and coding procedures and claims that arms races do not lead to war. Sample (1997) adds to the dialogue by utilizing a time lag and finding that arms races do ultimately increase the probability of war, claiming that arms races are neither necessary or sufficient conditions, but simply increase war probability (15).

Sample (1997) introduces an important concept for my claim that learning matters in the context of arms races. She claims the "character of relations in the past between two countries naturally affects their behavior in the present. If countries are engaging in repeated militarized disputes over a relatively short period of time, it may begin to appear to the decision-makers that the issues dividing them are unresolvable through normal political methods" (Sample 1997:16).

Following this causal logic, then, states, their citizens, leaders, and institutions must first learn to distrust one another and openly decide to engage in arms race behavior (as well as, most likely, other behaviors such as alliance formation or high-stakes crises or disputes). By my definition, then, they are learning to distrust one another from their previous interactions. They then decide to engage one another in an aggressive manner and initiate a buildup that results in an arms race. With each move, more information is learned about the other actor. However, uncertainty is still a problem in arms races.

Deterrence can only be assumed to work if a leader can be reasonably certain they are successfully deterring an opponent. Rider (2013) finds that the likelihood of an arms race occurring increases when salient stakes (such as territory) are disputed or when a new leader comes to power (583-584). His framework offers a conceptualization of arms races as “products of uncertainty used to reveal information” (Rider 2013: 580). Schelling (1966) likewise claims that “the fact of uncertainty-the sheer unpredictability of dangerous events-not only blurs things, it changes their character. It adds an entire dimension to military relations [which is] the manipulation of risk” (94). This means that there is a knowledge problem: arms races emerge under this formulation precisely because there is uncertainty. However, once two states begin to know each other more through interactions (and assuming salient stakes are not at risk), an arms race is more manageable.

Furthermore, this uncertainty can occur at different levels of planning: strategic, operational, and tactical. As an example of uncertainty at the strategic level involving a new leader (see above: Rider 2013<sup>29</sup>), Khrushchev was willing to test the new American president, John F. Kennedy, with the placing of missiles in Cuba (Thompson 2012: 276). This historical

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<sup>29</sup>Note that in this example, the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States was already underway. Rider’s (2013) piece argues that when uncertainty is high, an arms race is more likely.

event speaks to Rider's (2013) findings that arms races are more likely when new leaders come to power: precisely because the level of uncertainty is higher. While Rider (2013) offers a causal explanation as to how arms races emerge, we can likewise think about ongoing races as suffering from the problem of uncertainty.

When this uncertainty exists, rumors "fill in the blanks" between what is known and unknown. These rumors, along with an understanding of one's past interactions with the rival, come together to form strategy. To deal with these unknowns, each side attempts to "teach" the other side how to properly conduct itself in an arms race without creating a situation that is unacceptable and will result in physical conflict. In other words, each side learns the "standard operating procedures" of interactions between one another to ensure the arms race does not devolve into direct conflict. However, with each iteration of this "game", information is transmitted about what behaviors will be tolerated and to what extent and which behaviors will not. This process can then continue so long as both sides have faith in their ability to credibly deter the other side.

To continue with the previous example, Khrushchev's placing of intermediate and medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba in 1962 elicited a strong response from President Kennedy. When Kennedy was notified of the placement of these missiles, he clearly and openly signaled to the Soviet General Secretary that such action was unacceptable in the larger context of Soviet-American relations and that failure to remove the weapons would likely result in conflict. He claimed that:

*Nuclear weapons are so destructive and ballistic missiles are so swift, that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to peace.*

*For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States, recognizing this fact, have deployed strategic nuclear weapons with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which insured that these weapons would not be used in the absence of some vital challenge. [Kennedy 1962]*

In identifying and informing the Soviet Union of the imbalance the Soviets had achieved, President Kennedy was demonstrating that the Soviets had not learned that the lesson of this new arms race was to not destabilize events that could result in war. In other words, the Soviets had not learned the same lessons that the United States had. And though this was a change in the status quo, it fundamentally shook the United States' degree of certainty about the Soviet Union's actions and intentions. And with the US's response, Soviet faith in their ability to deter the United States was shaken to the core.

Thus, stability is vital to ensuring an arms race does not devolve into full-scale war (Richardson 1960; Lambelet 1973). If one leader perceives that the other state has or will soon have a strategic advantage unavailable to another state, there is an incentive to wage war on one's own terms. However, stability must be viewed holistically. As Glasser (2004) points out, stability can be undercut but is not a fatal cause of war, so long as it does not occur at the height of an arms race. Instead, instability can materialize when one state gains other non-military advantages, such as economic growth, new allies, or a technological advancement for a new or improved weapons system. This change in stability is brought about precisely because the formula changed (due to a shift in the balance) and thus the lessons learned from previous interactions may no longer hold true. At its core, an understanding of stability rests on the assumptions of what states have already learned about their previous interactions with the other actor. And when that stability is upset, uncertainty grows because the lessons learned may no longer apply.

## Disputes/Rivalries

The Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) project at the Correlates of War provides the researcher with insight into how states behave in other ways aside from direct military action that leads to war (itself a rare event at the dyadic and incident levels of analysis). A MID is defined as “united historical cases in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state” (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996). In light of this definition, there are multiple reasons as to why the researcher should carefully examine the MID dataset. To begin with, the size of the sample is quite large, giving the chance for more generalizability. Additionally, it captures a broad swath of potential activities a state can undertake in which to signal another state (such as threats, displays, and use of force). Furthermore, these incidents must be intentionally directed between states. Finally, these cases often fall short of war and, in many instances, do not lead to future confrontations. This begs the question, then: why do many disputes end in a relatively peaceful manner and not devolve into war? Do states or leaders learn from these low-intensity disputes? Or do states and leaders learn from events such as wars and rivalries (where the lessons are likely to be more important because the costs are higher)?

The relative rarity of war makes it difficult for the researcher to make better explanations about interactions between states that might encourage learning at a lower level of hostility. Likewise, selection effects exist as a way for leaders to choose or not choose to go to war in the first place, though these effects might be lower in MID cases. For instance, Weede (1989) points out the pacifying effects that superpowers (or, more generally, “world systems”) can have on the incidence of war outside of blocs. Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi (2008) likewise find

evidence that as the number of democracies in the international system rises, autocracies have learned to adhere to democratic norms, a seeming break-away from interest-based foreign affairs. This indicates (as does Mitchell 2002) that the autocratic leaders have learned the acceptable norms of behavior in the increasingly liberal democratic system and are “policed” by their superpowers, though internal disputes are still a real possibility. By examining MIDs, Weede (1989) mitigates against this small-n and gains more leverage on his argument. MIDs themselves act as a selection mechanism that “filter out” disputes that would not be captured by the otherwise rare event of war.

There are numerous reasons as to why leaders and states engage in MIDs. The most common of these reasons concerns territorial disputes (for instance, see Vasquez 1995; Vasquez and Henahan 2001). Probabilistically, states which border one another are more likely to engage in MIDs at the dyadic level because their exposure to disagreements, both territorial and otherwise, is much higher. For instance, Bremer (1992) finds that contiguous dyads are thirty-five times more likely to experience war. States also engage in shows of military force against one another over trade disagreements, disputes over citizens, attempting to revise the status quo of the system, navigation of waterways, etc.

Jones, Bremer, and Singer (1996) find that though the most violent types of MIDs occur when multiple states are involved, the majority are bilateral dyadic MIDs (163). Likewise, 39% of disputes begin as displays of force and 49% begin as use of force (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996: 193). Directed dyadic MIDs are useful as a unit of analysis to look for those instructional tool to see how leaders send signals to all leaders in the system concerning the extent to which one leader is willing to go to protect his state’s interests.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> While realism might attribute this to the degree of resolve of a state, I instead say that resolve is a part of the learning component. The information provided by the willingness of a state to follow through with a demand

One finding has shown that states which settle their disputes without resorting to militarized means are much less likely to have disputes in future disagreements and are thus not found in the MID dataset (Hensel and Diehl 1994). In fact, MIDs are more likely to occur among dyads when those dyads used military force against one another in the past (Hensel and Diehl 1994: 479). In other words, it seems likely that states that have experience with disputes with other states are more likely to use those types of behaviors in the future because they have learned that the mechanisms work for their policy goals.

Rivalries are a particularly deep-seated type of competitive interaction between states. While some rivalries lead to war, others may only have disputes with one another. Finally, et al. 1967 (also, Feste 1982) theoretically constructs rivalries as states with a high degree of “enmity” between one another. Azar, et al (1978) and Brecher (1984) later termed this a “protracted conflict” and Wayman (1989), along with Goertz and Diehl (1992b), termed this an “enduring rivalry”. Thompson (1995; 2001; 2011) later termed this phenomenon as a “strategic rivalry”. While different concepts of rivalry exist, these definitions seek to identify the deeply seated disputes that exist between a handful of states.

The procedures for operationalizing rivalries varies across two primary dimensions. One operationalization of rivalries is that of a dispute density approach, the most common of which has been used by Goertz and Diehl (1992a; 1992b) which uses a dispute density account to define states as involved in a rivalry. Thompson (1995; 2001; 2010), on the other hand, defines a rivalry in historical terms, relying on the perceptions of each state as the other state as a rival. This approach ensures statistical independence between the MID sample and rivalries sample.

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provides information about the costs and benefits to an action while revealing information. This then increases the probability of the lesson being “picked up” by the other state.

Rivalries are an important area of conflict research because 45% of all observations in the MID dataset are between the same states (Goertz & Diehl 1992a). In other words, these disputes should not be viewed as independent events, but rather as a series of linked events in a larger rivalry. In this light, we can think of MIDs and rivalries along a similar line as Nevin (1996) does for war. These conflictual behaviors are assumed to be learned from a heightened degree of political competition. We should thus expect to see those states involved in rivalries to be more likely to use violence in their interactions with other states precisely because they have experienced these high-level negative interactions and are therefore more likely to utilize such behavior with other states. One of my claims is that interactions between states do not just have implications within that dyad. Instead, it has implications for all states that interact with one another. If we assume that states can also learn observationally, then we should assume that the lessons they learn from observing others will also be transmitted in their interactions with others.

#### Diffusion of Violence/Diffusion of Peace Literature

Diffusion can simply be defined as the spread of information or behaviors between multiple actors that encounter one another. Diffusion is a symbiotic process in which like units exchange ideas, behaviors, or lessons between one another. Diffusion is a process in which the actors are not required to have direct interactions with one another, though this undoubtedly makes the lessons associated with the exchange more powerful and more likely to be meaningful. I have maintained that learning is the process by which states learn to compete or use alliance structures that other states have used. However, the mechanism by which this behavior is learned is diffusive in nature. When a state learns from seeing what others have written in alliance texts, the behavior itself has diffused to another actor. In the case of arms

races, states learn from their interactions with the competitor state and the lessons diffuse to affect their entire approach to dealing with the other state. Finally, in disputes, states that are in rivalries are more likely to use violence in lower level disputes with different actors. We can then see evidence of violence spreading to other actors in the international system.

Generally, there are two broad categorizations of conflict study that speak to this diffusion process. These occur within the diffusion of violence literature and the diffusion of peace literature. Rogers (2010) outlines the diffusion process as one in which new ideas are spread slowly via communication between innovators and others. Those ideas that are risky at first are initially met with skepticism, but, as more individuals try the new idea and the more success it meets with, the more likely are other individuals to adopt it. Thus, the mechanism by which states and leaders learn is a diffuseive series of interactions between states and the overall process is a series of learning events.

### Diffusion of Violence

Pitcher, Hamlin, and Miller (1978) argue that previous sociological literature focused on social conditions and psychological reasons for violence (23). They argue, instead, that violence should be understood as a diffusive process that “is both instigated and inhabited via direct and vicarious learning” (23). Singer and Small (1996), as mentioned above, note that MIDs tend to cluster geographically and that violence generally occurs within specific regions and states. Gibler’s (2007) work likewise claims that conflict is primarily grouped between contiguous states, which acts as an impediment to the democratic process. Both of these factors mean that diffusion is more likely because of this clustering effect.

Vasquez (2014) notes that a unified theory of the spread of violence is lacking among scholars of peace and conflict studies (149). Instead, scholars tend to focus on the individual aspects of when peace or conflict happens. A diffusive process, on the other hand, allows us to see a unified concept of how violence and peace spread temporally and spatially. Vasquez (2014) notes that alliances, rivalries, territorial contiguity, and pure contagions (such as ongoing civil wars) are processes by which conflict spreads from one actor to another.<sup>31</sup>

Within the civil war diffusion literature, several recent advancements in the learning politics literature are of note. Linebarger (2016) argues that civil strife metastasizes via a learning process in which the conflict is learned as an efficient strategy from interactions with successful rebel groups. Though it is likely that this diffusion of civil violence occurs best when states are contiguous, Linebarger (2016) finds evidence of rebel groups learning from non-contiguous, even ideologically dissimilar groups. However, he argues this diffusion process likely occurs from two pathways: 1.) from ongoing civil conflicts; 2.) from successful rebels in government (Linebarger 2016). Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) note that civil wars tend to cluster geographically and that a common link in this clustering is ethnic linkages in spatially proximate conflicts. Likewise, Schutte and Weidmann (2011) find that civil wars diffuses when there is a relocation of violence and as conflict escalates in one place, it escalates in another. Using a space-time analysis of conflict in the North Caucasus in Russia, O’Laughlin and Witmer (2012) find strong evidence that the direction and tone of violence in the region stemmed from the nucleus of violence in Chechnya.

Thus, both within the inter and intrastate divisions of conflict study, we see a similar trend: the spread of violent activities (or the preparation of violence in the case of the alliance

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<sup>31</sup> To this list I would also add arms races.

literature) behaves consistent with a diffusive process in which states learn from others' (particularly similar others) and their own interactions with other states. Both of these processes illustrate that both observational and experiential learning are components in learning violence.

### Diffusion of Peace

O'Laughlin et al (1998) find convincing evidence of temporal and spatial clustering of democracies and autocracies. Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi (2009), in addition to Mitchell (2002), find that autocracies will begin to behave like democracies as the number of democratic regimes increases globally (see also Dixon 1993; Dixon 1994; Dixon 1998; McLaughlin Mitchell and Hensel 2007). Similarly, Harrison (2010) examines the democratic peace from the systemic level and makes a neofunctionalist argument in support of spillover from democratic regimes to autocratic regime behavior. Likewise, Hayes (2011) labels this democratic wave and establishment of new norms as a 'third-wave' of constructivist thought.

Harrison (2004) takes a similar constructivist argument a step further towards liberalism and attempts to reform the liberal argument to claim that the so-called "liberal peace" acts as a socializing mechanism to create a critical mass of democracies that "push" their norms onto non-compliant states.

The point of these arguments, particularly Mitchell's (2002), is that human agency is ultimately responsible for these norms in the international system (51, footnote 5). However, these arguments maintain that peaceful existence between states causally comes from the presence of democratic regimes and not from a broader settling of the issues that are most likely to lead to war or disputes. Gibler (2007; also, Gibler and Tir 2010) among others<sup>32</sup> maintains

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<sup>32</sup> For an alternative theory of the democratic peace, see Gibler (2007) and Gibler (2012). Here, the author (along with others) argues that the phenomena of the democratic peace is a spurious result of the settlement of territorial

that democratic regimes emerge because these territorial issues are resolved in cooperative rather than competitive frameworks. This pre-existing cooperation, then, sets the stage for actors behaving in these frameworks to act cooperatively with one another in future interactions.

If the literature is correct that liberal international norms are slowly being adopted by non-liberal entities, this also implies the counterfactual. This also implies that states can learn conflictual behavior from one another and are more likely to reciprocate violent behavior to other actors in the international system if they are victims of violent interactions. Violence, it appears, operates under a similar mechanism on two fronts. First, if an actor is violent to another actor, it is probable that the actor will reciprocate that violence to the first actor. Second, it is more likely that the victim of violence will be more likely to use violence against other actors in the international system because they have internalized violence as acceptable. Thus, the diffusion of conflict literature, while operating under a similar mechanism as the diffusion of peace, is an important area of study for scholars who want to establish a causal mechanism by which violence spreads from actor to actor. This mechanism is highlighted by the learning process in which experience guides leaders as to the actions they should take.

## Chapter Outline

In Chapter 3, I examine all international alliances that have emerged in the state system since 1891. In this chapter, I conduct a textual analysis of these agreements to determine how both states and their leaders “learn” from both their own previous alliances (observational learning) and the alliances of other states (experiential learning). Here, I look for evidence of

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issues between states, particularly contiguous dyads. The ability of democracies to emerge as non-violent towards one another is then confused for a democratic peace. For more on the territorial peace, see Vasquez 1995; Gibler and Braithwaite 2013; Senese and Vasquez 2008).

alliance texts diffusing to other actors in the international system or within the same state. Reiter's (1996) text is useful here in guiding how I determine if states learn from the past. This will provide some interesting and valuable insights into how the leaders of states determine which documents are worthy of copying and those documents that are not worthy of copying. I argue that states and their leaders will be more likely to copy from alliance texts that they deem are either successful or useful to them in their own relations with other states and that leader-level assessments of prior alliance texts are only likely to matter when the state is newer to the international system. Furthermore, I expect to find that geographic and temporal contiguity will matter for whether a state decides to copy from previous alliance texts.

In Chapter 4, I examine arms races. The literature on arms races abounds within the discipline and often takes a realist slant, though many of these foundational questions may be flawed or difficult to substantiate (for instance, see Vasquez 1993; Vasquez 1998; Fearon 2002; also, Sample 1997, for an explanation and resolution of conflicting evidence from Wallace 1979 and Diehl 1983/1985a). For this chapter, I will examine nuclear arms races, which are arguably quite different from conventional arms races. However, since there have been so few cases of nuclear arms races, I will utilize qualitative methods, relying on primary and secondary sources to make my argument. Here, I will look for evidence that US leaders and Soviet leaders provided information to one another in an arms race that emphasized balance of power, deterrence, and public statements about the offensive/defensive balance of weapons systems and the effect on political objectives. This case is an important one to examine because of the high political stakes that were involved and because the case was largely driven by external competition in a bipolar arrangement (see Glasser 2004). I will also make the argument that many arms race models exclude the political components that ignite arms races in the firstplace,

making these studies guilty of spuriousness. I will rely on Mansbach and Vasquez's (1981) work to guide me as to the important latent political variables that indicate when an arms race will occur and how it will continue. Additionally, in the future I will be able to use this same framework for looking at other arms races, especially the case of India/Pakistan. Since this framework will rely largely on qualitative claims, this methodological approach can also be utilized for conventional arms races, making this case study more generalizable.

In this chapter, I will be explicitly testing experiential learning in the context of how both the Soviet Union and the United States learned from their prior interactions with one another. With the end of détente in 1979, I will demonstrate that the failure of détente was due to fundamental disagreements between how President Carter viewed interactions with the Soviets in the context of spreading the values associated with liberalism, while the Soviets and American policy before Carter had viewed détente as a respect of both states and their realm of influence. In the end, as is to be expected with state learning, the state learning as an organization triumphed over Carter's understanding of détente.

In Chapter 5, I look at MIDs in the presence of rivalries. I find evidence that states currently engaged in a rivalry with another state as well as states previously engaged in a rivalry with another state are more likely to use force against a non-rivalrous state because the experience of a rivalry makes it more likely that states will externalize violence to other states with which they interact. I expect to find a larger effect for states currently involved in a rivalry than in those states previously involved in a rivalry. This is because there should be a temporal decay of the memory of lessons learned in rivalries. Leng (2000) conducts a case study of post-WW II Soviet-American, Egyptian-Israeli, and Indo-Pakistani relations to examine how states learn from repeated interactions that lead to international crises. He then looks at how these

states learn from one another and how this affects their crisis bargaining. The questions he asks are if the states learned from their actions and acted differently in the next crisis, if they managed the crises better over time, and if other states learned from these interactions (Leng 2000: 3-4). I will instead examine the data for evidence of learning in non-rivalrous dyads, politically-relevant dyads, non-politically relevant dyads, and all dyads from 1816 to 2007. My claim is that states in high level of conflict with other states will be more likely to diffuse that violence to lower-level conflict to other actors in the system because they have learned from the heightened political conflict with other states.

In the final chapter, I conclude with my theory and what this has taught the reader about international relations. Additionally, I discuss prospects for this formulation. This will include a research agenda that examines areas such as non-traditional alliances, or how new states that come “online” during history tend to create new alliances; secret treaty/provision use by leaders; a case study of the most egregious alliance plagiarism cases; another case study in arms races, such as India/Pakistan or differentiate between conventional and nuclear arms races. As for the disputes in the presence of rivalries expansion piece, I will also look to Klein, Gortz, and Diehl’s (2006) dispute density approach for added robustness of my findings.

## CHAPTER 3: WHEN STATES COPY: AN ANALYSIS OF ALLIANCE TEXTS AND LEARNING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, 1891-1995

### Abstract

Previous scholarly research on alliances has focused on how alliances serve as both signaling and coordination mechanisms or as credible commitments to an alliance partner. However, the texts used to initiate a formal alliance have largely been ignored. Previous studies have missed the textual significance because they often focus on how alliances relate to the probability of war or other various behaviors associated with alliance making. Instead, I examine alliance texts for evidence of learning. I argue that leaders of states are likely to copy previous alliance commitments, as they act as instructional tools in the alliance-making process. Relying first on their own states' experiences in making alliances (experiential learning), they then look towards alliance texts made by other states (observational learning) where those texts act as secondary instructional devices. I construct a matrix of state alliances from 1891-1995 and use this as a proxy variable for learning. I find that leaders and states with less alliance experience are more likely to copy other alliance texts. I also find that contiguity, distance between capital cities, regional difference, and a difference in national capabilities are likely to impact a leader's decision to copy from another alliance.

### Introduction

Alliances are, for realists, one of the crucial ways in preparing for war (Vasquez 1993/2009; Siverson and Sullivan 1984: 1). As such, realists tend to focus on the material

capabilities, relative distribution of power within the international system, or other, more easily measured factors as to why alliances form or if they lead to war. For many, alliances are a way in which states deal with insecurity in the international system and are taken as a given, natural fact of international politics. This strain of inquiry tends to focus on the material capabilities of other states and, in so doing, ignores the individual decision-making process by states and their leaders or the documents themselves.

Instead, I examine those alliance documents from 1891-1995 to determine how much states learn from other previous alliances. I maintain that alliances are a way to prepare for war (Vasquez 1993/2009) but that a richer explanation of the learning process can be obtained from a close examination of the rate of copying to be found within alliance texts, treating this rate of copying as a proxy variable for learning. Similarity amongst alliance texts, in other words, is evidence of learning from previous interactions either between the state in question or other, third-party states that are not members of the current alliance.

### Alliances

One of the central debates within the alliance literature has been to address the most basic of issues: do alliances cause war? Vasquez (1993/2009) claims that alliances do not cause war in and of themselves but are a step on the road to war (being part of many other factors). In fact, Vasquez argues that the causal link between alliances and war is correlation and not causation and are a learned response to dealing with disputes between states. Levy (1981) similarly maintains that alliances do not cause war among great power states and are instead often associated with peace. Like Vasquez (1993/2009), Levy (1981) claims “alliances have often been formed in response to unstable conditions, rising tensions, and the anticipation of a

probable war” (581). Similarly, Sabrosky (1980) claims that alliances serve two goals: deterring potential enemies and winning wars, should they occur. Under this formulation, alliances act as a response to threats, though they may be construed as threats themselves.

Other authors, to the contrary, claim that alliances do result in an increased probability of war (Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita 1979; Sabrosky 1980, Siverson and King 1980; Siverson and Tennefloss 1984; Siverson and Sullivan 1984; Oren 1990). Siverson and Sullivan (1984) find that when two states are both major powers and have allies, war is likely (75%). However, they find little support for the link between alliances and wars if neither of the two states are major powers.

Smith (1995) endogenizes alliance reliability, claiming that alliance formation has predictable effects on state behavior and ambiguous effects on the occurrence of war. Leeds (1999), on the other hand, argues that alliance reliability matters based off the type of domestic structures, finding that joint democratic dyads and joint autocratic dyads are more likely to cooperate (991).

Similarly, scholars have found a link between territorial issues and the increased likelihood of war between states. Siverson and Starr (1989) find that territory has a positive effect on state decisions to ally with other states. Their diffusion of violence or interaction opportunity model suggests violence is like an infection (23) that draws in others when it spreads (Siverson and Starr 1989). In other words, the more borders one has, “the greater: (1) the number of risks and opportunities that confront the nation, (2) the likelihood that the nation or its territories will be “conditionally viable” ..., and (3) the level of that nation’s uncertainty” (25). Thus, if uncertainty is one of the driving forces of alliances, we should expect to see that states

will be more likely to engage with other states using previous alliance structures that have proven useful in the past.

Realists such as Morgenthau (1947) see alliances as a form of external balancing. Walt (1990) sees alliances as a way in which to balance against threatening behavior by other states, rather than a way for states to obtain something from the interaction (such as security).

Similarly, the context of the threat does matter for alliance formation (Siverson and Emmons 1991; Lai and Reiter 2000). This context is also important for Walt (1990) when he claims that the decision to bandwagon or balance is based off perceptions of victory for a side (115).

Waltz (1979) argues that the lack of order at the international level means that certain types of behavior will be rewarded and other behavior will be punished (see also Christensen and Snyder 1990). Similarly, Waltz (1979) and Christensen and Snyder (1990) claim that this will lead states to pursue a policy of balancing against other states, leaving two possible ways in which to do this: internally (arms buildup) or externally (alliances).

In a move that is problematic for the literature, scholars acknowledge that not all alliances are a response to a given threat (Schroeder 1976; Gibler 1996; Morrow 1994; Lake 2009). Instead, it is possible for an alliance to form between states without it being directed at a given other state. Tracing the origin of these alliances and why they happen thus becomes more difficult to causally explain because they are undirected.

Gibler and Nieman (unpublished) argue that once the process of state development is traced through the settlement of territorial issues (treating democracy as spurious to the onset of war), democracies are no more reliable than non-democracies in alliance formation. In fact, the claim that “democracy is a consequence of, not a cause of, alliance politics” (3).

Other researchers have found the neorealist logic of alliance formation to be problematic. In particular, formal models have indicated that the alliance formation process envisioned by neorealists is flawed. As an example, formal models do not find evidence supporting neorealists' arguments about alliances (Niou and Ordeshook 1990; 1994; Niou et al 1989). If the logics supplied by realists and neorealists is flawed, then, we must look for evidence of why states make alliances in the first place and why they refer to previous alliances as ways in which to construct their own.

Given this literature, it seems logical that leaders would be more likely to use those alliance agreements to represent the type of relationship they are in with other leaders. Other scholars have found that international actors do absorb lessons from one another in previous interactions. For instance, Pape (2003) has found that leaders of terrorist organizations make the decision to utilize suicide bombing campaigns because they perceive that these actions have been fruitful not only for themselves, but also for other terrorist organizations.

Linebarger (2015) takes an interesting approach when he combines various literatures (civil war, interdependence/human rights literature, and learning) into a cohesive picture of learning among rebel groups. Here, Linebarger (2015) argues that leaders of rebellions learn to rebel in two ways: 1.) from current, ongoing civil conflicts in other states; and 2.) from successful rebels in government. By utilizing this approach, Linebarger (2015) demonstrates that civil conflict is spread through a complex web of interactions in which one set of rebels learns from another set of rebels what actions are successful and which ones are not. In fact, if researchers use the concept of diffusion of violence and understand it as a learning experience, then one must also apply this to the diffusion of peace literature (for instance, see Maoz and Russett 1993; Mitchell 2002; Mitchell and Hensel 2007; Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi 2009).

In other words, instead of studies of peace and studies of war, we have an understanding of both processes as learning events expressed through a diffusive process of interactions. And we can then trace these interactions to see where states learn and adapt their behavior from previous interactions.

Somewhat troubling is the fact that most analyses of formal alliances do not focus on the actual documents themselves linking the texts to what actually happens in interactions between states. The failure to examine those documents closely ignores a rich area of research in which we might find useful evidence of how states conceived of as organizations learn from both their previous interactions and the interactions of other states in the international system. Furthermore, a close reading of these texts is crucial to understanding each state's perspective in forming an alliance on two fronts: 1.) what are their expectations in forming an alliance and; 2.) what have they learned from previous alliance commitments?

The vein of learning, which takes the form of a type of updating through interactions, works well within the constructivist paradigm in an explanation of states learning through interactions. Learning, in this context, is using prior information to direct the current policymaking process. Constructivism, in its most basic understanding, emphasizes that learning and the context or background of interactions matters more than the singular interaction itself. For instance, as Wendt (1995) points out, the US cares more about North Korea obtaining nuclear weapons than Great Britain, precisely because the relationship is adversarial. Thus, it flows logically that the US would respond in different ways to these different scenarios. In the case of alliance formation, states should also respond differently to how they make alliances. Newer states or leaders should be less likely to copy, whereas those states with more experience are more likely to copy, because they have the context of experience to guide them and they are

therefore more exposed to what texts are more useful to them. Similarly, states that have previously had an alliance should be more likely to copy, as they have been experience with the alliance making process.

Conceptually, we can understand interactions as generally taking two forms: conflictual or cooperative. States that have a series of positive interactions with one another will learn to behave in a cooperative framework. Those states that initially have negative interactions with one another will learn to behave in a competitive framework. As Linebarger (2015) notes (see above), in the case of intrastate conflict, rebels learn from interactions both with other rebels currently engaged in conflict and those who gained political power. I propose that states (and, as a secondary effect, their leaders) also learn to make alliance documents in two ways: 1.) from their own states' prior alliance texts; 2.) from other states' alliance texts. These two modes of learning equate to learning from experience and learning by observing the actions of others.

### Why Copy?

The similarity between alliance texts is an indicator of where states have learned from their interactions with other states (experiential learning) or the interactions of third-party states (observational learning). When states have a high rate of copying other alliances, it is indicative of their cognitive choices to apply the structures and wording other states pursue in interactions with other states. Likewise, if states or leaders copy their own former alliance documents, this is an even greater indication of learning from previous interactions and is indicative of how experiential learning in international relations is more valuable than observational learning. We can thus conceptualize the rate of similarity between alliance documents as a proxy variable for learning by states and their leaders. However, as mentioned above in Chapter One, learning by

states is most likely to matter more than the learning by individual leaders because alliances are more likely to be formed once the state has developed the organizational capacity to make such agreements. In the absence of this experience, both the state and leader rate of copying will be higher because the state has had less time to develop SOPs from experience.

This indication of learning in alliances may seem trivial at first, but the point of alliance treaties is to make them public, which provides information to other states about intentions and commitments with the secondary role of providing directions for inexperienced states in how to form alliances. If Gibler (2009) is correct, and alliances are both coordination agreements and signaling instruments, logic dictates that these agreements should be made public so that states, their leaders, and their publics are aware of where all parties stand in their relationship with one another and clear signals are sent. Though some documents contain secret agreements, the number of these alliance commitments is small and thus their impact is minimal.<sup>33</sup> The publication of alliance texts and the provisions they provide is essential for sending clear signals. Thus, these texts will largely be available for the consuming state and leaders. If states or their leaders take these signals seriously, they will adapt their policies in a corresponding manner if they view the alliances as successful, particularly in the case of copying their own previous texts. Thus, these texts will be available to other states precisely so that those states are able to see what structures are in place between the allying parties. The availability of these documents, then, means that states opposed to the alliance as well as other states considering making an alliance have more information with which to build their own alliances.

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<sup>33</sup> For instance, the secret alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union, popularly known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, was publicly announced on August 23, 1939, approximately one week before the invasion of Poland. While this pact was publicly conveyed to be a neutrality pact between two otherwise hostile states, it also contained secret provisions that were not released publicly at the time. These secret provisions dealt with the division of Eastern European states into “spheres of influence” for both the Soviet and Nazi regimes.

Cognitive learning is the measure of otherwise unobservable and subtle indications of a change in one's behavior over different interactions. In international alliance texts between states, there is an excellent yet un-utilized opportunity to indicate a cognitive learning process by states and their leaders. Cognitive science now tells us that mental representations of these stimuli are responsible for the response to those stimuli (Ormrod 2011:41; also, Bouton 1994; Forsyth and Eifert 1998). Thus, we move to the thinking process and start to hypothesize about what goes on inside the black box itself (Ormrod 2011: 41-42). In the context of this argument, I maintain that we can peer inside the "black box" of the state and we can see evidence of the state absorbing lessons from other states if we look at the similarity between alliance documents. If we are to believe research that both violence and peace and their associated mechanisms are essentially diffusive processes (for instance, Mitchell 2002; also, Vasquez 2014), then we need adequate evidence to support the claim.

In political science, much work on plagiarism has been completed with the content analysis of judicial rulings. Researchers have found a plethora of data indicating that judges from the Supreme Court to lower courts often rely on the words of others to form their own opinions on cases before their bench (for instance, see Corley 2008; Epstein 1992; Spriggs and Wahlbeck, 1997; Johnson 2004; Johnson, Wahlbeck, and Spriggs 2006). As an example, Corley, Collins, and Calvin (2011) find that lower courts can shape the opinion of higher courts when the Supreme Court utilizes the language found in lower court opinions. As these authors point out, justices have four sources in which to base their decisions: 1.) the legal briefs of the litigating parties; 2.) interest groups' briefs; 3.) oral arguments; and 4.) opinions of lower court (Corley, Collins, and Calvin 2011: 32). Similarly, Collins, Corley, and Hamner (2015) find that amicus curiae briefs are copied by Supreme Court justices based off how useful the language is in

providing useful legal structures for the arguments before the court. Thus, justices mimic arguments and structures that they think can legally work and not those they think will not work.

Likewise, leaders and states have several means in which to absorb lessons and determine whether to engage in an alliance with another state: 1.) personal background experiences with the behavior (alliance formation); 2.) personal/bureaucratic advisors; 3.) their interactions with other leaders in the past; 4.) their observations of leaders of other states interacting with other leaders. Though some of these variables are difficult to measure and are not relevant for my argument, it is possible to measure each alliance text against previous texts. States can then absorb the lessons from other alliance texts to suit their own needs. It is also likely that contiguity, particularly direct land contiguity, will have a positive impact on the degree of similarity. This is likely for two reasons: first, the bordering state is more likely to be at some time in an adversarial relationship with the copying state, given that the majority of MIDs involve territorial disputes (Bremer 1992; also, Jones, Bremer, Singer and Small 1996), and alliances can be a way to mitigate against this threat. Second, the opportunity for interactions is greater due to proximity (see Vasquez 1995, for a refutation of the proximity argument as a proxy for technological capacity). Likewise, this effect will be greater when the center of political power (national capital) for the two states is proximate to one another.

As the judicial content analysis literature has shown, a high rate of linguistic affinity with lower court opinion and other sources of information indicates influence between leaders. Likewise, if Collins, Corley, and Hamner (2015) are correct that Supreme Court rulings share linguistic affinity with amicus briefs that provide useful arguments for legal rulings, it seems

logical that leaders would use a similar approach in their decision to make an alliance.<sup>34</sup> This rate of similarity is especially higher for extremely technical documents, which alliances certainly are. When leaders and states see that previous alliance documents were useful for other leaders and states (perhaps in similar situations), they will be more likely to use those structures and words to make their own alliances.

The diffusion of violence literature claims that violence is spread mechanically from one actor to the next (for instance, see Rogers 2010; Vasquez 2014; Linebarger 2015; Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; and O’Laughlin and Witmer 2012). Conceptually, one actor sees a type of behavior exhibited by another actor and then uses the same or similar technique for their own policies. In the state politics literature within the American Politics subfield, much work has been completed to demonstrate how and when state legislatures adopt the policies and laws made by other states with similar political objectives (for instance, Gray 1973; Mintrom & Vergari 1998; Mooney 2001; Shipan & Volden 2008). In particular, Karch (2007) has advocated that a closer scrutiny of the content of public policies adopted by state legislatures should be examined in order to demonstrate the cognitive linkages between policies and how states have learned from the experience of other states.

Thus, when a state sees another state forming an alliance to prepare for war, the second state will be more likely to mimic the first state’s action, to the extent that it is deemed a prudent course of action. We can think of this in terms similar to the spiral model of conflict and peace in that one state's actions do not occur within a vacuum: they encourage other states to emulate their behavior. A richer understanding of diffusion of both violence and peace is to view the

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<sup>34</sup> While the institutional capacity and legality of domestic courts enjoys a strong legal and institutional position, it is still likely that alliances between states will operate under a similar process, though they do not possess the same legal and institutional privilege of courts.

entire process as a learning event in which states learn acceptable and unacceptable types of behavior for a given set of interactions.

By this logic, then, the copying of other alliance texts can also be understood as a diffusive “learning on the cheap” process. Copying a prior alliance text can be understood as a heuristic shortcut to information from prior alliance texts. Students, when they plagiarize in an academic setting, are effectively taking a “shortcut” to knowledge (albeit an unethical one). They are basing their work (either directly copied or paraphrased) from the work of another because they determine it is the path of least resistance. If this is the case, it would make no sense for a student to copy his work from another student who is failing the class or otherwise not performing well. Instead, a student is more likely to copy from someone who is doing well in the class or from a credible source (or, more appropriately, a source they deem to be credible). This decision to reproduce from a source that is deemed credible indicates that the student who is copying recognizes that the student being copied from produces a superior “product”. From this, they have learned that the best way in which to cheat to improve one’s grade is to copy from someone who knows the class or material well and is, to some degree, an “expert” on the matter.

Furthermore, states with have more experience making alliances are more likely to copy from previous alliances precisely because their exposure to those previous texts is higher. Additionally, the reliance upon previous texts is important because it acts as a “shortcut” to information. Using this as a “shortcut” they can make an alliance that reflects what they learned was successful for other states or from their own prior experiences. Similarly, states with a large differential in national capabilities will be more likely to reproduce the texts of other states, as it can be an effective way for states to “punch above their weight”.

I maintain that the content of alliance texts, an understudied aspect of the alliance literature and the broader behavior of states and leaders in the international system, is important to understanding how states and leaders absorb lessons via interactions with others. Just as content analysis of judicial opinions in the United States has been useful for indicating a variety of processes in the American judicial system, the content analysis of international alliances can show underlying processes of how states interact with one another.

### Theory

I argue that both states and leaders can first rely on previous interactions in their own political careers and their states (or the interpretations of those events) to contextualize and place themselves in a position that will maximize outcomes for both themselves for their state. This is properly termed experiential learning. And we can also expect to see states and leaders learning to copy alliance texts of other states, which is properly termed observational learning. Since these documents, by design, are publicly available, it is likely that states will copy from other states' documents when they do not have a plethora of prior experience with making alliances. Taking a cue from the plagiarism literature in judicial politics and the diffusion of policies across US state legislatures, we can find evidence of this learning mechanism by examining alliance texts for when they are copied (or not) by other states. This process is evidence of a learning environment in which states and their leaders learn first from the previous actions of the states they represent. As a secondary mechanism, they learn from other states in the international system, particularly those states with which they have numerous interactions.

Furthermore, we can effectively divide up the learning process into state-level attributes and leader-level attributes, or lessons that the state and leader have learned and their effect on

policy outcomes. I hypothesize that evidence for state-based learning will be greater than evidence for leader-based learning for several reasons. First and most obvious of all is that the state is not synonymous with the leader. While leaders of states do have an important role to play in the context of alliance negotiations, it is assumed that the state's bureaucratic structure and capacity to conduct relations with states will always be greater than what the individual head of government can accomplish. Along these lines, it is also assumed that states that are more experienced in terms of prior alliances will be more likely to copy because the state has developed the necessary institutional capacity to make alliances and refer to prior alliance texts. Second, the tenure for heads of government is, relative to the length of time the state is in existence, quite short. This means that the lessons that individual leaders adopt will not be as engrained or contextualized as the lessons the bureaucratic state has internalized. Third, if Bueno de Mesquita (2005) and selectorate theory are correct, then leaders have audiences they have to please. In the case of autocratic leaders, this audience is small. However, in the case of democratic polities, this audience is quite large. Therefore, the lessons that heads of government internalize will likely vary based on the size of selectorate they must please. Since democratic states have a larger audience to please, it is likely that the leader's true preferences for a given political situation are less likely to be exhibited, particularly if that individual is either 1.) up for reelection or; 2.) the issue is of a highly salient nature.

I argue that it is important to look at these variables as indicators of how states and leaders strategically pursue alliance commitments because they use this previous reservoir of knowledge as informational shortcuts to future behavior (Khong 1992). However, given the role of states in the international system and constraints placed on individual leaders, it is most useful to look for evidence of learning at the state-level of analysis. I assume that copying in alliances

will be lowest when leaders and states are less experienced in alliance making and have not yet learned the types of behavior (and language) that is acceptable in the formation of alliances.

Instead, states and leaders with more experience making alliances will be more likely to copy.

I further theorize that states and their leaders will look first to previous alliances signed by their own state because this is evidence of experiential learning and is therefore the lessons that they are the most familiar with. Previous scholarship (Ormrod 2012; Kim, Park, & Wyer 2009) has found that the distance between an event in the past and its suitability as a “teachable moment” decreases as the temporal distance grows. States, then, should be assumed to both have more access to and a greater likelihood of learning from their own prior alliance commitments, particularly if those alliances are of more recent vintage. And in the absence of these alliances, they will then turn to alliances made by other states because these documents act as heuristic shortcuts to information in making technical alliances. As mentioned, this is likely because those documents are easily available to the leaders of those states, meaning they have a greater opportunity to learn from them. Thus, in the absence of their own alliances, they will look towards alliance texts from other states as an indicator of what words and structures to include in their own texts. This effect is secondary for several reasons. First, these documents might not be readily available or known to the state. Second, they may not be pertinent to the alliance at hand. Either way, we should expect to see rates of copying highest among those texts previously signed by the state, providing support for the experiential learning model over the observational learning model.

Along a similar vein, I expect to see a greater rate of copying texts in those alliances that are originally signed by only two states. This is because the two sides have a greater amount of room to include their own text in the documents than in an alliance with, say, five original

signatories. Similarly, we must account for the presence of a major power in the negotiating of the alliance, if we assume that the major power state will have a greater influence over the text included in the document. A major power, it would stand to reason, would have greater say in the negotiating process. Functionally, as a great power state, they are equally sovereign as another state in an alliance. However, given their major power status, they should have a greater degree of leverage and benefit to the other state in an alliance, meaning they will exert greater influence over the alliance negotiations. Likewise, considering the nature of how states become major powers, it is logical to conclude that major power states would be less likely to copy than minor states precisely because they already have the experience needed in forming alliances.

In measuring both the experience of the leader and of the state, one can conceptualize of experience in two ways. The first and most obvious of these mechanisms is prior experience with the behavior. In this case, that would mean prior experience making an alliance. Logically, a state that has prior experience making an alliance should be assumed to be more likely to copy from prior alliance texts because by having engaged in that behavior in the past means that the state and leader are likely to have become socialized into that behavior by their own interactions with other states. In building alliances, there are invariably two partners involved in the agreement. This means that both states will have to compromise on what they wish to obtain from the alliance. Therefore, it is likely that states and their leaders will turn to prior compromises and prior treaty agreements as a way to justify current alliance treaties. Thus, those leaders or states with prior experience have an advantage over the state without that prior experience.

However, it is also possible to think of experience along a different line. Experience can also be measured in terms of time in the system. Since formal alliances are relatively rare in

international relations (Gibler 2007), this makes conceptualizing experience in international relations difficult and biases against those states that might have existed for a long time but had no need to form a formal alliance. In fact, some states have existed in the international system for long periods of time and have either had no alliances or had relatively few. Thus, while experience in terms of making previous alliances can be low, this does not mean the state is “inexperienced” with the behavior. This necessitates thinking about experience as length of time in the system. Since states are considered functional equivalents in terms of sovereignty, this means that their interactions with other states as peers will influence their interactions with other states and have a role to play with respect to how they make formal alliances, should they choose to do so. Under this causal understanding, states will copy at a lower rate when they have spent a longer time in office. This effect is due to the fact that they have existed in the international system for a longer period of time and thus have more professional interactions and knowledge of other states and informal alliances, meaning that they are less likely to look to either their own prior alliances or the alliances of others. Likewise, we should expect to see a similar behavior for states. The longer the state has been in the international system, the more likely it is that the state has developed the necessary bureaucratic institutions and capacity to develop their own abilities to make alliances texts without the need to rely on alliance texts from the past. In other words, there is a critical value at which state capacity reaches such a point that the state can effectively make alliances without formally relying on an examination of prior texts.

### Hypotheses

States will be more likely to copy other states’ documents that are geographically proximate. This is likely because states should be more likely to mimic texts from states that

they have numerous interactions with, whether they are positive or negative interactions. Shared land borders indicate that there exists a high level of interactions between states. This leads me to hypothesize:

**H1: States are more likely to copy alliance texts from states in which they share land contiguity.**

Functioning under a similar logic to geographic proximity, I assume that leaders will be less likely to copy alliance texts that are temporally distant. Given what we know from other fields of study (Kim, Park, and Wyer 2009; Soderberg, et al 2011) the greater the temporal distance between an event and the present, the less likely the abstraction or lesson will be utilized. This could operate under one of three mechanisms: 1.) the issues addressed in older texts have been resolved; 2.) language shifted such that the documents are updated with different, temporally-appropriate language; 3.) experience and memory have a decay function in which the lessons are no longer cognitively applied. I hypothesize that:

**H2: Alliance copying will occur at a higher rate among those alliance texts that are temporally proximate.**

I assume that the rate of similarity between alliance texts will be highest when there are only two original signatories to the alliance. This is probable for the mere fact that with less states and their interests represented at the negotiating table, there is a greater opportunity for states to copy from either their own previous alliances or alliances made by other states.

**H3: Copying of alliance texts will be highest when there are only two signatories to the alliance.**

Next, I assume that states will be more likely to learn from their own previous alliance texts, as this is indicative of experiential learning. As discussed above, this is likely because

states should first look to their own experiences in making alliances and the vocabulary and structures they chose to incorporate into their alliances with other states. A secondary step would be to look towards alliances made by other states and copy those structures and vocabulary. However, this form of observational learning is more likely to occur when the state does not have a prior alliance text. While it can be argued that the state's own prior alliance text is the one most likely to be available to the state, it is also likely that many other previous alliance texts will be available to states in the international system. This is likely because if Gibler (2007/2009) is correct that the goal of alliances is to either signal or coordinate with another state, the alliance text must be made public, otherwise the signaling goal of the alliance fails. In other words, for alliances to be successful signaling instruments, their texts must be public and available so that other states can see how deep the alliance is between the two states. A positive coefficient would represent a greater reliance upon the experiential learning model. This leads me to hypothesize:

**H4: States are more likely to copy their own previous alliances.**

As stated above, experience can be measured in two ways: both in time served (by the state and leader), as well as experience with the actual process of making alliances. I thus proceed by measuring experience both in terms of time since entry into the system and actual experience making an alliance. I maintain that states with more experience in the formation of alliances will be more likely to engage in copying as they have become socialized into the norms associated with alliance making. Leaders and states that are making an alliance for the first time can be expected to have a greater level of inexperience in how to structure alliance texts. Thus, leaders and states that have already previously made an alliance should have a greater probability of copying from other alliances because they have learned whether those alliances worked for

either themselves or the state. Operating under a similar logic that states without previous alliances copy at a higher rate, I assume that leaders of states will be more likely to learn from other alliances once they have made another alliance. This makes theoretical sense because for leaders who have no experience in making alliances, they have no prior experiences in which to call upon. However, once the leader has made one previous alliance, this experience will condition them into using language that other states have used, with the rate of similarity in documents decreasing over time, as the temporal distance becomes greater (a decaying language function). I term this phenomenon the socialization process of negotiating alliance agreements. I also assume that this effect is interactive and additive, meaning I should see a real difference between a state with no previous alliance (and, logically, no previous alliance by the leader in question), presence of a previous alliance by the state, and presence of a previous alliance by the state and leader. This leads me to propose:

**H5a: States that have previously had an alliance will copy other alliance texts at a higher rate.**

**H5b: Leaders who have previously had an alliance will copy other alliance texts at a higher rate.**

Finally, I also maintain that the length of a leader's time in office will matter for the rate at which they copy. Leaders learn from experiences with other alliance texts at a lower rate as their time in office increases. This is because the leaders of those states have already discovered what structures and languages are appropriate for making formal alliance commitments. Given that they (as well as states) have already learned the lessons of what is and is not acceptable in these documents, I expect to see less copying by leaders the longer they are in office but I expect this effect to matter less than a state's time in the international system because, logically, the

state will have more capacity and greater experience in terms of time (in most cases) in the international system to call upon.

**H6: Leaders with more time in office will copy other alliance texts at a lower rate.**

### Research Design

I conduct a textual analysis of all available alliance documents from 1891 to 1995. This data comes from Gibler's COW Alliance dataset (2009). These texts consist of all available alliance texts made between 1891-1995.<sup>35</sup> Singer and Small (1966) define alliances as formal agreements between two independent states, as well as treaties that obliged one or both nations under the auspices of being a defense, neutrality/non-aggression, or entente agreements (2-6). Gibler (2009) claims that at their core, "an alliance is a formal contingent commitment by two or more states to some future action" (Gibler, 2009, xlix). All treaties are translated from their original text into English, allowing for consistency in testing. The unit of analysis for this project is the state/leader alliance side when compared to a previous alliance side. The alliance side is the building block of this matrix, with the corresponding state accounting for what variables are added onto the data. For instance, this allows me to calculate prior alliance experience and length of time the state has existed in the international system. As an example, for an alliance with two signatories, there is an entry for both sides, which are then compared to all other previous available alliance texts. So for the first alliance between France and Russia, each state is counted as a separate observation and these observations are increased as subsequent alliance texts are compared to them. In this analysis, there are 1080 comparisons between the first alliance text (540 for each side) and the sides of each subsequent alliance

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<sup>35</sup> Alliance texts are not available post-1995 and I am constrained to 1891 because of the temporal domain and availability of data from the LEAD dataset.

document. The values for the leader variables are built on to each observation, allowing me to subtract their length of time in the system from the time in which the alliance was made.

So I take these alliance documents and construct a matrix dataset cross-matching the alliance treaties with the head of government who was in charge of the states who were involved in negotiating the alliance. I compare the copying rate between the member state with the original members of all other previous alliances. For example, the last alliance in this dataset (in 1995) between Australia and Indonesia is compared dyadically to all of the previous original member sides in the temporal domain (to 1891). Similarly, the second alliance in this dataset is compared to the one previous alliance (since it is only logical that one can replicate documents that have already been written). In this case, the 1894 agreement between Korea and Japan is compared to the 1891 agreement between Russia and France for both signatories of each agreement, giving me four observations. Since it is not possible that a leader in 1891 can model a document from another document made in, say, 1921, I delete the values of the matrix which compare alliance documents to future documents. This leaves a dataset with 109, 445 unique observations. For alliances with many members, I expect to find less evidence of learning, as there are more leaders competing over what information is included in the alliance texts.

To test for the presence of copying across previous alliance documents, I use the Plagiarism Checker X platform for its ease of use and reliability in showing the rate of copying between two documents. I use this platform because of the ability to bulk upload documents to individually be tested only against one other document at a time, giving a simple percentage value of repeated information. I use the cross-comparison feature within the platform to test the alliance documents against one another. This then gives me a percentage value between 0%-100% of the rate of similar material from the previous document.

Next, I must consider the leader experience variables. This data comes from the Leadership Attributes and Decisions (LEAD) dataset constructed by Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam (2015). This data compiles information on state leaders from 1875-2004 and is a repository of various attributes and backgrounds on state leaders and is a useful tool in providing insight into how and why leaders behave in certain ways. I use the state/leader-year as my unit of analysis for this study for all state leaders between 1891-1995. From this, I utilize the date the leader took office variable to measure the experience of the leader.

It is appropriate to use the leader as a proxy for the decision to make an alliance (in conjunction with state-level variables) because as the head of government, leaders are often given considerable leeway to make alliances as needed for a variety of different reasons: coordinating among friends or foes or allying with another to aggregate capabilities to deal with a potential foe. Though domestic mechanisms exist for approving/ratifying/declining alliances, I do not explore those effects here.<sup>36</sup> However, as has been noted elsewhere, I expect the role that the head of government plays will be lower than the role of the state conceived of as an organization plays in developing the alliance text between the states.

For the purposes of this research, I only examine those countries that are original signatories to the treaty. I do this because they were the only parties to actually negotiate the terms of the agreement with the other leaders in the arrangement. This is important because the initial setup of the alliance in establishing the informal institution sets the “rules” by which later-joining states must abide by. Thus, states that join later are not part of the original negotiation

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<sup>36</sup> Similarly, while detractors might argue that the leader is not the individual writing the alliance itself and this is instead left up to the foreign ministry, particularly the foreign minister, it is still likely that the inclusion of this variable will matter as a proxy for the experience of the leader, as it is likely that the head of government brought one of his/her trusted advisors in to serve as the foreign minister. Thus, we should expect a similarly lower level of experience with this foreign minister than of, say, a hold-over foreign minister from a prior administration.

process found in the alliance texts. This, however, is not a major concern for most texts, as most alliances tend to be bilateral or trilateral, with most signatories joining in the inaugural year. As an example, the 1955 non-aggression alliance between Iraq and Turkey (COW ID 3533) is coded only for the original two-member states, Turkey and Iraq. The later members (US, UK, Iran, and Pakistan) are not counted, as they were not responsible for the initial negotiation of the treaty. Additionally, I count the 1936 alliance between Egypt and Great Britain (COW 3088; version 4.1 id 163), though Gibler (2009) codes the start date for Britain later, this treaty was negotiated only between Britain and Egypt and agreed to by both parties on the original date.

Similarly, I do not count non-member observer states in my analysis. Substantively, this only affects COW ID 3551, the defensive alliance between Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, in which Costa Rica and Panama were observing states. I do not think it is important to count these states because, as observers, they do not have as much of an incentive to prioritize such an agreement, as they would with an agreement in which they were full members.

Also worth noting, there are a few cases in which the LEAD dataset counts the leaders as taking office the day in which an alliance agreement was signed. These cases are invariably cases of former colonies that are granted their independence. For example, Ramgoolam's term as the first prime minister of Mauritius began on March 12, 1968 (independence), which also coincides with the signing of an alliance between Great Britain and Mauritius (COW ID 3559). In this case, I count the leader as being the negotiating part on behalf of Mauritius. Likewise, in one instance, one leader is coded in the LEAD dataset as taking office later than what he is identified as starting elsewhere. Faisal I, who is coded for as King of Iraq and was also known as the King of Syria, is coded as beginning in 1932 (for Iraq), though I count his reign as beginning earlier for the purposes of one alliance (COW ID 3063), given his prior experience as

head of state. These two cases do not exhibit any special characteristics and do not affect my outcome in any meaningful way.

Along a similar line, I do not include the 1951 alliance between the United States and Japan, as Japan was still an occupied state under control of generals MacArthur and Ridgeway, both of whom were the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), which does not meet my criteria of leaders who are members of the international system and sovereign states that are able to enter and exit alliances at will. In fact, Japan did not reenter the international system until April 28, 1952, whereas the alliance document was signed on September 8, 1951. Though the alliance is still in force between the two states, I do not count it as an alliance.

#### Dependent Variable

My dependent variable is the log rate of copying in a state alliance dyad. Each alliance text is compared to all previous alliance texts to 1891. As mentioned above, the test of each document gives me a proportion between 0-1, measuring the more recent alliance against the older alliance. This value is a log, given the outliers at the high end of the scale (rates as high as 89%) (see figure 1 and appendix). Mindful of the Gaus-Markov, assumptions, these outliers are problematic and must be dealt with accordingly. Approximately 90% of the observations are below .20, thus there are some extreme heteroskedastic observations which justifies this measure.

#### Independent Variables

I assemble datasets from Gibler's (2009) alliance dataset, along with Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam's (2015) LEAD dataset, Gleditsch (contiguity, distance, etc.), Stinnett, et al's (2002) direct

contiguity dataset, and Correlates of War's state system membership dataset (2011). I also conduct counts of several variables (such as membership in previous alliances), leader time in office, state leadership, etc.

### Leader Variables

#### *Leader time in office (Log Alliance Date Start-Leader Date Start)*

In order to determine what role alliance text similarity has with respect to “inexperienced leaders” and given my claim that evidence or leader learning is most likely to matter only with states that are relatively new to the international system, I construct a variable which subtracts the date the alliance was signed from the date the leader took office. Since we can conceive of experience both in terms of temporal experience and prior experience with the behavior, I will account for both of these measures for both the state and the leader. This should give me a close approximation of how leader experience effects whether a leader decides to copy from another alliance text. This variable comes from Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam's (2015) LEAD Dataset. In several cases, the LEAD dataset does not code a start date for a leader in office. For instance, in the case of Antigua and Barbados, Vere Cornwall Bird (the first prime minister of the country) is not given a start date. In this case, as in others, I consult multiple open sources and come to a mutually agreed upon date in which the leader assumed the office of head of government. In most of these cases, the leaders are heads of government of post-British colonies. And in the case of Faisal I of Iraq, I count his ascension date to the kingship of Iraq as the start date, which came later (albeit within the same year) as his start date of the throne of Syria. Substantively, this effects the alliance between Great Britain and Iraq signed in 1930 (COW 3063; version 4.1 ID 143).

This variable measures the time difference between when a leader took office as the head of government and the time in which the alliance was signed. To do this, I use the startdate variable from the LEAD dataset. Gibler's (2009) alliance start date variable is then subtracted from this date. This gives me a value as a fraction of years (for instance, "7.5" for seven years and six months). I then take the log value of this, given some extreme outliers (for instance, Yahya's alliance in 1945 was made 40 years into his reign). This variable is useful because it gets at the experience of the leader in office and how likely they are to learn from other documents.

#### State-level Variables

##### *Additive Index of Previous Alliances (State and Leader Level)*

Next, I construct an additive index of previous alliance membership for both states and leaders to account for alliance-making experience. This value is initially a count variable of all previous alliances the state was an original signatory to, as well as alliances made by the leader of the state. Using my justification above that what matters is not alliance membership, but in negotiating alliance membership, I only count those states that were original signatories. This is a value that includes all alliances from 1816-1995. Thus, even though the temporal domain for my dependent variable begins in 1891, I count all alliances in the Correlates of War alliance dataset.

Operating under the assumption that prior experience matters for both states and their leaders, an additive index is used here because I suspect an interaction between the experience of the state and the leader are not wholly independent of one another. Likewise, I also assume that state capacity, and therefore evidence for learning, will be greater at the state-level of analysis

rather than at the leader level of analysis. This is a value that includes all alliances from 1816-1995. This value is coded as “1” for no previous alliance, “2” for a previous alliance made by the state, and “3” for previous alliance made by both the state and the leader.

### *Binary Contiguity*

As mentioned, I assume contiguity will matter for whether leaders of states learn from the alliance structures of other states. This should matter for several reasons. First, if Gibler (2007) and others (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; also, Siverson and King 1980) are correct and the majority of MIDs are driven by territorial disagreements, and alliances are formed in response (either defensive, offensive, or entente agreements) to external threats, then contiguity should matter. Likewise, contiguity should matter even when not in an adversarial relationship because the volume of interactions (and thus the exposure to other states) is greater, meaning the opportunity to learn from those interactions is greater. For this variable, I utilize COW’s direct contiguity data, version 3 (Stinnett, et. al 2002). I use Stinnett, et. al’s (2002) coding scheme but transform the variable into a binary indicator of contiguous/non-contiguous relationships. I code land contiguity as “1”, with all others coded as “0”.

### *Miles Distance*

Also, I utilize Gleditsch’s distance between capital cities data. Given some of the extreme outliers, this value is the natural log of Gleditsch’s variable. This should give me further leverage over my argument that geographic proximity is an important determinative factor in whether leaders learn from other documents at a higher rate or not. However, it will consider the large geographic size of some states in the international system, such as the United States, China, Russia, India, Canada, and Brazil.

## State Capacity/Membership (experience and time)

### *System Membership (Alliance Date- System Join Date)*

Next, I construct a variable that measures the time the alliance document was signed minus the date at which the state joined the international system. This is a useful measure for establishing the temporal experience of the state in the international system. I use Gibler's (2009) alliance data (v 4.1) and the start date for each original signatory to the alliance. The COW state system membership dataset (2011) is then subtracted from this date, giving me a value, in terms of years, months, and days, since the state entered the international system and made the alliance in question. I then take the log of this value, given the outliers.

Here, I utilize COW's State System Membership (2011) list to identify beginning and start dates of membership in the international system. However, I adjust this for a few states who form alliances but are not shown to be full members of the state system until a later date. For example, I assume that the leadership and preeminence of France (as well as Belgium and Luxemburg, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Norway, Denmark, and Ethiopia, Egypt, Syria, Japan), though temporarily interrupted by Nazi Germany's occupation from 1940-1944, to be vital and enduring enough to have withstood that occupation and that the leaders of the states that emerged after the war, as well as the state infrastructure, was sufficient to warrant treating it as a continuous member of the international system for those alliances made after they rejoined the international system. Likewise, I also revise the coding scheme for a few countries, such as Costa Rica, which, prior to 1920, had a small population and did not reach COW's criteria of having a diplomatic presence with Britain and France and thus was not given a start date. Instead, I update this country's membership in the state system to September 15, 1821. Likewise, for Bulgaria, I adjust the date of state entry to the de facto independence of the

Principality of Bulgaria to March 3, 1878. In the case of Syria, I use the date of December 1, 1924, the formation of the State of Syria (which was later to be dissolved), under the assumption that the quasi-independence of the rulers permitted them significant interaction on the international stage. In the case of Antigua and Barbuda, I use the earlier date of February 27, 1967, when Antigua and Barbuda joined the West Indian Associated States and the status of their relationship with the UK changed. In the case of Lebanon, I use the earlier date of December 1, 1924 (formation of Greater Lebanon). And in the case of Jordan I use the earlier date of April 11, 1921, the formation of the Emirate of TransJordan.

#### Alliance Text Variables

##### *Original Members (Binary)*

I assume that the number of negotiating parties in a treaty negotiation will affect the rate of copying in alliances due to increased competition at the negotiating table. To code this value, I give a value of “0” to alliances with only two original members and “1” to alliances that have more than one original signatory.

##### *Log Words*

It is necessary to control for the number of words in each alliance, as this will affect the sheer opportunity for copying from text to text. Additionally, it is assumed that the longer the text is, the more technical or specific is the alliance between the two states, and thus the lower will be the rate of copying. I obtain a count of the words in each alliance for side b. These range from a low of 150 words to 6,624 words and a mean of 1,336 words per alliance. This range of values necessitates a log count of total words in each alliance text.

##### *Major State Member*

Assuming that the presence of a major state member in the negotiations of the treaty will affect the level of learning from other alliances, I create a variable that gives a value of “0” if the none of the original signatories were major powers and “1” if any original signatory was a major power (COW 2011). This is a similar logic to Bremer’s (1992) major/minor power distinction. In this dataset, the number of alliance texts with at least one major power is 52%, whereas 48% of alliances had no original major power signatory.

#### *Temporal Difference between Document A and Document B*

Since it is likely that temporal distance affects the rate of learning absorbed by leaders, I measure the difference between when document A and document B are signed, giving me a positive value of the time that elapsed between when the first document was originally signed and when the second document was signed.

#### *Same State for Document A and Document B (State B Sign Date-State A Sign Date)*

It is likely that states would be more likely to learn from their own previous alliances with other states than from alliance texts of which they were not negotiators. This is evidence, then, of experiential learning. Whereas the decision to copy from a secondary state would be indicative of observational learning, meaning I should account for this difference (the difference between experiential learning versus observational learning). To do this, I code each observation as “0” for when the states in document a and document b are different and a “1” for when the signatories are the same.

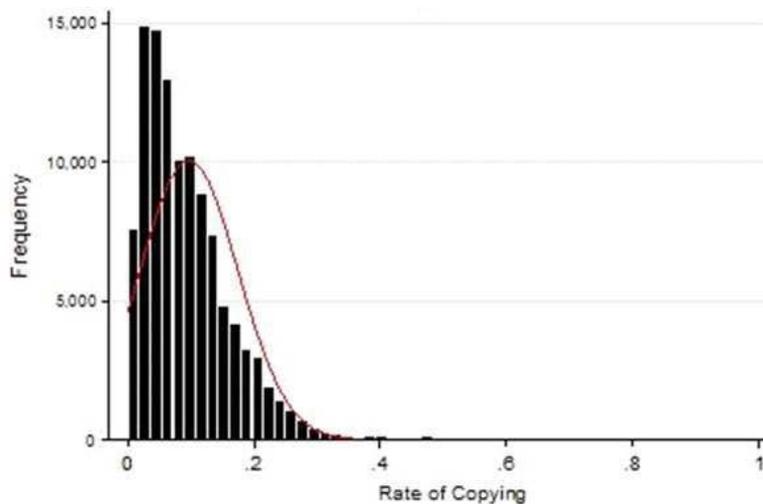
## Results

Before moving on to substantive results, it is worthwhile to mention some essential descriptive statistics. In total, I analyze 180 formal alliance documents (using Gibler’s (2009)

definition) from 1891-1995. Of these 180 alliance documents, there are 468 member states (an average of 2.6 member states per alliance). In total, 114 different states are represented in this sample. Likewise, there are 252 different leaders that make these alliances with other states. Similarly, 85 leaders make more than one alliance agreement. Among all leaders in this dataset, the average number of alliances made is 1.91.

As for the dependent variable, I present descriptive results below (Figure 1; also, see appendix). The mean rate of copying in all alliances is 9.7 %, with a standard deviation of 7.7%. The minimum observation of 0 is observed in 409 cross-comparisons. Similarly, the highest level is 89.3% (Hitler’s 1939 alliance with Latvia against his alliance with Estonia made the same day). There are likewise thirty observations above 70% and 460 observations at or above 50%.

**Figure 3.1-Rate of Copying in Alliances, 1891-1995**



Moving on to multivariate results for all observations (Figure 2), we see some interesting findings. All of the variables considered in the full model, with the exception of the same state a/b variable, have p-values of  $\leq .001$ . The same state a/b variable has a probability within the

acceptable range of statistical significance. When considering the state-level variables, we see that the log distance between capital cities is  $-.05$ , meaning that distance does negatively impact the rate of learning measured by copying. Likewise, we see support for H1, that land contiguity does positively affect the level of similarity, meaning I can reject the null hypothesis. With a positive value, this substantively means that moving from no contiguity to contiguity increases the log rate of copying by  $.09$  units. And upon examination of the State B – State A variable, we see that temporal distance between the signing dates of the two documents does matter, where the rate of learning decreases as the time between the signing of the two alliances increases, albeit at a small rate. Substantively, a one unit increase in the same state a/b variable is accompanied by a  $.211$  decrease in the time elapsed between the log rate of copying. So as time between the documents increases, they are copied at lower rates.

Looking at the Original Members variable, we see statistical significance in the expected direction. We can thus reject the null hypothesis and accept H3 that the copying of alliances decreases if there are more than two original members to the alliance. For a unit increase in this binary variable (more than two original alliance partners), we expect a  $.366$  unit decrease in the rate of copying. In terms of experiential learning, we see that states are more likely to learn from their own prior alliance texts, supporting H4. For a unit increase in same state a/b, there is a  $.27$  increase in the log rate of copying. In other words, this means that when documents are compared to previous document by the same state, there is a  $.27$  higher log rate of copying than when documents are compared to other states' documents. This means that there is support for my claim that states first learn from their own prior texts (experiential learning) over learning to copy from other states' texts (observational learning).

As for the additive index, which measures experience in terms of prior experience in making an alliance, we see a statistically significant increase of .125 over the base category of no previous alliance in the rate of copying. Here, the presence of a previous alliance by the state yields a .125 increase in the log rate of copying. For the third value of the additive index (a previous alliance by both the state and leader) there is not a large increase in the probability of copying alliance texts much more than the increase from the baseline category to the previous alliance formation by the state category. In real terms, a previous alliance by the state and the leader increases the log rate of copying by .153. As I assumed, the impact of a state's prior experience with making an alliance is greater than the impact of a leader's prior experience in making an alliance. This does, however, provide me with evidence to support both H5a and H5b.

And if we measure experience in terms of time in the system, in looking at the log alliance date-leader start date variable, we see that as the leader's time in office increases, they copy at lower rates. As the leaders' term in office increases by one unit, we expect to see a decrease of .0013 in the log rate of copying. This means that I am able to reject the null hypothesis and accept H6. It is also worth noting that the state's time in the international system is also statistically significant and in the negative direction.

Additionally, I report models for the values of different cut-points of the dependent variable (log rate of copying) in Figure 2. This allows for rigor in showing how the variables interact with the rate of copying. Substantively, the signs for some of the variables flip, indicating a lack of support for some of my hypotheses. However, given that the vast majority of my observations are less than the cut points I include, I am inclined to favor the full model (Model 1) rather than Models 2 and 3, as these look at only a mere fraction of the cases. In the

case of the > 20% cut point, only 8% of cases are considered. In Model 3, approximately 1.6% of the observations are considered.

**Table 3.1-OLS Estimates of Alliances, 1891-1995**

	Model 1 Base Model	Model 2 >20%	Model 3 >30%
<b><u>State Characteristics</u></b>			
Log Miles Distance	-0.05*** (-17.5)	-.002 (-0.80)	.040*** (6.45)
Binary Contiguity	.090*** (9.84)	.056*** (7.38)	.077*** (5.68)
Log Alliance Date-Join Date	-.041*** (-18.4)	.0159*** (5.64)	-.009 (-1.29)
Additive Index			
Previous State Alliance	.125*** (14.34)	-.078*** (-7.29)	-.018 (-0.81)
Previous State/Ldr. Alliance	.153*** (17.4)	-.078*** (-7.28)	-.008 (-0.33)
<b><u>Leader Characteristics</u></b>			
Log Alliance Date- Ldr. Start Date	-.001*** (-3.46)	.0001 (0.39)	-.002* (-2.33)
<b><u>Alliance Characteristics</u></b>			
Original Members	-.366*** (-67.8)	-.042*** (-5.93)	-.075*** (-4.82)
Log Words	-.133*** (-33.2)	.050*** (8.22)	.119*** (11.0)
Major State	.025*** (4.70)	-.054*** (-9.16)	0.014 (1.07)
Log State B Sign Date- State A Sign Date	-.211*** (-99.2)	-.079*** (-42.8)	-.049*** (-13.7)
Same State A/B	.270*	.160**	.140

	(2.22)	(2.62)	(1.77)
Constant	-.593*** (-16.8)	-1.49*** (-31.5)	-1.90*** (-21.5)
N	104501	8994	1714

t statistics in parentheses

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

With an n of 109,445 observations (and complete data for 104,501 observations), this examination of 90% of the alliances between 1891-1995, we thus have a better idea of what states learn from previous alliances. With an R<sup>2</sup> of .19, I am able to explain approximately one fifth of the variation in the dependent variable.

### Conclusion

Though the results reported here show small effects between the leader, state, and alliance level characteristics in the copying of alliance texts (due to the natural log transformation), the variables included above are an important first step in determining how states learn from other alliance texts. As I outlined above, I argue that the desire by leaders and states to copy other texts is an indication of them absorbing lessons from interacting with other states in the international system. The measure I use to show that states learn from their interactions with other states is important for two reasons. First, it offers a causal explanation of how previous alliance texts are utilized in current alliance making. Second, it advances the notion that one of the major behaviors associated with conflict, as well as peace, is a learned behavior. The decision to copy alliance texts, then, acts as a way for states and leaders to “learn on the cheap”. By looking at both the state and leader level of analysis, I demonstrate that both have a role to play in the decision to copy from prior alliance texts. However, the effect for states is greater when measuring experience either in terms of prior experience in making an

alliance or in terms of time in the system. This provides evidence to support my claim that learning by the state is the most crucial level of analysis to examine.

Additionally, I have shown that this effect becomes smaller the longer the leader is present as head of government in the international system. This evidence demonstrates that when measuring time in office, those leaders who have been in office longer are less likely to copy others' alliance texts. Additionally, states that are in the international system for a longer period of time are likewise less likely to copy prior alliance texts. Finally, this demonstration shows that states can learn either by contextualizing their own prior interactions (experiential learning) or they can learn by observing other states' interactions (observational learning), but that the lessons from experiential learning are the most likely to matter. This is logically consistent from what we know about experiential learning in psychology (Ormrod 2012).

If states thus behave in a manner that is consistent with this learning framework, we can conclude that the states learn both observationally and experientially. Similarly, when states interact violently with another state, they learn those lessons and apply them for use in other interactions. And if Vasquez (1993/2009) is correct that war is a learned behavior, we should also examine how alliances, one of the first steps on the steps to war argument (Senese and Vasquez 2008) is a learned behavior. By showing that many alliance texts are copied or heavily influenced by another text, I demonstrate that alliance structures themselves are influenced by other previous alliances and not just by the immediate political interests motivating the alliance. Though some of language is certainly lost in the translation to a standardized language, we can see that some cases are virtual copies of other alliances (in six alliance documents, there is a greater than 70% rate of copying another text). This finding indicates that a case study of heteroskedastic outliers is justified.

Furthermore, in measuring the experience of states and their leaders as temporal exposure, I have demonstrated that experience matters in the decision to reproduce segments and parts of other alliances. This important finding further supports my theoretical claim that newer states to the international system will copy at higher rates than other states precisely because they lack the institutional capacity and experience of other states in the international system. And the finding that shows that length of a leader's time in office as negatively influences the rate of copying shows robustness on both levels of analysis.

I have also shown that measuring experience in terms of having previously made an alliance matters in the rate of appropriated material. This is robust for both state and leader experience. As I argue, this is most likely an additive effect, with the experience of the state playing a greater role than the leader's role in the decision to copy from another text. As the factor variable additive index indicates, the role of state experience does have a larger increase than the move from a previous state alliance to a previous state and leader alliance. And where experience is lacking both from the state and leaders, they will be more likely to learn from other alliances.

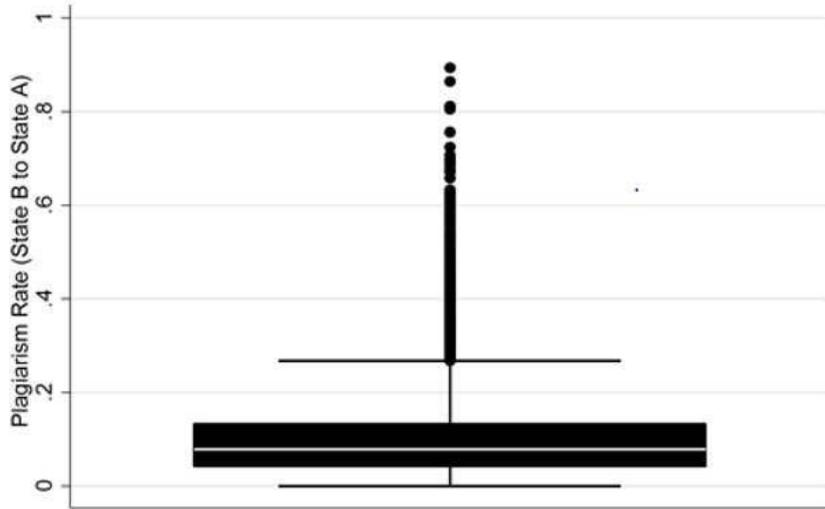
Similarly, the demonstration that both temporal and geographic distance matter is an important finding. As learning theory demonstrates, the lessons from temporally proximate events matter more than those events that are temporally distant. Likewise, geographic contiguity matters a great deal because states that are contiguous are more likely to be aware of the other state's alliance with other states, making the opportunity to copy greater.

In the future, a suitable approach would be to examine the treaties that copy other treaties at extremely high rates. Such an analysis of heteroskedastic outliers would provide useful insight into the mechanism and backdrop of how states learn from previous alliance

commitments. The six cases above 70% are useful texts to examine for evidence of why states copy other alliance texts, particularly their own. If we exclude the two texts signed by Nazi Germany on the same day, these other cases clearly illustrate that leaders will directly copy alliance texts they have learned were successful for their own policy objectives.

Appendix

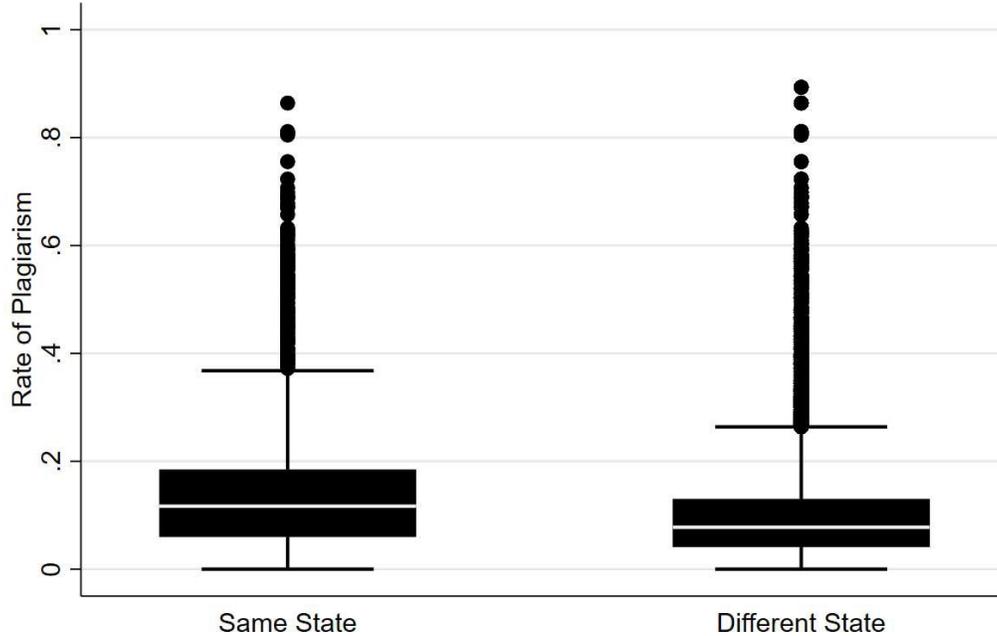
Figure 3.2- Rate of Copying (State B to State A)



**Table 3.2-Summary Statistics**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Log Copying	109036	-2.65	.864
Log Miles Distance	106317	7.71	.940
Binary Contiguity	109445	.087	.283
Log Alliance Date-Join Date	109445	66.1	53.6
Additive Index			
Prev. State Alliance	109445	.838	.368
Prev. Ldr. Alliance	109445	.449	.497
Log Alliance Date-Ldr. Start	109445	6.91	7.06
Original Members	109445	.393	.488
Log Words	109445	6.97	.678
Major State	109445	.523	.499
State B Sign Date-			
State A Sign Date	109445	24.4	18.3
Same State A/B	109445	.027	.163

**Figure 3.3- Rate of Copying by Same States and Different States**



**List of Available Alliance Texts:** 2076, 2077, 3000, 3001, 3004,3005, 3006, 3007, 3008, 3010, 3015, 3025, 3027, 3028, 3029, 3030, 3031, 3032, 3033, 3034, 3035, 3036, 3037, 3038, 3039, 3040, 3041, 3042, 3043, 3044, 3045, 3046, 3047, 3048, 3049, 3052, 3053. 3055. 3056, 3057, 3058, 3059, 3060, 3063, 3064, 3065, 3066, 3067, 3068, 3069, 3070, 3072, 3073, 3074, 3075, 3076, 3077, 3078, 3080, 3081, 3082, 3083, 3085, 3087, 3088, 3089, 3090, 3091, 3092,3093, 3095, 3096, 3097, 3098, 3099, 3101, 3102, 3103, 3104, 3105, 3107, 3108, 3109, 3110, 3111, 3112, 3113, 3114, 3115, 3116, 3117, 3118, 3120, 3121, 3122, 3500, 3501,3502, 3503, 3504, 3505, 3506, 3509, 3510, 3511, 3512, 3513, 3514, 3515, 3516, 3517, 3518, 3519, 3520, 3521, 3522, 3524, 3525, 3527, 3528, 3529, 3530, 3531, 3532, 3533, 3534, 3535, 3536, 3538, 3539, 3540, 3541, 3542, 3543, 3545, 3546, 3547, 3551, 3552, 3554, 3555, 3556, 3557, 3558, 3559, 3560, 3562, 3565,3567, 3568, 3569, 3570, 3571, 3576, 3579, 3580, 3581, 3582, 3583, 3586, 3589, 3590, 3591, 3595, 3596, 3597, 3598, 3599, 3600, 3601, 3602, 3603, 3604, 3606, 3607, 3608, 3613. 3616, 3620, and 3623

## CHAPTER 4: LEARNING TO RACE: THE CASE OF THE SOVIET/AMERICAN NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

### Abstract

The fundamental aspect of an arms race is not the arms themselves, but the underlying political tension/competition that results in arms races initiation. Rather than focus in on the mechanical components of the arms race as many studies tend to do, I claim that states learn from the political context of their interactions with other states and select into arms races. They then learn from these interactions how to conduct an arms race that maximizes political objectives. I maintain that that the arms race literature often is guilty of omitted variable bias, namely, the heightened political competition that results in an arms race initiation in the first place. States then learn from this political competition and decide to engage in an arms race or not. Below, I use the Soviet/American nuclear arms race as a case study of how states learn to conduct an arms race that is fundamentally rooted in political competition founded on a lack of political trust, political/ideological/and cultural dissimilarity, a clash of status, and a faith in the logic of deterrence. In keeping with my larger theory, I demonstrate that while both the leader and state level of analyses are important in thinking about how arms races begin, the leader level variable is the least important because of the dynamics of arms races.

### Introduction

It should come as no shocking revelation that arms races emerge out of the context of political rivalry. However, it is all too apparent that international relations scholars often neglect the context of why an arms race happens in the first place. The causes of arms races (or their

continuation) are often overshadowed by the material and the causal mechanisms by which an arms race can result in war (for instance, see Wallace 1979/1982; Diehl 1983/1985a/1985b; and Sample 1997). Perhaps much of this has to do with methodological approaches and the relative ease with which material capabilities and war onset can be measured. Measuring the intensity of political rivalry between states or groups of states is something different altogether and confounds mere quantification. Another component of the focus on the material is the judgment that the security dilemma takes on a “life of its own” to create a spiraling effect in which war becomes more likely as the material power of a competitor state increases. While both of these are certainly contributing factors to the direction the literature has taken, it is important to refocus the debate to one in which the political dimension drives arms races either to a peaceful conclusion or to war. What, in other words, causes the security spiral to start in the first place and what is the fuel that keeps it going? And what can prevent that spiral from developing into a full-fledged war?

Building off my larger theory that states learn to use behaviors often associated with conflict, I present a case study of the Soviet/American arms race during the Cold War. This case is particularly intriguing and important to the social scientist because the political competition between the two blocs over the second half of the twentieth century overshadowed most other political events at the time. Likewise, the political relationship, taken within the context of new technological advancements such as nuclear weapons, meant that for the first time in history, humanity had the ability to destroy not only their enemies, but the entire world in only a few hours (Schelling 1966: 18-19; also, Mandelbaum 1979). The nuclear arms race between the Soviets and Americans may be the only “true” nuclear arms race, but it is an excellent focal point because as the stakes of an arms race increase, the more incentive there should be for the two sides to cooperate to minimize accidental war. In fact, the sheer destructiveness of these weapons

does two things: it raises the danger of accidental war and makes it certain that both sides will behave in a more cautious manner (Mandelbaum 1979:3-4). Additionally, I will demonstrate that this study is different from previous studies in that I maintain that the Soviet/American arms race is indicative of how states learn from experiential interactions with one another in an arms race.

Similarly, it is generally acknowledged that by the mid-to late 1960s, both sides were in a virtual tie with one another in terms of their military capabilities and that a war resulting from such an exchange would be too costly (Bialer & Mandelbaum 1989). As such, both sides recognized that due to the impasse brought on by their mutual technical and military capabilities, political solutions were the only avenue to peacefully end the arms race. And though there has only been one nuclear arms race and the nature of these weapons are different than conventional weapons, “the patterns of conflict within nuclear rivalries are very similar to those in previous eras [without nuclear weapons]” (Diehl 1985b).

In this paper, I argue that three distinct periods, which are bordered on either end by political events, helped to shape and direct the Cold War arms race. In these periods, we can see how the race developed in the context of political competition and how each side “poked” and “prodded” the other along the way, providing information to one another on how to conduct an arms race that did not devolve into full-scale war. These political periods are roughly as follows: the late 1940s-Cuban Missile Crisis (The Early Arms Race: the Making of an Enemy); Post-Cuban Missile Crisis to Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (Managing the Race: Institutionalizing the Game); Post-Soviet Invasion/Reagan election to Soviet Collapse (Ending the Race). While I shall focus largely on the first temporal domain, I will also address how the change in political trust and faith in the logic of deterrence shaped other periods of the Cold War.

In the context of my larger argument regarding learning in international relations, in this chapter I will primarily focus on the role of state learning from prior experience and how that helped to shape the Cold War. Given that both states constructed the other state as an existential threat, I shall largely focus on the role that the state had in learning from prior interactions with other states. While it is possible that leaders can have a greater role in forming alliances with other states, this is less likely in arms races, particularly because of the length of time that arms races take to develop. In particular, alliances can often be understood as the “quick” way of preparing for war with another state (Vasquez 1993: 176). It therefore makes sense that individual leaders will have a greater role to play in alliance making than they will in individual arms race buildups.

In fact, arms races are lengthy processes that take a great deal of money and time to be recognized as arms races. Thus, the processes that develop out of arms races are more likely to become formalized into institutional mechanisms to manage the complexities associated with arming and developing new technologies. Given the logic outlined in Chapter One, the longer a particular behavior goes on, the less likely that we are to see learning occur because the longer the time elapsed, the more likely that those lessons will no longer be relevant or the more likely they are to have been usurped by events that came later. These later events, then, are more likely to result in a change to contemporary SOPs which are the codifications of what states as organizations have learned. Similarly, this means that individual leaders are less likely to have a role to play in the learning process because, due to the intricacies and length of time involved, leaders are more likely to have been selected out by time or the response by the other state in the arms race is more likely to be answered by institutionalized norms developed by the state. As I will demonstrate below, the Carter administration initially saw détente in a different light than

did prior American and Soviet leaders. Thus, while Carter had learned different lessons from détente, these lessons were not congruent with what the state organization on both sides had learned and were therefore huge upsets to the learning process during the Cold War.

### Literature

One of the earliest works examining the issue of arms races is Richardson's (1960) study. Here, Richardson (1960) does mention grievances, combined with weapons, as being a necessary condition of war. However, he notes that they are not sufficient conditions of war, meaning that other factors, beyond mere weapons and grievances, are the root cause of war.<sup>37</sup> In fact, his only quantitative test of arms races and their result in war are inconclusive evidence of the linkage between these two phenomena. Likewise, he quickly sidesteps the causes of war and moves on to the dynamics of arms races themselves, leaving perhaps the most important question about emergence unanswered.

Fore realists in particular, arms races are a response to fear (for instance, Thucydides 1910; Morgenthau 1948; Baldwin 1958). Logically, then, states and their leaders seek to deter opponents, via spoken or implied actions (Schelling 1966: 10) and minimize that insecurity. Naturally, then, reputation matters because otherwise the signals of an intent to deter an opponent are either ignored or not recognized as deterrence. If this happens, an arms race can quickly result in either political defeat without war or a political defeat from war.

Additionally, the type of deterrence a state pursues can change over time, even if the enemy does not. For instance, in the early days of the Cold War nuclear arms race, mutually

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<sup>37</sup>In fact, Smith (1982) cites that only about half of wars categorized since 1815 were preceded by an arms race, indicating that the presence of an arms race does not cause wars but is an important contributing factor. Diehl (1983), on the other hand, finds that only 25% of arms races lead to wars, disputing Wallace (1979).

assured destruction was the deterrence policy of both powers (Perkins 1991: 57). However, as technology improved, the strategy of deterrence changed and the two sides, especially the United States, were able to adopt a counterforce policy of deterrence in which the military, rather than cities, became the primary targets (Perkins 1991: 57). This shift ensured that the ability to actually destroy the enemy's retaliatory capacity and not sheer numbers and destructive force was the most important factor in deterring one's enemy. Thus, rather than a policy of Mutually Assured Destruction, both sides were increasingly able to credibly assure the other they could destroy the other side's retaliatory capacity.

Both offensive and defensive realists tend to focus on interests as being the *sine qua non* of international politics (Morgenthau 1946 and 1948; Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001). However, using interests as a starting point assumes that all relations between states will inherently be acrimonious as states vie for physical goods. Given the dispersion of the material sources of power and the plethora of overlapping issues and interests, one should then expect to see more arms races. This reductionist view of politics, set against the back drop of the Cold War, assisted in the material turn of American academia in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, I argue that conflicting interests must be coupled with a constructed view of the opposing state as an enemy or threat to the other state. Thus, the opposing state is seen not only as a material competitor, but also an immaterial competitor (in terms of ideological, historical, cultural, economic, or religious aims).

In support of this notion, Schelling (1966) introduces an interesting anecdote that has been largely missed by the literature: "I doubt whether we can identify ourselves with Pakistan in quite the same way we can identify ourselves with Great Britain, no matter how many treaties we sign during the next ten years" (57). This anecdote is quite similar to Wendt's (1995) claim that

“500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons because the British are friends of the United States and the North Koreans are not” (73). The implication of these statements should be understood as one in which a shared negative history with another state is the foundation upon which arms races are built. It is not uncertainty or fear, but past experience, that predominately gives inertia to an arms race. A lack of political trust, an immaterial consideration, is the foundation upon which political competition is built because it is from this that states on opposite sides during an arms race begin to distrust one another because of those prior experiences.

Schelling (1966) identifies several core concepts in arms races that are testable assumptions. Deterrence is a vital concept not only in nuclear arms races, but also in conventional races. Simply put, deterrence is “a belief those people have the will to use the means” (Schelling 1966: 37). Deterrence, however, relies on reputation as a mechanism in which to clearly signal one’s dedication to deter an opponent (Schelling 1966: 95). A state that lacks reputation or credibility is a state that would be incapable of communicating both military and political intentions very well, making war or capitulation more probable. Deterrence alone, though, is surely too simplistic of an explanation for why states engage in arms races in the first place.

Similarly, uncertainty might be one of the most studied aspects of the arms race process (for instance, Rider 2013). Schelling (1966) defines this as “the sheer unpredictability of events” (94), which necessarily means that predicting or attempting to quantitatively measure uncertainty is difficult. The problem with uncertainty is that “it changes [the] character [of dangerous events]... [and results in a] manipulation of risk” (Schelling 1966: 94). Thus, while political uncertainty and competition are the root causes of arms races, uncertainty is the fuel that drives

arms races. Furthermore, uncertainty can be understood as a lack of clarity regarding where another state stands on a given issue or policy and this uncertainty is likely to be greater when prior experiences are minimal.

Lambelet (1973) claims that “an unstable arms race can end in war” (123). Likewise, Lambelet (1973) also offers (anecdotal) evidence of American involvement in wars after arms reductions, such as the Korean War (124). Here, he makes the argument that the Korean War occurred partially because the US had gone too far in disarming relative to its opponents, giving the communist side an incentive for what appeared to be a low-cost war with high returns (124-126). For Lambelet (1973), stability in an arms race (not too many weapons and not too few) is key to ensuring war does not occur. This is vital for two reasons: the signal it sends to the opposing state and the false sense of confidence or lack of confidence it instills in the leaders of the vastly superior or heavily outnumbered state.

Similarly, Wallace (1982) theorizes that races that begin with spending that is initially large are more stable over time, but those that begin subtly with low expenditures and increase over time, are more likely to be unstable. This is because certainty remains cloudy and the context of political developments has a greater impact on the “learning curve” of states, making war more likely. Jervis (1979) argues that the security dilemma is the primary impediment to international cooperation and that “the fear of being exploited... most strongly drives the security dilemma” (172). This leaves the state with several options: increase the size of the military, make more international alliances, back down, or cooperate.

Diehl (1985b) points out that the explanation of the security dilemma, a spiraling effect in which both sides feed off one another’s perceptions of insecurity, is too simplistic (343) and

states have two options: increase defense budgets or make alliances (331).<sup>38</sup> This security dilemma argues that states feel insecure and arm themselves to defend against potential future aggression. The target state, seeing these actions, begins to arm itself, thinking that the other state is building an offensive capacity against them.<sup>39</sup>

Glasser (2000) simplifies the security dilemma into a scenario in which the primary variables of interest are the offense-defensive balance and the differentiation between offensive and defensive systems (267). However, a more holistic approach to understanding the political causes of war would acknowledge that the context in which these weapons systems and this balance exists are important factors. He then goes on to cite Glasser (1994/1995 and Jervis 1970) that a state that builds clearly offensive weapons when the defensive is seen to have an obvious advantage will send a hostile signal to other states, increasing the probability of an arms race. What Glasser (1994/1995; 2000) fails to recognize is that the context of these relationships matters more than the weapons themselves (or their orientation).<sup>40</sup> States can ultimately learn to deal with the security dilemma only if their opponents are well-understood from previous interactions and both sides also recognize the threat of a spiraling arms race. In other words, prior experience with a state tells another state whether the arms build-up should be considered dangerous.

Glasser (2000) is correct, though, in noting that there are times when it is rational to engage in an arms race, though the literature largely misses the mark in assuming that arms buildup by another state (including states that are in a positive relationship with one another) is

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<sup>38</sup> Note that Diehl (1985b) ignores the other possibility of cooperation.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, see Morgenthau, 1948. Also, Gibler, Rider, and Hutchison, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that weapons systems or a one-sided military buildup cannot engender feelings of mistrust. Instead, it is merely one component in the complex political relationship between countries, along with alliances, material capabilities, GDP, size, public statements, revisionist status, etc.

inherently threatening (for instance, Buzan and Herring 1998:83). Likewise, the unpredictability of interpretations of which weapons are clearly offensive and those which are defensive means that there is a large margin of error in these calculations.

Diehl (1985a) also finds that arms races are actually highly correlated with capitulations (78.6%), meaning that in some cases, arms races actually “work” (254). In this sense, there is a beneficial political outcome to one side without a resort to war. However, problems persist with this model, as 63% of the arms races ending in capitulation began in the 1930s. Sample (1997) likewise makes a convincing argument that many of the arms race studies found in the literature have critical methodological flaws. Contrary to Diehl (1985a; 1985b), she finds that arms races are positively related to the incidence of war.

Mitzen and Schweller (2011) claim that the real problem in the onset of conflict is not the problem of uncertainty, but the issue of misplaced certainty. In other words, having too much confidence gained from prior interactions and supposing one actually knows what the other state will do is problematic. In fact, if we think of this in terms of organizational learning framework I have provided, SOPs that develop from repeated interactions are designed not to be determinative of interactions, but guides as to how to handle similar events in the future. Mitzen and Schweller (2011) argue that states, sure of their own capabilities and the intentions of their opponents, have misplaced their certainty of victory and this pathway (rather than being unsure of the one’s opponent) is a more frequent cause of war. Rider (2013), on the other hand, finds that the likelihood of a conventional arms race occurring increases as uncertainty increases, namely when vital interests (territory) are at stake or when a new leader comes to power (583-584). These findings are convincing evidence to support the claim that uncertainty increases the probability of conflict and are important for my theory that states learn from their interactions

with one another. When states do not have a previous “history” with another leader, the rules of arms races quickly become cloudy, causing uncertainty to rise. Or, when there is a new leader or a change in the stakes, the political calculus is less clear, making conflict more likely. In fact, as argued above, the leader level of analysis is only likely to matter if the state is either new or uncertainty is high (for instance, see Rider 2013). As I argue, leaders matter more when the state does not have the requisite background or experience with other states and therefore lack the ability to learn from those prior interactions. As Rider (2013) demonstrates, this is due to uncertainty. But that uncertainty fundamentally emerges from a lack of prior experience with the actor, meaning that outcomes are not as fully understood as they were with previous interactions.

Furthermore, there is debate within the literature as to the causes of arms races originating within states from domestic politics (for instance, see Buzan and Herrin 1998; Glasser 2000; Richardson 1960; Morgenthau 1948). Though there is certainly an internal component to the logic of arms races, the degree of this competition certainly varies at different times and across different regime types.

Fortunately, the literature has not completely abandoned the political causes of arms races. For instance, Rider (2009) offers an alternative explanation of arms race initiations outside the traditional realist approach of deterrence. Instead, he finds convincing evidence that leaders appreciate the high costs (both politically and economically) of engaging in arms races. As such, they are only willing to commit to engaging another state in a race if salient stakes, particularly territory, are at risk (693). Additionally, Rider (2013) finds that arms races are products of uncertainty and repeated iterations of interactions between states reveal information.

## Learning

Diehl and Crescenzi (1998), in their response to Sample (1997) argue that the field lacks a true theory of arms race initiation and the causal link to war, going so far as to argue that “very few of the authors since Richardson (1960) have developed a well-articulated theoretical argument that directly connects arms races with war” (112). Sample (1997), on the other hand, argues for a theoretical model that directly links arms races with war.

Writing from the perspective of a defensive realist, Glasser (2000) claims that “assessing the consequences of arms races therefore requires a fully developed theory of when a state should build up arms and race” (252). Though I do not advocate the particular position of realism as such, Glasser (2000) and Diehl and Crescenzi (1997) are correct in claiming that what is important within the literature is a fully-fleshed theory that incorporates the spectrum of possible casual variables in what causes an arms race. I propose that the omitted variable in the arms race literature has consistently been the failure to account for the political and historical relationship between two countries, which does the following: 1.) it permits the states a justification to arm themselves to begin with; 2.) it gives the other side the excuse to see the buildup as an existential threat and initiates the so-called security dilemma; 3.) it provides states with the opportunities to develop SOPs to deal with the other state. This final point is important because these SOPs are only assumed to emerge once states have a prior history of interactions with one another. In fact, these SOPs act as a way for both states to exhibit how they understand the other state and develop policies to deal with the state in the future. In other words, this is a codification of experiential learning.

If two of the main thinkers of the constructivist and realist camps can agree on five assumptions of realism (itself no small task),<sup>41</sup> then it stands to reason that both sides should be willing to grant that states learn from their interactions with one another and update their preferences, even within an arms race. In fact, competition between states is actually “a result of ongoing interactions both between the two states and among the states and their social context” (Hurd 2008: 303). Mere history, then, is not enough to determine the interactions between states. Instead, this history must also be taken in the context of the current political situation between rival states. As previously mentioned, Lambelet (1973) claims the Korean War occurred because the US had disarmed too much relative to its communist opponents. However, I maintain that it was not just calculations of a “quick victory” over the US that led to the crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but the context of the ongoing political relationship between the US and Soviet bloc that led to war.

And if states learn from their interactions with one another, it stands to reason that reputation matters in diminishing uncertainty and establishing certainty in the political context. Reputation comes with successfully signaling intentions about deterrence and how “far” one is willing to go to protect their interests. Reputation thus implies multiple iterations of the arms race “game” between states because these iterations relay information about the player. This ensures that current interactions viewed in the context of prior interactions between states.

Interestingly enough, Fearon (2002) appears to have uncovered what the academy had only gleaned for decades. Rational self-selection by states is the driving force in which states either select into or select out of the decision to arm and race in the first place. In arguing this, Fearon (2002) demonstrates that states that attempt to deter after an initial confrontation by

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<sup>41</sup> “That international politics is anarchic, and that states have offensive capabilities, cannot be 100 percent certain about others’ intentions, wish to survive, and are rational.” (Wendt 1995: 72).

another state will only do so to the extent that they know they can send a credible signal with their given capabilities and resolve. In other words, there is a selection effect in what cases of deterrence show up in quantitative studies: only those cases where states do not back down initially can ever be seen. Logically, then, the only states that are likely to race<sup>42</sup> will select into arms races in the first place. In other words, in a dispute between the United States and, say Indonesia, it is unlikely that Indonesia would select into an arms race precisely because they know they could not compete with the US. However, in the case of the Soviet Union and the United States, an arms race was completely possible, if not probable, because of the relative equality (even with the decimation to the Soviet Union after WW II) of the material capabilities and the potential for growth of those capabilities. Given that capabilities can be quantitatively measured but resolve cannot, a qualitative approach to understanding when and why arms races happen is crucial.

### Arms Races as a Learning Process

Various scholars have claimed that alliances act a way of both signaling intentions and coordinating with other states for desirable policy outcomes (for instance, Niou and Ordeshook 1994). We can likewise understand arms buildups as both preparations for conflict (“a step to war” rather than a cause of war; see Senese and Vasquez 2008) and an information game. With each increase in military goods, information is transmitted as to what each state finds as important for its own arsenal as well as what it thinks are the strengths of the other side (or its

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<sup>42</sup> This is similar to the problem associated with alliances in which only similar states will ally with one another and those states that are entirely dissimilar or have extremely close historical, social, and linguistic ties are unlikely to ally in the first place. As an example, under the current regimes, an alliance between North Korea and the United States is all but unthinkable.

own weakness). If these signals are picked up, it directly results in the security dilemma, particularly if the intentions of the other state are unknown. And when more information is gleaned from one's opponent, one then is better prepared to respond to those buildups with their own. Thus, a type of updating emerges which increasingly, with each step, looks like learning through interactions. And in an arms race, this knowledge comes directly from the experience gleaned by each side from previous interactions with one another.

Mansbach and Vasquez (1981) offer what they call "a new paradigm" of international relations. Though they do not specifically call their formulation learning, it has many of the components necessary in my theory of international learning. They claim that three "background" variables exist that can properly articulate and predict when political competition occurs. These are a prior pattern of interactions (assumed to be negative), status, and similarity (389). These three variables, they argue, made the Cold War and the resulting arms race possible. Using these variables, among others, I argue that the arms race between the US and USSR was an historical event in which each side poked and prodded in such a manner that they instructed one another as to what behaviors were acceptable and which were not. Each of these interactions acted as instructional tools for the other side in how to respond to the other state. And with each iteration of this game by each side, they developed policies (SOPs) and an understanding of how to deal with the other state. Thus with each iteration of the "game", each state became "better" at reacting to the other state because they had more information about the values and limits of each side.

A prior pattern of negative interactions seems to be an obvious starting point for an arms race. As mentioned above, Schelling (1966) and Wendt (1995) point out that positive relationships matter in the context in which they occur and states cannot, overnight, reconcile the

ill-will which may have previously existed between them. States that do not enjoy such a positive relationship with another state, then, can become rivals. While Mansbach and Vasquez (1981) assume this is broadly a prior pattern of interactions, it is more appropriate to term this political mistrust. This prior pattern of negative interactions, then, becomes the degree of **political trust** between the two states. The materialists have argued that increasing defense budgets, growing arsenals, and growing armies was indicative of the lead-up to war, rather than these causal mechanisms of war being the result of political mistrust. As evidence, Goertz and Diehl (1993) find that arms races are more likely to occur in the context of an enduring rivalry, indicating that the discipline has largely omitted the political variable as the lead up to arms races and war. Instead, the political trust variable is indicative of the growth in arsenals and armies. The genesis of the security dilemma lies not with the material capabilities or overlap of interests, but the political trust between the two sides. This degree of political trust, then, allows states to develop SOPs to deal with the other state, which results in an increase in state capacity to better address the issues at hand.

Misplaced certainty or uncertainty can likewise feed into this political trust variable. States who are “known” to be untrustworthy, in terms of political bargaining or being so-called “rogue” states, will not engender trust amongst other leaders. But states or leaders that are unknown likewise make opposing states uncertain of their motivations (Rider 2013).

**Status**, of course, is an important variable that must be viewed holistically in the context of the entire international system. Logically, if two states in a given dyad are not of equal status, either in material capabilities or politically, then it is highly unlikely that such a dyad would experience an arms race or even highly polarized political competition (for instance, see Fearon

2002). Status, then, is the cumulative effect of material value plus political capital and the overall collective opinion of other states in the international system.

Status, of course, is not constant. States rise and fall for numerous reasons and new powers are constantly entering the international system (for instance, Gilpin 1981; Keohane 1984; Tilly 1992). And when states rise and fall, many authors find that this is often precipitated by conflict. For instance, Allison (2015) finds sixteen incidences of a shift in hegemony since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In these shifts, twelve cases resulted in war. Of the four cases that did not end in war, all were between states that did not have a negative shared past or had learned to cooperate with one another or the nuclear balance was such that to risk war was unthinkable.

As I will further demonstrate below, this status variable assumes that both states understand and properly contextualize their own status and the status of the other state. As I argue it, the Carter administration fundamentally misunderstood the role of détente in loosening the tensions between the two states. While the Soviets and prior American administrations viewed détente as a loosening of tensions and a respect of both sides' spheres of influence, Carter misunderstood Soviet rapprochement in the context of a desire of the Soviets to liberalize their economic and politically revisionist claims.

**Similarity**, or the relative contiguity between political, social, ideological, and cultural attributes between members in a dyad, is an important predictor of whether states will engage in a war or an arms race or not. Logically, states that are ideologically dissimilar and possess conflicting interests, such as territorial issues or a desire to revise the state system, are more likely to engage in an arms race (Rider 2009). And as mentioned above, states that share some similarity are less likely to end in war.<sup>43</sup> This is a main departure point where realists or neo-

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<sup>43</sup> In Allison's (2015) dataset, the pairs of states that did not go to war are the UK and US; USSR and Japan; USSR and US; and the UK/France and Germany. In the first case, the US and UK, though once at war against each other,

realists would likely disagree. However, in my learning framework, I maintain that the past context of interactions and shared historical friendship or animosity is indicative of where states learn different lessons.

Above all, a **faith in the logic of deterrence** is what makes arms races function. This has only become more important as technology has made the destruction of the world possible. It was once possible to destroy only an opponent's military or their ability to make war. It was also possible to destroy the other sides' population, though this took considerable time and effort to accomplish. With the advent of nuclear weapons, it suddenly became possible to both destroy the enemy's military and ability to wage war, as well as their population. Even more so, it became possible to destroy other states that were not even involved in the conflict between the two sides. Faith in the logic of deterrence, then, is a way to accomplish policy goals. States seeing deterrence as a credible policy will pursue because they assume it will minimize insecurity. But, when their faith in the logic of deterrence is shaken, they will either back down or seek to cooperate with the other state because they no longer believe in their ability to deter another state. Faith in the logic of deterrence, then, is largely dependent on prior experience with the ability to deter. In other words, lessons learned from an inability (or a near-fatal inability) to deter the other state means that the state will have to reassess how it thinks it can politically deal with another state if it thinks the military means of deterrence are no longer successful or the costs are too high.

Weber (1990) goes so far as to argue that the "faith" both the US and USSR placed in nuclear deterrence has fundamentally altered the international system (55), establishing a type of

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had largely reconciled their political differences by the time the US rose to the level of hegemon. In the case of the UK/France and Germany, the so-called "European project" has pushed states closer together into a coherent form of Western style liberalism, making war unlikely.

negarchy (Deudney 2007) over an otherwise anarchic system. He then argues that the overlay of nuclear deterrence to the international system between two competitive sides enhanced the lessons the states learned from their interactions with one another. Such an overwhelming threat of annihilation encouraged each side to act carefully, with stiff penalties for those who did not learn the lessons of Cold War confrontation. He argues that learning these lessons was not one of banal and simplistic self-interest (survival), but one in which nuclear deterrence had a system-wide effect that made each side think carefully about its actions (Weber 1990: 63). Thus, a premium was placed on learning from the interactions with the other state.

Faith in the logic of deterrence, though, can only take one so far, as I will demonstrate below. When faith in the logic of deterrence falters, states must seek new ways in order to manage the political and military spheres. They can either engage in more institutional approaches such as cooperation or back-down and abandon armaments programs. Another option, related to Vasquez's (1993) steps to war hypotheses, is for the state to seek an alliance, which, of course, comes with its own drawbacks.

States having these qualities possess the necessary motive, means, and opportunity in which to engage in an arms race. This bundle of variables represents an attempt to gain leverage on the political causes of arms races and their continuation. Below, I turn to the case of the US/USSR arms race during the Cold War. While I am primarily interested in how arms races emerge from a lack of political trust, dissimilarity, similarity of status, and a faith in the logic of deterrence, I do examine how both political trust and faith in the logic of deterrence and how that changed over the history of the Cold War as the primary two states had new experiences with one another. I argue that these new experiences were "watershed moments" in which the prior lessons of interactions changed how the states interacted with one another because their trust in

the other side increased as their faith in the logic of deterrence decreased. In particular, I am interested in the interplay in how the change of the political trust both with respect to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the end of détente affected both states' faith in the logic of deterrence and the course of the relationship between the two states.

### The Early Arms Race: The Constructing of an Enemy

It is possible to conceive of the roots of the Cold War arms race going back to the Bolshevik takeover of power, but this is a misconception. I have argued above that multiple conditions must first be met in order for states to be truly considered to be opponents and for an arms race to occur. These components are: political trust, similarity, status, and faith in the logic of deterrence. Below, I argue how each of these variables began to shift at the end of the Second World War and not before. The shift of these variables, together, made the Cold War and with it, the nuclear arms race, an unavoidable historical fact. In order to first race against one another, each side has to initially construct the opposing state as a dissimilar entity of similar status that is politically untrustworthy. Likewise, this construction of the enemy must continue throughout the arms race, though it can change and be updated as political events occur. However, this construction of the other state as an enemy and the degree to which that trust was shaped was fundamentally dependent on what each state learned from its interactions with the other state or what they failed to learn from the other state. These components, coupled with a faith in the logic of nuclear deterrence, are the political components that cause an arms race to emerge. While I am concerned with their emergence, I will also focus on how political trust and faith in the logic of deterrence changed over the course of the Cold War, which, in turn, affected the outcome of the Cold War arms race.

## Political Trust

To begin, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States were powers to be reckoned with in the interwar-years. In fact, the global distribution of power at that time was decidedly multipolar, with no one state truly the leading power. Instead of finding the roots of competition in the fallout from October 1917, I shall focus the scope of my analysis to the timeframe at the end of the Second World War. After the defeat of Germany and Japan, it was clear that the two global powers were the Soviet Union and the United States. Both similarly possessed the necessary prestige after the defeat of Nazi Germany in Europe and imperial Japan in the Pacific theater. Both states also initially were uncertain of how much trust they placed in the other side, leading each state to initially pursue a policy of *rapprochement*. This policy of *rapprochement*, however, did not last for long because the experiences on both sides were fundamentally rooted in a lack of political trust.

The pursuit of *rapprochement* began even before the Second World War was fully over. As allies of convenience during the war, it seemed possible that the two sides would be able to reconcile their political and ideological differences, which stemmed from different political and economic structures. The Soviets and Americans, along with Great Britain, met at Yalta to discuss the post-world order. Though earlier conferences involving the “Big Three” had occurred, it was the Yalta Conference that was the first to primarily concern itself with what world order would look like after the war. At this conference, agenda items included the partition of Germany, the promise of free elections in Poland and the re-establishment of statehood, and the topic of reparations. This meeting was the first preliminary attempt by the leaders of the major powers to establish the rules and norms of the post-war system.

The Potsdam Conference, which occurred less than three months after Nazi Germany's capitulation, was the formal agenda-setting conference that established the order of the post-war world. Technical issues dealt with the surrender of the Japanese, the division of Germany into zones of occupation, the demarcation lines in Poland, the forced expulsion of Germanic peoples outside of Germany, and the issue of reparations.

It was during this time in which the pattern of interactions between the Soviets and Americans became decidedly negative and it is from that which the seeds of mistrust grew. Though the initial ending of the Second World War appeared to be positive in the sense that both sides initially pursued policies of rapprochement, it quickly became apparent that neither side was willing to allow the other side to take the mantle of leadership in global politics and that the period from 1944-1947 highlighted the deteriorating relationship between the two superpowers (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981: 339). Both sides, in fact, learned that the other side wanted the role of leadership on the international stage. But since the two sides were diametrically dissimilar, political distrust emerged.

However, the policy of rapprochement was publicly and officially codified with the formation of the United Nations in 1945. The United Nations is most often seen as an attempt to institutionalize liberal norms at the international level, particularly with the Charter of the United Nations and later with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the United Nations also became an organ that was lived in the shadows of the dispute between the global powers. Additionally, it became a highly institutionalized organ for settling and bargaining about political disputes around the world.

Here, it was envisioned, that the Security Council would provide the role of agenda setting and formally institutionalizing the rules of the post-war world. The active role of the

Security Council, it was believed, would provide political solutions to political crises and confrontations as they emerged around the world. However, the reality of the ineffectiveness of the Security Council in establishing rules and norms during the Cold War quickly became apparent. The recurring crises in Taiwan and its straits, the almost perennial crises in Berlin (particularly in 1948 and 1961), as well as Soviet abstention over the China question, beginning in January 1950 (Zickel 1991), highlighted the inability of the Security Council to come to any absolute solution to a crisis involving one of the major powers. However, with each one of these crises, the Soviets and Americans learned more about their opponent's values and their political mistrust grew deeper.

Furthermore, the topic of nuclear weapons was controversial before WW II had even ended. The Americans, who were leading the charge in the development of nuclear weapons, had to decide whether or not they would share their new technology with their wartime allies. The physicist Niels Bohr met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to push for a plan to share the technology between the victorious allies (Mandelbaum 1979: 6). Bohr recognized the power of the weapons and the destructiveness they could unleash in war. As a liberal, he wanted to reconcile the two worlds: the political, which was unstructured and anarchic and the scientific, which was indifferent to Soviet or American possession of the bomb. And the movement to share nuclear technology did not end with scientists. Both policymakers and politicians actively considered the option of sharing nuclear technology.

Even President Truman spoke with the British and Canadian prime ministers early in the post-war timeframe about having a UN committee take over the nuclear issue and control the weapons for all states (Mandelbaum 1979: 25). However, Gromyko, the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union at the UN, countered with a proposal to ban the development

and use of nuclear weapons in war, as the Soviets were unwilling of trusting liberal states and institutions with the responsibility of sharing nuclear secrets because their experience with the liberal institutions had been decidedly negative.

But international control of atomic weapons and their technology did not occur. Both the Soviets and Americans were hesitant to have an international body control the weapons (meaning the possibility of institutionalized cooperation, as envisioned by Jervis (1979) was out). The Americans, perhaps rightly so, were hesitant to give up their monopoly on nuclear technology to an as of yet unproven international body of states (presumably the United Nations). The Soviets, of course, were perhaps right to hesitate with respect to the liberal mechanism of cooperation between states, given their status as a revisionist power of the international system, particularly the economic nature of the system. And the American organization charged with overseeing the possibility of transferring nuclear weapons to UN control fell apart a month after the Soviets detonated their first nuclear device in September 1949.

But the American hope for a way to control nuclear weapons and to come to some sort of easing of tensions between the two sides continued into the 1950s at the height of the Cold War. The United States' Atoms for Peace Proposal under Eisenhower was a way to attempt to reconcile East and West through a peaceful exchange of nuclear technology. The scientific scheme, however, did not have any substantial bleed-over with the Soviet Union and, in fact, most likely contributed to a heightening of tensions between the two sides, as it began the proliferation of fissile material and technology to other states, causing trust between the two sides to further dissipate. As such, the peaceful exchange of nuclear technology did not bridge the trust gap between the two sides.

The options for political trust were not merely confined to discussions about exchanges of technology for this new and dangerous weaponry. Political assessments of the other side occurred early in the post-war world. As evidence of this, in NSC 68 (1950), President Truman directed the National Security Council to reexamine the relationship with the USSR and recommend what course of action should be taken to deal with the Soviet situation after multiple political confrontations and disagreements, particularly in post-war Europe. NSC 68, then, was prompted out of this shared negative history between the two states and a desire by the US to develop the SOPs and policies to deal with the Soviet problem. NSC 68 (1950) paints a picture of the United States as a state whose goal it is to provide freedom and liberty to other countries of the world, whereas the Soviet Union's goal is to dominate and exercise absolute power.<sup>44</sup> With this document and the preceding behavior of the Soviet Union in occupied territories, the line had clearly been drawn that official US policy was to treat the Soviet motives as suspect. Thus, the Soviets were thought to be opposing the interests of the United States because the experience between the two actors demonstrated (to American policymakers) that the two sides were incompatible and the Soviets were untrustworthy. Experience had taught the Americans that the Soviets held incompatible world views and, given the context of prior interactions, were not to be trusted.

NSC 68 (1950) even goes so far as to argue that it is not only in the interests of the United States to confront the Soviets and to engage them, but the responsibility of the US to lead the Soviets to keep an atomic war from occurring (9). In directly tying American leadership over the Soviet Union to the arms race and the ideological divide between the two states, NSC 68

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<sup>44</sup> In fact, this reinforces a point made by Perkins (1991), "on the group level there are also habits of mind—a kind of groupthink—that the arms race promotes and that, in turn, promote the arms race. The arms buildups can distort reality through the tendency of groups, especially groups in hostile competition, to exaggerate their own virtues and the vices of the enemy" (162).

(1950) advocated a strong leadership position be taken against the Soviets so that the arms race, which emerged from this political tension, did not end in war. Thus, there was political advocacy at the highest levels of government for the US to lead the USSR in the arms race, ensuring a war did not happen. Likewise, under Eisenhower's Solarium project, Task Force B determined that "to deter communist military forces from advancing anywhere beyond (the) extended line, there was to be an explicit threat of "general war"-that is to say, of a nuclear response by the United States directly against the Soviet Union" (Murray & Sinnreich 2014: 366). Thus, the stated policy of the US during the arms race stemmed from the lack of political trust in the other side, while at the same time maintaining that the only way to defeat the Soviets was to "lead the way" in the arms buildup.

While policymakers relied heavily on assessments by academics and thinktanks to assess the motives of the Soviets and the relative size/capabilities of their forces, many scholars have been critical of these early attempts to measure the threat posed by the Soviet Union to the United States. Robin (2003) criticizes the methodological construct of post-war social sciences and the bleed over effect this had in constructing the Soviet Union as an inherent enemy of the United States. In particular, he points out the gross over characterizations of Soviet power as "rumors" that assisted in making the Cold War much hotter than it had to be. In particular, he criticizes government and scholarly backed behaviorist studies of the Cold War as painting an unrealistic view of the enemy and having a "pervasive contempt for complexity, the uncritical acceptance of contemporary cultural mores, and the denial of its intellectual limitations (Robin 2003: 5). Science itself, then, was involved in how the US constructed the enemy as an untrustworthy adversary.

Robin (2003) goes on to point out that the social scientists who encouraged such an understanding of the arms race were effective because the communist threat was, unlike previous nationalism, not spatially defined (42), due to the message of communism and its ability to transcend political borders, races, ethnicities, and the sexes. Similarly, the ability of planners in government to reduce the Soviet threat to one of expansionism and ruthlessly calculating had a calming effect on government, as it maintained it could deal with the Soviet threat (Robin 2003: 42). Robin (2003) also maintains that scholars and policymakers in the US both “reduc(ed) the enemy to a ruthless, expansionist, predictable calculator, rather than a complex adversary, had a distinctly calming effect on planners” (48). Logically, then, realism came to be the “natural, recurrent, inevitability” among planners at Rand Corporation, one of the earliest and most important anti-Soviet think-tanks (Robin 2003: 48). Nonetheless, it became historical fact that policymakers and many citizens within the United States constructed the Soviets as an enemy precisely because they did not trust Soviet motives and moves in occupied territories in Eastern Europe. So from policy leaders to social scientists to politicians to academia there was a broad mistrust of Soviet motives and this, coupled with dissimilarity, status, and faith in the logic of deterrence led to an emergence of the arms race.

#### Status

While Murray and Sinnreich (2014: 360-361) maintain that NSC 68 overblew the Soviet threat, the reality was that policymakers began to perceive the Soviets as an existential threat to the United States, particularly due to their growing strength. Another view is that NSC 68 (1950) rightfully articulates that in the span of a generation, world order had shifted (4). It cites

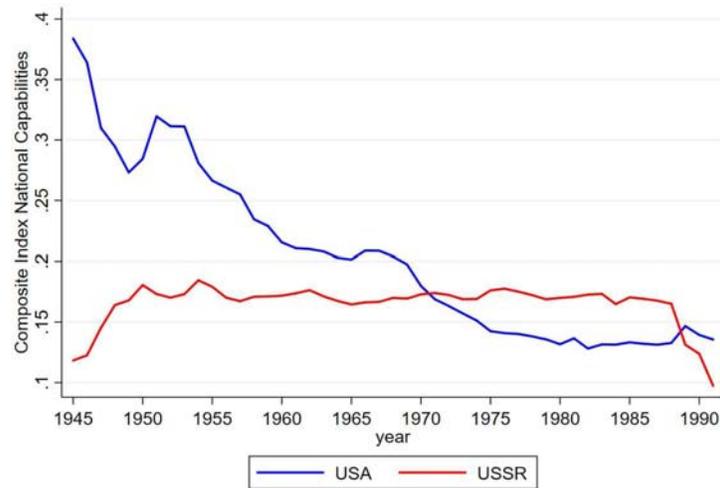
two global wars, the collapse of five empires, and the revolutions in Russia and China as being watershed events that brought in the United States as the predominant hegemon.

However, at this stage of the Cold War, it was clear that the Soviet Union's power and relative status was increasing. After the Second World War, the Soviet Union was in virtual shambles: approximately 20 million Soviet citizens had died, fully 1/3 of the total killed in the entire conflict. And while the US had approximately 132 million citizens in 1940 (the year before war), they had approximately 141 million in 1946, whereas the Soviet Union had 194 million citizens in 1940 and 174 million in 1946 (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972 [V. 5.0]). Thus the toll on the Soviet Union, across a variety of measures, was considerably greater than the toll on the United States. Coupling this with the fact that the US could not sustain the large military expenditures to deter the Soviets as it had during WW II, American leaders (particularly Eisenhower) were open to using nuclear weapons as a "cheap" alternative to large standing armies, with Eisenhower going so far as to openly discuss nuclear weapons in public on numerous occasions (Murray and Sinnreich 2014: 381).

While the US initially enjoyed a large power advantage over the Soviet Union (Figure 1), this lead began to fall as the Soviet Union recovered after WWII and the US found itself involved in the Vietnam War. At the end of World War II, the US military drawn down was swift, with an increase in military strength corresponding to conflict in Korea and remaining surprisingly steady throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. But by 1971, the Soviet Union had overtaken the US on the Composite Index of National Capabilities scale. In fact, in 1945, the United States possessed 38% of the world's total power (Figure 2), according to the National Material Capabilities dataset (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972 [V. 5.0]). When this factor was

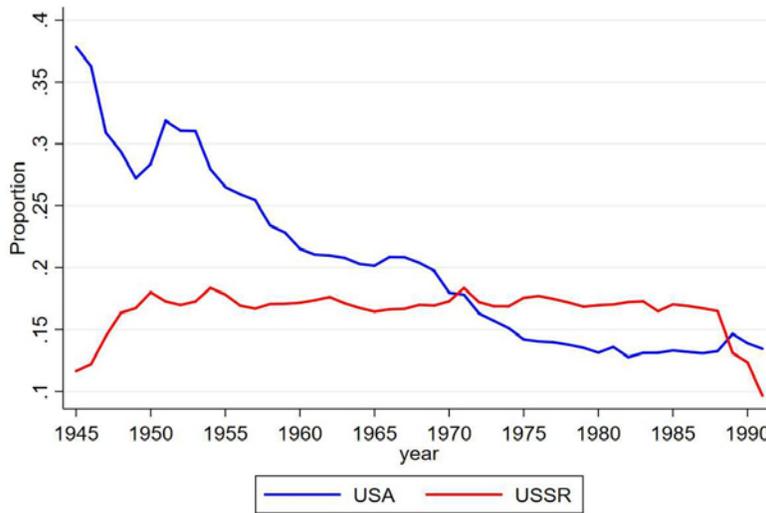
compared to the Soviet's relatively low 11.6% share of global power, it is not surprising that after the defeat of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union saw the United States as an existential threat.

**Figure 4.1-US/USSR CINC Scores**



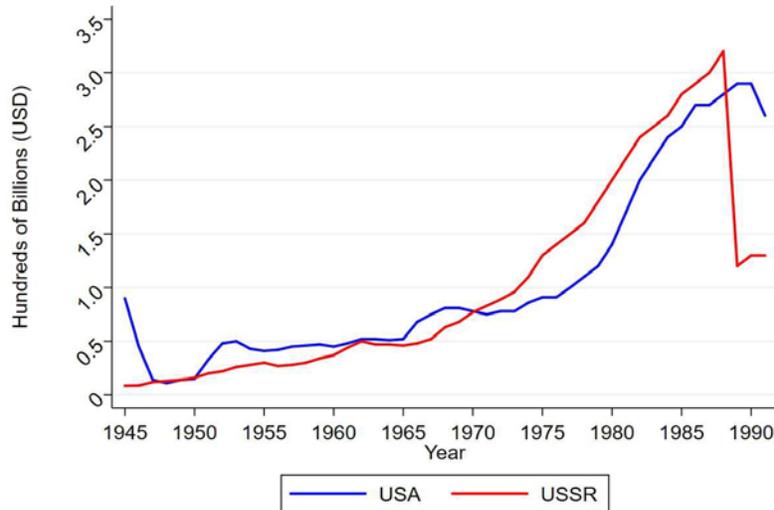
However, the power advantage enjoyed by the United States began to decline as the US drew down to peace-time strength. The US also enjoyed higher overall industrial output at the beginning of the Cold War and maintained this advantage for the duration of the Cold War. By the same token, the Soviet Union's low point was obviously during the war and immediately after, as there had been a huge amount of deaths, a large population movement, and even the movement of factories to areas deep within the Soviet Union, far away from advancing German units.

**Figure 4.2-Share of Global Power**



In terms of military expenditures, the US and Soviet armies enjoyed relatively equal investments in security. With the end of the war, the US rapidly began to draw down the size of its military, and, likewise, its military expenditures. However, the Soviet Union continued to grow its military expenditures such that they were spending approximately \$200 million more dollars (in contemporary currency) on its military by 1948 than the United States was (Figure 3). However, given the difference in both nations' economies, it became apparent early on that the United States was able to spend less money and achieve higher quality technology, while also being able to more seamlessly absorb the costs of security. On the other hand, the structure of the Soviet economy made the costs of defense and “keeping up” with the United States increasingly difficult.

**Figure 4.3-Military Expenditures**



Thus, while at the beginning of World War II the two states were more similar in terms of output, the costs of the war certainly affected the Soviet Union more than the United States. And while the United States enjoyed less economic hardship immediately prior to the outbreak of war (even with the Great Depression), the cost of the war was greater on the Soviets, even though they both emerged as the predominate global powers after the defeat of Nazi Germany. When one couples this with the other elements required in this framework, these two states thus had a greater probability of engaging in an arms race with one another because the conditions of similarity of status were present. As Fearon (2002) illustrates in crises, deterrence, a foundation of arms races, can only occur when two states are of relatively equal parity, otherwise one of the states will “select out” of attempting to deter the other state.

However, for states to engage in an arms race with one another, there must be a degree of disagreement over the status of both actors in the international system. Both sides, in other words, must see themselves as the legitimate heir to status in the region or between the two states or over a given issue. Thus in the example provided by the US/Soviet arms race, both states saw themselves as the more powerful of the two states that was capable of deterring the other state

militarily as a way to fulfill its political objectives. Arms races are therefore reliant upon a fundamental disconnect between perceptions of status and actual status between the two states. In the case of the Cold War arms race, both states saw themselves as the premier “indispensable” state that was the only state capable of deterring the other politically dissimilar state (see below). However, both states were relatively equal in terms of status measured as power. Both states had strong militaries, strong economic resources from continental-sized polities, large population bases, and, at least initially, relatively equal technological capacities. Thus this disconnect between reality of status and perceptions of status is important for how an arms race develops between two actors.

### Similarity

It should be no revelation to the casual reader that the Soviet Union and the United States represented fundamentally different political and economic systems. The United States, as a capitalist country with strong democratic institutions, was the natural enemy of all that was Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks had come to power after czarist Russia lost its monopoly on power in February 1917. Revolting against the provisional government in the October Revolution, a civil war was triggered, in which Western powers, including the United States, intervened. However, this conflict did not last. Though tension between the two sides was high throughout the 1920s and 1930s, this did not necessarily mean an arms race emerging from political acrimony would occur.

For some, “security is a highly variable concept” (Mandelbaum 1979: 9). To many revisionist Bolsheviks of the old order, security meant exporting communism internationally, so that the movement would spread and clash with capitalism, the mortal enemy of the Bolsheviks.

Though opinions on this varied considerably, part of the initial goal of the Bolsheviks was the exportation of communist revolution, leading to similarity between all states along economic terms and the ultimate elimination of states. While this was at the foundation of many Soviets' political beliefs, it also colored their conception of security. In this concept of security, official state policy became one of preserving both the regime and, initially exporting revolution to other states. Some thought that this exportation would ensure that the Soviet state would be secure. However, throughout the course of the Cold War, Soviet views on security began to change to a view that favored less aggressive expansion and more coexistence with the West.

To the United States, security meant several things. First, it was the preservation of itself as the new global hegemon. Second, it also meant the stability of the international system, which was decidedly capitalist. Finally, it also meant the creation and the spread of liberalism through various international institutions.<sup>45</sup> These institutions include organizations such as the United Nations, the Security Council, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bretton Woods monetary system. And these institutions stood in direct conflict with much of what the Soviet Union despised about the capitalist and democratic West.

Thus, while at face value the states seemed quite different and official state policy was beginning to take shape to indicate these stark differences, public support had to be garnered to solidify the construction of the other state as a dissimilar enemy. To this end, George Kennan's "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" appeared in the July 1947 edition of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, marking a watershed moment in American foreign relations with the Soviet Union. Kennan (1947) opens with a critique of the Soviet circumstances and ideological system, going so far as to claim that these two factors make confrontation with the West increasingly likely. It was in

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<sup>45</sup> For more on this, see Kissinger (1994). Likewise, see Keohane (1984) for an understanding of institutions as a way in which to manage hegemonic decline and continue the liberal tradition.

this nexus between ideology and the Russian experience that allowed communism to take hold (Kennan 1947) and it is ideology, he argues, that compels the Soviets to have a desire to export revolution. At the very least, this means “that there can never be on Moscow's side any sincere assumption of a community of aims between the Soviet Union and powers which are regarded as capitalist” (Kennan 1947). In its most extreme form, it meant the exporting of revolution and direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. Plainly put, Kennan (1947) argues that the Soviets are “rivals” that can be dealt with. But, more importantly, he identifies them publicly as a dissimilar state.

Though it is well known that Kennan was a staunch advocate of the doctrine of containment,<sup>46</sup> it is usually unacknowledged that he advocated a policy of leadership, or teaching, of the Soviet Union how to confront one another without devolving into a full-scale war. This is because Kennan (1947) argued that the Soviet Union would be “difficult to deal with.” Kennan argues for a doctrine of containment with an eye towards the Soviets’ understanding of their own prestige and the impact this could have on its relationship with the US. Causally, he argues, the Soviets were likely to “poke” and “prod” the West in an attempt to find weaknesses and spread communism to new and fertile ground. The policy of containment, as Kennan describes it, should shift continually to meet Soviet aggression head on to delimit what actions are acceptable and what actions are not. This policy, as he describes it, sounds like an active learning experience. As an opponent state makes a move, either political or militarily, the other side adjusts its actions to meet with the new challenges posed by the other state. And if a move is considered so destabilizing that it is a fundamental challenge to security, the state must

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<sup>46</sup> Though he later was to advocate against active containment and claim that the United States should instead pursue a policy that sought to impose political and (importantly) economic pressure on the Soviets, in the belief that they would not be able to “keep up” with the West (Stephanson 1989).

successfully signal that the change in behavior is unacceptable to prevent more unacceptable actions from occurring or to keep the situation from devolving into outright war. Fundamentally, this is a learning by experience process.

Historically, the two countries do, of course, share some similarities. Both countries are continental sized with large populations (from different ethnicities and nationalities). Likewise, both states have abundant natural resources they exploited in industrialization and in the Cold War. However, given the political and economic differences between the two states, these similarities precluded any type of cooperation

Likewise, Soviet leaders began to realize it was suicidal “to predicate Soviet doctrine and extension of the Leninist premise of “frightful collision” between the socialist and capitalist systems” (Thompson 2012: 270). Therefore, Soviet leaders after Stalin began to realize that direct confrontation with the West was too costly and while they did openly oppose one another on political matters, both sides increasingly began to determine that the way to “defeat” the other state was to engage them by increasing their preparedness of weapons systems and sheer military numbers in order to decrease the perceived threat they felt from the other states.

### Faith in the Logic of Deterrence

Mandelbaum (1979) claims that the advent of nuclear weapons fundamentally altered the three questions states must address when linking grand strategy with the desired outcomes. These are: 1.) what is the political purpose; 2.) does the military force support those purposes; 3.) how will force be used once hostilities break out (8-9). The advent of nuclear weapons meant that the two sides had to develop (and learn along the way) what this new grand strategy would be. The price of success was great, as the two sides fought for moral and political sway in third-

world countries across the globe. But the price of failure was even greater. Nuclear weapons created a new paradox: due to the destructive power of these new weapons and the ability of the other state to retaliate if their forces survived, the weapons were essentially useless because of their destructive power. And while both sides developed strategies to manage this problem, according to Mandelbaum (1979), the task of developing a strategy that would deal with the problem of nuclear weapons and the appropriate diplomatic tools rested with the United States (18) and “the Soviet Union has largely followed the American lead”.

Likewise, scholars maintain that the prior experiences of both states colored their decision to engage the other state in an arms race. In fact, Murray and Sinnreich (2014) claim “that one can insightfully evaluate American grand strategy in the Cold War in terms of generic factors of success gleaned from previous big wars” (351).<sup>47</sup> In other words, the United States had learned from prior interactions with other states during war what it thought would be necessary for success about another state it perceived to be its new enemy. While this does not speak as to the validity of whether those lessons were the “correct” lessons, it does demonstrate that the prior experience of the US helped to dictate its course of action with respect to the Soviet Union.

In engaging the Soviets throughout the arms race throughout the early stages of the Cold War (to the mid-1960s), the US was scientifically and thus, in terms of military technology, superior. Even more than mere quantitative superiority with respect to weapons systems, the United States largely exercised qualitative superiority over the Soviet Union throughout this timeframe. This quantitative and qualitative superiority was largely true for the US throughout the arms race (except in sheer number of nuclear weapons in the late sixties onwards). And due

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<sup>47</sup> The authors go on to maintain that the most important part of the Cold War was the early stage in which American assessments of the Soviet Union helped policymakers to understand how it viewed the USSR as an enemy and how it developed policies to deal with what it saw as an existential threat Murray and Sinnreich (2014:356.)

to this quantitative and qualitative superiority, it is more likely that American developments of new weapons systems would lead the way and affect the policies regarding nuclear balance and deterrence.

This early quantitative and qualitative superiority in terms of nuclear weapons and delivery systems meant that for every action taken by the US in terms of building up its arsenal, the Soviets would be more likely to follow suit, given the difference in their strategic posture. While the US was the first to develop nuclear weapons in 1945, it was also the first to “marry” them into strategic forces that operated largely independently from other forces within the USAF structure. The US was also the first state to develop Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and to perfect the precise delivery mechanisms that became standard on later nuclear weapons.

In one of the first hints at nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, the United States forward deployed B-29s to Great Britain during the 1948 Berlin crisis, the same type of plane that had dropped the bombs in Japan (Perkins 1991: 10). The crisis had begun when the Soviets cut off the Western allies’ access to the Western sections of Berlin, the US was quick to lead the way with the subtle threat of nuclear warfare. Though it is unknown if the Soviets knew whether or not these bombers were not nuclear capable, the message was clear. This incident marks the first point during the Cold War in which the US openly displayed its resolve in defending its allies and the lengths to which it was willing to go to protect its interests. Similarly, it set the tone for the early stage of the Cold War (up to the Cuban missile crisis) where both states openly and publicly expressed how far they were willing to go to protect their interests.

In terms of perceptions regarding the nuclear capabilities of the Soviet Union, George Kennan hypothesized that the Soviets would have two hundred nuclear weapons by 1954 (five

years after the detonation of their first device) (Murray and Sinnreich 2014: 362-362). As a response, then, the United States determined that it would need to build up its own reserves to deal with this potential threat, which would naturally be picked up by Soviet intelligence officers, meaning that the Soviets would respond by building up their own forces.

However, Mandelbaum (1979) maintains that the United States did not develop a fully comprehensive nuclear strategy for several years because the “nuclear age had not fully arrived” (41/45). Instead, it took the development of nuclear weapons by a rival state and the beginnings of amassing an arsenal for the United States to fully understand the problem that was before the world and the threat posed by an opposing state with a nuclear capable force. It took a lack of political trust (which had to be constructed by both the United States and the Soviet Union), a clash in terms of status and similarity, and a faith in the logic of deterrence for this arms race to begin.

Likewise, by 1954, the United States had installed nuclear-capable weapons in Europe and the Soviets followed suit in 1957 (Perkins 1991: 11). By leading the way of signaling its intentions of protecting its allies, the US sent a signal to Moscow that raised the stakes of deterrence. These weapons in place within Europe meant shorter response time and caused both sides’ faith in the logic of deterrence to be shaken. With such short response time (as will be seen later during the Cuban missile crisis), decision making to respond and launch a counterattack became severely hampered. Similarly, though it had been implied by members of the US military, the decision to rely on nuclear weapons in Europe as a deterrent against the Soviets was becoming increasingly clear. The decision by the US to rely so heavily on nuclear deterrence was a logically “cheap” alternative to large-standing conventional armies to deter the Soviets in Europe and elsewhere. By relying so heavily on nuclear deterrence, the US forced the

Soviets' hand and continually increased their involvement in the arms race as a matter of national pride and strategy. However, given the large economic base of the United States, it was apparent from the beginning that the Soviets would be unable to financially keep up in the arms race against the United States,<sup>48</sup> meaning that the United States would be able to lead the Soviets. The United States was also afforded the opportunity to be more flexible in the weapons systems it chose, while the Soviets were forced to be choosier with the trade-off between new weapons systems and the subsequent drain it had on the rest of the economy.

For instance, the US began to rely more heavily on the presence of tactical nuclear weapons in the European theater to deter the Soviets from conventional attack. The intent of these weapons systems was to purposefully blur the distinction between general nuclear war and isolated incidents of tactical nuclear warfare, implying that the use of tactical weapons could prove to escalate to all out nuclear war. In turn, the Soviets followed the American lead and were forced to rely more on tactical weapons to deter the US (Perkins 1991: 93-94), though the Soviets were also forced to field large and expensive conscripted armies.

For the Americans, the perceived missile defense gap of the mid-1950s (and the earlier, though less known, bomber gap) solidified American respect of faith in the logic of deterrence. In believing that they were outnumbered by superior forces, the United States dedicated more money and resources to the development of more weapons systems and new technology to deliver those weapons deep and accurately into Soviet territory.

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<sup>48</sup> Kennan (1947) even goes so far as to argue that this should be one of the primary goals of containment. Kennan later went on to argue as head of Policy and Planning at the State Department that his article had been misconstrued and that he actually advocated for a more flexible response to Soviet aggression in an attempt to slowly “bleed” them drive over the long-term. These statements, however, were likely influenced by outside events such as US engagement during the Korean War.

These necessary components allowed both sides to develop what they thought was the grand strategy linking political, military, economic, and ideological ends. Linking the arms race to political and ideological victory during the Cold War became more important than ever, given the destructive power of nuclear weapons. The task of developing the concept of deterrence and massive retaliation fell largely to the United States. With the largest economy and a democratic society weary of war, the United States was willing to pursue the “cheap” option of nuclear deterrence in order to check the Soviet Union. But in so doing, the United States further encouraged the Soviets to build up their own nuclear arsenals, arguably increasing the likelihood of war, at minimum making it deadlier were it to ever occur. Now, I turn to two different phases of the Cold War, which stemmed from a lack of political trust of the other state and how these interactions challenged each state’s faith in the logic of nuclear deterrence.

### Managing the Race: Institutionalizing the Game Political Trust

#### Political Trust

The Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the Soviet Union had placed Mid-Range Nuclear Missiles in Cuba, was a watershed moment during the Cold War. It is arguably the closest both sides came to war, in which nuclear weapons would have almost certainly been used. But more than the Soviet’s backdown in Cuba, the Cuban Missile Crisis signaled a shift in which both sides realized how close they had come to war. Thus, they were willing to set aside their lack of trust in one another to meet at the negotiating table to come to agreements on how they could manage the arms race so that it did not devolve into outright war.

At its core, the Cuban Missile Crisis was about balance and the clear US signal was that this move by the Soviets was an unacceptable tilting of the balance that the Americans would not

tolerate (Betts 2010: 109). Furthermore, while many historians and social scientists view the event as an American victory with the Soviet back down, the US did concede some points to the Soviets (Betts 2010: 142), such as the removal of Jupiter missiles in Turkey and a pledge to not invade Cuba. Both concessions and the removal of nuclear weapons from Cuba indicated that both states were willing to place more trust in the other side and come together to the meet one another at the negotiating table. In fact, the lessons of the Cuban missile crisis taught both sides that they were incapable of perfectly managing the arms race between the two states, resulting in a decrease in both sides' faith in the logic of deterrence.

While the Soviet Union had initially sought to export revolution beyond Soviet borders, it became increasingly clear to Soviet leaders that its foreign policy should not be predicated on the premise of an inevitable collision between the forces of capitalism and communism (Thompson 2012).<sup>49</sup> And thus, while both sides competed against one another for the upper hand during the Cold War, Thompson (2012) claims that even though both states did not fully trust one another, they were willing to trust one another enough after the crisis such that it “sobered” both sides and they began to talk about banning and coming to agreement on the need to curb nuclear weapons (276). It is also after this that Soviets began to push for arms limitations and treaties (Thompson 2012: 284). In fact, Thompson (2012) goes so far to claim that the SALT I treaty served to “structure rather than curb the arms race, as both the Soviet Union and the United States sought to improve the quality and survivability of their nuclear arsenals” (284).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Thompson (2012) goes on to claim that Soviet leaders learned it was suicidal “to predicate Soviet doctrine and extension of the Leninist premise of “frightful collision” between the socialist and capitalist systems” (270).

<sup>50</sup> The author goes on to further maintain that the Soviets learned to use bargaining and arms agreements to their overall strategic advantage in two ways: reduction of tensions and hold back Western buildup and technological superiority (Thompson 2012: 284).

## Faith in the Logic of Deterrence

After the Cuban Missile crisis, both sides recognized how close they had come to war. This inability to control the situation shook the foundation of faith in the logic of deterrence in both states. Lambelet (1973) notes that there are two different kinds of arms races: those which are fundamentally unstable due to the reaction of the opposing state and the size of one's military expenditures relative to total economic output. On the other hand, there are stable arms races, in which the cost of weapons relative to total economic output is manageable and the reaction of the opposing state is learned from experience and the state in question can adequately predict reactions and are thus less likely to take risks.

However, the Cuban Missile Crisis was viewed as an existential threat to the United States, with President Kennedy going so far as to claim that:

*Nuclear weapons are so destructive and ballistic missiles are so swift, that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to peace.*

*For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States, recognizing this fact, have deployed strategic nuclear weapons with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which insured that these weapons would not be used in the absence of some vital challenge. [Kennedy 1962]*

With this statement, it became obvious that in Kennedy's mindset, prior interactions between the Soviets and the United States were predicated on an understanding that neither side should upset the balance of power too much because, given the destructive capability of nuclear weapons, neither could be certain of the other side's reaction if there was a fundamental challenge to the relative parity between the two sides. And while Bueno de Mesquita and

Lalman (1988) maintain that “war can occur even when the leaders of the two nations know that they can gain more by negotiating than by fighting” (273), it is possible with a fast sequence of events during the crisis could have plausibly led to war. Both states, then, had their faith in the ability to deter the other politically was shaken because they realized how quickly they could lose control of military events.

No other event during the Cold War approached the seriousness of the Cuban Missile Crisis. To this end, I make several claims about how the Cuban Missile Crisis shook both sides’ opinion of the nuclear arms race and the balance of power between the two states. These are: 1.) both sides recognized the qualitative parity with the other; 2.) both sides recognized a nuclear war was unwinnable; 3.) both sides recognized only political solutions existed to the conflict; 4.) both sides recognized the other’s spheres of influence 5.) both sides recognized their own structural domestic problems.

To point one, by this time both states had the ability to deliver nuclear weapons to any part of the world, by aircraft, land-based nuclear weapons, and by Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). The advent of SLBMs in the late 1950s had an increasingly stabilizing effect on the arms race because these weapons systems were essentially “indestructible”, thus undercutting the idea that a massive retaliatory strike could negate the other side’s weapons (Fieldhouse and Taoka 1989: 84/87).

By the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis, both sides acknowledged the problems that had emerged with the logic of deterrence. As evidence of both sides lacking the faith in the logic of deterrence they had once been so sure of, both sides agreed to the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, less than one year after the Cuban Missile Crisis. This event foreshadowed a greater desire to attempt to manage the arms race, as both sides saw how vulnerable they were to nuclear

weapons. This, in fact, was the underpinning of détente, which emerged with a lessening of tensions in the late 1960s. Later agreements between the two states came with the signing the Outer Space Treaty in 1967 (banning weapons in space), the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 (prohibiting the transference of weapons to other states), and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 1972 (the banning of protections against nuclear weapons).

What is illustrative of all these agreements is that both sides agreed to come together to limit and manage the possibility of conflict between the Soviets and Americans. As stated, the Cuban Missile Crisis forced both states to realize that events could quickly get out of hand and that both states needed to manage the race to ensure that war did not break out. This managing of the race would continue until both sides could come to a political solution that would reduce the competition between the two states and thus decrease the probability of conflict.

## Ending the Race: Détente and the End of the Cold War

### Political Trust

While some scholars place the end of détente at the feet of Reagan, other scholars argue that détente ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. For instance, Thompson (2012) maintains that détente died because the US feared Soviet buildup of bigger missiles and the placement in strategic locations, and Soviets disliked US moving nukes to Europe and elsewhere and the superior technology in things like cruise missiles (285). However, he maintains that issues related to human rights and Brezhnev extending control of Soviet ideology to states outside of its traditional sphere of influence (Afghanistan) were the catalysts that ended the lessening of tensions between the two sides (Thompson 2012: 285-286).

However, I maintain that détente ended because US President Jimmy Carter fundamentally misunderstood what détente was about. While the Soviets and prior American presidents such as Nixon and Ford understood détente as a loosening of tensions between the two states and developed the diplomatic and military means to loosen the tensions between the two sides, the Carter administration viewed détente as an opportunity to spread the liberal democratic values such as human rights to the Soviet sphere of influence. In fact, the lessons Carter learned from détente were very different than the lessons learned by previous leaders and the state itself.

For both the Soviet and American governments, cooperation in the early 1970s meant that both sides were forced to rethink their political trust of one another. Because of cooperation that emerged from numerous summits between the two sides, the resulting SALT I treaty limiting the number of nuclear weapons, the Biological Weapons Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the end to the Vietnam War, the negotiation of the Helsinki Accords, and even cooperation in space, both sides were forced to rethink the SOPs they had developed from two decades of prior experience with the other state. Because of these events and the restructuring of preferences and the adjustment of SOPs for relations between the two states, political trust between each side reached the highest it had been since during World War II.

The case of the Helsinki Accords is illustrative of this phenomenon. The very name of the conference and emergent organization centered on the prospect of cooperation. At the signing of the document in August 1975, ten points were agreed upon in which states agreed to:

- I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty*
- II. Refraining from the threat or use of force*
- III. Inviolability of frontiers*
- IV. Territorial integrity of States*
- V. Peaceful settlement of disputes*
- VI. Non-intervention in internal affairs*
- VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including*

*the freedom of thought,  
conscience, religion or belief*  
VIII. *Equal rights and self-determination of peoples*  
IX. *Co-operation among States*  
X. *Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law* (Conference on Security and  
Co-operation in Europe 1975: 4-8)

As is clearly obvious, the clear majority of the ten points adopted by the conference was that of mutual respect and cooperation between the two states rather than a resort to arms to solve political problems. In fact, only two points (VII and VIII) were with respect to human rights and self-determination. Most of the document concluded that, based on the prior history between the two blocs and the sheer destructiveness of nuclear weapons, the lesson to be learned was that only political respect and cooperation could bring about a conclusion to the hostilities between the parties. With both sides agreeing to these fundamental points, there was a newfound trust between the two states because experience had taught both states that the other could be trusted. Thus détente should be understood as an event which made the older lessons of the 1950s and early 1960s outdated modes of thinking. Both states then began to form new procedures to operate with the other state considering this new-found trust.

However, the Carter administration did not understand détente as an opportunity for both sides to have greater political trust in the other side. Instead, the Carter administration thought that the lesson of détente was not that both sides saw the other as coequals, but that the Soviets were willing to compromise and make concessions on human rights concerns (points VII and VIII of the Helsinki Accords). As an illustration of this, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 in efforts to prop up the Afghan communist regime, Carter responded strongly. The Carter administration requested for the Senate to discontinue discussion on ratifying SALT II on January 2, 1980, in an effort to undermine the US-Soviet relationship. Carter even went so far as to recall the US ambassador to the Soviet Union. In fact, it was this

series of events that ended détente (Rhodes 2008: 135). From the American viewpoint, the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan was a human rights violation and an extension of Soviet influence beyond what was recognized from prior interactions as an area of Soviet influence. In fact, it fit into the larger narrative constructed out of the end of WW II that the Soviet Union was fundamentally expansionist (Rhodes 2008:136).

However, to the Soviets, becoming involved in Afghanistan was necessary because the Afghan Communist Party had in stage a coup in 1978 (of which it is assumed the Soviets played no role). From this, bitter fallout occurred and many parts of Afghanistan were in open rebellion against the communist leadership of Nur Mohammed Taraki. With his assassination in September 1979, relations with the Soviets became severely strained to the point where Brezhnev saw no other recourse than an invasion of Afghanistan to prop up the faltering communist regime. From the Soviet perspective, this was not an expansionist move (and therefore not a violation of points III, IV, and VI of the Helsinki Accords) but a stabilizing move on its borders that fit in line with moves made at the end of WW II.

The fact that Brezhnev acted out of a desire to stabilize a country on its border (much in the same way the United States had acted out of a desire to stabilize the Republic of Vietnam) rather than spread communism was fundamentally misunderstood by Carter. Carter's interpretation of détente from what he perceived to be the prior interactions with the late Nixon and Ford administrations was that the Soviets were willing to concede points on human rights and political cooperation with the United States. What Carter failed to understand about détente is that it occurred perhaps at the low point of American power relative to the Soviet Union and the high-water mark of Soviet power during the Cold War. And instead of détente being rooted

in an understanding of shared values such as a tolerance for human rights, détente was an understanding and a mutual respect of both states' right to exist and status in the world.

In fact, Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB (and later General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), confided in Markus Wolf, the head of the East German Stasi intelligence service, that he believed the US was trying to win the arms race and politically defeat the Soviets, which created a destabilizing effect on détente (Rhodes 2008: 145). This fundamental misunderstanding that occurred between the two sides meant that the lessons of the recent thaw in the Cold War that both states had meant that for once the distorted lessons learned by a leader overshadowed the lessons each state had learned from the eleven years of interactions during détente.

The case of the end of détente, then, was about the differences in the interpretations in experiences that both states had surrounding détente. But this difference in interpretation was largely driven by the misperception of President Carter with respect to the lessons he had learned from interactions with the Soviets during the late 1970s. The Soviets, in this case, had properly interpreted the Helsinki Accords and other agreements made between the two states as a fundamental loosening of tensions and respect for each states' sovereignty. And since experience guided the two states similarly during détente, both states developed similar mechanisms to deal with disagreements with the other state. But the Carter reforms of the late 1970s brought in a different perspective of those lessons learned and ultimately ended détente.

And while the end of the 1970s brought the end of détente, the 1980s saw unprecedented military buildup by the US, much of which the Soviet Union was unable to counter. Since the end of détente, the Soviet and American response (which came from the most recent series of experiences) was that the other side could not be trusted and, therefore, steps must be taken in

order to ensure that the other state was credibly deterred. In this case, then, the lesson of the end of détente was one in which political mistrust escalated and the two states must learn from that experience and develop SOPs to deal with the other state in the reignited Cold War. And while this military buildup further aggravated the arms race in the early part of the decade, by the mid-1980s with a new leader, the United States felt that it was able to deal with the young Mikhail Gorbachev, meaning that political trust in the other side could be restored because the experience of interactions between the two states during this time meant that the two states agreed on much more than they had previously. Bialer and Mandelbaum (1989) note that in the past, the US had shied away from making arms agreements with the Soviets because, as a closed society, US policy leaders believed that the Soviets would defect. However, with the new leadership under Gorbachev, there was a fundamental change in policymakers' views of the Soviets. Therefore, the prior relationships that had existed between the two states and informed the policies that were developed had to be reformulated. In fact, Soviets by 1988 came to three conclusions on nukes: they could not have strategic superiority over US, the US's large technology lead and their poor state means that America could "break out" and leave the Soviets in the "dust", meaning war was more likely, and a continuation of the arms race meant more money would have to be spent, which they could not afford (Bialer and Mandelbaum 1989: 126).

This new-found trust coupled with the fundamental change in the status of the Soviet Union and domestic changes with the USSR led to a lessening of tensions between the two sides. In all actuality, the Soviet Union knew that it had more problems internally than it had externally (Thompson 2012: 301). In fact, if Mandelbaum (1979) is correct that "security is a highly variable concept" (9), then the greatest threat to the Soviet Union was the decay from within rather than the threat from without. Gorbachev, knowing this, was thus more willing to approach

the US to relieve the pressure caused by the expensive arms race. Thompson (2012) goes so far as to claim this was the primary driving force behind Gorbachev's efforts to negotiate START I with the United States (302). In fact, Gorbachev had also begun to trust the United States and no longer viewed the US as an existential threat to the Soviet Union, making it possible to both lower the tensions in the arms race and have spill over to other areas of political cooperation.

Thus the Soviet decision to appoint a relatively young and energetic leader who recognized the deep structural problems in the USSR and was willing to address those and reach out to the US caused a fundamental shift in the way in which both states trusted one another. The lessons of the past were no longer the dictators of the relationship between the two sides.

#### Faith in the Logic of Deterrence

While the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not directly undermine America's faith in the logic of deterrence, it did undermine the US's faith in the Soviets and ended the decade-long détente that had softened relations. But with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, The US began to dramatically increase the size of its military in the largest peace-time buildup ever.

Perkins (1991) maintains that Reagan had a profound, almost religious desire to see the end of the Cold War and the curbing of nuclear weapons so that he pursued a massive military buildup to force the Soviets to the table. Perkins (1991) claims that Reagan saw the heightened arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States as a way to gain superiority over the Soviets and therefore force them to the bargaining table to reduce the weapons and political mistrust between the two states (15; see also Isard, Smith, & Anderton 1988:18). On the other hand, Bialer and Mandelbaum (1989) claim that protests and public sentiment in the US forced Reagan administration to restart arms control agreements with Soviets (102).

Supporting Perkins' (1991) claim is Rhodes (2008), who notes that in Reagan's speech to the British Parliament in 1982, Reagan specifically called for a defeat of the Soviets as being the only way to end the Cold War. Reagan's hatred of nuclear weapons was apparently so deep that he was moved by the airing of apocalyptic *The Day After* on American televisions in 1983 and he vowed to end the arms race between the two states (Rhodes 2008: 168). In fact, Reagan even said in his primetime announcement of the technologically ambitious but unfeasible Strategic Defense Initiative that his goal was to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether (Rhodes 2008: 158).

Additionally, by the late 1970s, it was acknowledged that the Soviets had technologically fallen behind in the arms race and they felt the need to "catch up" to the United States (Rhodes 2008:158). And by the time Gorbachev came into power, he realized the strain that the Soviet military was placing on the economic health of the Soviet Union and decided to pursue arms control agreements as a way to cut the runaway costs (Rhodes 2008: 205). In this respect, then, the Soviet Union had lost its faith in its ability to credibly deter the United States, while the US still had faith in its ability to deter the Soviets. This fundamental disconnect made it likely that the Soviets would be more likely to make compromises on weapons because the lessons of the Soviet Union throughout the 1980s increasingly focused inward on the deep structural problems in Soviet society. The American experience of the early 1980s was one of deep mistrust of the Soviets that was driven by what was perceived to be expansionist aims after the invasion of Afghanistan. And even though the Reykjavik meeting in October 1986 resulted in no agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether, Gorbachev had more trust in Reagan's motives after the summit (Garthoff 2015: 75).

In support of this buildup, Schwartz (2011) notes that from 1981 to 1988, materials production increased again (after a decline in mid-1960s-1970s), under Reagan, as the US sought

to more openly oppose the USSR for actions in different parts of the world and the European deployment of the SS-20 intermediate range missile (71), which was met with the deployment of Pershing II missiles into Western Europe. And while this is but one instance of the heightened tension during the early 1980s between the Soviet Union and the United States, many other instances seemed to indicate that both sides had regained their faith in the logic of deterrence and their ability to deter the other state. In actuality, this buildup was an alternative way of dealing with both states' new-found lack of faith in deterrence. In particular, Reagan's zeal to do away with nuclear weapons by increasing the number of weapons and his public rhetoric of defeating the Soviet Union were signals not that he had greater faith in deterrence than his predecessors, but that he was attempting to force the Soviets to the bargaining table to minimize the risk posed by nuclear weapons.<sup>51</sup> While this approach was different from the management approach by leaders of both states immediately after the Cuban Missile Crisis twenty-five years early, it certainly was rooted in a lack of faith in the logic of deterrence and a new-found trust between the two states.

### Conclusion

While the experience of the Soviet Union and the United States during the arms race of the Cold War might not be identical to conventional arms races (or even other nuclear arms races), it is worth noting that others disagree, maintaining that “the patterns of conflict within nuclear rivalries are very similar to those in previous eras” (Diehl 1985b: 345). Instead, “nations appear to attempt solving their differences peacefully and resort to war only after the serious

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<sup>51</sup> In fact, Robert T. McFarlane, Reagan's National Security Advisor to Reagan claimed that the goal of programs such as SDI was intended “to get the Russians to decrease their numbers of land-based ICBM warheads” (Schwartz 2011: 95-96).

clash of interest persist in a rivalry” (Diehl 1985b: 344). I have demonstrated here that the lessons learned from interacting with one another in arms races informs both states’ political trust in the other and their faith in the logic of deterrence. What makes this claim unique is that these lessons must be learned from repeated interactions. These lessons cannot become internalized by the state without prior experience to guide them. Without the near-war risk of the Cuban Missile Crisis, there would have been no Partial Test Ban Treaty or no direct link between Moscow and Washington, meaning that the risks of another confrontation would be higher. And without the fundamental misunderstandings of détente by Carter, there would not have been an end to détente and a reigniting of Cold War tension throughout the 1980s.

While I do not maintain that the arms race between the US and USSR is generalizable to other arms races, I do claim that this relationship is instructive in how arms races emerge from a deeper set of disagreements between two states in the international system. A lack of political trust, a similar status, a lack of similarity, and a faith in the logic of deterrence means that states will “learn” to construct an opposing state as an enemy. In the face of this constructed enemy, states generally have two options: arm themselves or seek alliances (Vasquez 1993 [2009]; Diehl 1985b: 331). Therefore, arms races are likely to emerge between states so long as these conditions exist.

Placing the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States into a framework of learning is useful for scholars. By understanding that arms races emerge with this lack of political trust and similarity between states, scholars and policymakers alike can better understand when it is likely that an arms race will occur and what can be done to ensure that it either terminates or does not result in war. Above all, if states have a renewed sense of political trust in one another and lack faith in the logic of deterrence, it is likely that one side or both will

back down in the arms race, thus decreasing the probability of conflict. However, central to this claim is the implicit assumption that both states must learn from their prior experiences with one another and from watershed moments (such as the Cuban Missile Crisis) to better understand ones' opponent.

## CHAPTER 5: MAKING THE CONFLICT JUMP: EVIDENCE FOR A CAUSAL MECHANISM OF DIFFUSIVE VIOLENCE

### Abstract

Below, I argue that evidence of diffusively learned conflict behavior can be found by examining states in rivalries and their interactions with non-rivalrous dyads. Using Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) definition of strategic rivalries and MID 4.01, I examine all MIDs for evidence of externalizing the lessons of rivalrous behavior. Using an evolutionary and diffusive framework, I argue that states perform a "conflict jump" when they apply the lessons learned from experience in rivalrous conflicts to those states with whom they are not engaged in rivalries. With these variables and tracing of the effects of how violence spreads, I find that states that were previously involved in a rivalry or are currently involved in a rivalry are likely to externalize this conflict behavior to other states. Specifically, I find that these states are more likely to initiate conflict against another state, they are more likely to use force or enter into war, and they are more likely to use higher levels of force.

### Introduction

States, to the extent possible, should be expected to "learn" from their prior interactions with other states, which is properly termed experiential learning. While a plethora of literature exists to account for the immediate causes of war or conflict (for instance, Bremer 1992; Vasquez 1993/2009; Maoz and Russett 1993; Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Diehl and Goertz 2001), little attention has been paid to how prior experience with conflict can increase the

probability of conflict with different dyads. While states undoubtedly have immediate concerns in their interactions with other states, scholars should not discount how the states' previous experience with conflict influences the decision of those states to engage in conflict with other states that they interact with in the international system. In fact, scholars should assume that states learn from their prior experience and that this prior experience is the equivalent of experiential learning.

Below, I present quantitative evidence of the diffusion of violence process. I argue that rather than seeing violence between states as either an inherent behavior (for instance, see Morgenthau 1947) or as a result of an anarchic international system (for instance, see Waltz 1979), we can better understand conflict as a causal process that is both learned from previous interactions and diffused throughout the international system. Using this novel approach, I provide evidence for a “conflict jump” between two actors in the international system to another set of actors in the international system by means of diffusively learned conflict.

### Rivalries and Literature Review

Rivalries, or the continued political dispute between states, are an important area in which to look for evidence of externalized behavior. Vasquez (2014) claims that rivalries fundamentally are “competitive relationship(s) between two actors over an issue that is of highest salience to them” (152), whereas Maoz and Mor (1996) say rivalries are “long-term hate affairs between nations” (141). What makes the rivalries literature so important is that wars that spread to other states tend to emerge from rivalrous interactions (Vasquez 2014: 152; see also, Hensel 1999; Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008). In other words, rivalries, when they do result in disputes or war, are more likely to spread to other states throughout the region or world,

unless the major power state involved in the rivalry is able to successfully prevent minor allies from become involved in conflict and dragging major power actors into war (Vasquez 2014: 153). The rivalries literature begins with attempts at quantifying such behaviors into a coherent, special type of conflict. Rivalries are, at their core, problematic for international relations because a sizeable majority of conflict occurs between these states (Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008, Table 3.8: 88). When the quantified literature of the 1980s first began to identify specific rivalries, it was hoped that better understanding recurrent conflict would lead to solving the problems between those states most likely to engage in conflict with one another.

As Hensel (1998) notes, the concept of rivalry initially emerged under a theoretical construct as “enmity” (Finlay, et al, 1967; Feste 1982), “protracted conflict” (Azar, et al., 1978; Brecher 1984), “enduring rivalry” (Wayman 1989; Goertz and Diehl 1992b, 1993; Vasquez 1993; Bennett 1993), and finally as a form of “strategic rivalry” (Thompson 1995; Thompson 2001; Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008). These evolutionary changes in the definitions resulted in a rich literature that disagrees primarily on one thing: the operationalization of rivalries.

For early scholars such as Finlay, et al. (1967), rivalry was simply defined as an enmity that was deeply seated between two actors in the international system. As the defining and operationalizing of the concept progressed, this was narrowed down into protracted conflict. As Feste (1982) notes, the rivalries literature was virtually ignored throughout the 1970s, as scholars focused on other areas of conflict processes.

Azar, et al (1978) argues that the Arab-Israeli conflict became such an entrenched disagreement that it essentially took on “a life of its own”, causing conflict to spread where it might otherwise certainly not have happened. In fact, they go so far as to claim “that the

structure of the conflict is itself a product (or "output") of the interaction situation (regional/international) (Azar, et al, 1978: 42). Likewise, Breecher (1984) adds to this research agenda by claiming the hallmark of rivalries is that they are protracted conflicts between two states. Furthermore, the length of these conflicts and the depth of the hostility frequently lead to more violent conflict.

Goertz and Diehl (1992a) define rivalries in the context of how often they appear on opposing sides in the MID dataset. To do this, they propose a count of prior involvement in disputes with one another and if this threshold is met within the given timeframe (twenty years), then the states are said to be in a rivalry under this dispute-density formulation. Goertz and Diehl (1992a) find that some 45% of all cases in the MID dataset are between the same states, indicating that the conflict is linked to a larger rivalry. In later updates (Diehl and Goertz 2000; also, Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2006) these definitions are significantly altered, taking the original incidence of 64 rivalries to 290 rivalries (Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008: 53). Others using a dispute-density approach include Bennett 1997; Bennett 1998; and Maoz and Moor 2002. This approach may be problematic from a research design perspective, depending on one's DV, since there is a lack of independence between the independent variable and dependent variable. Another issue identified with the dispute-density operationalization is that not all conflict is necessarily observed in counting MIDs. Instead, states that are lacking in resources may not attack another state specifically because they lack capacity to do so (Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008: 52). By measuring simple counts of disputes (with a relatively large number of disputes needing to occur between states; [Colaresi, Rasler, & Thompson 2008: 51]) and coding those as rivalries, the authors miss the historical approach provided by Thompson (2001), where diplomatic perceptions of the leaders of both states matter in constructing a rivalry. And while

Goertz and Diehl (1993) claim to want to contextualize the history of conflict between states (147-148), this is difficult to do from a purely quantitative dispute-density approach.

Thompson (2001) (as well as Thompson and Dreyer 2011), on the other hand, does not take a dispute-density approach in defining rivalries.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Thompson (2001) uses what he calls a “perceptual categorizing process” to identify which interactions are strategic rivalries. To do this, he “consults historical sources about when and with whom decision-makers thought they were in rivalry relationships” (558-559). This deductive approach is more suited to avoiding the methodological problems he identifies (Thompson 2001) with other operationalizations of the definition. In fact, Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson (2008) find commonalties between rivalries that include repeated fighting, the states regard the other as a rival and are unable to completely resolve the issue at the center of the conflict (10), “the relationship is framed in expectations and beliefs that... exaggerate possibly hostile actions and downplay the sincerity of possibly cooperative gestures”, as well as not fighting continually (12).

What emerges in the literature regarding rivalries largely centers on how to define rivalries and operationalize/measure their claims. We then see some important considerations, as Hensel (1998) points out: some difficulty emerges in how to measure lesser rivals (Diehl and Goertz 1993; Wayman and Jones 1991), which are sometimes called “proto-rivalries” (Diehl and Goertz 1993). What is interesting about these low-level rivalries is that they, for some reason or another, do not evolve into full-fledged rivalries. Instead, researchers can look at why these low-level rivalries do not become full-fledged rivalries and better understand the causal process which make rivalries occur. For Thompson (2001), a potential explanation may be that these are cases of “false positives”, in that the leaders of these states do not perceive the other state as

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<sup>52</sup> Thompson’s data initially ran to 1999 and has since been extended to 2010.

strategic rivals and by using the dispute-density approach, researchers are seeing something that is not an actual rivalry.

Though the operationalization of the term rivalry is difficult, the fundamental underpinnings of the literature focusses on the sustained level of competition between two actors in the international system. Likewise, what distinguishes rivalries from other disputes is that events are seen in terms of a relative gains and loss calculation (Vasquez 2014: 154) in which value is relative to what the other state gains or loses. Furthermore, Hensel (1998) correctly notes that for international conflict and rivalries, context matters (162). In fact, the historical context of conflict matters deeply for whether or not states decide to use force against one another. In support of this, Vasquez (2014) argues that when the issues become contentious enough, they are seen not in the context of the individual events, but in the larger Schmittian (2008/1932) narrative of “us versus them” (154). In other words, states involved in rivalries with one another have learned from those interactions that the opposing state is a “special” kind of enemy that emerges over repeated negative interactions.

In Hensel’s (1998/1999) formulation of rivalries, such behavior begins as an evolutionary construct that continues as states compete against one another. Here, Hensel (1999) finds that the longer conflict occurs between two states, the more likely it is for the rivalry to become entrenched, which makes it more likely that future conflict will occur (175). Seeing the concept of rivalry not as a binary choice (0/1), but rather as a continuum (see pg. 4 of 49) is advantageous because it offers a causal story as to how seemingly benign proto-rivalries (or low-intensity rivalries) can metastasize into full-fledged rivalries. The early militarization of these disagreements, then, can logically entrench conflict as a way in which to deal with rivalries.

In a similar manner, but as it relates to the diffusion of democratic norms, Mitchell (2002) finds that democratic norms become internationalized when a certain proportion of states in the international system become democratic. Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi (2008) find that third-party mediators propagate the spread of democratic norms by dispute resolution. Oneal and Russett (1997) present evidence for a Kantian peace in which democratic norms throughout the international system encourage cooperation between states. In fact, Goertz, Diehl, and Balas (2016) argue that peace itself is an evolutionary concept in which the management of territorial disagreements, coupled with international organizations and the use of international norms are causal steps in reducing the primary causes of conflict, which promotes peace. In a related finding, Maoz and Abdolali (1989) find that as the number of autocratic dyads in the international system increases, the level of conflict increases, whereas when the level of democratic dyads in the international system increased, the probability of conflict decreased. These findings illustrate a diffusive process by which peace permeates from one state to another, with the effect increasing as the proportion of democratic states in the international system increases.

Likewise, violence can be understood as a diffusive process in the same way that some conflict can spread throughout a region or the world (Vasquez 2014: 149). Vasquez (2014) also outlines that evidence shows that interstate and intrastate conflict tend to cluster spatially and temporally, indicating a link between domestic and international conflict (150). Vasquez (2009) also outlines six assumptions about the puzzle of war. For my purposes, the first two assumptions are useful for this argument: 1.) war is a learned behavior and 2.) war is a product of interactions between states (42-46).

To the first point, we can see war as a learned behavior variously in anthropological, biological, or psychological terms. Anthropological explanations are lacking precisely due to the scarcity of data or inability to conclusively pinpoint the emergence of war as a political phenomenon at a specific point in time. Biological explanations are also problematic because animal behavior might not be generalizable to the human experience for several reasons, the two most prominent being the political organization and institutionalization of social interactions, including violence and cooperation. Finally, psychological explanations of the emergence of violence are problematic because the application of what occurs in the “black box” of the mind may not be applicable to human institutions and may not be visible in the first place (Ormrod 2012).

Second, Vasquez (2009) claims that war emerges as a product of interactions between states and is a consequence of foreign policy decision-making (44-45). This is certainly true for what Mitchell (2002: see above) finds. The subtlety revealed here is that notions about systemic power grabs or maximization or a flawed human nature are incorrect. Rather, it is the history of interactions between actors that determines their relationships with one another. In the field of psychology, this is often referred to as experiential learning. In other words, when knowledge is gained from interactions between units, it is assumed that states have learned from these interactions and this knowledge informs future behaviors.

If we also accept Senese and Vasquez’s (2008) steps to war argument, which claims that behaviors such as arms races, alliances, rivalries, and disputes are steps to war, then we should consider to what extent both rivalries and disputes are learned behaviors. In other words, how do states learn to distrust one another and does this distrust of another state mean that those states are more likely to use force against non-rivalrous states?

In support of this proposal, Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson (2008) are correct in claiming that “rivalries are selected” (25) both because of the shared negative interactions and the resulting learning that accompanies that history. And while in this context Vasquez (2009) certainly means that the dyadic interactions matter in terms of interactions, I maintain that we can see these lessons learned externalized to other actors within the international system. In order to provide evidence of this phenomenon of the diffusion of violence, we must look beyond mere dyadic relationships and towards how the externalization of those dyadic relationships might affect relations with other states in the international system. In other words: does heightened political competition with a third-party result in an increased probability of violence with other states?

To look for evidence of conflict as a learned behavior that emerges as a product of interactions between states, we can look towards third-party disputes in the context of rivalries. Here, we can see if states involved in rivalries are more violent with states they are not involved in rivalries with. I term the process by which this happens experiential learning because the state has learned to use violence with its interactions with rivalrous states and to apply this knowledge to interactions with non-rivalrous dyads. This approach to using the rivalries dataset to explain the transference of conflict to other actors is useful for two reasons. First, by using Thompson and Dreyer’s (2011) dataset, independence between events can naturally be assumed to be greater than in a dispute-density approach. Since I am using the rivalries dataset as an independent variable and the MID dataset as the dependent variable, I am assuming statistical independence on the left and right-hand side of the equation. Second, this approach offers compelling evidence that states learn from their interactions with other states, offering a competing causal explanation as to how states can learn conflict with other states.

In the intrastate conflict literature, civil conflict in one country can become internationalized, in which case it makes a “jump” from the domestic to the international. Under this formulation, violence spreads throughout a system in an evolutionary manner, with one state’s interaction with another state predicated on their past interactions both together as a dyad and then separately with respect to their own state experiences with other, third-party states. Though we lack the data to measure the origin of violence between states, there are other approaches than the historical approaches (Tilly 1992), as well as anthropological approaches (Wrangham and Peterson 1996; Baumeister 1997) regarding the origin of violence. Lacking the data to quantitatively test such hypotheses with respect to the origins of interactions international system, I contend that we can nevertheless find evidence of diffusively learned conflict behavior when a state (a) is engaged in a rivalry with another state (b), which then externalizes this behavior to their interactions with another state (c).

Within the social construction of norms literature, we can understand violence, like peace, as a norm (or more appropriately, as institutions of collective norms). In Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) formulation, this is a three-step process in which norm entrepreneurs encourage the emergence of norms domestically, then attempt to get other states to follow the same type of behavior internationally, then, they take on a “taken-for-granted” quality (895) that is non-negotiable. This type of behavior is then considered acceptable under a given set of circumstances and is, in fact, encouraged. It is only with the emergence of a new or competitor norm that the old norm then falls out of fashion. In the context of conflict and cooperation, we can better understand the institutions of violence and peace as often conflicting norms that compete for acceptance by states, their leaders, and publics over a given set of circumstances.

Mitchell (2002) heavily cites Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) work, using their argument to theoretically explain the finding that non-democratic states begin to behave like democratic states in settling territorial disputes. Using the same logic, we can understand the spread of violence in terms of a normative behavior. States that are in a heightened state of competition with another state (known as a rivalry) are likely to externalize this behavior to other actors in the international system. Thus, violence between states is best understood as a learned normative behavior.

### Theory

If Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) are correct and we can understand the development of norms as evolutionary in their "life cycle" (see Figure 1, pg. 96), then we can also understand how conflict becomes externalized as a set of learned practices to other states in the international system. As a theoretical construct, Vasquez (2014) claims that states engaged in rivalries with one another are likely to reciprocate negative effects through hostile actions because they have internalized the "us versus them mentality" (154-155). As a causal process, we can better understand violence as a diffusively learned process (Vasquez 2014) in which states in conflict one another "learn" the lessons from their history and the history of other states and reciprocate conflictual behavior to other states. This phenomenon is properly termed experiential learning when an entity learns from their own direct experience. While psychology disagrees on the concept of learning as being based on external change, mental representations of having learned a lesson, or contextualizing those lessons (for instance, see the debate between behaviorists, constructivists, and socio-constructivists), one should acknowledge that states take information from each interaction and these interactions can then inform relationships with other states. And

if rivalries are the most contentious form of relations between states short of war, we should expect to find a diffusion of the “us versus them mentality” to relations with other states not involved in rivalries.

Diffusively, violence acts as an instructional tool in which states and their leaders learn the lessons of the past and apply them to future interactions with other states. Using Hensel’s (1999) formulation of rivalry as an evolutionary behavior, I argue that the next logical step of the evolutionary process of rivalries is the “conflict jump”, in which such aggressive behavior is externalized to other states that are not involved in rivalries with the state in question. In the intrastate conflict literature, whereby internal strife becomes internationalized, this equates to a jump from the domestic to the international. In the context of international conflict, we can see evidence of a jump in behavior when violence applied to dyadic relationships with other states. In more proper terms, the conflict has become externalized because the state has learned from experience to be more violent in interactions with other states.

Conflict, it appears, is a learned process and we as individuals and institutions (namely, states), are prone to learning certain lessons over others (Vasquez 1993/2009). It is easier to learn to respond to an aggressive state with conflict rather than cooperation because the causal chain linking the action with the desired reaction from the other state appears to be shorter and more logically consistent. Thus, when a state attacks another state, it is more likely that the second state will respond in a similar way to the provocateur, rather than seek to negotiate a compromise, especially when salient stakes are at issue (such as territory). Cooperation between states, on the other hand, appears to be a more difficult lesson to learn for several reasons: first, the “us versus them” mentality is difficult to overcome. Second, linking the causal steps between cooperation and absolute gains is difficult in the political. Third, reciprocating

conflictual interactions gives both legitimacy and credibility to states. Ironically, however, recent research has focused almost exclusively on understanding normative behavior in terms of cooperation rather than conflict (for instance, Mitchell 2002; Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi 2008).<sup>53</sup> Measuring the norm of conflict may also be more straight-forward than measuring norms associated with cooperation.

Since it is difficult to quantitatively trace an anthropological, biological, or psychological explanation of conflict emergence from the beginning of human history, I propose another innovative way in which to measure the spread of violence from one actor to another. We can look within the available data for evidence of the externalization of violence between states in lesser forms of disputes with other states if they are in a rivalry with another state. Though this does not allow us to see an “origin of violence”, it does permit us to see how the virus of conflict spreads throughout a system. And if we assume that states do learn from their prior interactions with other states (experiential learning) in models similar to those proposed by scholars in the field of psychology (for instance, Ormrod 2012: 4), then we should look for evidence that indicates that violent interactions can be transmitted from one actor to another actor in the international system.

To find evidence of experiential learning in disputes, we may examine two instances: first, we may look for evidence of this behavior when states are engaged in a rivalry with another state for evidence of escalation to actions. Second, we can examine when state a and state b are in a rivalry with one another and how aggressive behavior is exhibited to another state, say c, by state a (see Figure 1). In other words, rather than looking for evidence of learning from

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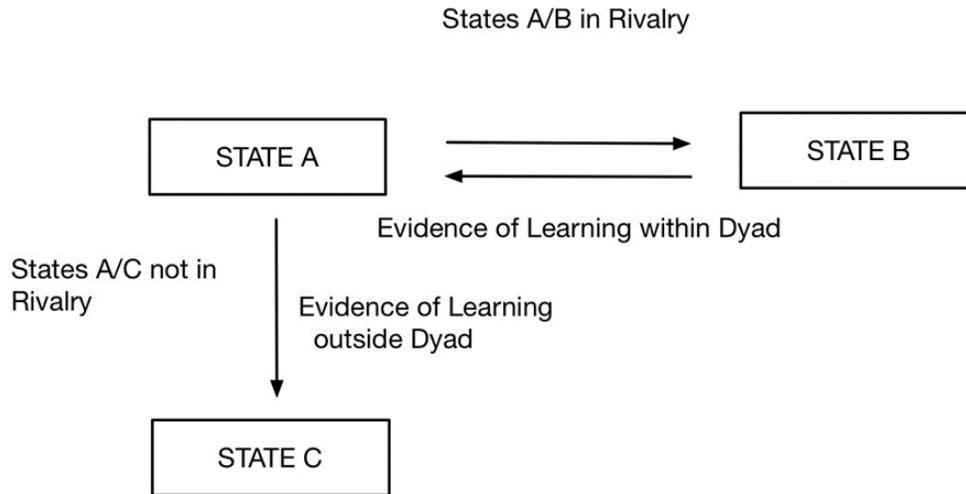
<sup>53</sup> While the rate of cooperative behaviors is surely increasing in the international system as the number of democracies increases, defining norms of cooperation is decidedly narrower than defining norms associated with the norms of conflict. Thus, measuring the spread of particularly dangerous conflict (rivalries) to lower-level disputes is useful because it shows evidence for how conflict spreads.

interactions *within* the rivalry dyad, we can look to the relationships states in rivalries have with other, non-rivalrous states. Though it is likely that learning does occur within the context of rivalries in a feedback loop (see top part, Figure 1), this is difficult to measure directly (for instance, see Senese and Vasquez 2008 on ritualized rivalries).<sup>54</sup> Second, we should expect to see aggressive behavior exhibited by a state after its rivalry with another state has ended. We should expect to see more aggressive behavior displayed to non-rivalrous states, as well as the states that were once involved in a formal rivalry with another state. It makes sense to include a variable that identifies past rivalries because one of the values of a learning framework is in how long the “lessons” of conflict endure. If we find a positive relationship indicating that states with previous rivalries are more likely to use force, this means that the lessons learned have real holding power that continue long after the hostility with the other state has concluded. For each of these factors we should expect to see a state in a rivalry to be more likely to initiate a conflict and they should also be more likely to resort to using higher levels of force when they enter a conflict with another state. This flows coherently from theoretical expectations because states that have engaged in rivalries with other states are more likely to accept the use of force and are more likely to use more force than they would otherwise. On both counts, the lessons learned in rivalrous behavior from experience are transmitted to relations with other states.

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<sup>54</sup> Peering within the “black-box” of the state and the seemingly closed system of the dyadic relationship is difficult. Instead, in looking to interactions with other state, we can find evidence of an externalized learning of violence.

**Figure 5.1-Externalized Rivalry and the Conflict Jump**



Under the “conflict jump” from the particularly dangerous type of interactions found in rivalries, states “learn” that conflictual and competitive behavior may to their advantage in terms of relative gains. This process is likely to be internalized both to the leader of the state, the state bureaucratic structures, and, in particularly deep-seated rivalries, to the domestic publics. Thus, when states have engaged in the most brutal types of conflictual behavior (short of war) with another state in the international system, we should expect to see those states externalize their experiences to interactions with others. Given this novel approach to understanding how conflict can permeate through a system and “jump” to other actors, we can better understand the diffusive process by which violence works. And by operationalizing my claim by using the higher and more dangerous level of violence to argue this spreads to other, less violent and less dangerous relationships, I can show evidence for the spread of violence that is otherwise unable to be measured due to a lack of temporal depth.

States experienced with this type of conflict behavior are likely to internalize conflict as an essential and legitimate use of state power (rather than, say, soft power; see Nye 2004). Within Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) framework, this is akin to the norm emergence leg of the norms life cycle (Figure 1: 896). And when the state applies this type of behavior to another actor in the international system with which it has a dispute, the state externalizes that behavior to another actor. Eventually, violence then becomes an accepted norm within the international system (see Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Table 1: 898).

With Vasquez's (1993; also, 2009) and Senese and Vasquez's (2008) understanding of conflict as a learned process in which people are soft-wired to learn certain lessons over others, we can understand violence as being the "easier" lesson to learn and the easier norm to accept when one has previously engaged in such an activity. Thus, when states are engaged in deep-seated rivalries with other states, they are more likely to accept the use of force rather than pursue cooperative interactions with one another, as the lessons of cooperation are not as easily learned as lessons of violence for those states in rivalries. However, I do expect these effects to be more muted and play less of a role than in initiating a MID with a state that both sides are involved in a rivalry. I expect this effect will be more muted, though statistically significant and positive, because the tendency of human interactions is that the lessons from one set of events does not perfectly transfer to another set of events between other actors.

This then leads me to three hypotheses:

**H1: States engaged in a rivalry with another state and states previously engaged in a rivalry with another state are more likely to originate a dispute with another state not involved in the rivalry.**

**H2: States engaged in a rivalry with another state and states previously engaged in a rivalry with another state are more likely to use force or enter into war with another state not involved in the rivalry.**

**H3: States engaged in a rivalry with another state and states previously engaged in a rivalry with another state are more likely to use higher levels of activity in disputes with another state not involved in the rivalry.**

### Research Design

Given Hensel's (1998) and Vasquez's (1993; 2009) claim that the context of relations between states matters for whether conflict arises between them or not, it is more appropriate for my purposes to use Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) definition of rivalries. Thompson and Dreyer (2011) define rivalries in strategic terms rather than as a count of MIDs between states (as in other approaches). For my purposes, given that this is not a dispute-density approach, I expect independence between my dependent variables and independent variables. Since I will be explaining dispute initiation, use of force, and level of force as my dependent variables and rivalries will be an independent variable, I should take care to ensure statistical independence between both sides of the equation. Thus, I utilize Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) conceptualization of strategic rivalries because of this statistical independence in the samples.

Considering Bremer's (1992) findings regarding the dyadic study of international conflict, I use the directed-dyad year as my unit of analysis. I then take all those states and, using MID 4.01, I identify which states are in rivalries with one another and which states are not. I use Rudkevich's (2016) Directed Dyad MID 4.0 dataset and match these with each country-year directed dyads. However, using his methodology and reasoning, I drop 120 observations

because sides a and b of the dyad were not involved in the dispute at the same time, meaning there was no real interaction between the two sides. This leaves 7,682 directed-dyadic disputes. For dyads that have more than one dispute per year, I use the dispute with the highest level of activity by the state so that I may capture the highest level of activity between the states. For cases that have the same violence level, I drop the second dispute in the year. This leaves 6,957 directed disputes. I then construct two variables for each dyad, indicating if the aggressor state (side a) was involved in a rivalry with another state or had previously been involved in a rivalry with another state. I primarily rely upon politically relevant dyads as my unit of analysis, defined as states that are contiguous or have a major power on either side of the dyad.<sup>55</sup> In Table 1 below, I give a brief overview of the variables utilized in the models.

**Table 5.1-Variables List**

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Coding Scheme</b>
Originator	Coded as "1" if side a originated dispute
Adjusted Hostility	Coded as "1" if side a use of force or war
Highest Activity	1-21 COW scale of highest activity by state a
<b>Independent Variables</b>	
Major State Member	Coded as "1" if a major state on either side
Joint Democracy	Coded as "1" if both sides Polity $\geq 6$
Miles Distance	Miles distance between state capitals
Contiguity	Coded as "1" if states share land contiguity
CINC Proportion	$CINCa / (CINCa + CINCb)$
Territory	Coded as "1" if the dispute involves territory
Defensive alliance	Coded as "1" if the state has a defensive alliance
World War I control	Coded as "1" if observation during World War I
World War II control	Coded as "1" if observation during World War II
Externalized Rivalry	

<sup>55</sup> However, note that I report results for all dyads, politically-relevant dyads, and non-politically relevant dyads, based on comments made by reviewers. One previous reviewer noted that s/he would be more willing to buy the argument if there was evidence to demonstrate this phenomenon with non-politically relevant dyads. In other words, if I could demonstrate this finding where it is least likely to be found (in those relationships that were the

least likely to matter), there should be stronger claims for this phenomenon.

	Coded as "1" if the state is currently in a strategic rivalry
Past Rivalry	Coded as "1" if the state previously in strategic rivalry
Strategic Rivalry	Thompson's rivalry data (control)

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### Dependent Variables

I use three dependent variables across three different primary models, which correspond to the above-mentioned hypotheses. The first dependent variable is the originator variable in the MID 4.01 dataset. This is coded as “1” for if the state initiated the MID against the other state in the dyad and “0” for otherwise. My second dependent variable (corresponding to hypothesis 2) is a binary variable of the hostility level reached by side a, coded as “1” if the action involved a use of force or war and “0” if otherwise. My third dependent variable, corresponding to hypothesis 3, is the highest activity level variable for side a, which is an ordered categorical scale from 1-21, indicating the highest level of force used by side a in the dispute.

### Independent Variables<sup>56</sup>

#### *Joint Democracy*

Given findings that suggest rivalries among democracies are as uncommon (Diehl and Goertz 2000) as they are in more general disputes between states (Maoz and Russett 1993; Oneal and Russett 1997; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, and Smith 1999), I expect democracy decreases the probability of a state initiating a dispute with another state, as well as pursuing a lesser level of force. All dyads which rank as 6 or greater on the standard Polity IV -10/10 scale

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<sup>56</sup> In other statistical tests not presented here, I run models with bilateral trade flows. These results do not substantially change the results for my variables of interest and, given both the limited economic data (temporal constraints) and the miniscule coefficient size, I do not include economic data in my models.

are treated as joint democracies and coded as “1”. I then identify which states in these dyads are joint democracies.

#### *Major Power Presence*

As major power status of side a or side b in a given dyad affects the calculus of whether or not a state enters into a dispute with another state, I control for the major power status of both sides in the dispute using COW’s major powers dataset (2011). Major powers are coded as “1” and minors are coded as “0”. Thus, the presence of a major power in the dyad is coded as “1” and no major powers on either side is coded as “0”.

#### *Miles Distance*

Next, I include variables measuring the miles distance between capital cities. This data comes from Gleditsch’s Distance Between Capital Cities dataset. Given that distance affects the ability to project power, it makes theoretical sense to account for the distance between capitals. While some scholars’ preference is for the nearest distance between borders, I do not use this variable. While I tested both of these variables, I noticed no major differences across any of my models.

#### *Contiguity*

Given findings that contiguity significantly impacts the occurrence of conflict between states (for instance, Bremer 1992; Vasquez 1995; Diehl 1985a), I control for contiguity using data from Stinnett, et al. (2002), coding states with land contiguity as “1” and all other values (water contiguity distances and no contiguity) as non-contiguous “0”.

#### *CINC Proportion*

Next, given the role that power distribution has in a dyad, I control for the share of power by state a within the dyad. To do this, I use the CINC composite scores from COW’s National

Capabilities Index dataset (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). This is calculated as the CINC score side a divided by CINC score a plus CINC score b, or  $[CINCa/(CINCa+CINCb)]$ .

### *Territory*

Since territorial issues have a positive effect on the incidence of conflict (Vasquez 1995; also, Vasquez and Henehan 2001), I control for the territorial issue of the dispute. Owsiak and Rider (2013) find that rivalry life is cut short if there is an agreement signed to resolve the relevant border issues, implicitly indicating the territorial component of rivalries and larger conflict. This variable comes from revision type variable of the MID 4.01 dataset (Palmer, D’Orazio, Kenwick, and Lane 2015). Here, territorial disputes are coded as “1”, whereas non-territorial disputes are coded as “0”.

### *World Wars*<sup>57</sup>

Aware of the criticism that militarized interstate disputes could be “polluted” by events surrounding the larger events related to the world wars, I introduce two separate controls for the world wars. The World War I control codes all disputes between 1914-1918 as “1”, while the World War II control codes all disputes between 1939-1945 as “1”. I also include models in the appendix demonstrating the effect without controlling for the World Wars, though I find no major changes to my models.

### *Defensive Alliance*<sup>58</sup>

Since alliances have been identified to be a primary reason why conflict occurs between states (for instance, see Vasquez 2009; also, Leeds 2003), I control for if the state has a defensive

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<sup>57</sup> Previous reviewers had indicated a desire to see controls for the world wars. I also include models without the control variables in the appendix. Given research which has demonstrated that the MID dataset does contain a large number of cases from the World Wars, it might make theoretical sense to control for those observations. In any event, I find that my results are largely robust, demonstrating the validity of this research design.

<sup>58</sup> Separately, I run models with different types of alliance memberships the state is a member to. I do not find that any of these alliance types significantly impact my two primary independent variables, which provides strong evidence that my findings are not due to omitted variable bias or misspecification.

alliance with another state, which means it could be subsequently pulled into conflict with another state. Defensive alliances are the type of alliance pact that entail the highest level of commitment (see Gibler 2009) and thus are the most likely alliance type to affect the probability of a dispute or war between states.

### Primary Independent Variables

#### *Externalized Rivalry*

Using Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) data, I generate a variable that codes the initiating states currently involved in a rivalry with another state. I code as "1" all disputes between states involved in a rivalry with another state. As an example, the US and Chile are coded as being in a rivalry between 1884-1892. If the US became involved in a MID with another state in this timeframe, I code that dispute as "1". Since Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) data is up-to-date only to 2010, I am only able to examine dyads to 2010 and accounting for missing data, I have complete data to 2007.

#### *Previous Rivalry*

Using Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) strategic rivalries dataset, I then generate a variable indicating if a state has previously been involved in a rivalry in its history which has now ended. This is important because it gives me leverage over the temporal externalization of the "lessons learned". In other words, this accounts for if the lessons learned from the rivalry with other states carried over to MIDs after the rivalry ended (this does include the state that the initiating state was previously involved in a rivalry with). Since Thompson and Dreyer (2011) only provide start years of rivalries (and not months or days), to ensure that I do not capture rivalrous behaviors, I lag the start of post-rivalrous behavior by one year. So, for the rivalry

between the US and Chile from 1884-1891, I code MIDs occurring after January 1, 1892, as post-rivalrous behaviors. In the case of states that have more than one rivalry with another state, I count all MIDs occurring after the earliest cessation of a rivalry as being post-rivalrous behavior. For instance, Thompson and Dreyer (2011) code Argentina as having four rivalries (with Brazil from 1817-1985; with Great Britain after 1965; with Chile from 1843-1991; and with Paraguay from 1862-1870). I count all MIDs for Argentina occurring after 1818 as post-rivalrous behaviors, since it is likely that their first rivalry had a large impact on the state's political and organizational development.

### *Strategic Rivalry*

Given that the previous two variables measure the externalization of learning but do not differentiate from those in which the state was involved in a strategic rivalry, I include a control to demonstrate the difference between my previous rivalry and enduring rivalry variables from those states that are involved in the rivalry with state a in the dyad. This variable should show a substantially higher rate of involvement in a dispute with a rivalry member, as I expect the learning effects of this conflict jump to be less important in the case of dyadic relations which are not involved in a rivalry with one another.

## Results

Since my first two dependent variables are dichotomous outcome variables, it is appropriate to use logistic regression to test for the effect of rivalries on non-rivalrous behaviors with other states. For my third dependent variable, I use ordered logit since my variable is a categorical ordered variable. I then look at politically-relevant dyads, following Lemke and Reed's (2001) example. I define politically relevant dyads as those dyads in which the two states

are contiguous or either side is a major power. In the appendix, I include results for non-politically relevant dyads, under the supposition that these dyads should be the hardest cases to provide evidence for externalizing the lessons of disputes, since salient stakes such as territory are not likely to be at stake and interactions are certainly more sparse. I also include models for all dyads and models without the World War controls. For the majority of these models, I find statistical significance in the expected direction for the two primary variables of interest.

In Table 2 (Models 1, 2, and 3), I present models that do not control for the presence of an ongoing rivalry, according to Thompson (2001). In Table 3 (Models 4, 5, and 6), I add the control for an ongoing rivalry, which shows clearly that the risk of originating a MID, using higher levels of violence, and a higher categorical score of the highest activity by the state is correlated with states that are engaged in rivalries. However, it also shows that the overall effect of the spread of violence moves to other disputes.

Quite clearly, we see statistically significant results across virtually all models for all variables, except for the defensive alliance variable and the major power presence. Likewise, with a  $\chi^2$  of 0, model 1 is an efficient predictor of my dependent variable. Substantively, in model 1, we see that contiguity, territory, and externalized rivalry (in the presence of a rivalry), and a past rivalry increase the probability of conflict. Not surprisingly, territory has the biggest impact on the decision to originate a dispute, use higher levels of force, and higher levels of activity. In terms of the externalized variable, we see a positive effect of being currently involved in a rivalry with a state and originating a dispute with another state. Substantively, this means states currently involved in rivalries are more likely to originate disputes with other states, with an increased odds of 2.35. As for the past rivalry variable, we see that having previously being involved in a rivalry means that a state is more likely to originate a dispute with another state,

with a one-unit change in past rivalry corresponding to an increased odds of 1.54 in originating a dispute. As suspected, the coefficient is smaller for the past rivalry variable, as it is likely that

**Table 5.2- Effects of Current and Past Rivalries on Conflict (Politically-relevant Dyads)**

	Model 1 (Logit) Originator	Model 2 (Logit) Adjusted Hostility	Model 3 (Ordered Logit) Highest Activity (Side a)
Major Power Presence	0.464 (0.85)	-0.147* (-2.08)	-0.0231 (-0.41)
Miles Distance	-0.000208*** (-19.79)	-0.000183*** (-14.59)	-0.000203*** (-19.98)
Contiguity	0.832*** (13.94)	0.665*** (8.74)	0.616*** (10.21)
CINC Proportion	-0.475*** (-9.60)	-0.505*** (-8.33)	-0.308*** (-6.28)
Joint Democracy	-0.488*** (-9.73)	-0.635*** (-9.67)	-0.599*** (-11.65)
Territory	6.071*** (41.56)	4.376*** (55.26)	4.275*** (69.90)
Defensive Alliance	-0.168*** (-4.57)	-0.0143 (-0.32)	0.0443 (1.19)
World War I	0.967*** (11.66)	1.452*** (16.65)	1.132*** (13.97)
World War II	1.032*** (15.75)	1.612*** (24.17)	1.335*** (22.10)
Externalized Rivalry	0.854*** (19.34)	0.954*** (16.66)	0.869*** (18.98)
Previous Rivalry	0.434*** (10.39)	0.317*** (6.27)	0.376*** (8.94)
Constant	-4.222*** (-53.09)	-4.704*** (-46.72)	-----
N	182959	182959	182959

t statistics in parentheses

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

the lessons learned from previous rivalries have a temporal decay. The miles distance between capital cities, CINC proportion, joint democracy, and defensive alliance are, unsurprisingly, correlated with being less likely to originate a dispute with another state. Surprisingly enough,

the coefficient for being currently involved in a rivalry is larger than the variable for joint democracy, indicating that the context of disputes and rivalries matters more than the democratic status of a state.

As for model 2, we see similar results as in model 1. With a  $\chi^2$  of 0, my model is a good predictor of the effect on the dependent variable. CINC proportion, major power presence, and joint democracy are negatively associated with using force or entering war. Similarly, contiguity, territory, world war controls, and the rivalry variables are all statistically significant at the .001 level of significance. Substantively, states currently involved in a rivalry with another state are more likely to use force or enter war with other states in the international system. Moving from no rivalry to currently being involved in a rivalry, states have a 2.6 higher odds of externalizing a rivalry. Likewise, states that have previously been involved in rivalries are more likely to use force or enter war with another state. For a one unit increase in past rivalry behavior, a corresponding increase of 1.37 odds is observed in with the adjusted hostility variable. As in model 1, the effect for the past rivalry variable is lower than the externalized rivalry variable.

In model 3, an ordered logit model of conflict escalation, we find that miles distance, CINC proportion, and joint democracy are negatively correlated with an increase in higher activity of violence. However, contiguity, territory, the World War controls, and externalized and previous rivalry variables are positively correlated with an increase in the level of highest activity by the state. For a one unit increase in the externalized rivalry variable (moving from no rivalry to currently in a rivalry), we find a .376 unit increase in the highest activity variable, holding all other variables constant.

Turning to the next set of models in table 3, which adds Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) rivalry data to control for those states that are currently in a rivalry with one another, we see similar results. Models 4, 5, and 6 show statistical significance at the .001 level for all variables except major power presence. Likewise, with a  $\chi^2$  of 0 for both models 4 and 5, these variables are good predictors for my dependent variable. The primary variables of interest, being currently involved in a rivalry with another state and having previously been involved in a rivalry with another state are significant at .001 level (see figure 4 for marginal effects of models 4 and 5). In substantive terms, states that are previously involved in a rivalry with another state or states currently involved in a rivalry with another state are more likely to originate a dispute against another state, they are more likely to use force or enter into war with another state, and they are more likely to use higher levels of violence against another state. However, the coefficients across models 4, and 6 are smaller than in models 1 and 2, which is to be expected with the addition of the control for Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) rivalries. In real terms, states currently involved in a rivalry with another state have an increased odds of 1.48 in increasing the probability of originating a dispute with another state and a state previously involved in a rivalry with another state have increased odds of 1.6 in originating a dispute with another state. In model 5, states currently involved in a rivalry are 1.7 times more likely to use force or enter war with another politically-relevant state. And states previously involved in a rivalry are 1.4 times more likely to use force or enter into war with another state. And in model 5, a one unit increase from no current rivalry to currently being in a rivalry results in a .544 increase in the highest level of violence pursued by a state. Similarly, moving from no past rivalry to previously having a rivalry results in a .342 increase in the level of violence pursued by a state.

Given the control for Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) strategic rivalries, which shows that states are considerably more likely to originate force, use higher levels of force, and use violence or enter into war with the state they are currently involved in a rivalry with, it is more appropriate to rely on models 4, 5, and 6. Reliance upon these models gives us a clearer picture for two reasons. First, states in rivalries, as hypothesized in the rivalries literature, are more likely to use force and initiate a dispute with one another. Second, it allows us to see the difference in the effect between states involved in rivalries with one another and those states that are not involved in rivalries with one another. Substantively, this means that we are finding evidence of learning and the conflict jump, in which the lessons of rivalrous behaviors are transferred to disputes with other states in the system.

Given this evidence, I find support for H1, H2, and H3. Models 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are statistically significant for the primary variables of interest, indicating that there is a degree of externalization in experiential learning. Likewise, the effects are in the expected direction and the effect of past rivalry is often, though not always, smaller than the effect of currently being involved in a rivalry (indicating that temporal considerations of lessons learned decay over time). Similarly, being involved in a rivalry or previously being involved in a rivalry has a larger

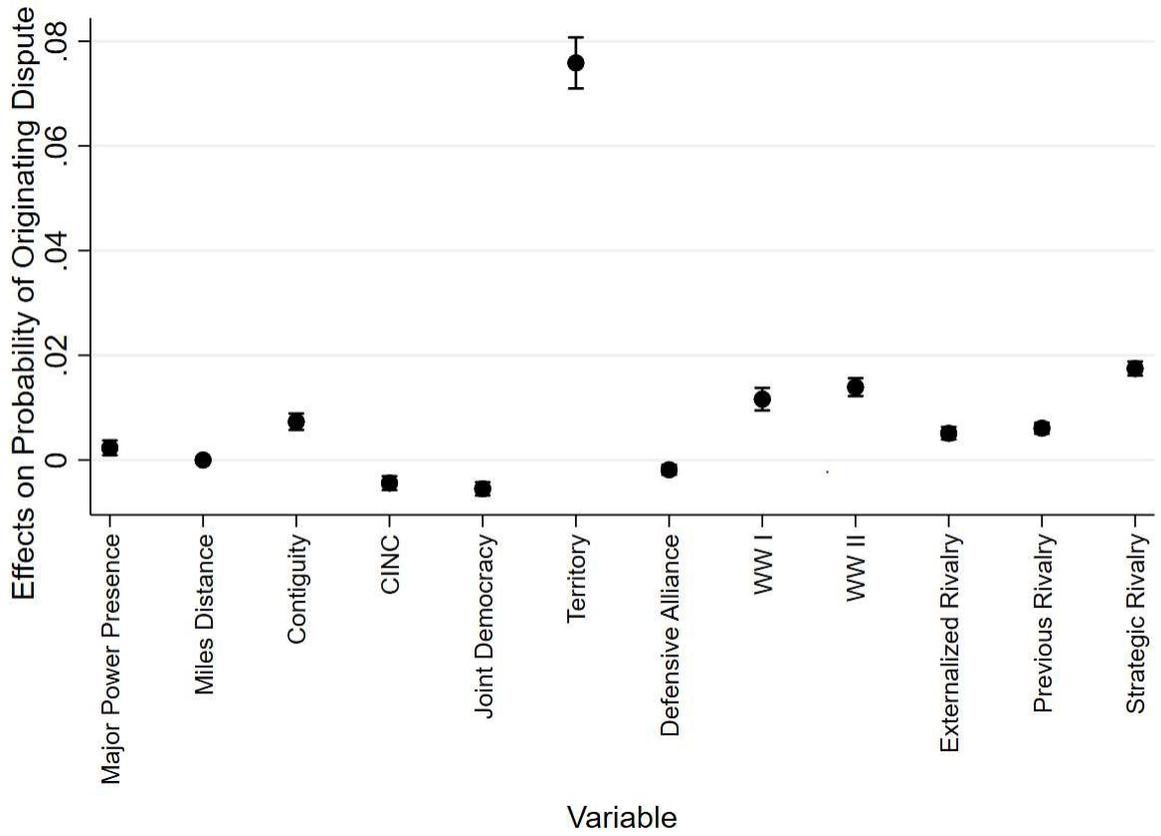
**Table 5.3-Effects of Current and Past Externalized Rivalries on Conflict (Politically-relevant Dyads, Controlling for Strategic Rivalries)**

	Model 4 (Logit) Originator	Model 5 (Logit) Adjusted Hostility	Model 6 (Ordered Logit) Highest Activity (Side a)
Major Power Presence	0.179** (3.22)	-0.0339 (-0.47)	0.0980 (1.70)
Miles Distance	-0.000175*** (-16.77)	-0.000157*** (-12.53)	-0.000177*** (-17.43)
Contiguity	0.566*** (9.24)	0.403*** (5.15)	0.338*** (5.45)
CINC Proportion	-0.341*** (-6.55)	-0.384*** (-6.04)	-0.156** (-3.01)
Joint Democracy	-0.426*** (-8.44)	-0.590*** (-8.92)	-0.548*** (-10.58)
Territory	5.871*** (39.70)	4.070*** (49.65)	3.908*** (61.86)
Defensive Alliance	-0.144*** (-3.87)	0.00382 (0.08)	0.0655 (1.74)
World War I	0.899*** (10.65)	1.395*** (15.82)	1.090*** (13.29)
World War II	1.077*** (16.25)	1.659*** (24.76)	1.393*** (22.90)
Externalized Rivalry	0.394*** (8.22)	0.544*** (8.86)	0.436*** (8.88)
Previous Rivalry	0.470*** (11.22)	0.342*** (6.75)	0.396*** (9.38)
Strategic Rivalry	1.351*** (29.85)	1.200*** (21.84)	1.299*** (28.70)
Constant	-4.319*** (-53.85)	-4.754*** (-46.96)	-----
N	182959	182959	182959

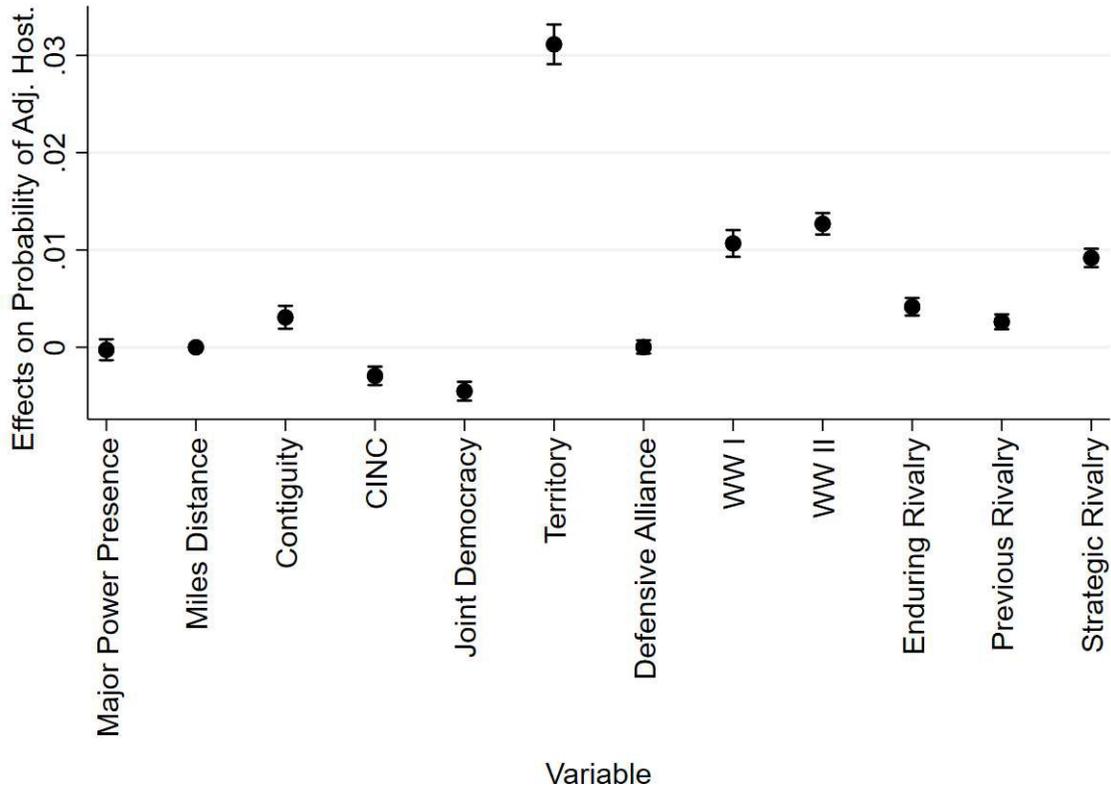
t statistics in parentheses  
\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

statistical effect than defensive alliances, CINC scores, joint democracy, the miles distance between capitals, and major power presence.

Figure 5.2- Model 4, Conditional Marginal Effects Plots (95% CIs)



**Figure 5.3- Model 5, Conditional Marginal Effects Plots (95% CIs)**



**Conclusion**

With these above findings, we see that violence does act diffusively between actors in the international system and that states learn from their experiences. When a state is engaged in a rivalry with another state, we see that the state is more likely to behave aggressively with other states in the international system. Similarly, I find a smaller effect for previously being involved in a rivalry across two of the three models, which indicates that diffusion of violence does not conclude with the end of a strategic rivalry and that the lessons of rivalries endure long after the end of the rivalry. This highlights the fact that lessons are often temporally bound (though evidence shows this is not the case for originating a dispute with another), though it is the case for using higher levels of force.

These findings are important for three primary reasons. First, realist accounts of violence between states as either due to the inherent nature of humans or an anarchic, self-help system are flawed in that they do not see conflictual behavior as a learned set of behaviors. Second, it provides evidence in support of Vasquez's (1993; 2009) claim that war is a learned behavior. Third, by using a framework of experiential learning, I demonstrate that the larger implication of thinking about conflict and peace as learned behaviors is crucial in understanding how states interact with one another. If Vasquez (1993; 2009) is right to claim that war is a learned behavior, we should examine the evidence to see if the steps to war argument (Senese and Vasquez 2008) constitutes a set of learned behaviors. Simply put, history and the experience between actors, as well as interactions with other actors in the international system, matters in determining whether states interact cooperatively or conflictually with one another. Experience matters for the practice of international relations and conflict.

The unique contribution of this argument is the way in which learning is operationalized. By using Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) rivalry data as a vehicle to argue that states externalize conflictual behavior to other non-rivalrous states, I avoid several problems. First, I am not looking between interactions with states that are involved in rivalries with one another. Instead, I am looking outside the unique set of circumstances that develop around rivalries and how states externalize violent behaviors to other states they interact with. This operationalization also avoids problems associated with selecting on the dependent or independent variables that accompanies using dispute-density approaches, which take their definitions of rivalries from the number of MIDs in a given timeframe. While this approach is useful, for my purposes it is not because the sample from which the dispute-density data is drawn is my dependent variable.

## Appendix

**Table 5.4 Effects of Current and Past Externalized Rivalries on Conflict (Non-politically Relevant Dyads)**

	Model 7 (Logit) Originator	Model 8 (Logit) Adjusted Hostility	Model 9 (Ordered Logit) Highest Activity (Side a)
Major Power Presence	-----	-----	-----
Miles Distance	-0.000435*** (-22.63)	-0.000290*** (-16.02)	-0.000331*** (-20.55)
Contiguity	-----	-----	-----
CINC Proportion	-0.434*** (-4.14)	-0.249* (-2.12)	-0.149 (-1.49)
Joint Democracy	-0.00560 (0.06)	-0.0382 (-0.35)	0.0867 (0.99)
Territory	11.00*** (17.99)	7.611*** (32.91)	7.293*** (38.19)
Defensive Alliance	-0.609*** (-8.70)	-0.330*** (-4.13)	-0.294*** (-4.38)
World War I	0.571 (1.86)	1.662*** (6.99)	1.299*** (5.51)
World War II	1.089*** (6.61)	2.751*** (26.05)	2.386*** (23.57)
Externalized Rivalry	0.820*** (10.00)	0.931*** (10.02)	0.869*** (11.05)
Previous Rivalry	0.368*** (4.57)	0.173 (1.92)	0.209** (2.72)
Strategic Rivalry	3.613*** (30.50)	3.782*** (25.88)	3.616*** (28.57)
Constant	-6.019*** (-63.04)	-7.032*** (-62.03)	-----
N	1345829	1345829	1345829

t statistics in parentheses

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**Table 5.5-Effects of Current and Past Externalized Rivalries on Conflict (All Dyads)**

	Model 10 (Logit) Originator	Model 11 (Logit) Adjusted Hostility	Model 12 (Ordered Logit) Highest Activity (Side a)
Major Power Presence	1.614*** (50.68)	1.427*** (36.83)	1.594*** (50.56)
Miles Distance	-0.000286*** (-31.87)	-0.000241*** (-23.71)	-0.000263*** (-30.95)
Contiguity	1.474*** (35.44)	1.386*** (26.89)	1.295*** (31.02)
CINC Proportion	-0.422*** (-8.92)	-0.404*** (7.13)	-0.194*** (-4.18)
Joint Democracy	-0.322*** (-7.24)	-0.452*** (-7.94)	-0.388*** (-8.67)
Territory	7.184*** (45.97)	4.704*** (55.87)	4.369*** (69.70)
Defensive Alliance	-0.302*** (-9.30)	-0.159*** (-4.05)	-0.0897** (-2.77)
World War I	0.905*** (10.78)	1.484*** (17.51)	1.173*** (14.73)
World War II	1.143*** (18.27)	1.979*** (34.25)	1.653*** (30.84)
Externalized Rivalry	0.608*** (14.77)	0.770*** (15.15)	0.667*** (16.15)
Previous Rivalry	0.586*** (15.74)	0.407*** (9.18)	0.457*** (12.42)
Strategic Rivalry	1.669*** (38.06)	1.498*** (27.96)	1.580*** (35.90)
Constant	-5.970*** (-119.40)	-6.544*** (-107.27)	-----
N	1528788	1528788	1528788

t statistics in parentheses

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**Table 5.6-Effects of Current and Past Externalized Rivalries on Conflict (Politically-relevant Dyads, Excluding World War Controls)**

	Model 13 (Logit) Originator	Model 14 (Logit) Adjusted Hostility	Model 15 (Ordered Logit) Highest Activity (Side a)
Major Power Presence	0.208*** (3.76)	0.0382 (0.54)	0.148** (2.58)
Miles Distance	-0.000175*** (-16.76)	-0.000157*** (-12.52)	-0.000178*** (-17.55)
Contiguity	0.565*** (9.24)	0.404*** (5.21)	0.344*** (5.57)
CINC Proportion	-0.331*** (-6.39)	-0.349*** (-5.55)	-0.132* (-2.57)
Joint Democracy	-0.434*** (-8.61)	-0.618*** (-9.36)	-0.564*** (-10.93)
Territory	5.949*** (39.96)	4.087*** (49.99)	3.893*** (61.69)
Defensive Alliance	-0.186*** (-5.02)	-0.0705 (-1.56)	-0.00751 (0.20)
Externalized Rivalry	0.433*** (9.08)	0.620*** (10.22)	0.494*** (10.16)
Previous Rivalry	0.479*** (11.48)	0.348*** (6.91)	0.403*** (9.60)
Strategic Rivalry	1.350*** (29.88)	1.185*** (21.68)	1.281*** (28.44)
Constant	-4.270*** (-53.41)	-4.660*** (-46.44)	-----
N	182959	182959	182959

t statistics in parentheses

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Implications

Taking into account how states learn from their prior interactions and their interactions with other states is an important step to having a unified concept of how conflict between two international actors occurs (Vasquez 2014). Furthermore, Vasquez (1993) claims that “war is a learned behavior” that “comes out of a long-term process” and “is a product of interactions and not simply systemic conditions” (42). In these three propositions, Vasquez (1993) maintains that conflict is learned behavior that emerges from a relationship between actors that is not simply the result of the immediate policy disagreements. Instead, conflict and the behaviors associated with conflict emerge between two states because the factors that foster conflict are already present: political dissimilarity, lack of trust, political competition, along with other behaviors that emerge from a shared negative history between the two actors. And with experience or observations of other states to guide them, states are more likely to choose violence or peace in the context of those relationships.

If I can demonstrate that states learn from prior interactions or others’ interactions across a variety of different behaviors associated with conflict, then I have provided evidence that prior interactions between states matter and that conflictual behaviors are learned from these interactions. In fact, most research regarding international conflict processes addresses why conflict is more likely to occur and under what conditions the probability of conflict escalates to war. Instead of discounting these claims, I have offered a causal story of how states and leaders

interact with their own history (experiential learning) and the history of others (observational learning) to contextualize their own policies with regards to a contemporary political problem.

By accounting for various other explanations of why alliances, arms races, or conflicts in the presence of disputes occur, I have demonstrated that my argument is robust across a variety of different literatures within the conflict processes area of study. Next, by using a learning framework that is rooted in findings from the fields of political science, education psychology, and organizational behavior, I have added a causal story to why these correlations exist. While it is possible to simply demonstrate or claim that these behaviors are spurious correlations driven by an exogenous factor, I have given a causal story that has maintained that these behaviors causally flow from the experience of these states.

In terms of the copying that occurs within alliance texts, if we can more fully understand the alliance structures that states and their leaders look to in their decisions to ally, we can better understand how states determine whether a previous alliance was successful or not. Additionally, we can better understand the process by which states “normalize” the formal language of alliance texts and use these texts to direct their own foreign policy goals. Most importantly, I have demonstrated in this chapter that states can either learn from their own prior alliance texts or from other states’ alliance texts. However, knowledge gained from the state’s prior alliance making history matters more than knowledge from other alliances, providing more evidence for experiential learning over observational learning. Additionally, I have demonstrated that there is greater learning at the state level than at the leader level of analysis and that this is due to the fact that the state has greater capacity for learning and translating those lessons into policy than do the individual leaders.

In terms of arms races, if we understand that arms races emerge from a dynamic political process in which states are dissimilar and are politically competitive, then when can understand the conditions under which we are likely to see an arms race emerge. Additionally, after an arms race has begun, if we see that one side has lost faith in the logic of deterrence, then we can see when it is likely that a state will either back down or have incentive to strike first. As I argue, the logic in how an arms race emerges closely mimics a learning process. The security dilemma itself can be understood as a game in which information is revealed about certainty, uncertainty, and resolve with each iteration of the game and that the state acts according to those signals it picks up. This process is more appropriately understood as a learning process, particularly an experiential learning process. However, it is also possible for states to look at how other states conducted arms races or interacted with the opposing state and use that information to diminish uncertainty and “gain the upper hand” in its dispute with the opposing state. Importantly, I have also demonstrated that due to the length of arms races and the intricate nature of how the political, economic, and military objectives are intertwined means that the state’s capacity for learning will be greater than the individual leader’s capacity to learn from events during an arms race.

The first implication of states being involved in rivalries is that states and their leaders are more likely to use force to accomplish their goals in interactions with other states. The second implication is that as a larger proportion of states in the international system are involved in rivalries, the more likely we should see dispute initiation and higher levels of force between non-rivalrous states in the system. A third implication is that non-rivalrous states that are victims of a state involved in a rivalry with another is that this third state is more likely to use force against another non-rivalrous state. We can therefore see evidence for a “network of violence”

that accompanies rivalrous behaviors. We should also expect to see this network affect filtering down from wars, which are the most deep-seated type of conflict between states in the international system. Finally, the implication of this is that experience guides states in how they interact with other states in the international system. And evidence for this experiential learning lasts beyond the rivalry: states previously involved in rivalries are more likely to initiate disputes, use higher levels of force, and use force or enter into war.

A further implication of the findings presented in this dissertation is that this argument speaks to both the conflict process literatures and peace literatures. While scholars often think of these literatures as speaking about vastly different behaviors in the international system, I have maintained that behaviors associated with conflict can be understood in the context of a state's prior interactions that are learned (experiential learning). The implication of this is that states or leaders who are involved in forming alliances, conducting arms races, or involved in rivalries are more likely to reciprocate such behavior in their interactions with other states. Thus, I claim that these behaviors associated with conflict and the steps to war argument (Senese and Vasquez 2008) diffuse to other actors in a system because they are learned behaviors from a state's past and are applied to a current political problem (for the definition of learning utilized, refer to page 15).

The flip side of this equation, which I do not address in this dissertation, is that behaviors associated with peaceful interactions are also more likely to spread in a diffusive manner to other actors within the international system. In fact, this is the causal argument that underpins much of the liberalism literature, particularly neofunctionalist and functionalist understandings of cooperation between states. If the learning mechanism I propose here is valid for behaviors more frequently associated with conflict, then scholars should also assume that states in peaceful

interactions with other states will be more likely to reciprocate those peaceful interactions with other states in the international system.

### Conclusion

As demonstrated in the proceeding arguments, I have shown that scholars of international relations should examine how states learn to behave in arms races, alliances, and disputes/rivalries from previous experiences and by observing other states' interactions. While conflict and cooperation can certainly be understood as stemming from more immediate causes (for instance, Vasquez 2009; Senese and Vasquez 2008), we should also consider to what extent states learn from their prior interaction or, in the absence of these interactions, the extent to which the experience of other states influences their behaviors.

Given Reiter's (1996) findings regarding alliance behavior regarding the type of state and the success/failure of prior alliances, we should assume that we can also draw similar conclusions regarding the alliance texts themselves. Next, using Mansbach and Vasquez's (1981) framework regarding arms races, we should consider how the heightened political competition between two states increases the probability that two states will engage in an arms race with one another. Thus, arms races emerge from political differences, a lack of similarity, and a belief in the logic of deterrence. In other words, for arms races to emerge, there must be a shared negative history between the two parties. And this means that states learn from their prior interactions and this dissimilarity that the other state is a "threat" and, therefore, states arm themselves under the preparedness doctrine to "prepare for war". Finally, if Nevin (1996) is correct that states learn to use war as a selection by consequences (meaning victory or defeat),

then we should also examine how states engaged in rivalries interact differently with non-rivalrous states than those states that are not in a rivalry.

If, as mentioned earlier, we assume that states and their leaders are more than “black boxes”, then we should conclude that states and their leaders interact with and learn from the world in which they live. While previous scholarship has largely focused on those immediate correlations and results of conflict, instead of conflict as a long-term process, I have offered an alternative view that supplements our understanding of conflict processes as a series of learning events based on experiences and observations.

I frame this understanding of learning in two different yet inter-related ways. First, I assume that states and leaders can either learn by doing or learn by observing others. While learning by doing (experiential learning) is assumed to elucidate the most valuable lessons, learning by observing others is understood to be a valid “shortcut” to determining the implications, strategies, and approaches one may use in interacting with another in the international system. However, evidence for observational learning is particularly difficult to come by and is less likely to have as large of an impact as does experiential learning.

Second, I assume that the process by which states learns is diffusive. In other words, knowledge is transmitted through the interactions between actors within a system. Simply put, diffusion is the process by which states learn to use certain behaviors for a given situation. While data problems mean that we cannot see the origin of alliances or the first arms race or the first states in rivalries with one another, we can look for evidence within the current data we have to see how these behaviors diffuse to other actors in the system. In particular, this demonstrates that state and leader learning in international relations is predicated on either prior experiences

(or near experiences, such as domestic political background), or on observing the behaviors of others.

In the case of alliances, I have examined an otherwise overlooked resource of rich causal inference. Specifically, I have examined all available alliance texts from 1891 to 1995 for evidence of how states learn from prior experiences with making alliances and, in the absence of this experience, how they learn from the experience of others. By controlling for whether a state had a previous alliance or if the leader had a previous alliance (of which a smaller effect is expected), I demonstrate that in examining my full model, states and leaders with prior alliances are more likely to copy from those previous texts. This demonstrates that their prior experience with negotiating and making alliances does matter in making newer alliances. Additionally, I show that states are more likely to copy from their own previous texts more so than they do from other states' texts. This finding indicates that states are more likely to rely on their own experiences (texts) than the experiences of other states. I argue that this is for two reasons. First, the lessons may be more applicable to the current political environment a state is involved in. Second, the state is more familiar with its own history and thus more likely to apply the lessons from that history to its own current policies.

In the arms race chapter I conduct a case study of the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States. I argue that while previous scholarship has largely focused on the effects of arms races or how various topic such as the security dilemma and uncertainty can cause an arms race to emerge or escalate to war. Instead, I have focused on the political aspects that surround the emergence and continuation of the Cold War arms race. I argue that scholars have largely ignored the fact that arms races emerge from a shared sense of hostility between two parties and they are sustained by both sides' belief in the logic of deterrence and the

preparedness doctrine. Additionally, I maintain that we should view arms races as a series of learning events in which states learn from the other state with each iteration of the arms race game. And the fact that states learn from this series of interactions while having faith in the logic of deterrence means that the state conceived of as an organization will learn from its prior history of interactions with the opposing state.

In the case of disputes in the presence of alliances, I argue that states currently engaged in a rivalry or states previously engaged in a rivalry are more likely to use violence with non-rivalrous states. To do this, I use Thompson and Dreyer's (2011) rivalry data to identify which states are more likely to have "learned" the lessons of rivalrous behaviors. Next, I see that those states are more likely to originate disputes and use higher levels of violence in those disputes than states which are not currently involved in rivalries. While I do not explicitly test observational learning in this chapter, I do directly test experiential learning. My argument is that states currently or previously involved in rivalries, which are particularly deep-seated political disagreements between states, will make a state more likely to start a dispute with a non-rivalrous state and use higher levels of force against that state. This is because states in those rivalries have been exposed to the higher levels of violence and political competition within rivalries and are therefore more likely to accept and utilize that behavior with other states in the international system. Finally, I determine that this finding is robust across all dyads, politically relevant dyads and non-politically relevant dyads.

While Vasquez (2014) has noted that a unified concept of conflict does not exist, I have identified several components of conflict process literature that demonstrate that states as well as their leaders learn from prior experiences as well as the experiences of others. While this is not to say that I have offered a unified theory of conflict, I do maintain that my contribution is

that I have argued that we should examine to what extent prior experiences matters in the decision of states and their leaders to use these behaviors associated with conflict to achieve political objectives.

### Future Work

The causal framework presented in this study makes future work regarding state learning both logically coherent and applicable to a variety of other questions in the conflict processes literature. Below, I present some of the future works planned that use or are derived from the framework that has been presented in this dissertation.

In terms of measuring alliances for evidence of learning, I (along with Doug Gibler) have developed several ideas that both speak to the literature and further provide evidence that alliance texts themselves are rich sources of data. In particular, we have conducted preliminary tests that indicate that leaders from democracies are more likely to copy texts pre-WW II and that rebel leaders with a labor background from 1960 onwards are more likely to copy alliance texts. We argue that these individuals are more likely to copy alliance texts at those times because it was a way to “accede” to the dominate norms of the time. Pre-WW II there were few democracies and heads of democratic states were more likely to “learn” from rulers of non-democratic states. And those leaders with a rebel and labor background were more likely to copy alliance texts around 1960 as a way to gain legitimacy in the eyes of democratic states that were largely the agenda setters in the post-WW II world.

Additionally, Doug Gibler and I are currently working on constructing a dataset disaggregating the alliance texts from 1891 to 1995 to determine which of the articles and provisions are the most influential on subsequent texts. We argue that this is a good measure for

which texts are deemed “successful” by leaders and which texts are not. Additionally, we argue that those articles that are heavily copied are also most likely to be the “trend setters” for future alliances.

In terms of future research into the diffusion of conflict from higher levels of conflict to less intense levels of conflict, I intend to expand my argument to include the Goertz and Diehl (2006) data which operationalizes rivalries differently. As previously mentioned, though, using this operationalization is problematic for my purposes because it violates assumptions of statistical independence between both sides of the equation.

Additionally, I intend to determine if we see this effect for wars on both crises and rivalries. In other words, are states or leaders that are involved in interstate wars more likely to have rivalries with states with whom they did not engage in war? Additionally, does this affect hold for international crises, which are political events that could readily develop into wars? Finally, do we see this effect in one-sided crises within the ICB data? In one-sided crises, only one state perceives itself to be involved in a crisis with another state. Thus we should expect the other state which does not perceive itself to be in a crisis to not be more likely to be more conflict-prone with other states in the international system. While this will be a separate paper, it will add to the robustness of my findings regarding the diffusion of violence from high-level conflictual interactions to lower-level conflictual interactions.

As also mentioned, I intend to trace the “network” of violence to third-order actors to determine how far down the chain of interactions between states violence permeates. In the chapter presented in this dissertation, I examine when state a is in a rivalry with state b and how

it interacts with state c. An even more interesting question is how state c interacts with state d.<sup>59</sup>

This approach is useful because it strengthens my argument that the effect of rivalries permeates deep within the system to actors who are not involved in or allied with the rivalrous actors.

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<sup>59</sup> Credit for this idea must be attributed to Prof. Susan Sample. In discussions with her regarding the diffusion of violence from rivalries to disputes, she pointed out that an even more interesting question is the third-order effect of rivalries and their consequences for interactions with states not involved directly in rivalries.

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