

Game: My first alliance

Premise

- *Background:* your country—a patron—forged a new alliance with another country—a protege. The goal is to deter a land invasion from your mutual adversary, maintain influence over your protege, and avoid entrapment.
- *Challenge:* Maintaining alliances are hard, but you are up to the task. Navigate key decisions in alliance politics and see whether you are able to maintain the alliance or not.
- *Tools:* A central challenge of international politics is that there is uncertainty about the intentions and capabilities of other states. So to play this game we will need to inject some uncertainty: <https://freeonlinedice.com>.

Round 1: Two-level games

Your domestic polity is mad at you for making an alliance because your country will bear most of the human and economic costs of defense. Your protege is now worried about being abandoned. What do you do?

- Nothing: the domestic audience will get over it soon
- Domestic messaging: go on a campaign and prove the alliance's worth
- Reassurance 1: foreign diplomatic trips to smooth things over
- Reassurance 2: send the ally more weapons

Here is the payoff structure to your Round 1 decision:

- If you choose nothing and roll is an even number, give yourself a +1. The domestic audience and protege got over it. But the domestic audience may still turn on you later. . . If the roll was odd, you get 0 points, and your protege not only feel like it might be abandoned but has taken interest in exploring other (independent) policy options.
- If you chose domestic messaging and roll is 1 or 2, give yourself a +2. The domestic audience buys into your story and is here to support for the long-run. If the roll was 3-6, you get 0 points, and your protege not only feel like it might be abandoned but has taken interest in exploring other (independent) policy options.
- If you chose reassurance 1 and roll is 3 or 4, give yourself a +1. Diplomats are reassured for the time being. Otherwise, you get 0 points, and your protege not only feel like it might be abandoned but has taken interest in exploring other (independent) policy options.
- If you chose reassurance 2, give yourself a +3. Protege is very reassured and excited to get more weapons.

Round 2: Protege's move

Congrats to all those who gained alliance points! But now your proteges are too excited to have your support. They are thinking of dragging you into a conflict (i.e., entrapment). To those who did not gain an alliance point: your protege is a bit ticked at you. They are deciding to go fully independent. A roll of the dice will tell us what the protege decides to do next.

- If you have 0 alliance points, an odd roll will mean your alliance is over. Otherwise, your alliance lives to see another day. . . but things are shaky.
- If you have 1 alliance point, a roll of 5 will mean you are entrapped! Otherwise your ally is in check.
- If you have 2 alliance points, a roll of 5 or 6 will mean you are entrapped! Otherwise your ally is in check.
- If you have 3 alliance points, an even roll will mean your entrapped! Otherwise, your ally is in check, but they are very tempted to recklessly drive!

Round 3: Adversary's move

A lot has gone down recently in the world of alliance politics. Your mutual adversary is watching from afar and deciding whether right now is the time to take some territory from your protege. A roll of the dice will tell us what the adversary decides to do next.

- If your protege went independent, a roll of 2-6 means that the adversary decided to invade your protege. You have no formal obligations anymore, so you are not obligated to militarily intervene.
- If your protege did not entrap you and did not go independent, a roll of 1 means that the adversary will fight. The chances are low because you've build a stable system of reassurance and deterrence.
- If your protege entrapped you, then you are potentially in hot water if the adversary takes the bait. An odd roll means you fight.

Alliance assessment

- Did your alliance survive (i.e., no formal break-up) by the end of the three rounds? If it did not survive, what went wrong?
- What types of activities are costly signals of reassurance? When did reassurance "work"?
- Did you end up entrapped in a conflict? If so, what tipped your alliance in that direction?
- What factors do you think are related to deterrence failure (i.e., the adversary attacks)?
- How realistic do you think this game was? If you were a game designer, would you make any tweaks to the payoff structure or steps in the game?