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Leader ideology and state commitment to multilateral treaties

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Abstract

The existing literature argues that the left is generally more supportive of multilateralism in foreign policy than the right. However, the impact of ideology on state commitment to multilateral cooperation have not yet been empirically tested adequately. We assess the presence of such a left–right divide on state commitment to multilateral treaties employing an original dataset, containing all the available information about the ratification of the multilateral treaties deposited with the UN Secretary General since 1945. Our results indicate that indeed countries led by left-wing leaders are generally faster at ratifying treaties than those led by right-wing leaders. However, the association between leader ideology and commitment to multilateral treaties is substantially conditioned by regime type and the international context. In fact, we find robust evidence of a significant gap in ratification duration between states led by left-wing and right-wing leaders in democracies but not in other regime types, and during the Cold War but not after. Through such findings, this article provides a contribution to the debate on the impact of ideology on international relations and the drivers of global support for multilateralism.

Keywords Ideology · Ratification · Multilateral treaties · Domestic politics · Democracy · Cold War

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1 Introduction

The United States signed the Paris Agreement under the Democrat Barack Obama, withdrew under the next administration, the Republican one of Donald Trump, and then re-joined it under Trump's successor Joe Biden, Obama's former vice president. Brazil signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons during the presidency of Michel Temer, but the ratification process stopped when the far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro took over. Now, with the left-wing president Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva in power, the ratification process is back on track and expected to be completed soon (Presidência da República, 2023). Does leader ideology have anything to do with states commitment to multilateral treaties?

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the future of international cooperation. While the number of issues requiring attention and solutions at the supranational level is increasing, scholars and policy-makers alike have expressed concerns about the ability to deliver international cooperation in the future. Ratification of international treaties is of crucial importance for our understanding of international cooperation, as treaty-making is the preferred way of international cooperation today and a key mechanism for commitment to address common problems (Bernauer et al., 2010; Denemark & Hoffmann, 2008; Lantis, 2008; Lupu, 2016; Milewicz & Elsig, 2014). Committing to multilateral treaties usually consists of two steps: the signing of international treaties, and their domestic ratification. However, there is often a significant period between signing and ratifying international treaties.

One of the reasons for such delay might come from politicisation at the domestic level. Scholars have argued that ratification processes "have become increasingly politicized" (Lantis, 2008, p. 1). However, states are bound by the treaties only from the moment of ratification. Drawing on the two-level game theory approach (Putnam, 1988), scholars have also argued that negotiators need to take into account what the domestic moods are when negotiating treaties (Bang et al., 2012; Bernauer et al., 2010; Hug & König, 2002; König, 2005). A few studies investigated the impact of partisanship on the treaty-ratification process in the US (Böller, 2021; DeLaet & Scott, 2006; Kreps et al., 2018; Peake, 2017). However, attention to the effect of ideology on treaty ratification globally has been much more limited (Boockmann, 2006). In this article, we move this research a step forward, addressing this literature gap.

We focus on treaty ratification as a key indicator of commitment to multilateralism, as it represents a stronger test of willingness to engage in multilateral cooperation. While signatures can signal intent, states are only legally bound by their multilateral obligations upon ratification. States can withdraw ratification without withdrawing their signature, indicating a decreased commitment to multilateralism, as seen in Russia's withdrawal from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (Arms Control Association, 2023). As Ostermann and Wagner (2023a) note, ratification is vital for understanding domestic constraints on foreign policy and normative commitments. Additionally, focusing on signatures rather than ratification can create empirical issues in assessing state commitment, as states often

commit to multilateral treaties without signing them. Accession, which is ratification without prior signature, is common practice for states committing to multilateral treaties already entered into force or signed before their independence.

Through this article, we provide a significant contribution to two distinct fields of inquiry. On the one hand, the literature on ideology and foreign policy has rarely considered commitment to multilateralism as an output to be explained. On the other hand, the literature on treaty ratification has never comprehensively investigated the impact of ideology. Moreover, we study whether the effect of ideology varies across different regime types and over time. Regrettably, scholarship on ideology and foreign policy has not yet explored such interactions. Therefore, this study adds nuances to the established claim that "ideology matters" in international politics, highlighting "where" and "when" it matters. To test such arguments, we use a novel dataset of multilateral treaties which covers 350 multilateral treaties deposited with the UN Secretary General and stored in the United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC) since the end of the Second World War. This is the most complete dataset on multilateral treaty ratification to date, spanning across different type of participants (states and international organizations), treaty scope (universal and regional treaties) and issue area (e.g. disarmament, environment, human rights).

Our findings suggest that ideology matters, but not everywhere, and not all the time. We find that, broadly speaking, states led by left-wing leaders are more committed to multilateral treaties than states led by centrist and right-wing leaders. This finding provides evidence that individual-level differences about multilateral cooperation between leftist and rightist translate into government-level preferences (Rathbun, 2007). However, the effect of leader ideology is circumscribed only to a certain type of regime and a specific period. Democracies led by left-wing leaders are faster at ratifying multilateral treaties than democracies led by right-wing leaders, but there is no significant difference between left-wing and right-wing non-democracies. During the Cold War, left-wing led states were more committed than right-wing led states, but such difference has become negligible afterwards.

The remainder of the article continues as follows. In the second section, we review the state of the art on treaty ratification. Tacking stock of the debate on the impact of ideology and partisanship on foreign policy, we then present our hypotheses. In the following section, we introduce our original dataset on multilateral treaty ratification. We subsequently describe the dependent and independent variables included in our regression analysis. In the fifth section, we show the results of our models and prediction about the average duration of state treaty ratification process on the basis of leader ideology. The final section concludes the article, discussing our empirical findings and our contribution to extant scholarship.

2 Why states ratify multilateral treaties

The question why some states ratify international treaties quickly and others more slowly is related to the question why states join international treaties at all. Scholars often look at international treaties as signalling devices (Baccini & Koenig-Archibugi, 2014; Hugh-Jones et al., 2018). As Büthe and Milner (2008) argue, when a

state joins a treaty, it signals a certain position to the world, and treaties in this way fulfil an informational role. Von Stein (2005) even sees a "selection bias" as signing a treaty could be interpreted as a signal of a willingness to commit. This argument has been broadly applied to investment and trade treaties (Bauerle Danzman, 2016; Haftel, 2010; Peinhardt & Allee, 2012), environmental treaties (Bernauer et al., 2010; Hugh-Jones et al., 2018), and labour standard treaties (Baccini & Koenig-Archibugi, 2014). However, there are multiple ways in which states can use signalling – they may aim to signal an association with a particular group of countries (Long et al., 2007), but also to signal their commitment to a certain future-oriented policy direction (Fearon, 1994; Moravcsik, 2000).

However, ratification is not to be taken for granted after signature. States sometimes do not ratify the treaties that they signed, and sometimes take a very long time to ratify. Even if they are committed to international treaties, involuntary defection can occur, often due to domestic and international factors (Grieco et al., 2009; Simmons, 2009). Looking at the domestic determinants of the treaty commitment, scholarship based on two-level-game approaches (Putnam, 1988) focused on the interplay between domestic situation and international agreements. Scholars have often stressed that, in order to facilitate the ratification of treaties at home, the negotiators need to anticipate possible domestic challenges (and challengers), and take possible criticism into account already when designing the treaties (Hug & König, 2002; König & Hug, 2006). However, the two-level nature is also recognised in the scholarship that focuses on the domestic politics of treaty negotiation, which looked at particular strategies used by executives to assure ratification in legislatures, particularly in the US setting (Bang et al., 2012; Kelley & Pevehouse, 2015; Kreps et al., 2018; Lantis, 2006; Milner & Tingley, 2015). Scholars also tried to understand the effect of partisanship and ideology on the ratification process of treaties in the United States (Böller, 2021; DeLaet & Scott, 2006; Kreps et al., 2018; Peake, 2017).[1] The effects of partisanship are also reflected in public opinion (Gries, 2014; Rathbun, 2013).

However, the attention to ideology as a factor in understanding multilateral cooperation on a larger sample of countries was limited (Boockmann, 2006; Schulze, 2014). In fact, there are no studies empirically testing the impact of ideology on commitment toward multilateral treaties across different topics. This is surprising as by now there is ample evidence that ideology generally matters in international politics (Gries & Yam, 2020; Hofmann, 2013; Hofmann & Martill, 2021; Noël & Thérien, 1995; Rathbun, 2004, 2007). At the same time, extant literature on the politics of foreign policy has consistently overlooked commitment to multilateral treaties as an output to be explained by ideology. Some studies suggested that, broadly speaking, leftist individuals are more prone to support multilateralism than rightist individuals (Rathbun, 2007, 2012). However, whether such cleavage translates into diverging foreign policy outputs or not is yet to be known. Therefore, through this study, we fill a gap in both these strands of research.

[1] Interestingly enough, a majority of these works focus on ratification of arms control agreements.

Moreover, the effect of government ideology on international politics has seldom been investigated spanning across the end of the Cold War and, simultaneously, regime types. Most of the long-term analyses on the impact of partisanship on foreign policy concentrated on the case of United States, with contrasting evidence regarding the effect of the bipartisan competition (Chaudoin et al., 2010; Kupchan & Trubowitz, 2007). Most comparative studies instead tend to focus on the post-Cold War period only and all of them consider the impact of ideology only in democratic countries due to the lack of comparable data for autocratic and developing countries (Finke, 2022; Ostermann & Wagner, 2023a, 2023b). While we acknowledge the importance of keeping intervening variables constant and issues in measuring ideology across different contexts, we see such analyses as limited. Relying on a brand-new dataset categorizing leader ideology across the world since 1945, we therefore aim to improve the understanding of the impact of ideology on international politics.

In testing the impact of ideology on multilateral treaty ratification across regime type and over time, we look at a broad set of treaties signed since the end of the Second World War. The existing scholarship on the determinants of ratification has thus far been partial at best. Existing work has focused either on a limited time period (Elsig et al., 2011; Hugh-Jones et al., 2018); a limited geographical area (Kelley & Pevehouse, 2015; Lantis, 2005; Peake, 2017); or a particular issue area, such as trade (Büthe & Milner, 2008; Schneider & Urpelainen, 2013), labour rights (Baccini & Koenig-Archibugi, 2014; Boockmann, 2006), human rights (Hafner-Burton et al., 2008), investment (Haftel & Thompson, 2013), arms control (DeLaet & Scott, 2006; Krepon & Caldwell, 2016) or environment (Böhmelt & Butkutė, 2018; Neumayer, 2002a, 2002b; Yamagata et al., 2017). If scholars looked into the past at the broader set of treaties, they were interested in the joining process rather than in the ratification process duration (Lupu, 2016). By building the largest dataset on multilateral treaty ratification to date, we offer an empirical advancement to the research on this issue.

3 Ideology and commitment to multilateral treaties

The "domestic turn in international relations" (Kaarbo, 2015) has focused the attention of scholars on the domestic factors which explain the behaviour of states in international politics. One of the most fruitful avenues of scholarship in this stream has been focusing on the role of political ideology in explaining particular foreign policy choices by states.

In recent years, one way to study the impact of ideology on commitment to multilateralism would be to focus on the role of populism in international politics. Scholars have studied how populists interact with multilateral institutions, for instance by studying their development aid allocation (Hackenesch et al., 2022), how they interact with international courts (Voeten, 2020) or what preferences they have in the IMF (Carnegie et al., 2024). However, one of the conclusions of this work is that the impact of populism is often variegated (Copelovitch &

Pevehouse, 2019).[2] As populism is often seen as a thin ideology (Mudde, 2004), impact of populism often varies by host ideology (Destradi et al., 2021). Therefore, it makes sense to focus on other dimensions of ideology.

As Noël and Thérien (2008) argue, the left–right dimension of political ideology remains dominant, "the most enduring and comprehensive way of mapping belief systems" (Noël & Thérien, 2023, p. 151). It is therefore no wonder that it was found to matter not only in domestic politics, but in foreign policy too. For instance, this cleavage is influential in security policy, particularly in the propensity to use force (Rathbun, 2004; Wagner, 2020). Wagner et al. (2018) show that contestation of military operations is driven by the traditional left–right cleavage rather than "new politics" conflicts such as "gal vs tan" ("gal" stands for green-alternative-liberal and "tan" stands for traditional-authoritarian-nationalist). In international economic policy, the left–right dimension unsurprisingly affects how states approach trade (Milner & Judkins, 2004), how foreign direct investment is allocated (Pinto, 2013), or how foreign aid is distributed (Dietrich et al., 2020; Thérien & Noel, 2000). To sum up, scholars have demonstrated that left-wing and right-wing voters are systematically different when it comes to foreign policy (Onderco, Etienne, & Smetana, 2022), that such differences are mirrored at the party level (Fonck et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2018) and that they are eventually translated into different foreign policy outputs at the government level (Mello, 2012; Wagner, 2020). The left–right distinction on foreign policy matters even in settings where this dimension is usually not salient, such as Japan (Proksch et al., 2011). Even if the leaders might sometimes use ideology in instrumental or strategic ways, their electorate's views are fairly stable in reflecting left–right ideology (Noël & Thérien, 2023).

Existing work in the field of international relations indicates that left-leaning governments are generally more cooperative in international politics. Left-wing governments are often more attuned to international cooperation on the basis of their roots which are often in organised labour or other popular movements. Leaders in such parties are more likely to hold cosmopolitan views which create a moral obligation to cooperate (Bayram, 2017). They are more likely to express and hold views privileging community over an individual, which translates into preference for cooperation in international affairs (Rathbun, 2007). As Rathbun argued in his ground-breaking work, individuals leaning to the left (more liberal, using the American vocabulary) are more likely to trust their counterparts and show more openness to international cooperation (Rathbun, 2012). Their trust towards others also translates into lesser concern about sovereignty loss and associated sovereignty costs (Böhmelt, 2022). Their cooperativeness extends further: left-wing governments are more engaged in debates in the UN General Assembly (Finke, 2022) and have more positive views of (and spend more on) development aid (Thérien & Noel, 2000). Evidence from Anglophone democracies also shows that they are more likely to vote similarly to other countries in the world (Hanania, 2018). By contrast, right-wing governments are more likely to express more nationalist views, which then translate into views opposed to multilateralism and multilateral cooperation (Fordham &

[2] We are grateful to Reviewer 3 for suggesting us to engage with this line of inquiry.

Flynn, 2023), more negative views of other countries (Gries, 2014), but also privileging military spending (Wenzelburger & Böller, 2020).

In terms of treaty ratification, Boockmann (2006) shows that countries led by left-wing governments are more likely to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions than right-wing counterparts. To the contrary, Schulze (2014) does not find this domestic cleavage to be relevant in determining ratification of environmental treaties. However, as we already noted, the effect of political ideology on treaty commitment has never been assessed comprehensively across multiple issue areas.[3] Therefore, in line with the just mentioned literature, we hypothesise that left-wing led states are more likely to ratify multilateral treaties than right-wing led states.

H1: States led by left-wing leaders are more committed to multilateral treaties than states led by right-wing leaders

Scholars, especially comparative political economists focusing on neoliberalism, have demonstrated that there are important ideological similarities between the policies pursued by neoliberal governments in democratic or non-democratic settings (Gallo, 2021). However, most international relations scholarship would argue that this matters more in democracies. The domestic regime type is broadly recognised as a major factor driving the foreign policy of states (Mansfield et al., 2002; Russett & Oneal, 2001; Simmons, 1998). The academic focus on regime type has even given rise to a major research programme, dubbed "democratic distinctiveness" (Geis & Wagner, 2011; Owen, 2004). Scholars in this research programme have found democracies to be more cooperative (Russett & Oneal, 2001), and when it comes to treaty ratification, democracies are usually faster (Elsig et al., 2011). However, leaders in democracies are also more reflective of the preferences of their citizens within the borders of their countries (Aldrich et al., 2006). Because leaders in democracies need to be (re-) elected, they are more careful to reflect the preferences of their electorate and stick to the ideological proclivities which they were elected on (Gries & Yam, 2020; Milner & Tingley, 2015). In democracies, civil society often advocates and lobbies in favour of ratification of certain international treaties, and such lobbying is less common in non-democracies (Slaughter, 1995). Other types of regimes feature fewer restrictions, and therefore their leaders need to worry less about domestic veto players (Hafner-Burton et al., 2008; Vreeland, 2008). They might sometimes opportunistically ratify treaties without a desire to comply.[4] If autocratic leaders are constrained in their exercise of the foreign policy, it is often because of different types of players (such as other power centres within the regime), or the general sentiment in the public opinion (Jost, 2024). Noël and Thérien (2023)

[3] Vignoli and Corradi (2024) is an exception as they test the correlation between ideology and treaty ratification in Italy after 1989.

[4] This should, however, not be interpreted as arguing that parliaments do not matter for international treaty ratification in non-democracies. Kassenova (2022), for instance, argues that Kazakh parliament was seen as a serious veto-player for the process of ratification of a number of treaties related to the removal of nuclear materials after the Soviet Union's breakup.

agree that the left–right dimension matters more in democracies, but offer a different theoretical explanation – democracies give citizens "the capabilities and possibilities of making and expressing their own choices" (p. 254), building on the work of Inglehart and Welzel (2005). On the basis of such arguments, we expect the cleavage between left and right on commitment to multilateral treaties to be amplified in democratic countries.

H2: In democracies, the impact of leader ideology on the states' commitment to multilateral treaties is stronger than in other regime types.

Lastly, we think that the difference between governments with different ideological proclivities declined after the end of the Cold War. Realist theories of international cooperation argue that the international system influences the likelihood of states to join and ratify international treaties. As argued by Kenneth Waltz (1979), the shape of the international system influences how states behave within the system. For Waltz, the key part of the international system is the number of great powers in it. Since the end of World War II, the international system was characterised by the bipolarity of the Cold War and the unipolarity of the post-Cold War world. During the Cold War, much of the international cooperation was seen through the prism of rivalry between East and West, which soured the cooperation between the camps (Lupu, 2016; Russett, 1966; Soo Yeon & Russett, 1996; Voeten, 2000). The fault lines of the Cold War meant that cooperation across individual camps was difficult and structural conflict was dominant (Doyle, 1983; Krasner, 1985).

By contrast, at the end of the Cold War, international system was marked by unipolarity, which led to the development of what Ikenberry (2009) calls "Liberal Internationalism 3.0". This was also a period of intense institutionalization, both in terms of the scope and depth of international cooperation increased as well (Börzel & Zürn, 2021). On the other hand, more states became involved in international negotiations where previously only a handful of countries had been active – such as in the areas of the environment (Neumayer, 2002a, 2002b) or nuclear non-proliferation (Onderco, 2019). The newly democratising countries were encouraged to join the institutions of the liberal international order – which often included signing and ratifying treaties (Cooley & Nexon, 2020; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). Prior work also confirmed that the end of the Cold War changed the patterns of the ratification of global environmental treaties (Yamagata et al., 2017). Therefore, the end of the Cold War created a pressure for multilateral engagement.

The end of the century marked also what Noël and Thérien (2008, p. 195) define as a global "rapprochement" between the left and the right. In domestic politics, while "the right soften[ed] its stance on market competition, individualism, and a leaner state", the "left [came] to terms with the legitimacy of the market, the virtues of competition, and the need for efficiency". Notably, in this period, Giddens (1994) theorised a "third way" beyond left and right that inspired many (centre-) leftist leaders in Western Europe, including Tony Blair in Great Britain and Gerhard Schröder in Germany. Such convergence towards the centre, mostly driven by socialist parties, has found robust empirical support (Knutsen, 1998). In the context

of many developing countries, the left also felt compelled to question communist ideology and embrace the benefits of foreign investment.

In international politics, such rapprochement pivoted around a "new development consensus", able to combine the right's preference for market and competition with the left's concern for justice (Noël & Thérien, 2008, p. 195). According to Noël and Thérien (2008), on one hand, the United Nations realised the importance of markets for development, and, on the other hand, Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and World Bank) moved away from the strict neoliberal agenda they had pursued in the previous decades. However, this rapprochement was not limited to economic agenda. As argued by Rathbun (2004) and confirmed by Wagner (2020), the post-Cold War period has seen a greater convergence among between the ideological left and right also in other areas of foreign policy. For instance, the leftist parties (and then, particularly the center-left) became similarly supportive of the use of military force abroad compared to the right-wing parties, but for different reasons. In yet another area of international politics, Schneider and Urpeleinen find decreasing levels of partisan heterogeneity in preferences for development cooperation since the end of the Cold War (Schneider & Urpeleinen, 2014). Drawing on this work, we propose a more generalized hypothesis that the ideological divide between the left and right after the end of the Cold War decreased.

H3: After the end of the Cold War, the impact of leader ideology on states' commitment to multilateral treaties decreases.

The second and third hypotheses should be conceived as a refinement of the central argument expressed in the first hypothesis. We are convinced of the relevance of the left–right distinction in shaping states' foreign policy behaviour, and in particular, commitment to multilateralism, and we deem as important to provide the first comprehensive test of this general pattern. Partly because of data limitations, existing literature has failed to test the impact of ideology on foreign policy in a systematic way. At the same time, we have strong reasons to think that this pattern is restricted to democratic countries during the Cold War. Our key contribution consists exactly in hypothesizing that the argument is valid only under certain conditions and assessing the impact of such conditions. This does not diminish the proposition that leader ideology is relevant for state commitment to multilateralism, it rather qualifies it, clarifying the condition that makes it (more) relevant. To sum up, we expect that the left–right cleavage may broadly determines our phenomenon of interest but that its impact is decisively affected by diverging constraints for leaders across regime types and the effects of the end of the bipolar competition between the US and Soviet Union.

4 Data

4.1 Treaties and countries

In order to test such hypotheses, we built a dataset containing the largest amount of information about the ratification of multilateral treaties to date. We collected these

data by scraping the United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC) website.[5] UNTC has been for a long time considered as an authoritative source of information about international treaty commitments. Its status can be highlighted by the fact that when the UN started charging for the UNTC access in 2000, academics and civil society alike rose in opposition (Alston, 2001). While there are other databases which claim to be more comprehensive, these are not publicly accessible at the time of writing (Acharya et al., 2023). The UNTC contains information on all treaties published and registered by the United Nations. Given the aim of our research, we focused only on the Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary General (MTDSG), that are 693 in total. They represent a subset of highly salient multilateral treaties and, as a consequence, UNTC provides detailed information about them, including full text, status, and, most importantly for us, states' signature and ratification dates in most cases.

Our dataset covers only those MTDSGs for which complete signature and ratification dates were available, indeed. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many treaties adopted before 1945, dating back to the League of Nations period. As a consequence, we extracted only treaties signed after the end of the Second World War. Moreover, in our data collection process, we did not report two types of MTSDGs: Annexes and Regulations. Annexes do not require a formal act of ratification on behalf of participants but mere application. We excluded all the 166 regulations present in the MTSDGs as they regard one single agreement: the "Agreement concerning the Adoption of Harmonized Technical United Nations Regulations for Wheeled Vehicles, Equipment and Parts which can be Fitted and/or be Used on Wheeled Vehicles". In total, our dataset considers 12 types of treaties: Conventions, Agreements, Treaties, Declarations, Protocols, Statutes, Treaties, Amendments, Charters, Memoranda, Articles, and Acts.

Ultimately, the dataset covers 350 multilateral treaties. The oldest treaty included in our dataset, the United Nations Charter, was adopted in 1945. The most recent one, the Amendment to article 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, dates back to 2019. The difference between those adopted during the Cold War and afterwards is not large: 199 to 149. Considering that the Cold War period (1945–1989) was ten years longer than its aftermath (1989–2022), these figures confirm an increase in global cooperation after the end of bipolar competition. As already suggested, most of the studies on treaty ratification focus on specific areas. In contrast, our dataset spans across a wide number of areas of international cooperation. Specifically, all UNTC Chapters but one, each corresponding to a different issue area, are represented by at least one treaty.[6] Transport and Communications is the most present Chapter in our dataset, with 74 treaties. Environment comes second with 53 treaties, Human Rights third with 27. While the number of treaties belonging to the former category has decreased

[5] The UNTC is available at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=_en. Data were scraped using the "rvest" R package in April 2022.

[6] Chapter XV, "Declaration of Death of Missing Persons", contains treaties with no info on signature and ratification dates.

after the end of the Cold War, the number of treaties of the two latter categories of treaties has considerably increased. More disarmament treaties were adopted after 1989 too. Summarises the distribution of the treaties sorted by UNTC Chapter in alphabetical order and period (Cold War/Post-Cold War) Table 1.

Our dataset includes both universal and regional treaties. In total, we have 46 regional treaties (13.2%). It is worth pointing out that some of the most comprehensive studies on treaty commitment to date only focus on universal treaties (Elsig et al., 2011; Lupu, 2016; Milewicz & Elsig, 2014). We further differentiate "institutional" treaties from the others. Institutional treaties are those aiming to establish an organisation. In the dataset, there are only 22 of them (7.5%). The Agreement Establishing the African Development Bank (1963) is an example of both a regional and institutional treaty.

The dataset contains information on the ratification of multilateral treaties for 229 actors. 204 of them are either official UN member countries or other UN non-member states (e.g., Palestine and the Holy See). Three countries that ceased to exist in this period were excluded from the dataset: East Germany, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia.[7] The remaining 25 actors are Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO) such as the European Union. Even though our current focus is only on states' treaty commitment, the inclusion of IGOs is a major empirical contribution to the debate. In fact, to our knowledge, there is no dataset that takes them into account as participants in multilateral treaties. In total, our dataset counts 24,346 participant-treaty observations.

The core aim of the dataset is providing detailed information on treaty ratification. Ratification can take different forms according to the type of treaty and its rules regarding the type of adhesion procedures. We consider ratification as equivalent to accession and acceptance-approval. Accession is "the act whereby a state accepts the offer or the opportunity to become party of a treaty already negotiated and signed by other states". For instance, new countries have resorted to it to join treaties that came into force before their independence. Acceptance and approval are instruments of a treaty "that have the same legal effect of ratification" that, in the practice of certain states, "are used instead of ratification when constitutional law does not require the treaty to be ratified by the head of state".[8]

Actors that, at the moment of the data scraping, neither signed nor ratified a treaty yet are not included in the UNTC treaty tables. In contrast, actors that signed but did not ratify an agreement are included. In total, we report 7 per cent of signed but non-ratified treaties shows the Top 10 treaties by number of ratifications, excluding associated amendments. Notably, six out of ten treaties concern environmental issues Table 2.

Table 3 lists instead the top and bottom 10 countries by number of ratifications, respectively. In the Top 10, we see the presence of only European states. This may be due to a bias in treaties for this area but surely reflect the high extent of

[7] Data concerning the signing and ratification of the treaties for these countries is placed in the footnotes and, consequently, cannot be scraped automatically.

[8] Definitions are taken from the UNTC glossary.

Table 1 Number of treaties, by UNTC Chapter and period

Chapter	Cold War (%)	Post-Cold War (%)	Total (%)
Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice	4 (2.01)	0 (0)	4 (1.15)
Commercial Arbitration and Mediation	2 (1.01	2 (1.34)	4 (1.15)
Commodities	6 (3.02)	11 (7.38)	17 (4.89)
Disarmament	2 (1.01)	11 (7.38)	13 (3.74)
Economic and Statistics	2 (1.01)	0 (0)	2 (0.57)
Education and Culture	8 (4.02)	1 (0.67)	9 (2.59)
Declaration of Death of Missing Persons	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Environment	7 (3.52)	46 (30.46)	53 (15.14)
Fiscal Matters	2 (1.01)	0 (0)	2 (0.57)
Freedom of Information	1 (0.5)	0 (0)	1 (0.29)
Health	9 (4.52)	4 (2.68)	13 (3.74)
Human Rights	10 (5.03)	17 (11.26)	27 (7.71)
International Trade and Development	14 (7.04)	8 (5.37)	22 (6.32)
Law of Treaties	3 (1.51)	0 (0)	3 (0.86)
Law of the Sea	6 (3.02)	3 (2.01)	9 (2.59)
Maintenance Obligations	1 (0.5)	0 (0)	1 (0.29)
Miscellaneous	0 (0)	1 (0.67)	1 (0.29)
Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances	12 (6.03)	0 (0)	12 (3.45)
Navigation	13 (6.53)	3 (2.01)	16 (4.60)
Obscene Publications	4 (2.01)	0 (0)	4 (1.15)
Outer Space	2 (1.01)	0 (0)	2 (0.57)
Pacific Settlement of International Disputes	1 (0.5)	0 (0)	1 (0.29)
Penal Matters	5 (2.51)	20 (13.42)	25 (7.18)
Privileges and Immunities	12 (6.03)	1 (0.67)	13 (3.74)
Refugees and Stateless Persons	4 (2.01)	0 (0)	4 (1.15)
Status of Women	3 (1.51)	0 (0)	3 (0.86)
Telecommunications	4 (2.01)	4 (2.68)	8 (2.3)
Traffic in Persons	7 (3.52)	0 (0)	7 (2.01)
Transport and Communications	55 (27.64)	19 (12.75)	74 (21.26)
Total	199 (56.86)	151 (43.14)	350 (100)

commitment to multilateralism of European countries. In the bottom 10 list we find the presence of non-independent territorial entities (such as the Cayman Islands), recently independent countries (South Sudan), and states with a recent history of conflict (Eritrea).

4.2 Dependent variable: Ratification duration

Our dependent variable of interest is the duration of the treaty ratification process. However, as we just noted, states have multiple pathways to commit to multilateral treaties. Therefore, we consider three different scenarios of ratification process

Table 2 Top 10 multilateral treaties by number of ratifications

Treaty	Ratifications
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987)	198
Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985)	198
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	197
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (1994)	197
Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	197
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)	197
Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (1992)	194
Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997)	194
Constitution of the World Health Organization (1946)	193
Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)	193

duration. In the first and more general one, we measure the time span between signature and ratification. In the second one, when a country accedes to a treaty after the treaty has already entered into force, we calculate the ratification duration starting from the moment when the treaty is open for signature to the moment when the country accedes to it.[9] In the third one, when a country accedes to a treaty already entered into force before its emergence in the international system, we calculate the ratification period as the interval between the moment in which the state enters the system and the moment of accession to the treaty.[10]

To measure ratification duration, we move from a participant-treaty to a participant-treaty-year unit of analysis. This way of structuring the data is only an approximation of the real duration but allows us to deal with time-varying covariates. Indeed, this is an issue in our case since country-level characteristics, such as leader ideology and democracy, can change across the years. The occurrence of ratification is then captured by a dichotomous variable taking value 1 in years when the event occurs and 0 in the other years. If a country fails to ratify a treaty

[9] In most cases, states sign treaties at the moment of its adoption or very soon after it. Therefore, it is appropriate to compare the first and the second scenarios. To be precise, the average time-span between treaty adoption and signature is 377 days, a little more than a year. In 67 per cent of the cases, treaty adoption and state signature occur in the same year, meaning that there will be no difference using the year of adoption as starting point in the counting process in the first scenario. In a further 22 per cent of the cases, state signature follows treaty adoption by only one year.

[10] As soon as they become independent and join the international system, states tend to accede to various fundamental multilateral treaties such as the one just mentioned. Therefore, calculating the ratification period as the time between the country's entry into the system and the accession produces a number of extremely short intervals that have more to do with the type of treaty than with the willingness of states to accede. However, excluding these treaty accessions would have the inevitable side effect of reducing the number of treaties ratified by countries emerging during the time span of the analysis. Therefore, we have decided to keep those cases in consideration.

Table 3 Top 10 and bottom 10 countries by number of ratifications

Top	Ratifications	Bottom	Ratifications
Netherlands	253	Cook Islands	47
France	242	Eritrea	43
Belgium	238	Niue	40
Finland	235	Tuvalu	40
Denmark	232	South Sudan	23
Luxembourg	230	British Virgin Islands	1
Sweden	227	Cayman Islands	1
Germany	224	Hong Kong	1
Switzerland	223	Montserrat	1
Norway	223	Turks and Caicos Islands	1

that had previously been signed, all the observations from the year of signature onwards take value 0. We performed three further modifications with respect to the original dataset. First, as already suggested, we removed all international organisations from our dataset. Second, as a consequence of the employment of a Polity V score as a measure for democracy, all countries with fewer than 500 thousand inhabitants were removed from the analysis. That leaves us with 165 countries. Third, in order to match the time-span of our measure of leader ideology, we deleted the years after 2020.

4.3 Independent variables: Leader ideology, regime type, and Cold War

In order to measure national leader ideology, we rely on the Global Leader Ideology (GLI) dataset (Herre, 2023). This dataset classifies the ideological leanings of political leaders annually in 182 countries from 1945 or their year of independence to 2020. We chose this source over a number of existing ones measuring the ideological leanings of cabinets and leaders – including the similarly expert-based Comparative Political Dataset (CPDS) (Armingeon et al., 2023) and the manifesto-based Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Lehmann et al., 2023) – as it includes a larger number of countries, democratic as well as non-democratic. This enables us to test the impact of ideology on state commitment to multilateral treaties across different regimes. While Herre (2023) basis the coding on the economic positions, as we argued above, his scores represent well ideological cleavages on the broader ideological spectrum.

We focused on variables within this dataset associated with the ideology of national leaders rather than heads of governments. In more than 91 per cent of cases, the two roles coincide. Notable cases in which the leaders and the head of governments are not the same person include periods of cohabitation in semi-presidential democracies such as France, Poland, and Portugal. Herre (2023) suggests that when the two figures differ, national leaders tend to be in charge of foreign policy while heads of governments take care of domestic politics. For instance, this is the case for all of the three countries mentioned above. We extracted three dichotomous

variables from GLI coding, the presence of left-wing, centrist, and right-wing leaders in government in a given year respectively. From such dichotomous variables, we further elaborated a three-values discrete variable differentiating between these alternatives.[11] We consider cases of non-ideological leaders and missing information as missing values across all four variables.[12] As a consequence, two countries were further dropped from our analysis.[13]

We are aware that the GLI measures are not very fine-grained. In particular, they present two important issues for our analysis. First, the concepts of left and right can be better captured as the two poles of an axis through a continuous variable as both CPDS and CMP do. While two political leaders can be considered as left-wing, one could be seen as more left-wing than the other one. Moreover, executives in democracies are often composed of a coalition of parties presenting distinct ideological profiles. However, we find that the GLI's dichotomous measures of leader ideology strongly correlates with continuous CPDS cabinet ideology measures across all OECD countries from 1960 and CMP cabinet ideology scores weighted by party portfolio allocation across all EU countries from 1990.[14] Second, a yearly-based variable cannot grasp changes in national leadership during a given year as consequences of events such as elections and coups. In particular, GLI classifies leaders in power at the end of each calendar year. In our case, this operationalisation can generate cases of mismatches between the leader who is in power at a given time and the one that ratifies the treaty. However, such cases are very rare. Treaty ratification occurred in a year with a change in leader ideology only 9 per cent of the times. As a result, the amount of potentially mismatched cases accounts for a mere 0.8 per cent of the total participant-treaty-year observations.

We assess the impact of leader ideology against two major factors associated with commitment to multilateral treaties: a country's regime type and the end of the Cold War. The domestic regime type is broadly recognised as a major factor driving the foreign policy of states (Mansfield et al., 2002; Russett & Oneal, 2001; Simmons, 1998). As already suggested, various studies show that democratic countries are faster at ratifying multilateral treaties than non-democratic countries, which is part of the democratic distinctiveness we discussed above (Elsig

[11] The percentage of leaders classified as right-wing and left-wing is considerably larger than the percentage of leaders classified as centrist. In the original dataset, 46 per cent of the leaders were categorized as left-wing, 42 per cent as right-wing, 8 per cent as centrist.

[12] In most cases, leaders classified as non-ideological are authoritarian leaders. Missing observations often refer instead to periods when countries are occupied (post-WWII Japan) or involved in domestic conflicts (post-Saddam's Iraq and post-Gaddafi's Libya). Given our theoretical expectations, it is therefore unsurprising to find that the probability of ratification across observations with missing or non-ideological value for this variable and ratification likelihood is one third-lower than the one with scored as non-missing or ideological (0.06 to 0,09).

[13] These countries are Montenegro and Qatar.

[14] For more details about the correlations between GLI, CDPS and CMP measures, see Tables A1 to A4 in the Appendix. The difference is partially explained by the occasional incongruence between head of government and leader ideology in the GLI dataset.

et al., 2011; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). In accordance with standard practices, we classify countries as democracies if they are given a Polity score of 6 or larger in a given year.[15] As we noted, at the end of the Cold War, the extent of institutionalisation within the international system increased (Börzel & Zürn, 2021). As of consequence, states tend to be more committed to multilateral treaties (Yamagata et al., 2017). We consider the year of the fall of the Berlin wall as the point of departure and accordingly construct a dichotomous variable. Notably, through these variables, we are also able to test H2 and H3, assessing how regime type and the end of the Cold War impact the relationship between national leader ideology and ratification duration.[16]

4.4 Control variables

We assess the impact of leader ideology on state commitment to multilateral treaties across different regime types and changes in the structure of the international system, controlling for a series of characteristics associated with both states and the treaties under investigation. We check for the impact of the following state-level factors: security situation, leadership change, parliamentary involvement, and major power status. A country's security situation is measured in terms of the number of inter-state rivalries in which it is involved. Existing scholarship demonstrates that states engaged in international rivalries tend to be ruled by hawkish leaders (Colaresi, 2004). Such leaders might be less interested in international cooperation, because they often perceive others as trying to exploit them and are less trusting (Wagner and Onderco, 2014). We elaborated a discrete measure of yearly inter-state rivalries on the basis of the Peace Data (Diehl et al., 2021). In addition, through a dichotomous variable, we take into account the effect of leadership ideological change. We expect that changes in leadership ideology reduce the likelihood of treaty ratification for two reasons. First, the incoming leader may want to focus first on his/her own domestic agenda rather than taking care of foreign policy which is comparatively less salient. Second, the new leader has incentives not to ratify a treaty signed by his/her predecessor to mark a distance from him/her. Moreover, we expect that countries where the parliament is involved in the process take longer to ratify treaties than countries in which the executive power is the only actor in charge. We differentiate such cases through a dichotomous variable extracted from

[15] We reduced the 20-point Polity scale into a dichotomous variable as the literature suggests that democracies are significantly more cooperative than other regime types (Russett and Oneal, 2001). Such rationale underlies our preference for Polity scores over the equally (if not more) popular among political scientists V-Dem indices. In fact, V-Dem high-level democracy indices do not have established thresholds for differentiating democracies and non-democracies. Furthermore, the use of a dichotomous variable facilitates the readability and interpretability of findings associated with interaction terms. Polity V data spans only until 2018 and were extended to 2020 by the authors.

[16] There is a strong and significant association between state regime type and the Cold War. The percentage of observations for democracies moves from 33% during the Cold War to 56% afterwards. In any case, we believe it is important to include both in the models for theoretical reasons. Furthermore, we expect them to have an opposite effect on the relationship between leader ideology and the commitment to multilateral treaties.

the Comparative Constitution Project (Elkins & Ginsburg, 2022). Importantly, we find that the parliamentary procedures for ratification in democracies and non-democracies do not vary significantly: parliament is involved in treaty ratification in 74 per cent of democracies, and 72 per cent of non-democracies. In addition, we take into account major power status as a reflection of the realist considerations that the more powerful states are less likely to be willing to be bound by international organisations (Mearsheimer, 1994). We consider as major powers all the countries holding a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

In addition, we control for the effect of various types of treaties and ratification procedures. We distinguish regional and institutional treaties from other treaties as we expect them to foster higher state commitment. Treaty commitment is presumed to be easier to achieve at the regional level where countries have more similar preferences and interests. Countries are also presumed to be quicker in committing to "institutional" treaties as their support is needed to help the institution actually set up and function. Protocols and amendments are also expected to attract a higher extent of commitment. Therefore, we use a couple of dichotomous variables to differentiate them from the other treaties. Protocols often allow states to use a procedure called "definitive signature", whereby they express their consent to be bound by the treaty without need for ratification. This is presumed to decrease the duration of the ratification process. Amendments are formal alterations of the provisions of an existing treaty. Therefore, we expect that states that committed to the original treaty will be likely to commit to the amendment too, reducing the duration of the ratification process. As far as ratification procedures are concerned, we control for accession, that is, joining an international treaty after it has come into force and when the two-step process is no longer possible. We should therefore expect accessions to be associated with lower commitment. Nevertheless, as we said, we also consider cases in which a state – directly upon its emergence as an independent state – accedes to an existing treaty. Therefore, controlling for accessions also enables us to distinguish between signatory parties and non-signatory parties.[17]

5 Empirical analysis

As already suggested, we employ event history analysis as a method to test our hypotheses. Event history models allow the researcher to investigate the timing of political change (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004). In other words, not only do these models permit us to explain the likelihood of observing an event but also the duration of the process associated with the event. For this reason, event history analysis appears as a particularly fitting method to examine ratification in multilateral treaties. Among the various event history models, we rely on the Weibull model for the estimation. This model is parametric as it assumes the presence of a relationship between time and the likelihood that the event under study occurs (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004). In particular, it assumes this relationship to be monotonic:

[17] For a description of all of the variables, see Table A5 in the Appendix.

the likelihood of observing the event either increases or decreases over time. In our case, we have strong reasons to believe that a relationship between the probability of observing treaty ratification and the duration of the process leading to it is monotonic too. In fact, although a certain amount of time is required for a state to ratify a treaty, longer periods are usually evidence of lack of commitment.[18]

As to test our hypotheses, we ran six Weibull models with clustered standard error by country-treaty: Models 1 to 4 test the individual impact of leader ideology through our four different measures, while Models 5 and 6 test the interactions between leader ideology and regime type and the post-Cold War period respectively. Figure 1 reports the effect of our independent variables on the likelihood of ratification, expressed in hazard ratio (the exponential of the coefficient) with 95% confidence intervals: a value higher than 1 means that an increase in the independent variable increases ratification likelihood (shorter ratification process), a value lower than 1 means that an increase in the independent variable decreases ratification likelihood (longer ratification process). The effect is quantified in percentage points as the distance from 1.

We replicated these models across four different sub-samples: non-democracies, democracies, Cold War, post-Cold War to have a better sense of the results. In addition, we replicated Model 1 across four further sub-samples: democracies during the Cold War, democracies after the Cold War, non-democracies during the Cold War, non-democracies after the Cold War. Furthermore, we replicated Model 5 and Model 6 using dichotomous measures of leader ideology. Moreover, we conducted a series of robustness checks on these models to check that our results are not sensitive to the removal of relevant controls that would nonetheless generate a considerable number of missing observations (including states' Trade Openness, GDP per capita, and membership in IGOs), biases in our dependent variable (removing potentially mismatched observations), changes in the selection of our key independent variable (by using head of government ideology measure or alternatively CMP weighted ideological scores or using a binary variable computed from V-Dem-s Regime of the World scale instead of the Polity V measure of democracy), model selection (using Cox Proportional Hazard), and differences across treaty areas (applying clustered standard error by Chapter). In particular, through this last robustness check, we empirically demonstrate that leader ideology has a significant impact on multilateral treaty commitment across multiple treaty areas.[19]

[18] Most of the literature on event history analysis suggests treating time dependence as a nuisance and, consequently, employs the Cox Proportional Hazard model (Box-Steffenmeier and Jones, 2004). However, the relationship between treaty ratification and time is particularly strong in our case, as the Kaplan–Meier curve in Figure A1 in the Appendix shows. After only six years, ratification likelihood drops to 50 per cent. An examination of measures of fit in our main models further validates our choice of the Weibull model over the Cox model: AIC and BIC estimates are almost 6 times smaller using the Weibull model. This indicates that this model is more suited to capture the variance in our data. The AIC and BIC estimates are instead slightly lower using Gompertz and Gamma distribution compared to the Weibull distribution. However, the Weibull is more generalizable than the Gompertz model and produce much better estimates than the Gamma model. For a comparison of AIC and BIC estimates across parametric and monotonic survival models, see Table A6 in the Appendix.

[19] For the main models, the replications across subsamples and the robustness checks, see Tables A7 to A20 in the Appendix.

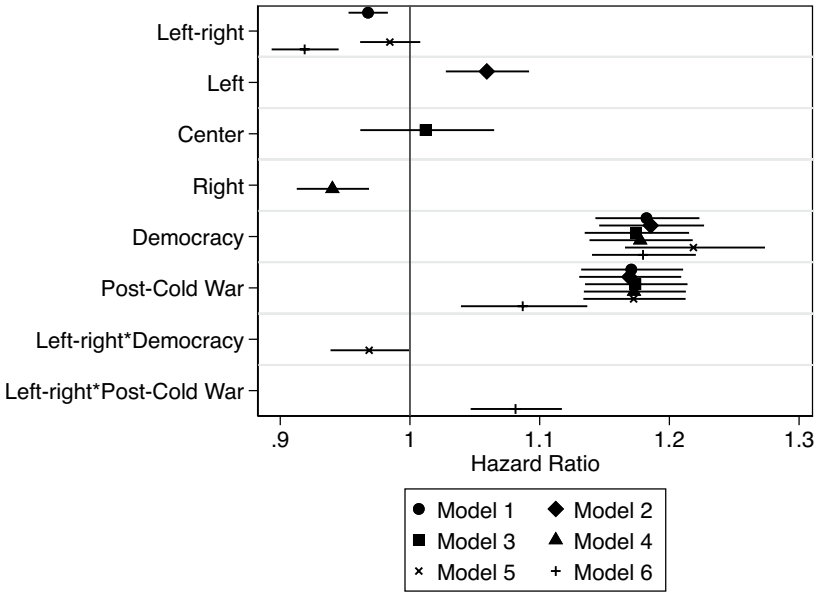

Fig. 1 Effect of leader ideology, regime type, and Cold War on ratification likelihood

Model 1 shows that an increase in our three-point leader ideology scale corresponds to a significant 3.3 per cent decrease in the likelihood of ratification. This result suggests that, as expected in H1, states led by left-wing leaders are on average faster at ratifying multilateral treaties than states led by centrist leaders that, in turn, are faster than states led by right-wing leaders. Models 2 to 4 confirm the presence of a slight left–right divide on commitment to multilateral treaties. In fact, our dichotomous variables for left-wing and right-wing leaders have a different but equally significant impact on ratification likelihood. States led by left-wing leaders are 5.9 per cent more likely to ratify multilateral treaties than states led by centrist and right-wing leaders. States led by right-wing leaders are similarly less likely to ratify multilateral treaties than states led by centrist and left-wing leaders. Our dichotomous variable for centrist leaders has a positive but non-significant impact. Therefore, states led by centrist leaders are not significantly different from states led by left-wing and right-wing leaders when it comes to commitment to multilateral treaties. This further reinforces the idea of the presence of a left–right divide on commitment to multilateral treaties, rather than a cleavage between states led by centrist leaders on one side and states led by left-wing and right-wing leaders on the other side.

Notably, across all the main Models, both variables measuring the impact of regime type and Cold War have a strongly positive and significant impact on ratification likelihood.[20] Democratic countries are around 18 per cent more likely to

[20] Various factors listed as controls significantly determine the commitment to multilateral treaties in the predicted direction. The number of inter-state rivalries and parliamentary involvement are associated with longer ratification processes. Institutional treaties, protocols, and especially amendments draw a higher extent of commitment among states. In contrast with our expectations, major powers are faster at ratifying treaties than the other countries.

ratify treaties than non-democratic countries. After the end of the Cold War, states were 17 per cent more likely to ratify multilateral treaties. In other words, in line with extant scholarship, we find that the duration of ratification process is shorter in democracies and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The hazard ratio for the interaction term in Model 5 indicates that the impact of leader ideology measured on a left–right scale is magnified by 3.2 per cent in democratic countries. In other words, as expected by H2, in democracies, the gap between states led by left-wing leaders and states led by right-wing leaders is significantly larger when it comes to commitment to multilateral treaties is larger.[21] Conversely, the hazard ratio for the interaction term in Model 6 shows that the effect of leader ideology is significantly moderated by the end of the Cold War by 8.1 per cent. To put it bluntly, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, being led by a left-wing, centrist, or right-wing leader was less relevant in determining commitment to multilateral treaties.[22]

In order to better describe the impact of leader ideology on commitment to multilateral treaties, we estimated the predicted duration of ratification process for countries led by left-wing, centrist, and right-wing leaders across regime types and time.[23] Figure 2 reports the average duration of ratification process in years for states led by left-wing, centrist, and right-wing leaders on the basis of Model 1 with 95% confidence intervals. This plot further demonstrates that, as predicted by our first hypothesis (H1), leader ideology has a slight but statistically significant impact on the duration of multilateral treaties ratification process. In fact, states led by left-wing leaders take on average 6.90 years to ratify multilateral treaties, while states led by centrist leaders take 7.15 years and states led by right-wing leaders take 7.4 years.

Figure 3 makes a step further, describing how the predicted duration of multilateral treaty ratification changes across states led by left-wing, centrist, and right-wing leaders, conditioned on the state regime type (non-democracy versus democracy)

[21] In the replication of the models on the sample containing only non-democracies (Table A8), the left–right variable has no significant impact. Curiously, centrist-led are 40 per cent more likely to ratify multilateral treaties than the other ones. In the replication of the models on the sample containing only democracies (Table A9), the negative effect of an increase in our left–right variable on ratification likelihood rises to 4.6 per cent. Democracies led by left-wing leaders are 10.5 per cent more likely to ratify international treaties than democracies led by centrist and right-wing counterparts. The moderating effect of the end of the Cold War rises up to almost 17 per cent.

[22] In the replication of the models on the Cold War years sample (Table A10), the negative effect of an increase in our left–right variable on ratification likelihood leaps up to 8.7 per cent. During the Cold War, states led by left-wing leaders were 17.5 per cent more likely to ratify treaties. Democracy widened the ideological divide by 11.4 per cent. After the end of the Cold War (Table A11), none of our ideological variables has a statistically significant impact on multilateral treaties ratification likelihood. The replication of Model 1 across the four subsamples (Table A12) shows us instead that the mediating impact of the end of the Cold War is more relevant than the amplifying factor of democracies. In fact, the impact of leadership ideology is significant for both democracies (15.4 per cent likelihood decrease) and non-democracies (4 per cent likelihood decrease) during the Cold War and turn non-significant afterwards. Finally, the replication of the interaction model (Table A13) suggests how left-wing cabinets stand apart from the other ones in terms of ratification commitment. In fact, the effect interacting democracy in this case jumps to 10 per cent and the ones of Cold War to 12 per cent.

[23] The predicted duration takes into account cases of non-ratification too. Therefore, we expect the real duration of the process to be slightly shorter.

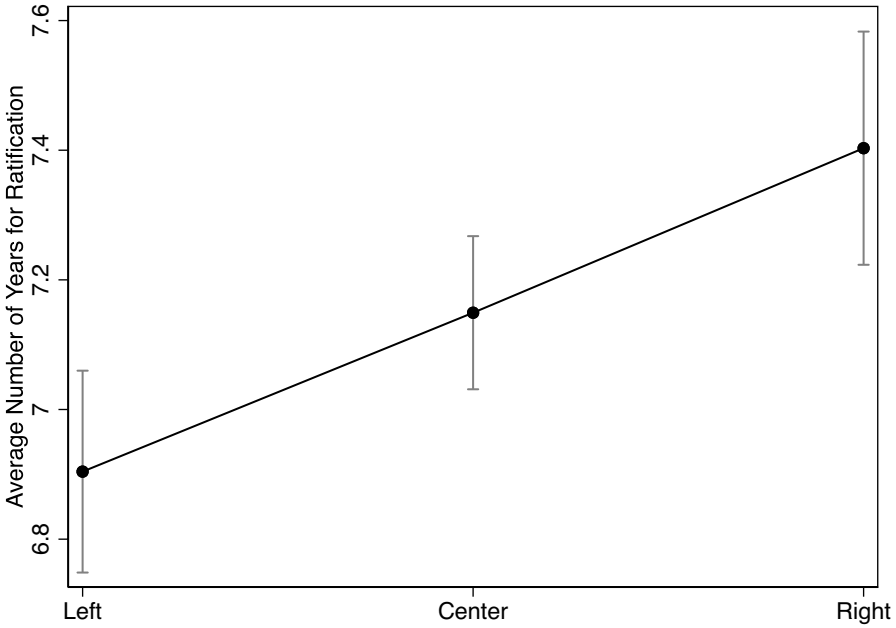

Fig. 2 Predicted duration of multilateral treaty ratification process conditioned to leader ideology

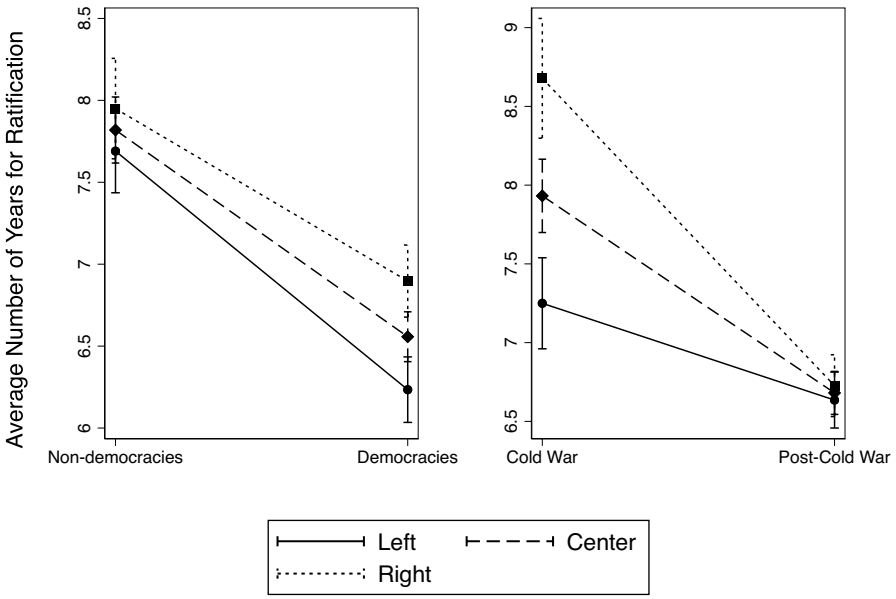

Fig. 3 Predicted duration of multilateral treaty ratification process conditioned to leader ideology across regime types (left) and during/after the Cold war (right)

and the period (Cold War versus its aftermath). The estimates for the predicted duration in years are based on the interaction terms in Models 5 and 6 and have 95% confidence intervals. Before commenting on such interactions, it is worth pointing out again how regime type and the end of the Cold War individually affect the length of the ratification process. The plot of the left shows that all democracies, irrespective of the leadership ideological leaning, takes significantly less time to ratify multilateral treaties than non-democracies. The plot on the right instead further underlines that, during the Cold War, states were significantly slower at ratifying treaties.

The plot on the left also shows that the impact of leader ideology on the duration of ratification process is significantly stronger in democratic states than in non-democratic counterparts. In non-democracies there is basically no difference between left-wing, centrist, and right-wing leaderships: they all take around a little less than 8 years on average and there is consistent overlap between the confidence intervals. The impact of leadership ideology is much more evident in democracies: states led by left-wing leaders take on average 6.2 years, states led by centrist leaders take 6.5 years, and, finally, states led by right-wing leaders take almost 6.9 years. To sum up, this further confirms our second expectation (H2) about the amplifying effect of democracy on the impact of leader ideology on commitment to multilateral treaties. More precisely, this plot rectifies our argument by showing that there is a significant left–right gap only in democracies.

The plot on the right further highlights that, after the end of the Cold War, the effect of leader ideology on the duration of ratification process shrunk. During the Cold War years, countries led by left-wing leaders took on average 7.2 years to ratify a treaty: 0.7 less than countries led by centrist leaders and 1.4 years less than countries led by right-wing leaders. The impact of leader ideology on commitment to multilateralism totally disappears in the post-Cold War period. As the plot shows, after the end of the Cold War, whether a country is led by a leftist, centrist, or rightist leader does not matter at all, as the confidence intervals are completely overlapped. This provides further evidence in favour of our third hypothesis (H3), arguing that the end of the Cold War has decreased the impact of leader ideology on states commitment to multilateral treaties. The impact has decreased to a point that we can argue that the left–right divide on commitment to multilateral treaties existed only during the Cold War. It has to be pointed out that the conditioning impact of international context is larger than that of regime type. In other words, the Cold War pushed left and right-led states to be significantly different in terms of commitment to multilateral treaties irrespective of their regimes, while regime type did not have the same homogeneous effect over changes in the international context.

Finally, Fig. 4 shows the impact of leader ideology on the duration of ratification process in democracies (top) and non-democracies (bottom) across decades, enabling to grasp the impact of regime type and Cold War in a more detailed way.[24] First of all, these plots indicates how, after the 1940s, when many foundational treaties for international cooperation were ratified, the level of commitment progressively decreased during the

[24] For the corresponding models and the model pulling together democracies and non-democracies, see Table A21 in the Appendix.

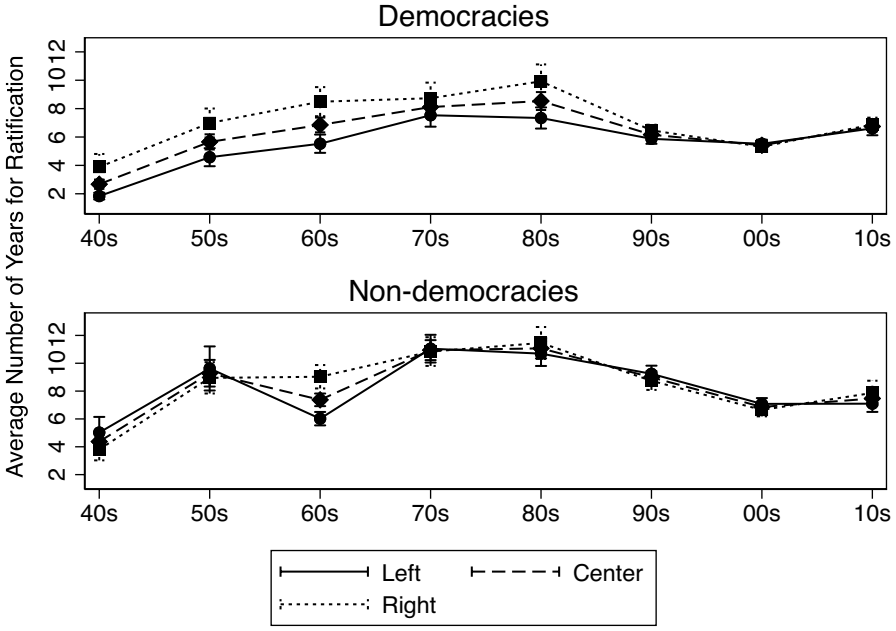

Fig. 4 Predicted duration of multilateral treaty ratification process conditioned to leader ideology across decades, in democracies (top) and non-democracies (bottom)

Cold War only to increase again in the 1990s. Interestingly, the duration of ratification process of multilateral treaties seems to have slightly rose again in the most recent decade. The figure also confirms that generally democracies tend to be faster ratifiers than non-democracies. In addition, the top graph shows the presence of a significant left–right divide across all the Cold War decades among democracies. This gap was more pronounced in the 1960s – when left-wing democratic leaders took only 5.5 years to ratify multilateral treaties, 1.3 years fewer than centrist counterparts, and almost 3 years fewer than right-wing counterparts – and in the 1980s – when left-wing democratic leaders took 7.3 years, 1.2 years less than their centrist counterparts, and 2.6 less than their right-wing counterparts. From the 1990s onwards, such differences became negligible. The bottom graph points to the fact that the ideological divide was much more limited for non-democracies across all decades. The 1960s is again an exceptional decade as countries led by left-wing autocrats were considerably faster at ratifying treaties than countries led by right-wing autocrats (6 against 9 years on average).

6 Conclusion

In this article, we looked at the effect of leader ideology on commitment to multilateral treaties by studying the ratification of international treaties since the end of the Second World War. Our results indicate that states led by left-wing leaders are significantly faster at ratifying multilateral treaties than states led by

(more) right-wing counterparts. However, the impact of left–right dimension is considerably conditioned by regime type and changes in the structure of the international system. In fact, this divide is present in democratic states but not in non-democratic states and during the Cold War but not in its aftermath. To put it bluntly, left-wing led countries are more multilateralist than right-wing led countries but not everywhere, not all the time. Through such findings, we contribute to the understanding of the determinants of commitment towards multilateral treaties and the impact of ideology on international politics. In addition, we offer an empirical contribution to the research on multilateralism, compiling the most comprehensive dataset on multilateral treaty ratification to date. It includes a far larger number of participants and treaties than existing ones.

Our findings have important implications for three strands of scholarship. Scholars of the "domestic turn" will find here suitable evidence that ideology and partisanship matter in yet another dimension of international politics – commitment to multilateral treaties. The results of the empirical analysis indicate that domestic politics matters for commitment to multilateralism. Furthermore, the finding providing a more nuanced understanding on where and when ideology matters is a useful contribution to this scholarship. Nevertheless, the fact that the differences between left and right disappear after the end of the Cold War highlights the need to broaden the existing empirical work. This result also runs contrary to some other works, which recently argued that the Cold War was a rare period of bipartisanship, and that partisan contestation of foreign policy actually increased after its end (Wagner, 2020). Notwithstanding the emergent narrative that the extent of partisan polarisation in foreign policy might be overstated (Bryan & Tama, 2022; Tama, 2024), we think that future scholarship must continue to scrutinise the extent of the effect of ideology and polarisation on foreign policy. Future scholarship might, for instance, find that there are varying effects depending on particular treaty types or particular characteristics of states. Some emerging work, for instance, finds that right-wing populist parties are less supportive of treaty ratification in certain particular national contexts in Central Europe (Stankova, 2024).

Secondly, scholars of international order will find here another argument for the qualitative change that happened in global politics after the end of the Cold War, in the era of US hegemony (Clark, 2011; Cooley & Nexon, 2020; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Hofmann, 2020). In particular, we find that this is a period of increasing cooperation among countries, and lessening differences between different domestic political systems and regimes. A similar finding was recently presented by Erik Voeten (2021), but our work demonstrates that the qualitative change in the international system goes beyond UN voting. In particular, we show that the importance of ideology declined after the end of the Cold War. At least when it comes to multilateralism, international politics after the end of the Cold War became depoliticized. The difference between the left-wing governments and others became negligible, regardless of the regime type. This was in stark difference to the period during the Cold War. Our findings therefore provide further evidence of the unusual "unipolar moment" after the end of the Cold War.

Thirdly and lastly, our findings contribute to the scholarship on systemic versus domestic sources of global governance (Bernauer et al., 2010). It added a further piece of evidence demonstrating that domestic politics, namely leader ideology, matters for global governance. Importantly, our article was one of the first ones that looked at the effect of the ideology beyond a subset of rich, democratic, mostly Western countries. Admittedly, our study contributed with a rather broad approach, employing only a raw measure of ideology. Future scholarship should study how partisanship and ideology influence other areas of multilateral global governance, providing further insights on how to facilitate international multilateral cooperation. For instance, future research might explore whether the rising ratification duration in the 2010s might be linked to the global populist wave. Studies looking at local settings, looking for instance at the dynamics of ratification process within individual countries or their groups could help us to understand the interplay between ideology and multilateralism at the micro level.

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Data availability The dataset as well as all replication files will be made available on the journal's website upon acceptance.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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