

# Domestic Political Survival and International Conflict: Is Democracy Good for Peace?

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## Introduction: Democratic Peace

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- ▶ Approach: Split countries into pairs (dyads) and regress some measure of conflict on some measure of level of democracies in the dyad as well as other controls. Mao and Russett (1993), Oneal and Russett (1997). Main point: *Democracies rarely fight each other, though they may be aggressive towards non-democracies.*

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- ▶ Democratic peace idea used by Clinton and Bush to justify democratization and also associated with “neoconservatives”.

## Introduction: Criticisms

- ▶ “Realists” argue that intervention based on democratic peace idea might do more harm than good. “I don’t think in any reasonable time frame the objective of democratizing the Middle East can be successful. If you can do it, fine, but I don’t think you can, and in the process if trying to do it, you can make the Middle East a lot worse.” (Scowcroft in Goldberg (2005)).

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- ▶ Schelling and classical scholars like Thucydides, Xenophon blame “reciprocal fear of surprise attack” for causing war, e.g. “the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta” caused the Peloponnesian War. How do political institutions dampen or exasperate the logic of mutual suspicion? Is the population necessarily less fearful than the leader?

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- ▶ Main empirical result: We find support for these hypotheses as well as the democratic peace hypothesis.

# Conflict Game

		Country $j$	
		$A$	$P$
Country $i$	$A$	$-c$	$\mu - c$
	$P$	$-d$	$0$

- ▶  $c < \mu$ : Player is a *hawkish* greedy type with a dominant strategy to be hawkish/aggressive.
- ▶  $c > d$ : Player is a *dovish* pacifist type with a dominant strategy to be dovish/passive.
- ▶  $\mu < c < d$ : Player is a *coordination* type who wants to coordinate with the opponent.

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- ▶ Neville Chamberlain had to resign after his appeasement of Hitler, but Margaret Thatcher won re-election after the successful Falklands War.

## Model: Timing

- ▶ Time 1: Leaders choose whether to play  $A$  or  $P$ .
- ▶ Time 2: Citizens decide whether to oust the leader or not.
- ▶ In country  $i$ , leader  $i$  needs support  $\sigma_i^*$  to survive. If he survives, he receives benefit  $R$  where  $0 < R$ . (We will use this critical level of support to classify political institutions.)



## Model: Support and Regimes

**Assumption 2:** Greed is more prevalent than pacifism.

Given Assumption 1, if the coordination types vote with one of the other two groups, the leader has at least 50% support. This leads to the following classification of regimes:

- ▶  $\sigma_i^*$  is very low: The leader can survive in power even if only the pacifists support him when he loses a war. This means he can *always* survive and the country is an *dictatorship*.
- ▶  $\sigma_i^*$  is roughly 1/2: The leader can survive if and only if the median voter supports him. In this case, the country is a *full democracy*.
- ▶  $\sigma_i^*$  lies well between 1/2 and zero: The leader *cannot* survive if only pacifists support him but can survive if only the greedy types support him. In this case the country is a *limited democracy*.

# Conflict Game: Dictatorship vs. Limited Democracy

- ▶ The leader of a *limited democracy* has an extra “*hawkish bias*” compared to a *dictator*, as he does not survive if he is passive in the face of aggression. The dictator survives in this case as he needs little support to survive.

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- ▶ During World War I, the German leaders believed a peace agreement would lead to their demise (they were right: Kaiser Wilhelm left for permanent exile in the Netherlands, and Ludendorff fled to Sweden).

# Conflict Game: Democracy vs. Limited Democracy

- ▶ The leader of a *full democracy* has extra “*dovish bias*” compared to a *limited democracy* as he does not survive if he is aggressive against a passive opponent: the median voter does not re-elect him. (This is the embodiment of the democratic peace idea in our model.) In a limited democracy, he survives when he is overly aggressive as the hawks support him and their support is all he needs to survive.

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- ▶ **Proposition 3:** *Hawkish Democracies:* If the dyadic democratic peace hypothesis holds, if a country changes from a full democracy to any other regime type, the probability of conflict increases more if its opponent is a full democracy than if it is any other regime type.

## Empirical Results: Data

- ▶ Correlates of War data documents inter-state conflict for around 190 countries from 1816-2000. This dataset has been modified so that for each country-year pair lists if they are in conflict and who initiated the conflict. Along with many studies, by a conflict, we use *militarized disputes* (MID) which includes not only wars but any deliberate, aggressive action such as the firing of a missile.



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- ▶ Polity III data (Jagers and Gurr (1996)) construct aggregate democracy and autocracy scores for countries using indices measuring competitiveness of political participation, competitiveness of process for electing chief executive, regulation of political participation, openness of executive recruitment and constraints on the chief executive. Each aggregate score ranges from 0 to 10. ONeal and Russett (1997) and many other combine the scores to generate a net democracy score ranging from -10 to +10.

# Empirical Model

- ▶ Countries with Polity scores between -10 to -4 are dictatorships, -3 to +3 are limited democracies and +4 to +10 are full democracies. We use many statistical techniques to allow for time-dependence of conflict, dyad-dependence of conflict, trade between countries, whether countries share borders etc.

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- ▶ Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Germany are limited democracies at key points in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- ▶ France is a limited democracy at the time of the Belgian War of Independence, and at the time of the Franco-Prussian War. France's successful support of Belgium does not result in the demise of King Louis-Philippe, but France's loss against Prussia forces Napoleon III from power.

## Empirical Model

- ▶ France and Mexico were both limited democracies when they fought the “Pastry War” 1838-1839, ostensibly over the looting of a French chef’s shop, but more significantly over the repayment of outstanding debt. Eventually Mexico was forced to repay, which triggered a series of domestic crises that led to the overthrow of Mexico’s President Bustamente. France’s King Louis-Philippe remained in power.

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- ▶ With the end of the Cold War, countries arising from the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the end of the Soviet Union such as Armenia, Croatia, Georgia, Russia and Yugoslavia satisfy our definitions of limited democracy during key conflicts.

# Empirical Results

Table: Regression Models

						Dependent Variable: Onset of
Model	(1) BASELINE			(2)		
<b>Panel a)</b>						
$D_{DiDi}$	-0.58			-0.0027		-0.90
	[0.21]***	(<0.01)***		[0.0013]**	(<0.01)***	[0.18]***
$D_{LiDi}$	-0.54			-0.0030		-0.47
	[0.20]***	(<0.01)***		[0.0013]**	(<0.01)***	[0.19]**
$D_{DeDi}$	-0.57			-0.0033		-0.34
	[0.20]***	(<0.01)***		[0.0013]**	(<0.01)***	[0.19]*
$D_{DeLi}$	-0.70			-0.0044		-0.44
	[0.21]***	(<0.01)***		[0.0014]***	(<0.01)***	[0.20]**
$D_{DeDe}$	-1.38			-0.0071		-1.33
	[0.22]***			[0.0014]***		[0.23]***
<b>Panel b)</b>						
Alliance	-0.38			-0.0054		-0.06
	[0.12]***			[0.0016]***		[0.12]

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- ▶ *Dyadic Democratic Peace*: A pair of full democracies is more likely to be peaceful than any other pair of regime types.
- ▶ *Hawkish Democracies*: We also find evidence that full democracies are hawkish in the sense of responding most aggressively to adverse changes in the environment. For example, when a country changes to a democracy from a dictatorship, if it faces a democracy, the probability of a dispute decreases by 90%. But if it faces a dictatorship, the probability of conflict decreases by only 12%. Hence, a piecemeal intervention that creates a democracy in one country while leaving an opponent as a dictatorship does not significantly lower the incidence of dyadic disputes.

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- ▶ As formulated by Paine and Kant, the democratic peace hypothesis states that democracy is good for peace, because wars are disadvantageous to the average citizen.
- ▶ But if wars are caused by fear and distrust, then our model finds a possibly non-linear relationship between democracy and peace.
- ▶ Our empirical analysis of militarized disputes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveals that a dyad of two limited democracies is more likely to be involved in a dispute than any other dyad (including dictatorships). Echoing earlier results, we also find that a dyad of two full democracies is the least likely to experience a dispute. Finally, we find that as the environment becomes more hostile, democracies become more aggressive faster than other regime types. These three empirical facts are consistent with our simple model.

# Conclusions

- ▶ Many countries in the Middle East are classified as dictatorships, or vacillate between dictatorship and limited democracy. President George W. Bush has adopted a “forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East” because “the advance of freedom leads to peace”. Unfortunately, our research suggests that a *limited* advance of freedom might lead to more war. Worse, if the average citizen in the democracy is sufficiently fearful, then even transforming a country into an *ideal* democracy may not lead to peace if other countries are not so transformed.

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- ▶ Our simple theory implies that democracies may become particularly aggressive when placed in a hostile environment. Unfortunately, this also seems to be consistent with the data.
- ▶ This non-linear relationship between democracy and peace has complex policy implications: *Democratization carries promise but also many risks.*