Democracy in international politics and democracy promotion in US foreign policy

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Debating democracy

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How does democracy shape relations among states?

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The democratic peace and democracy promotion

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Wilsonianism and the ethics of democracy promotion

Positive Consequences of Democracy

A. Constrains Potential for State Repression

B. Promotes Greater Individual Responsibility

C. Democracy Is More Successful

Common Arguments Against Democracy

I. Danger of Un-informed Majorities – Are citizens equipped to rule themselves?

II. Inefficiency – Can democratic governments make timely and difficult decisions?

Answering Democracy’s Critics

Response to critiques of democracy: the remedy to democracy’s flaws – centralization of power – is worse.

Winston Churchill: "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

How democracy influence interstate relations?

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Nested in theoretical bet: Foreign policy of states shaped by the internal composition of a polity

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First, electoral constraints: elections as institutional device to punish officials for costly policies

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Democracies selective when fight; only fight when (think) can win

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Second, Sustaining commitments: checks and balances within democracy makes difficult to change status quo policies once implemented

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E.g. 60 votes needed in Senate to clear filibuster

How democracy influence interstate relations?

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Third, Externalizing norms of conciliation and compromise

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Democracies have shared identity, fosters expectation of trust and reciprocity

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Fourth, Transparent decision making: facilitated by legislative checks and competitive press

What are consequences of democracy for interstate relations?

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More cooperation

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Join preferential trading agreements (with lower customs barriers) at a higher rate

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Engage in more international trade

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Foreigners invest more capital in democracies

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More likely to join a military alliance with another democracy

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More likely to win wars

What are consequences of democracy for interstate relations?

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The Democratic Peace

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Claim that military conflict (low levels, including threat to use force; and war) less likely between two democratic states

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Democracies will be peaceful toward other democracies, but not peaceful toward autocracies Why democratic peace?

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Electoral constraints raise the political costs associated with war

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Peace settlements more durable because democracy helps to solve the commitment problem

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Shared democratic identity: externalizing norms of conciliation and compromise

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Less public support for using military force against fellow democracy

The Historical Ebb and Flow of Wilsonian Foreign Policy

I. Wilson and Versailles

II. Wilsonianism During the Cold War

III. Democratization and End of Cold War

IV. Democracy promotion after the Cold War

Rethinking the democratic peace and democracy promotion

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Puzzles for the democratic peace

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Democratic transition

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Post-World War I phenomenon

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Institutions protect the process, not the policy outputs

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Not democracy, but American power and influence after World War I

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Empirical correlation product of American support for democracy and American imposition of peace on governments within its sphere of influence

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Example: Germany and Japan after World War II

Rethinking the democratic peace and democracy promotion (cont.)

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Illustrating the critique with an example: the resolution of the German problem and the post-WWII peace in Europe

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Correlation does not equal causation: yes, European peace corresponds with timing of democracy in West Germany, but...

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East Germany also peaceful but autocratic

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Germany divided

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The US threatened intervention in German domestic politics if partisan composition of government either far left or far right

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Soviet Union heavy influence on East German politics

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Significant American and Soviet military presence in two Germanies

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Peace in Europe about American and Soviet settlement over Germany, not democracy in West Germany

Rethinking the democratic peace and democracy promotion

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Condoleeza Rice was right...in 2000

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Foreign Affairs piece for candidate Bush criticized for focusing on China and Russia while neglecting terrorism

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Can’t expect peace by fostering democratic reform and then just letting them “go free”

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Rhetoric of democracy promotion expanding American commitments