# Democracy and Victory | *Michael C. Desch*

## Why Regime Type Hardly Matters

**W**hether democracies are more or less likely to win wars has long been a contentious issue. The Greek general Thucydides' chronicle of the defeat of democratic Athens in its twenty-four-year struggle with authoritarian Sparta in *The Peloponnesian War,* particularly his account of the Sicilian debacle, remains the classic indictment of the inability of democracies to prepare for and fight wars.[1] Indeed, for most of Western history, pessimism dominated thinking about democracy and war. "Democratic defeatists," from the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville to mid-twentieth-century realists such as E.H. Carr, George Kennan, and Walter Lippmann, believed that democracy was a decided liability in preparing for and fighting wars. Particularly during the Cold War, the pessimistic perspective on the fighting power of democracies was dominant.[2] Even leaders of the free world, such as John F. Kennedy, believed that when democracy "competes with a system of government . . . built primarily for war, it is at a disadvantage."[3] Despite the end of the Cold War, a few Cassandras remain concerned that democracies are unprepared to meet the next major military threat from authoritarian states such as China or international terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda.[4]

Not everyone shared this pessimism, however. The Greek historian Herodotus argued that democracy increased military effectiveness: "As long as the

*Michael C. Desch is Professor and Associate Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce at the University of Kentucky.*

1. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War,* Bk. 7, trans. Rex Warner (Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin, 1954).
2. See, for example, Jean-François Revel, *How Democracies Perish* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), p. 3.
3. Quoted in Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789–1994* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. xiii.
4. Donald Kagan and Frederick W. Kagan, *While America Sleeps: Self-Delusion, Military Weakness, and the Threat to Peace Today* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), pp. viii, 307; and Robert Kagan and

Athenians were ruled by tyrants they were no better warriors than their neighbors, but once they got rid of the tyranny they became best of all by a long shot."[5] With the democratic West's victory in the Cold War, a renewed optimism about the military prowess of democratic states has taken root. "Democratic triumphalists" note that an examination of major wars since 1815 reveals that the more democratic states have been on the winning side in the overwhelming majority of cases.[6] "There is something about democratic regimes," two triumphalists suggest, "that makes it easier for them to generate military power and achieve victory in the arena of war."[7]

Democratic triumphalists offer different explanations for why this should be the case, and sometimes they dissent from each other's arguments; taken as a whole, however, they suggest two reasons why democracies tend to win wars.[8] Some argue that democracies are better at picking the wars they get into, starting only those they know they can win. This is the "selection effects" argument. Others maintain that once at war, democracies fight more effectively: They have bigger economies, form stronger alliances, make better decisions, have higher levels of public support, or can count on greater effort from their soldiers. This is the "military effectiveness" argument.

The aim of this article is to question this sanguine view about democracy and military victory. I make three arguments. First, an examination of the historical data and methodological approach does not strongly support the triumphalists' claim that, all other things being equal, democracies are more likely to win in war.

Second, the logic that underpins the triumphalists' case is unpersuasive. Specifically, there is no reason to believe, nor is there much evidence to suggest, that leaders of democracies are more careful in selecting their wars than their authoritarian counterparts. The same charges can be made against the military effectiveness argument.

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William Kristol, "Getting Serious," *Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2001, http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/000/518hrpmo.asp.
5. Quoted in Donald Kagan, *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Athenian Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 16. See also Victor Davis Hanson, *The Soul of Battle: From Ancient Times to the Present Day, How Three Great Liberators Vanquished Tyranny* (New York: Free Press, 1999).
6. David A. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 86, No. 1 (March 1992), pp. 24–37. See also Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).
7. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 42, No. 3 (June 1998), p. 259. For similar sentiments, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 340; and Hanson, *The Soul of Battle,* p. 4.
8. William Reed and David H. Clark, "War Initiation and War Winners," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 44, No. 3 (June 2000), pp. 378–395.

Third, explanations other than those based on regime type more plausibly explain how states perform in war. Some of these explanations are well known. For example, an advantage in military power is often a reliable indicator of which side is likely to win a war.[9] The nature of the conflict can also influence military outcomes. In particular, the opposing sides in a war often have asymmetrical interests, which sometimes produce a paradoxical outcome where the weaker state defeats its more powerful adversary.[10] Moreover, states that imitate the military organization and doctrines of the leading states in the international system are likely to prevail in war.[11] Nationalism has also proven to be a potent source of increased military effectiveness in democracies (e.g., revolutionary France, 1789–94) and in autocracies (e.g., Prussia and Spain, 1807–15).[12] Other explanations are less well known. It is possible, for instance, that the correlation between democracy and victory is spurious: Certain factors that make it more likely that a state will be democratic also increase the likelihood that it will win most of its wars.[13] Finally, whether a regime is consolidated or not could determine its performance in war.

My case against the triumphalists should not be read as support for the pessimists' claim that democracies are especially inept at fighting wars, and therefore likely to be defeated by rival authoritarian states. Rather, it supports the

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9. Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security,* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Summer 2001), p. 97, finds that in interstate wars between 1800 and 1998, the stronger actor won nearly 71 percent of the time. See also John J. Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security,* Vol. 13, No. 4 (Spring 1989), pp. 54–89; and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

10. Andrew M. Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars," *World Politics,* Vol. 27, No. 2 (January 1975), pp. 175–200; and Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," pp. 93–128.

11. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 76–77, 127–128. See also João Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870–1914," *Security Studies,* Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 193–260.

12. Aside from Carl Maria von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed. Anatol Rapoport (Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin, 1968), pp. 384–385, the best general discussions of military consequences of increasing nationalism are Peter Paret, "Nationalism and the Sense of Military Obligation," *Military Affairs,* Vol. 34, No. 1 (February 1970), pp. 2–6; Robert R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 91–122; Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 80–124; and Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), p. 30.

13. John Mueller makes a similar argument about the spurious relationship between democracy and peace in "Is War Still Becoming Obsolete?" paper prepared for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 1991, pp. 50–52. See also John Mueller, *Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the Recent Transformation of World Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

view that, on balance, democracies share no particular advantages or disadvantages in selecting and waging wars. In other words, regime type hardly matters for explaining who wins and loses wars.

The remainder of the article is laid out as follows. The triumphalists' case is presented in the next section. In the following section, I critique the data and approach that undergird the triumphalists' claim that in war democracies are more likely to be victorious. The logic and evidence that underpin the triumphalists' case—selection effects and military effectiveness—are analyzed in the next two sections. Throughout the article I use, among other cases, Israel since 1948 to illustrate the problems with these arguments. Israel is a big winner in the triumphalists' data sets and so should be an easy test for their claim. The standard view is that Israel, a small, embattled democracy, has won its wars despite overwhelming odds for many of the reasons that triumphalists suggest.[14] If their theories do not in fact explain these victories, there are even more grounds for discounting them.[15] The article concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of my findings for scholarly debates on the relationship between democracy and war. It also offers some policy recommendations on how to think about the sources of military effectiveness.

## The Triumphalists' Case

The foundation of the triumphalists' claim that democracies are more likely to win wars is based on two studies that employ different sets of cases selected from the same databases. In a 1992 study, David Lake looked at every war since 1815 listed in the Correlates of War (COW) data set and selected those involving states with a democracy score of 6 or higher based on the widely used POLITY democracy index.[16] This criterion makes sense because states with such scores exhibit the characteristics that we expect of democracies.[17] Using

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14. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* p. 65.
15. This is essentially what Stephen Van Evera calls a "hoop test": that is, if a theory is correct it should easily pass this test; if it does not, there are grounds to doubt the theory. See Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 31.
16. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists." The COW data set refers to J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *Correlates of War Project: International and Civil War Data, 1816–1992,* No. 9905 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [ICPSR], 1994). This data set contains information about war participation, outcomes, various indices of military power, and war initiators. For the most recent version of the POLITY democracy index, see Keith Jaggers and Ted Robert Gurr, *Polity III: Regime-Type and Political Authority, 1800–1994,* No. 6695 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: ICPSR, 1996). From that data, most analysts calculate a composite democracy score (−10 to 10) by subtracting their AUTOC from DEMOC scores.
17. On a 21-point scale from −10 to 10, 6 is the generally accepted cutoff point for democracy.

Lake's method, I have determined that in the most current versions of the COW and POLITY data sets, there have been 31 wars involving democracies, 3 of which are excluded because they were draws (Korean War, 1969 War of Attrition, and 1982 Lebanon War). Democracies won 23 of the remaining 28 wars, or 82 percent (see Table 1).[18]

In a more recent study, Dan Reiter and Allan Stam examined most of the wars since 1815 in the COW data set to determine how often, controlling for other factors, the more democratic state prevailed over the less democratic state. Like Lake, Reiter and Stam used the POLITY democracy index to measure the level of democracy in the warring states. Utilizing that criterion and the most current versions of the COW and POLITY III data sets, I counted 75 wars, 24 of which were excluded because (1) data are missing on the level of democracy for all participants, (2) the wars involved states with the same democracy score, (3) the war ended in a draw, or (4) the conflict was ongoing. The more democratic state won 36 of the remaining 51 wars, or 71 percent (see Table 2).[19]

In sum, the historical record appears to support the triumphalists' claim that whether one looks at wars involving states with democracy scores greater than 6 or expands the universe to consider all wars in which more democratic states battled less democratic ones, there is a strong correlation between democracy and victory.

## *Do Democracies Really Win Wars More Often?*

To determine whether regime type really explains a state's military performance, it is to necessary to look more closely at both the data and the approach that lead triumphalists' to conclude that democracies are more likely to win their wars.

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Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Predator Initiators and Changing Landscapes for Warfare," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (August 1999), p. 7.

18. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists," pp. 24–37. Because there was often more than one state on each side in these wars, Lake actually has an *N* of 121. The Gulf War, which occurred subsequent to the publication of Lake's article, should also count according to his criteria.

19. The 1994 version of the COW data set, including these wars, has an *N* of 269. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, pp. 52–57, employ many (but not all) of these wars, leaving them with an *N* of 197. Specifically, they do not include the following wars: First Schleswig-Holstein (1848–49), Spanish-Chilean (1865–66), Sino-French (1884–85), Franco-Thai (1893), Central American (1906), Lithuanian-Polish (1919–20), Franco-Turkey (1919–22), Sino-Japanese (1937–41), Chankufeng (1938), Franco-Thai (1940–41), Korean (1950–53), Second Kashmir (1965), Football War (1969), Sino-Vietnamese (1979), Iran-Iraq (1980–88), Gulf War (1990–91), and Azeri-Armenian War (1992–98). They also disaggregate World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Yom Kippur War into distinct phases.

**Table 1. Outcomes of COW Wars (democracy score > 6).**

| Pessimists | Triumphalists | Not Counted |
|---|---|---|
| | Mexican-American (1848) | |
| | Roman Republic (1849) | |
| | Crimean (1853–56) | |
| | Anglo-Persian (1856–57) | |
| | Sino-French (1884–85) | |
| Greco-Turkish (1897) | | |
| | Spanish-American (1898) | |
| | Boxer Rebellion (1900) | |
| | Spanish-Moroccan (1909–10) | |
| | First Balkan (1912–13) | |
| | Second Balkan (1913) | |
| | World War I (1914–18) | |
| | Hungarian-Allies (1919) | |
| | Russo-Polish (1919–20) | |
| Russo-Finnish (1939–40) | | |
| | World War II (1939–45) | |
| | Palestine (1948) | |
| | | Korea (1950–53) |
| | Sinai (1956) | |
| Sino-Indian (1962) | | |
| Second Kashmiri (1965) | | |
| Vietnam (1965–75) | | |
| | Six-Day (1967) | |
| | Football (1969) | |
| | | War of Attrition (1969–70) |
| | Bangladesh (1971) | |
| | Yom Kippur (1973) | |
| | Turko-Cypriot (1974) | |
| | Falklands (1982) | |
| | | Lebanon (1982) |
| | Gulf War (1990–91) | |
| **Total 5** | **23** | **3** |

DATA

There are at least six problems with the data that the triumphalists use to support their claim that democracies excel at winning wars. First, conflicts are misaggregated in a number of cases. Misaggregation could—and sometimes does—bias the results in favor of democracy.[20] Second, there are cases of democracies winning wars as members of mixed alliances where the nondemocracy accounted for the majority of the winning alliance's military

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20. Other scholars have recognized this problem too. See, for example, D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam III, "The Declining Advantages of Democracy: A Combined Model of War Outcomes and Duration," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 42, No. 3 (June 1996), p. 246; and Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* p. 39.

**Table 2. Outcomes of COW Wars (winner democracy > loser democracy).**

| Pessimists | Triumphalists | Not Counted |
|---|---|---|
| | Franco-Spanish (1823) | |
| | | Russo-Turkish (1828–29) |
| | Mexican-American (1848) | |
| | | Austro-Sardinian (1848–49) |
| First Schleswig-Holstein (1848–49) | | |
| | | Roman Republic (1849) |
| La Plata (1851–52) | | |
| | Crimean (1853–56) | |
| | Anglo-Persian (1856–57) | |
| | | Italian Unification (1859) |
| | | Spanish-Moroccan (1859–60) |
| | | Italo-Roman (1860) |
| | Italian-Sicilian (1860–61) | |
| | Franco-Mexican (1862–67) | |
| Ecuador-Columbia (1863) | | |
| Second Schleswig-Holstein (1864) | | |
| | Lopez (1864–70) | |
| | Spanish-Chilean (1865–66) | |
| | | Seven Weeks (1866) |
| | | Franco-Prussian (1870–71) |
| | | Russo-Turkish (1877–78) |
| | Pacific (1879–83) | |
| | Sino-French (1884–85) | |
| Central America (1885) | | |
| | Franco-Thai (1893) | |
| | Sino-Japanese (1894–95) | |
| Greco-Turkish (1897) | | |
| | Spanish-American (1898) | |
| | Boxer Rebellion (1900) | |
| | Russo-Japanese (1904–05) | |
| Central America (1906) | | |
| | | Central America (1907) |
| | Spanish-Moroccan (1909–10) | |
| | | Italian-Turkey (1911–12) |
| | First Balkan (1912–13) | |
| | Second Balkan (1913) | |
| | World War I (1914–18) | |
| | Hungarian-Allies (1919) | |
| | Russo-Polish (1919–20) | |
| | Lithuanian-Polish (1919–20) | |
| | | Greco-Turkey (1919–22) |
| | | Franco-Turkey (1919–22) |
| Sino-Soviet War (1929) | | |
| | Manchuria (1931–33) | |
| Chaco (1932–35) | | |
| Italo-Ethiopian (1935–36) | | |
| | Sino-Japanese (1937–41) | |
| | Chankufeng (1938) | |

**Table 2. (continued)**

| Pessimists | Triumphalists | Not Counted |
|---|---|---|
| Nomohan (1939) Russo-Finnish (1939–40) | | |
| | World War II (1939–45) Franco-Thai (1940–41) Palestine (1948) | |
| | | Korea (1950–53) |
| | Sinai (1956) | |
| | | Russo-Hungarian (1956) |
| Sino-Indian (1962) Second Kashmir (1965) Vietnam (1965–75) | | |
| | Six-Day (1967) Football (1969) | |
| | | War of Attrition (1969–70) |
| | Bangladesh (1971) Yom Kippur (1973) Turko-Cypriot (1974) | |
| | | Vietnamese-Cambodian (1975–79) Ethiopian-Somali (1977–78) Uganda-Tanzania (1978–79) Sino-Vietnamese (1979) Iran-Iraq (1980–88) |
| | Falklands (1982) | Lebanon (1982) Sino-Vietnamese (1985–87) |
| | Gulf War (1990–91) | |
| | | Azeri-Armenian (1992–98) |
| **Total 15** | **36** | **24** |

strength.[21] A "mixed alliance" is one in which the democratic participant accounts for less than 50 percent of the power potential in two out of three power categories, such as iron and steel production, number of troops, and total population. Third, in some cases a democracy was much more powerful than its adversary and used that advantage to overwhelm its rival. A "gross mismatch" is a conflict in which one side has a better than 2:1 advantage in two out of three power indices. Such gross mismatches should be considered only if the triumphalists' can prove that regime type caused the imbalance of

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21. Bennett and Stam, "The Declining Advantages of Democracy," p. 248, n. 20, also identified this problem. It is not clear, however, given the large number of missing data points and the fact that capabilities may not measure real contribution to the war effort, that their solution of gauging each participant's role in the alliance based on their individual capabilities solves the problem of who contributed what in a mixed alliance.

power.[22] Fourth, in several cases the triumphalists' coding is questionable and, when corrected, weakens their case. Fifth, there are cases in which the belligerents' interests in the outcome of the conflict are so asymmetrical that it is impossible to ascribe the outcome to regime type and not to the balance of interests. Sixth, many of the cases involve states that cannot really be considered democratic and therefore are not strong tests of the triumphalists' theories.

A number of the cases in the COW data set are not fair tests of whether regime type affects the likelihood of a state winning its wars. A fair test of a theory involves identifying crucial cases that clearly rule out alternative explanations.[23] For example, in Lake's data set, World War II is treated as a single war involving the same belligerents from 1939 to 1945 in which the democracies prevailed. This characterization is misleading, however, because the war comprised at least three distinct conflicts involving different actors and different scenarios: the Battle of France (May–June 1940), the European War (June 1941–May 1945), and the Pacific War (December 1941–August 1945). Treating World War II as single war overstates the effectiveness of the democracies and misses the real reasons why they were on the winning side.

In the spring of 1940, Nazi Germany went to war against Britain, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Early in the war, the Germans, who were about as powerful (0.8:1 in iron and steel production, 0.9:1 in military manpower, and 0.8:1 in population) as their democratic adversaries, nonetheless defeated them decisively, thus contradicting the triumphalists' expectations.[24]

In the ensuing war in Europe, a mixed alliance including Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States defeated an alliance of fascist states led by Nazi Germany and Italy. Although the democracies—Britain and the United States—were on the winning side, this case does not strongly support the triumphalists' claim for two reasons.[25] First, the Soviet Union—not Britain and

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22. Because Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* p. 58, reject other triumphalist arguments that democracies win wars because of a preponderance of power—either their own or their allies—they ought to be particularly eager to find cases of democracies being relatively evenly balanced with nondemocracies.

23. On the importance of "crucial cases" for devising "fair tests" for comparative theory testing, see Arthur Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), pp. 24–28.

24. Classic accounts include William L. Shirer, *The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940* (New York: Da Capo, 1994); Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994); and Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle: France 1940* (New York: Penguin, 1988).

25. In *Democracies at War,* Reiter and Stam, who do disaggregate the war in Europe, separately credit the United States and Britain with defeating Nazi Germany. Their data set also credits demo-

the United States—was principally responsible for defeating Nazi Germany. Most historians agree that the war in Europe was settled mainly on the eastern front.[26] Indeed, roughly 85 percent of the *Wehrmacht* was deployed along that front for most of the war; not surprisingly, about 75 percent of German casualties were suffered there.[27] Second, this case is a gross mismatch: The Allies had a 3.8:1 advantage in iron and steel, a 1.7:1 advantage in military manpower, and a 2.47:1 advantage in population over the Axis.

In the Pacific War the United States, with support from Australia, Britain, China, and New Zealand, inflicted a decisive defeat on Japan in 1945. Although the democracies were on the winning side in this conflict, Japan lost because it was far less powerful than its rivals. Although the military manpower balance was roughly even, the Allies had a 13:1 advantage in iron and steel production and a 10:1 advantage in population.

Several Arab-Israeli cases also illustrate the problems with miscodings in the triumphalists' data set. Reiter and Stam, for example, code the 1969–70 Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition and the 1982 Lebanon war as victories for democratic Israel. Most analysts, however, including the original compilers of the COW data set, regard them as draws. As Ezer Weizman concluded, "It is no more than foolishness to claim that we won the War of Attrition. On the contrary, for all their casualties it was the Egyptians who got the best of it."[28] Even a few miscodings can bias the triumphalists' findings about the propensity of democracies to win their wars.

Other Arab-Israeli cases illustrate how asymmetric interests might be a better determinant of military success. Israel did well in conventional wars in which its survival was at stake (e.g., 1948 and 1967). In contrast, Israel fought poorly in unconventional wars where its survival was not on the line (e.g., Lebanon in 1982 and the first Palestinian *intifada* [uprising] in 1987).[29] This is not surprising because, as Martin Gilbert notes, the 1982 Lebanon war "was

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cratic Israel with not one but two victories in the 1973 Yom Kippur War by dividing it into two wars: Israel versus Egypt and Israel versus Syria. This coding tilts the scale in favor of democracies, although it is balanced by their counting as separate victories Germany's defeats of Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and France.

26. Alan Clark, *Barbarrossa: The Russian-German Conflict of 1941–45* (New York: Quill, 1965); Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 63–100; and Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort, 1941–45* (New York: Penguin, 1997).

27. W. Victor Madej, "Effectiveness and Cohesion of the German Ground Forces in World War II," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology,* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1978), pp. 233–248.

28. Quoted in Martin van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York: PublicAffairs, 1998), p. 215. On Lebanon, see Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

29. Quoted in van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* p. 296.

the first war in Israel's history for which there was no national consensus. Many Israelis regarded it as a war of aggression."[30] The abysmal performance of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and indeed the Israeli government as a whole, was even more marked in Israel's efforts to suppress the first *intifada.* As Martin van Creveld wrote: "Never known for its discipline, the IDF's traditional strengths—originating in the *Yishuv*'s prestate military organizations— had been initiative and aggressiveness in defeating Arab armies in short, sharp wars. Now those very qualities started turning against it in a prolonged conflict that demanded patience, professionalism, and restraint."[31] The late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin concurred: "It is far easier to resolve classic military problems. . . . It is far more difficult to contend with 1.3 million Palestinians living in the Territories, who do not want our rule, and who are employing systematic violence without weapons."[32]

Of the 75 wars since 1815 listed in the most recent version of the COW data set, 54 are clearly unfair tests. This leaves 21 cases of fair fights. Of these, the more democratic state won 12 times, and the less democratic state won 9 times (see Appendix).[33] This approach of looking at wars involving states that are relatively more democratic increases the number of relevant cases; however, it also results in the inclusion of many cases of wars between states where at least one of the belligerents does not score a 6 or above on the democracy scale—for example, the Pacific War (1879–83), the Sino-Japanese War (1894– 95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), the Manchurian War (1931–33), the Sino-Japanese War (1937–41), and Changfukeng (1938). There were 31 wars involving states that were clearly democratic; however, 22 of these involve misaggregations, mixed alliances, gross mismatches, or asymmetric interests. Thus, of the remaining 9 cases, 3 support the pessimists and 6 support the triumphalists.[34]

In both cases, democracies do better than their rivals. They seem to do better in wars involving one clearly democratic state (democracies win in 67 percent

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30. Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (New York: William Morrow, 1998), p. 504.
31. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* p. 344.
32. Quoted in Gilbert, *Israel,* p. 526.
33. This adds 12 cases to those listed in note 34. Five support the defeatists: Ecuadorian-Colombian (1863), Second Schleswig-Holstein (1864), Central American (1906), Sino-Soviet (1929), and Chaco (1932–35); and seven support the triumphalists: Pacific (1879–83), Central American (1885), Sino-Japanese (1894–95), Russo-Japanese (1904–05), Manchurian (1931–33), Sino-Japanese (1937–41), and Chankufeng (1938).
34. These are the first part of World War I (1914–17), the Battle of France (May–June 1940), and the Sino-Indian War (1962), which seemingly support the defeatists; and the Russo-Polish War (1919–20), the Israeli War for Independence (1948), the Six-Day War (1967), the Football War (1969), the Yom Kippur War (1973), and the Falklands War (1982), which appear to support the triumphalists.

of the 9 cases) as opposed to all wars (democracies win in 57 percent of the 21 cases). Yet, based on these findings, it is difficult to have confidence in the proposition that democracy is the reason states are more likely to win their wars.

Table 3 illustrates the potential impact of misaggregations, mixed alliances, gross mismatches, asymmetric interests, and miscodings on the triumphalists' findings. Model 1 is a simple probit model using Reiter and Stam's data estimating the effects of the level of democracy (without any control variables) on the likelihood of a state winning a war. Not surprisingly, the model supports their argument that a democracy is more likely than a nondemocracy to achieve victory. Model 2 shows what happens when the misaggregations in World War II (crediting Britain and the United States with defeating Nazi Germany) and the Yom Kippur War (crediting Israel with two victories) are corrected, the miscodings are eliminated (Israel should be credited with draws rather than victories in the 1969–70 War of Attrition and the 1982 Lebanon war), and the focus is exclusively on cases that are fair tests of the triumphalists' theories. With these changes, the democracy variable is no longer significant.

APPROACH

Some might argue that a better approach would be to keep the unfair tests and control statistically for other factors that may account for why democracies win wars more often than nondemocracies. The major advantage of this approach, proponents argue, is that it offers a large number of cases that make advanced statistical analysis possible. Yet even if one accepts the validity of all the historical cases and tries to control for competing explanations, there are still reasons to question the triumphalists' claim that democracy is the key to military victory.

First, Lake as well Reiter and Stam employ approaches that utilize "pooled data" consisting of a number of countries, some of which are involved in multiple wars, to generate each data point. A central assumption of statistical analysis is that each data point is independent (the outcome of one war is not affected by the outcome of previous ones), homogeneous (the wars are roughly comparable), and exchangeable (if a democracy can beat one nondemocracy, it should be able to defeat all similar nondemocracies). Reiter and Stam, for example, have an $N$ of 197, but this actually consists of only 66 countries, a small number of which are looked at repeatedly. Among the most democratic states in their data set (scores of 9 or 10 on the democracy index), three—Britain, Israel, and the United States—comprise approximately 56 percent of the cases.

**Table 3. Probit Results (win/lose).**

| Variables | Model 1 | Model 2 (fair fights > 6) |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.1410283 (0.097201) | −0.3440138 (0.227655) |
| Democracy | 0.0359429** (0.0137452) | 0.0364302 (0.0313352) |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.0248 | 0.0332 |
| LL | −133.04446 | −21.342535 |
| *N* | 197 | 34 |

NOTE: Data are available at http://www.yale.edu/plsc151a/. I used the variables politics and wl.
* ≤ 0.05 (all tests two-tailed)
** ≤ 0.01
*** ≤ 0.001
[Robust standard errors]

Of the most democratic states that won wars, these three countries account for 75 percent of the results. Given that three states play such a large role in the triumphalists' findings, it makes sense to ask whether there are particular circumstances in each case, or variables not contained in the triumphalists' models, that explain their propensity for winning particular wars. This is the potential problem of "fixed unobserved effects" that a recent article suggests affects much large-*N* research in international relations.[35] Some scholars argue that this problem can be solved simply by reporting robust standard errors.[36] The optimal solution to the fixed effects problem, however, is to collect more and better data that would make it possible to control directly for the unobserved variables that might be unique to each case.[37] This is by no means an easy task. Unobserved variable bias would not be much of a problem if it were easy to identify and measure those variables. Therefore, another way to address the problem is through in-depth process tracing in obviously related cases to ascertain whether factors unique to those cases can explain the outcome.

35. Donald P. Green, Soo Yeon Kim, and David H. Yoon, "Dirty Pool," *International Organization,* Vol. 55, No. 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 441–468.
36. John R. Oneal and Bruce M. Russett, "Clear and Clean: The Fixed Effects of the Liberal Peace," *International Organization,* Vol. 55, No. 2 (Spring 2001), p. 471.
37. Gary King, "Proper Nouns and Methodological Propriety: Pooling Dyads in International Relations Data," *International Organization,* Vol. 55, No. 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 497–507.

Second, although there is a correlation between democracy and victory, correlation does not mean causation.[38] To establish causation, the most likely alternative explanations need to be ruled out. There are, however, alternative explanations that the triumphalists cannot rule out by controlling for them statistically. For example, a large body of scholarship argues that democracy takes root and flourishes as the result of a distinct set of preconditions, including high levels of aggregate wealth, equitable wealth distribution, free markets, high levels of social development, a strong feudal aristocracy, a strong bourgeoisie/middle class, high levels of literacy and education, a liberal political culture (e.g., toleration, compromise, and respect for the law and individual rights), Protestantism, strong intermediary organizations, capable political institutions, low levels of domestic political violence, moderate politics, occupation by a democratic state, geographical security (water, mountains, etc.), strong allies, and weak adversaries.[39]

Some of these preconditions for democracy confer decided military advantages as well.[40] For example, wealthy, highly developed, well-educated, strongly institutionalized states that are geographically secure and have strong allies and weak adversaries are also more likely to win wars. Rather than democracy explaining this outcome, it is possible that certain preconditions of democracy produce both a democratic political system and an impressive record of military success. If this argument is correct, then the correlation between democracy and military victory is spurious: The preconditions, not democracy per se, account for both.

If the preconditions argument is correct, there should be little variation in the military effectiveness of states over time, especially pre- and post-democracy, but significant variation across cases with different preconditions. Some democracies, such as the United States and Israel, were founded on democratic principles, so they are not useful for assessing the preconditions argument. Two other democracies—Britain and France—have long predemocratic

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38. Important cautions about overreliance on correlational findings include Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), p. 669; and David Dessler, "Beyond Correlations: Toward a Causal Theory of War," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 35, No. 3 (September 1991), pp. 337–355.
39. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 37–38.
40. Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 78–79. For the classic discussion of how a benign security environment is more conducive to democracy, see Otto Hintze's treatment of Great Britain in "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 178–215.

histories. They have also had strikingly different records of military success since 1648. Britain has fought about 43 wars since the end of the Thirty Years' War, winning 35 (81 percent) of them. Britain's record in the COW data set is slightly better: It has fought 9 wars and won 8 (89 percent).[41] The preconditions argument would attribute these results to the fact that Britain is a wealthy, geographically secure state with many allies, allowing it to win wars with little domestic mobilization. Conversely, France has few of the preconditions necessary for democracy and military success, and thus has been both an inconsistent democracy and a less successful belligerent. France has fought 31 wars since 1648 and won 18 of them (58 percent). In the COW data set, it fought 16 wars, winning only 9 (56 percent).

Another possible explanation for how a state performs in war is whether its government is consolidated. The mean democracy score for Lake's winners is 0.59, which is well below the democracy range.[42] The average democracy score for winners in Reiter and Stam's data set is even lower: −1.41. The distribution of winners in all wars since 1815 by democracy score shows that this remarkably low average is due to the large numbers of highly authoritarian states that won their wars too (see Figure 1). This leads Reiter and Stam to propose that the effect of the level of democracy is curvilinear (i.e., the most democratic and most autocratic states win, but those in the middle tend to lose).[43] This pattern, however, is also compatible with an argument that ascribes victory not to the level of democracy but to whether a regime has been politically consolidated, as one would expect with highly democratic and authoritarian states. The mixed regimes in between high democracy and high autocracy, which are referred to as "anocracies," may perform poorly in war because they are unconsolidated, transitional regimes.[44] The primary reason for characterizing anocracies as transitional regimes is that they do not stay at this level as long as regimes do when they are either in the democracy or autocracy range.[45]

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41. British and French military track records since 1648 were calculated from R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History: From 3500 B.C. to the Present,* 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).
42. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists," p. 31, n. 31.
43. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* pp. 25, 129.
44. This logic parallels Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), p. 35, who suggest that an alternative explanation for their finding about the increased likelihood of international conflict in democratizing states is that states undergoing any sort of political change are more likely to engage in war.
45. For evidence that anocracies are short-lived, see Hårvard Hegre, Tanja Elligson, Scott Gates, and Nils Peter Gleditsch, "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 95, No. 1 (March 2001), p. 34.

**Figure 1. The Distribution of Winners By Democracy Score.**
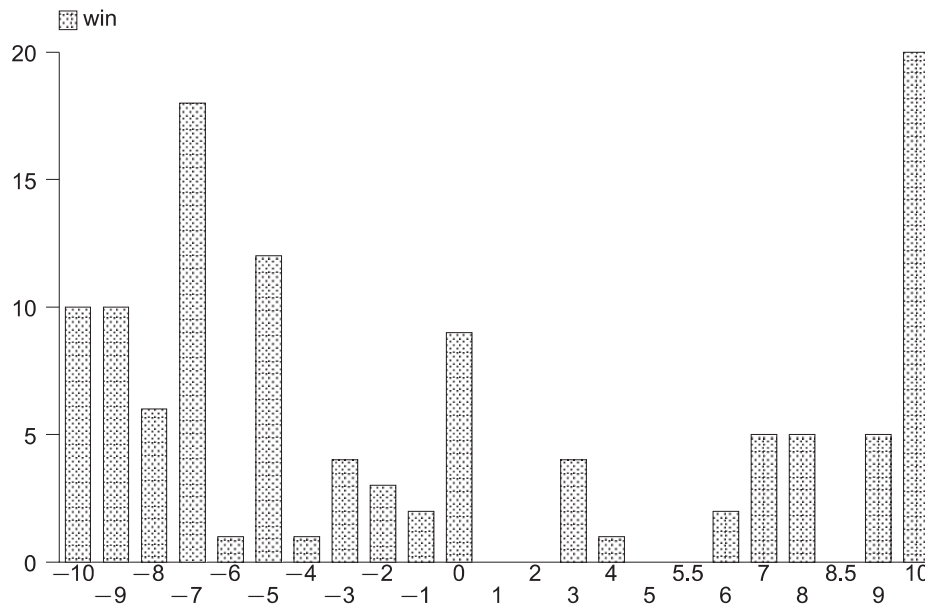
In sum, the historical data do not strongly support the triumphalists' claim that democracies are more likely to win wars than nondemocracies. In particular, many of the cases they employ are not fair tests of their claim and therefore cannot be used to support (or refute) it. Nor does the triumphalists' approach effectively rule out two alternative factors that may explain why states win wars: (1) the existence of common preconditions for democracy and victory and (2) the degree of regime consolidation. In the following two sections, I assess the causal mechanisms that the triumphalists use to explain why, in their view, democracies are more likely than other types of regimes to win their wars.

## Selection Effects

According to the selection effects argument, democracies win wars because they start them only if they have a high probability of being victorious. The

reason for this caution is that democratic leaders must run for office, and voters will punish those who initiate unsuccessful wars. Authoritarian leaders, on the other hand, are rarely held accountable by their populations, and thus can more easily weather a losing war.[46]

Lake as well as Reiter and Stam use statistical methods that aim to show that whether or not democracies start wars matters tremendously for the outcome. Their data show that even controlling for power and other factors, democracies are more likely to win the wars they initiate; triumphalists interpret this as support for the selection effects argument (see Table 4).[47]

Despite this apparent support for the triumphalists' case, there are three reasons for skepticism. First, victory in war is a complex and overdetermined phenomenon in which many factors play a role. The key question is: Which factors play the biggest roles? As Table 5 makes clear, a calculation of the "marginal effects" for each variable in Table 4 shows that democracy has one of the smallest effects of any variable. Marginal effects are derivatives of the probability that the dependent variable will equal 1 (in this case that the state wins) with

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46. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," pp. 658–659; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph M. Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 89, No. 4 (December 1995), pp. 841–855; Kenneth A. Schultz, "Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 92, No. 4 (December 1998), p. 830; Bennett and Stam, "The Declining Advantages of Democracy," pp. 346, 365; Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III, "Democracy, War Initiation, and Victory," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 92, No. 2 (June 1998), p. 378; and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alistair Smith, "Policy Failure and Political Survival: The Contribution of Political Institutions," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 147–161.

For the claim that initiators are more likely to win wars, see Kevin Wang and James Lee Ray, "Beginners and Winners: The Fate of Initiators of Interstate Wars Involving Great Powers since 1495," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 38, No. 1 (March 1994), pp. 139–154.

47. Lake, "Powerful Pacificists," uses a logit model to measure the impact of two independent variables—democracy and initiation—on the dependent variable, which is the likelihood of winning or losing a war. Based on that, for example, going from a democracy score of 5 to 10 (e.g., from Syria in 1948 to the United States in 1941) more than doubles the likelihood of victory. Logit makes it possible to calculate the odds likelihood ratio by applying anti-logs to both sides of the basic equation $\text{logit}(\pi) = \alpha + \beta X$,
which yields the odds likelihood ratio from the formula

$$\frac{\pi}{1 - \pi} = e^{\alpha + \beta X} = e^{\alpha}(e^{\beta})^X.$$

This reveals the effect of a one-unit increase in the democracy score on the likelihood of victory.

Reiter and Stam, *Democracy at War,* p. 45 (Table 2.2), particularly model 4 (which best captures the argument that democracies are better able to pick winning wars), employ more sophisticated probit models (including more control variables and a broader spectrum of cases). Unlike Lake, who measures the interaction effect between democracy and war initiation by including both variables in the same equation, Reiter and Stam assess selection effects by including a number of interaction terms between democracy and war initiation in their equations along with various control variables.

**Table 4. Probit Results (win/lose).**

| Variables | R&S Model 4 |
| --- | --- |
| democracy*initiation | 0.0675943* |
| | (0.0298018) |
| democracy*target | 0.0639582* |
| | (0.0275639) |
| initiation | 0.9142049** |
| | (0.3422103) |
| capabilities | 3.726842*** |
| | (0.5249923) |
| allies capabilities | 4.721843*** |
| | (0.6837011) |
| quality ratio | 0.0522075 |
| | (0.0329194) |
| terrain | −10.93261*** |
| | (2.937978) |
| strategy*terrain | 3.560021*** |
| | (0.9689448) |
| strategy1 | 7.235081* |
| | (2.886022) |
| strategy2 | 3.478767 |
| | (1.993146) |
| strategy3 | 3.35718* |
| | (1.428867) |
| strategy4 | 3.069146* |
| | (1.252304) |
| Constant | −5.517191** |
| | (1.698374) |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.5244 |
| LL | −64.886064 |
| *N* | 197 |

NOTE: I used the following variables: polini, poltarg, init, wl, concap, qualrat, capasst, terrain, strat1, strat2, strat3, strat4, and staterr. These variables are discussed at length in Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 40–44. I also estimated this model using only the fair-fight cases and found no selection effects for democracies.
* ≤ 0.05 (all tests two-tailed)
** ≤ 0.01
*** ≤ 0.001
[Robust standard errors]

**Table 5. Marginal Effects of Variables in Probit.**

| Variable | dy/dx |
|---|---|
| democracy*initiation | 0.0267582 |
| democracy*target | 0.0253188 |
| initiation* | 0.3469761 |
| capabilities | 1.475326 |
| allies capabilities | 1.869212 |
| quality ratio | 0.0206671 |
| terrain | −4.327838 |
| strategy*terrain | 1.409287 |
| strategy1* | 0.6914264 |
| strategy2* | 0.5623581 |
| strategy3* | 0.851552 |
| strategy4* | 0.5051578 |

*dy/dx is for discrete change of dummy variable from 0 to 1.

respect to each independent variable by itself. The marginal effects calculation measures the sensitivity of that probability of winning to changes in the values of various independent variables. The higher the absolute value of the marginal effect of an independent variable (i.e., the larger the value of $dy/dx$), the more sensitive the probability of the dependent variable equaling 1 is to changes in each independent variable, and thus the greater the effect of that independent variable. In other words, the marginal effects calculation measures how much a state's chance of winning changes because of variations in the independent variables. The interaction between democracy and initiation has one of the smallest effects (0.0267582), whereas terrain (−4.327838) and power—both the state's (1.475326) and its allies' (1.869212)—and the interaction between strategy and terrain (1.409287) have the largest effects on who wins.[48]

Second, there is little reason to think that caution about starting a war should be unique to democratic leaders. In fact, even some triumphalists concede that leaders of every kind of regime incur significant costs from starting a losing war, and thus they are apt to be careful about blundering into one. As Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson note, "The leader—whether

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48. I calculated these effects using STATA's "mfx compute" function, which holds the values of other variables at their mean in computing the marginal effect of each variable.

Reiter and Stam, *Democracy at War,* Figure 2.2, provide data on the marginal effects of increases in the democracy score but not on the relative effect of democracy compared with those of other variables. In an earlier work, Allan Stam, *Win, Lose, or Draw: Domestic Politics and the Crucible of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Figures 28, 45, does. Not surprisingly, my findings about democracy's relatively small marginal effect on the likelihood of victory are similar to his.

president, prime minister, or president-for-life—who adopts policies that reduce the security of the state does so at the risk of affording their political opponents the opportunity of weakening the leader's grasp on power."[49] As this statement makes clear, the general logic of their argument applies equally to democracies and autocracies.

One could even argue that democratic leaders should be less cautious about going to war than their nondemocratic counterparts. The worst fate that a democratic leader faces is removal from office and disgrace. On the other hand, authoritarian leaders who lose wars are frequently exiled, imprisoned, or put to death. Given that fact, it seems hard to maintain that an authoritarian leader would be less wary than a democratic leader about losing a war.[50] Although the probability of democratic leaders being ousted may be higher, the costs to autocratic leaders of losing power are so great that the net result should be that both are equally wary of losing a war. Finally, if democracies are actually more selective in choosing their wars, starting only easy ones, they should engage in fewer wars than authoritarian states, because there are not likely to be many sure victories. In fact, it is widely acknowledged by scholars that democracies are at least as, if not more, war prone than other types of regimes.[51] In short, the logic undergirding the triumphalists' selection effects argument is unconvincing.

Third, the Israeli cases provide little empirical support for the selection effects explanation. Of the three wars that Israel started, just one—the 1967 Six-Day War—indisputably supports the triumphalists' claim. The 1956 Sinai War cannot be credited as a victory for Israel because Israel was forced to return captured Egyptian territory by the United States. The disastrous 1982 Lebanon war clearly demonstrates that Israel has not consistently initiated successful wars.[52]

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49. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders," p. 853. See also William R. Thompson, "Democracy and Peace," *International Organization,* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter 1996), p. 149.
50. H.E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 39–40. For a logically rigorous argument that the incentives facing democratic and authoritarian leaders are similar, see Gordon Tullock, *Autocracy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), p. 19.
51. See Jack Levy, "The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence," in Phillip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern, and Charles Tilly, eds., *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War,* Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 270. I thank Hein Goemans for reminding me of this point.
52. Miriam Fendius Elman, "Israel's Invasion of Lebanon, 1982: Regime Change and War Decisions," in Elman, ed., *Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer?* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), p. 329.

If the triumphalists' data and approach are accepted without reservation, democracy plays one of the smallest roles in accounting for why states that start wars tend to win them. However, logical problems with the selection effects argument, and the lack of empirical support for it in what should be easy cases for them, are grounds for questioning even this modest role for democracy. In sum, democracy matters relatively little, if at all, in explaining whether states wisely select and then win their wars.

## Military Effectiveness

The triumphalists offer five causal mechanisms to support their claim that democracies are better at fighting wars than nondemocracies: Democracies (1) are wealthier, (2) make better allies, (3) engage in more effective strategic evaluation, (4) enjoy greater public support, and (5) have soldiers who fight more effectively than their counterparts in authoritarian states. It is impossible to do justice to each of these arguments in the space of one article. Nevertheless, a brief assessment of these causal mechanisms suggests that none is logically compelling or has much empirical support.

### DEMOCRACY AND WEALTH

Lake maintains that as a rule democracies are wealthier than authoritarian states, and because wealth is the foundation of military power, democracies are more likely to win wars.[53] This claim is based on the belief that democracies are less prone to rent seeking—that is, the governments of democratic governments are less likely to meddle in their economies, thus fostering free markets that produce greater national wealth.

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53. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists," p. 24, and before him Frederic C. Lane, "The Economic Meaning of War and Protection" in his *Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 389, n. 10, applied this argument to military power. A related argument is that liberal institutions make it easier for governments to borrow money to wage war. See Kenneth A. Schultz and Barry Weingast, "Limited Governments, Powerful States," in Randolph M. Siverson, ed., *Strategic Politicians, Institutions, and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 15–50.

For general arguments about democracies being less prone to rent seeking, see Mancur Olson, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 87, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 567–576; Barry Basinger, Robert B. Ekeland Jr., and Robert Tollison, "Mercantilism as a Rent-Seeking Society," in James M. Buchanan, Robert D. Tollison, and Gordon Tullock, eds., *Toward a Theory of the Rent-Seeking Society* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980), pp. 235–268; and Mark Brawley, "Regime Types, Markets, and War: The Impact of Pervasive Rents in Foreign Policy," *Comparative Political Studies,* Vol. 26, No. 2 (July 1993), pp. 178–197.

Triumphalists maintain that democracies are better wealth creators than other types of regimes, but they provide no supporting evidence for this claim.[54] Even the large body of scholarship on the relationship between levels of democracy and levels of economic development does not provide much of a foundation for their assertion. To be sure, there is some evidence that bolsters the triumphalists' contention that democracy makes economic growth more likely,[55] but there is much more evidence for the converse proposition that wealth is a key factor in creating democracy.[56] Thus, there is no consensus in the development literature on which way the causal arrow runs.[57] Therefore there is little basis for believing the triumphalists' claim that democracies produce greater wealth than nondemocracies.

Another reason to doubt the triumphalists' assertion that democracies are superior wealth creators is that the rent-seeking logic that underpins their claim is flawed. There is no reason to think that rent seeking should be less frequent in democracies. Indeed there are compelling reasons why it should be more common.

Rent seeking is the effort by interest groups in a society to gain excess profits through nonmarket mechanisms.[58] For example, tobacco producers receive special tax breaks and subsidies as a result of political lobbying, which injects economic inefficiencies into the marketplace that slow the rest of the economy. Economists offer compelling arguments for why it is more likely that interest groups will be successful rent seekers in a democracy.[59] "Countries that have

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54. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists," p. 28.

55. "Democracy and Growth: Why Voting Is Good for You," *Economist,* August 27, 1994, pp. 15–17; and Yi Feng, "Democracy, Political Stability, and Economic Growth," *British Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 391–418.

For a largely theoretical argument that democracy causes growth because of the greater credibility of democratic governmental institutions, see Douglass C. North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History,* Vol. 49, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 803–832.

56. John F. Helliwell, "Empirical Linkages between Democracy and Economic Growth," *British Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 24, No. 2 (April 1994), pp. 225–248; Ross E. Burkhardt and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 88, No. 4 (December 1994), pp. 903–910; Deane E. Neubaur, "Some Conditions of Democracy," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 61, No. 4 (December 1967), pp. 1002–1009; John B. Londregen and Keith T. Poole, "Does Income Promote Democracy?" *World Politics,* Vol. 49 No. 1 (October 1996), p. 2; and Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," *American Behavioral Scientist,* Vol. 35, Nos. 4/5 (March/June 1992), p. 450.

57. Mark J. Gasiorowski, "Democracy and Macroeconomic Development in Underdeveloped Countries," *Comparative Political Studies,* Vol. 33, No. 3 (April 2000), pp. 319–350.

58. James M. Buchanan, "Rent Seeking and Profit Seeking," in Buchanan, Tollison, and Tullock, *Toward a Theory of the Rent-Seeking Society,* pp. 3–15; and Robert D. Tollison, "Rent Seeking: A Survey," *KYKLOS,* Vol. 35, No. 4 (November 1982), pp. 575–602.

59. Mancur Olson, "A Theory of Incentives Facing Political Organizations: Neocorporatism and

democratic freedom of organization without upheaval or invasion the long-est," Mancur Olson argues, "will suffer the most from growth-repressing organizations and combinations."[60]

Lake identifies governments, not interest groups, as the main rent seekers. But even if democratic governments are less likely to engage in rent-seeking behavior, the fact remains that interest groups in democracies are more likely to be engaged in this kind of behavior. Lake provides no evidence, however, that the lack of government interference in a democracy's economy offsets the negative effects of rent seeking by interest groups.

Moreover, although wealth is necessary for generating military might, it also is essential that a state be able to mobilize its wealth for military purposes.[61] This two-step process raises a question that Lake does not address but that might be thought essential to his position: Are democracies better able to extract resources from their societies than nondemocracies? The best available study on the subject maintains that regime type is largely irrelevant: "Politically capable governments can mobilize vast resources from the society under stress of war, but totalitarian, democratic and authoritarian regimes do not determine the level of performance."[62] In short, democracies are no better than nondemocracies at transforming economic might into military power.

Contrary to Lake's rent-seeking argument, Israel between 1948 and 1982 did not have a bigger economy, except in per capita terms, than its Arab adversaries.[63] Israeli democracy did not inhibit state rent seeking. In fact, Israel was a classic example of a state with one of the major preconditions for rent seeking:

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the Hegemonic State," *International Political Science Review,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 1986), pp. 165–189; and Tollison, "Rent Seeking," p. 590.

60. Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 77.

61. This is a classic argument. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1945), p. 243. See also Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and War Initiation," p. 378; and Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* pp. 117–129.

62. See Jacek Kugler and William Domke, "Comparing the Strength of Nations," *Comparative Political Studies,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (April 1986), pp. 39, 50, 66. See also Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Political Regimes and Economic Growth," *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 51–69; Erich Weede, "The Impact of Democracy on Economic Growth: Some Evidence from Cross-National Analysis," *KYKLOS,* Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 1983), p. 35; and José Antonio Cheibub, "Political Regimes and the Extractive Capacity of Government: Taxation in Democracies and Dictatorships," *World Politics,* Vol. 50, No. 1 (April 1998), pp. 372–373.

63. According to data in the International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance* (London: IISS, various years), Israel had a gross national product of only $3.6 billion, compared with a combined Arab GNP of $16.1 billion in 1967; in 1969 and 1970, the ratio between Israel and Egypt was $4.5 billion to $6.3 billion and $5.4 billion to $6.45 billion, respectively; and in 1973 it was $8.7 billion to the combined Arab GNP of $23.53 billion. In 1982, however, Israel enjoyed an overall advantage over Syria of $21.77 billion to $16.158 billion.

The Heritage Foundation ranks Israel very high (4 on a scale of 5) in terms of the level of government intervention in the economy.[64] This is not surprising inasmuch as the economic ideology of Israel has always been socialist and collectivist. As one historian of Israel points out: "[Israel] had originally been created by East Europeans who brought with them not the ideas of Western liberal, bourgeois democracy but the collective socialism of the old Russian intelligentsia."[65] Democracy did little to constrain state intervention and did not provide Israel with more economic resources than the Arabs.

In sum, it is clear that democracies are wealthier than nondemocracies, and it is indisputable that national wealth is a key building block of military power. But contrary to what Lake and others triumphalists believe, democracy does not appear to be the source of that wealth. It seems equally plausible that states become wealthy first and then become democratic, not the other way around. Moreover, democracies enjoy no special advantage over authoritarian states in mobilizing that wealth for military purposes. Finally, even if Lake is right that state rent seeking is less of a problem in democracies, there are a number of logical reasons why rent seeking by interest groups is more of a problem in democratic political systems.

DEMOCRACY AND ALLIANCES

According Randolph Siverson and Juliann Emmons, democracies tend to form alliances with each other because they share a deep-seated commitment to two norms: cooperation and amity.[66] Some scholars argue that democratic alliances are more durable that other types of alliances.[67] This durability of democratic alliances leads Lake and others to conclude that, in war, the resulting democratic alliances are more effective than either mixed alliances or alliances com-

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64. See Kim R. Holmes, Bryan T. Johnson, and Melanie Kirkpatrick, *1997 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal, 1997), pp. xxx, 242–244, 255–257.
65. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Controversy of Zion: Jewish Nationalism, the Jewish State, and the Unresolved Jewish Dilemma* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1996), p. 241.
66. Randolph M. Siverson and Juliann Emmons, "Birds of a Feather: Democratic Political Systems and Alliance Choices in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 285–300. The classic statement of the normative argument is Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in Ted Humphrey, ed., *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 107–145. More recent work combines normative and institutional arguments. See, for example, Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations," *International Organization,* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 110–111.
67. On the greater durability of democratic alliances, see William Reed, "Alliance Duration and Democracy: An Extension and Validation of 'Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations,'" *American Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 1072–1078; and D. Scott Bennett, "Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816–1984," *American Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 846–878.

prising only nondemocracies.[68] One underlying assumption that could lead to this conclusion is that democratic leaders must worry about audience costs if they renege on their alliance commitments, which should make them highly reliable allies.[69] There are reasons to suggest, however, that this is not the case.

The proposition that democracies are likely to align with each other finds little support in the historical record.[70] In fact, history offers few examples of purely democratic alliances; most have been either mixed or between nondemocracies exclusively. Siverson and Emmons's own data indicate that democratic alliances accounted for only 3.24 percent of the total in the 1920–39 period and 10.97 percent in the 1946–65 period.[71] These data can be interpreted to mean that the growth of purely democratic alliances was largely a Cold War phenomenon, where the Soviet threat, not ideological affinity, brought democracies together.[72]

The Israeli cases do not lend much support to the "birds of a feather argument" that democracies are natural and constant allies. Early in its independence, Israel experienced difficulty forming alliances with other democracies. It did, however, find significant support from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union was one of the first states to formally recognize the new state of Israel. And Golda Meir concluded that "had it not been for the arms and ammunition that we were able to buy in Czechoslovakia and transport through Yugoslavia and other Balkan countries in those days at the start of the war, I do not know whether we actually could have held out until the tide changed, as it did by June of 1948."[73] More recently, Israel made common cause with such nondemocratic states as South Africa.[74] In fact, the Israeli

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68. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists," p. 24; and Anjin Choi, "Cooperation for Victory: Democracy, International Partnerships, and State War Performance, 1816–1992," John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, April 2002.

69. For the institutional argument that because democracies have large audience costs (e.g., leaders cannot change policies because the public is wedded to them), their commitments (or threats) are more credible, see James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 88, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 577–592; and Joe Eyerman and Robert A. Hart Jr., "An Empirical Test of the Audience Costs Proposition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 597–616.

70. Michael W. Simon and Erik Gartzke, "Political System Similarity and the Choice of Allies," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 617–635; and Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, "Democracy, Political Similarity, and International Alliances, 1816–1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 44, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 203–228.

71. Siverson and Emmons, "Birds of a Feather," p. 300.

72. This observation about the time boundedness of the democratic "birds of a feather" phenomenon is similar to the finding that the so-called democratic peace is also a recent development. On this, see Henry S. Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Polities and Peace," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Fall 1995), pp. 239–262.

73. Golda Meir, *My Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), pp. 230–231.

74. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* p. 206.

government and the South African apartheid regime were so closely aligned that they even cooperated secretly in developing each other's nuclear programs.[75] In short, democratic Israel has aligned itself with different types of regimes.

There is also little evidence to think that democratic alliances are militarily more effective than mixed or nondemocratic alliances. Large-*N* studies of this issue have produced contradictory findings.[76] Moreover, in the COW data set there is only one war (the debatable case of the 1956 Sinai War in which Israel, France, and Britain defeated Egypt) where the victorious alliance was composed entirely of democracies. In the overwhelming majority of other wars in which democracies won in alliance with other states, these alliances included nondemocracies.[77]

Moreover, the assumption that democracies should ally with each other is unconvincing because there are equally plausible reasons why democracies should ally with nondemocracies. Michael Simon and Eric Gartzke, for example, argue that because democracies and authoritarian states have different strengths and weaknesses (e.g., democracies have greater difficulty keeping secrets than authoritarian states), they make good allies.[78] Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser suggest an alternative rationale for why different kinds of regimes attract each other. Collective action among democratic allies is likely to be difficult, they argue, because the bonds of friendship may cause democracies to contribute less than their fair share—that is, they might think that their partners will pick up any slack out of a sense of fraternal obligation. In alliances that include nondemocracies, every member is more likely to pull its own weight, because each recognizes that the others are motivated strictly by self-interest. Therefore, they will not tolerate the kind of free riding that is likely in an alliance made up solely of democracies.[79] In short, there is no good reason why democracies should prefer to ally with each other rather than with nondemocracies.

There is also reason to question the audience costs argument, which could provide the theoretical foundation for the claim that democratic alliances are

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75. Seymor Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 271–283.
76. Compare Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* pp. 111–113, with Choi, "Cooperation for Victory," p. 32.
77. Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and War Initiation," p. 378.
78. Simon and Gartzke, "Political System Similarity and the Choice of Allies," pp. 617–635.
79. Mancur Olson Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," in Julian R. Friedman, Christopher Bladen, and Steven Rosen, compilers, *Alliance in International Politics* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970), p. 186.

especially durable and therefore more militarily effective. Although Joe Eyerman and Robert Hart conclude that crises between democracies are resolved more easily than those between nondemocracies—and they interpret this finding as support for at least some aspects of the audience costs argument—there is still no evidence that these costs make democracies better allies.[80] The level of public support within democracies for foreign attachments varies widely; in cases where the public is not seriously engaged, there are no audience costs for failure to honor an obligation.[81] Indeed there is considerable evidence that democratic publics are not particularly attentive to international affairs, which means that more often than not audience costs play little role in the calculations of democratic leaders.[82] Even in those cases where the public strongly supports a commitment to another state, such support can evaporate quickly.[83] Finally, leaders have considerable latitude to shape public attitudes toward alliances, which means that they will sometimes be able to explain away broken promises without incurring significant audience costs. In the best available study on regime type and commitments, Kurt Gaubatz concludes that the evidence supports only the more modest conclusion that democracies are no worse than other types of regimes in making "lasting commitments."[84]

The democratic state that should have had the highest audience costs in breaking a commitment to Israel was the United States. But despite the presence of an influential pro-Israel constituency in the United States after World War II, this alignment did not become very tight until the 1970s. Indeed the

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80. Eyerman and Hart, "An Empirical Test of the Audience Costs Proposition," pp. 597–616. But see Stephen M. Walt, "Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies," *International Security,* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 33–35, for a discussion of the limits of this empirical support. For suggestions of other logical problems with the audience costs argument, see Kenneth A. Schultz, "Do Democratic Institutions Constrain or Inform? Contrasting Two Institutional Perspectives on Democracy and War," *International Organization,* Vol. 53, No. 2 (Spring 1999), p. 237, n. 11.

81. This point is made by Walt, "Rigor or Rigor Mortis?" pp. 33–35.

82. Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus, Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 36, No. 4 (December 1992), p. 447; and John Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), p. 2.

83. Charles D. Tarlton, "The Styles of American International Thought," *World Politics,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (July 1965), pp. 584–614. This trend had become even more pronounced until September 11, 2001. The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations' most recent survey of public opinion finds that foreign policy is not even a top-ten issue for the American public. See John E. Reilly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1999* (Chicago: CCFR, 1999), p. 7, Figure I-2, which showed that the public's concern about international problems is the lowest ever. See also John Mueller, "Eleven Propositions About American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in an Era Free of Compelling Threats," Department of Political Science, Ohio State University, April 19, 2001.

84. Gaubatz, "Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations," p. 137.

U.S. government was ambivalent about Israeli independence in 1948,[85] opposed the democratic coalition that Israel fought beside in 1956 in Suez, and hamstrung the Israelis in 1967. Not surprisingly, once the U.S.-Israeli alliance was consolidated, the Israelis remained somewhat skeptical.[86] Other democracies such as Britain, France, and Germany were not always reliable allies either.[87] As Golda Meir recounted: "One day, weeks after the [Yom Kippur] war, I phoned [German Chancellor] Willy Brandt, who is much respected in the Socialist International, and said ' . . . I need to know what possible meaning socialism can have when not a single socialist country in all of Europe was prepared to come to the aid of the only democratic nation in the Middle East. Is it possible that democracy and fraternity do not apply in our case?'"[88] The U.S.-Israeli alliance was based not on high domestic audience costs but on the strategic interest of the United States in having allies in the Middle East to balance against the Soviet Union and later Iran and Iraq.[89] Realizing that these realpolitik considerations might someday lead to the U.S. abandonment of Israel, the Israelis and their American supporters have consistently sought to cloak the alliance in the mantle of democratic confraternity.[90] In short, democratic leaders are not necessarily constrained by alliance commitments, so there is little reason to believe that democratic alliances should be more effective than other types of alliances at winning wars.

DEMOCRACY AND SOUND STRATEGY

Some triumphalists believe that democracies are better strategic decision-makers than nondemocracies because the voters and their representatives, not just a handful of elites, have a say in how to wage war. According to Bruce Russett, this has two positive effects: Greater public involvement in decisionmaking produces better military policies, because those who would pay the costs of going to war make the decisions about how it is conducted; and the greater the number of individuals participating in the decisionmaking process,

85. Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 191.
86. Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry R. Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine,* RAND Report 2845-NA (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, September 1981), pp. 9, 24. More recently, see Stephen J. Glain, "For Some Israelis, U.S. Aid Is a Burden: Some Say Strings Attached to Military Assistance Aren't Worth the Money," *Wall Street Journal,* October 26, 2000, p. A23.
87. Gilbert, *Israel,* p. 448.
88. Meir, *My Life,* p. 446.
89. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* p. 252; and Gilbert, *Israel,* pp. 165, 225, 326, 367, 407, 445.
90. Wheatcroft, *The Controversy of Zion,* p. 308.

the lower the likelihood of strategic blunders.[91] Optimal security policies usually prevail in the marketplace of ideas, which is what Stephen Van Evera, Jack Snyder, and others argue occurs in a democratic political system.[92] On close examination, however, these claims are unpersuasive for three reasons.

First, there are no studies available that assess whether democracies or nondemocracies make better decisions about how to wage war. Indeed the triumphalists offer no systematic evidence to support this claim, but rather make their case by emphasizing the logic that underpins it. There is, however, evidence to suggest that democracies are no better at making strategy than authoritarian states.

Israeli democracy has not consistently fostered high-quality strategic evaluation and decisionmaking. Indeed Israel has made a number of major strategic blunders since 1967. The lapses in judgment that produced the 1987 Palestinian *intifada* were rooted in decisions made after Israel's 1967 victory in the Six-Day War. Even though it had been clear to many Israeli leaders early on that retaining the Occupied Territories would be more trouble than they were worth,[93] the electoral dynamics of Israeli democracy made it difficult for any leader to unilaterally withdraw from them.[94] The intelligence failures that nearly resulted in Israel's defeat in the Yom Kippur War were thoroughly documented by the 1974 Agranat Commission.[95] Both Defense Minister Moshe Dyan and Prime Minister Meir resigned after the release of the commission's report of 1974, but that has not ensured that subsequent Israeli governments have been any wiser.[96] Consider, for example, the many mistakes made by Israeli leaders that led to the 1982 Lebanon debacle.[97] Prime Minister Menachem Begin re-

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91. Russett's reasoning follows Condorcet's jury theorem, which holds that if there is a 55 percent chance of any individual making the right decision, and 1,000 people decide using majority rule, then there is a 99.9 percent chance that such a democratic procedure will produce the right outcome. Bruce M. Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 106, 150.

92. Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), p. 27; Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 18–19; and Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, pp. 23–24,146, 160.

93. Gilbert, *Israel*, p. 398.

94. Ibid., p. 396; and Wheatcroft, *The Controversy of Zion*, p. 312.

95. Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement: October 1973* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), pp. 31, 278; Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence through Lebanon* (New York: Vintage, 1982), pp. 236–239; Amos Perlmutter, "Israel's Fourth War, October 1973: Political and Military Misperceptions," *Orbis*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 1975), pp. 434–460; and "Chief of Military Resigns in Israel, Blamed in Inquiry," *New York Times*, April 3, 1974, pp. 1, 5.

96. Gilbert, *Israel*, p. 465.

97. Schiff and Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*.

signed after the Lebanon campaign, yet the architect of that debacle, Ariel Sharon, is Israel's current prime minister.[98]

Moreover, the Israeli government has traditionally revealed very little information about its national security decisionmaking to the Israeli public.[99] Reflecting on the situation during the Yom Kippur War, former Israeli President Chaim Herzog observed that "Mrs. Meir's method of government brought about a system whereby there were not checks and balances and no alternative evaluations. Her doctrinaire, inflexible approach to problems and the government was to contribute to the failings of the government before the war. She was very much the overbearing mother who ruled the roost with an iron hand. She had very little idea of orderly administration and preferred to work closely with her cronies, creating an *ad hoc* system of government based on what was known as her 'kitchen.' But once war had broken out these very traits proved to be an asset."[100] Therefore, contradicting the marketplace of ideas argument that free and unfettered debate should produce optimal wartime policy, this undemocratic system has been effective for Israel in wartime. The fact that Israel is a democracy has not necessarily meant that it has crafted better security policies. But the lack of public input has not uniformly hindered Israeli decisionmaking either.

Second, there is no question that the public wants to avoid strategic blunders. Nobody wants to die if it can be avoided. The key issue, however, is whether there is a mechanism for translating that motivation into better wartime decisionmaking. In fact, there is not. The root of the problem is that the soldiers who fight wars hardly ever have the expertise to improve the decisionmaking process. Invariably, they have significantly less information and expertise than the civilian and military elites charged with directing the war. In the end, how well those at the top make decisions is all that matters.

Finally, a political system that gives voice to large numbers of individuals with diverse preferences may not be able to reconcile those differences and produce coherent policies. For example, Gaubatz's recent application of Kenneth Arrow's "paradox of democracy" to illustrate how national security decisions are made suggests how difficult it is to aggregate the diverse opinions

98. Gilbert, *Israel,* p. 515.
99. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* pp. xviii, 68, 109–110; and Perlmutter, "Israel's Fourth War," p. 435.
100. Herzog, *The War of Atonement,* p. 282.

common to democracies.[101] Unfortunately, the marketplace of ideas is not necessarily an efficient producer of sound strategy.[102]

DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

According to Aaron Friedberg, democratic leaders can count on greater public support for their wars than their authoritarian counterparts because elected policymakers are accountable to the people and so will conduct wars in such a way as to ensure that public support remains high.[103] Although there is no question that democratic leaders are answerable to their constituents, it is doubtful that this link translates into greater public support for their states' wars or that it explains why they win them.

Friedberg argues that it is especially difficult for democracies to rely on coercion and centralized control to wage war while maintaining public support, because they place a high premium on the norm of consent and they usually have a limited and decentralized form of government. To maintain public support for the war effort, Friedberg maintains, democratic leaders must conduct wars while relying on the voluntary consent of the public. Doing so, in fact, is likely to increase the prospects of military success. This approach, according to Freidberg, explains why the democratic United States, rather than the authoritarian Soviet Union, prevailed in the Cold War. It is not clear, however, how much regime type affects the level of public support for a war effort.

First, there are other reasons why the United States did not become a large, intrusive, and coercive garrison state during the Cold War that could have risked losing public support in the struggle against authoritarian communism. Structural factors such as geographic isolation and possession of nuclear weapons, rather than norms and institutions, offer an equally plausible explanation for why the United States could wage the Cold War while relying on voluntary consent and with a less intrusive government than that of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the problem with Friedberg's argument is in part one of case

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101. Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Intervention and Intransitivity: Public Opinion, Social Choice, and the Use of Military Force Abroad," *World Politics,* Vol. 47, No. 4 (July 1995), p. 538. Kenneth Arrow originally laid out his "paradox of democracy" argument in *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New York: Wiley, 1951).
102. For cautionary notes from an early proponent of the "marketplace of ideas," see Stephen Van Evera, "Why States Believe Foolish Ideas: Non-Self-Evaluation By States and Societies," version 3.5, January 10, 2002, p. 11, n. 21.
103. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State;* and Aaron Friedberg, "Why Didn't the United States Become a Garrison State?" *International Security,* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1992), pp. 109–142.

selection. His normative, institutional, and structural factors all anticipate a smaller and less coercive U.S. government relative to the Soviet Union. In the Cold War, the United States' antistatist ideas and weak governmental institutions coincided with geographical insulation and nuclear weapons. Thus it is not the best case to demonstrate that antistatist ideas and institutions were the driving force behind these strategic choices. In fact, this case could just as plausibly be interpreted as indicating that both democracy and success in war were the results of a favorable geographic location and nuclear weapons.

Second, Friedberg's assertion that the Cold War U.S. government was smaller and less intrusive than it might have otherwise been is debatable. If the comparative baseline for measuring the expansion of the U.S. Cold War state is either World War II or what some proponents of big government advocated, it was certainly smaller and less intrusive. The United States was much larger, significantly more intrusive, and somewhat more coercive, however, than it had been during the interwar period or at various times in the nineteenth century.[104] Indeed all successful states become more centralized and coercive in wartime.[105] Authoritarian Nazi Germany, which lost World War II, had remarkably little wartime centralization. On the other hand, the victors (i.e., the authoritarian Soviet Union and the democratic United States and Britain) were highly centralized.[106] This suggests that more centralized and more coercive states are more likely to win wars and also that regime type may not be the most important factor in explaining which states are able to more effectively mobilize societal resources in wartime.

Third, the triumphalists' claim about democracy and public support is not logically compelling. In particular, there is reason to believe that leaders and their publics often have different time horizons that affect their thinking about the utility of war. As Donna Nincic and Miroslav Nincic suggest, democratic publics, like consumers, tend to focus on short-term considerations when thinking about the use of force: What is the immediate payoff? In contrast, democratic leaders are inclined to think about war the way investors do: What will be the long-term payoff?[107] Given these different perspectives on the use

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104. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State,* pp. 30–31.

105. Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *War and State-making: The Shaping of Global Powers* (Boston: Unwin and Hyman, 1989); and Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

106. Overy, *Why the Allies Won,* p. 206; and Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy, and Society: 1939–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 99–131.

107. Donna J. Nincic and Miroslav Nincic, "Commitment to Military Intervention: The Democratic Government as Economic Investor," *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 32, No. 4 (July 1995), pp. 413–426.

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of force, it is reasonable to expect democratic leaders and their publics to be out of step in their enthusiasm for particular wars.

Fourth, there are no comprehensive studies to support the triumphalists' claim that democracies enjoy greater public support in wartime than authoritarian states. There is actually plenty of anecdotal evidence; however, both types of regime enjoy varied levels of public support in times of conflict, and neither has an apparent advantage over the other. For example, the American public strongly endorsed U.S. participation in World War II (1941–45), but its support for the Vietnam War (1965–73) evaporated over time, leading the United States to withdraw from the conflict. Authoritarian Russia, on the other hand, saw public support for World War I disappear between 1914 and 1917, yet the Soviet Union enjoyed broad and deep public support throughout World War II.[108] The historical record thus appears to show that regime type has hardly any effect on the level of public support in wartime.

There can be little doubt that historically the state of Israel was able to count on the overwhelming support of its citizens when it went to war between 1948 and 1973. But this support was not the result of its democratic system, as the triumphalists would argue. Rather, Israelis believed that they were fighting for their very survival.[109] Golda Meir made clear why Israeli society came together in wartime despite overwhelming odds: "We couldn't afford the luxury of pessimism . . . , so we made an altogether different kind of calculation based on the fact that the 650,000 of us were more highly motivated to stay alive than anyone outside Israel could be expected to understand and that the only option available to us, if we didn't want to be pushed into the sea, was to win the war."[110] Van Creveld echoes this point: "Israeli public opinion continued to see the IDF as the one great organization standing between it and death. Even more than before, it was prepared to do its utmost to ensure the army's success by providing the necessary resources in terms of material and the very best manpower at its disposal."[111] In short, common threat, rather than shared democratic ideology, provides a more compelling explanation for why Israeli society supported Israel's war efforts so enthusiastically.

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108. See the discussion of resurgent Russian nationalism during World War II in Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 290–293.
109. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*, pp. 125, 153, 197, 241.
110. Meir, *My Life*, p. 233. See also similar comments by David Ben Gurion and Moshe Dyan, in Dyan, *Moshe Dyan: Story of My Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), pp. 92, 396, 441.
111. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*, p. 153.

DEMOCRACY AND FIGHTING PROFICIENCY

Reiter and Stam maintain that because democratic governments have greater legitimacy than their authoritarian counterparts, their soldiers perform better on the battlefield. They attribute this finding to the political culture of democracies, which they argue fosters greater individual initiative and better leadership among their soldiers.[112] They reject as an alternative explanation that nationalism, rather than democracy, produces superior leadership and initiative, arguing that nationalism results only in higher morale.

There is reason to think, however, that nationalism also enhances individual initiative and leadership. Many scholars believe that the French Revolution transformed warfare precisely because it democratized French society. This, they maintain, fostered a greater sense of loyalty to the regime, which in turn increased the military effectiveness of the French army in all three areas.[113] This effectiveness, however, had its roots in prerevolutionary France and survived the collapse of French democracy and the coming to power of Napoleon Bonaparte.[114] Prussia and Spain, two highly nationalistic but not democratic regimes, played important roles in defeating Napoleon by employing many of the same tactics that served revolutionary and then Napoleonic France so well.[115] Nationalism and democracy, though they sometimes reinforce each other, are not inseparable.[116] Indeed Reiter and Stam concede that nationalism, not democratic ideology, may account for combat prowess. Unfortunately, they have not systematically tested nationalism as an alternative explanation for why militaries in their data set performed well on the battlefield.[117] Thus their case rests not on explicating an unbroken chain of logical reasoning, but on showing that there is a significant statistical correlation between democracy and various combat skills.

At first glance, Reiter and Stam appear to have assembled impressive statistical support for their claim that soldiers in democratic societies display greater leadership and initiative than those from nondemocracies. On close inspection,

112. Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness," pp. 259–277; and Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* pp. 58–74.
113. John A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996).
114. Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (New York: Collier, 1962), pp. 98–142.
115. Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War," in Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy,* pp. 123–142.
116. Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 110–111, argues that democracy and nationalism are intimately related. However, Ropp, *War in the Modern World,* pp. 126, 138, reminds us that the Spanish and Prussian cases during the Napoleonic Wars demonstrate that nationalism and democracy are not necessarily linked.
117. Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness," p. 264.

however, the Combat History Analysis Study Effort (CHASE) data set of battles, which provides the basis for these findings, is unreliable. In 1982, the Historical Evaluation and Research Organization (HERO) was commissioned to assemble this data set for the U.S. Army Concepts Analysis Agency (CAA). After receiving the initial version of the data set in 1984, CAA randomly selected 8 battles from it and submitted them for analysis to the U.S. Army Military History Institute, the U.S. Army Center for Military History, the Department of History at the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Army Combat Studies Institute. A total of 159 codings were checked in the 8 cases. The results seriously called into question the data set's reliability: 106 codings (67 percent) were judged to be in error, another 29 (18 percent) were deemed questionable, and only 24 (15 percent) were ascertained to be correct by the reviewers.[118]

Despite two revisions, there is still reason to question the reliability of the 1990 version of the CHASE data set that Reiter and Stam employ. The principal problem is that the codings of certain items in the data set are imprecise. The former CAA project manager, for example, concedes that "even with our best efforts error rates of 5% to 30% are to be expected."[119] As a result of continuing conflict between CAA and HERO over the reliability of the CHASE data set, HERO was relieved of responsibility for updating that data set in 1987. Nevertheless, HERO continues to work on its own to update the 1987 version of the CHASE data set, which it calls the Land Warfare Data Base (LWDB).[120] Recently, HERO (which is now called the Dupuy Institute) compared the 1990 version of the CHASE data set with the current LWDB, focusing on 1,196 data points common to both data sets. They found that almost half (500) of the codings for those same data points were different.[121]

There were no differences between the CHASE and LWDB data sets in the "leadership" category, but the consistency between the two data sets is not evidence that the data on leadership are reliable. In its various revisions to the CHASE data set after 1987, HERO focused exclusively on relatively hard variables such as order of battles and casualties, while ignoring softer variables such as initiative and leadership. According to a HERO staff member, these

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118. See Management and Support Directorate, *Military History: A Data Base of Selected Battles, 1600–1973,* Vol. 1, *Main Report* (Bethesda, Md.: U.S. Army Concepts Analysis Agency, September 1984), p. 21. See also Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance," p. 66, n. 29.

119. Robert Helmbold, "Lessons Learned Regarding Battle Data Bases," January 14, 1987, Howard Whitley Archives, Box 1, Center for Army Analysis, Ft. Belvoir, Virginia.

120. Discussions with Christopher Lawrence and Richard Anderson of the Dupuy Institute, McLean, Virginia, April 2000.

121. Letter (with attachments) to author from Christopher Lawrence, executive director, Dupuy Institute, June 8, 2000.

two variables were the "least looked at and poorest proofed section of the data base," because their codings were widely regarded as "all a judgement" anyhow.[122]

Problems with the HERO data set notwithstanding, Reiter and Stam believe that their findings are still valid on two related grounds: First, unless there is systematic bias in the codings, the fact that there is a very large number of cases should still make it possible to trust the findings. Second, because the principal architect of the original CHASE data set did not regard democracy as a key explanation for military prowess, we can be confident that the data are not biased in favor of their claims about the battlefield advantages of soldiers of democratic states.[123]

Although there may be no systematic bias in the CHASE data set, there is so much potential measurement error in the data set generally, and particularly in the leadership and initiative variables, that Reiter and Stam are left with inefficient models. Consider, for example, that if the relatively hard variables have a 5–30 percent error rate in their coding, how much more imprecise these soft variables are.[124] There is an even more serious data problem: possible bias or error in the coding of the independent variable—democracy. Ido Oren makes a convincing case that the POLITY democracy scores are highly subjective and thus unreliable.[125] The combination of problems with data for both the dependent and independent variables casts doubt on Reiter and Stam's findings that democratic armies demonstrate greater initiative and leadership skills on the battlefield.

Reiter and Stam note that there is another unbiased source of data on comparative military competence that can be used to test the triumphalists' proposition about the relationship between democracy and military performance.[126] Allen Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth Watman's study of the great power militaries in World War I, the interwar period, and World War II pro-

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122. Christopher Lawrence, telephone conversation, June 19, 2000.
123. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War,* pp. 71–72.
124. On the problems of bad data due to "measurement error," see William H. Williams, "How Bad Can 'Good' Data Really Be?" *American Statistician,* Vol. 32, No. 2 (May 1978), pp. 61–65. See also Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 158–163, concerning how nonsystematic error in the dependent variable reduces efficiency.
125. Ido Oren, "The Subjectivity of the 'Democratic' Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Fall 1995), p. 266. For a thoughtful discussion of the other limitations of the POLITY data set, see Kristian Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "A Reexamination of Democracy and Autocracy in Modern Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1997), pp. 361–383.
126. Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness," p. 264.

vides indicators of their military effectiveness.[127] It offers little evidence, however, that democratic armies fight better than nondemocratic armies.[128] Given the problems with the CHASE data set and the evidence of at least one other data set, there are grounds for doubting the triumphalists' claims that democracies are more likely to win their wars because their soldiers fight better.

This conclusion is hardly surprising, given the consensus among military historians that the three most formidable armies of the twentieth century in terms of initiative and leadership were (1) Imperial Germany's army during World War I (authoritarian state),[129] (2) Nazi Germany's army during World War II (authoritarian state),[130] and (3) Israel's army between 1948 and 1973 (democratic state).[131] In the Israeli cases, necessity, rather than shared democratic ideology, accounted for the superior performance of Israeli soldiers on the battlefield between 1948 and 1973. Van Creveld attributed the combat prowess of Israeli soldiers to the fact that they had no choice but to fight well or risk death: "Nothing mattered any longer, not even fear of incurring casualties. Was not Nasser a second Hitler? Was not another Holocaust just around the corner? Thus motivated, the Israelis fought like demons."[132] Israeli troops fought so valiantly not because their democratic political system made them want to fight better but because they had to if they wanted to survive.

It is clear that ideology did play an important role in Israeli military success; that ideology, however, was not liberal democracy but rather nationalism.[133] The common Arab threat solidified the sense of Israeli national identity, which in turn increased the willingness of Israeli society to support the war effort and its soldiers to fight hard. In contrast, there is little evidence—despite much

127. Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security,* Vol. 11, No. 1 (Summer 1986), p. 37.

128. Lt. Gen. John H. Cushman, U.S. Army (ret.), "Challenge and Response at the Operational and Tactical Levels, 1914–45," in Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, eds., *Military Effectiveness,* Vol. 3, *The Second World War* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 320–340. Cross-tabulations and $\chi^2$ for POLITY III democracy scores and Cushman's operational and tactical effectiveness grades for various countries covered in the three-volume study ($A = 4$, $B = 3$, $C = 2$, $D = 1$, $F = 0$) show no significant relationship between regime type and effectiveness.

129. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 290–303; and Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine during the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981).

130. For a comparative discussion of the combat power of the German army, see Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982).

131. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive,* p. xvii.

132. Ibid., p. 197.

133. Yehoshaphat Harkavi, "Basic Factors in the Arab Collapse during the Six Day War," *Orbis,* Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall 1967), p. 680; and Gilbert, *Israel,* p. 174.

pan-Arab rhetoric—that the Arab-Israeli wars ever generated much nationalist sentiment in the Arab world, beyond Palestine in recent years. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris, this lack of nationalist identity put the Arabs at a distinct military disadvantage vis-à-vis the Jews: "For the average Arab villager, political independence and nation-hood were vague abstractions; his loyalties were to his family, clan, and village and, occasionally to his region. Moreover, decades of feuding had left Palestinian society deeply divided."[134] Given this lack of national consciousness, it is not surprising that the highly nationalist Israelis were generally more militarily effective than their Arab neighbors.

In sum, the triumphalists' arguments about the relationship between democracy and the economy, alliances, decisionmaking, public support, and the battlefield performance of soldiers as explanations for why democracies should do well once in war are unconvincing.

## *Conclusion*

My skepticism about the triumphalists' argument that democracies more skillfully choose and effectively wage wars is based on two findings. First, much of the data supporting the correlation between democracy and victory are, upon closer inspection, of little value for testing the triumphalists' claim because they suffer from various shortcomings. Second, neither of the triumphalists' arguments that democracies do well because they are better at selecting wars they can win or that democracies fight better once at war are persuasive. Both rest on faulty logic and have only modest empirical support.

Therefore, if one wants to understand the sources of military effectiveness, either for one's own state or for potential allies and adversaries, whether or not that state is democratic is not the most important factor to consider. Although democracies and autocracies undoubtedly have different strengths and weaknesses that may affect some aspects of their performance in wartime, overall they seem to cancel each other out and so regime type confers no clear advantage or disadvantage. Moreover, at least until recently, military power could be produced in a variety of ways, through many different combinations of social organization, economic potential, specific doctrinal and training decisions, and

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134. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p. 192. For the link between family and clan loyalty and the inability of Arabs to succeed in modern mechanized wars, see Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996.

strategic choices. In other words, the "recipe" for effective military performance had a lot of variability, which meant that very different regimes could produce similar levels of capability by combining other ingredients in different ways. Given this fact, it is not surprising that democracies and nondemocracies are sometimes good at fighting and sometimes bad; regime type alone does not confer a clear advantage or disadvantage in selecting or fighting wars.

One might accept that regime type was irrelevant in the past but argue that whether a state is democratic or not is now becoming more important. According to this line of reasoning, the lesson of the past eleven years is that if a state wants to have a truly cutting-edge military fully capable of taking advantage of the so-called revolution in military affairs, it cannot do this in a centralized, coercive, and information-controlled society. Specifically, if a country wants to be able to fight as successfully as the United States did in the 1991 Gulf War, it must have an open democratic society where everyone is able to freely exchange ideas and knowledge and avail themselves without restriction of computer and communication technologies.[135] The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, largely because it was a centralized and coercive political system that was unable to compete militarily with the West, lends credence to this view. China, however, which remains fairly centralized and undemocratic, suggests that it may be possible for a state to reform its economy and revitalize its technology base so as to produce an effective military without political democracy.[136] Indeed, China is one of the cases that scholars need to watch to accumulate additional evidence about how much regime type may matter for military effectiveness in coming years.

My skepticism about the importance of regime type for military effectiveness stands in direct contrast to the current trends in the U.S. government, especially the intelligence community, in which there has been a renaissance of interest in the domestic-level sources of military effectiveness.[137] But if I am right, analysts should be wary about relying on monocausal theories of mili-

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135. For the general logical underpinning of this argument, see Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," pp. 14–16; and Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State,* p. 304.
136. For an example of how China has been able to modernize without across-the-board liberalization, see Evan A. Feigenbaum, "Who's Behind China's High-Technology 'Revolution'? How Bomb Makers Remade Beijing's Priorities, Policies, and Institutions," *International Security,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), p. 119. For an argument that China does not have to match the United States across the board to pose a serious regional challenge to it, see Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security,* Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 5–40.
137. "Culture as Tool in National Security Analysis: A Roundtable," sponsored by the Strategic Assessments Group, Directorate of Intelligence, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, McLean, Virginia, April 29, 1999.

tary effectiveness, whether they are based on regime type or some other domestic-level factor. Rather, they should look at a constellation of factors including the balance of actual and potential military power resources, the nature of the conflict, the willingness and ability of states to emulate the most successful military practices, nationalism, whether states have the common preconditions for military effectiveness and democracy, and whether their regimes are consolidated or not as indicators of how a state will do in war.[138]

The good news is that contrary to some defeatists inside and outside the U.S. government, democracy is not a liability for a state in choosing and effectively waging war. The bad news, however, is that democracy is not as large an asset as triumphalists maintain. In sum, regime type hardly matters.

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138. See, for example, Jeffrey A. Isaacson, Christopher Layne, and John Arquilla, *Predicting Military Innovation,* documented briefing (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1999); and Ashley J. Tellis, Janice L. Bially, Christopher Layne, Melissa McPherson, and Jerry Solinger, *Measuring National Power in the Post-Industrial Age,* RAND Report 1818-A (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, July 1999).

**Appendix. Fair Tests.**

| War | Misaggre-gation | Mixed Alliance | Gross Mismatch | Asymmetric Interests | Draw | Fair Test/Favors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Franco-Spanish | | | x | | | no |
| Russo-Turkish | | | | | | no[a] |
| Mexican-American | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Austro-Sardinian | | | x | | | no[b] |
| First Schleswig-Holstein | | | x | | | no |
| Roman Republic | | | x | | | no[c] |
| La Plata | | | x | | | no |
| Crimean | | x | | | | no[c] |
| Anglo-Persian | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Italian Unification | | | | | | no[b] |
| Spanish Moroccan | | | | | | no[a] |
| Italo-Roman | | | | | | no[b] |
| Italo-Sicilian | | | x | | | no |
| Franco-Mexican | | | | x | | no |
| Ecuador-Colombian | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Second Schleswig-Holstein | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Lopez | | x | x | | | no |
| Spanish-Chilean | | | | | | no |
| Seven Weeks | | | | x | | no[b] |
| Franco-Prussian | | | | | | no[b] |
| Russo-Turkish | | | | | | no[a] |
| Pacific | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Sino-French | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Central American (1885) | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Franco-Thai | | | x | | | no |
| Sino-Japanese | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |

**Appendix. (continued)**

| War | Misaggregation | Mixed Alliance | Gross Mismatch | Asymmetric Interests | Draw | Fair Test/Favors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greco-Turkish | | | X | | | no[c] |
| Spanish-American | | | X | | | no[c] |
| Boxer Rebellion | | X | | | | no[c] |
| Russo-Japanese | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Central American (1906) | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Central American (1907) | | | | | | no[b] |
| Spanish-Moroccan | | | X | | | no[c] |
| Italo-Turkish | | | | | | no[a] |
| First Balkan | | X | | | | no[c] |
| Second Balkan | | X | X | | | no[c] |
| World War I | X | | | | | no[c] |
| Hungarian | | | X | | | no[c] |
| Russo-Polish | | | | | | yes/triumphalists[c] |
| Lithuanian-Polish | | | X | | | no |
| Greco-Turkish | | | | | | no[b] |
| Franco-Turkish | | | | | | no[b] |
| Sino-Soviet | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Manchurian | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Chaco | | | | | | yes/pessimists |
| Italo-Ethiopian | | | X | | | no |
| Sino-Japanese | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Chankufeng | | | | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Nomohan | | | X | | | no |
| Russo-Finnish | | | X | | | no[c] |
| World War II | X | X | X | | | no[c] |
| Franco-Thai | | | | X | | no |

**Appendix. (continued)**

| War | Misaggre-gation | Mixed Alliance | Gross Mismatch | Asymmetric Interests | Draw | Fair Test/Favors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Israeli independence | | | | | | yes/triumphalists[c] |
| Korea | | | | | x | no[c] |
| Russo-Hungarian | | | | | | no[b] |
| Sinai | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Sino-Indian | | | | | | yes/pessimists[c] |
| Second Kashmiri | | | | | ? | no[c] |
| Vietnam | | | | x | | no[c] |
| Six-Day | | | | | | yes/triumphalists[c] |
| Football | | | | | | yes/triumphalists[c] |
| Attrition | | | | | x | no[c] |
| Bangladesh | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Yom Kippur | | | x | | | yes/triumphalists |
| Turkish-Cypriot | | | | | | no[c] |
| Vietnamese-Cambodian | | | | | | no[a] |
| Ethiopian-Somali | | | | | | no[a] |
| Ugandan-Tanzanian | | | | | | no[a] |
| Sino-Vietnamese (1979) | | | | | | no[a] |
| Iran-Iraq | | | | | x | no |
| Falklands | | | | | | yes/triumphalists[c] |
| Lebanon | | | | | x | no[c] |
| Sino-Vietnamese (1985–87) | | | | | | no[a] |
| Gulf War | | | x | | | no[c] |
| Azeri-Armenian | | | | | x | no |

NOTE: For further discussions of these codings, see "Assessment of the COW Universe of Interstate Wars since 1815," http://www.uky.edu/AS/PoliSci/Desch/research.htm.
[a] = equally democratic.
[b] = missing democracy scores.
[c] = democracy score > 6.