



POLI 150: The Long Peace

Daniel Gustafson

12 February 2020



Today's Class

- The Long Peace
- Regime Type
- The Democratic Peace and Alternative Explanations



The Global Zero Movement

- Recently, a movement to eliminate nuclear weapons called Global Zero has emerged
- Global leaders have endorsed it, and public opinion is in their favor
- Is this possible and desirable?
- Joffe & Davis argue that nuclear proliferation hasn't really happened, nuclear stability is desirable, and the world wouldn't be safer without nukes



Iran's Nuclear Program

- Iran has actively pursued nuclear research for both energy and weapons
- Has faced harsh international sanctions for its efforts
- In 2015, a deal was reached to lift sanctions in exchange for a large scale reduction in its nuclear program
- Waltz argues that Iran should be allowed to pursue a nuclear weapon for the sake of stability in the Middle East

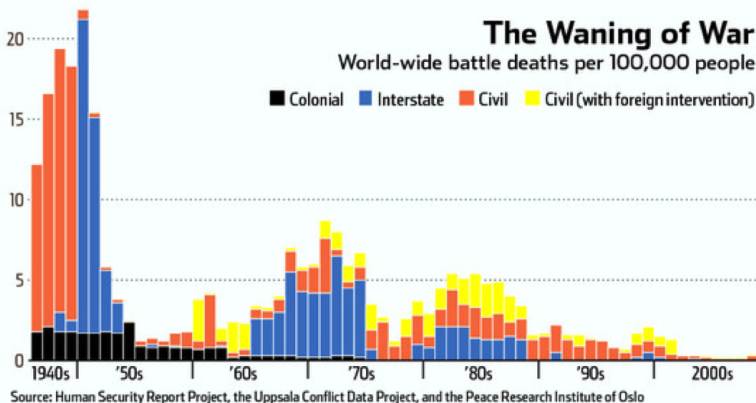


The State of the World

- People make a lot of claims about conflict today and the 20th century more broadly
- The degree to which information about the world is available is at its peak and steadily rising
- In terms of conflict, what is the state of the world? Positive, negative, in the middle?



The Decline in Conflict



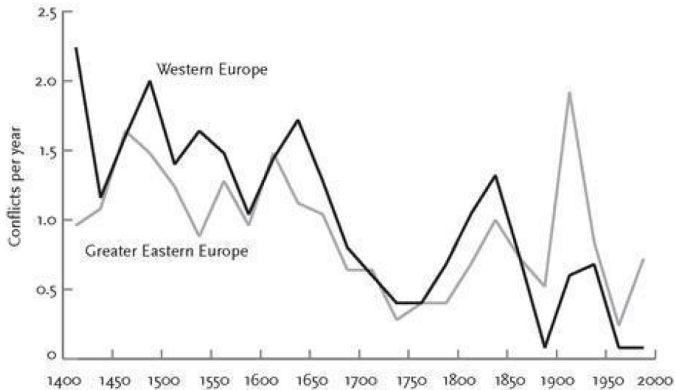


Pinker's Zeros

- Zero: the number of times nuclear weapons have been used since 1945
- Zero: Number of US-USSR wars
- Zero: number of interstate wars in Europe since 1945
- Zero: Number of interstate wars in global north since 1945
- Zero: Number of colonial conquests since 1945
- Zero: Number of states that disappeared due to conquest since 1945

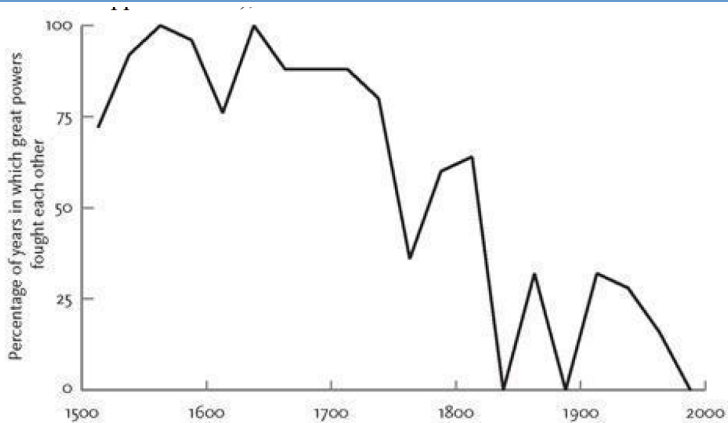


Conflicts in Greater Europe





Conflict Percentage





Why the Long Peace?

- Given how bloody in the first half of the 20th century was, why are we experiencing a long stretch of relative peace now?
- Is it a function of domestic politics?
- Is it a product of nuclear deterrence?
- Does economic development or the proliferation of international institutions explain it?



A Topic of Interest

- The answer to this question has sparked a huge debate
- The dominant answer is referred to as the democratic peace: the observation that democracies do not fight one another
- Google Scholar returns 15,000 pieces of research relating to the democratic peace
- The democratic peace is held up as the closest thing in international relations to a scientific law



The Democratic Peace

- Democracies fight wars with one another almost never*
- However, democracies are *not* less belligerent overall
- Policymakers clearly think it's important (e.g. Bush & Obama)

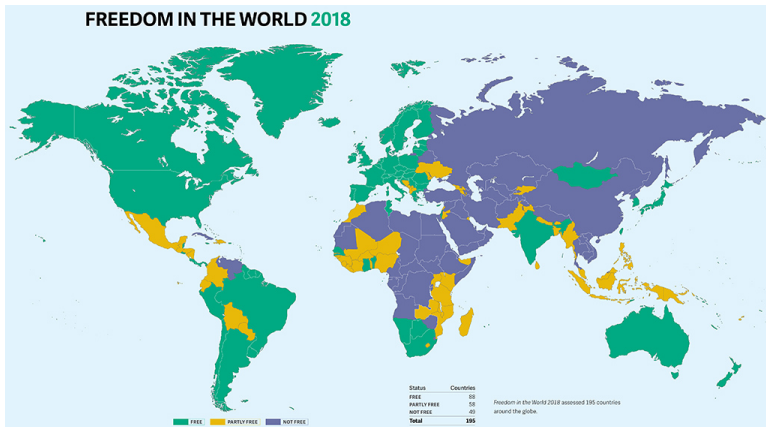


What is a Democracy?

- Regime type refers to the type of government within each state
- Generally divided into democracies and autocracies (non-democracies)
- Democracy: a political system in which candidates compete in frequent free and fair elections in which many can vote
- Autocracy: a system in which power is concentrated in an individual or small group of people with no competition and few constraints on power
- These are not perfectly measured concepts!



Regime Type Around the World





Why the Democratic Peace?

- What explains the democratic peace?
- Some argue that it exists because of norms
- Others suggest that its roots are institutional
- Still others claim that the relationship is misleading



Institutional Simulation

- The institutional argument suggests that there's something special about democracies that makes them less likely to fight one another
- To see the difference between the two types of institutions, we are going to simulate resource allocation in each system



Autocratic Resource Allocation

- Take a card
- King, Queen, Jack of spades are *rulers*
- Other royal cards are *elites*
- Everyone else is a *citizen*



Democratic Resource Allocation

- Take a card
- King, Queen, Jack of spades are *executives*
- Other royal cards are *legislature*
- Everyone else is a *citizen*



To Whom Are Leaders Accountable?

- In democracies, leaders are accountable to the public
- In autocracies, leaders are accountable to small groups of elites that keep them in power
- The degree to which their “selectorate” (i.e. group keeping them in power) hold leaders accountable constrains their decisions



Accountability in Democracies & Autocracies

- Accountability: the ability to punish or reward leaders for their decisions
- Leaders do not bear the costs of war and are more likely to initiate wars if they are not held accountable
- Democratic systems have institutions that allow leaders to be punished for making decisions that society does not agree with
- Autocratic leaders can also be punished, but are held accountable by different groups of individuals



Accountability & the Democratic Peace

- Democratic leaders have systematically higher costs for war
- War is less attractive, meaning that they will challenge fewer status quo situations
- Democratic leaders should only start wars that they are very likely to win
- These things make war between democracies especially unlikely
- Does not affect autocracies challenging democracies (e.g. Persian Gulf War and Pearl Harbor)



Alternative Explanations for the Democratic Peace

- Democratic institutions can better signal their intentions
- Transparency allows for more complete information
- Democratic leaders have high costs for backing down, so their threats are more credible
- Additionally, there are explanations about norms of mutual respect and diplomacy that cause democratic states not to fight one another

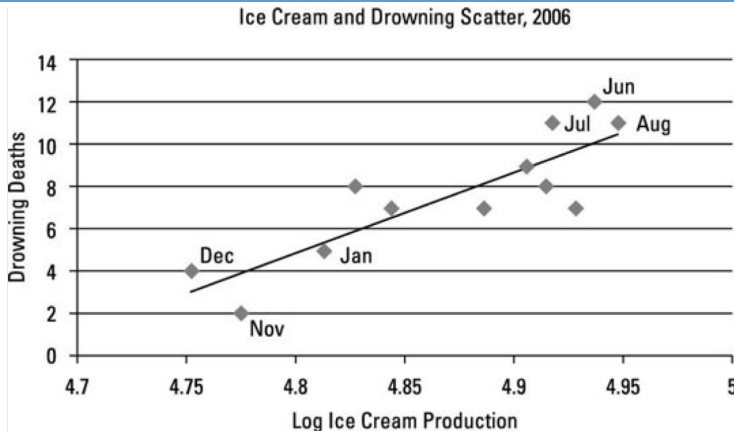


Democracy & Peace: Causal Claims

- Does democracy cause peace?
- Maybe, but there are a few reasons why this might not be the case
- The result could be spurious or the subject of reverse causality



Does Ice Cream Cause Drowning?





Spuriousness

- Spuriousness occurs when one factor explains two seemingly related factors, and that's the true explanation for the relationship
- In particular, perhaps economic development causes both democracy to exist and peace to occur
- Additionally, deterrence could allow for democracy to flourish and countries to not risk nuclear war



Reverse Causality

- Could the opposite be true: does peace cause democracy?
- Dangerous international systems tend to lead citizens to empower the central government and military
- Democracy may only be possible in low-threat worlds



To Think About...

- Should democratic leaders prefer friendly autocracies or hostile democracies?
- A question that the United States has puzzled over Cold War (e.g. Iran, Chile) to recently (e.g. Egypt)
- Trade-off between national security interests and moral arguments about self-determination