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Democratization and War in Political Science

LARS-ERIK CEDERMAN, SIMON HUG, and
ANDREAS WENGER

This article explores what political science literature has to say about the promises and perils of expanding democratic governance. International relations literature and comparative politics literature both deal with the claim that stable democracies do not fight each other. However, these two strands of literature only to a minor extent exchange research findings on the causes of war. International relations scholars are well aware of the fact that the early stages of democratization in particular may trigger conflict, and they explain that they are referring to the size of a country's power and the distribution of capabilities among the major powers, among other factors. In contrast, comparativists focus on the opening of domestic political space. In a transitional state, open political space fosters elite competition, which cannot be regulated by weak political institutions and therefore may cause civil war. They are less aware of the fact that these internal dynamics may even enhance the risk of political violence beyond territorial borders. Both of these approaches must be used to focus on the consequences of democratization on a regional scale. In 'bad neighbourhoods', including the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Great Lakes in Africa, democratization can trigger conflict beyond state frontiers by altering the incentives and opportunities of political actors.

Key words: democratization; war; international relations; neighbourhoods

Introduction

The promotion of democracy in the contemporary world builds on a long and venerable tradition in Western liberal thought. Despite its ultimate failure, US President Woodrow Wilson's attempt 'to make the world safe for democracy' has had a major impact on foreign policy production, especially in the United States. The calamities of World War II and the risks associated with nuclear deterrence have, however, strengthened the hand of realist sceptics. While President Carter and President Reagan in the US both exhibited an appetite for Wilsonian principles, at least rhetorically, it was not until after the end of the Cold War that democratization regained a central position in foreign policy debates. The crumbling of authoritarian regimes in the post-communist world, in Latin America and elsewhere led to a sweeping wave of democratization that decisively changed the *Zeitgeist* in the early 1990s. During the Clinton presidency, it was increasingly argued that the long-term

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stabilization of war-torn areas outside the Western world required efforts to democratize the polities in question.¹

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the George W. Bush administration raised the stakes even further in its attempt to democratize the entire Middle East, partly as an attempt to justify its occupation of Iraq in 2003. Yet, democratization turned out to be much more difficult than anticipated by its Western promoters, as illustrated by the events in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region. The neo-conservatives surrounding the White House, who were among the most enthusiastic proponents of the war in Iraq, have been almost fully discredited by their own failure to bring either stability or democracy to Iraq, let alone beyond its borders. Indeed, many around the world now see democratic intervention as a cover for US imperialist or even neo-colonialist tendencies.² At the same time, the Bush administration's extreme anti-terrorist measures, including illiberal detention policies and investigation techniques, have further undermined the global appeal of Western democracy. Moreover, there are signs that the democratization wave set in motion by the end of the Cold War has started to wane in other parts of the world, perhaps most prominently in Russia and its 'near abroad'.

Given the high stakes involved in these democratization efforts and the contradictory trends that surround them, it is all the more important to get the facts right. Covering primarily empirical studies, this article explores what the political science literature has to say about the promise and perils of expanding democratic governance. In order to limit our review to the core issue, we focus entirely on the hypothesis that democratization may trigger conflict. As will become clear, this postulate does not stand in opposition to the well-known claim that stable democracies do not fight each other. What matters in this case is what happens when authoritarian regimes undergo transformations that open the doors to broad political participation. Indeed, Michael Mann reminds us that even ultimately successful democratization processes have triggered considerable amounts of violence.³ From a Western perspective, it is all too easy to forget how countries, such as France and the United States, that today enjoy the fruits of stable democracy and human rights underwent turbulent periods of nation-building that included ethnic cleansing and coercive assimilation.

The account starts by considering how international relations scholars have analysed the connection between democratization and warfare before turning to the comparative politics literature. As will become clear, each body of work has developed almost independently of the other. The following section considers more recent attempts to transcend the sub-disciplinary boundaries by considering domestic and international politics in an integrated framework.

Democratization and War in International Relations

During the Cold War, structural theory dominated the international relations literature on war causation. According to neo-realists and proponents of related theories, neither changes in human behaviour, nor reforms of the state are likely to eliminate war. Given the anarchical state of international life and the fundamental need for states to protect their own security, war will continue to occur, for there is nothing to

prevent it from happening.⁴ Opposing such a pessimistic view, liberal scholars argue that democratic values and institutions, together with growing trade networks, will limit war and strengthen the pacific behaviour of states.⁵ Until late in the 20th century, however, the liberal proposition that states become more peaceful through democratization was overshadowed by realist pessimism and third-image interpretations of interstate wars.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the tide began to turn in favour of democracy, as politics in many regions of the world became more democratic, and several studies began to provide solid evidence supporting the view that democracies tend not to go to war against other democracies.⁶ Over time, the dyadic democratic peace proposition emerged as an empirical consensus, although the debate surrounding definitions of democracy and war, and the specific causal mechanisms linking the two, continues.⁷ Enthusiasm about the peaceful impact of democracy peaked at the end of the Cold War and with the 'third wave' of democratization in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁸

However, more recently, a series of articles introduced a more cautionary note into the debate, pointing to the 'dark side of democracy',⁹ and to the 'rise of illiberal democracy'.¹⁰ Two influential articles by Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder posited the idea that in the early stages of a state's democratization, the risk of war increases.¹¹ Mansfield and Snyder undoubtedly accept the majority view in the democratic peace debate that the world would be a safer place if more states were mature and stable democracies. However, they also stress that autocracies do not become democracies overnight. On the contrary, developing democracies typically go through a rocky transition period during which they become more conflict-prone than states without a changing regime. Unlike many realists, Mansfield and Snyder argue that the volatile domestic attributes of states during democratic transition help to explain the outbreak of war equally as well as shifts in the balance of power between states and in the structure of the international environment.

As exponents of a 'tough-minded' liberalism, Mansfield and Snyder however take issue with the 'naïve enthusiasm for spreading peace by promoting democratization' associated with the Clinton administration.¹² In their view, it is not wise to push autocracies and commanding powers such as Russia and China towards early liberalization, as this could have dire consequences. This should not be interpreted as a recommendation that democratization be suppressed in the interests of peace. Rather, Mansfield and Snyder argue that since external actors have only a limited impact on domestic democratization processes, the best the international community can do is to develop strategies that minimize the risks associated with democratization. They contend that the best way of reducing the dangers associated with democratic transition is therefore to provide threatened elites with incentives to give up power and to support a free and responsible exchange of ideas. Of similar importance are the establishment of steady commercial partnerships and the maintenance of a regional security presence.¹³

How do Mansfield and Snyder explain the propensity of democratizing states for violent conflict? The opening of the domestic political space in the early stages of democratization, they argue, leads to intense competition between old and new

elites.¹⁴ While the old autocratic power structures are in decline, the new democratic institutions are still too weak to effectively regulate mass political competition. The unhealthy interaction between mass political participation and underdeveloped institutions is central to their argument and builds on Samuel Huntington's earlier observation. Huntington discerned that the gap between high levels of political participation and poorly integrated institutions is one of the key problems of political development.¹⁵

In mature democracies, political competition is regulated by effective and efficient democratic institutions. However in the early stages of democratization, elites have to turn to other means to mobilize popular support, and in the absence of strong institutions, such as political parties, independent courts, free media, and transparent electoral processes, old and new elites alike are prone to use national sentiment to gain popular support and win elections. In particular, the break-up of the old regime threatens the privileges of its most powerful elites, including military bureaucrats and key economic actors. These elites, who often have a parochial interest in military expansion and in minimizing foreign economic competition, quickly recognize the value of 'playing the nationalist card' to protect their interests. This means that in developing democracies, national sentiment is often riding high.

The weakness of the transitional state, Mansfield and Snyder suggest, allows elites to govern in the name of the people without having to be fully accountable to voters. Furthermore, weak political institutions have a tendency to produce incoherent policies. This, according to Mansfield and Snyder, explains why democratizing states often fail to send clear signals to both their allies and their enemies.¹⁶ Moreover, unregulated competition between old and new elites tends to result in heterogeneous coalitions of elites and popular supporters, brought together by parochial interests. Coalition politics under such circumstances favours logrolling and nationalist outbidding strategies, further heightening the danger of war. Once elites are engaged in a process of nationalist outbidding, they are often drawn towards belligerent foreign policies, which in turn can result in war, initiated by the democratizing state.

In their original articles, Mansfield and Snyder derive most of their theoretical arguments from the early stages of mass political participation during the decline of the feudal state.¹⁷ Their examples are drawn from four great powers: Britain, France, Germany, and Japan. The results of their quantitative analysis are limited to interstate wars, including wars between a state and a non-state actor, as in colonial wars. Early findings indicate that democratizing states were more likely to fight wars than were states that had not undergone a regime change. It seemed that the bigger the leap toward democracy, the greater the risk of war. Moreover, autocratic reversals did not appear to reduce the risk of war to the extent apparent in states that had not undergone a regime change. States in the process of democratization, however, appeared more likely to go to war than those in the process of autocratization.¹⁸

Mansfield and Snyder's argument that democratization can cause war triggered an intense debate about the precise circumstances under which democratization might lead to military hostilities. A series of critiques cautioned that problems in their research design produced inconsistent results. First, claiming that Mansfield and Snyder's measure of democratization is imprecise, some critics highlighted various

problems linked to their operationalization of regime type. Specifically, these scholars criticized the length of the arguably arbitrarily chosen intervals that were used to define regime change. According to this critique, a ten-year period is too long to exert an influence on the probability of war participation.¹⁹ Other critics suggested that different types of democratization might contain different levels of risk, and called for a disaggregation of the types of democratization.²⁰ Still others pointed out that Mansfield and Snyder had failed to consider the dynamic aspects of regime change, namely the direction, intensity, and nature of this change. Relying on statistical methods, Ward and Gleditsch distinguished between smooth and gradual democratization processes on the one hand and oscillating democratization processes full of reversals on the other, arguing that such a research design offers a better assessment of the effects of democratization on the likelihood of war.²¹

Second, another line of attack implies that war is linked more closely to regime-type transitions in general than to democratization more specifically. Although Mansfield and Snyder's theory was concerned with the dangers associated with democratization, they also found evidence that autocratization could be dangerous. The fact that they included all types of regime change, regardless of the direction of such change, prompted these scholars to downplay the role of democratization. Testing the correlations between overall regime change and war onset, Thompson and Tucker found that democratization and war occurred independently of one another,²² a claim subsequently challenged by Mansfield and Snyder.²³

Third, some authors highlighted alleged empirical biases in Mansfield and Snyder's original work. Although Mansfield and Snyder's theoretical argument is based on a few great-power cases, most of the statistical evidence concerns small and medium states. In contrast to Mansfield and Snyder's outward-looking causal logic, these authors suggested that external factors associated with the distribution of power might also affect war onset.²⁴ Yet others took issue with Mansfield and Snyder's focus on transitions from 1816 to 1980, which by definition ignores the most recent waves of democratization in Latin America and in Eastern Europe.²⁵ The swift and mostly peaceful democratization of post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, these critics asserted, undermines Mansfield and Snyder's findings – a point that had been noted by Mansfield and Snyder in their original contribution.²⁶ Indeed, it is quite possible that feudal and communist states react differently to democratization processes.

In response to these arguments, Mansfield and Snyder substantially refined their research design.²⁷ The differentiation between incomplete democratic transitions (from autocracy to mixed regimes) and complete democratic transitions (to coherent democracies) is central to their later work. Without this distinction, there is only limited evidence that democratization affects international conflict. Utilizing the refined research design considerable evidence is found that incomplete democratization processes are especially prone to war, more so than both mature democracies and states in the process of autocratization. Complete and quick democratizations, however, seem much less risky; further, only a few indications were found that autocratic transitions can lead to war.

Mansfield and Snyder's findings confirm that the country's power and the distribution of capabilities among the major powers are important indicators for the likelihood of war. However, realist explanations that focus on the relative military weakness of democratizing states cannot adequately explain why limited transitions often result in war. According to Mansfield and Snyder's results, democratizing states are not especially likely to become the target of an attack. On the contrary, they tend to be the initiators of international hostilities, triggering conflict through nationalist rhetoric and through costly but unaccountable commitments.²⁸

The differentiation between incomplete and complete democratization is also important with regard to policy. Although Mansfield and Snyder do not deny the peaceful benefits of quick and successful transformations to mature and stable democracies, they warn about democratization processes that stall before the emergence of stable democracy. Limited transitions in countries with weak central government institutions are likely to result in undesirable foreign policy consequences, including war. Consequently, Mansfield and Snyder recommend that a strong state is built before the introduction of competitive elections.²⁹ This policy advice has been criticized by less reluctant liberals, most prominently by Thomas Carothers and Roland Paris.³⁰

Due to the dominance of so-called 'third-image explanations' of war,³¹ the international relations literature still offers relatively little guidance as regards domestic politics and relevant political institutions. For similar reasons, and despite the decline of interstate wars, civil wars received relatively little attention by international relations scholars until recently. As we will see in the next section, comparativists have been quicker to address these challenges.

Democratization and War in Comparative Politics

While students of comparative politics have devoted considerable amounts of energy to understanding democratization, the link to political violence has rarely been at the centre of attention. Democratization, studied mostly in light of recent experiences in Southern Europe and Latin America³² or more recently in Central and Eastern Europe,³³ was largely seen as an evident goal, and the main question was rather how democracies could be consolidated.³⁴ As we have seen, Huntington's classic work on development suggested that the path to democracy could also lead to turmoil.³⁵ According to this perspective, mass mobilization inevitably linked with democratization has to be channelled by strong state institutions. In the absence of such institutions, democratization may end in violent conflict. These cautionary remarks also found resonance in Rustow's work, which posits that successful democratization is more likely if it follows a series of well-defined steps.³⁶

The discussion of the path toward democracy in comparative politics was, however, very strongly linked to the question of what political institutions were most appropriate to resolve potential societal conflicts. A main preoccupation was whether democracy is at all possible in plural societies.³⁷ In this connection, Arend Lijphart introduced the notion of 'consociational democracy' to bridge the cleavages in plural societies and came to a more optimistic conclusion, though not one dealing

with post-war societies. More specifically, he argued that in plural societies, elite accommodation may help bridge societal divisions.³⁸

Similar questions were addressed in studies of presidentialism³⁹ and federalism.⁴⁰ As a number of Latin American countries began to democratize after military dictatorships, many of them 'imported' presidential systems from North America. Critics argued however, that these systems' reliance on both the presidency and the parliament, each one enjoying separate legitimacy, undermines conflict management. Parliamentary regimes, in contrast, would allow for a much better resolution of conflict.⁴¹ The debate on the effects of federalism followed similar lines. While certain authors claimed that this institution had very attractive properties,⁴² others, especially after the break-up of federal ex-Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, questioned these optimistic assessments.

Thus it is not surprising that the increasing importance, both in terms of numbers and casualties, of civil wars has prompted comparative politics scholars to address the question of how societal tensions could be prevented from triggering violent conflicts. In his influential study of *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz discusses in detail various institutional arrangements supposedly serving to mitigate ethnic tensions.⁴³ His assessment of both consociational democracy and federalism is mostly negative. These institutions, in his view, might actually perpetuate the divisions between societal groups rather than resolve conflicts. Following this important work, a series of quantitative studies addresses in a more systematic way the extent to which various institutional arrangements may trigger rebellions⁴⁴ and the outbreak of civil wars.⁴⁵

Given that many of these institutions are only of relevance in at least minimally democratic settings, the level of democracy often appears as an important background factor. Therefore, when assessing whether proportional institutions might mitigate societal conflict, Cohen controls for whether the political system is in transition.⁴⁶ He finds that transitional periods marginally increase the level of rebellions. Many studies, however, do not focus directly on transitions or democratizations, but assess how the level of democracy affects conflict. In part this has to do with the fact that important studies dealing with the outbreak of civil wars focus on the opportunity for violence, and less on the grievances that might be mobilized in democratization processes. Two influential studies, by Fearon and Laitin and by Collier and Hoeffler, emphasize the first element of the well-known dichotomy of 'greed and grievances'.⁴⁷ In these studies, regime instability and the level of democracy are controlled for, but very little weight is given to the finding that anocratic systems appear to be particularly afflicted by civil wars.

This relationship attracts explicit attention in a Norwegian study by Hegre and his colleagues, who find a curvilinear relationship between the level of democracy, as measured by the Polity Index, and the outbreak of a civil war.⁴⁸ The authors argue that many democratization efforts fail to result in complete transitions and thus get stuck in the middle range of the democracy scale. Such anocracies are disproportionately affected by civil wars.⁴⁹ Given the static nature of the test regarding democracy, however, it is impossible to infer whether democratization increases the likelihood of violent domestic conflict.

A more fine-grained analysis is proposed by Kristian Gleditsch.⁵⁰ He not only considers how the level of democracy affects the outbreak of civil wars, but also controls for the direction of changes and their extent.⁵¹ His findings confirm that anocracies are the most conflict-prone, but in addition he is able to demonstrate that the changes themselves may lead to conflictual situations.

All these preceding studies rely on the well-known Polity Index as their main measure of democracy. As several authors have recently highlighted, however, this indicator is problematic when applied to civil wars.⁵² In particular, specific codes of the component indicators are related to the outbreak of civil wars. Given that these codes often bias the overall score toward anocracy,⁵³ many of the insights concerning the link between democracy and civil war have to be regarded as questionable. Vreeland, for instance, demonstrates that the curvilinear effect of democracy in the aforementioned Norwegian study disappears if these problems with the Polity Index are accounted for. Furthermore, the curvilinear effect fails to appear when other democracy indicators are used.⁵⁴

A more fundamental critique of the Polity Index is advanced by Treier and Jackman, who argue that the measurement model underlying this index is flawed.⁵⁵ Employing a more adequate measurement model and replicating the Norwegian study, Treier and Jackman find no confirmation for a curvilinear relationship between the level of democracy and the outbreak of a civil war.

Based on the comparative politics literature, it must be concluded that the relationship between democratization and political violence remains largely uncharted territory. Either the studies do not explicitly take account of democratization as such, or their indicators are problematic because of components endogenous to the conflict situation.

Democratization and War as Spatio-temporal Macro Processes

As illustrated by the previous section, the comparative politics literature has added methodological sophistication and theoretical ideas to international relations contributions. However, both bodies of literature tend to be both static and overly state-centric, treating country cases as if they were independent from one another. Moreover, these two clusters of scholarship explain different types of conflict. Whereas the international relations scholars have attempted to account for interstate warfare, the comparativists have focused mostly on civil wars. However, there are good reasons to believe that these two types of conflict are connected. What is needed, then, is a contextual approach that traces border-transgressing conflict processes in time and space.

At the highest level of aggregation, democratization can be analysed as a global process gradually creating expanding zones of peace. In contrast to most recent writings on the democratic peace, Immanuel Kant's classic theory of peace outlines an explicitly dynamic sketch that helps us understand how the international system could have become, and actually did become, democratized.⁵⁶ Rather than being the end-point of the analysis, the assumption that democratic authority structures at the domestic level contribute to such outcomes should be seen as a part of a

dynamic, macro-historical process.⁵⁷ Mindful of the geopolitical realities of world politics, Kant did not assume that democracy (or in his words, the republic) itself would automatically engender democratic security communities. To bolster this point, he advanced a series of causal mechanisms that together would drive the process toward peace. Perhaps the most important of these is the notion of an expanding peaceful federation that could repel attacks from non-democratic competitors, but Kant also considered norm-based, power-related, and dialectical mechanisms.⁵⁸

Far from being a smooth and deterministic process, Kant expected democratization and pacification of the world to proceed in fits and starts, including instances of major backlash. In fact, his sophisticated dialectical argumentation regards such reversals as a contribution to the process of democratization both because they promote war-wariness⁵⁹ and they strengthen democratic vis-à-vis non-democratic states thanks to the former's superior war-fighting performance.⁶⁰

The historical record has provided ample evidence of authoritarian reversals, including most prominently the authoritarian trends associated with the two world wars. At the moment of crafting his theory in the late 18th century, Kant could hardly have anticipated the power of another major macro-historical process, namely nationalism. Inextricably associated with the emergence of representative democracy, this process changed the principles of political legitimacy forever.⁶¹ Based on the notion of popular, rather than territorial, sovereignty, nationalism had deep repercussions for geopolitics as it spread from Western Europe to other parts of Europe, and then further to the Third World.⁶²

The crux is that in its traditional form, representative democracy cannot exist without a *demos*, i.e., a popular unit.⁶³ In the 18th century, the French Revolution established a direct link between the *demos* and the nation.⁶⁴ In areas where the state mostly coincided with the nation, the transformation concerned the gradual mobilization of the masses within given state borders. However, wherever the state did not coincide with the nation, the geopolitical consequences were much more turbulent, including open warfare.⁶⁵ In a recent statistical study, Wimmer and Min show that the creation of nation-states, either through unification or secession, is powerfully linked with conflict.⁶⁶ Thus, it is clear that the introduction of popular sovereignty can have destabilizing consequences for entire regions. Arguably, we still witness the repercussions of this process in regions that have not been able to solve the 'nationality issue'.

The global processes of democratization and nationalism do not exhaust possible explanations at the macro-level. Decolonization and ideological trends have also been proposed to account for why democracies have gained ground at a global scale. Yet, the picture painted by such sweeping processes is too crude to yield precise information about the hypothesis at hand. Indeed, Gleditsch and Ward argue that 'looking for a *Zeitgeist* or universal global influences that affect all countries alike is probably as ill-conceived as assuming identical and independent processes within each country'.⁶⁷

Consequently there is plenty of room for theorising at an intermediate level, between the large macro processes and the country-level focus of conventional democratization studies. Moreover, disaggregation is not only necessary with respect to spatial resolution, but also as regards the conflict type. Most of the macro studies are as imprecise about the forms of political violence as are the traditional

international relations and comparative perspectives. It therefore makes a lot of sense to disaggregate the analysis down to the level of regions and neighbourhoods that link states to each other.

Building on a rich legacy of geographic approaches, Gleditsch and Ward have pioneered the application of modern statistical techniques to the problem of democratization and conflict.⁶⁸ They show that, far from being randomly located, democracy and conflict are strongly clustered and that both these patterns are inextricably linked to each other. In principle this is compatible with the dynamic and spatially explicit renderings of macro processes that we have alluded to above, but it lends further empirical precision to the earlier studies and allows us to evaluate our main hypothesis explicitly in a spatio-temporal context.

The most comprehensive introduction to this approach can be found in Gleditsch's book *All International Politics is Local* (2002), which provides a complete account of the theoretical forerunners on which his empirical analysis is based.⁶⁹ Addressing the problem of democratization and war head-on, Gleditsch applies spatial statistical techniques to study neighbourhood effects with his own distance data. Based on such a research design, it is possible to separate the effects of democratization emanating from domestic, endogenous influences from those that originate in the immediate geopolitical vicinity of a state. As long as the focus remains on interstate war, the analysis shows that democratization reduces, rather than increases, the likelihood of conflict, at least in part contradicting Mansfield and Snyder's original hypothesis.⁷⁰ Whether democratization happens at home or across the border, the effect on interstate violence is firmly negative.⁷¹ However, this picture changes as the attention shifts to civil wars. Using a similar framework that allows for separate analysis of the internal and external influences of democratization, Gleditsch finds statistically significant evidence linking both phenomena with the onset of civil war. Therefore, he concludes that 'taking the regional context into account, we can reconcile the finding that democratization tends to reduce the likelihood of interstate war with stylized facts of dangerous democratizations or cases in which transitions are associated with civil war'.⁷²

While systematic statistical research on patterns of democratization and conflict is doubtless useful, the question of causal mechanisms remains open due to the high level of aggregation implied by quantitative analysis of states and their geopolitical neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, Gleditsch's book takes some important first steps toward filling in this explanatory gap. In his view, the negative finding at the interstate level indicates that Mansfield and Snyder's original interpretation based on diversionary-war theory must be wrong.⁷³ As states become democratic, the room for interstate warfare shrinks, thanks to the institutional constraints that democracy imposes on political leaders. Instead of triggering the search for external scapegoats, democratization is likely to destabilize the power position of state elites by opening up new opportunities for separatist minorities and other actors to mobilize against the state, a process that is likely to trigger internal conflict. Once a civil war has broken out, this may in turn lead to an internationalized conflict finally triggering interstate warfare. Conflict diffusion may happen through various mechanisms including kin-group effects and transnational rebel activities. In an even more recent study, Gleditsch and his

colleagues analyse the influence of civil war on interstate conflict and find that internal conflict has a very strong tendency to expand into internationalized warfare, thus casting further doubt on the interstate version of the diversionary war hypothesis.⁷⁴

It is possible that this dismissal of 'scapegoat' arguments is premature, because diversionary conflict also occurs at the domestic level. This is illustrated by President Slobodan Milošević's instrumental use of political violence directed at Yugoslav minorities, such as the Kosovo Albanians, in order to strengthen his power position as the economy turned sour in the late 1980s. In cases where state borders are endogenous to the conflict itself, it is difficult to separate mobilization against internal and external enemies.⁷⁵ At any rate, Mansfield and Snyder's argument has developed well beyond a narrow reliance on diversionary war theory. In their most recent work, these authors emphasize mobilization opportunities, primarily, though not exclusively, within the framework of ethnic nationalism.⁷⁶

The question of causal mechanisms calls for further, disaggregated analysis that is sensitive to potential regional differences. Within the framework of the research project *Democratizing Divided Societies in Bad Neighbourhoods*, with funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation, the authors invited area experts to a series of informal workshops to explore the precise links between democratization and conflict in selected regions characterised by a lack of both democracy and stability.⁷⁷ In these 'bad neighbourhoods', which included the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Great Lakes Area in Africa, experts presented clear evidence that democratization can trigger conflict by altering the incentives and opportunities of political actors. Three particularly problematic mechanisms identified in the workshops are the opening of the political arena, political competition producing winners and losers, and the destabilizing sequencing of democratic procedures.

First, the opening of the political arena entails that formerly marginalized groups receive the opportunity to mobilize and organize themselves. In the least extreme cases, the addition of new political actors to the arena heightens the intensity of competition. Moreover, the previous political centre may (be forced to) loosen its grip on the periphery. In extreme cases, the reshuffling of the political arena during democratic transitions can lead to a political power vacuum at the centre, as illustrated by the turmoil in Georgia in the early 1990s.

Second, elections raise the odds of the political competition over constituencies and resources resulting from the emerging plurality of actors. In particular, elections polarize by distinguishing between voters and non-voters, and between majorities and minorities. With such polarization comes the fear of being unable to participate in determining the country's future or sharing the benefits. In such an environment, elections may become mere censuses of group strength, lending democratic legitimacy to the not necessarily benevolent rule of the majority. Groups on the losing side may feel tempted to resort to non-democratic means, including violence. For example, the electoral competition in the Palestinian Territories has fuelled violent exchanges between the Fatah and Hamas movements.

Third, the sequence of elections also matters. National elections held too early are likely to stimulate competition even further. On the other hand, timing elections at the

national level after local and regional elections take place may destabilize the whole country. The failed democratization of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s illustrates this point: here, the leaders of individual ethnic groups were legitimized by regional elections, but the national level obtained no such legitimation.⁷⁸

Conclusion

On balance, the statistical evidence on whether democratization triggers conflict remains somewhat mixed, but with the help of more sophisticated methods, it appears possible to discern an effect. Whereas case-based evidence lends support to the hypothesis, researchers will have to make further efforts to break down artificial sub-disciplinary boundaries preventing an integrated view of domestic and international processes. Neither democratization nor conflict respects state borders. It will therefore be necessary to study both patterns in a regional context rather than retaining the fiction of hermetically closed national units of analysis. As shown by our survey of the literature, there is plenty of room for improvement in both international relations and comparative politics, as well as an overarching need to merge their findings.

The main task is to close the gap between suggestive, but relatively unsystematic, causal conjectures and quantitative, but causally underdeveloped, evaluations. In recent years, promising research based on spatial statistics and explicit process theory has been leading the way, but much work remains to be done in order to articulate institutionally specific mechanisms and embed them in the relevant historical and regional contexts. Although it is desirable to find general principles governing democratization, it would be foolish to ignore specific developments in various parts of the world.

Ultimately, more precise dynamic models are needed, articulating causal mechanisms based on explicit actor constellations and specifying the strategic motivations and action repertoires of the key players in democratization processes. Ideally, such analysis needs to be supplemented with in-depth studies of selected countries and regions, as well as systematic, disaggregated quantitative research that allows us to isolate relational mechanisms, rather than reducing them to crude country-level effects. Furthermore, current statistical assessments of the hypothesised link between democratization and conflict still suffer from an overly static rendering of democratization, usually operationalizing this inherently dynamic phenomenon as a particular, intermediate range of given democratization indices. Democratization is too important to be left to either international relations scholars or their colleagues in comparative politics. Instead, this important topic calls for truly integrated research that transcends the divide between national and international politics.

NOTES

1. Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2000).
2. See, for example, Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2005); David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, *US Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, Enemies, and Empire* (London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2008).

3. Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
4. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
5. David Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
6. See, for example, Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). For a review, see Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise', *Merston International Studies Review*, Vol. 41, No. 59–61 (1997), pp. 59–91.
7. Sebastian Rosato, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory', *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 4 (2003), pp. 582–602.
8. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
9. Michael Mann, 'The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Economy', *New Left Review*, No. 235, May–June, (1999), pp. 18–45; Mann (note 3).
10. Fareed Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6 (1997), pp. 22–43.
11. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and the Danger of War' *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1995), pp. 5–38. See also Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74 No. 3 (1995), pp. 79–98.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Valerie Bunce, 'Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience', *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (2003), pp. 167–92.
15. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).
16. Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratization and the Danger of War' (note 11).
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.* pp. 12–19.
19. Andrew Enterline, 'Driving While Democratizing', *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1996), pp. 183–96; William R. Thompson and Richard Tucker, 'Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered: A Reply to Farber and Gowa and to Mansfield and Snyder', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1997), pp. 462–77. See also William R. Thompson and Richard Tucker, 'A Tale of Two Democratic Peace Critiques', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1997), pp. 428–54.
20. Reinhard Wolf, 'To the Editors', *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1996), pp. 176–80.
21. Michael D. Ward and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, 'Democratizing for Peace', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (1998), pp. 51–62. 'Smooth democratization' means a linear change from autocratic to democratic forms of government (p. 54); 'oscillating democratization' is defined as an alternation between democratic and non-democratic forms of government (p. 54); 'gradual' means a change by minor steps toward political democracy in contrast to rapid changes (p. 55).
22. Thompson and Tucker, 'A Tale of Two Democratic Peace Critiques' (note 19).
23. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'A Reply to Thompson and Tucker', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1997), pp. 457–61.
24. Thompson and Tucker, 'A Tale of Two Democratic Peace Critiques' (note 19).
25. Wolf (note 20).
26. Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratization and War' (note 11).
27. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War', *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2002), pp. 297–337; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight. Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).
28. Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War' (note 27).
29. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'The Sequencing 'Fallacy'', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007), pp. 5–9.
30. Thomas Carothers, 'The "Sequencing" Fallacy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2007), pp. 12–27. Roland Paris, *At War's End. Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
31. To explain the causes of war, Kenneth N. Waltz distinguished in his seminal 1959 book, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) three levels of analysis. According to this distinction, first-image approaches explain war on the individual level with human behaviour. Second-image approaches focus on the nation-state level and explain war by reference to the internal political structures and institutional character of states. Third-image approaches

- focus on the level of the international state system, explaining war by the behaviour of states – meaning clash of interests among them, as well as the international state system's inherent asymmetries. See also J. David Singer, 'Review: International Conflict: Three Levels of Analysis', *World Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1960), pp. 453–61.
32. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
 33. Barbara Geddes, 'Initiation of New Democratic Institutions in Eastern Europe and Latin America', in Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman (eds), *Institutional Design in New Democracies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 15–41; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Valerie Bunce, 'Comparative Democratization. Big and Bounded Generalizations', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 6–7 (2000), pp. 703–34.
 34. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
 35. Huntington (note 15).
 36. Dankwart Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model' *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1970), pp. 337–63. The current debate between 'sequentialists' and 'gradualists' builds on similar ideas.
 37. Eric A. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies* (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1972); Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, OH: C. E. Merrill, 1972).
 38. Arend Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1969), pp. 207–25; Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975). Later work by Lehmbruch and Steiner emphasized concordance and amicable agreements. See Gerhard Lehmbruch, *Proporzdemokratie. Politisches System und politische Kultur in der Schweiz und in Österreich* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967) and Jürg Steiner, *Amicable Agreement versus Majority Rule: Conflict Resolution in Switzerland* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1974). Moreover, Lijphart extended the basic ideas to other contexts, possibly overreaching somewhat, see Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977). This literature attracted considerable critique. Some authors raised the question whether consociationalism was not by definition inimical to democracy, see Brian Barry, 'Review Article: Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1975), pp. 477–505; Ian Lustick, 'Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism versus Control', *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1979), pp. 325–44.
 39. See, for example, Joan Linz, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
 40. See, for example, Daniel J. Elazar (ed.), *Federalism and Political Integration* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).
 41. Linz (note 39).
 42. See, for example, Lake David A. and Donald Rothchild, 'Territorial Decentralization and Civil War Settlements', in Philip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild (eds), *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005) pp. 109–32.
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 44. See, for example, Frank S. Cohen, 'Proportional Versus Majoritarian Ethnic Conflict Management in Democracies' *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (1997), pp. 607–30; Stephen M. Saideman, David J. Lanoue, Campenni Michael, and Samuel Stanton, 'Democratization, Political Institutions, and Ethnic Conflict: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis, 1985–1998', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2002), pp. 103–29.
 45. See, for example, Marta Reynal-Querol, 'Ethnicity, Political Systems, and Civil Wars.' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2002), pp. 29–54; Patrick M. Regan and Daniel Norton, 'Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2005), pp. 319–36.
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 48. Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates and Nils Petter Gleditsch, 'Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2001), pp. 33–48.

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52. See, for example, James Raymond Vreeland, 'The Effect of Political Regime on Civil War: Unpacking Anocracy', unpublished manuscript (Yale, CT: Yale University, 2007), forthcoming in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2008).
53. 'Anocracy' refers to the fact that many 'polities have mixed authority traits, and thus can have middling scores on both Autocracy and Democracy scales. These are the kinds of polities' which are characterized as "anocratic" and "incoherent" in the Polity I studies. As a group they proved to less durable than coherent democracies and autocracies.' *Polity IV, User's Manual 2002* (University of Maryland, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management), p. 15.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–14.
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57. Lars-Erik Cederman, 'Back to Kant: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace as a Macrohistorical Learning Process', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2001), pp. 15–31.
58. See, for example, Andrew Hurrell, 'Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1990), pp. 183–205; Wade Huntley, 'Kant's Third Image: Systemic Sources of the Liberal Peace', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1996), pp. 45–76.
59. See especially I. Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in Hans Reiss (ed.), H. B. Nisbet (trans.), *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, [1784] 1970), pp. 41–53.
60. See, for example, David A. Lake, 'Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (1992), pp. 24–37.
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62. Lars-Erik Cederman, *Emergent Actors in World Politics: How States and Nations Develop and Dissolve* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
63. Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).
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66. Andreas Wimmer and Brian Min, 'From Empire to Nation-State: Explaining Wars in the Modern World, 1816–2001', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 6 (2006), pp. 867–97.
67. Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, 'Diffusion and the Spread of Democratic Institutions', in Frank Dobbins, Geoffrey Garrett, and Beth Simmons (eds), *The Global Diffusion of Democracy and Markets* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), p. 269.
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70. Mansfield and Snyder (note 11).
71. Gleditsch (note 50), Table 4.4.
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