



Domestic Constraints on War and the Democratic Peace

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Today's Class

- Putnam and Two-Level Games
- Domestic Politics and War
- Democratic Peace



- Prompt 4 due tonight; prompt 5 due Thursday.



Central Question

How can domestic factors influence interstate war?



Key Terms

- Two-Level Game
- Diversionary War
- Rally Effect
- Democratic Peace



Putnam and Two-Level Games

- Putnam claims that research focusing on just bargaining at the international level is incomplete.
 - The bargaining model of war implicitly focuses on the international level.
- Putnam's main insight is that **even when states are negotiating with each other, each side's diplomats must also remember domestic factors.**
- Thus, he suggests that we should study **two-level games**: games where actors attempt to reach an agreement that is acceptable to an international bargaining partner **and** a domestic audience.



Putnam and Two-Level Games

- He uses game theory to model this as a **two-level game**: a model of international bargaining with domestic constraints.
- This model has two levels:
 - Level 1: International negotiations/bargaining.
 - Level 2: Domestic lobbying and constraints.
- We have been talking about Level 1 for the past few classes
 - the bargaining model of war is focused on this level.



Putnam and Two-Level Games

- We have thus far assumed that states are **unitary actors**: actors with a single set of preferences.
- This model removes that assumption.
- Actors now must find a negotiated settlement that is acceptable to **both** the other state and their own domestic audience.
- National leaders are negotiators with two other parties: their foreign counterpart and their own domestic constituents.



Two-Level Game Steps

- In this model, bargaining first takes place at the international level (Level 1) and then the domestic level (Level 2).
- Negotiators/leaders can agree to a deal between their states at L1.
- Each leader then takes that agreement to their domestic audiences to seek ratification.
- Sometimes, this process is iterative, with leaders coming back to L1 for multiple revisions of the deal based on input from L2.



- Each leader will only accept a deal within their **win-set**.
- **Win-set**: the range of international agreements that will be accepted at the domestic level.
- Larger win-sets thus make agreements more likely.
- The size of domestic win-sets affects the distribution of outcomes possible in international bargaining.



Changing Win-Sets

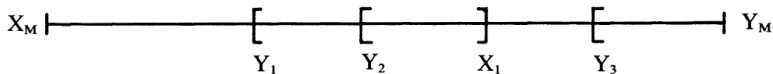


FIGURE 1. *Effects of reducing win-set size*



Determinants of Win-Set Size

What determines how large or small a win-set is?

- 1 Status-quo or reversion point: what do leaders stand to gain? What happens if they fail to reach any deal?
- 2 The distribution of domestic actors: are they homogeneous or heterogeneous?
- 3 Issue linkage: what are the dimensions of bargaining?
- 4 Institutions: how are agreements ratified by the domestic audience?



Two-Level Games

- The introduction of a second level means that ‘wrong’ decisions become doubly likely.
- The other state’s leader can inflict costs on the opposing state.
- Domestic actors unhappy with a deal can remove the national leader from power.
- **When acting internationally, outcomes must please both international and domestic actors.**



Strategic Interaction in Two-Level Games

- L1 actors are especially uncertain about the L2 domestic considerations of their counterparts.
- This uncertainty is both a bargaining tool and a constraint.
- Each L1 has an incentive to understate the domestic side of their win-set, but also knows this about the other side.
- This uncertainty increases risk of involuntary defection by the other side if their L2 supporters won't ratify a deal, so L1 negotiators want to be certain any deal is within the other side's L2 win-set.
- This means they may not press for especially harsh bargains that the other side's L2 won't accept.



Two-Level Games Wrap-Up

- This model illustrates that no state or leader is independent from its domestic politics.
- The internal domestic institutions thus influence how international bargaining and cooperation plays out by impacting the bargaining range.
- Opaque domestic institutions make it harder for other states to determine resolve.
- The need to obey domestic coalitions may make it harder for states to commit to agreements.



Two-Level Games Wrap-Up

- While we often consider states to be **unitary actors**, that is an assumption that can sometimes obscure important details.
- We must consider both the international and domestic incentives that actors face to study their decision-making.
- **We have already discussed international incentives with the bargaining model of war, so what do these L2 domestic incentives look like?**



Domestic Politics and War: Gas



Doug Wilson/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images



Domestic Politics and War: Oil Price

FIGURE 4.1 *The Price of Oil, 1960–2018*

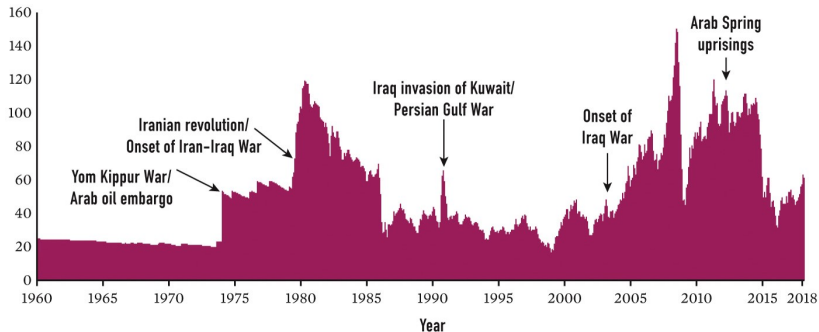


Figure source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Spot Crude Oil Price: West Texas Intermediate (WTI) [WTISPLC], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/WTISPLC>, March 19, 2018. * In 2017 U.S. dollars.



Domestic Politics and War: Oil Price

- US consumer dependence on gasoline means that US consumers have an interest in stability in the Middle East.
- Some have argued that, due to this dependence of both the military and civilian economy, US interventions in the ME are in the national interest.
- This is a specific example of how internal (L2) domestic characteristics can influence military commitments (such as placement of US military bases in the ME) or political commitments (such as US-Saudi Arabia alliance).



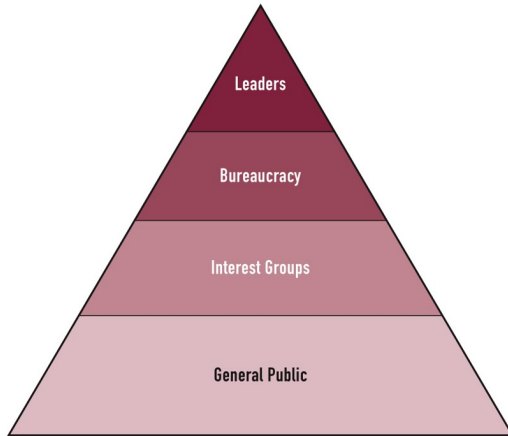
Domestic Politics and War: Interests

- More generally, this shift to considering L2 means that we are shifting away from national interests in war towards considering particularistic interests in war.
- **National interests:** the motivations of states so far (power, security, wealth).
- **Particularistic interests:** the motivations of specific groups within states.
- Who are these groups?



Domestic Actors

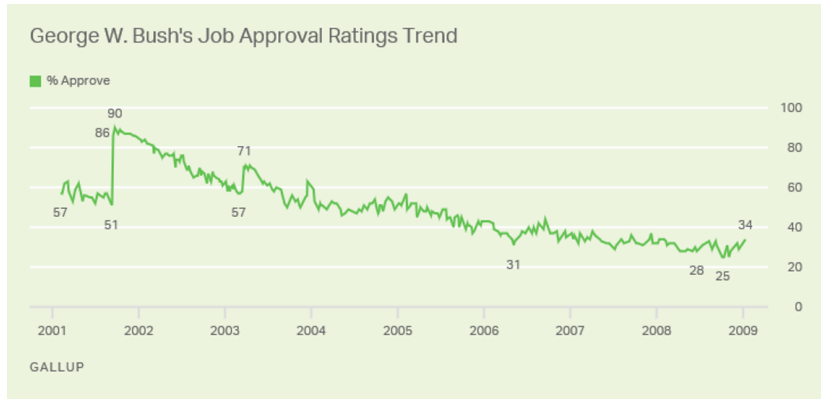
FIGURE 4.2 *Key Domestic Actors in Foreign Policy*





Domestic Actors: Leaders

Do leaders ever spark war to generate domestic benefits?





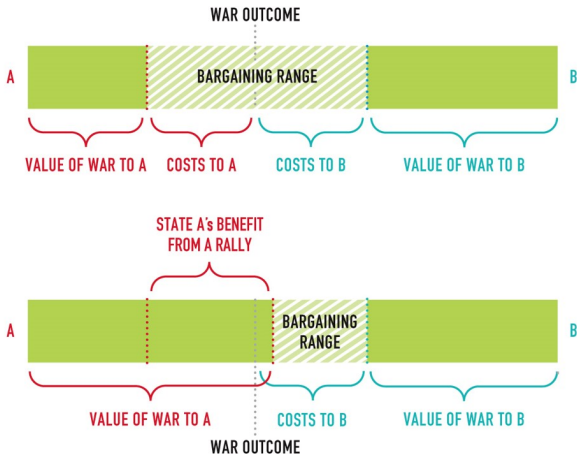
Domestic Actors: Leaders

- One common explanation for war: leaders will start a war to generate a “rally around the flag.”
- **Rally effect:** temporary increase in citizen support for their state’s government in response to international crises or wars.
- This can yield particularistic benefits to the leader, such as boosting support.
 - Benefits for both democratic and autocratic leaders: reelection or increased legitimacy.
- Existence of rally effects creates a **diversionary incentive** for leaders.
- How does this impact the bargaining range?



Rally Effects and Bargaining Range

FIGURE 4.3 *Rally Effects and the Bargaining Range*





Rally Effects: Falkland Islands War





Rally Effects: Falkland Islands War

- Argentine ruling junta facing domestic riots and demands for its overthrow.
- Seizing the Falkland Islands, a British possession, shifted the Argentine public's attention away from that domestic discontent (temporarily).
- Britain experiencing economic recession, and PM Thatcher facing very low approval ratings.
- Thatcher received a substantial boost in her approval ratings following the start of the war, which lasted Apr. 2 - Jun. 14, 1982 and ended in British victory.



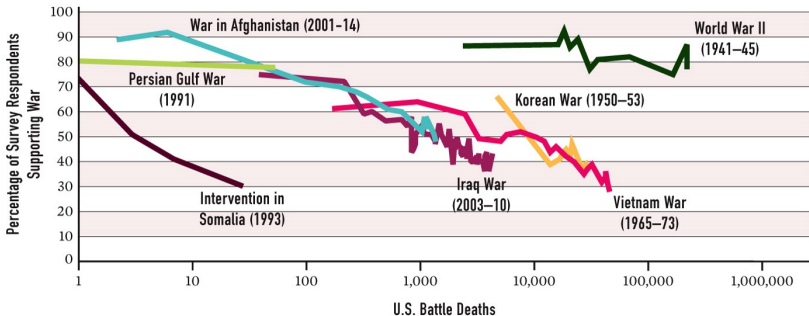
Rally Effects Wrap-Up

- Like the brinksmanship strategy, rally effects tend to lack systematic evidence for their use outside of a few high-profile examples.
- Benefits of war must certainly outweigh benefits of peace for a rational leader to launch a war in hopes of rally effect, which is rare.
- Rally effects are also temporary, as support decreases as casualties rise.



Rally Effects Wrap-Up

FIGURE 4.4 *U.S. Battle Deaths and Public Support for War*



Source: World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War, and Somalia from Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996). Other poll numbers from Gallup, www.gallup.com/poll/1633/Iraq.aspx and www.gallup.com/poll/116233/Afghanistan.aspx (accessed 01/20/15). Casualty figures for Iraq and Afghanistan from www.icasualties.org (accessed 01/20/15).



Other Domestic Actors

- Other domestic actors, like the state's **bureaucracy** (including its military) and **interest groups**, may have particularistic interests in interstate war.
 - Military officers may view war as a chance for promotion and larger budget.
 - Military-industrial complex may view war as a chance for lucrative contracts.
- However, by definition, many of these groups will be much smaller than the general population who pay the costs of war (higher taxes and deaths). Why does their influence matter?



Collective Action Problems Reprise

- This is a case of the bureaucracy and interest groups overcoming a collective action problem, while the general population cannot.
- Recall the elements of successful collective action: smaller group size enables easier coordination and monitoring to prevent free-riding to obtain a public good.
- In this case, the bureaucracy and special interest groups are sufficiently small that they can coordinate to effectively lobby government policy, gaining those benefits of war (“public goods” if we define “public” as these groups).
- By contrast, the general population will struggle to mobilize for similar collective action reasons.



Collective Action Problems Reprise

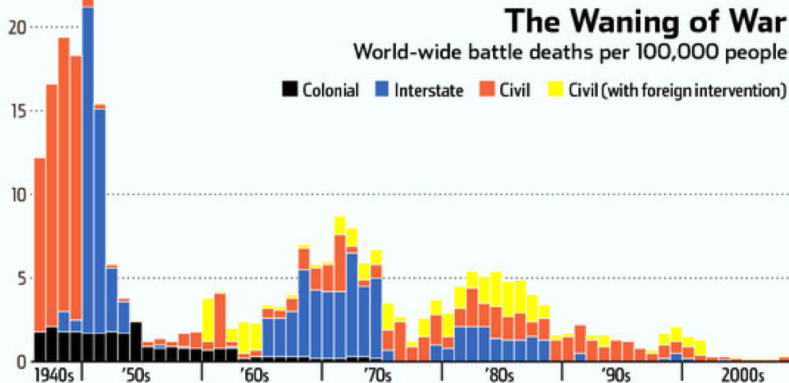
- The costs of war fall on the general public, while the benefits accrue to the bureaucracy and special interest groups.
- Note that this does not always mean the military is automatically warmongering: it can have a more realistic understanding of its costs and abilities than civilians.
- More generally, this points to the idea that different groups with different preferences over war influence the bargaining range between two states, even if none of those groups are directly negotiating with the opposing side.



How does regime type (democracy or autocracy)
influence war?



The Decline in Conflict



Source: Human Security Report Project, the Uppsala Conflict Data Project, and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo



The Long Peace

- 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



Why the Long Peace?

- Given how bloody the first half of the 20th century was, why are we experiencing a long stretch of relative peace now?
- This observation sparked a substantial debate.
- The dominant answer is the **democratic peace**: the observation that democracies do not fight one another.
- The democratic peace is held up as the closest thing in IR to a scientific law.



Spread of Democracy

FIGURE 4.6 *The Spread of Democracy, 1800–2016*

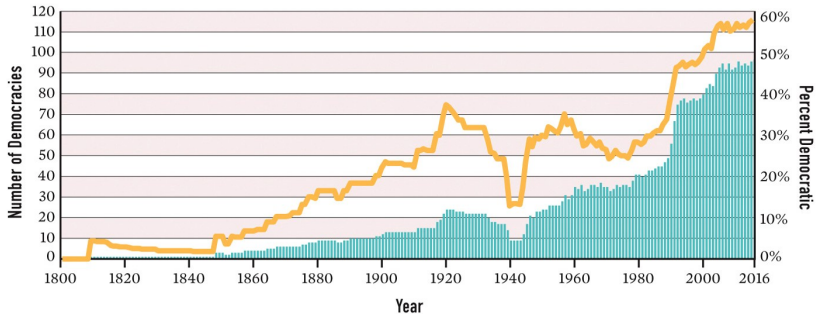


Figure source: Monty G. Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, and Keith Jagers, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2016," Center for Systemic Peace, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html> (accessed 11/21/17).



The Democratic Peace

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



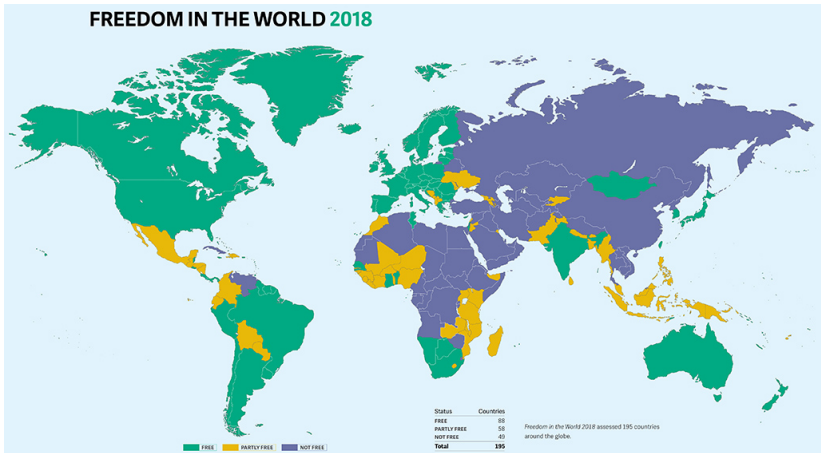
What is a Democracy?

- 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

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2018





Why the Democratic Peace?

What are the proposed explanations for the democratic peace?

- 1 Norms of mutual respect and nonviolence.
- 2 Democratic institutional impacts on the bargaining process.
- 3 The relationship is spurious (something else explains it).



Explanation 1: Norms

- One proposed explanation for the democratic peace is the norms of mutual respect and nonviolence.
- The idea here is that democracies are, by their nature, just less aggressive and prone to resorting to violence.
- This explanation is not convincing, as data shows democracies are not less likely to go to war with non-democracies.



Explanation 2: Institutions

- 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 the “selectorate” (the group keeping them in power) holds leaders accountable constrains their decisions.
- **Accountability:** the ability to punish or reward leaders for their decisions.



Explanation 2: Institutions

- Because of accountability, democratic leaders have systematically higher costs for war.
- War is thus 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)



Explanation 2: Institutions

- In addition to accountability, democratic institutions decrease private information.
- Democratic institutions allow leaders to better signal their intentions via audience costs.
- Democratic leaders have high costs for backing down (like electoral defeat), so their threats are more credible when tying hands.
- Transparency, such as a free press, means less private information.
- Survey research shows low public support in democracies for war with other democracies.
- All of this makes finding a bargaining range easier for two democracies.



Explanation 3: Spurious Relationship

- But does democracy **cause** peace or is it just associated with peace?
- Some critics argue this finding could be spurious or the subject of reverse causality.
- Essentially, they argue that democracy and peace just happen to occur together, but one is not causing the other - there is some third factor we are missing.
- Another way of saying this is to say that the relationship is **endogenous**.



Endogeneity comes in three forms:

- 1 Common (alternative) cause
 - What if economic development makes democracy more likely, and reduces likelihood of conflict (“capitalist peace”)?
- 2 Reverse causation
 - What if peaceful international relations are necessary for the establishment of democratic government?
- 3 Spurious association
 - What if what really matters is that democracies happened to be allies after WWII against non-democratic Soviet Union?



Explanation 3: Spurious Relationship

- While endogeneity remains theoretically possible, it is unlikely to explain away this relationship.
- The democratic peace has been very highly scrutinized, and none of these potential alternative explanations have really worked out.
- **Explanation 2 (institutions) seems the most likely cause of the democratic peace.**



Summary

- Before today, we have treated states as unitary actors, but now we discard that assumption to examine domestic impacts on war.
- Putnam's two-level game shows us that crisis bargaining involves finding a deal acceptable not only to the other state but also to one's own domestic constituents.
- At the domestic level, leaders may sometimes launch wars to benefit from a rally effect, while bureaucratic elements and interest groups may lobby for war.



Summary

- In all these cases, war's costs may be diffused across the population, while its benefits may accrue to specific small groups that can overcome their collective action problems to lobby the government.
- Democracies are less likely to go to war with each other, because democratic institutions decrease private information and make credible communication easier.