

# The Democratic Peace

POSC 3610 – International Conflict

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## Goal for Today

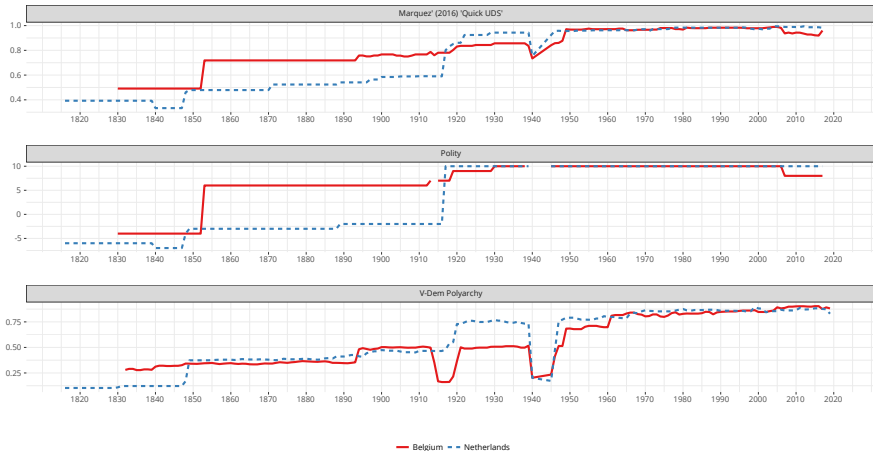
*Discuss the core findings and intuition behind “the democratic peace.”*

## Confrontation of the Day: "The Ten Days' Campaign" (MIC#0025)



## Various Democracy Scores for Belgium and the Netherlands, 1816-2017

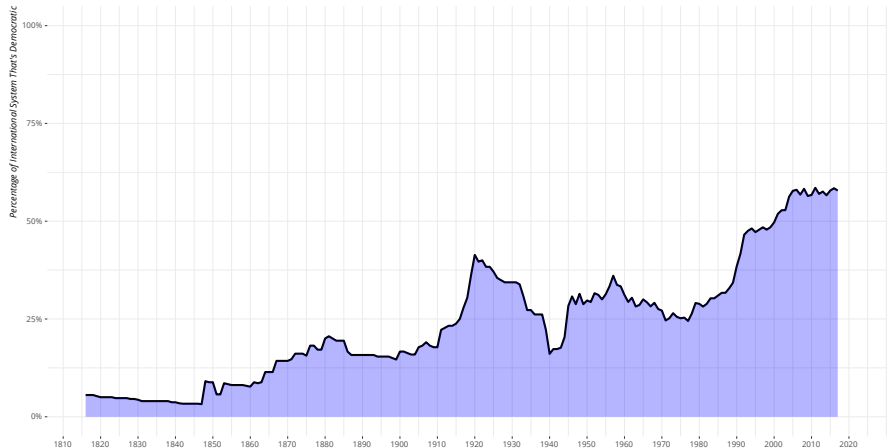
Peace emerged between Belgium and the Netherlands as both democratized, consistent with a story told by democratic peace theory.



Data: Coppedge et al. (2020), Marshall et al. (2017), and Marquez (2016), by way of *ipeacsciencer*.  
Note: Marquez' 'Quick UDS' extensions standardized to probability of democracy.

## The Proliferation of Democracies in the International System (1816-2017)

States coded with `polity2` value at or above 6 are coded as democratic.



Data: The Polity Project (Center for Systemic Peace)

# Democratic Peace Theory

Democratic peace theory (DPT) may constitute the most important advancement in IR scholarship.

- Originally a finding by Babst (1964), a skeptical Singer and Small (1976) confirmed it.
- Has important theoretical origins in Immanuel Kant (1795).
- Levy (1988) notes it's the closest thing to an empirical law in all political science.

Long story short: democracies don't fight each other, and never in war.

# Democratic Peace Theory

Nonetheless, DPT is a bit of a misnomer.

- It's a democratic peace *fact*. It *needs* a theory.
- In many ways, this is still true.

So, why don't democracies fight each other?

## Maoz and Russett (1993)

Maoz and Russett (1993) test two competing explanations.

- Normative model
- Structural (institutional) model



# Normative Model

The authors identify two assumptions of the normative model.

1. States externalize their *internal* norms of behavior.
2. A conflict between democrats and autocrats will be characterized by the norms of the latter.

# Normative Model

Autocrats have few if any normative bounds on their behavior.

- They may capture the state through use of lethal force and violence.
- They may also keep their hold on power through the same means.
- Autocratic foreign policy behavior reflects the autocrat's preferences.

# Normative Model

Democracies, by contrast, rest on different norms.

- e.g. equal competition, minority rights, consent to be governed.
- Force and repression to govern would be deemed “illegitimate.”
- This imposes “normative” restraints on behavior.

International politics becomes an extension of domestic politics.

# The Normative Model

The argument:

- In a jointly democratic dispute, both sides are secure in their knowledge of the other's normative restraints.
- In a mixed or autocratic dispute, nothing is in place to restrain escalation.

Democracies will not fight each other, but will fight other pairs of states.

# Structural (Institutional) Model

The authors identify two assumptions of the structural model.

1. Dangerous foreign policy dilemmas require a lengthy mobilization of domestic support.
2. Only emergencies allow democracies to circumvent this mobilization process.

# Structural (Institutional) Model

The argument:

- In a jointly democratic dispute, selling the conflict domestically takes too much time.
  - Cooler heads will prevail.
- There are no mutual structural constraints in a mixed or autocratic dispute.
  - This resembles an “emergency” that will allow democratic leaders to circumvent the lengthy mobilization process.

Democracies will not fight each other, but will fight other pairs of states.

# What Does This Look Like Empirically?

## **Units of analysis:**

- non-directed dyad-year
- state-year (e.g. USA-1816, USA-1817, USA-1818)

# Dependent Variables

## Dependent Variables:

- *confrontation onset*: binary, indicates a unique confrontation onset in dyad-year/state-year
- *sum of minimum fatalities*: total (minimum) estimated fatalities in dyad-year/state-year
- *sum of maximum fatalities*: total (maximum) estimated fatalities in dyad-year/state-year
- *dyadic war*: whether a confrontation escalated to over 1,000 [dyadic] (minimum) fatalities



# Main Independent Variable(s)

**Main Independent Variable(s):** democracy (Polity project)

- *Joint democracy*: both members of dyad have `polity2 > 6` in dyad-year (dyad-year)
- *State is a democracy*: state has `polity2 > 6` in state-year (state-year)

Note:

- There's not a great reason to use Polity over alternatives these days.
- It is, however, the most common democracy measure you'll see.

# Control Variables

## Control Variables:

- *Dyad-year*: territorial rivalry, CINC proportion (W/S), land/water contiguity, major powers in the dyad, defense pact, advanced economies
- *State-year*: territorial rivalry, CINC score, num. land/sea borders, major power status, GDP per capita

## Other notes: (i.e. things that academics care a lot about)

- Confrontation data: Gibler and Miller (Forthcoming)
- Sample: politically relevant dyads (i.e. neighbors and/or dyads with a major power)
- Onset estimated using logistic regression.
- Fatalities estimated with Heckman sample correction, selecting on ongoing confrontations.
  - Otherwise: basic OLS (“linear regression”).
- War model is Bayesian probit with ad hoc Heckman sample correction.

Table 1: A Dangerous Dyad-ish Analysis of Inter-state Conflict

	<b>Conf. Onset</b>	<b>Min. Fatalities</b>	<b>Max. Fatalities</b>
Territorial Rivalry	0.921*** (0.057)	0.506*** (0.145)	0.583*** (0.159)
Land Contiguity	1.012*** (0.069)	-0.052 (0.175)	-0.095 (0.191)
Other Contiguity	0.540*** (0.093)	-0.304 (0.211)	-0.323 (0.231)
CINC Proportion	0.612*** (0.092)	-0.033 (0.216)	-0.185 (0.236)
Both Major Powers	0.756*** (0.088)	0.990*** (0.213)	0.909*** (0.234)
Major-Minor	0.133* (0.066)	0.477** (0.148)	0.472** (0.162)
Defense Pact	0.007 (0.060)	-0.285* (0.138)	-0.354* (0.151)
Joint Democracy	-0.815*** (0.088)	-0.367+ (0.212)	-0.436+ (0.232)
Min. GDP per Capita in Dyad	0.112*** (0.017)	-0.214*** (0.038)	-0.263*** (0.041)
Num.Obs.	107798	2338	2338

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# How to Interpret a Regression Table Like This

1. Find the variable(s) of interest.
2. Look for direction (positive/negative)
3. Look for “stars” (to determine statistical significance)

Table 2: The Important Results of Our Analysis (Omitting the Control Variables)

	<b>Conf. Onset</b>	<b>Min. Fatalities</b>	<b>Max. Fatalities</b>
Joint Democracy	-0.815*** (0.088)	-0.367+ (0.212)	-0.436+ (0.232)
Num.Obs.	107798	2338	2338

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 3: The Important Results of Our Analysis (Omitting the Control Variables and Color Coded)

	<b>Conf. Onset</b>	<b>Min. Fatalities</b>	<b>Max. Fatalities</b>
Joint Democracy	-0.815*** (0.088)	-0.367+ (0.212)	-0.436+ (0.232)
Num.Obs.	107798	2338	2338

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4: The Important Results of Our Analysis (Omitting the Control Variables, Color Coded, Identifying Significance)

	Conf. Onset	Min. Fatalities	Max. Fatalities
Joint Democracy	<b>-0.815***</b> (0.088)	<b>-0.367+</b> (0.212)	<b>-0.436+</b> (0.232)
Num.Obs.	107798	2338	2338

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5: An Escalation Model of Dyadic War

	Dyadic War
Territorial Rivalry	0.392 [0.177, 0.617]
Land Contiguity	-0.168 [-0.402, 0.074]
Other Contiguity	-0.357 [-0.685, -0.053]
CINC Proportion	-0.291 [-0.624, 0.043]
Both Major Powers	0.911 [0.634, 1.187]
Major-Minor	0.482 [0.271, 0.705]
Defense Pact	-0.376 [-0.649, -0.128]
Joint Democracy	-10.801 [-32.955, -1.743]
Min. GDP per Capita in Dyad	-0.071 [-0.124, -0.018]
Num.Obs.	2338

*Note:*

Model is Bayesian GLM with default {rstanarm} priors.



Table 6: A Monadic Analysis of Inter-state Conflict

	<b>Conf. Onset</b>	<b>Min. Fatalities</b>	<b>Max. Fatalities</b>	<b>War</b>
Has Territorial Rivalry	0.292*** (0.048)	0.199+ (0.103)	0.209+ (0.111)	0.233*** (0.060)
Num. Land Borders	0.087*** (0.009)	-0.076*** (0.019)	-0.082*** (0.021)	-0.032** (0.011)
Num. Sea Borders	0.076*** (0.010)	-0.086*** (0.023)	-0.098*** (0.025)	-0.071*** (0.016)
Major Power	0.145 (0.100)	1.193*** (0.182)	1.263*** (0.195)	0.710*** (0.104)
Is Democracy (Polity)	-0.040 (0.054)	-0.296* (0.119)	-0.370** (0.127)	-0.237** (0.082)
GDP per Capita	0.048** (0.018)	-0.294*** (0.042)	-0.353*** (0.045)	-0.106*** (0.024)
Num.Obs.	14089	3245	3245	4115

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 7: A Monadic Analysis of Inter-state Conflict

	<b>Conf. Onset</b>	<b>Min. Fatalities</b>	<b>Max. Fatalities</b>	<b>War</b>
Is Democracy (Polity)	-0.040 (0.054)	<b>-0.296*</b> (0.119)	<b>-0.370**</b> (0.127)	<b>-0.237**</b> (0.082)
Num.Obs.	14089	3245	3245	4115

+  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

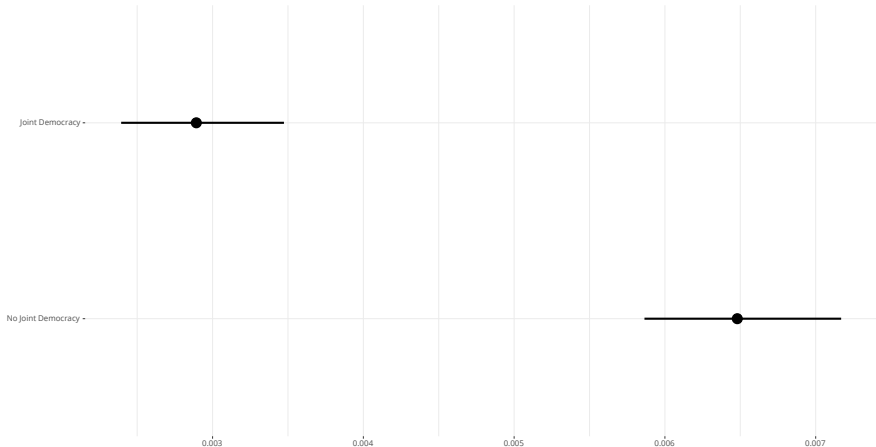
# Takeaways

*The core of the democratic peace: democracies do not fight each other, but aren't necessarily more peaceful in general.*

- Joint democracy is more peaceful than other dyadic regime pairings.
- The probability of escalation to war is fantastically rare.
- Democracies are still as conflict-prone at the unit (monadic) level.
- Their confrontations, though, seem to be of lesser severity.

## The Simulated Probability of Confrontation Onset, by Dyadic Regime Type

Joint democracy leads to percentage change in the probability of confrontation onset of about 55%. That's a big effect!

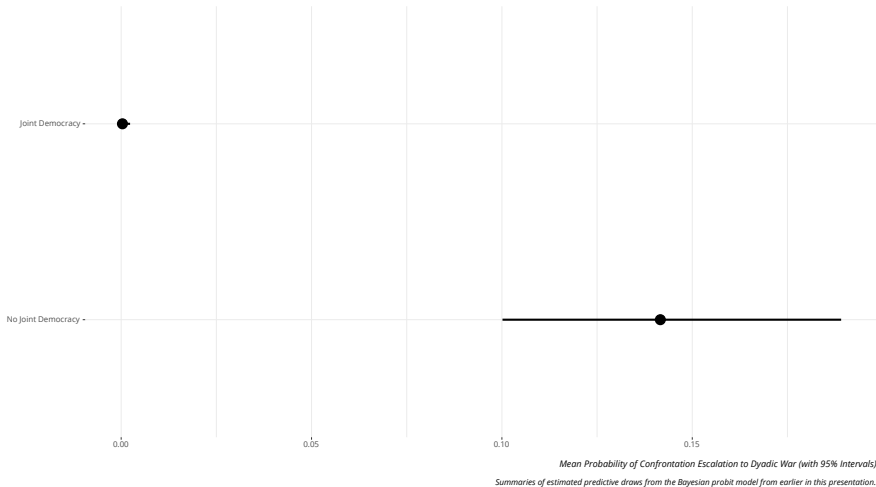


Mean Probability of Confrontation Onset (with 95% Intervals)

Simulation by way of multivariate normal distribution, given Model 1 in this presentation.

## The Probability of Dyadic War Between Joint Democracies is Fantastically Small, Almost Zero

The baseline probability of escalation, all things equal, is .141. With joint democracy: about .00037.



# What Are The Jointly Democratic Wars We Observe?

Flukes, coding artifacts, odd cases, and almost exceptions that prove the rule.

- Coding artifact of ephemeral declaration of war from WWII allies to Finland
  - There were some low-level skirmishes between the UK and Finland in 1941, with no more than 25 fatalities through the year.
- Franco-Siamese War (MIC#0196)
  - Britain never actually fought France.
- India-Pakistan “Kargil War” (MIC#4007)
  - Pakistan would soon have a military takeover of the state.
- Cyprus-Turkey 1974 conflict (MIC#1293)
  - Turkey had a coup (by memorandum) in 1971, and another in 1980.
- Lithuania’s campaign for independence against (in part) Germany (MIC#2604) in 1919/1920.
  - A weird case at a weird moment in time.

# Conclusion

The democratic peace is one of the most important empirical discoveries in IR.

- Joint democracies rarely fight each other, and almost never in war.
- The core is “dyadic” and not necessarily “monadic.”
- Theoretical arguments focus on norms or democratic institutions.

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