The Democratic Peace

POSC 3610 – International Conflict
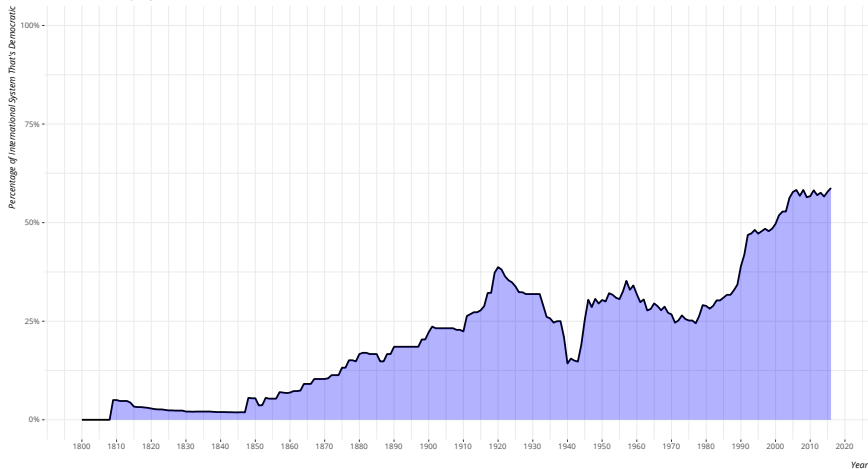
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Goal for Today

Discuss the democratic peace and its importance to the study of conflict.

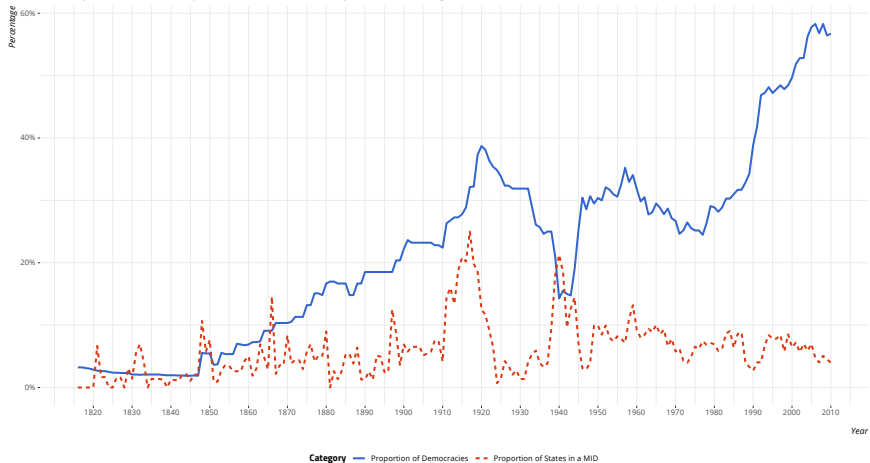**The Proliferation of Democracies in the International System (1800-2016)**

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

Percentage of International System That's Democratic

Year

Data: The Polity Project (Center for Systemic Peace)

The International System Has Seen Less Conflict as It Became More Democratic

Admittedly, most of the relationship is observable after WWII and may cluster on something else.

Data: GML MID Data (v. 2.1) and the Polity Project

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.

The Results

Table 1: Simple Bivariate Relationship Between Joint Democracy and War (GML MID Non-Directed Dyad-Year Data [v. 2.1]

Joint Democracy?	Number of Wars
No Joint Democracy	514
Joint Democracy	4

So What Are Those Joint Democratic Wars?

Flukes, basically:

- Coding artifact of ephemeral declaration of war from WWII allies to Finland (MID#0258)
- Franco-Siamese War (MID#0196) even though Britain never actually fought France.
- India-Pakistan "Kargil War" (MID#4007) even though Pakistan was reverting to a police state
- Cyprus-Turkey 1974 conflict (MID#1293) even though Turkey was relapsing to authoritarianism again.
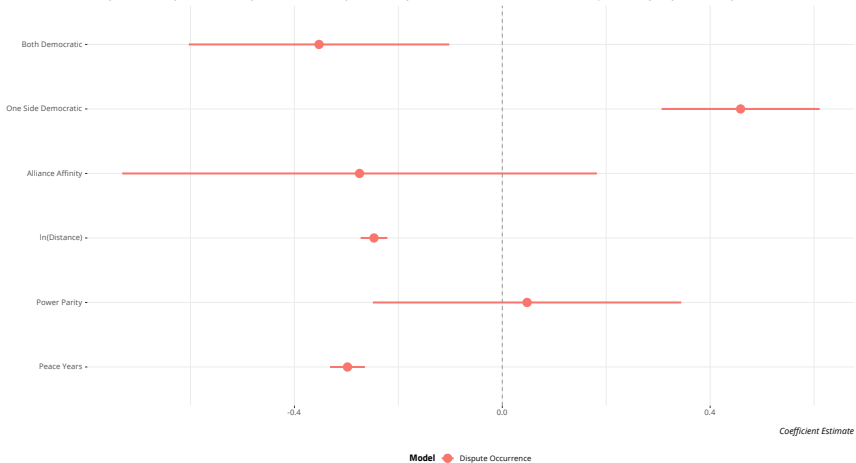
A More Systematic Analysis

Here's a more rigorous dyad-year analysis:

- *DV*: MID ocurrence, MID initiation, MID escalation
- *IV*: joint democracy, only one side democratic.
    - We include both to test for a "cats-and-dogs" effect.
    - i.e. we expect joint democracy to have a negative effect and one-side-democratic to have a positive effect.
- *Controls:* distance, power parity, peace years, *S*-score for affinity in alliances.

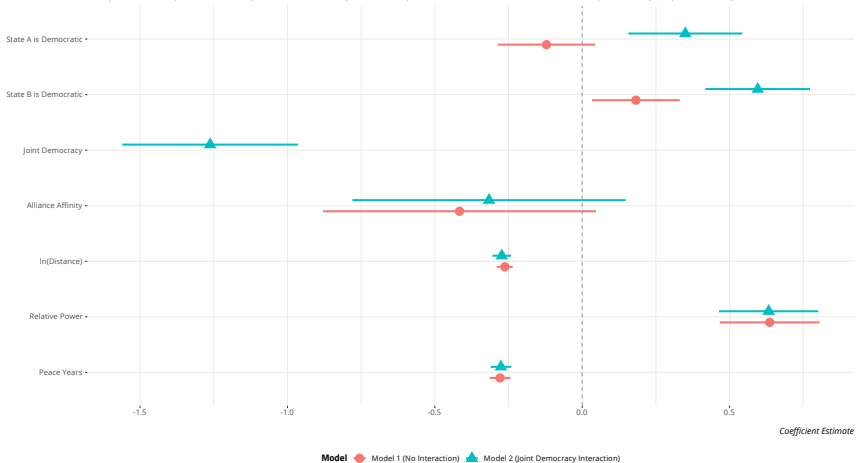## Democracies are Peaceful, but Just With Each Other

Jointly democratic dyads are less likely to be in a MID but dyads in which just one side is democratic is more conflict-prone than jointly autocratic dyads.

Coefficient Estimate

Model ● Dispute Occurrence

Data: Quackenbush (2015).

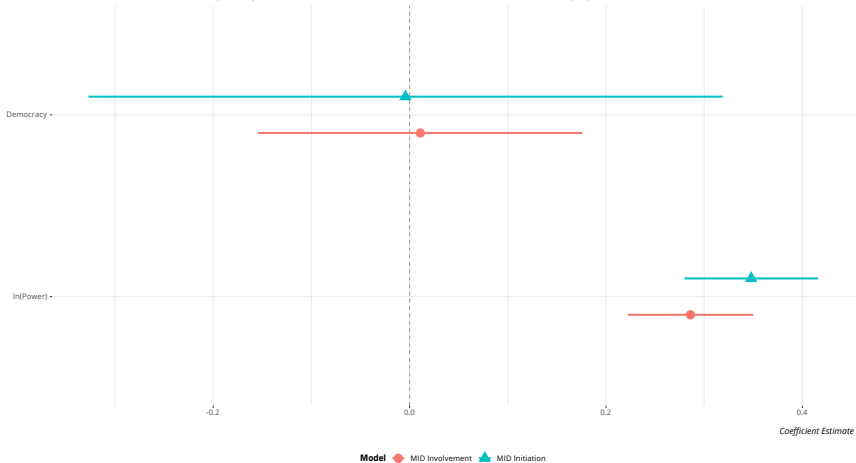**Democracies Appear to be Conflict Prone, but Just Not With Each Other**

Jointly democratic dyads are less likely to be in a MID but dyads in which just one side is democratic is more conflict-prone than jointly autocratic dyads.

Coefficient Estimate

Model ● Model 1 (No Interaction) ▲ Model 2 (Joint Democracy Interaction)

Data: Quackenbush (2015).

There Is No Monadic Democratic Peace

Democracies are no different in their proclivity for conflict and almost all models have failed to vindicate the monadic proposition.

Democracy

ln(Power)

-0.2   0.0   0.2   0.4

Coefficient Estimate

Model ● MID Involvement ▲ MID Initiation

Data: Quackenbush (2015).

Other Findings and Arguments

Democratic peace findings generally cluster into two categories:

1. Democratic war avoidance
2. Democratic war behavior

Democratic War Avoidance

1. Democracies don't fight wars against each other.
2. Democra*tizing* states are war-prone (e.g. Serbia). Mature democracies are the peaceful ones.
3. Democracies conclude what disputes they do have with negotiation and compromise.
4. Democracies as major powers are more constrained than democratic minor powers.

Democratic War Behavior

1. Democracies are essentially as war-prone as non-democracies.
2. Democracies win the wars they fight.
3. Democracies fight shorter wars.
4. Democracies are as likely as non-democracies to target weak rivals.
5. Democracies are more likely to initiate wars against autocracies (not the other way around).
6. Democracies incur fewer battle deaths in the wars they initiate.
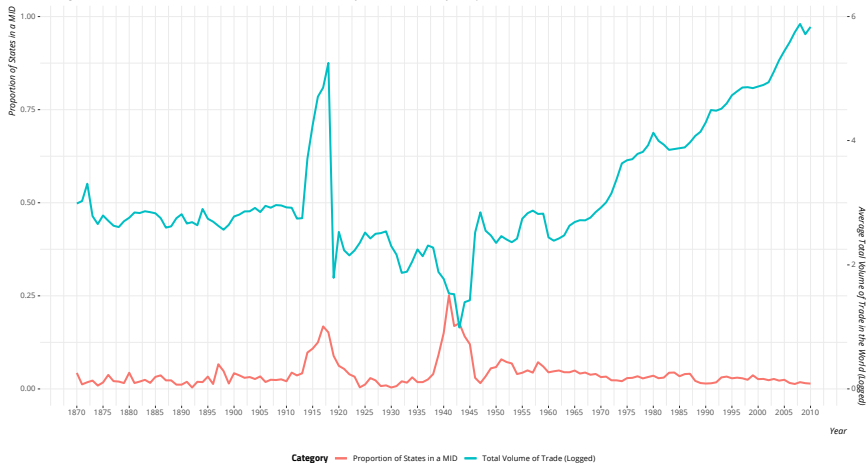
Auxiliary Arguments

Others have added some tweaks to the core arguments.

- "Kantian peace"
- "Selectorate peace"

Neither seriously challenges that democracy is a force for peace, just that there's more happening than the standard DPT argument.

IR Scholars Generally See Trade as Conducive to Global Peace

The argument is intuitive; interconnected states see conflict as too costly and an unnecessary disruption of commerce.

Category — Proportion of States in a MID — Total Volume of Trade (Logged)

Data: Correlates of War Dyadic Trade Data (v. 4.0) and Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v. 2.02)

Conclusion

Democratic peace might be the most important finding in IR, but doubts persist:

- "Capitalist peace" (ed. there are a laundry list of problems with this argument)
- Common systems or common interests? (ed. we don't adequately model temporal variation)
- Territorial peace (i.e. have we put the cart before the horse?)

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