

# The Theory of Democratic Peace Revisited

## Institutional Constraints or *Pax Americana*

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# Introduction

- Why do states engage in warfare?
- If such question is too difficult to answer, let's consider another one: under which circumstances do states refrain from war engagement, i.e. under which circumstances do states maintain peace?
- Democratic Peace theory is one of the longest-standing explanations for interstate peace, arguing that democratic states do not fight wars with each other, compared to other regime dyads, *ceteris paribus*.
- In normative political theories, democratic peace finds its origins in the writings of Mozi, Immanuel Kant, et al.
- In empirical studies, democratic peace is probably one of the most researched areas of comparative politics and international relations, for its practical importance in foreign policy making, methodological simplicity and consensus.

## 1 Conceptualizing Democratic Peace

- Militarized Disputes, War, and Peace
- Democracy: Normative and Empirical
- Operationalizing Democratic Peace

## 2 Forty Years of Empirical Democratic Peace Study

- Revival of the Democratic Peace Thesis
- Consolidated Consensus of Methods and Research Design
- Causal Mechanism of Democratic Peace
- Emergence of Alternative Theoretical Explanations

## 3 Analysis

- Tracing the Mechanism of Democratic Peace
- Disaggregating the Democratic Peace
- Democratic Peace and Great Power Hierarchy

## 4 Conclusion

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# Militarized Disputes, War, and Peace

- We define peace as the lack of interstate violence.
- Interstate violence takes on many forms. Wars might be the most common one, but full-on wars are scarce, and may lead us to reach biased conclusion.
- We instead operationalize peace as the lack of militarized interstate disputes, measured in the Correlates of War project.

# Militarized Disputes, War, and Peace

Global Militarized Interstate Disputes  
1816 – 2016

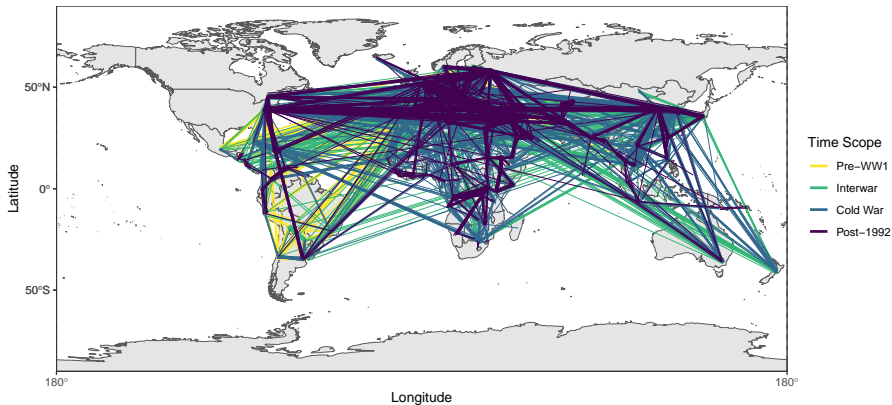


Figure 1: Global MIDs Disaggregated by Time Periods (1816 – 2016)

# Democracy: Normative and Empirical

- If democracy does generate peace, what kind of democracy are we looking into?
- Etymologically, democracy stems from the ancient Greek word *dēmokratía* (lit. rule of the people). Does the original meaning suffice to define how democracies should operate today? <sup>1</sup>
- While debates of normative definitions and values of democracy continue, our research demands an operational and measurable definition of democracy.
  - *Polity V*
  - Freedom House (Political Rights, Civil Liberties)
  - V-Dem

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1. See Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatham, N.J: Chatham House Publishers, 1987)

# Measuring Democracy with Polity Score

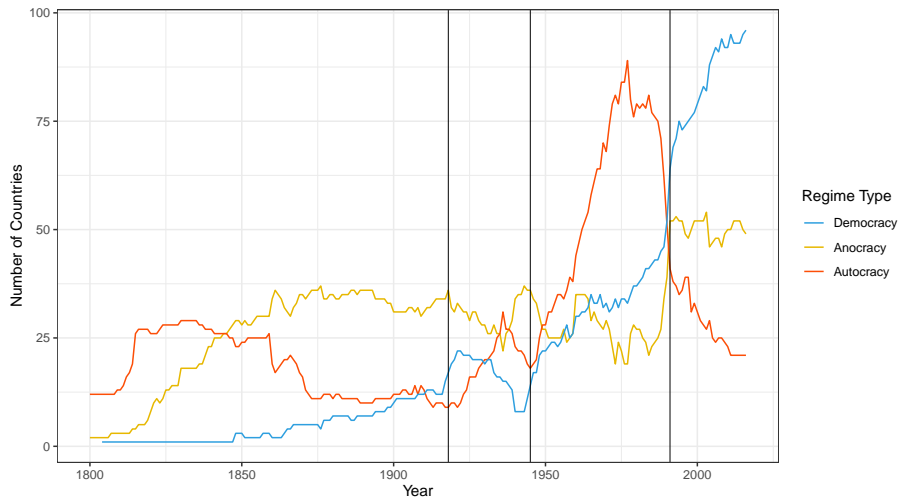


Figure 2: Number of Countries by Regime Type



# Measuring Democracy with Polity Score

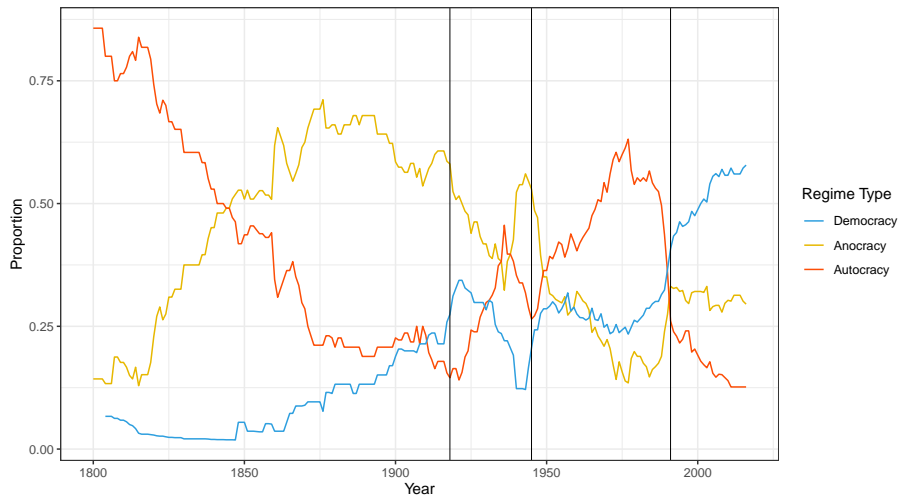


Figure 3: Proportion of Regime Types in International Politics

$$\text{logit}(\text{War}) = \beta_0 + \beta X \quad (1)$$

**Outcome Variable** The probability of war breaking out in a dyad year; it is dichotomous, and takes on the value 0 or 1.

**Explanatory Variable** A vector of predictors which we will discuss in the literature review section.

- Democracy scores,
- Great power hierarchy,
- Distance,
- Capacity difference...

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- As discussed by McDonald,<sup>2</sup> empirical research of democratic can be divided into four stages in the area of CP and IR.
  - The first wave of empirical democratic peace study almost simultaneously revived with normative political philosophy in the 1970s and 1980s. Simple observations, descriptive and bivariate analysis were available in this period.
  - More sophisticated methods were being employed in the second stage; research design was consolidated.
  - Then followed by the unpacking black box of the mechanism of democratic peace.
  - Alternative theories emerged to question the genesis and mechanism of democratic peace.

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2. Patrick J. McDonald, "Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes: Rethinking the Domestic Causes of Peace," *International Organization* 69, no. 3 (2015): 557–588.

# Revival of the Democratic Peace Thesis

- The first wave of empirical democratic peace study started to reexamine the intellectual legacy of political theorists.<sup>3</sup>
- Researchers observe that democratic states avoid fight war with each other.<sup>4</sup>
- Such phenomenon can only be observed in state dyads, not single states.<sup>5</sup>
- In most cases, only descriptive and bivariate analytic methods were being used. Regression analysis was rare.<sup>6</sup>
- Problems?

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3. Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1151–1169.

4. Steve Chan, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...: Are the Freer Countries More Pacific?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (December 1984): 617–648.

5. Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, "Regime Types and International Conflict, 1816–1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33, no. 1 (March 1989): 3–35.

6. R. J. Rummel, "Libertarianism and International Violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 1 (March 1983): 27–71.

# Consolidated Consensus of Methods and Research Design

- The second stage starts with consolidating research design decisions. Controlling variables were clearly defined, and preliminary causal mechanisms were properly modeled and discussed.<sup>7</sup>
  - Normative causes: norms of compromise and cooperation prevent conflicts.
  - Structural causes: complex political mobilization processes impose institutional constraints on leaders of two democracies confronting each other.
- Furthermore, democracies can avoid escalation.<sup>8</sup>
- The unit of analysis has been agreed to be a state dyad, though evidence of monadic was observed in crisis emergence.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993): 624–638.

8. William J. Dixon, "Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 1 (March 1994): 14–32.

9. David L. Rousseau et al., "Assessing the Dyadic Nature of the Democratic Peace, 1918–88," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (September 1996): 512–533.

- Economic interdependence was sometimes considered,<sup>10</sup> but it was rendered spurious for failure to consider temporal dependence.<sup>11</sup>

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10. John R. Oneal and Bruce M. Russett, "The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950-1985," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (June 1997): 267-294; Bruce M. Russett and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001).

11. Nathaniel Beck, Jonathan N. Katz, and Richard Tucker, "Taking Time Seriously: Time-Series-Cross-Section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable," *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (October 1998): 1260.

# Causal Mechanism of Democratic Peace

- This stage aimed to unpack the black box of democratic peace.
- Leaders in democratic countries avoid threatening use violence because of the domestic audience,<sup>12</sup> while they can't avoid revealing this tendency to other non-democratic countries.<sup>13</sup>
- Democratic institutions also limit their leaders to allocate resources to fight costly long-term wars.<sup>14</sup>
- The probability of democratic leaders losing office is relatively less dependent on the war outcome, as opposed to their counterparts in undemocratic countries. They are less likely to engage in wars.<sup>15</sup>

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12. James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 577–592.

13. Kenneth A. Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, First (Cambridge University Press, July 2001).

14. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, ed., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003).

15. Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (August 2010): 430–445.



# Causal Mechanism of Democratic Peace

- From a social constructivist perspective, democratic states adopt non-violent and compromise-oriented behaviors with other democracies, while interacting with non-democracies with enmity under the realist assumption of international anarchy.<sup>16</sup>
- The peace between or among democracies depends on norms of nonviolent dispute resolution, politically educated public, and free press that keep the people informed.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Thomas Risse - Kappen, "Democratic Peace — Warlike Democracies?: A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument," *European Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 4 (December 1995): 491–517.

17. Jarrod Hayes, "Securitization, Social Identity, and Democratic Security: Nixon, India, and the Ties That Bind," *International Organization* 66, no. 1 (January 2012): 63–93.

# Emergence of Alternative Theoretical Explanations

- Democratic peace theory has also been heavily challenged.
- For example, unsuccessful democratic transition can cause militarized conflicts, and democratic peace seems to only restricted to consolidated democracies.<sup>18</sup>
- Reverse causation?

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18. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

# Emergence of Alternative Theoretical Explanations

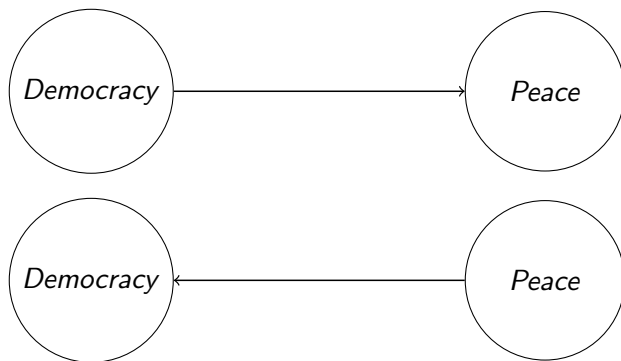


Figure 4: Reverse Causation of Democratic Peace Theory

- The cost of treating regime types as exogenous?—Refer to Figure 3.
- Great powers' hegemony in international politics,<sup>19</sup> power shifts,<sup>20</sup> and the shaping of regime types as a result of great power alliance<sup>21</sup> challenge the exogeneity of democracy in most countries around the world.

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19. Kevin Narizny, "Anglo-American Primacy and the Global Spread of Democracy: An International Genealogy," *World Politics* 64, no. 2 (April 2012): 341–373.

20. Seva Gunitsky, "From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century," *International Organization* 68, no. 3 (2014): 561–597.

21. Daniel Brinks and Michael Coppedge, "Diffusion Is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 4 (May 2006): 463–489; Carles Boix, "Democracy, Development, and the International System," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 4 (November 2011): 809–828.

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## Example of the Bangladesh War

As seen in the literature review, is the correlation between democracy and peace weak prior to WWI?

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

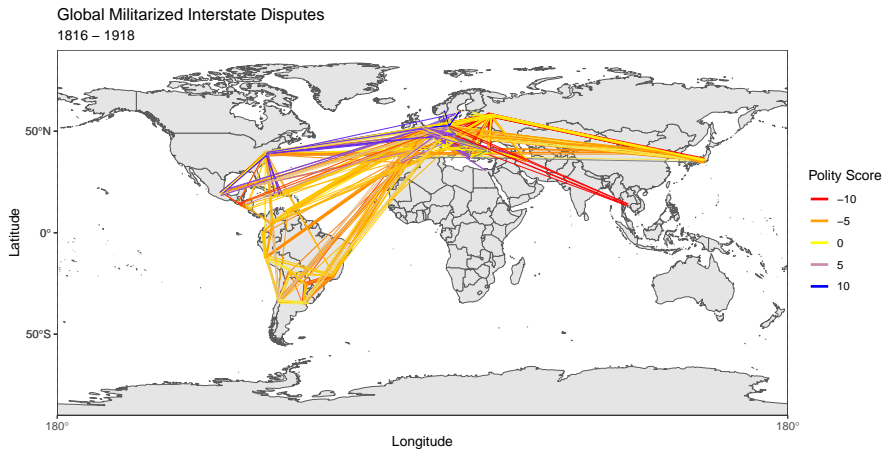


Figure 5: Global Militarized Interstate Disputes (1816 – 1918)



# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

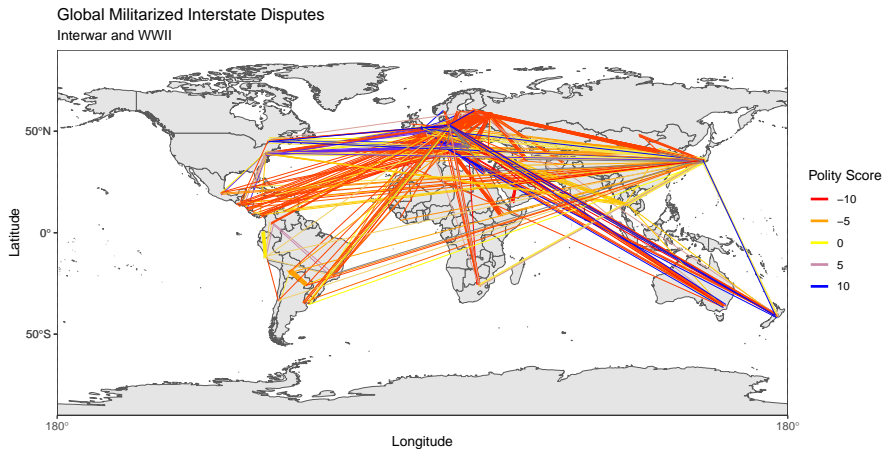


Figure 6: Global Militarized Interstate Disputes (1919 – 1945)

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

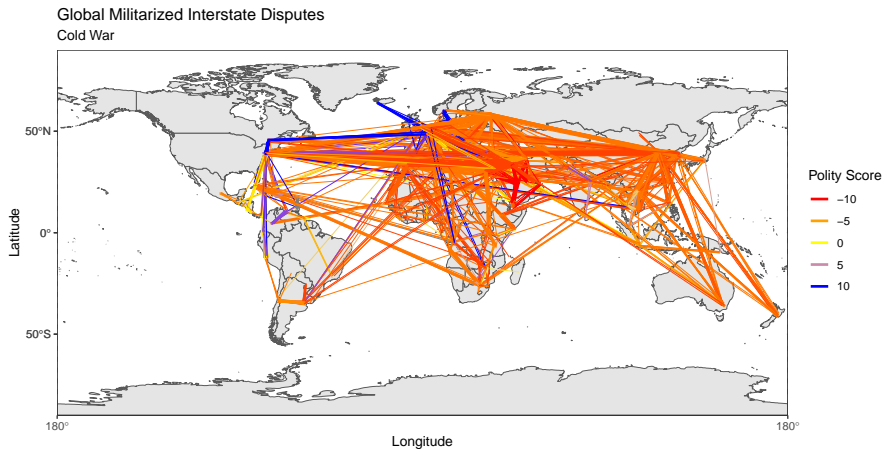


Figure 7: Global Militarized Interstate Disputes (1946 – 1991)

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

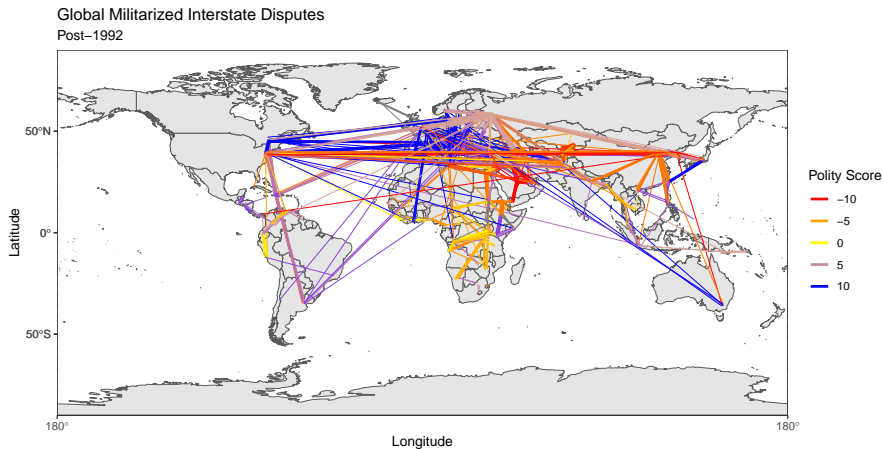


Figure 8: Global Militarized Interstate Disputes (1992 – 2016)

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

- Let's model the correlation between democracy and peace formally, disaggregated by the time scope (pre-WWI, interwar and WWII, Cold War, and post-1992).
- We have two explanatory variables: democracy (measured as the lower polity score in a dyad), and great power (if one of the state in the dyad is a great power defined in the COW project).
- We control dyadic alliance, intercapital distance, contiguity, and capacity ratio. It is common practice as discussed in literature review.
- Since the outcome variable is dichotomous, we can use logistic regression to model this problem.
- As a type of Generalized Linear Models (GLMs), logistic regression uses a link function to transform the range of the outcome variable to  $[0, 1]$ .

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

$$\text{logit}(Y) = \ln\left(\frac{Y}{1-Y}\right) = \beta_0 + X\beta \quad (2)$$

$$\text{equivalent of } Y = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + X\beta}}{1 + e^{\beta_0 + X\beta}}, Y \sim [0, 1] \quad (3)$$

- Mathematically, we have the following model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{logit}(MID) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \textit{Democracy} + \beta_2 \times \textit{GreatPower} + \\ & \beta_3 \times \textit{Alliance} + \beta_4 \times \ln(\textit{Distance}) + \\ & \beta_5 \times \textit{Contiguity} + \beta_6 \times \textit{Cap.Ratio} \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

- We use MLE to estimate parameters in the model, as MCMC converges extremely slowly due to large sample size, and we don't have to incorporate priors here.

# Disaggregating the Democratic Peace

Table 1: Disaggregated MIDs 1816 – 2016

	Outcome Variable: MID				
	All Years	Pre-WW1	Interwar and WW2	Cold War	Post-1992
Democracy	-0.077*** (0.002)	0.040*** (0.006)	-0.076*** (0.005)	-0.122*** (0.003)	-0.077*** (0.003)
Great Power	0.963*** (0.027)	1.501*** (0.071)	1.942*** (0.068)	1.042*** (0.055)	1.363*** (0.066)
Dyadic Alliance	-0.476*** (0.029)	-1.695*** (0.098)	-0.355*** (0.081)	-0.353*** (0.043)	-0.640*** (0.059)
<i>ln(IntercapitalDistance)</i>	-0.131*** (0.015)	-0.023 (0.036)	-0.129*** (0.041)	-0.123*** (0.022)	-0.197*** (0.028)
Contiguity	2.874*** (0.039)	1.672*** (0.093)	1.859*** (0.098)	3.241*** (0.057)	3.528*** (0.080)
Capacity Ratio	-0.019** (0.008)	-0.021 (0.022)	0.111*** (0.020)	-0.057*** (0.013)	-0.169*** (0.017)
Intercept	-4.804*** (0.225)	-5.230*** (0.550)	-4.416*** (0.632)	-5.356*** (0.333)	-4.082*** (0.431)
Observations	1,955,623	126,541	115,980	865,565	847,537
Log Likelihood	-39,915.260	-4,812.858	-4,787.485	-18,945.180	-10,046.850
Akaike Inf. Crit.	79,844.520	9,639.715	9,588.971	37,904.370	20,107.690

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

# Democratic Peace and Great Power Hierarchy

- As seen in the previous table, democracy and MID are positively correlated. This means democratic peace didn't exist before WWI.
- Let's model great power supported democracies to examine if the so-called democratic peace is actually generated by great power hierarchies.

# Democratic Peace and Great Power Hierarchy

Table 2: “Great Power Supported” Democracies and Democratic Peace<sup>22</sup>

	Outcome Variable			
	1919 – 1945		1946 – 1991	
	MID	FATALMID	MID	FATALMID
Democracy	−0.026*		−0.010	−0.007
	(0.015)		(0.017)	(0.033)
GPDEM	5.258**		2.871***	7.311***
	(2.321)		(0.958)	(1.561)
GPDEM×Democracy	−1.031**		−0.384***	−1.035***
	(0.357)		(0.112)	(0.156)
Observations	46,000		311,489	311,189

Note:

\*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$



# Great Power Hierarchy as A Confounder

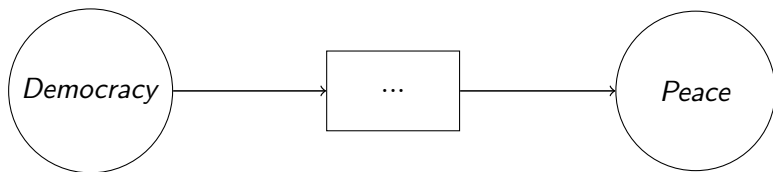


Figure 9: Causal Diagram of Common Research Design

# Great Power Hierarchy as A Confounder

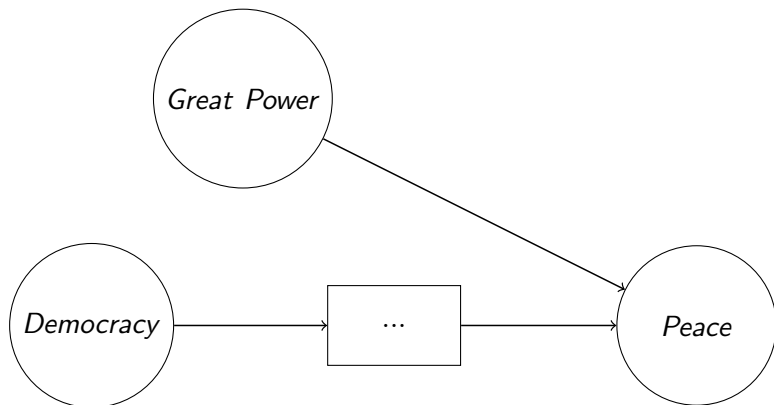


Figure 10: Causal Diagram Modeling Great Powers

# Great Power Hierarchy as A Confounder

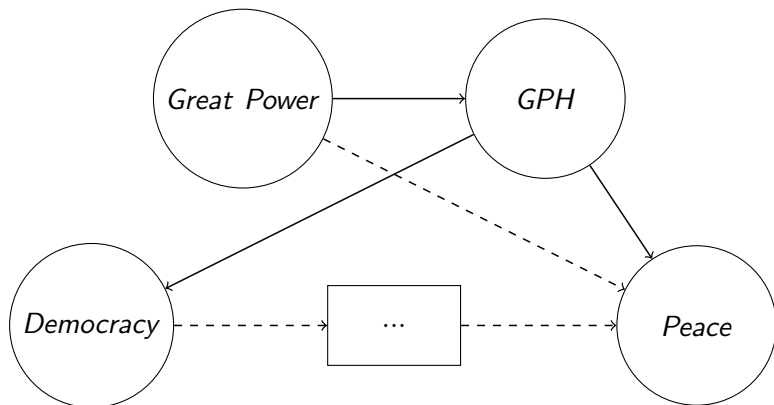


Figure 11: Causal Diagram Modeling Great Power Hierarchy

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- The phenomenon called democratic peace did *not* exist prior to WWI.
- The endogeneity of regime types confounds the statistical relationship between democracy and peace. When it is modeled, the correlation collapses. This means that democratization in the immediate aftermath of two world wars and the Cold War was managed by the great powers; they generate similar regime types and peace in their hierarchies.
- The democratic peace we know today is, in fact, *Pax Americana*.
- International politics is still constructed and operated by great powers.<sup>23</sup>
- “Novitism” and “Beyondism”?

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23. McDonald, “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes.”

## What now?

To realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian.

— Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*

Thanks!

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