Why Democratic Peace?

Bruce Russett

When democratic states were rare, the Kantian perspective had little practical import, and power politics reigned. But if the Kantian perspective is correct, recent events replacing authoritarian regimes with democratic values and institutions in much of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America[1] may have profound implications not just for governmental practices within states, but for worldwide peace among states. It may be possible in part to supersede the "realist" principles (anarchy, the security dilemma of states) that have dominated practice to the exclusion of "liberal" or "idealist" ones since at least the seventeenth century.

Politics within a democracy is seen as largely a nonzero-sum enterprise; by cooperating, all can gain something even if all do not gain equally, and the winners are restrained from crushing the losers. Indeed, today's winners may, as coalitions shift, wish tomorrow to ally with today's losers. If the conflicts degenerate to physical violence, either by those in control of the state or by insurgents, all can lose. In most international politics—the anarchy of a self-help system with no overall governing authority—these norms and practices are not the same. "Realists" remind us of the powerful norms of legitimate self-defense and the acceptability of military deterrence, norms much more extensive internationally than within democratic states. Politics among nations takes on a more zero-sum hue, with the state's sovereign existence at risk.

The principles of anarchy and self-help in a zero-sum world are most acute in "structural realist" theories of international relations. The nature of states' internal systems of government is seen as nearly irrelevant; their overall behavior is basically determined by the structure of the international system and their position in that structure. "Peace" is a fleeting condition, dependent upon deterrence and eternal vigilance. By this structural realist understanding the kind of stable peace that exists among democracies cannot last, because eventually democracies would be compelled, by the structure of the international system and their eternal security dilemma, to enter a state of war or at best of military deterrence.[2] Realism has no place for an expectation that democracies will not fight each other. To the degree we establish that peace between democracies is a fact, and are able to explain it theoretically, we build an alternative view of the world with great import for expectations and for policy. We begin with the theories.

If scholars are near consensus that democratically governed states rarely go to war with each other or even fight each other at low levels of lethal violence, this does not mean there is anything like consensus on why the phenomenon occurs. Nor can the same generalization be supported for relations among other kinds of political systems (for example, military or other dictatorships). Sharing common forms of political structure and political culture in general does not prevent war between independent states.[3] If similarity of form of government in general were enough, then we would have seen peace between the Soviet Union and China, between the Soviet Union and its formerly communist East European neighbors, and between China and Vietnam. Despite important differences in political values and organization among the communist countries, they were much more like one another in values and ideology than like the democracies or even like right-wing dictatorships. Yet war between these countries, and disputes that threatened to erupt in war, were commonplace.

Certainly some kinds of differences, if politically salient, can cause conflict. But that becomes virtually tautological unless one can specify what differences

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1. The trend to democratic government has been documented worldwide up to 1988 by Raymond Gastil, *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1988–1989* (New York: Freedom House, 1989), and later by Freedom House, i.e., R. Bruce McColm, et al., *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1991–92* (New York: Freedom House, 1992), and traced back to the eighteenth century by George Modelski, *Is America's Decline Inevitable?* (Wassenaar: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, 1988), and Ted Robert Gurr, Keith Jaggers, and Will Moore, "The Transformation of the Western State: The Growth of Democracy, Autocracy, and State Power since 1800," in Inkeles, *On Measuring Democracy*. Also see Harvey Starr, "Democratic Dominoes: Diffusion Approaches to the Spread of Democracy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 356–381; and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

2. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Relations* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.

3. Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Don't Democracies Fight One Another?* (forthcoming), suggests that certain types of oligarchies rarely have fought each other in various historical eras, but Stuart A. Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816–1965," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1992), pp. 309–341, finds no evidence for this in the modern world. Previous analyses of very broad measures of social and cultural similarity have produced mixed results. See Lewis Frye Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961); David Wilkinson, *Deadly Quarrels: Lewis F. Richardson and the Statistical Study of War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), chap. 9; Bruce Russett, *International Regions and International System: A Study in Political Ecology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), chap. 11; and R. J. Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War*, Vol. 4, *War, Power, and Peace* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1979), chap. 16.

will be salient. For sixteenth-century Europe religious differences between Catholics and Protestants provided politically salient ideological reasons for killing each other; by the twentieth century those differences were irrelevant to violent conflict save in isolated pockets like Northern Ireland. Thus it seems likely that the reasons for "democratic peace" are either rooted somehow in the nature of democracy itself, or are correlated in the modern world with the phenomenon of democracy.

Some scholars vigorously question the causal inference that democracies are at peace with each other simply because they are democratic. They point instead to other influences that are correlated with democracy and hence create a spurious relation between democracy itself and general peace between democratic states. Without going into the vast range of hypotheses about the causes of war and peace, we need to consider some of the most important ones that might specifically account for the relationship between democratic states.

Alternative Explanations

Alternative hypotheses to explain the phenomenon include the following.

TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS MAKE PEACE

The states in question are peaceful toward each other because they are bound by common ties in a network of institutions crossing national boundaries. Democracies often do share many common institutions. Analysts may emphasize the role of the European Community (EC), for example, and certainly one of the major motivations of the founders of the institutions that evolved into the EC was to bind together previously hostile states so that they would be unable to make war on each other. Some international organizations clearly have this intention. Others, not primarily addressed to war prevention, help to resolve many troublesome conflicts of interest that might feed suspicion and hostility. But states and ethnic groups typically share common institutions just because they have major interests in conflict as well as in common; institutions are supposed to provide a means to resolve those conflicts peacefully. If the common institutions cannot do so, or if one party is coerced into unwillingly sharing common institutions with another, the institutions exacerbate conflict and may become the occasion for civil war.[4] Hence the existence of common

4. Russett, *International Regions and the International System*, chap. 12, finds that, if anything, states sharing membership in international organizations are more likely to be involved in violent conflict with each other.

intergovernmental or supranational institutions cannot so plausibly be invoked as a prior reason for the absence of war. Peaceful relations must in some degree precede the institutions.

An influential variant of the institutional approach focuses on transnationalism: individual autonomy and pluralism within democratic states foster the emergence of transnational linkages and institutions—among individuals, private groups, and governmental agencies. Those linkages can serve to resolve transnational conflicts peaceably and, by forming transnational alliances into other states, inhibit their national governments from acting violently toward each other. This perspective derives from classics both of international integration theory and of bureaucratic politics and foreign policy.[5] It is not, however, completely separable from the matter of democracy. Democracies foster, and are fostered by, the pluralism arising from many independent centers of power and influence; autocracies do not. Democracies are open to many private and governmental transnational linkages; autocracies rarely are. (Recall the late and unlamented Iron Curtain.) Thus transnationalism cannot easily be considered separately from the distinction between democracies and other kinds of states. Since it is substantially correlated with the "open" institutions of democratic politics, it cannot be treated analytically or empirically as an independent cause.

DISTANCE PREVENTS WAR

Most wars are fought between physically adjacent states, thanks to their combination of capability and willingness (reasons) to fight neighbors.[6] Likewise, individuals are most likely to be murdered by friends and close relatives with whom they are are in constant contact. But until after World War II democracies

5. See, for example, Karl W. Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), and I.M. Destler, H. Sato, P. Clapp, and H. Fukui, *Managing an Alliance: The Politics of U.S.-Japanese Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1976), esp. chap. 5. A milestone in the transnational relations literature is Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), with institutions defined less as formal organizations than as "recognized patterns of practice around which expectations converge," Oran R. Young, "International Regimes: Problems of Concept Formation," *World Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (April 1980), pp. 331–356, see p. 337, and as facilitators of communication. An important look at transnational relations is Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: Norms, Transnational Relations, and the European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

6. First established by Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*, corroborated in reviews by Wilkinson, *Deadly Quarrels*, chap. 5; J. David Singer, "Accounting for International War: The State of the Discipline," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1981), pp. 1–18; and Paul Diehl, "Geography and War: A Review and Assessment of the Empirical Literature," *International Interactions*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1991), pp. 11–27, and confirmed as an independent influence by Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads."

tended to be relatively few and far between. Hence the absence of murderous quarrels between democracies was not too surprising, and may need—at least for the pre-1945 era—little further explanation. Even for much of the post-1945 period, the rarity of contiguous democratic states outside of Western Europe might explain much of the absence of violent conflict between democracies.[7] Yet the more recent one's snapshot of the international system, with many contiguous democracies in Europe and the Western Hemisphere, the less conclusive the distance argument seems.

ALLIANCES MAKE PEACE

Allies may be presumed to choose each other because of their common interests, and hence to be already peacefully inclined toward each other. Moreover, their common interests are likely to concern security against a common enemy. If so, they are not likely to fight each other. Many democracies have shared common interests in presenting a unified alliance front. NATO and the Western alliance system provide the most recent example, but in both world wars the democracies found themselves ranged together (with some nondemocracies alongside, to be sure) against the nondemocratic Central/Axis powers.[8] So of course democracies won't fight each other.

One trouble with this hypothesis is that it begs the question. Did they not fight each other because they were allied, or did they ally because they feared a common foe (and hence did not fight each other)? And if the latter, did they fear a common foe because they were united in a desire to preserve their common democratic institutions? If the latter, then democracy, not alliance, accounts for the peace among them.

A related hypothesis accounts for peace among members of multilateral alliances not by the alliance per se, but by the active policy of a dominant major power to keep peace within the alliance. Such a hegemonic power may make it very clear to the small powers that in the interest of common security against a major power rival it simply will not tolerate violence among them. Surely in

7. Samuel P. Huntington, "No Exit: The Errors of Endism," *The National Interest*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Fall 1989), pp. 3–11, expressed great skepticism about democratic peace on this ground, and even Small, Melvin, and J. David Singer, "The War-proneness of Democratic Regimes, 1816–1965." *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1976), pp. 50–69, strongly implied that their pioneering results on the absence of war between democracies were only an effect of distance.

8. Randolph Siverson and Juliann Emmons, "Birds of a Feather: Democratic Political Systems and Alliance Choices," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 285–306, confirm a generalization, stronger since World War II than before it, that democracies are more likely to ally with each other than with nondemocracies. Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), chap. 5, do not confirm that over the long period they analyze.

the Western Hemisphere (Rio Pact) and in NATO the United States played such a role, with threats to withhold economic and military assistance to the culprits.[9]

The trouble with this variant of the hypothesis, however, is that as a generalization it is empirically backward. Repeated systematic analyses, beginning with Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's,[10] affirm that allies are in general more likely to fight each other, even while still formally allied, than are nonallies. Again, the reasons are not so mysterious: the apparently "common" interests may be enforced by a big power with the capability and will to keep straying allies in the fold. Military action by the Soviet Union against Hungary in 1956 provides an example. Consistent with this interpretation, Stuart Bremer finds allied states likely to fight each other when both states are militarized.[11] But democratic allied states are different; they are not likely to have violent conflicts with each other.[12]

WEALTH MAKES PEACE

Since democracies are often wealthy, it can be hard to separate their effects. Several variants of this argument persist. One is that for politically stable, economically advanced, and rapidly growing countries the cost/benefit ratio of any war fought on or near their home territories with another advanced state looks extraordinarily unpromising. Historically many wars have been fought to acquire territory; the value of acquiring as war booty the territory of an advanced industrial country would rarely compensate for the costs of wartime destruction and the problems of pacifying newly incorporated peoples.[13] The disincentives would be magnified for highly interdependent economies, which suffer even from damage inflicted on each other's territory that destroys investments, markets, or sources of imports. Interdependence also creates groups with vested interests in continuing economic exchanges.[14]

9. Erich Weede, "Extended Deterrence by Superpower Alliance," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1983), pp. 231–254, attributed peace among states of the Western alliance system to the U.S. hegemonic role. Recently (1992), however, he has acknowledged that mutual democracy provides a better explanation.

10. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981).

11. Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads."

12. Siverson and Emmons, "Birds of a Feather"; and Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, *War and Reason*, pp. 166–167.

13. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic, 1989); and W. Geoffrey Shepherd, *The Ultimate Deterrent* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

14. Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State* (New York: Basic, 1986); and Helen Milner, *Resisting Protectionism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

The wealth-makes-peace argument is thus closely related to the one that transnational interests of trade and investment make peace. Writers as various as the nineteenth-century liberal Richard Cobden, the Marxist Karl Kautsky, and Joseph Schumpeter argued that the web of economic interdependence would promote international peace. Yet Lenin and other theorists of imperialism opined otherwise. Economic interdependence, for example between the United States and Japan, provides both glue and friction. Even where a relationship between trade and peace can be demonstrated, there may be a chicken-and-egg problem. Weak economic ties within the industrialized world during the Depression help explain the political tensions that produced World War II, but after that war peaceful relations were largely established before high levels of economic interdependence were reached in the 1970s.[15] Some systematic evidence indicates that trade diminishes political conflict, with the party receiving greater benefits from trade acting on greater incentives.[16] But if one party perceives the benefits as markedly asymmetrical against it, the effects are not pacific. Trade between rich and poor states may concentrate on raw materials, with the threat of military action by the rich state in the background or forefront. Other research points the primary causal arrow from political relations to economic ones ("trade follows the flag") rather than the other way.[17] As with other generalizations, the conclusions are often context-dependent or indeterminate.[18]

Yet another variant of the wealth-makes-peace view emphasizes growth. Many democracies have experienced fairly consistent rapid economic growth during the past half-century. Rapidly growing states may generally be less inclined to initiate conflict. The reasons are similar to those regarding the connection between wealth and lack of conflict. A special case, however, may be made regarding growth in democracies. States often engage in international conflict to divert attention and anger from domestic problems.[19] Democratic

15. Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, *World Politics: The Menu for Choice*, 4th ed. (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1992), pp. 385–392.
16. Mark Gasiorowski and Solomon Polachek, "Conflict and Interdependence: East-West Trade and Linkages in the Era of Détente," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1982), pp. 709–729; and Solomon Polachek, "Conflict and Trade," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1980), pp. 55–78.
17. Brian Pollins, "Does Trade Still Follow the Flag?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (1989), pp. 465–480; and Brian Pollins, "Conflict, Cooperation, and Commerce: The Effect of International Political Interactions on Bilateral Trade Flows," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1989), pp. 737–761.
18. Russett, *International Regions and the International System*; and Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, *War and Reason*, p. 289.
19. Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 259–288.

governments are not immune to such temptations. They often initiate international disputes during economic slowdowns or recessions, or if in economic difficulty respond more aggressively when others initiate disputes.[20] But rapidly growing democracies would not have such an incentive for conflict between them.

POLITICAL STABILITY MAKES PEACE

The diversionary effects of economic instability are related to those of political instability. States with stable and durable political systems will lack incentives to externalize domestic discontent into conflict with foreign countries. They will be even more reluctant to engage in conflict against other states that are politically stable. If they see the government of the would-be opponent as possessing substantial legitimacy, they will expect the population at large, and those sectors of society that have ensured domestic stability, to back it in international conflict.[21] Unstable governments have more to gain from scapegoating and diversion, and are more likely to do so when they confront an adversary that faces substantial domestic political problems.

If stable governments are less likely to initiate international disputes, especially against other stable governments, it is important to note that twentieth-century European and Anglo-American democracies were generally more stable—more durable and adaptable—than were nondemocracies.[22] The more years a given type of political system lasts, the better its odds of surviving another year. Perhaps the inherent stability that characterizes many democratic political systems accounts for their low rate of conflict with other democracies. In fact, the combination of variables denoted as stable democracy becomes a component of the theory to be developed and tested in this book.

Conceptually and empirically the competing explanations overlap somewhat and reinforce each other. Some of them are quite plausible. The network of

20. Charles W. Ostrom and Brian Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (1986), pp. 541–566; Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Bruce Russett and Gad Barzilai, "The Political Economy of Military Actions: Israel and the United States," in Alex Mintz, ed., *The Political Economy of Military Spending in the United States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1991); and Alex Mintz and Bruce Russett, "The Dual Economy and Israeli Use of Force," in Steve Chan and Alex Mintz, eds., *Defense, Welfare, and Growth* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 179–197.
21. Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "General Deterrence between Enduring Rivals: Testing Three Competing Models," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (1993), pp. 61–73; and Zeev Maoz, "Joining the Club of Nations: Political Development and International Conflict, 1816–1976," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1989), pp. 199–231.
22. Ted Robert Gurr, "Persistence and Change in Political Systems," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1974), pp. 1482–1504.

international institutions has been strongest in the past half-century among the democratic, allied, prosperous, and politically stable states of Western Europe. Yet counterexamples can be cited for each proffered explanation. There have not been wars even between poor but democratic states, yet World War II is an obvious example of a war pitting advanced capitalist states against each other. Argentina and Britain fought in 1982 despite their common alliance with the United States. The Soviet Union, after achieving apparent stability by the early 1920s, nevertheless fought four wars. Later we will analyze the incidence of wars and less violent conflicts between states in the post-1945 era, with proper statistical controls to test many of the above alternative hypotheses. Even when controls for physical distance, alliance, wealth, economic growth, and political stability are incorporated into the analysis, an independent explanatory role for democracy remains.[23] Nevertheless, no merely empirical relationship can be compelling without a powerful theoretical explanation. Nor can it be clear how widely, in different historical and cultural contexts, the relationship may apply. Two kinds of theories, one stressing norms and the other stressing political structures, offer explanations to which we now turn.

Democratic Norms and Culture?

We should begin with the common assertion that democracies are *inherently* more peaceful or "dovish" internationally because of the political culture favoring the peaceful resolution of disputes, or because democratic processes produce restraint by the general populace which will have to pay the price of war in blood and money.[24] Individual examples of the operation of these factors can easily be found. Over the course of a long war democratic governments may experience seriously eroding domestic support for the war effort, and may feel constrained, if they do go to war, to pursue strategies designed to minimize their own costs, especially in casualties. (U.S. strategy against Iraq in 1991 immediately comes to mind.)

23. Also see Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads," and Stuart A. Bremer, "Democracy and Militarized Interstate Conflict, 1816–1965," *International Interactions*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1993), pp. 231–250, for the effect of democracy even with other controls for relative power, great power status, hegemony, and militarization.

24. Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing, 1955); and Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

This is a strong assertion, however, and, overall, the evidence for it as a generalization is not very compelling.[25] It ignores the evidence for the familiar "rally 'round the flag effect" typically induced by the threat or use of force by democracies against other countries. Hostility especially to certain kinds of foreigners—those seen as governed autocratically—can often be mobilized to support military actions by democracies.[26] Elites can even feel impelled by popular pressures to act militarily.[27] Also, so long as this explanation focuses on the characteristics of single states, it cannot explain the consistent evidence that democracies are about as war-prone and disputatious in general (not toward other democracies) as are other kinds of states.[28] Nor can it explain the pattern of nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperialism by democracies.[29] And it would have us believe that the United States was regularly on the defensive, rarely on the offensive, during the Cold War. Though there are elements of plausibility in the argument that democracies are inherently peaceful, it contains too many holes, and is accompanied by too many exceptions, to be usable as a major theoretical building block.

A more plausible theoretical strain, however, yields a more limited assumption. It focuses on powerful norms within democratic states against the use of lethal force under certain conditions—namely, "dovishness" in relations between democracies, though not necessarily in their relations with other kinds of states. Several authors offer a perspective emphasizing social diversity, perceptions of individual rights, overlapping group memberships, cross-pressures, shifting coalitions, expectations of limited government, and toleration of dissent by a presumably loyal opposition. The basic norm of democratic theory is that disputes can be resolved without force through democratic political

25. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, *War and Reason*, p. 155, find that by their measure the mean domestic costs to democracies of using force are greater than for nondemocracies, but the difference is small. Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads," and Bremer, "Democracy and Militarized Interstate Conflict," suggests a mixed picture; i.e., democracies are less likely to originate wars with all kinds of states, but more likely to join wars being fought by other states.

26. Nehemia Geva, Karl DeRouen, and Alex Mintz, "The Political Incentive Explanation of the 'Democratic Peace' Phenomenon: Evidence from Experimental Research," *International Interactions*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1993), pp. 215–229; and Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, "Why Don't Democracies Fight Each Other? An Experimental Assessment of the 'Political Incentive' Explanation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1993).

27. Russett, *Controlling the Sword*, chap. 2.

28. Maoz and Abdolali, "Regime Types and International Conflict"; Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads"; and Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, ch. 4.

29. On Snyder's effort, *Myths of Empire*, see Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 177–198.

processes that in some balance ensure both majority rule and minority rights. A norm of equality operates both as voting equality and certain egalitarian rights to human dignity. Democratic government rests on the consent of the governed, but justice demands that consent not be abused. Resort to organized lethal violence, or the threat of it, is considered illegitimate, and unnecessary to secure one's "legitimate" rights. Dissent within broad limits by a loyal opposition is expected and even needed for enlightened policy-making, and the opposition's basic loyalty to the system is to be assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.[30]

All participants in the political process are expected to share these norms. Even though all these images may be founded to a large extent on myth as well as on reality, they may operate as powerful restraints on violence between such systems. In practice the norms do sometimes break down, but the normative restraints on violent behavior—by state and citizens—are fully as important as the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force in keeping incidents of the organized use of force rare. The norms themselves may be more important than any particular institutional structure (two-party/multiparty, republican/parliamentary) or formal constitutional provision. If institutions precede the development of norms in the polity, the basis for restraint is likely to be less secure.

By this hypothesis, the *culture, perceptions, and practices* that permit compromise and the peaceful resolution of conflicts without the threat of violence within countries come to apply across national boundaries toward other democratic countries. In short, if people in a democracy perceive themselves as autonomous, self-governing people who share norms of live-and-let-live, they will respect the rights of others to self-determination if those others are also perceived as self-governing and hence not easily led into aggressive foreign policies by a self-serving elite. The same structures and behaviors that "we" assume will limit our aggression, both internally and externally, may be expected similarly to limit similarly governed people in other polities. Those who claim the principle of self-determination for themselves are expected to extend it to others. Within a transnational democratic culture, as within a democratic nation, others are seen as possessing rights and exercising those rights in a spirit of enlightened self-interest. Acknowledgment of those rights allows us to mitigate our fears that they will try to dominate us. That acknowledgment

30. Most of the authors cited in "The Fact of Democratic Peace," note 25 write predominantly from this perspective.

also prevents us from wishing to dominate them; a norm that it would be wrong to do so in effect raises the "costs" to us of doing so.

By contrast, these restraints do not apply toward a country governed by very different and nondemocratic principles. According to democratic norms, authoritarian states do not rest on the proper consent of the governed, and thus they cannot properly represent the will of their peoples—if they did, they would not need to rule through undemocratic, authoritarian institutions. Rulers who control their own people by such means, who do not behave in a just way that respects their own people's rights to self-determination, cannot be expected to behave better toward peoples outside their states. "Because nonliberal governments are in a state of aggression with their own people, their foreign relations become for liberal governments deeply suspect. In short, fellow liberals benefit from a presumption of amity; nonliberals suffer from a presumption of enmity."[31] The essence of America's Cold War ideology was that it had no quarrel with the Russian people, but only with the atheistic communist elites who repressed them. A vision of the other people as not in self-governing control of their own destiny justified a hostile policy. Authoritarian states are expected to aggress against others if given the power and the opportunity. By this reasoning, democracies must be eternally vigilant and may even need to engage in defensively motivated war or preemptive action anticipating an immediate attack.

Whereas wars against other democratic states are neither expected nor considered legitimate, wars against authoritarian states may often be both. Thus an international system composed of both democratic and authoritarian states will include both zones of peace (actual and expected, among the democracies) and zones of war or at best deterrence between democratic and authoritarian states. And by this reasoning democracies may fight wars and other lethal conflicts as often as authoritarian states do—which is what most of the systematic empirical evidence indicates. They just will not fight each other.

The presumption of enmity from and toward nondemocracies was exemplified by American determination to root out aggressive fascism and Nazism in Japan and Germany after World War II, and to establish the basis for democratic government there. It took more dubious forms in many Cold War interventions (including covert operations, which we shall consider later) and in the 1989 invasion of Panama. Elihu Root's wartime rhetoric, in his presiden-

31. Doyle, Michael W. "Liberalism and World Politics." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (December 1986), pp. 1151–1169.

tial address to the American Society of International Law, expressed the tradition vividly:

> So long as military autocracy continues, democracy is not safe from attacks, which are certain to come, and certain to find it unprepared. The conflict is inevitable and universal; and it is *à l'outrance*. To be safe democracy must kill its enemy when it can and where it can. The world can not be half democratic and half autocratic. It must be all democratic or all Prussian. There can be no compromise. If it is all Prussian, there can be no real international law. If it is all democratic, international law honored and observed may well be expected as a natural development of the principles which make democratic self-government possible.[32]

These assumptions lead to the following propositions about democracies' external relations. The norms of regulated political competition, compromise solutions to political conflicts, and peaceful transfer of power are externalized by democracies in their dealing with other national actors in world politics. On the other hand, nondemocracies may not externalize these norms. Hence, when two democracies come into a conflict of interest, they are able to apply democratic norms in their interaction, and these norms prevent most conflicts from mounting to the threat or use of military force. If they do go that far, at least they will not go to all-out war. By contrast, when a democracy comes into conflict with a nondemocracy, it will not expect the nondemocratic state to be restrained by those norms. It may feel obliged to adapt to the harsher norms of international conduct of the latter, lest it be exploited or eliminated by the nondemocratic state that takes advantage of the inherent moderation of democracies. Similarly, conflict between nondemocracies may be dominated by the norm of forceful conduct and search for decisive (noncompromise) outcome or elimination of the adversary.

Robert Axelrod's work on the evolution of cooperation and norms shows how norms of behavior depend heavily on the environment in which they are applied.[33] When a player employing a conditionally cooperative strategy like tit-for-tat is confronted by someone playing a consistently noncooperative

32. Elihu Root, "The Effect of Democracy on International Law," presidential address to the annual meeting of the American Society of International Law, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1917.
33. Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic, 1984); Robert Axelrod, "An Evolutionary Theory of Norms," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (December 1986), pp. 1095–1112; also Roy Behr, "Nice Guys Finish Last . . . Sometimes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1980), pp. 289–300; and Raymond Dacey and Norman Pendergraft, "The Optimality of Tit-for-tat," *International Interactions*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1988), pp. 45–64.

strategy, noncooperation dominates. Short of teaching cooperation to "meanies"—which takes a long time—noncooperative strategies typically force cooperative strategies to become noncooperative.[34]

Legal systems in democratic states seem to make distinctions between democratic and authoritarian states when deciding whether to enforce in their own courts the laws of other nations. Other democratic states are recognized as within a "zone of law," a legal community defined by various institutional and ideological similarities. Courts in democracies share enough common values to recognize and enforce each other's law in accord with pluralist principles of tolerance and reciprocity. They do not, however, recognize the legal systems of nondemocratic states as equal partners; they are seen as lacking the political autonomy of democratic legal systems, and hence not appropriate as providing norms for conflict resolution.[35]

Governments and political institutions can change rapidly after a revolution, but norms take time to develop. Laws can change faster than the practices in which norms are embedded. Formal norms such as one of nonrecourse to war can be written into a constitution, but become effective only with the repeated practice of bargaining and conciliation.[36] Thus if violent conflicts between democracies do occur, we would expect them to take place between democratic states that are relatively young in terms of the tenure of the democratic regime. That is, they would occur between states in at least one of which democratic norms have not matured to a degree that is expressed in moderate and dependable strategies of peaceful conflict management. Democratic governments in which democratic norms are not yet fully developed are likely to be unstable, or to be perceived by other states as unstable, so they may be unable to practice norms of democratic conflict resolution internationally. Equally important, the democratic states with whom they develop conflicts of interest may not perceive them as dependable in their practices. Newness and instability cloud others' perceptions.

Of course, democracies have not fought wars only out of motivations of self-defense, however broadly one may define self-defense to include anticipation of others' aggression or to include "extended deterrence" for the defense

34. I owe this argument to Zeev Maoz.
35. Anne-Marie Burley, "Law among Liberal States: Liberal Internationalism and Act of State Doctrine," *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 92, No. 8 (1992), pp. 1907–1996.
36. Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

of allies and other interests. Many of them have also fought imperialist wars to acquire or hold colonies, or to retain control of states formally independent but within their spheres of influence. Here is another aspect of perception and misperception, of cases where democracies have fought against people who on one ground or another could be characterized as not self-governing.

The nineteenth-century objects of colonial expansion were peoples who in most instances were outside the European state system. They were in most instances not people with white skins, and whose institutions of government did not conform to the Western democratic institutional forms of their colonizers. Europeans' ethnocentric views of those peoples carried the *assumption* that they did not have institutions of self-government. Not only were they available for imperial aggrandizement, they could be considered candidates for betterment and even "liberation"—the white man's burden, or *mission civilatrice*. They could be brought the benefits not only of modern material civilization, but of Western principles of self-government. If they did not have such institutions already, then by definition they were already being exploited and repressed. Their governments or tribal leaders could not, in this ethnocentric view, be just or consensual, and thus one need have few compunctions about conquering these legitimate candidates for "liberal" imperialism.[37] Later, when Western forms of self-government did begin to take root on a local basis in many of the colonies, the extremes of pseudo-Darwinian racism lost their legitimacy. Decolonization came not only because the colonial governments lost the power to retain their colonies, but because in many cases they lost confidence in their normative right to rule.

We can now summarize all this discussion about restraints on violent conflict among democracies in a set of propositions as follows.

The Cultural/Normative Model

1. In relations with other states, decisionmakers (whether they be few or many) will try to follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize their domestic political processes.
2. They will expect decisionmakers in other states likewise to follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize those other states' domestic political processes.

37. As shown in chap. 5 of Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, in fact "preindustrial" peoples often had participatory forms of government that shared many democratic attributes.

A. Violent conflicts between democracies will be rare because:

3. In democracies, the relevant decisionmakers expect to be able to resolve conflicts by compromise and nonviolence, respecting the rights and continued existence of opponents.
4. Therefore democracies will follow norms of peaceful conflict resolution with other democracies, and will expect other democracies to do so with them.
5. The more stable the democracy, the more will democratic norms govern its behavior with other democracies, and the more will other democracies expect democratic norms to govern its international behavior.
6. If violent conflicts between democracies do occur, at least one of the democracies is likely to be politically unstable.

B. Violent conflicts between nondemocracies, and between democracies and nondemocracies, will be more frequent because:

7. In nondemocracies, decisionmakers use, and may expect their opponents to use, violence and the threat of violence to resolve conflict as part of their domestic political processes.
8. Therefore nondemocracies may use violence and the threat of violence in conflicts with other states, and other states may expect them to use violence and the threat of violence in such conflicts.
9. Democratic norms can be more easily exploited to force concessions than can nondemocratic ones; to avoid exploitation democracies may adopt nondemocratic norms in dealing with nondemocracies.

The numbered propositions are part of the deductive structure, and whereas it will be useful further to illustrate their application and plausibility, we will not subject most of them to rigorous empirical testing. The basic empirical statements A and B, however, will be so tested, in the form that *violent conflicts between democracies should be observed much less frequently than between democracies and nondemocracies*. Indeed, because of the susceptibility of democratic norms to exploitation, we may well find *violent conflicts between democracies and at least some kinds of nondemocracies to be more frequent than would be expected* if conflicts were distributed around the international system totally by chance. Proposition 6, that *if violent conflicts do arise between democracies at least one of the democracies is likely to be politically unstable*, also is empirically testable. As such, it can provide some extra empirical content to the basic hypothesis about the relative frequency of violent conflict of democracies with other democracies and with nondemocracies.

Propositions 5 and 6 therefore incorporate into the cultural/normative theoretical structure the point about political stability that was initially treated as one of several alternative perspectives on the phenomenon of peace between democracies. They do not yet, however, indicate just why force might be used when one democracy in a pair is politically unstable.

As noted in the discussion about the possible role of economic growth or its absence, increasing evidence is accumulating that democracies are more likely to use or threaten to use military force, in general, when the economy has been doing badly. Most of the studies cited there also indicate that democracies are more likely to use or threaten to use military force in the year or months immediately preceding an election.[38] The motivation, of diverting hostility toward foreigners and of producing a "rally 'round the flag" effect for the party in power, is similar. If we expand the notion of political instability to include domestic political threats to the government because of its economic policy shortcomings, or competition in a close election, this gives us a temporal context for the possible use of military force by democracies. It suggests that the "unstable" state will initiate, or escalate, the use of force in a diplomatic dispute. But it does not tell us against whom it may direct that force.

To do that, we can elaborate the hypothesis as suggesting that the threat or use of *force will be directed against states that a democracy perceives as politically unstable.* At least two possible reasons for this come to mind: The state may see an unstable democratic regime as under these political pressures, and hence as a real danger needing to be forcibly constrained or deterred. Alternatively, an unstable democratic regime may seem a publicly more legitimate and acceptable object for diverting hostility and provoking a rally effect. That is, the government may truly feel itself threatened in some degree by such a regime, or, if not, it may believe that the public will at least accept perception of a threat. If the adversary is perceived as a stable democracy, by contrast, the cultural/normative argument suggests little political benefit in trying to invoke a rally against it. Thus instability may work both as encouraging the use or threat of force by the "unstable" regime, and in selecting an "unstable" object for the exercise of force.

Empirically it will be very difficult to sort out the mechanism systematically. Even in the 1946–86 period with many democracies in the international system,

38. They are not, however, more likely just before elections to engage in the full-scale use of military force known as war; if anything they are more likely to go to war during the year just after the election has passed. See Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Election Cycles and War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (1991), pp. 212–244.

Table 1.2 showed only fourteen militarized disputes between democracies. In their manifestation of threat or use of force all of them were extremely localized, typically an air incursion or shelling in the general direction of a boat lasting a single day. None were reciprocated uses of military force, in which the attacked party made any military reprisal, and nearly all of them were bloodless. Most could plausibly have been unauthorized acts by local commanders. In most instances it is hard to show that they were deliberate and considered governmental acts of the sort plausibly included under the rubric of politically motivated incidents just discussed. And while one can identify who actually used force or first threatened to use it, it is not so easy to say which side played the greater role in provoking the incident. Thus one should not expect to find a systematic pattern of motivation in such low-level incidents. In near-wars, however—where the level of violence may be greater, and the degree of central control and deliberate act may be stronger—we may find some such evidence.

We should also, by extension, expect such events to occur *between states where one or both states' status as a democracy leaves some basis for doubt*. Perceptions of instability may be based on the recency and immaturity of experience with democratic processes and norms: a new democracy will not yet have developed wide experience in practices of democratic conflict resolution. Perceptions of instability may also be based on a high degree of violent opposition to the democratic government: a democracy under siege of domestic terrorism, insurgency, or civil war is one in which the ostensible norms of peaceful conflict resolution simply are not working well. If a government's practice of democratic forms of government is very recent and subject to violent domestic challenge, or its practice of democracy is incomplete or imperfect by the standards of the day, it may be imperfectly constrained by the norms of democratic government that are supposed to keep conflict nonviolent. Or uncertainty about the commitment to democratic norms by the state with which one has a conflict of interest may lead to perceptions and expectations that it will practice those norms imperfectly.

The list of numbered propositions above often implies a dichotomy between democratic and nondemocratic states. But in the real world such a dichotomy masks degrees of democratic practice. Therefore if we find militarized disputes between democracies we should typically find that one party or both is only recently democratic, is subject to violent domestic challenge, or is toward the center of a democratic to nondemocratic continuum. We should also, in a revised version of proposition 6, look for evidence that one party, correctly or not, *perceives* the other as not really democratic.

Structural and Institutional Constraints?

As with the normative and cultural argument, it is best to avoid assuming that democracies are dovish or peaceful in all their relations. Rather, a plausible argument can be constructed on the strategic principles of rational action; that is, about how states, in interactions of threat and bargaining, behave in anticipation of how their bargaining adversaries will behave. Decisionmakers develop images of the government and public opinion of other countries. They regard some governments or peoples as slow to fight, or as ready and eager to do so. In forming these images leaders look for various cues: in other leaders' and countries' past behavior in diplomatic or military disputes, and in other countries' form of government. Perhaps other governments will see a democracy as culturally (normatively) dovish on the above grounds, but Kant's own view argued that *institutional constraints*—a structure of division of powers, checks and balances—would make it difficult for democratic leaders to move their countries into war.

Democracies are constrained in going to war by the need to ensure broad popular support, manifested in various institutions of government. Leaders must mobilize public opinion to obtain legitimacy for their actions. Bureaucracies, the legislature, and private interest groups often incorporated in conceptualizations of the "state" must acquiesce. The nature and mix of institutions vary in different kinds of states (for example, "strong" states and "weak" states, parliamentary and presidential systems) but it is complex. Popular support in a democracy can be built by rhetoric and exhortation, but not readily compelled.

The complexity of the mobilization process means that leaders will not readily embark on an effort to prepare the country for war unless they are confident they can demonstrate a favorable ratio of costs and benefits to be achieved, at acceptable risk.[39] Moreover, the complexity of the process requires time for mobilization, as the leaders of various institutions are convinced and formal approval is obtained. Not only may it take longer for democracies to

39. David Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (1992), pp. 24–37, (also Mark R. Brawley, "Regime Types, Markets and War: The Importance of Pervasive Rents in Foreign Policy," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, April 1992) makes a structural argument that democracies with broad franchises are inherently less imperialistic than are autocratic states, and while democracies may fight to resist autocracies, the conjuncture of two democracies with low imperialist drive makes them unlikely to fight each other. His empirical test is indirect, however, of a derived proposition that democracies will win wars in which they engage more often than will

gear up for war, the process is immensely more public than in an authoritarian state. Democratic governments can respond to sudden attack by using emergency powers, and by the same powers can even strike preemptively in crisis. But in normal times they are ill suited to launching surprise attacks.[40] Apparently for these reasons, major-power democracies seem never to have launched preventive war (a deliberate attack not under immediate provocation) against another major power.[41] The greater the scale, cost, and risk of using violence, the more effort must be devoted to preparations in public, and of the public.

Even if two states were totally ignorant of each other's form of government, structural delays in the process of mobilization for war in both states would provide time to elapse for negotiation and other means of peaceful conflict resolution. Yet perceptions matter here too. If another nation's leaders regard a state as democratic, they will anticipate a difficult and lengthy process before the democracy is likely to use significant military force against them. They will expect an opportunity to reach a negotiated settlement if they wish to achieve such a settlement. Perhaps most importantly, a democracy will not fear a surprise attack by another democracy, and thus need not cut short the negotiating process or launch a preemptive strike in anticipation of surprise attack.

If democratic leaders generally consider other democracies to be reluctant and slow to fight because of institutional constraints (and possibly because of a general aversion of the people to war), they will not fear being attacked by another democracy. Two democratic states—each constrained from going to war and anticipating the other to be so inhibited—likely will settle their conflicts short of war. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman provide a deductive argument that two such states, each with perfect information about the other's constraints, will always settle their conflicts by negotiation or by retaining the status quo.[42] In the real world perfect information is lacking, but the presence of democratic institutions provides a visible and generally correct signal of "practical dovishness"—restraints on war in the form of institutional

autocracies. The latter can alternatively be attributed to democracies' greater ability to motivate their citizens and to superior information-processing capability. See Russett, *Controlling the Sword*, p. 150.

40. Ben Hunt has suggested, in a personal communication, that the degree of elites' control by public opinion may be the key variable, and that, while it is highly correlated with democracy, the correlation is not perfect—some democracies' elites may be less constrained than are others by public opinion, and some autocracies more so than others.

41. Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?" *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992), pp. 235–269.

42. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, *War and Reason*, chap. 4.

constraint if not of inherent disposition. Reading that sign, democracies will rarely if ever go to war with each other.

Leaders of nondemocratic states may also anticipate that a democratic country will be slow to go to war. But if they are themselves aggressive, they may be more likely to threaten or bully a democracy to make concessions. In turn, that would raise the threshold of provocation facing the democracy, and perhaps overcome its initial inhibition against fighting. That would explain why the overall frequency of war fighting by democracies is no different from that of nondemocratic states.[43] But leaders of two nondemocratic states, neither encumbered by powerful structural constraints, are more likely than two democratic states to escalate to war.

This argument can be summarized as follows.

The Structural/Institutional Model:

A. Violent conflicts between democracies will be infrequent because:

1. In democracies, the constraints of checks and balances, division of power, and need for public debate to enlist widespread support will slow decisions to use large-scale violence and reduce the likelihood that such decisions will be made.
2. Leaders of other states will perceive leaders of democracies as so constrained.
3. Thus leaders of democracies will expect, in conflicts with other democracies, time for processes of international conflict resolution to operate, and they will not fear surprise attack.

B. Violent conflicts between nondemocracies, and between democracies and nondemocracies, will be frequent because:

43. In chapter 5 of *War and Reason*, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman present this hypothesis and some confirming evidence. (Similar reasoning goes back at least to Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942], pp. 842–845; and Harvey Starr, "Democracy and War: Choice, Learning, and Security Communities," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 29, No. 2 [1992], pp. 207–213, Harvey Starr, "Why Don't Democracies Fight One Another? Evaluating the Theory-Findings Feedback Loop," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, No. 4 [Spring 1992], pp. 41–59, extends the insight that forms of government signal a state's likely international behavior.) Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman reject (pp. 152–155) the argument that "the political culture of democracies leads to an abhorrence of violence" in general, and build their theory on the assumption that democratic leaders "face a greater political cost for using force." In context they treat this as an institutional constraint, though in a personal communication Bueno de Mesquita suggested that democratic norms may similarly raise the costs.

4. Leaders of nondemocracies are not constrained as leaders of democracies are, so they can more easily, rapidly, and secretly initiate large-scale violence.
5. Leaders of states (democracies and nondemocracies) in conflict with nondemocracies may initiate violence rather than risk surprise attack.
6. Perceiving that leaders of democracies will be constrained, leaders of nondemocracies may press democracies to make greater concessions over issues in conflict.
7. Democracies may initiate large-scale violence with nondemocracies rather than make the greater concessions demanded.

Distinguishing the Explanations

The cultural/normative and institutional/structural explanations are not neatly separable. Institutions depend on norms and procedures. For example, stability, which we treated as a measure of normative acceptance of democratic processes, is also an institutional constraint if political structures are not subject to overthrow. States may also consider the dominant norms in other states, as well as their institutions, as signals; thus both explanations also depend in part on perceptions. Great emphasis on reading signals of the other's intention, however, slights the importance of self-constraint. Institutions may slow or obstruct one's own ability to fight. Perhaps more importantly, a norm that it is somehow not "right" to fight another democracy raises the moral and political cost, and thus limits one's own willingness to do so. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman neglect this,[44] as well as the opposition a democratic government might find among its own population against fighting another *democratic government*.[45] Within democracies, structural impediments to using force are less strong than within autocracies; normative restraints must bear the load. So we should not assume that normative constraints are unimportant in relations between democracies. Both norms and institutions may contribute to the phenomenon of peace between democracies; they are somewhat complementary and overlapping. But they are also in some degree distinctive and competing explanations, allowing us to look for greater impact of one or another in various contexts.

Other influences, such as trade and the network of international law and organizations as suggested by Kant, likely also play a role in directly supple-

44. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, *War and Reason*.
45. Geva, DeRouen, and Mintz, "The Political Incentive Explanation."

menting and strengthening that of democracy. Further elaboration of the theoretical arguments is probably needed. Certainly, detailed empirical work is necessary on how institutions operate, and on how perceptions toward other countries evolve, so as to make it possible to weigh the relative power of institutional and normative explanations. So too is the creation and application of systematic empirical tests to differentiate between the two kinds of explanations for violence in the modern interstate system.

Another way of differentiating between the two is to look for other hypotheses that may be derived from either, and tested. One such hypothesis for the normative model is represented in work by William Dixon.[46] He postulates that *democracies, with norms of using third-party intervention for peaceful and non-coercive resolution of conflicts internally, will carry those norms into management of their international conflicts with other democracies.* Dixon then looks at how international conflicts have been settled in the post-World War II era. Not only does he confirm our results from Table 1.2 that conflicts between democracies are much less likely to escalate to lethal violence and to be settled peacefully, but he finds that they are much more likely to be settled by some means of third-party conflict management, such as the use of good offices, mediation, and intervention. Also, all conflicts between democracies were ended either by agreement or by stalemate; none terminated in a settlement imposed by one of them or by a third party. Such a pattern is much more readily explicable by common norms than by characteristics of internal democratic institutions acting as constraint. Russell Leng similarly infers support for the normative argument from evidence that in interstate crises democracies are much more likely to use strategies of reciprocating the escalatory or de-escalatory moves of other states than are authoritarian regimes.[47] He argues that reciprocation is an engrained democratic norm, as contrasted with behavior like bullying, appeasing, or stonewalling.

Another test can be derived from the patterns of strategic interaction as discussed in the model of structural constraints. By that argument, two democracies engaged in a conflictual bargaining process with each other can reasonably expect each other not to escalate the dispute to the point of war or serious

46. William Dixon, "Democracy and the Management of International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1993), pp. 42–68; also William Dixon, "Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1992.
47. Russell Leng, "Reciprocating Influence Strategies and Success in Interstate Crisis Bargaining," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1993), pp. 3–41.

violence. Therefore, many bargaining models predict there would be few strategic restraints on escalating the conflict up to, but not beyond, the point of an exchange of lethal violence. In fact, each state might have strong incentives to go that far for the purpose of showing resolve; perhaps even escalating to the first (limited) use of force in confidence that the other would be unlikely to reply in any substantial military manner. Such behavior is implicit in the bargaining "game" of chicken, which is widely applied to crisis negotiation.[48] This reasoning, therefore, leads to the prediction that disputes between democracies should commonly escalate to the display and even limited use of force, though not to war. But as Table 1.2 showed, that is not the case. Democracy/democracy pairs are less likely to enter into militarized disputes at all than are other pairs of states, and less likely to escalate them at any level up the escalation ladder—not just at the top to war.[49]

Rather, this suggests that *to use or threaten to use force is not usually normatively acceptable behavior in disputes between democracies*, even in the form of symbolic, ritualized bargaining behavior. Relations between democracies therefore fit into the category of "stable peace"[50] or a "security community"[51] in which states not only do not fight each other, they do not expect to fight each other, or significantly prepare to fight each other. In such relationships disputes are routinely settled without recourse to threat and military deterrence. Dependent as the definition of security community has been on expectations, it has been a difficult phenomenon to observe reliably; here, in the relative absence of militarized dispute and escalation, is a reasonably objective measure.

The Future of the Democratic Peace

Compared with their actions toward other kinds of states, democracies in the modern world are unlikely to engage in militarized disputes with each other.

48. Steven J. Brams and D. Marc Kilgour, *Game Theory and National Security* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Steven J. Brams, *Negotiation Games: Applying Game Theory to Bargaining and Arbitration* (London: Routledge, 1990); and William Poundstone, *Prisoner's Dilemma* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
49. James Fearon, "Audience Costs, Learning, and the Escalation of International Disputes," manuscript, Political Science Department, University of Chicago, 1992, argues from the structural tradition that escalation represents a costly signal especially for democratic leaders who risk being forced to back down in front of their powerful domestic audience. If so, disputes between democracies should indeed show less escalation, but the initiation of disputes between democracies would not necessarily be less frequent.
50. Kenneth Boulding, *Stable Peace* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).
51. Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*.

When they do get into disputes with each other, they are less likely to let the disputes escalate. They rarely fight each other even at low levels of lethal violence, and never (or almost never) go to war against each other. They are not in any of these respects markedly more peaceful toward authoritarian states than authoritarian states are toward each other. But democracies' relatively peaceful relations toward each other are well established, and are not spuriously caused by some other influence such as sharing high levels of wealth or rapid economic growth or ties of alliance. Peace among democracies was not maintained simply by pressure from a common adversary in the Cold War, and it is outlasting that threat. The more democratic each state is, the more peaceful their relations are likely to be.

The phenomenon of democratic peace can be explained by the pervasiveness of normative restraints on conflict between democracies. That explanation extends to the international arena the cultural norms of live-and-let-live and peaceful conflict resolution that operate within democracies. The phenomenon of democratic peace can also be explained by the role of structural restraints on democracies' decisions to go to war. Those restraints ensure that in a conflict of interest with a democracy another state can expect ample time for conflict-resolution processes to be effective, and virtually no risk of incurring surprise attack.

Evidence supports both of these explanatory models. The debate between their proponents is not settled, nor should it be seen entirely as a debate. They are not fully separable in theory or in practice. Both make a contribution, and the two kinds of influences reinforce each other to produce the phenomenon of democratic peace.

Nevertheless, some evidence suggests that the normative model is the more powerful. Norms, as measured by the absence of violence in domestic politics and the duration of democratic regimes, were somewhat more strongly associated with peace between democracies than was our measure of structural/institutional constraints. When democracies do have serious diplomatic disputes, they are unlikely to escalate them—as a normative explanation would predict, contrary to common structural models. They are more likely to reciprocate each other's behavior, to accept third party mediation or good offices in settling disputes, and to settle disputes peacefully. The spread of democratic norms and practices in the world, if consolidated, should reduce the frequency of violent conflict and war. Where normative restraints are insufficient, institutionalized restraints on foreign policy decision-making may be a second-best influence. Yet in democracies with institutional constraints but weak normative

ones (due to recency of democracy, or violence or instability), charismatic or adventurous leaders may override the institutional limits.

In the world of ancient Greece the institutions that could be expected to restrain the resort to force by democracies were almost entirely lacking, and the norms that democracies should not fight each other were nascent and weak. But there was some evidence of restraint attributable to norms. In most of the wars that did occur between democracies, perception of political instability in the adversary state, and misperception of its democratic nature, played an important role in instigating the war.

Nonindustrial societies, as studied by anthropologists, also provide an opportunity to look for restraints on warfare among democratically organized polities that typically lack the institutional constraints of a modern state. Yet despite that absence, democratically organized units evince significantly less warfare with each other than do nondemocratically organized units. Moreover, political stability (or its absence) again proves an important influence on the resort to violence by those democratically organized units. These findings, more than those about ancient Greece, support the proposition that democracies are in general relatively peaceful toward each other. Though the relationship is not quite so strong and consistent as that which emerges in the modern international system, to find it at all in nonindustrial societies shows that the phenomenon of democratic peace is not limited to contemporary Western democracies.

Strengthening Democracy and Its Norms

The literature on the "prerequisites" of democracy is vast, and much of it is deeply flawed—ethnocentric and too enamoured of economic preconditions. Yet some things have been learned, and stated with some modesty, in recent analyses. Among several good efforts,[52] the most prominent may be Samuel Huntington's book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Cen-*

52. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics;* Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989); Giuseppe DiPalma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Evelyne Huber, Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and also the review in Graham T. Allison and Robert P. Beschel, "Can the United States Promote Democracy?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 107, No. 1 (1992), pp. 81–98.

tury.[53] Since it reviews most of the earlier literature a summary of its conclusions should suffice. Nor do its conclusions depart markedly from those of most other recent analyses. Huntington begins by identifying five changes in the world that played significant parts in *producing* the latest wave of recent transitions to democracy: (1) deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian governments unable to cope with military defeat and economic failure; (2) economic growth that has raised living standards, educational levels, and urbanization—raising expectations and the ability to express them; (3) changes in religious institutions that made them less defenders of the status quo than opponents of governmental authoritarianism; (4) changes in the policies of other states and international organizations, to promote human rights and democracy; and (5) "snowballing" or demonstration effects, enhanced by international communication, as transitions to democracy in some states served as models for their neighbors.

Later in the book, Huntington lists conditions that have favored or are favoring the *consolidation* of new democracies: (1) experience of a previous effort at democratization, even if it failed; (2) a high level of economic development; (3) a favorable international political environment, with outside assistance; (4) early timing of the transition to democracy, relative to a worldwide "wave," indicating that the drive to democracy derived primarily from indigenous rather than exogenous influences; (5) experience of a relatively peaceful rather than violent transition; and (6) the number and severity of the problems confronted.[54]

Such lists do not lead to simple diagnosis or prescription, with "necessary" or "sufficient" conditions, but they do offer a helpful focus for discussion. Most importantly, they single out both internal and external influences on the process of democratization. Internal influences are certainly prominent, especially in the consolidation list. It is hard to imagine a successful consolidation of democracy without many or most of them. But the list of international conditions is impressive also. Favorable international conditions may not be essential (either alone or in combination) in every case, but they can make a difference, and sometimes a crucial one when the internal influences are mixed. The United States and its allies have made a difference—for the defeated Axis powers after World War II, and sometimes in other cases since that time.

53. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp. 45–46.
54. Ibid., pp. 270–279.

Currently, with economic conditions so bad in much of the Third World, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, and the consequent dangers to the legitimacy of new democratic governments, external assistance—technical and financial—is especially important. Rather small amounts—but more than have been forthcoming to date—could make a difference. As a stick, aid can surely be denied to governments that regularly violate human rights, for example of ethnic minorities. Clear anti-democratic acts, such as a military coup or an aborted election, can be punished by suspending aid. As to the carrot of extending aid on a conditional basis, broader goals of developing democratic institutions require creation of a civil society, and are less easily made conditional. Recipients may see multilateral aid, with conditions of democratic reform attached, as a less blatant invasion of their sovereignty than aid from a single country.[55] Without exaggerating the prospects for success, it would be a terrible loss if the United States and other rich democracies did not make serious efforts. It would be a loss, as the Bush-Baker rhetoric claims, to themselves as well as to the peoples of the struggling democracies.

A special complication, one hardly unique to the current era but felt acutely now, is nationalism in the quilt of ethnicities left behind from the former Soviet Empire. Nationalism, with its combination of inclusion and exclusion, readily conflicts with the quasi-universalistic ethos of "democracies don't fight each other." Hatreds, long suppressed, emerge to bedevil any effort to build stable, legitimate government. They bring border conflicts to liberate or incorporate "oppressed" minorities, and civil wars. Civil wars often are contests between ethnic groups for exclusive control of the central coercive institutions of the state. The conflict then becomes one over the right of some minority ethnic groups to secede from the control of those institutions, and in doing so frequently to take with them other ethnic groups who may in turn consider themselves oppressed by their new government. Neither the institutions nor the experience of "live and let live" may exist.

An irony is that the initial creation of democratic institutions may contribute to the explosion of ethnic conflicts, by providing the means of free expression, including expression of hatred and feelings of oppression. That does not mean, however, that the solution lies in less democracy. Rather, it likely lies in devising institutions, and nurturing norms and practices, of democratic government with respect for minority rights. It may also require allowing the secession of

55. Joan M. Nelson with Stephanie Eglinton, *Encouraging Democracy: What Role for Conditioned Aid?* (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1992).

groups who are not satisfied that their rights and interests can be sufficiently respected under a single government. A consolation may be that nationalism in a democratic era probably dooms any substantial effort of imperialism that would incorporate into a larger political unit different ethnic groups against their will. The will of acquired peoples to separation can be repressed only at great cost and risk. Nationalism need not be inconsistent with respect for human rights.[56] The creation of institutions, norms, and practices to protect minorities has never been easy. But it presents the fundamental challenge of world political development in this era.

Again recall the requirement, for a democratic peace, of stability of democracy and perceptions of stability. For the near future, at least, that condition is likely to be in short supply in much of the world. If one's neighbor has vast unsolved economic problems, is it politically stable? Has it experienced democracy long enough, with some success in managing its problems, to be stable? If it is "democratic" for some, even a majority, of its citizens, but forcibly represses its minorities, is it "stable?" Many of the new states of the old Soviet Union fail these and other tests. Some have not yet had a real democratic transition.

Georgia, for example, did elect, by reasonably democratic procedures, Zviad Gamsakhurdia as president when it was still a republic in the Soviet Union. But on independence, he seized dictatorial powers. In January 1992 he was finally overthrown in bitter fighting, and replaced (but not by election) by Eduard Shevardnadze, who fought of a subsequent coup attempt. Meanwhile, severe ethnic violence continued in the secessionist region of Abkhazia. Elections to confirm Shevardnadze's status as democratic leader were not held until October. Georgia in 1992 may have been an aspiring democracy or a nascent democracy, but it was not yet a stable democracy nor, by any reasonable international standard, even just a "democracy." Until its democracy is established, it should surprise no one if Georgia or states like it get into war with their neighbors. Nor would such a war invalidate a "democracies don't go to war with each other" generalization.

Another threat to the theory and the reality of "democracies don't go to war with each other" lurks in the Middle East. Save for Turkey much of the time, and Lebanon for a while, Israel has been the only stable democracy in that part of the world. Israel's democracy is surely flawed by the treatment of its Arab subjects, but in most respects it has well earned the label of democracy. If an

56. Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Arab state should achieve an equivalent degree of democracy, and then go to war with Israel, we would have a blatant exception to the proposition.

Unless one categorically rules that "Arab democracy" is an oxymoron—and I do not—such an event is imaginable. A Muslim fundamentalist movement might achieve power in the name of democracy. We will never know what might have been in Algeria had the military not seized power after the elections of 1991. But, conceivably, such a regime could have been both stable and somewhat democratic; i.e., while promoting Islamic values of a majority it might have respected minority rights and tolerated the expression of secular opposition under domestic and international pressures. Such a government probably would not be seen as a major security threat to nonfundamentalist neighboring regimes. Would such a fundamentalist government fight Israel if the military situation seemed propitious? Perhaps, as part of an alliance with other Islamic states. Certainly the normative restraints on democracies not fighting each other would be sorely stressed by the entrenched normative roots of Arab-Israeli hostility. But such a state might be less likely itself to initiate a war, thanks to structural as well as possible normative constraints.

Can a Wider Democratic Peace Be Built?

Understanding that democracies rarely fight each other, and why, has great consequence for policy in the contemporary world, as well as for theoretical debates of "realists" vs. "idealists" or "liberal transnationalists." It should affect the kinds of military preparations believed to be necessary, and the costs one would be willing to pay to make them. It should encourage peaceful efforts to assist the emergence and consolidation of democracy. But a misunderstanding of it could encourage war-making against authoritarian regimes, and efforts to overturn them—with all the costly implications of preventive or hegemonic military activity such a policy might imply. Not all authoritarian states are necessarily aggressive. In fact, at any particular time, the great majority are not.

Recollection of the post-1945 success with defeated adversaries can be both instructive and misleading. It is instructive in showing that democracy could supplant a thoroughly discredited totalitarian regime, at a time when authoritarianism in general was not held in high esteem globally. It can be misleading if one forgets how expensive it was (Marshall Plan aid, and important economic concessions to Japan), and especially if one misinterprets the political conditions of military defeat. The United States and its allies utterly defeated the old regimes. To solidify democratic government the allies conducted vast

(if incomplete) efforts to remove the former elites from positions of authority. But they had something to build on, in the form of individuals and institutions from previous experiences with democracy. The model of "fight them, beat them, and then make them democratic" is irrevocably flawed as a basis for contemporary action. It probably would not work anyway, and no one is prepared to make the kind of effort that would be required. A crusade for democracy is not in order.

External military intervention, even against the most odious dictators, is a dangerous way to try to produce a "democratic world order." Sometimes, with a cautious cost-benefit analysis and with the certainty of substantial and legitimate internal support, it may be worthwhile—that is, under conditions when rapid military success is likely *and* the will of the people at issue is clear. Even so, any time an outside power supplants any existing government the problem of legitimacy is paramount. The very democratic norms to be instilled may be compromised. At the least, intervention should not be unilateral. It must be approved, publicly and willingly, by some substantial international body like the UN or the OAS. Under most circumstances, even such international bodies are better used as vehicles to promote democratic processes at times when the relevant domestic parties are ready. Peacekeeping operations to help provide the conditions for free elections, monitor those elections, and advice on the building of democratic institutions are usually far more promising than is military intervention. The UN, newly strengthened with the end of the Cold War, has emerged as a major facilitator of peaceful transitions and democratic elections in such places as Cambodia, Namibia, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.[57]

Perhaps most important, understanding the sources of democratic peace can have the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Social scientists sometimes create reality as well as analyze it. Insofar as norms do guide behavior, repeating those norms helps to make them effective. Repeating the norms as descriptive principles can help to make them true. Repeating the proposition that democracies should not fight each other helps reinforce the probability that democracies will not fight each other. It is an empirical fact that democracies rarely fight

57. See Bruce Russett and James S. Sutterlin, "The U.N. in a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (1991), pp. 69–83, on UN peacekeeping in a broad sense. One possible hybrid form of peacekeeping might be an agreement, by all parties in advance, that the international agency would have the right (but not an obligation) to intervene if a government, elected in a process certified by the agency as fair and democratic, were subsequently overthrown. Morton H. Halperin and David J. Scheffer with Patricia L. Small, *Self-Determination in the Modern World* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992) call such agreements "prior consent" to intervention.

each other. They do not need to fight each other because they can employ alternative methods of conflict resolution, and at less cost than through violent conflict. A norm that democracies should not fight each other thus is prudentially reinforced, and in turn strengthens the empirical fact about infrequent violent conflict.

Norms may be violated and break down. Nevertheless, norms do constrain behavior, both by affecting what one wants to do and what one may be able to persuade others to do or not to do. The discourse of ethics, and of politics, is for instrumental as well as moral reasons largely a normative one. For example, the wrenching abortion debate is overwhelmingly a normative conflict ("respect life" versus "respect choice") for the control of public policy. In a world where democracy has become widespread, understanding the fact of the "democratic peace" proposition will help to make it true. So too will wider acceptance of the norm.

In turn, a stable and less menacing international system can permit the emergence and consolidation of democratic governments. Harold Lasswell's dire warnings of "a world of garrison states"[58] may have been extreme, and some of the charges about a "military-industrial complex" a quarter of a century ago were shrill and exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is hard to refute the argument that international threats—real or only perceived—strengthen the forces of secrecy and authoritarianism in the domestic politics of states involved in "protracted conflict."[59] Relaxation of international threats to peace and security reduces both the need, and the excuse, for repression of democratic dissent. Democracy and the expectation of international peace can feed on each other to mitigate both the real and the perceived dangers of a still anarchic international system. An evolutionary process may even be at work. Because of the visible nature and public costs of breaking commitments, democratic leaders may be better able to persuade leaders of other states that they will keep the agreements they enter into.[60] Democracies more often win their wars than do authoritarian states,[61] whether because they are more effective in

58. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (1941), pp. 455–468.
59. Ted Robert Gurr, "War, Revolution and the Growth of the Coercive State," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1988), pp. 45–65.
60. Fearon, "Audience Costs, Learning, and the Escalation of International Disputes"; and Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1992.
61. Lake, David A. "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (March 1992), pp. 24–37.

marshaling their resources or are more accurate and efficient information processors.[62] And the government of the loser of a war is much more likely to be overthrown subsequently[63] and may be replaced by a democratic regime.

Perhaps major features of the international system can be socially constructed from the bottom up; that is, norms and rules of behavior internationally can become extensions of the norms and rules of domestic political behavior. The modern international system is commonly traced to the Treaty of Westphalia and the principles of sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs affirmed by it. In doing so it affirmed the anarchy of the system, without a superior authority to ensure order. It also was a treaty among princes who ruled as autocrats. Our understanding of the modern anarchic state system risks conflating the effects of anarchy with those stemming from the political organization of its component units. When most states are ruled autocratically—as in 1648 and throughout virtually all of history since—then playing by the rules of autocracy may be the only way for any state, democracy or not, to survive in Hobbesian anarchy. Alexis de Tocqueville's doubts about democracies' ability to pursue stable and enlightened foreign policies are well known.[64] But Tocqueville was writing in 1835, mindful of a realist anarchic system in which the vast majority of states were still autocracies. A democracy which tried to operate by democratic norms was at a great disadvantage, and might well shift policy unstably in trying to adjust to the risks.

The emergence of new democracies with the end of the Cold War presents an opening for change in the international system more fundamental even than at the end of other big wars—World Wars I and II and the Napoleonic Wars. For the first time ever, in 1992 a virtual majority of states (91 of 183)[65] approximated the standards we have employed for democracy. Another 35 were in some form of transition to democracy. Democracy in many of these states may not prove stable. This global democratic wave may crest and fall back, as earlier ones have done. But if the chance for wide democratization can be grasped and consolidated, international politics might be transformed.

62. Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control* (New York: Free Press, 1963).
63. Arthur Stein and Bruce Russett, "Evaluating War Outcomes and Consequences," in Ted Robert Gurr, ed., *Handbook of Political Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1990); and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Randolph Siverson, and Gary Woller, "War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (1992), pp. 639–646.
64. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1945), esp. part I, ch. 13.
65. McColm, et al., *Freedom in the World*, p. 47.

A system composed substantially of democratic states might reflect very different behavior than did the previous one composed predominantly of autocracies. If, after winning the Cold War at immense cost, the alliance of industrial democracies should now let slip a chance to solidify basic change in the principles of international order at much lower cost, our children will wonder. If history is imagined to be the history of wars and conquest, then a democratic world might in that sense represent "the end of history." Some autocratically governed states will surely remain in the system. But if enough states become stably democratic in the 1990s, then there emerges a chance to reconstruct the norms and rules of the international order to reflect those of democracies in a majority of interactions. A system created by autocracies centuries ago might now be recreated by a critical mass of democratic states.