

## Gov 97 Week 10: Democracy at War

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### (1) What is the democratic peace proposition?

- Russett: democracies rarely go to war with one another.
- Some limitations
  - War with non-state actors, e.g. against terrorist organizations, civil war, wars of independence, colonial wars, war with ethnic/other minorities within a state.
  - Interstate violence with few casualties, e.g. air strikes??
  - Does this change if we broaden the definition of a democracy (e.g. to not-autocracy)?
  - What's the timeframe? Before WWII, there weren't that many democracies around.
  - What about different type of autocracies? If regime type matters to democracy, should it matter to autocracy too? E.g. single/hegemonic party states, personalist dictatorships, monarchies
- There does seem to be an empirical correlation:

	Inter-state war 1816-1991	Any international violence 1973-2005
Dems vs dems	0	0
Dems vs non-dems	155	18
Non-dems vs non-dems	198	42

Rummel, from Matt Baum's slides

	Threat of force	Display of force	Use of force	War
Dems vs dems	2	4	8	0
At least one non-dem	39	116	513	32

Russett

### (2) Explanations for democratic peace

- **Russett:**
  - Looks at features inherent to democratic states.
  - (1) Democratic norms → permit/promote the peaceful resolution of conflict. Perception of people from other democratic countries as autonomous, self-governing people.
  - (2) Democratic institutions, e.g. checks and balances, need for public debate etc. → constraints on action
    - Opportunity for negotiation/settlement. Though non-democratic countries don't face the same constraints – they may initiate attack; democratic countries may initiate attack with non-democratic countries because they fear a surprise attack/being taken advantage of.
  - Qs:
    - Does this sound plausible?
    - Is the institutionalization of norms correlated with political stability generally?
    - What about norms that are not peculiarly democratic – e.g. of national self-determination and state sovereignty?
    - Shouldn't institutional constraints on action apply to war with non-democratic countries too?

- **Lake:**

- Looks at features of states in general.
- Microeconomic approach: states as rent-maximizers (e.g. rent from the defence industry). The amount of rent a state can get depends on the ability of society to control the state – by monitoring state behaviour, voice and exit.
- Autocratic states have greater incentive to go to war (“imperialist bias”
  - Can keep more rent
  - Expansion of territory → more rent for the state (ceteris paribus)
  - Provoke attacks from other countries → increase support from citizens for war
  - May target democratic countries, because they show their citizens the alternative
- But when democratic countries go to war, they tend to win. Because they extract less rent from their states → fewer economic distortions, more wealth; have greater societal support for their policies
  - Also tend to form overwhelming counter-coalitions – especially if they’re more likely to be targets of autocratic expansion.
- Qs
  - Does this sound plausible? Do you like the microeconomic model?
  - Can you think of examples?
    - 1990 Iraq invasion of Kuwait as an example of autocratic expansion? [Came](#) in an Iraqi economic crisis from post-war debt (the Iran-Iraq war?) – Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of keeping oil prices low and pumping more than its quota from the shared Rumaila oil field. (Sounds like an example of a diversionary war.)
    - Russian annexation of the Crimea?
    - Although none of these examples are for rent per se.
  - On democratic countries tending to win wars: is democracy the right IV?
    - For e.g. rich countries tend to fight less (bad for business) but win the wars they fight (more resources – Lake controlled for military personnel and iron/steel production, but not economic wealth, military tech?).

- **Fearon:**

- Also looking at features of states in general. A game-theoretic model.
- States would rather settle than go to war. But leaders have private information about their willingness to use force (vs compromise), and they have incentives to misrepresent this information to get a better deal.
- So the game: states can concede, wait/escalate or attack. Not an infinite game – they can’t wait/escalate forever – not because of an exogenously imposed time horizon, but an endogenously imposed one: because of audience costs. There are costs to conceding after escalation vs conceding right off.
- The higher the audience costs, the less likely the state is to concede, and the more likely to go to war. This seems counter-intuitive (you’d think states with high audience costs might concede more quickly) if you don’t take into account the *signalling value of escalation*. Higher signalling value for states with higher audience costs – they may be less willing to escalate a dispute into public confrontation to begin with, but more likely to go to war if they do escalate.

- Relation to regime type: democracies seem to have higher audience costs. E.g. George H. W. Bush’s declarations on Kuwait (including “This will not stand”) vs the difficulty for Western observers of knowing what to conclude about Saddam Hussein’s willingness to fight from his many public refusals to pull out of Kuwait in the fall of 1990.
- Qs
  - Another example: Syria and the “[redline](#)”? Did Obama lose credibility in trying to backpedal his remarks about military invasion? Did escalation by the US send a signal to Russia/Syria about American willingness to use force → push Assad into agreeing to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons? A [timeline](#):
    - Aug 20: Obama says chemical weapons are a red line.
    - Aug 21: There’s an alleged chemical attack near Damascus, kills > 1400 people.
    - Aug 24: US naval ships positioned near Syria.
    - Aug 29: British parliament rejects resolution to take military action.
    - Aug 30: Secretary of State John Kerry makes the case of US military action. (That the Obama administration decided to go to Congress – does that strengthen or weaken the signal?)
    - Sept 3: Speaker of the House Boehner expresses support for the call for military intervention. Kerry testifies before the Senate Foreign Committee. But there’s growing opposition to military intervention in the House.
    - Sept 4: Obama waffles.
    - Sept 5-6: G20 meeting; Obama seeks support for US-led military intervention.
    - Sept 9: Assad warns of retaliation. Agrees to hand over chemical weapons, after negotiations with Russia; says it wasn’t a reaction to the threat of US military intervention.
    - Sept 10: Obama calls for Congress to postpone the vote on military intervention.
  - Do democracies generate higher audience costs than non-democracies? It might depend on the type of non-democracy – e.g. audience costs might be higher for hegemonic party systems and possibly personalistic dictators, but lower for monarchies. For e.g. would Russia or the US be able to back down from escalation with fewer political costs? China or the US? Partisan politics might lower audience costs. And so might proportional representation (accountability vs representativeness)??

Golden Balls [game](#):

	B		
A		Split	Steal
	Split	(1,1)	(0,2)
	Steal	(2,0)	(0,0)

- To show:
  - Strategic behaviour
  - Single-game and multi-game behaviour?
  - The rest of the video – one convinced the other that he definitely was going to steal – made a credible commitment.

**(3) Alternative explanations** (see Russett)

- Wealth – economic interdependence, Constant (and Kant) and commerce, Golden Arches theory?? Economics, like war, as politics by other means.
- Distance/geography?
- International institutions/transnational linkages – though not clear whether lib-dem norms → inter/transnational institutions, or the other way around.
- Political stability – should it be treated independently of regime type? (Also correlated with wealth.)
- Not a thing – democratic countries happened not to have any incentive to go to war with one another. But does this beg the question: why don't they see one another as a threat?

### (3) War and media (Baum & Potter)

- Foreign policy market: three actors: political leaders/elites, the public, the media. In the short term, leaders have a greater informational advantage over the public, can control the framing of events. The media tends to go along with their framing – dependent on them for access to information, the public tends to support their leaders. In the longer term, public demand for information increases, multiple frames emerge – the media more independent, meets the public demand for information, more critical of the government. So the media as a middleman/trader – not completely independent, not just a conduit for elite opinions/frames.
- Diversionary war or the [wag](#)-the-dog syndrome – because there *is* a short-term rally-around-the-flag phenomenon, though it tends to dissipate. No clear evidence of diversionary war in the US or outside.
  - Is this peculiar to democracies? Wouldn't it be easier for non-democracies?
- Media framing of events – no clear evidence that the “CNN effect” is real, though the elite media is thought to shape elite opinion, and the media can bring international issues to domestic attention (e.g. through human interest stories).
- Qs
  - Some examples of the media influencing events:
    - Use of media to get information out: e.g. Youtube videos of chemical attacks in Syria? The “twitter revolution” of the Arab Spring?
    - Media frames: 9/11? Though not independent of frames by political leaders.
    - Media influence: [photos](#) of the Vietnam war?
  - What influence does the media have on decisions to go/not to go to war?
    - Could increase audience costs
    - Could serve as an institutional constraint on government action
    - Could disseminate norms
    - On the other hand, could push the administration to take particular actions
    - Could frame issues in ways that encourage/discourage particular actions
    - Could provide multiple frames for the public, e.g. on disputes over military intervention in Syria

Emailed in advance:

1. What is democratic peace?

- Russett gives a good overview of the theory in his first chapter (you can skim the historical detail).

2. What are the explanations for democratic peace?

- Russett (second chapter), Lake and Fearon all give different explanations for the phenomenon – and they approach the subject in very different ways.

- For Fearon, you don't have to go into the technical aspects of the model (unless you want to), just his arguments and roughly how the model works. Unlike Russett and Lake, he takes a game-theoretic approach to the subject.

3. Are you convinced by any of these explanations? Are there others you prefer? Or explanations which do not depend on features of democracy - e.g. the Golden Arches theory mentioned by Prof Baum (countries with McDonald's rarely go to war with other countries with McDonald's), or less ironic theories?

4. War and the media (Baum and Potter) - what do you think is the relationship between political leaders, the public and the media with respect to foreign policy and decisions to go to war? How would we relate this theory to regime type? E.g. does this relate to Fearon on audience costs?