PS 0500: The Democratic Peace Theory

William Spaniel

williampspaniel.com/classes/worldpolitics
Outline

- Brief History of IR Theory
- The Democratic Peace
- Explanations for the Democratic Peace?
- Correlation Does Not Imply Causation
- The McDonald’s Peace Theory
- Economic Interdependence
- The Rise of China
Roadmap

• Before: Unitary actor assumption
• Now: Perhaps type of government matters
• Next week: Perhaps leaders matter
Intellectual History

• For the majority of IR’s history, scholars assumed that states were identical except for in relative power (Realists)
• Other scholars challenged this assumption in the 1980s
  – Evidence overwhelmingly supports the second group
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The Democratic Peace Theory

Democracies tend not to fight other democracies.
Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other. (1994 State of the Union)
Democracies don't go to war with each other. And the reason why is the people of most societies don't like war, and they understand what war means.... I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East...is to promote democracy. (2004 Press Conference)
Are democratic countries more peaceful?
Answer: Kind of.
Democracy + Democracy = Little War
Democracy + Democracy = Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War
Some Caveats

• How do we define democracy?
  – Is Mexico a democracy?
  – Is Russia a democracy?
  – Was the United States in 1796 a democracy?
Some Caveats

• How do we define war?
• Correlates of War is the standard dataset for war (1816-present)
  – Requirements
    • 1000 battle deaths (lots of death)
    • At least 100 battle deaths per side or 1000 troops committed (balanced fight)
    • Continuous conflict
Some Caveats

• Democracies sometimes do fight other democracies
  – Ancient Greece
  – War of 1812
  – Spanish-American War
  – Lebanon/Israel Six Day War
  – Kargil War
Some Caveats

• Democracies aren’t always friendly to democratic ideals
  – Iran 1953
  – Indonesia 1957
  – Chile 1973
  – Nicaragua 1984
Some Caveats

• Very few democracies existed before the end of World War II
• Most of the democracy versus democracy data we have comes from the Cold War
  — But just about all of the democracies were allied against communism at the time!
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• **Explanations for the Democratic Peace?**
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How does democracy cause peace?
Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives
Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives
Culture of Contracts

• Behavioral explanation for the democratic peace
• In democracies, citizens have incentive to cooperate through contractual agreements
  – Violence is not allowed
Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives
Transparency

• Rationalist explanations for war: uncertainty about resolve causes conflict
• How can rival states be uncertain about a democracy’s level of resolve?
  – Public polling data is readily available to everyone, including the evil dictators of the world
  – Less private information $\rightarrow$ less war
Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives
Electoral Incentives

- *Selectorate*—the pool of individuals who can make up winning coalitions
- *Winning coalition*—a group of individuals necessary to remain in power
  - Democracies: Half of all voters plus 1
  - Autocracies: Military commanders, a handful of politicians
Electoral Incentives

• War is costly, but some benefit
• Easy to buy off a small number of people
  – Saddam Hussein ➔ steal Kuwaiti oil ➔ buy off his cronies
• Hard to buy off a large number of people
  – Since democracies share the burden of war relatively equally, democratic leaders have less incentive to fight
Democracy + Democracy → Little War
Democracy + Democracy → Little War
Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy → Some War
Democracy + Democracy = Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War
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What is the difference between correlation and causation?
Correlation

• When A is present, B tends to be present as well and vice versa
Correlation

• When A is present, B tends to be present as well and vice versa
  – When two democracies are present, peace tends to be present as well
Correlation

• When A is present, B tends to be present as well and vice versa
  – When two democracies are present, peace tends to be present as well
• This tells us nothing about causation!
Correlation

- For the moment, assume there actually is a causal relationship
  - Correlations can exist randomly
    - A fair coin appears biased every now and then
  - We have statistical tests to ensure this is not the case
Problems with Inferring Causation

1. B causes A.
2. A and B cause each other.
3. C causes A and B.
4. A causes C which causes B. But D also causes C which causes B.
Problems with Inferring Causation

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Example: United Nations Failure?

- Presence of United Nations troops is correlated with the outbreak of civil war. Therefore, we should not station U.N. troops in hotspots.
Example: United Nations Failure?

• Presence of United Nations troops is correlated with the outbreak of civil war. Therefore, we should not station U.N. troops in hotspots.
  – But U.N. troops go to the *hardest* places to keep the peace. Of course they fail frequently!
Peace Causes Democracy

• Democracies are not as efficient as autocracies
  – Benefit: check and balance on power
• With external threats, citizens might be willing to concentrate power
  – So democracies only arise in places not prone to war
Problems with Inferring Causation

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Example: Wealth and Democracy

• Democracy is correlated with high domestic wealth. Therefore, democracy causes wealth.
Example: Wealth and Democracy

- Democracy is correlated with high domestic wealth. Therefore, democracy causes wealth.
  - Yes.
  - But wealth also gives the middle class political power. So wealth causes democracy. The relationship goes both ways.
Democracy and Peace

• Perhaps democracies causes peace but peace also causes democracy
• We cannot estimate the effectiveness of democracy by looking at the correlation between democracy and peace
Problems with Inferring Causation

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Example: Arms Races

• Arms races are correlated with the outbreak of war. Therefore, arms races cause war.
Example: Arms Races

• Arms races are correlated with the outbreak of war. Therefore, arms races cause war.
  – No. Bargaining problems (i.e., rationalist explanations for war) cause war. States engage in arms races to prepare for war.
ARMS RACES → WAR
Bargaining Problems

Arms Races

War
Democracy, Economics, and War

- Perhaps wealth causes democracy
- Perhaps the creation of wealth (i.e., trade) causes peace
WEALTH

DEMOCRACY

PEACE
Problems with Inferring Causation

1. B causes A.
2. A and B cause each other.
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Cold and the Cold

- Cold weather and sickness are correlated. Therefore, cold weather causes sickness.
Cold and the Cold

- Cold weather and sickness are correlated. Therefore, cold weather causes sickness.
  - Not quite. Cold weather forces people indoors. Sharing cramped spaces allows germs to spread more easily.
COLD WEATHER

BEING INDOORS

SICKNESS
COLD WEATHER → BEING INDOORS → SICKNESS
EXTREME HEAT
DEMOCRACY  TRADE  PEACE
DEMOCRACY

TRADE

PEACE

OTHER THINGS
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McDonald’s Peace Theory

- Countries with McDonald’s restaurants tend not to fight other countries with McDonald’s restaurants
  - Originates from a 1996 NYT article by Thomas Friedman
Perfect Theory?

• Yes!
Perfect Theory?

• Yes...until Russia and Georgia screwed everything up in the summer of 2008
But Wait

- “Wars” are armed conflicts with at least 1000 battle deaths
- South Ossetian war only killed 281
- Theory still holds!!!
Correlation versus Causation

• Clearly, Big Macs are not suddenly causing the peace
Correlation versus Causation

- Clearly, Big Macs are not suddenly causing the peace
- But countries with McDonald’s tend to be better economically developed and open to trade
  - Perhaps open trade is causing the peace
  - In other words, peace is based in capitalism
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How does trade cause peace?
Economic Interdependence

- Countries that trade with each other tend not to fight each other
  - True for disputes and wars
  - Finding controls for other factors
Economic Interdependence

• Correlation does not imply causation
  – Perhaps causation goes the other way
  – Can we explain why trade relations might cause peace?
Explaining the Peace

• Last unit: trade creates a surplus
  – Splitting the surplus makes everyone better off
Explaining the Peace

- Last unit: trade creates a surplus
  - Splitting the surplus makes everyone better off
- Two units ago: range of mutually preferable settlements grows larger as costs grow
Explaining the Peace

- Last unit: trade creates a surplus
  - Splitting the surplus makes everyone better off
- Two units ago: range of mutually preferable settlements grows larger as costs grow
  - States cannot trade if they are at war
  - So the trade surplus makes war costlier!
Bargaining without Trade

Bargaining Range

$p_A - c_A$  $p_A$  $p_A + c_B$

A’s Costs of War  B’s Costs of War
Bargaining with Trade

Bargaining Range

$p_A - c_A - t_A$

A’s Share of Trade Surplus

$p_A$

$p_A + c_B + t_B$

B’s Share of Trade Surplus
Bargaining Range with Trade

Bargaining Range without Trade
Explaining the Peace

• Trade makes war less appealing
• The less appealing war is, the less likely bargaining breaks down for most explanations for war
Type of Trade

• Suppose Mexico and U.S. trade mostly substitute products
  – Mexico makes tequila; U.S. makes wine
• Suppose U.S. and Canada trade completely different things
  – U.S. produces iPhone apps and Canada’s chief export is Nickelback
Type of Trade

- All else equal, which of these dyads is more likely to fight?
- Why?
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• The Capitalist Peace
• The Rise of China
Is China going to kill us any time soon?

Hint: The answer is no.
Red Dawn

• A really crummy 2012 movie based on a kinda crummy 1984 film.
• The story of a secret Chinese plot to destroy the United States. Fortunately, Thor saves the day.
Movies Are Silly...

- ...but some Americans are actually worried that China is going to get more belligerent.
- Should we be worried about a Chinese invasion? Should we launch preventive war?
Preventive War

• Silly!
  – Oops #1: China has nuclear weapons.
Preventive War

• Silly!
  – Oops #1: China has nuclear weapons.
  – Oops #2: U.S and China exchange $500 billion in trade every year.
Preventive War

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  – Oops #3: You thought Iraq was bad...China has one billion people!
Preventive War

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  - Oops #1: China has nuclear weapons.
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- Conclusion: Preventive war is not an option.
But China Will Take Us Over!

• This is paranoia.
But China Will Take Us Over!

- This is paranoia.
  - Oops #1: China enjoys trading with us
Red Dawn

• A really crummy 2012 movie based on a kinda crummy 1984 film.
• The story of a secret Chinese plot to destroy the United States.
  – Except the producers realized they wanted to sell the movie to the large Chinese audience. So they changed the villains to North Koreans post-production.
But China Will Take Us Over!

• This is paranoia.
  – Oops #1: China enjoys trading with us
  – Oops #2: China owns shares in the United States—$1.3 trillion of U.S. debt
But China Will Take Us Over!

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But China Will Take Us Over!

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  – Oops #2: China owns shares in the United States—$1.3 trillion of U.S. debt
  – Oops #3: We have nukes
  – Oops #4: Did China see what happened in Iraq?
• Conclusion: No communist takeover
But China Will Be Stronger

United States
• 1990: $5,800,525,000,000
  – First in world.

China
• 1990: $390,279,000,000
  – Tenth in world.
But China Will Be Stronger

**United States**
- 1990: $5,800,525,000,000
  - First in world.
- 2011: $15,094,025,000,000
  - First in world.

**China**
- 1990: $390,279,000,000
  - Tenth in world.
- 2011: $11,299,967,000,000
  - Second in world.
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But China Has Its Own Problems

United States
- 1990: $5,800,525,000,000
  - First in world.
- 2011: $15,094,025,000,000
  - First in world.
- 2050: $83,805,000,000,000
  - Third in world (India).
- 2011 Per Capita: $48,387
  - Sixth in world (Qatar, Luxemburg, Singapore, Norway, Brunei).

China
- 1990: $390,279,000,000
  - Tenth in world.
- 2011: $11,299,967,000,000
  - Second in world.
- 2050: $205,321,000,000,000
  - First in world.
- 2011 Per Capita: $8,382
  - 92nd in world, in between Ecuador and Belize.
Summary

- US will learn to accept China as having a more prominent role in international affairs
- Preoccupation with the economic relationship makes this less of big of a deal
- China has domestic problems looming