In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise

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This essay reviews the growing literature on the democratic peace. It assesses the evidence on whether democracies are more peaceful and, if so, in what ways. This assessment considers the match and mismatch among the data, methods, and theories generally used in exploring these questions. The review also examines the empirical support for several explanations of the democratic peace phenomenon. It concludes with some observations and suggestions for future research.

Are democracies more peaceful in their foreign relations? If so, what are the theoretical explanations and policy implications of this phenomenon? These questions have been the focus of much recent international relations research. This interest in the democratic peace proposition reflects its perceived relevance to, and importance in, major theoretical, policy, and even methodological debates.

The democratic peace proposition encourages hope for a new age of international peace. In the wake of the "third wave" of democratization (Huntington 1991), democracies constitute for the first time in history a majority of the states in the international system. Therefore, the norms governing their relations have a better chance now than earlier to become the dominant mode of interaction in world politics (Russett 1993a:138; Shin 1994:176; Kegley and Wittkopf 1995:69–70). These norms suggest that democracies rarely, if ever, enter into war against each other.

The above generalization has not escaped the attention of policymakers. "Democracies rarely wage war on one another," averred U.S. President Bill Clinton (quoted in Oren 1995:147; also see Owen 1994:87). Other U.S. officials (for example, former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, and former Secretary of State James Baker) likewise have maintained that democratic values and international peace reinforce each other (quoted in Raymond 1994:25 and Mansfield and Snyder 1995a:5). Their statements often suggest that democracy is the best antidote to war.

Some scholars, however, are concerned about the normative and policy implications of this professed confidence in the democracy-peace synergism. It can appear as a smug dogma that dismisses many past instances of aggression committed by democracies (Haas 1995). Worse still, this thesis can fuel a spirit of democratic crusade and be used to justify covert or overt interventions against others (Forsythe 1992; Kegley and Hermann 1995a). Its logic has sometimes even been twisted by politicians to argue, for instance, that a democracy (like Israel) should not make
concessions to nondemocracies (such as the Arab countries) because peace can only exist between democracies (Maoz 1996:10).

The democratic peace proposition also has implications for theoretical and methodological debates. The practical absence of war among democracies is, according to Jack Levy (1989:270), "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations." Likewise, Bruce Russett (1990:123) has observed that the democratic peace proposition constitutes "one of the strongest nontrivial or nontautological generalizations that can be made about international relations." In a similar vein, Nils Petter Gleditsch (1995:297) has argued that "the importance of democracy lies in it being a near-perfect sufficient condition for peace." These remarks tend to reflect the results of scholarship based on quantitative methods. Indeed, the democratic peace proposition is arguably one of the most robust generalizations that has been produced to date by this research tradition. Most, although clearly not all, academic proponents of this thesis engage in statistical analysis of large data sets. Conversely, skeptics of this proposition tend to question such attempts at pattern identification, often preferring to undertake focused case studies of particularly salient historical episodes. Although in principle these quantitative and qualitative analyses should be mutually informative (Ray 1995), in practice they are often set apart by epistemological differences.

The democratic peace proposition is, furthermore, a matter of theoretical contest. Currently, realism is the dominant paradigm in the study of international relations. It claims that all states are motivated to seek power and security in an anarchic system. As a result, the structure of the international system, not the attributes of governments, determines states' policies. As Russett (1993a:24) has remarked, "realism has no place for an expectation that democracies will not fight each other. To the degree we establish peace between democracies as 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."

This essay reviews the extant democratic peace literature. The review is necessarily interim as it seeks to address an ongoing debate and a rapidly increasing body of research. Nevertheless, it argues that, to a significant degree, disagreements to date reflect a serious disjunction between theoretical articulation and analytic practice. The essay also shows how some recent rationalist formulations of the conduct of foreign policy can accommodate several central and derivative aspects of the democratic peace proposition and, thus, may offer a promising approach to unifying research in this area.

A Progressive Debate

In Perpetual Peace, Immanuel Kant (1957 [1795]) posited that a republican form of government, exemplifying the rule of law, provides a feasible basis for states to overcome structural anarchy and to secure peaceful relations among themselves. Kant’s work has long been recognized by contemporary international relations scholars (see, for example, Waltz 1962). Moreover, systematic analysis of the empirical relationship between regime characteristics and international violence has been a long-standing concern for such scholars (see, for example, Richardson 1960).

The genesis of the recent surge of interest in the democratic peace proposition, however, can be traced to an article published in a relatively obscure journal for international relations scholars, Industrial Research. In this work, Dean Babst (1972:55) reported that "no wars have been fought between independent nations with elective governments between 1789 and 1941." His important conclusion was followed by a study by Melvin Small and David Singer (1976) who found that
democracies participated in fewer wars than nondemocracies from 1815 through 1965. Because relatively few democracies existed during this time period, Small and Singer were guarded in their assessment of the statistical significance of this finding.

Rudolph Rummel (1979, 1981) was most responsible for calling attention to the phenomenon of the democratic peace, arguing that it was not a statistical artifact. His 1983 article in the Journal of Conflict Resolution, with its claim that liberalism reduced international violence, was especially influential, inviting responses from Steve Chan (1984) and Erich Weede (1984). The latter authors argued that the democratic peace proposition was subject to some important qualifications growing out of the type of warfare that was studied and the time period that was examined.

Appearing in the same year as Rummel’s important 1983 piece, Michael Doyle’s (1983a, 1983b) two-part article in Philosophy and Public Affairs offered a cogent explanation of the Kantian perspective on “perpetual peace.” This presentation was followed by another influential article in the American Political Science Review (Doyle 1986), which gave this topic additional visibility.

Interest in the democratic peace proposition was further boosted by an exchange of notes in the International Studies Quarterly between Rummel (1987) and Jack Vincent (1987a, 1987b). This exchange was followed by a series of studies (Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Morgan and Campbell 1991; Bremer 1992, 1993; Maoz and Russell 1992, 1993; Morgan and Schwebach 1992; Weede 1992; Dixon 1993, 1994; Russett 1993a) that resulted in an apparent consensus: although democracies are not generally less warlike than nondemocracies (the so-called monadic hypothesis), they rarely (if ever) fight each other (the dyadic hypothesis).

The next surge of interest in the democratic peace proposition was stimulated by a special issue of International Security—featuring articles by Christopher Layne (1994), John Owen (1994), and David Spiro (1994)—that raised questions about the growing acceptance of the phenomenon, and Russett’s (1995) subsequent response to them. This collection of essays coincided with a similar kind of exchange in the Review of International Studies, this time between Raymond Cohen (1994, 1995) and Russett and James Ray (1995). These commentaries were followed in short order by still another series of critiques in the pages of International Organization (Gowa 1995) and International Security (Farber and Gowa 1995; Mansfield and Snyder 1995a, 1995b; Oren 1995), which have, in turn, invited additional responses (for example, Enterline 1996; Mansfield and Snyder 1996; Maoz 1996).

In the meantime, a number of studies have appeared that have sought to probe the empirical frontiers of the democratic peace proposition or clarify further its theoretical foundations. Some of this research has explored the proposition’s “cosilience” (Olson 1982) by extending its logic beyond the original concern with war to other phenomena such as foreign intervention, dispute mediation, trade practice, civil strife, covert subversion, alliance membership, and international treaties as well as the crisis-management and war-winning capabilities of democratic or democratizing states (see, for example, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1986, 1990, 1992; Gaubatz 1991, 1996; Siverson and Emmons 1991; Burley 1992; Lake 1992; Dixon 1993, 1994; Gowa and Mansfield 1993; Fearon 1994; Kozhemiakin 1994; Raymond 1994, 1996; Zerkinos 1994; Chan 1995; James and Mitchell 1995; Kegley and Hermann 1995a; Barbieri 1996a; Eyerman and Hart 1996; Hermann and Kegley 1996; Hewitt and Wilkenfeld 1996; Jacobsen 1996; Lemke and Reed 1996; Oneal et al. 1996; Simon and Gartzke 1996). Other studies have offered collateral evidence for the democratic peace proposition using historical, anthropological, and experimental approaches (see, for example, Ember, Ember, and Russett 1992; Russett and Antholis 1992; Geva, DeRouen, and Mintz
1993; Mintz and Geva 1993; Crawford 1994; Weart 1994; Kiser, Drass, and Brustein 1995). Still others have presented various political, economic, psychological, and philosophical perspectives to illuminate why the democratic peace occurs (see, for example, Roy 1991; Lake 1992; Sørensen 1992; Russett 1993a, 1993b; Hermann and Kegley 1995; Kegley and Hermann 1995b; Huntley 1996).

Finally, several recent studies have focused on differentiating between the monadic and dyadic hypotheses that compose the democratic peace proposition (see, for example, Leeds and Davis 1995; Benoit 1996; Rousseau et al. 1996). In effect, there is no sign that interest in this topic is abating. More analyses are currently being circulated as working papers are scheduled for publication. All this research contributes to a vigorous debate—surely, one of very few areas in international relations scholarship in which, notwithstanding substantial disagreement, considerable progress and excitement have resulted from an iterative process of criticism and response.

**Pattern Recognition**

Pattern recognition and theoretical formulation form an interactive and, indeed, integral enterprise. In the contemporary democratic peace literature, observations of empirical regularities have tended to precede explicit theories to explain them. The next two sections of this essay will address the questions of "whether" and "why" in turn; namely, this section will explore if democracies are, in fact, more peaceful, and the next section will examine what factors account for the pacifism that is discovered.

Regarding the question of whether democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies, the debate revolves around three competing interpretations: (1) democracies are, in general, more peaceful than nondemocracies; (2) democracies are only more peaceful toward each other; and (3) democracies are no more peaceful than nondemocracies. Until recently, the literature appeared to lend overwhelming support to the view that although democracies in general are not more peaceful than other states, wars among them have been very rare and perhaps nonexistent. Although differing on specifics, most—although clearly not all—reviews of the accumulated research evidence have reached this general conclusion (see, for example, Doyle 1983a, 1983b; Rummel 1985, 1995b; Levy 1988, 1989; Gleditsch 1992; Starr 1992a, 1992b, 1995; Cashman 1993; Chan 1993; Morgan 1993; Russett 1993a; Hagan 1994; Haas 1995; Ray 1995; Gates, Knutsen, and Moses 1996; Maoz 1996).

In fact, a large number of studies have found that democracies almost never fight against one another—that is, with the possible exception of a few questionable cases, democracies do not find themselves on opposite sides of an armed conflict (see, for example, Babst 1964, 1972; Rummel 1983, 1985; Doyle 1986; Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Maoz and Russett 1992, 1993; Schweller 1992; Ray 1993, 1995; Russett 1993a; James, Solberg, and Wolfson 1995). Especially since World War II, the evidence for this "dyadic peace" among democracies is quite robust; the finding generally persists even after one accounts for such confounding effects as geographic proximity, economic development, and alliance membership (see, for example, Bremer 1992, 1993; Maoz and Russett 1992; Dixon 1993, 1994; Raymond 1994; Farber and Gowa 1995; Gleditsch 1995; Gates and McLaughlin 1996; Oneal et al. 1996). Even anthropological and experimental studies have offered support for this dyadic hypothesis (Ember, Ember, and Russett 1992; Russett and Antholis 1992; Geva, DeRouen, and Mintz 1993; Mintz and Geva 1993; Crawford 1994; Weart 1994). Democratic practices seem to have a pacifying influence on the relations between political units.
This “pact of nonaggression” among democracies, however, does not extend to nondemocracies. Indeed, as Doyle (1983b:324-325) has observed, “the very constitutional restraint, shared commercial interests, and international respect for individual rights that promote peace among liberal societies can exacerbate conflicts between liberal and nonliberal societies” [emphasis in original]. Doyle’s statement has been reinforced by a number of empirical studies that have concluded democracies are not less conflict-prone than nondemocracies in general, whether conflict is defined as war, intervention, or militarized dispute (see, for example, Wright 1942; Richardson 1960; Salmore and Hermann 1969; Russett and Monsen 1975; Small and Singer 1976; Chan 1984; Weede 1984, 1992; Garnham 1986; Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Merritt and Zinnes 1991; Maoz and Russett 1993; Kegley and Hermann 1995a).

Other scholars, however, have suggested that democracies are more peaceful in general. Rummel (1979, 1981, 1983, 1995b) has argued that a general negative relationship exists between democracy and violence. Ray (1995) has also cited evidence from Daniel Geller (1985), Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali (1989), Stuart Bremer (1992) and Clifton Morgan and Valerie Schwebach (1992) to support this “monadic” hypothesis. But his analysis, as noted by Miriam Elman (1996), focused instead on dyadic interactions. Recent studies by Kenneth Benoit (1996) and Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld (1996) lend support to the view that the presence of a democracy can by itself reduce the odds of conflict occurrence or escalation.

Examining this research, however, in more detail shows that in some studies a negative, but weak (that is, statistically insignificant), association was found between the level of a state’s democracy and its involvement in conflict—the more democratic, the more peaceful. Other studies reported no association, and still others discovered that democracies were more conflict-prone. The latter pattern was especially pronounced in the nineteenth century when democracies engaged in militarized disputes and waged extra-systemic (colonial or imperialist) wars. Evidence in support of democracies being more peaceful in general appears to be strongest in the period since the 1960s and when international conflict is defined as war involvement. Critics of the democratic peace argue that such results depend on the definitions of democracy and war used (see, for example, Layne 1994; Haas 1995; Oren 1995) and suggest that the generalizability of the phenomenon is limited to specific spatial or temporal domains (the North Atlantic region or the Cold War era) (Weede 1984; Cohen 1995; Gowa 1995).

Two recent studies confront explicitly and simultaneously the null, monadic, and dyadic hypotheses. David Rousseau and his colleagues (1996:526) noted that “our findings give powerful support to the argument that the democratic peace is primarily a dyadic process when addressing the escalation of international crises.” However, they also found substantial monadic effect in the sense that, as satisfied status quo powers, democracies are less likely to become involved in international crises in the first place. In the other study, Brett Leeds and David Davis (1995:25) concluded that the influence of domestic political structure on international interactions “is primarily a dyadic phenomenon” because “overwhelmingly . . . the foreign policy of democracies is influenced by characteristics of their target states.”

Because differences in pattern recognition often are affected by differences in theoretical formulation, concept operationalization, and data analysis, it is important to clarify how changes in any one of these may influence the answer to the question “are democracies more peaceful.” Let us turn now to a more detailed discussion of such issues to explore if they can help us differentiate among the three competing interpretations regarding the relationship between democracy and peace.
Criteria for what is or is not admissible evidence obviously shape empirical inquiry. Criteria can only be derived from specific theories. In the democratic peace literature, however, it is not always clear which or whose theory is motivating and guiding particular empirical analyses. Given the differences in theoretical referents, it is not surprising that considerable confusion exists about the meaning or relevance of the supposed evidence.

Although Immanuel Kant is routinely invoked as the first influential voice offering a philosophical justification for the democratic peace, analysts have not generally differentiated the ideas of republicanism, liberalism, and populism in his writing. As noted by Wade Huntley (1996), Kant viewed republicanism—defined as a rule of law that is respectful of people's basic freedoms—as the basis for interstate peace. Kant was rather skeptical about majoritarian rule, and, indeed, would not have considered himself a democrat if democracy were defined as the rule of popular will (Huntley 1996:48, 72; see also Waltz 1962; Spiro 1994:55; Oren 1995:151; Gates, Knutsen, and Moses 1996). To the extent that scholars undertaking empirical studies have exclusively stressed the attributes of participatory democracy and voter sovereignty (for example, electoral contest and universal suffrage), they have overlooked the critical variables in Kant's philosophy. Moreover, Kant's writing anticipated the distinction between the monadic and dyadic components of the democratic peace. Although positing that democracies would not wage war on other democracies, he rejected the related—and, as Huntley (1996:46) has put it, "often conflated"—idea that democracies were generally more peaceful.

Among the many empirical studies on the democratic peace, only Mark Brawley (1993:182) and Spencer Weart (1994:301) have focused specifically on republicanism, referring respectively to polities in which the interests of different economic sectors are represented and "political decisions are made by a body of citizens who hold equal rights." According to these definitions, not all republics are democracies (it is possible for oligarchies, in which only a minority of citizens have political rights, to be republics); however, all democracies are republics.

Rummel (1983), who has been most responsible among contemporary social scientists for popularizing the democratic peace proposition, has been careful to hypothesize a negative relationship between libertarianism and violence. Libertarian states will exhibit less violence. By libertarianism, he meant a variety of political as well as economic freedoms. Subsequent analyses, however, have included Rummel's concerns for political freedom but not his concerns for economic freedom (an exception is Brawley 1993 who linked pervasive domestic rents to an aversion to a liberal international economic order).

Other scholars have argued that what is important is how constrained leaders are. Morgan and Sally Campbell (1991:193) distinguished between officials' electoral accountability and their policy discretion, explaining that "our theoretical expectation should not be that popularly elected governments should be least war-prone; rather, our hypothesis is that governments facing the most severe decisional constraints . . . should be the least war-prone." Accordingly, leaders who were not elected could be as constrained as, or even more constrained than, their elected counterparts from undertaking war. Yet, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995a, 1995b) have maintained that too much rather than too little constraint can produce hypernationalism and war. Pointing to the weakening of central authority in democratizing countries such as "Weimar Russia," they noted that "among the great powers, the problem was not excessive authoritarian power at the center, but the opposite" (Mansfield and Snyder 1995b:92).
Woodrow Wilson is also often mentioned in this literature as an important advocate of democratic peace. Yet, he was less convinced by the virtues of mass democracy than those of an efficient administrative state (Oren 1995). Mass democracy—defined in terms of voting rights for a relatively high percentage of male adults—does not necessarily imply widespread civil liberties. Indeed, the concepts of “liberalism” and “democracy” have been “distinguishable attributes of states... which have been joined only in the last century and whose intermingling is complex” (Huntley 1996:46). As Owen (1994:102) has noted, Britain before the 1832 Great Reform Act was liberal but undemocratic, whereas the Confederacy during the U.S. Civil War was democratic but illiberal. A general failure to make such distinctions can lead to considerable confusion in empirical studies concerning the particular regime attributes that are supposed to produce the democratic peace.

A recognition of this issue can contribute to our understanding of the theoretical and empirical nuances that are extant in the democratic peace literature. For instance, it enables us, as Huntley (1996:50) has observed, to appreciate Kant’s view that excessive “democracy,” not “liberalism,” challenges republics’ conduct of foreign policy in an unstable international environment. It also helps to explain Weart’s (1994) finding that oligarchic republics were able to maintain peace among themselves, and Russett and William Antholis’s (1992) discovery that the less liberal democracies in ancient Greece had waged wars against one another.

**Concept Specification**

Not only is the theoretical referent unclear, but the meaning of democracy is contested (see, for example, Sørensen 1993; Haas 1995). The various rating schemes that have been used to assess democracy have been criticized for being subjective, ethnocentric, inconsistent, incomplete, and biased (see, for example, Scoble and Wiseberg 1981; Bollen 1993; Oren 1995). As Ido Oren (1995:147) has argued, the values embodied in the usual definitions often “are the products, more than determinants, of America’s past foreign political relations.” There is also not a strong consensus about the nature of democracy. Should the definition of democracy emphasize—or include—mass welfare, distributive justice, popular sovereignty, personal liberty, or political participation? However one reacts to this question, it seems important to disaggregate the concept of democracy and to specify whether and how each of its components can promote—or hinder—the pursuit of peace. The desiderata subsumed under this concept often pose competing concerns, and it is not obvious that they should all contribute to peace. Significantly, as observed above, those theorists whose arguments are generally invoked in discussions of the democratic peace have very different ideas about democracy; their ideas about democracy often fail to correspond to those of the analysts doing research or to those of the original developers of the data sets used in these analyses. Given the different procedures for operationalizing democracy and related concepts, it is not surprising that these data sets are not always able to provide convergent validation for particular results (see, for example, Kegley and Hermann 1996; Lemke and Reed 1996).

Scholars also need to be aware of the difference between what is involved in determining the type of political system a country has and in assessing the degree to which the country represents that particular regime type. Maoz (1996:56) has offered a useful caveat, calling attention to the treatment of anocracies by those using the Polity data set to measure democracy. Contrary to some practices, these polities do not represent the middle point on a democracy-autocracy continuum. They possess a mixture of regime characteristics and are conceptually different in kind, not in degree, from the democracies and autocracies. As Harvey Starr
(1992b:209) has stressed, “the central problem facing decision-makers, as in many games [of international interaction], is that of separation: how to distinguish what type of opponent one is facing in terms of its preferences and preference ordering [emphases in original].”

In a similar vein, John Mearsheimer (1990a:50) has maintained that “the possibility always exists that a democracy will revert to an authoritarian state. This threat of backsliding means that one democratic state can never be sure that another democratic state will not change its stripes and turn on it sometime in the future.” Perhaps enticed by the prospects of the “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992), researchers analyzing the democratic peace have shown a greater interest in the spatial spread of formally democratic structures than in their temporal resilience. Examining the broadening, or diffusion, of democratic institutions across countries (see, for example, Starr 1991; Siverson 1995) is important, but it is also necessary to investigate the deepening of a democratic ethos within specific countries. Although a large number of countries have recently adopted democratic structures of governance (for instance, universal suffrage, multiparty competition, contested elections, legislative oversight), it is not evident that their leaders and people have internalized such democratic norms as those regarding tolerance, compromise, and sharing power.

The available evidence suggests that a civic culture of such norms tends to follow, imperfectly and belatedly, the introduction of democratic institutions (Muller and Seligson 1994). Moreover, a growing literature (Shin 1994) attests to the difficulties that accompany a democratic transition—whose success is paradoxically more often a result of negotiated pacts by elite factions than popular reforms based on mass mobilization (Huntington 1984). Researchers should, therefore, distinguish between initiating democratization as a process and consolidating democracy as an outcome. Sørensen (1993:62) has argued that much of the democratic progress made in the recent “third wave” of democratization has been fragile, tentative, and reversible, remarking that “in most cases, the odds seem to weigh heavily against the further development and consolidation of the frail democratic openings that have taken place in recent years.” Taking into account regime durability and the degree to which democratic norms are accepted by elites or masses can affect which countries are considered democratic and which types of democracies are considered more peaceful.

Conflict Domain

Just as there is controversy over the treatment of the independent variable, there is debate about the nature of the dependent variable. Strictly speaking, the latter should be peace, even though most researchers actually study the occurrence (or severity) of conflict. Of course, these two phenomena—peace and the absence of war—are not necessarily conceptually equivalent.

Zones of peace have existed among democracies as well as among nondemocracies. But there can be different kinds of peace—“negative peace,” “stable peace,” “pluralistic security community”—with different causes (Kacowicz 1995). Peace, defined as the absence of war, could be the result of foreign hegemony, mutual deterrence, or acquiescence to the status quo; it could also be the result of shared values and positive interdependence. These cases of “no war” are typically treated alike in the extant literature and combined into a single category for comparison with those cases in which war occurred.

As was noted earlier, a number of studies have gone beyond a strict concern with war involvement. They have investigated a variety of foreign policy behaviors including foreign interventions, militarized disputes, alliance membership, conflict
mediation, trade practices, and international conventions. Do these studies offer legitimate tests of the democratic peace proposition, or do they fall outside its theoretical bounds?

Kantian and Wilsonian formulations are mainly concerned with war, whereas Rummel's theory addresses only violence. Consequently, the propensity of democracies to engage in covert or overt intervention (see, for example, Cohen 1994; Kegley and Hermann 1995a) is not accepted by some analysts as evidence against the democratic peace proposition. Indeed, Starr (1995:2, 3-4) has remarked that investigations examining "such international behaviors as interventions, militarized disputes, escalation, etc., . . . do not disprove or weaken the DPprop [democratic peace proposition]," which simply asserts that "war does not occur in democratic dyads." Likewise, in Maoz's (1996:68) view, data on foreign interventions and civil wars, although not militarized disputes, are not directly relevant to this proposition.

Commenting on this same issue of theory-data congruity, Rummel (1987:113) has argued that events data on nonviolent international conflict (Vincent 1987a, 1987b) cannot provide an appropriate test of his theory because they focus on the severity of violence committed by states. War incidence, referring to only one aspect of violence, is also not sufficient for testing Rummel's (1985:426) hypotheses. Disputes and crises are relevant only if they actually involve violence.

Proponents of the democratic peace proposition, however, have at times considered certain collateral evidence as supporting this proposition. They have not limited their evidence to just the war phenomenon or international violence more generally. In fact, some of the most prominent research supporting the democratic peace (see, for example, Bremer 1992, 1993; Dixon 1993, 1994; Maoz and Russett 1993; Raymond 1994; Hewitt and Wilkenfeld 1996) has examined the frequency of militarized disputes, the dynamics of crisis escalation, and the propensity to accept international mediation by democracies and nondemocracies to illuminate the mechanisms that prevent war among the democratic countries.

Critics of the democratic peace proposition could argue that the less appealing evidence should be informative for this very same reason. For instance, the incidence of foreign interventions undertaken by democracies—sometimes against fellow democracies (Kegley and Hermann 1995a)—is a relevant concern in Kant's philosophy. Such behavior undermines the rule of law and violates the principle of state sovereignty. For Kant, the rule of law at the domestic and international levels is mutually dependent; "a league of peace" should consist of autonomous nations that retain their sovereignty. He would have serious misgivings about liberal interventionism, considering it in the long run unnecessary and counterproductive (Huntley 1996:71).

Moreover, in the eyes of some critics, civil and extra-systemic wars are clearly instances of warfare and should be covered by the democratic peace proposition. Although these wars are generally disregarded by its proponents, such evidence is deemed crucial by its challengers. One skeptic (Layne 1994:41) has argued that "the War Between the States cuts to the heart of the democratic peace theory's causal logic: if democratic norms and culture fail to prevent the outbreak of civil war within democracies, what reason is there to believe that they will prevent the outcome of interstate wars between democracies?"

As analysts shift their focus from the study of wars to that of conflict of less intensity (see, for example, Gates and McLaughlin 1996; Hewitt and Wilkenfeld 1996; Oneal and Ray 1996; Oneal and Russett 1996), it is important to articulate more fully the theoretical connection between the occurrence of disputes and crises, on the one hand, and escalation to war, on the other. The rationale, often implicit, seems to be that the former types of conflict are usually a precursor to war, and ipso facto democracies should be expected to have fewer disputes and crises if
the democratic peace proposition is valid. As Bruce Bueno de Mesquita has noted, however, an opposite inference is also plausible. If, indeed, democracies are sure that war with other democracies is impossible, should they feel constrained from getting into disputes and crises with each other—after all, they no longer have to fear the risk of escalation? Leeds and Davis (1995:6) have offered still another perspective, observing that the democracies’ “well-known desire to avoid war may not have purely pacific effects; it may also undermine deterrence.” If true, this possibility suggests that democracies are more likely to become involved in crises because their adversaries tend to question their resolve.

Three recent studies help shed light on the linkage between democracies’ involvement in crises and disputes and their involvement in wars. Rousseau and his colleagues (1996) found that democracies are less likely to be involved in crisis initiation because they are generally satisfied with the status quo. Hewitt and Wilkenfeld (1996) discovered that when a crisis involves a larger proportion of democracies, the severity of ensuing violence is diminished. The proportion of democracies, however, did not predict whether violence would be used as a crisis-management technique. And, unlike the results reported by William Dixon (1993), how involved and effective international organizations were in resolving crises was not significantly different in those cases with a high proportion of democracies from those with a low proportion. Along the same line, Gregory Raymond (1994, 1996) has shown that although democracies are more likely to accept binding third-party intervention for resolving crises, such arbitration efforts do not produce more successful outcomes for democracies compared to nondemocracies. In combination, these studies suggest that, as status quo powers, democracies are typically less likely to initiate crises. Once in a crisis, however, they do not preclude the use of violence, although they tend to limit its severity. This apparent restraint against conflict escalation, though, does not necessarily imply that democracies are more successful than nondemocracies in crisis resolution.

Policy Initiator

In their recent article, Rousseau and his colleagues (1996:515) reported that “In the twentieth century, the Belgium-Netherlands dyad has been peaceful, but the Belgium-Germany dyad has been war prone. This is not because democratic Belgium was more war prone in its relations with authoritarian Germany than with democratic Netherlands; Belgium did not initiate violence against either but was invaded twice by Germany.” As this example suggests, simple frequency counts of past conflict involvement cannot address the core claim of the democratic peace proposition, because they fail to distinguish between initiators and defenders in international hostilities. The democratic peace proposition contends that for structural or cultural reasons democracies are less able or willing to initiate violence or to start war. It does not argue that, if attacked, democracies will fail to respond in kind. Hence, the determination of which side in a conflict was the first one to resort to arms is critical for the democratic peace proposition, although relatively few analysts have addressed this issue (Chan 1984; Leeds and Davis 1995; Rousseau et al. 1996). Even though the role of initiator of violence does not necessarily mean the country in question is the aggressor in a particular conflict, it is still the most important discriminating indicator for examining the democratic peace proposition.

Chan (1984) failed to find a statistically significant pattern indicating that democracies are less likely to start wars or to fight on the side of war initiators. More recently, Leeds and Davis (1995:22–23) have observed that “democratic-democratic dyads very rarely experience violence. Monadically, however, democracies send
more violence than other types of states.” Unprovoked or asymmetric resorts to violence by democracies against targets that do not have the means to retaliate undermine the democratic peace proposition because they imply that the fear of retaliation, rather than inherent democratic properties, prevented the use of violence in more symmetric dyads. In the same vein, democracies’ use of overt intervention or covert subversion against vulnerable targets—although not necessarily involving massive violence—also provides evidence concerning how regime characteristics may or may not restrain states from initiating hostilities. Although democracies have initiated interventions against both democracies and nondemocracies, they are less likely to be the targets of such actions regardless of the regime type of the initiator (Kegley and Hermann 1995a; Hermann and Kegley 1996). Frequency counts that are insensitive to the distinction between initiator and target, thus, overlook the tendency for democracy to shield a country from becoming the target of an intervention but not to prevent it from undertaking such action itself.

Relevant Actors

In addition to the proper behavioral domain for testing the democratic peace proposition, there is a related question about the nature of the actors whose behavior should be the subject of study. Should these actors be limited to contemporary states, or could they include nonstate entities (including premodern polities)? As already mentioned, several studies (Ember, Ember, and Russett 1992; Russett and Antholis 1992; Crawford 1994; Weart 1994) have examined external relations in ancient Greece, medieval Switzerland, early modern Italy, and among the native American nations and other preindustrial polities. This research on relations among premodern societies has offered support for the democratic peace proposition.

Evidence regarding relations between such societies and modern states is generally overlooked, however, in evaluating the democratic peace proposition. Thus, researchers examining the war-proneness of democracies typically restrict their analyses to warfare among sovereign states defined as recipients of diplomatic recognition by Britain and France or, more recently, as members of the League of Nations or the United Nations. As a result, they consider only the historical record of interstate wars and disregard the extra-systemic wars waged against ostensibly nonstate actors. Data on the latter type of warfare would challenge the monadic hypothesis that democracies are more peaceful (Chan 1984; Haas 1995).

Data Coding

In addition to the issues of what types of behavior and which actors should come under the coverage of the democratic peace proposition, there is the matter of data measurement. According to Rummel (1985:426), “violence, as far as [his] propositions are concerned, cannot be measured adequately by a count of violent events or, as an indirect measure, a count of revolutions or wars. Most relevant would be some measure of severity overall, such as the number of people killed in official foreign violence [emphasis in original].” Yet, both proponents and opponents of the democratic peace have so far studied almost exclusively the incidence of conflict rather than its intensity. It is an open empirical question as to whether democracies, once in war, are more restrained by structural or normative considerations from inflicting massive military and civilian casualties on the target (Chan 1993). Winston Churchill apparently believed that democracies would be less restrained, remarking that “the wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings” (quoted in Raymond 1996:15). The burden is on the proponents of the
democratic peace to explain why those institutional and normative properties hypothesized to restrain democracies from entering war should not also have a similar effect on their conduct of war. This point is especially relevant in the context of Rummel’s assertion that it is the severity, not the mere incidence, of violence that matters most when testing the democratic peace hypothesis.

A second coding concern grows out of the heterogeneity of the conflict phenomena being studied. A sample of wars, for example, could include both large-scale conflicts producing massive casualties (the Vietnam War) and comparatively minor clashes (the “Football War” between El Salvador and Honduras). Moreover, as Arvid Raknerud and Håvard Hegre (1995:11) have remarked, “the threshold for being counted as a participant in a war is low compared to the threshold for a war being counted as a war: A participant is counted if more than 1000 of its troops were involved, or if the country lost more than 100 people on the battlefield.” Thus, both Brazil and the Soviet Union would be counted as participants in World War II; likewise, both Ethiopia and China would be coded as participants in the Korean War. Simple frequency counts of these types of war involvement overlook the tremendous differences in the roles these countries played in the conflicts.

A third coding problem revolves around a few ambiguous cases that have been a source of much contention. Disagreements, for instance, have arisen about the characteristics of the German and Spanish regimes that fought in World War I and the Spanish-American War, respectively, as well as Finland’s status when it was a belligerent against the democratic Allies in World War II (Ray 1993, 1995; Layne 1994; Oren 1995; Russett 1995). These cases need not be controversial if one adheres to the theoretical premise of Rummel’s (1983:29) “joint freedom” proposition (a version of the dyadic hypothesis described above). This proposition offers a categorical prediction: international violence is precluded when both parties in a relationship are democratic. Purposive conduct—not legal formality—should be the criterion for judging such cases as Finland’s involvement in World War II. If that country did not undertake deliberate military action against the Allies, its behavior would not contradict Rummel’s hypothesis. Accordingly, marginal or ambiguous cases would not count against the democratic peace proposition. Conversely, “one clear case of violence or war unqualified by very unusual or mitigating circumstances falsifies the proposition [emphases in original]” (Rummel 1983:29).

A fourth coding issue pertains to the disagreement over whether dichotomous categories (democracy versus nondemocracy) or scalar measures (more or less democratic) are more appropriate for testing the democratic peace proposition. Building on the work of Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman (1992), Starr (1992a, 1992b) has made a case for dichotomous categories being the more appropriate. These researchers argue that whether or not countries avoid war depends on their mutual recognition as democratic doves. Leaders perceive their counterparts as either doves or nondoves (this latter category includes both definite hawks and ambiguous cases). In a world of imperfect information, they often rely on the regime attributes of their counterparts to infer their dovishness—emphasizing an assessment of their intentions rather than their capabilities (Farnham 1996). “The ‘democraticness’ of a state is used [by them] as an indicator of doveness; it is used to separate doves from non-doves” (Starr 1992b:210). When leaders on both sides perceive each other as doves, they prefer to negotiate than to fight. It takes a certain threshold of democratic achievement, however—and one might add, a considerable test of time—for leaders to feel confident about assigning their counterparts to the dovish category (Starr 1995; see also Ray 1995:93). Leaders are more apt to err on the side of being too cautious than being too reckless. They can be expected to be more willing to accept the cost of treating a dove as a nondove than of mistaking a nondove as a dove. Countries with intermediate levels of
democracy are not likely to be perceived as members of the democratic camp; they will be placed with the nondemocracies.

The key issue is whether leaders are likely to perceive and, therefore, to treat their foreign counterparts conservatively in a dichotomous fashion as suggested above—and in the manner of stereotyping in-versus out-groups as suggested by political psychology (Hermann and Kegley 1995; Kegley and Hermann 1995b), or whether they are likely to place their counterparts along a democracy-nondemocracy continuum as implied by a scalar measurement (Benoit 1996). The former scenario seems more plausible. As Owen (1994:102) has observed, "a liberal democracy will only avoid war with a state that it believes to be liberal [emphasis in original]." This rationale also accords well with what John Oneal and his colleagues (Oneal et al. 1996; Oneal and Ray 1996) found when they explored the linkage between economic interdependence and the democratic peace. Dichotomous measures of democracy performed much better than scalar ones in explaining the incidence of militarized disputes.

**Diagnostic Standards**

Coding decisions cannot be separated from diagnostic standards; that is, how does one interpret the available evidence? A strong and persistent cross-national correlation between level of democracy and frequency of war involvement does not validate the central claim of the democratic peace proposition that democracies do not fight each other (the dyadic or "joint freedom" hypothesis). This claim postulates that shared democracy is a sufficient, although not a necessary, condition for peace. In his response to Layne's (1994) analysis of several cases of "near misses" (that is, occasions in which democracies almost went to war), Russett (1995:166–167) pointed out that the democratic peace proposition does not rule out the possible contribution of other factors (for example, strategic calculation) to avoiding war. Peace can be maintained by a variety of factors, including shared democracy. After all, many nondemocracies have managed to live in peace—a fact that should hardly invalidate the democratic peace proposition. If the dyadic hypothesis is valid, however, one should not expect to find any war between two democracies. The logic of inquiry would suggest that we need to determine whether, among the known cases of war, there has ever been an unambiguous instance of belligerence between two democracies. One clear-cut case of such belligerence would be sufficient to disconfirm the democratic peace proposition.

Conversely, the same logic would argue that numerous demonstrations of a negative cross-national correlation between the degree of shared democracy and the incidence of war between pairs of states would not be enough to validate the proposition. Indeed, such efforts seem quite irrelevant. Rummel's (1983:29) "joint-freedom proposition" states that "libertarian systems mutually preclude violence." It does not logically follow, however, that the level of violence—or the incidence of war—should necessarily be higher for mixed or nondemocratic dyads. The hypothesis "asserts an amount (zero) and not a correlation or association between libertarianism and violence" (Rummel 1983:43). Moreover, it only posits the presence of joint democracy as a sufficient condition for nonviolence or peace; it does not assert that the absence of joint democracy is sufficient to cause violence or war. Correlational analyses, however, implicitly accept the latter assertion, when they report that a given increase (or decrease) in the degree of joint democracy reduces (or raises) the level of violence or the probability of war by a certain amount (see Rummel 1985:421).

The reader should note that the relevant theories also do not claim that joint democracy is a necessary condition for peace. Relations among most mixed and
nondemocratic dyads have remained peaceful in the absence of this condition. Accordingly, the democratic peace proposition does not deny the possibility that "zones of peace" can be established among mixed or nondemocratic states. To the extent that such instances have occurred historically—such as among the oligarchic republics studied by Weart (1994) or the South American states mentioned by Cohen (1995)—they encourage researchers to search for alternative conditions or policies that promote peace (for instance, hegemonic stability, power balance, security community). These occurrences, however, do not invalidate the democratic peace proposition because it does not argue that joint democracy is a necessary condition for, or the only way of, establishing peace (Russett and Ray 1995).

Statistical Significance

A common objection to the democratic peace proposition is that, until recently, there were few democracies. Therefore, they were not likely to find themselves at war—especially given that war itself is a rare phenomenon for all pairs of states (see, for example, Mearsheimer 1990a:50–51; Layne 1994:38; Spiro 1994:51, 68). According to this complaint, the absence (or rarity) of war among democracies is a result of chance alone. This concern has been addressed by the studies that have shown a statistically significant difference in the incidence of war participation between democratic dyads and other kinds of dyads (see, for example, Bremer 1992, 1993; Maoz and Russett 1992).

The key issue is not so much the probability of war among democracies at any point in time. Rather, it is the cumulative probability of this hazard. Although the absence of war among democracies in any given year is not surprising, this zero observation is highly significant if, as appears to be the case, it turns up year after year over a long period of time (Russett 1995:171; see also Maoz and Abdolali 1989). Spiro (1994:75–76), however, has found the evidence supporting the democratic peace phenomenon to be less significant for longer time periods than for shorter ones (with the time around World War I providing an exception to his general conclusion of insignificance).

Wars tend to be a rare phenomena regardless of the regime characteristics of the belligerents. Even if democracies have the same propensity to fight war as nondemocracies, the expected frequency of armed conflict between democracies would be relatively low. Therefore, how one interprets a few ambiguous cases can make a rather decisive difference in judging the validity of the democratic peace proposition. "The existence of even a few wars between democratic states would wipe out entirely the statistical, and therefore arguably the substantive, significance of the difference in the historical rates of warfare between pairs of democratic states, on the one hand, and pairs of states in general, on the other" (Ray 1995:42).

Temporal Matters

Given that the democratic peace proposition makes a causal claim, its validation requires, among other things, that the alleged cause occurs before the effect. The standard annual observations used in most analyses, however, can prove inadequate for addressing this concern. Consider Raknerud and Hegre's (1995) example of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. This conflict would be coded as a war between two democracies if regime characteristics were evaluated at the beginning of 1974. Before the Turkish invasion, however, a coup overthrew the Cypriot government, thus changing the nature of the dyadic relationship. The continuous-time model developed by these authors tracked the exact succession of events much more effectively than the annual snapshots that are generally used.
When temporal aggregations stretch over several years, the danger of spurious causal attribution is even higher. For instance, Benoit (1996) assessed democracy at two points in time: 1965 and 1973. Each of these two annual democracy observations was used to explain the incidence of war between 1960 and 1974 and between 1960 and 1980. The observations of the independent variable were made several years after the start of the time periods covered by the dependent variable, thus reversing the temporal order necessary for causal attribution in these cases. Moreover, because only one snapshot of the independent variable was taken, it was assumed that countries did not undergo regime changes between 1960 and 1974 or between 1960 and 1980.

With some exceptions, the relevant literature has also been rather unconcerned about the possible lag effect between a country's regime change and its foreign conduct, and between its regime change and others' recognition of, and confidence in, this change. Recency and longevity, however, do seem to matter. Russett (1993a:86–87) has found that the behavior of stable, long-term democracies is more supportive of the democratic peace proposition than that of recent, fragile democracies. Mansfield and Snyder (1995a:8) have warned that “democratizing states [emphasis in original]—those that have recently undergone regime change in a democratic direction—are much more war-prone than states that have undergone no regime change. . . .” Transitional processes can exacerbate internal demagoguery and external aggressiveness. Weart (1994:310) has stressed the importance of regime stability in reassuring foreign audiences and avoiding any “misperception of the newborn” regime. His analysis emphasized “well-established” republics, requiring that a new democratic regime be in place for three years after its initiation to allow the norms of compromise and tolerance to develop. Constitutional pledges and formal structural changes lack credibility for foreigners unless they have met the test of time through customary and persistent practice.

Calendar years may not be the best way to capture the nature of the processes just described. It might be more sensible to track generational cohorts as a way of assessing the effects of time on the internalization of democratic norms. Accordingly, one would not expect the effects of such norms to be felt in foreign policy until, say, three generations (of approximately twenty years each) after the initial democratic opening so that children socialized in the new norms would have time to become leading officials. Alternatively, if one were interested in structural explanations of the democratic peace, Samuel Huntington’s (1991) double-turnover criterion could serve to reassure domestic and foreign audiences alike that the electoral institutions of democratic contest had been securely put into place (Ray 1995:100). Whether lags of one, five, ten, or nineteen years between the initiation of democratic reform and the subsequent outbreak of war were too long or too short (see, for example, Mansfield and Snyder 1995a; Maoz 1996:58) could, then, be related in a more coherent and explicit way to the theoretical arguments being tested.

Time poses another threat to valid inference in the democratic peace research with the use of country-years or dyad-years as the units of analysis (see, for example, Rummel 1983; Chan 1984; Bremer 1992; Maoz and Russett 1993; Farber and Gowa 1995). As these and other scholars have recognized, such units are not independent; thus, using statistical methods that assume independence is inappropriate. This problem applies not only to the years when wars persist. Peace, like war, tends to continue from one year to the next. Deleting years with continuing wars (that is, removing years subsequent to the first year of belligerence) from a sample of cases to be analyzed still leaves serial dependency among the years in which there was peace (Bremer 1992; Maoz and Russett 1993; Raknerud and Hegre 1995; Ray 1995). Parenthetically, even though they are customarily treated
as separate observations, those instances in which several countries join together to engage in war (for example, World War II) are also not statistically independent.

Analyses using regimes (adjusted for years) or disputes as observation units avoid the above problem and are, accordingly, more valid (see, for example, Morgan and Campbell 1991; Russett 1995:173–174). Maoz and Russett’s (1993) decision to investigate only “politically relevant” dyads is also more sound than an undifferentiated approach. Political relevance here refers to dyads that are contiguous or involve a major power. Decisions to include or exclude certain dyads across different studies seem to be responsible for some major differences in their substantive findings (see, for example, Maoz and Russett 1993; Barbieri 1996a; Gates and McLaughlin 1996).

Finally, trends that occur across time can undermine the stationarity assumption. The number of independent states in the international system has increased over time—from 32 in 1840 to 182 in 1992. Raknerud and Hegre (1995:7) have indicated what consequences this expansion in the size of the international system can have on testing the democratic peace proposition:

\[
\text{Since each state enters } N-1 \text{ dyads, the number of interstate exposures a state is subject to increases linearly with } N. \text{ If the war probabilities in each dyad-year are constant, the probability of war approaches one as } N \text{ increases. The important implication for statistical modeling is that probabilities at the dyadic level must be modeled as a function of the size of the system. Failure to incorporate this explicit system dependence yields estimated probabilities of war at the monadic level that become absurd when } N \text{ increases. Furthermore, there is a high risk of spurious correlation if we include covariates that are correlated with the (unmodeled) time-trend.}
\]

Waves of democratization provide an example of what Raknerud and Hegre are describing. The percentage of democratic dyads in the international system is correlated with this trend. This realization should lead the reader to question “whether the significant negative relationship between double-democracy dyads and war reported in the literature is a substantial finding or merely an artifact of the double-democracy variable being a proxy for a general negative trend in dyadic war probabilities” (Raknerud and Hegre 1995:7).

**Theoretical Explanations**

The previous section raised a number of questions about the democratic peace phenomenon that focused on the match between data, methods, concepts, and theory in examining whether democracies are more peaceful. Turning now from the question of “whether” to that of “why,” this section explores what factors can account for democracies’ peaceful relations with each other and for the nonpeaceful relations they sometimes have with nondemocracies. The existing literature features a variety of explanations that will be organized here under three headings: the Kantian rationale; explanations invoking common structures, norms, and interests; and the rationalist approach reflecting perception and attribution. Because these formulations overlap in some respects, they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

**The Kantian Rationale**

Kant pointed to three factors that could promote peace among republics. (These factors encompass several aspects of the structural and normative explanations that will be discussed below.) First, *public opinion* constitutes a powerful force against belligerence. As Kant (1957 [1795]:12–13) observed, “if the consent of the citizens
is required in order to decide that war should be declared. . . nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war."

Second, a spirit of commerce contributes to peace. Being more developed economically and more active in foreign trade, democracies especially stand to benefit from international commerce and are self-deterred from fighting wars against one another because of the prospective losses that could result from disrupted trade. Dense networks of commercial ties lead to interaction that over time produces the norms of mutual responsiveness and reciprocal adjustment. Through international commerce, Kant (1957 [1795]:28) believed, "a peaceful traffic among nations was established, and thus understanding, conventions, and peaceable relations were established among the most distant peoples."

Third, the creation of a pacific union among democracies restrains war among them. Democracies’ shared values and common institutions provide the political foundation for a league of peace in which, over time, norms of reciprocity and expectations concerning a preference for nonviolent procedures develop to regulate interaction. A more contemporary formulation (Deutsch et al. 1957) refers to this integrative process as the formation of a security community in which the idea of resorting to arms as a way of settling disputes becomes unthinkable. Kant (1983 [1795]:117) argued that a league of peace would "eventually include all nations and thus lead to perpetual peace . . .” because once

"a powerful and enlightened people should form a republic (which by its nature must be inclined to seek perpetual peace), it will provide a focal point for a federal association among other nations that will join it in order to guarantee a state of peace among nations that is in accord with the idea of the right of nations, and through several associations of this sort such a federation can extend further and further."

Extant research offers different degrees of support for Kant’s three causal hypotheses, subjecting them to important qualifications. Russett (1990) has summarized the influence of public opinion in shaping the foreign policies of democracies. Although this influence cannot be denied, public opinion is usually quite “permissive” and often only reacts to policies (Hughes 1978). Its tendency to under- or overreact led Walter Lippman to remark that in their foreign affairs, democracies are likely “to be too late with too little, or too long with too much, too pacific in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutralist or appeasing or too transparent” (quoted in Sørensen 1993:96). This characterization is especially apt in describing democracies’ relations with nondemocracies.

Public opinion in democracies can be quite belligerent toward nondemocracies and even, at times, toward fellow democracies (see, for example, Ray 1995:193). Regarding other democracies, public opinion seems to exercise an effective restraint only against the outright application of open and massive military violence because established democracies have been known to undertake covert subversions and armed interventions against their peers (Forsythe 1992; Joyner 1992; Russett 1993a; Stedman 1993; Rosas 1994; Cohen 1995; Kegley and Hermann 1995a). The influence public opinion has on policymaking also varies considerably among the established democracies. It is quite dependent on each country's institutional arrangements, with some governments—like that in the United States—being rather open to its influence and other governments—like that in France—being insulated from its effect (Risse-Kappenberg 1991). In several recent democracies in Eastern Europe, public opinion has reflected racial demagoguery, ethnic mobilization, and hypernationalism. Similarly, religious fundamentalism has enjoyed significant mass support in the Middle East, where liberalism, populism, and electoral accountability do not necessarily coincide.
In the context of two-level games (Putnam 1988; Evans, Jacobson, and Putnam 1993), democratization can reduce the bargaining space for international negotiators faced with the problem of domestic ratification. Greater public influence may hinder rather than promote international agreements. One recent study (Kozhemiakin 1994) has found that its more assertive public impeded Ukraine’s compliance with the nuclear nonproliferation regime whereas, unconstrained by popular sentiment, authoritarian Kazakhstan was able to be more responsive to this regime. Another case study (Lehman and McCoy 1992), focusing on Brazil’s debt problems, concluded that under conditions of severe internal constraints, fragile democracies may be more prone to engage in diplomatic brinkmanship and risk the collapse of international negotiations than their authoritarian counterparts—who are probably both more willing and more able to impose internationally dictated concessions on their domestic constituents.

Research on Kant’s second reason for democratic peace indicates that countries with extensive trade ties are, indeed, less likely to go to war (see, for example, Polachek 1980; Gasiorowski and Polachek 1982; Domke 1988; Brawley 1993; Dixon and Moon 1993; Gowa and Mansfield 1993; Gowa 1994; Mansfield 1994; Oneal et al. 1996; Oneal and Russett 1996). The cause-effect relationship is not entirely clear, however: do countries trade more because they are already on peaceful terms, or are their peaceful relations caused by extensive trade (Pollins 1989a, 1989b)? Naturally, economic interdependence produces not only incentives for cooperation, but also problems of mutual vulnerability (see, for example, Keohane and Nye 1977). It is a double-edged sword with beneficial as well as costly aspects, and the relationship between interdependence and conflict tends toward non-linearity (Gasiorowski 1986; de Vries 1990; Barbieri 1996a, 1996b). Interdependence can lead to greater cooperation or more conflict depending on which aspects dominate. Except under certain limiting conditions, international trade does not in itself assure peace (Gowa 1995). Wars have occurred among countries with close economic ties. Thus, Kahler (1979/80:393) has argued that in 1914 an international system “characterized by high economic interdependence, unparalleled prosperity, and relative openness still went to war.”

Yet, to the extent that trade has security implications and that states are inclined to pay a security premium in trading with those perceived to be more trustworthy and less likely to manipulate commerce for political gain (Pollins 1989a, 1989b; Brawley 1993; Gowa and Mansfield 1993; Chan 1995; Oneal et al. 1996), one can expect democracies to engage in more extensive trade with each other. Therefore, although trade may not necessarily produce peace, democracies are apparently more inclined to trade with each other and, as we have seen, they are, in fact, more peaceful in their relations.

The historical evidence strongly supports Kant’s observations regarding a pacific union among democracies. Such polities share important procedural norms concerning conflict resolution. They are more likely to entrust third parties who have judicial competence with mediating their disputes (see, for example, Dixon 1993, 1994; Maoz and Russett 1993; Raymond 1994). Moreover, they are more likely to settle disputes by compromise. To the extent that the norms of reciprocal responsiveness, mutual adjustment, and joint gains become the stable expectations and institutionalized procedures among democracies, these countries should have a better chance of resolving their differences by peaceful means (Starr 1992a, 1992b).

As already noted, established democracies have less confidence in the stability and dependability of their more immature and fragile counterparts (Russett 1993a). Indeed, most historical evidence on security communities has come from Western civilization. Thus, Cohen (1995) has argued that the “third wave” of
democratization is too recent to demonstrate that this “pacific union” has been effectively extended beyond the North Atlantic region. Maoz (1996:71) has countered by observing that the democratic peace is neither restricted temporally (it is “a global phenomenon which extends into a history well before the advent of nuclear weapons”) nor limited spatially (“there is nothing to the North Atlantic culture notion”). Cultural explanations alone cannot account for the democratic peace given that these same North Atlantic countries have fought two world wars (Maoz 1996:69) and many of the interstate wars to date could be considered civil wars within the Western civilization (Huntington 1993).

Unit-level explanations based on the concerns and perceptions of states give us only a partial understanding of the democratic peace phenomenon. In addition, systemic-level factors are operating. One such factor is the norms of international conduct. As already noted, there is a dualism in a democracy’s foreign conduct, with one set of norms characterizing its relations with other democracies and another set applying to those with nondemocracies. Maoz and Russett (1993:625) have noted that “when a democratic state confronts a nondemocratic one, it may be forced to adapt to the 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.” When faced with a noncooperative counterpart, a player following the logic of tit-for-tat will be forced to retaliate—thus making noncooperation the dominant strategy for both sides (Axelrod 1984). As democracies increase in number, however, a general strategy of conditional cooperation should become more attractive for all states. The norms guiding democracies’ interactions could evolve into the dominant pattern in international relations.

This process is enhanced by the democracies’ competitive edge in promoting economic development, demonstrating policy resolve, and prevailing in wars (see, for example, Lake 1992; Olson 1993; Fearon 1994). These advantages, according to Huntley (1996), force nondemocracies to become more democratic over time. Such systemic influence provides a powerful stimulus for democratization, creating a “bandwagoning” effect for countries to join the “league of democracies” (Walt 1987). As Daniel Deudney and John Ikenberry (1991/92:97) have put it, “in short, a world dominated by liberal states affords the remaining illiberal states both a need and an opportunity to liberalize.” The Kantian dynamic is, therefore, seen to operate not only “from inside out” but also “from outside in.”

Structures, Norms, and Interests

Two popular contemporary explanations for the democratic peace revolve around democracies’ structural constraints and shared cultures. The structural explanation basically argues that the institutional arrangements of a democracy limit the autonomy and discretion of leaders to launch war. The shared cultures explanation posits that democracies externalize their domestic political norms of tolerance and compromise in their foreign relations, thus making war with others like them unlikely.

In general, normative explanations of the democratic peace have been shown to be more persuasive than structural explanations (Maoz and Russett 1993). As Starr (1992a:52) has noted, “if [structural] constraints per se are the explanation, they should apply to all states so constrained.” But such an expectation does not hold. Morgan and Campbell (1991:204) concluded from their study of constraints that “in general. . . it appears that structural constraints on chief decision makers are not important determinants of the probability that disputes escalate to war.” Owen (1994:91) observed further that “. . . democratic structures were nearly as likely to drive states to war as to restrain them from it. Cabinets, legislatures, and publics
were often more belligerent than the government heads they were supposed to constrain.” Structural interpretations of the democratic peace are interested in the costs and constraints faced by leaders in undertaking war without being equally attentive to those institutional incentives that incline them to be more belligerent than they would otherwise be (see, for example, Gaubatz 1991; Geva, DeRouen, and Mintz 1993; Mintz and Geva 1993; Fearon 1994; Kiser, Drass, and Brustein 1995; Smith 1996).

Normative explanations have fared better in research. In addition to Maoz and Russett’s (1993) results, Weart (1994:306–307) found that the single most important factor for peace is the development of a conducive political culture for the nonviolent contestation of power. The normative approach, however, is not without problems. The response to Starr’s (1992a:48) question “do democracies treat each other ‘better’ generally?” is “they don’t”—even though they always manage to avoid escalating their disputes to outright war.

A more serious criticism of the normative explanation was recently voiced by Joanne Gowa (1995) who observed that it is difficult to distinguish between norm-based and interest-based attributions of foreign policy conduct. Democracies’ behavior toward one another, such as their inclination to make alliances or settle disputes, is compatible with both attributions. If an interest-based perspective can account for the democratic peace, it would mean that democracies after all do not behave differently from other types of countries given that the foreign conduct of all countries is understood as the pursuit of national interest by the traditional realist paradigm.

Reflecting this interest-based perspective, several authors have questioned whether the democratic peace phenomenon is limited to the post–World War II era, being derivative of the Cold War, bipolarity structure, or U.S. hegemony (in the noncommunist world) in this period (see, for example, Weede 1984; Farber and Gowa 1995; Eyerman and Hart 1996). Is the relative absence of conflict among democracies the result of their shared interest in competing against the communist challenge or the result of their common cultures and polities?

Some recent studies have stressed another type of interest, arguing that democracies tend to be satisfied powers (see, for example, Brawley 1993; Kacowicz 1995; Lemke and Reed 1996; Rousseau et al. 1996). They are, therefore, less likely to challenge the status quo, and more likely to favor a liberal international order. Because other democracies are presumed to support this order, changes in the relative power among democracies are not seen as especially alarming. A power transition in favor of a nondemocratic challenger, however, is likely to be viewed as more threatening to this order, and hence to induce a more belligerent response from the democracies (Schweller 1992). A democratic preference for the status quo has to be understood in the historical context so that status quo refers to a liberal order dominated by democratic hegemons such as Britain and the United States. Should a nondemocratic hegemon be able to impose an illiberal order, it is unclear whether democracies would be inclined to support such a status quo or to challenge it. An interest-based perspective would predict the latter possibility and would expect democracies to become more involved in international crises than heretofore—thus, challenging the monadic version of the democratic peace that argues democracies are generally more peaceful.

Evidence pertaining to interest-based explanations tends to be rather mixed. Rousseau et al. (1996) failed to find any support for the argument that alliance ties (indicating shared interests) decrease the likelihood of international conflict. They did, however, show that a preference for the status quo has had an important and independent impact on decreasing the likelihood of engaging in international conflict, a conclusion that was confirmed by Douglas Lemke and William Reed
(1996). In another study, Maoz (1996:50–55) compared the effects of democracy and alliance on international conflict, showing the former variable (common pol-

ity) to be a more important determinant of conflict than the latter variable (com-

mon interest). Generally, nonaligned democracies have been less likely to fight

one another than allied nondemocracies. The actual causal mechanisms posited by

the normative explanation—that leaders (if not the masses) internalize certain

values (for example, tolerance and compromise) from their domestic socialization

and then externalize these values to their dealings with foreign democracies—

should be the focus of further studies (see, for example, Farnham 1996).

Rationalist Approach

Recent studies (see, for example, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1986, 1990,

1992; Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Starr 1992a, 1992b; Siverson

and Miller 1993; Fearon 1994, 1995; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Miller

1995) based on a rationalist approach to explaining foreign policy offer a useful

way to combine the insights of structural and normative explanations in under-

standing the democratic peace phenomenon. These studies share a common em-

phasis on elite perception, deliberate calculation, cross-national signaling, and

expected-utility formulation. Moreover, they treat the democratic peace as a part of

the more general problem of conducting purposeful policy under conditions of

uncertainty.

The incentives and disincentives that democratic leaders have for certain types

of behavior represent an important variable in the democratic peace puzzle. Such

officials have few incentives to engage in belligerence against fellow democracies.

Although voters may reward democratic leaders for successful bellicosity against

nondemocracies (the “rally around the flag” syndrome), a resort to arms against

fellow democracies is likely to be seen as a sign of policy failure (Geva, DeRouen,

and Mintz 1993; Mintz and Geva 1993). This distinction offers a powerful basis for

understanding why democracies are peaceful toward each other but not toward

nondemocracies.

Whether or not democratic leaders stand to gain more political return than

nondemocratic leaders by escalating external conflict, they are more likely to pay a

political price should their policy end in failure. Bueno de Mesquita and his

colleagues (Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Bueno de Mesquita

and Siverson 1995) have shown that setbacks in foreign wars tend to jeopardize the

political survival of democratic leaders more than that of nondemocratic leaders.

This penalty is especially pronounced for leaders who lose a conflict they initiated.

Moreover, for democratic leaders, victory does not offset this risk. Knowledge of

these findings should help us predict the targets of democratic bellicosity. Assum-

ing that democratic leaders have a vested interest in their own political longevity

and try to anticipate the consequences that war will have on their longevity, they

are likely to target those nondemocracies that are especially weak or unpopular.

One could also derive from this discussion certain expectations regarding condi-

tions in the domestic context that are likely to precipitate democratic bellicosity

and influence its timing. Democratic leaders are more likely to undertake war (or

escalate disputes) when they can rationally expect an international diversion to

boost their sagging domestic popularity and to make a difference in a closely

contested election (see, for example, Smith 1996). Alternatively, democratic lead-

ers could be expected to act in a similarly decisive fashion when they enjoy wide-

spread domestic support. These propositions suggest that foreign wars or

interventions will be initiated at either the beginning of democratic officials’ ten-

ure (when they can more easily mobilize political support for their policies) or the
end of the electoral cycle (when they have a stronger incentive to resort to diversionary tactics in order to increase their electoral prospects). Kurt Gaubatz (1991), Morgan and Kenneth Bickers (1992), Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson (1995), Ross Miller (1995), and Alastair Smith (1996) have presented evidence that is generally congruent with these expectations. They have found that the logic for escalating disputes is dependent on the nature of the context, varying with the economic performance of incumbents’ governments and the margin of incumbents’ electoral advantage (or disadvantage).

The factors that impinge on the calculations of democratic officials are known to their opponents abroad. The opponents’ own calculations are, in turn, based on their perceptions of the democratic leaders’ incentives and disincentives. Thus, opponents tend to refrain from initiating international crises late in democratic leaders’ electoral terms because the latter are perceived to have a stronger incentive to respond decisively at that time (Smith 1996). Instead, opponents initiate more crises early in democratic leaders’ electoral cycle in the hope that the latter will have less domestic incentive to respond to their provocations. Accordingly, democratic leaders are presented with more challenges early in their tenure and, as a result, have more opportunities to become involved in foreign crises during the early stages of their administrations, thus explaining the observed tendency for such crises to occur at the beginning of electoral cycles (Gaubatz 1991). This account suggests that the strategic interactions between democratic leaders and their opponents are based on bilateral opportunities for, and willingness to, engage in international conflict (Most and Starr 1989).

To the extent that structural or normative constraints discourage democracies from undertaking war, one should rarely find these countries initiating belligerence. Because the political penalty is especially heavy and certain for democratic leaders who lose wars they initiated (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995), these officials should be more reluctant than their authoritarian counterparts to start such ventures. It stands to reason, then, that democracies are more likely to be engaged in wars started by others than to initiate such hostilities themselves (Chan 1984; Rousseau et al. 1996). Presumably, institutional and cultural constraints against belligerence are more severe in the latter situation than in the former—a distinction that the current literature with its focus on war involvement overlooks.

Conversely, authoritarian leaders—especially those with long tenure—are seemingly better able to hold on to political power when they suffer defeat in a foreign conflict. Compared to their democratic counterparts, they stand a much better chance of surviving foreign policy disasters. They are, therefore, less restrained from escalating disputes or launching wars, even those with a low probability of success (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995). Whereas preemptive wars should be very uncharacteristic of democracies, we should find authoritarian leaders more often in the role of the initiator.

A further implication of this discussion is that there should be systematic differences in the frequency with which major and minor democracies become involved in war. As mentioned earlier, structural constraints tend to dampen the major (or larger) democracies’ war involvement but have the opposite effect on the minor (or smaller) democracies (Morgan and Campbell 1991). According to Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992), the minor democracies are more likely to be challenged by the nondemocracies. The latter’s challenge is based on the mistaken belief that the minor democracies are under severe domestic constraints and are likely to acquiesce to their demands. Contrary to their expectations, however, the minor democracies usually respond forcefully to such challenges, thus precipitating war. In contrast, adversaries are not tempted by major democracies’ (as well as
nondemocracies’) comparable domestic constraints. In fact, such constraints seem to curtail the probability that the major democracies will find themselves at war. These explanations account for the tendency, described by Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992), for democratic lions to squeak and for democratic mice to roar.

Mutual recognition of peaceful intent is an important part of the expected-utility formulation in the rationalist approach. The transparency of democratic politics provides greater opportunity for the foreign partners of democracies to monitor for any signs of defection on declared policy commitments; it provides them with early warning that they need to adjust their policies should defection occur. Moreover, because defecting on declared policy commitments is politically costly to democratic leaders, their foreign counterparts can be more reassured that they will not defect. Defection is costly both domestically and internationally—domestically because of the vested interests that favor the status quo (indeed, foreign governments can count on domestic groups in democracies to serve as watchdogs and lobbyists for existing commitments) and internationally because of its damaging effect on one’s reputation for credibility and reliability. Such audience costs encourage confidence in binding agreements and relax the security dilemma among democracies (Crawford 1994; Starr 1995).

James Fearon’s (1994, 1995) research suggests that because democracies are likely to incur greater audience costs for reneging on their policy commitments, such commitments become more believable. And because democracies feature open societies, their transparency reduces major problems in international communication and coordination—for example, the possession of secret information, the deliberate misrepresentation of policy positions, and the difficulty in establishing credibility for upholding agreements. Transparency boosts reciprocal confidence among democracies, whereas the absence of this trait complicates communication and coordination between democracies and nondemocracies as well as between nondemocracies.

According to Joe Eyerman and Robert Hart (1996), the above perspective implies that conflicts involving democratic dyads should have fewer phases than those involving at least one nondemocracy. As a result of democracies’ greater domestic and international audience costs, they should be better able to demonstrate resolve and be less likely to back down in a crisis. Eyerman and Hart (1996) report evidence congruent with this expectation. Taking this line of research a step further, the tendency for crises involving a large number of democracies to produce less severe violence (Hewitt and Wilkenfeld 1996) may result from democracies’ greater ability to demonstrate resolve and make credible commitments rather than from their inherent pacific qualities.

Mutual awareness of the high costs of war among democracies is invoked by those following the rationalist approach to explain their peaceful relations (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Siverson and Miller 1993:91–92). Each democracy faces high costs for using force and realizes that its counterpart faces a similar disincentive. Both, therefore, prefer negotiation to war. Reciprocal confidence, based on past responsiveness, lengthens the “shadow of future” for further cooperation among democracies. Such reassurance enables peaceful transfer of hegemonic power from one democracy to another (Schweller 1992). As Huntley (1996:58) has remarked, “the most important quality that republican government brings to [the] climate of [international uncertainty] is not a ‘peaceful disposition,’ but rather a capability to be trusted” [emphasis in original].

Recent research on alliances tends to support this observation regarding the trustworthiness of democracies. Siverson and Juliann Emmons (1991) found that democratic dyads are more likely to form alliances. Gaubatz (1996) showed, moreover, that alliances among democracies tend to last longer, thus belying the suspi-
cian that democracies are less able than nondemocracies to keep durable commitments. Significantly, the most notable finding in these studies involves what happens when democracies interact. As Gaubatz (1996:136) has described it, “democracies are no different than nondemocracies when it comes to relationships with nondemocracies. It is only alliances between democracies that appear to be more durable.” These results cannot be explained just by security interests; democratic norms seem to matter.

The condition of trust, stressed above, does not apply to nondemocratic or mixed dyads, therefore accounting for their more tumultuous relations. Indeed, nondemocracies’ lack of trustworthiness and transparency accentuates democracies’ felt need to demonstrate resolve when facing them in crises. As a consequence, democracies tend to undertake strategies that are more escalatory and irrevocable in these encounters (Fearon 1994), thus contributing to a significantly greater probability of war with the nondemocracies (compared to the prevailing peace among democracies).

**Future Research**

The studies reviewed in this article have revealed a number of interesting patterns of behavior that point to fruitful areas for further research. Any attempt at a general explanation of the democratic peace phenomenon should seek to account for these patterns. Although they may not be strictly relevant to the proposition that democracies do not fight each other, these tendencies do reflect generally on democratic pacifism, nonviolence, and respect for law. They pose research puzzles in need of further exploration.

1. Democracies are less likely than nondemocracies to become involved in crises. Once in a crisis, however, violence—even against other democracies—is not precluded, although democracies do tend to limit the severity of violence against their fellow democracies (Hewitt and Wilkenfeld 1996). Thus, it is important not to conflate “the effects of democracy on the emergence of crises with its effects on the escalation of crises” (Rousseau et al. 1996). Likewise, scholars need to separate democracies’ decisions to enter into alliances from their choices of alliance partners (Simon and Gartzke 1996). Such self-selection processes (that is, the choice about whether to enter into a crisis or alliance in the first place) ought to receive more attention. A country’s orientation toward the international status quo might provide an especially relevant analytic underpinning for this type of investigation.

2. Democracies have undertaken foreign interventions against fellow democracies, although they have always refrained from full-scale war (Kegley and Hermann 1995a). Similarly, democracies do have disputes, even though they manage to resolve their differences short of war (Siverson and Miller 1993). What “braking mechanisms” are responsible for limiting the escalation of violence or conflict among democracies? Detailed case studies of “near misses” might offer a useful approach to exploring the factors that keep democracies from full-scale war (see, for example, Layne 1994; Owen 1994; Ray 1995). Moreover, these same case analyses could determine the thresholds at which the hypothesized democratic restraints “kick in” to block further escalation.

3. Although the incidence of war among democracies has been much lower than can be expected by chance alone, autocratic dyads also have had fewer wars or disputes than one would expect from their frequency distribution (Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Oneal and Ray 1996; Oneal and Russett 1996). As Hermann and Kegley (1995:518) have observed, “wars between countries with different regime types are more likely than expected by chance, whereas wars among countries with similar regime types are less likely than expected by chance.” In other words,
mixed dyads have been more war-prone than dyads with similar regime characteristics (Raknerud and Hegre 1995). Recent research by Oneal and his colleagues (Oneal and Ray 1996; Oneal and Russett 1996) has found that the political distance between regimes in a dyad, in addition to their level of joint democracy, is an important determinant of dispute incidence. Thus, how similar or different the regimes in a dyad are from each other offers itself as a relevant factor for further analysis.

4. Although the incidence of war among democracies has been extremely rare or nonexistent, "democraticness" is unrelated to the severity of foreign wars (measured by deaths). This finding presents an important exception to the general negative relationship between democracy and violence reported by Rummel (1995a). Apparently, once in war, democracies are not restrained from inflicting high casualties. Whereas previous cases studies have focused on decisions about whether to enter war, future case analyses should seek to understand whether and how democratic institutions, norms, or interests affect decisions about how much violence to use after a democracy finds itself already at war.

5. Partially free states, variously defined, tend to be more war-prone (or conflict-prone) than those that are not free (nondemocracies). When presented as a trichotomy ("free," "partially free," and "not free"), the relationship between a country’s level of democracy and its propensity for conflict appears to be curvilinear (see, for example, Rummel 1987; Vincent 1987a; Benoit 1996). Likewise, dyads composed of anocracies are more likely to engage in wars and disputes than either democratic or autocratic ones. Although this nonlinear pattern has been observed, its explanation still eludes us.

6. Structural constraints have been rather effective in restraining war among the major powers but have had the opposite effect of increasing the danger of war for minor powers (Morgan and Campbell 1991:205). Moreover, among nondemocracies, those governments that are somewhat constrained by the need for power sharing and by political competition have had a higher percentage of their disputes escalate to war than those that are not similarly constrained (Morgan and Schwebach 1992:315). These studies suggest the fruitfulness of expanding our focus beyond democracy per se to a more general concern with regime structures (a shift of attention comparable to the recent extension of interest beyond wars to disputes, crises, and interventions). Given that structural properties—such as the role of political parties and public opinion, the influence of legislatures, and the power and access of interest groups—could either dampen or encourage foreign belligerence, we need to determine which factors trigger which effect and under what conditions.

7. Normative explanations of the democratic peace find empirical support in the tendency for democracies to enter into alliances, to keep their treaty commitments, to accept third-party mediation, and to settle disputes by negotiation (Siverson and Emmons 1991; Dixon 1993, 1994; Raymond 1994; Gaubatz 1996). The more general proposition derived from these results that democracies treat each other "better," however, is disconfirmed when we explore the distribution of payoffs these countries give each other as partners in war coalitions (Starr 1972). Moreover, arbitration does not necessarily produce more successful resolutions of disputes among democracies than it does among nondemocracies (Raymond 1996). Pending further analysis, it also seems that, outside of the NATO framework, when democracies decide to enter into alliances, they are actually less likely to ally with one another than with nondemocracies (Simon and Gartzke 1996). We need to understand better the nuances and implications of these reported results.

8. States in the midst of a political transition or those that have recently had regime changes face a higher risk of war, although there is disagreement about
whether those experiencing autocratization are more war-prone than those undergoing democratization (Mansfield and Snyder 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Enterline 1996; Thompson and Tucker 1996). Whereas Mansfield and Snyder have proposed that the democratization process can lead states to become more aggressive, Andrew Enterline (1996) and Maoz (1996:66) have argued that it leads to more peaceful relations, and Oneal and Russett (1996:14) have reported that “there is no indication that movement toward democracy in itself significantly increases the danger of dyadic conflict [emphasis in original].” The emergence of new democracies offers scholars the chance to engage in a quasi-experiment, exploring the “before” and “after” effects of democratic reform on foreign policy conduct.

9. Evidence supporting a lower-than-expected incidence of disputes—or the nonexistence of war—among democracies is stronger for the post-World War II period (Chan 1984; Weede 1984; Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Farber and Gowa 1995; Gates and McLaughlin 1996; Maoz 1996). During the nineteenth century, disputes among democracies were higher than their expected probability. This intercentury difference has produced several explanations focused on the politics of principal rivalry and the alliance systems during the Cold War (Weede 1984; Farber and Gowa 1995; Thompson and Tucker 1996). Studies designed to determine the stability and robustness of generalizations across different temporal domains, including those based on data since 1989, would be helpful for clarifying these differences.

10. Finally, it is important for the research community to take seriously the possibility of reverse causality. Could it be that peace promotes democracy rather than vice versa? William Thompson's (1996) concern about “putting the cart before the horse” is long overdue. His historical case studies have shown that contests for regional primacy preceded the development of democracy, and engagement in or disengagement from such contests in a country’s “home region” had important negative or positive effects on its democratization. In a similar vein, Layne (1994:45) has suggested that “states that are, or that believe they are, in high-threat environments are less likely to be democracies because such states are more likely to be involved in wars, and states that are likely to be involved in wars tend to adopt autocratic governmental structures that enhance their strategic posture.” Manus Midlarsky (1992, 1995) has also presented historical evidence showing that war and the threat of war, as well as other environmental factors such as aridity and insularity, influence the prospects for democracy. Conversely, other scholars have posited that war mobilization, armed rivalry, and foreign expansion have actually contributed to the economic development, state formation, and democratic tradition of Western Europe (see, for example, Weber 1964; Tilly 1985, 1990). In their view, it was precisely the fragmented political landscape of early modern Europe and its attendant military competition—in contrast to the “universal peace” and central control of Ming China—that facilitated the former’s subsequent economic and political development (Chan 1993:210). Work to formulate “grand history” should inform these causal interpretations.

Conclusions

The debate on the democratic peace has addressed a number of issues: Is the definition of democracy too broad or too restrictive? Does its operationalization reflect the conceptualizations of relevant theorists? Does the democratic peace proposition cover only the incidence of war, or does it apply to the level of international violence? Are other types of conflict behavior—such as militarized disputes, foreign interventions, and civil wars—relevant to this proposition? Just what are the scope conditions of the theory from which this proposition is derived? Does
such a theory admit any spatial or temporal boundaries? Based on the literature reviewed here, which was intended to call attention to these questions, Starr (1992a:55) is surely correct in concluding that "although many of the questions of this literature return to the different meanings, operationalizations, and indicators of 'democracy,' the key problem is not one of measurement. The central problem of research design and theoretical cumulation seems to involve failures in conceptual clarification [emphasis in original]."

Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made in research on the democratic peace. There is mounting evidence pointing to the practice of "normal science" with considerable replication and cumulation, even though the research could benefit from greater attention to the match between data, methods, concepts, and theory. Moreover, a dialogue has been initiated among those with differing theoretical perspectives and methodological inclinations, such as efforts aimed at bridging the realist and liberal interpretations of international politics (Waltz 1962; Mearsheimer 1990a, 1990b; Roy 1991; Sorensen 1992; Russett 1993a; Layne 1994; Kegley 1995; Ray 1995). This dialogue is in itself a significant development. Scholars working in different disciplinary niches are paying attention to what others outside their immediate reference group have to say. Such discussion is both healthy and hopeful, and it attests to the theoretical and policy importance of the issues raised by the democratic peace debate.

References


In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise


