

POLS 318: Theories of IR
Lecture 17 (03.17.2021):
Democratic Peace & War

Rotem Dvir

Texas A&M University

rdvir@tamu.edu

Department of Political Science
Spring 2021

Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Democratic Peace - the Public
- 3 Democracies in war
- 4 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Democratic peace theory.
- Liberal, normative views.
- Structural, institutional views.
- Democratic leaders and war effort.
- Criticism - Does public opinion matter??
- Trent affair, the Ruhr crisis.

Questions?? Email me!

Democratic Peace

Why should the public matter?

- Democratic leaders and accountability.
- Political survival in democracies.
- Public reject fighting another democracy? leaders 'follow'.

- How can we test it? ask the public...
- Method: experiments.

Public opinion and democratic peace

Geva and Mintz (1993)

- Leaders' incentives structure and conflict behavior.
- Avoidance behavior → no positive rewards.
- Focus on rewards and not imposed costs.

Public opinion and democratic peace

Geva and Mintz (1993)

- Fighting democracies/non and rewards/costs angle.
- Why conflict?
- Diversionary theory of war - domestic problems.
- Public reject fighting democracy → war is a *failed policy* → lower likelihood of such conflicts.
- Why experiment? control of causal factor → regime type.
- Findings:
 - ① Less support for attacking democracy.
 - ② Use of force versus democracy - failure of policy.

Public opinion and democratic peace

A primer on experiments

- What are experiments?
- Main benefit → direct test of causality.
- Reduce concerns of other factors.
- Problems: generalize results...
- Replicate design: Geva and Mintz (1993) → three samples (US students and public, Israel students).
- Increase number of respondents to strengthen results.

POLS 318 and democratic peace

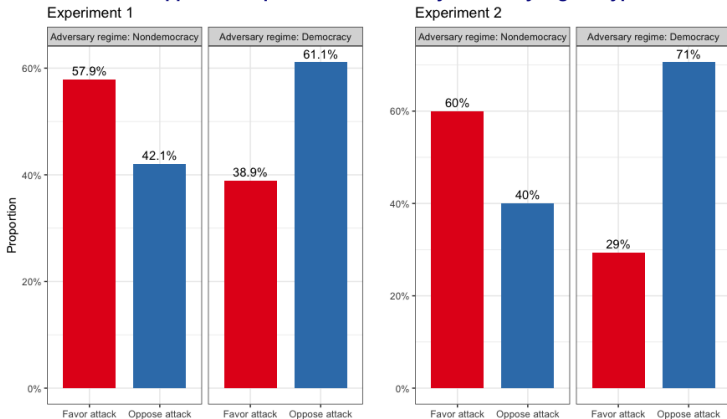
Survey task 1

- A survey experiment on conflict that involves the US.
- Your opinion on decision to attack.
- A replication of recent study (Tomz and Weeks 2013).
- How do we 'control' the regime type?
- Two versions of the same scenario... [▶ 2Versions](#)

POLS 318 and democratic peace

Your results

Public approval for president decision by adversary regime type



Public opinion and democratic peace

Tomz and Weeks (2013)

- Experiment embedded in public surveys (US, UK).
- Why public in this context? voting, electing representatives in congress and control over conflict budgets.
- Theory:
 - ① Regime type.
 - ② Trade relations.
 - ③ Alliance status.
- Mechanisms: Morality and threat perception.

Public opinion and democratic peace

Tomz and Weeks (2013)

- Lower support for attacking democracies [▶ Findings](#)
- Policy? effect more powerful among engaged citizens.
- Mechanisms: morality and threat.

TABLE 3. The Effect of Democracy on Perceptions of Threat

If the U.S. did not attack, the country would ...	Belief if Autocracy	Effect of Democracy
Build nuclear weapons	75	-3*
Threaten to use nukes vs. another country	52	-14*
Threaten to use nukes vs. U.S. or U.S. ally	45	-11*
Launch a nuclear attack vs. another country	34	-8*
Launch a nuclear attack vs. U.S. or U.S. ally	30	-6*
<i>Average</i>	47	-9*

Democratic Peace

Existing evidence on democracies and war

- More likely to win wars.
- Why?
- Two potential mechanisms:
 - ① War fighting - effective in fighting wars.
 - ② Selection - "I decide which wars I will fight".

Democracies in War

Reiter and Stam (1998)

WAR FIGHTING EXPLANATION

- Democracies are more effective at fighting → winning wars.
- Why?
 - ① Resources - invest in military capabilities.
 - ② Coalition - join strong allies.
 - ③ Public - leadership, and individualism.

Democracies in War

SELECTION EFFECTS EXPLANATION



Israel 1967



Iraq 1980

Democracies in War

Reiter and Stam (1998)

SELECTION EFFECTS EXPLANATION

- Why being 'selective' ??
 - 1 Political survival - regime and winning coalition.
 - 2 Information transparency - media, military advice.

Democracies in War

Reiter and Stam (1998)

- Data: interstate wars (1816-1982).
- Democracies → more likely to win (institutional logic).

TABLE 1. War Outcomes by State Type and Initiation

Outcome	Democracy	Anocracy	Autocracy	Total
Initiators				
Win	14	21	21	56
Lose	1	15	14	30
Targets				
Win	12	18	16	46
Lose	7	27	31	65
Total	34	81	82	197

Democracies in War

A democratic 'advantage'

- So, democracies win more wars.
- Yet...
- Public has limited tolerance for war costs.
- Time as a crucial factor.

▶ PublicWarCosts

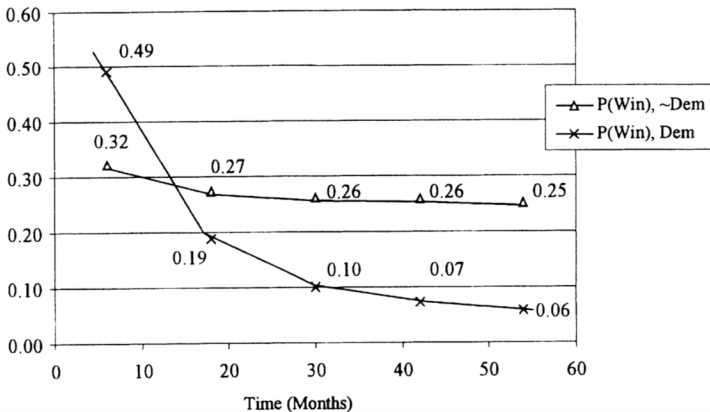
Democracies in War

Bennett and Stam (1998)

- The Duration question.
- Democratic advantage has an 'expiration date'.
- Long wars → higher costs.
- Shift in public opinion.
- As wars persist → dictators gain the 'advantage'.
- End conflict → costs of war \gg benefits of winning.

Democracies in War

The Duration question ▶ LongWar



Democracies in War

The costs of war

- War costs as a critical factor in democracies.
- Opposes the desire of leaders to win (public support).
- Winning does not always works for politicians.
- The price of victory (USSR in WW2).

The costs of war

Valentino, Huth and Croco (2010)

MECHANISMS TO DECREASE COSTS

- 1 Mobilize resources - military and public.
- 2 Casualty-reducing war strategies: mobility vs. attrition.
- 3 Distance: no civilian casualties.
- 4 Coalition: more capabilities and 'share' costs.

The costs of war

Valentino, Huth and Croco (2010)

- Data: war fatalities (military and civilian).
- Support for all 4 mechanisms.
- And regime?
- Democracies suffer less casualties (military and civilian).

	Initial Estimate	Estimate After Δ	Δ In DV	% Change
Dom. Mil. Capabilities (ln)	25.26	34.10	8.84	35.01
Coalition Capabilities (ln)	7.80	14.04	6.24	80.02
Guerrilla Strategy	4.33	2.55	-1.78	-41.15
Attrition Strategy	47.01	35.98	-11.03	-23.46
Battle Proximity	.16	.74	.59	374.94

Recommended readings

More studies on democracies and war:

- 1 Fazal, Tanisha M. (2014). "Dead wrong?: Battle deaths, military medicine, and exaggerated reports of war's demise." *International Security* 39, 1, 95-125.
- 2 Croco, Sarah E. (2011). "The decider's dilemma: Leader culpability, war outcomes, and domestic punishment." *American Political Science Review* 105, 3, 457-477.
- 3 Gelpi, Christopher. (2017). "Democracies in conflict: The role of public opinion, political parties, and the press in shaping security policy." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, 9, 1925-1949.

Controlling the causal factor

Here is the situation:

- A country is developing nuclear weapons and will have its first nuclear bomb within six months. The country could then use its missiles to launch nuclear attacks against any country in the world.
- The country has high levels of trade with the United States.
- The country is a democracy, and shows every sign that it will remain a democracy.
- The country's nonnuclear military forces are half as strong as U.S. nonnuclear forces.
- The country's motives remain unclear, but if it builds nuclear weapons, it will have the power to blackmail or destroy other countries.
- The country has refused all requests to stop its nuclear weapons program.

Here is the situation:

- A country is developing nuclear weapons and will have its first nuclear bomb within six months. The country could then use its missiles to launch nuclear attacks against any country in the world.
- The country has high levels of trade with the United States.
- The country is not a democracy, and shows no signs of becoming a democracy.
- The country's nonnuclear military forces are half as strong as U.S. nonnuclear forces.
- The country's motives remain unclear, but if it builds nuclear weapons, it will have the power to blackmail or destroy other countries.
- The country has refused all requests to stop its nuclear weapons program.

Democratic Peace - Public

TABLE 1. The Effect of Democracy on Willingness to Strike

	United Kingdom (between)	United States (between)	United States (within)
Not a democracy	34.2	53.3	50.0
Democracy	20.9	41.9	38.5
Effect of democracy	-13.3	-11.4	-11.5
95% C.I.	(-19.6 to -6.9)	(-17.0 to -5.9)	(-14.7 to -8.3)

Democratic Public and Long wars

Public opinion of War in Vietnam

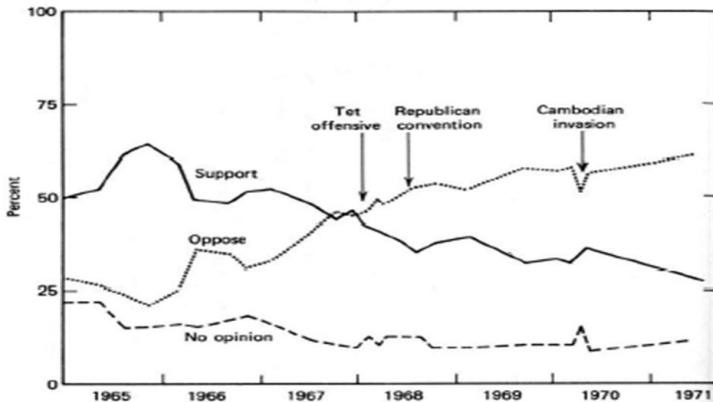


Figure 3.2 Trends in support for the war in Vietnam.