



How Democracies Keep the Peace: Contextual Factors that Influence Conflict Management Strategies

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Some studies find that democratic states are more amenable to third party forms of conflict management, while other studies indicate that democracies are able to resolve contentious issues on their own through bilateral negotiations. Using data from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project, the authors investigate peaceful and militarized conflict management strategies that democratic states employ to resolve contentious issues. Theoretically, the authors focus on how militarized conflict history, relative capabilities, and issue salience influence the tools of conflict management employed by democratic states. Empirical analyses suggest that democratic dyads employ bilateral negotiations more often to resolve contentious issues when the issue has not been militarized previously, when the issue is more salient, and when democratic states face equal adversaries. Democratic dyads seek out non-binding third party settlement more frequently in situations of power preponderance than nondemocratic dyads, although binding forms of third party settlement occur most often in relatively equal democratic dyads. When it comes to the use of force, democratic states are much less likely than their authoritarian counterparts to militarize an issue claim when little or no armed conflict characterizes the relationship. However, democratic leaders show a willingness to confront force with force. After one militarized dispute, democratic states are no different in their conflict propensity than autocratic states.

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Over the last decade, the phenomenon known as the democratic peace has received a considerable amount of attention in the international relations literature. The main tenet of this theory is well known: democracies seldom, if ever, go to war with each other (Buono de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Maoz and Russett 1993), although democratic states may be equally likely to participate in wars as nondemocracies (Ray 1995; Chan 1997).¹ These empirical observations have spurred a rather rich quest to ascertain why the dyadic democratic peace exists. A number of possibilities have been posited, including shared norms of compromise and cooperation (Dixon 1993; Maoz and Russett 1993; Dixon 1994; Mitchell 2002), institutional constraints (Buono de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Morgan and Schwebach 1992; Buono de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, and Smith 1999; Huth and Allee 2002b; Buono de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow 2003), capitalistic market prosperity (Hegre 2000; Mousseau 2000), economic interdependence (Russett and Oneal 2001), regime similarity (Werner 2000; Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002; Souva 2004; Bennett 2006; Lektzian and Souva 2009) and joint involvement in international organizations (Russett and Oneal 2001).

The fact that democratic states do not fight wars against each other is not to say they do not have their share of disagreements. There has been no shortage of them, and sometimes they involve military forces. Examples include a series of clashes between Canada and the United Kingdom over the ownership of Labrador during the 1920s, the “Cod War” between Great Britain and Iceland, and the 1997 “Salmon War” between the United States and the Canadian province of British Columbia. Mitchell and Prins (1999) document close to 200 militarized democratic disputes between 1946 and 1992. The difference between clashes by jointly democratic dyads and other dyads is that the former do a much better job of preventing escalation to the most serious confrontation level, interstate war.² Militarized disputes between democracies are more likely to end in compromise and negotiated settlements (Dixon and Senese 2002). Furthermore, there have been only a handful of militarized disputes between two democracies that have resulted in any fatalities (Mitchell and Prins 1999; Wayman 2002).

Democracies are more likely to adopt compromise solutions to problems as a matter of course. But do these compromise solutions come about because of efficient bilateral contracting, because democracies are more willing to involve neutral third parties in the conflict resolution process, or some combination of both? Dixon (1993, 1994) finds that democratic dyads are more likely than other pairs of states to use third party assistance to resolve their disputes. Raymond (1994) and Allee and Huth (2006a) find that democratic dyads have a preference for binding forms of third party settlement, such as arbitration or adjudication.³ Allee and Huth (2006a,b) show that states with significant domestic audience costs and political opposition are more likely to seek out international legal rulings to resolve ongoing territorial claims. An implication of these empirical findings is that third party participation in the conflict resolution process may be a key reason why democracies have fewer wars. More recent studies of conflict management by Hensel (2001) and Mitchell (2002), on the other hand, find consistent evidence that jointly democratic dyads are significantly more

¹ Some studies present empirical evidence for a monadic democratic peace as well. See for example Rummel (1983), Benoit (1996), Leeds and Davis (1997), Huth and Allee (2002b), Keller (2005), and Souva and Prins (2006).

² Ironically, while good at preventing escalation, democracies do not do such a good job of terminating lower-level disputes among themselves (Mitchell and Prins 1999). Senese (1997) finds that once in a militarized dispute, jointly democratic dyads are just as likely to escalate the dispute to uses of force short of war.

³ Raymond (1994) finds that binding tools are more likely to be selected by democracies, but these conflict management efforts are not particularly effective for resolving the underlying issue in contention.

likely to employ bilateral negotiations to resolve disputes, and much less likely to turn to third party conflict management.

These seemingly opposite empirical results present an interesting puzzle about *how* democracies negotiate solutions to their interstate conflicts. One possibility for explaining these disparate findings is that there is a selection effect at work in this process. All things equal, states would prefer to negotiate on their own because this allows them to retain greater control over negotiation outcomes (Hensel 2001). Furthermore, if democracies' institutional constraints or peaceful conflict management norms operate effectively, they may be able to avoid third party involvement, militarized disputes, and escalation of disputes to war precisely because they are able to resolve things through bilateral negotiations.⁴

A second possibility is that democratic dyads utilize bilateral negotiations to resolve contentious issues until such efforts fail and one or both disputants resort to militarized force to resolve the issue. Empirical studies may produce disparate findings about how democracies manage conflicts because they analyze data at different stages in the process of escalation. Dixon's (1993, 1994) data include conflicts that reach the crisis stage or higher, whereas the data employed by Hensel (2001), Mitchell (2002), and Allee and Huth (2006a,b) focus on diplomatic contention over territory; only some claims escalate to the level of militarized conflict.⁵ Raymond's (1994) data focuses only on third party attempts to settle interstate disputes, leaving out the comparison categories of bilateral negotiations and military force.

A third potential explanation for the puzzling findings relates to the interrelationship between power and regime type. Bilateral negotiations may be prevalent in asymmetric democratic dyads because democracies are more willing to employ coercive tactics against weak adversaries. Yet when facing evenly matched disputants, democracies may find third party solutions more attractive, especially if they reach an impasse in bilateral negotiations. Another possibility is that the variance in issue salience influences how democracies manage interstate conflicts. Democracies might employ more coercive conflict management strategies when seeking resolution on a highly salient issue, such as contention over a valuable piece of territory, in comparison to a low salient issue, like a minor fishing dispute. Ecuador and Peru's violent contestation of their land border provides a good example of democracies pushing important issues to the brink of war.

All of these possibilities suggest that there are several important contextual factors that must be analyzed to get a better handle on the process by which democratic dyads resolve interstate conflicts differently than nondemocratic dyads. Our theory focuses on three factors that interact with dyadic regime type to explain conflict management strategies: (i) militarized conflict history, (ii) relative capabilities, and (iii) issue salience. We show that these contextual factors have a strong influence on democratic states' usage of bilateral, third party, and militarized conflict management tools.

Our empirical analyses suggest that previous militarized conflict pushes all states toward both peaceful and violent conflict resolution. The same relationship holds for issue salience as well. Important issues experience greater peaceful and militarized settlement efforts. However, we also find significant regime differences when we control for contextual factors. Democratic states are much more likely to employ bilateral negotiations and much less likely to use military

⁴ Reed (2000) estimates a selection model of militarized dispute onset and escalation to war, finding that the effect of regime type on the conflict process occurs only in the first stage (dispute onset). This suggests another possibility, namely that pairs of democracies simply avoid militarized conflicts in general, providing fewer opportunities for interstate war.

⁵ In the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) data set in the Western Hemisphere, Europe, and the Middle East, for example, only 44.3% of territorial claims, 41.4% of maritime claims, and 19.4% of river claims have resulted in even a single militarized dispute over the issue in question (Hensel, Mitchell, Sowers, and Thyne 2008).

force compared with autocratic states when little or no previous violent conflict characterizes the dyadic relationship. As militarized conflicts accrue, democratic leaders show an increasing willingness to resort to armed conflict at the same time as they reduce more accommodative settlement strategies. Democratic states further rely on bilateral negotiations and binding third party settlement more often than nondemocracies when the issues at stake are highly salient. This suggests that democratic states are better able to avoid violent conflict because they actively pursue multiple accommodative conflict resolution strategies for the most salient and thus presumably the most dangerous claims they confront.

Our paper is organized as follows. We begin with a literature review of research connecting states' regime characteristics to conflict management strategies, with an emphasis on bilateral versus third party settlement. Next, we develop our theoretical argument about how militarized history, relative capabilities, and issue salience condition the relationship between regime type and conflict management strategies. This is followed by a discussion of our research design and empirical tests. Our paper adds new insight to the conflict management literature by analyzing a data set from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project (Hensel et al. 2008) that expands the types of geopolitical issues examined (territorial, maritime, and river claims) and allows for significant variance in negotiation contexts.

Conflict Management Strategies

Recent research on conflict management emphasizes the enhanced ability of democratic states to resolve disputes peacefully, especially when their opponents are democratic. But even when choosing peaceful conflict management strategies, states must make choices about whether they will negotiate issues on their own, through bilateral talks with their opponent, or whether they will turn to third parties (individuals, states, IGOs, or NGOs) for assistance. Even when third parties are consulted, states must still choose between nonbinding forms of conflict management (good offices, inquiry, conciliation, mediation, and multilateral talks) and binding forms (adjudication and arbitration). In this section, we review past research on the question of when democratic states turn to bilateral negotiation versus when they seek out third party assistance and in what form.

Going It Alone: Bilateral Negotiations

Direct bilateral negotiation is the most frequent method employed for the peaceful settlement of disputes (Levi 1991), occurring in over 70% of all peaceful attempts to resolve contentious interstate issues (Levi 1991; Hensel 2001; Mitchell 2002). Why might *democratic* countries prefer to resolve interstate conflicts through direct, bilateral negotiations? One obvious answer relates to the ability of two democracies to strike reliable bargains. As Lipson (2003) argues, four basic traits of democratic regimes allow them to reach peaceful international agreements more readily: transparency, regime continuity, audience costs, and constitutionalism. Constitutional procedures make commitments more credible and transparent, serving to both constrain and inform states in international bargaining (Lipson 2003:77). Regime continuity for established democracies strengthens commitments to international agreements by raising the reputation costs for reneging, in essence tying future leaders' hands to bargains struck today. Thus, democracies can strike successful bilateral bargains more efficiently than nondemocracies.

Domestic political accountability should induce risk-aversion on the part of popularly elected leaders (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Fearon 1994).

Since the use of military force is likely to be costly, leaders that must face voters and defend their policy decisions are likely to seek negotiated outcomes to foreign policy crises. While foreign policy failures can result in a democratic leader's removal from office, more likely is that such setbacks will diminish a leader's ability to move other parts of their domestic and foreign policy agendas (Brace and Hinckley 1992; Huth and Allee 2002a). Furthermore, an inability to solve crucial policy issues will motivate opposition parties to challenge a democratic leader's competence and their ability to govern effectively (Schultz 1998).

Domestic political accountability not only pushes democratic leaders away from risky foreign policy ventures, it also serves as a signal to foreign elites about the constraints confronted in addressing salient policy problems. In an international environment where political leaders have both the ability and the incentive to bluff about preferences, resolve, and capabilities, opposition parties that can impose audience costs improve a government's ability to signal truthfully (Fearon 1994; Schultz 1998). "When there is weak political support for war," Schultz (1998:830) writes, "the opposition can reveal this fact by deciding to oppose the government's threat." The potential response by opposition parties makes it costly for liberal leaders to bluff. In a similar vein, Huth and Allee (2002a) focus on the effect of domestic accountability on conflict management strategies to settle territorial disputes. Their empirical analyses demonstrate that democracies are significantly more likely to engage in peaceful talks, less likely to employ militarized force over territorial disputes, and more willing to make greater concessions in peaceful negotiation rounds in comparison to nondemocratic states.

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999, 2003) agree that the political costs democratic elites confront for policy failure adds to efficient signaling of preferences and thus makes foreign policy demands in bilateral negotiations more credible. Since backing down in the face of a challenge is assumed to be costly for democratic leaders, insincere or deceitful demands issued by these same elites to foreign governments for foreign policy change should arise infrequently. Thus, it seems that democratic leaders avoid violent conflict in part because they hardly ever bluff about their preferences. Indeed, Huntley (1996) maintains that "the most important quality that a republican government brings to [the] table is not a 'peaceful disposition,' but rather a *capability to be trusted*" (quoted in Chan 1997:81).

Trust is enhanced in these situations because states can monitor at least some of the internal processes at work in the competing state due to the transparent nature of democratic governments and the frequent need for those governments to garner public support. Both sides also have an incentive to reach a jointly satisfactory agreement so that the issue does not arise again, especially while the current domestic regime is still in power. As a result of the nature of democratic openness and expected commitment to peaceful outcomes, democracies may not generally feel a need for third parties to mediate agreements or guarantee outcomes.⁶ At the very least, until they have tried to solve an issue themselves, or unless the situation appears to be leading to military escalation, they may see no value in inviting outsiders to become involved in their affairs, and potential third parties may see no requirement for offering their services. Since democracies rarely find themselves involved in fatal armed conflicts, they have little need for the services of a third party mediator to help overcome entrenched perceptions of enmity that might disrupt a negotiated settlement.

⁶ Nondemocratic dyads, on the other hand, may see third party assistance as desirable when both sides really want a settlement. In environments lacking trust, third parties may be needed to provide guarantees that the terms of the agreements will be carried out (Walter 1997).

A Little Help from My Friends: Third Party Settlement Attempts

Third party involvement takes many forms, ranging from very minimal third party commitment to legalistic means for resolving the dispute. One example of a lower level commitment by a third party is the use of “good offices,” which involves the facilitation of negotiations or third parties carrying messages back and forth between the disputants. Third parties can also serve as *mediators*, where they try to reconcile opposing views of the disputants and offer possible solutions to the conflict. *Inquiry* is a fact-finding mission that attempts to “produce an impartial finding of disputed facts, and thus to prepare the way for a negotiated settlement” (Akehurst 1997:277). Legal scholars refer to *conciliation* as a combination of inquiry and mediation, but whereas mediators can make multiple proposals to resolve a conflict, a conciliator usually offers one proposal in the form of a single report (Akehurst 1997). Good offices, inquiry, mediation, and conciliation are nonbinding forms of conflict resolution in the sense that the disputants are not committed to accept any settlement proposals offered by third parties.

Third parties can play a more direct role in the resolution of international disputes by employing legally binding tools of *adjudication* and *arbitration*. Adjudication is a legal procedure where the dispute is brought before a standing tribunal, such as the International Court of Justice (Levi 1991; Akehurst 1997). In the case of arbitration, the number of arbitrators, the manner of their appointment, procedures to be employed, and issues to be resolved are usually defined in advance in a *compromis* (Bederman 2001:237). The outcomes of both adjudication and arbitration are binding upon the parties, as they are expected to follow through with the terms of the final decision.

While transparency and openness may improve the chances for bilateral negotiations, these same institutional characteristics may also increase democracies’ willingness to join and work with international institutions. After all, look at the most successful and enduring of institutions designed to facilitate international cooperation and avoid or remedy disagreements. Among them are the G-8 for international financial issues, the European Union (EU) and Organization of American States (OAS) for regional problems, and NATO for defense matters. All of these institutions are composed primarily of democratic states. Even the United Nations, the body in which nearly every nation holds membership, emerged from coordination of the mostly democratic victors of World War II (Cassell Publishers 1994; Ikenberry 2001). Empirical evidence illustrates democratic states’ commitment to international institutions. “Shared democracy is associated with a 7 percent higher density of IGO memberships” (Russett and Oneal 2001:217). Furthermore, international organizations populated with mostly democratic members have democratic decision-making procedures (Risse-Kappen 1996) and their members are better able to avoid militarized conflict (Pevehouse and Russett 2006). Membership in regional organizations also promotes democratization among nondemocratic members (Pevehouse 2002).

Democratic states’ internal institutions and norms may also enhance their willingness to involve third parties in the dispute settlement process (Simmons 1999). Dixon (1993, 1994) focuses on how norms of bounded competition make democratic states more inclined to turn to third party dispute resolution. “All modern democracies are openly competitive systems of governance where conflicting material interests and basic political values routinely clash over the proper course of public action ... Just as competition is a constant of democratic governance, so too is the presence of rules, procedures, or guidelines for setting its boundaries” (Dixon 1994:15). Democratic actors are willing to forego the use of force to achieve a victory on a contested issue: “contingent consent implies that within democratic societies political actors will prefer to follow nonviolent

regulatory procedures and will expect competing actors to do likewise” (Dixon 1994:16).

Dixon asserts that this democratic norm of bounded competition extends to world politics. When a dispute arises between two democratic states, they are more amenable to peaceful dispute settlement because they realize that their opponent is operating under a similar norm of compromise and nonviolence. Such conciliatory democratic norms should increase the chances of democracies adopting or agreeing to conflict management efforts, especially active participation by third parties (Dixon 1993). Dixon’s (1993) analysis of post-World War II SHERFACS data strongly supports this hypothesis. He finds that third party management in a given crisis phase is about 50% more likely if both dispute participants are highly democratic.

Raymond (1994) also contends that democracies are more likely to turn to third parties to help resolve their disagreements. However, he believes that democracies will not view all types of third party settlement equally. Rather, two democracies will be more inclined to involve third parties in the resolution of disputes in binding ways, such as arbitration or adjudication, as opposed to non-binding forms of conflict management because democratic institutions create a norm of trust in legal procedures. “Lacking shared democratic norms and the trust in law such norms encourage, autocratic leaders would be predisposed to restrict any third party to functioning as a go-between rather than as an umpire ... Limiting the power of a third-party intermediary eliminates the dilemma of being obliged to adhere to a verdict that might injure perceived national interests” (Raymond 1994:27). Raymond’s empirical analysis of 206 dyadic disputes from 1820 to 1965 reveals that coherent democratic dyads are three times more likely to use binding third party arbitration in comparison to nondemocratic dyads.⁷

Allee and Huth (2006a,b) make a similar theoretical argument about democracies’ willingness to submit to legal dispute settlement procedures more frequently than nondemocratic countries. They argue that third party settlement provides a form of political cover for democratic leaders who are electorally vulnerable with respect to foreign policy failure. Their empirical analyses of all territorial claims from 1919 to 1995 supports the theory, demonstrating that legal dispute settlement is much more likely if the claimants face strong domestic opposition and if the dyad is democratic.⁸

Context Matters

While existing theoretical arguments focus on the tendency for democracies to choose bilateral or third party conflict management tools, we know that states employ both strategies when managing conflicts. We are interested in understanding more carefully which strategy is most likely to be employed in a given negotiation situation. We think the key to unpacking the existing empirical puzzle relating regime type to negotiation strategies lies in a better grasp of negotiation context. In some situations, leaders will prefer bilateral negotiations, while in other situations, they will seek out third party assistance. Unlike previous studies that simply control for contextual factors, we argue that these

⁷ Not only do democracies engage in binding settlement attempts more frequently, they are also more likely to submit themselves to the authority of international courts. Powell and Mitchell (2007) examine states’ willingness to submit to the compulsory jurisdiction of the World Court, finding that democratic states are five times more likely to accept the Court’s jurisdiction than nondemocratic states.

⁸ In the research design section, we talk about militarized strategies for conflict management as well. Empirically, we compare peaceful conflict management (bilateral negotiations, nonbinding third party settlement attempt, binding third party settlement attempt) to the onset of militarized disputes (with and without fatalities) over the issue in question.

variables condition the relationship between regime type and conflict management strategies. As noted above, our theory focuses on three contextual factors: militarized conflict history, relative capabilities, and issue salience. Below, we describe how these three factors modify the way that democracies manage interstate conflicts.⁹

Militarized Conflict History and Democratic Conflict Management Strategies

Generally speaking, democratic dyads should be more apt to settle contentious disputes peacefully as opposed to through armed conflict, which means that they will be more likely to use bilateral or third party peaceful settlement than non-democratic dyads. In other words, all types of peaceful settlement will be more common among democratic dyads in comparison with nondemocratic dyads, which is what Hensel et al. (2008) find in their analysis of the ICOW data. The process of negotiation usually begins with bilateral attempts to settle a dispute. Third party solutions to a conflict become more attractive if bilateral negotiations fail and if one or both parties to a conflict resort to the threat, display, or use of militarized force. As conflicts intensify and the number of militarized incidents increases, they become more visible to potential third party conflict managers. The disputants themselves will also view external efforts to manage their differences with greater necessity as things heat up, especially considering the costs incurred in militarized conflicts.

The conflict management literature often refers to these situations as “ripe” for resolution. Highly militarized relationships in world politics, such as enduring rivalries, attract a great deal of attention from third party mediators. Enduring rivalries attracted close to half of all mediation efforts in the Cold War era (Bercovitch and Diehl 1997). Similarly, Hensel (2001) finds that nonbinding third party settlement attempts become significantly more likely in the resolution of territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere as the number of previous militarized conflicts between the claimants rises. With respect to the dynamics of third party conflict management, Greig (2001) examines mediation efforts across the span of enduring rivalry relationships, finding a curvilinear pattern. Mediation efforts are more successful either early on when the rivalry emerges, or much later when the rivalry is fully entrenched.

Most of these conflict management studies, however, do not distinguish carefully between conflicts involving two democracies, and those between mixed or autocratic dyads. The greater transparency and credibility of democratic regimes should intensify the effect of militarized conflict history on peaceful conflict management practices. This could push in one of two directions. First, if democracies face greater audience costs for backing down in crisis situations (Fearon 1994), then a history of militarized conflict over a given interstate issue may lead to higher levels of resolve in future bargaining situations and lowered propensities to negotiate the issue peacefully. This is consistent with Senese’s (1997) finding that democratic dyads escalate lower level militarized disputes more frequently than nondemocratic dyads. These tendencies toward hawkish foreign policy behaviors may be exacerbated if leaders’ electoral fortunes are on the line (Ostrom and Job 1986; Colaresi 2004; Lektzian and Souva 2009). However, when democracies face other democratic adversaries, they should fear the chances for escalation of militarized conflicts if both sides have signaled their resolve clearly. While democracies might be willing to threaten or use militarized force,

⁹ Our theory and analyses focus on the particular strategies that democracies employ to resolve contentious issues, rather than whether specific tactics are successful in ending the issues at stake. For analyses that focus on the success of conflict management attempts, see Putnam (1988), Raymond (1994), Kadera and Mitchell (2005), and Crescenzi, Kadera, McLaughlin Mitchell, and Thyne (2010).

especially as a history of conflictual relations accrues over time, we would not expect these disputes to escalate to severe levels when their adversary is also a democratic state.

On the other hand, militarization of an issue claim in a jointly democratic dyad might encourage more serious peaceful efforts to resolve the issue. This could ramp up bilateral efforts to resolve contentious issues, especially given bilateral contracting advantages that democratic dyads enjoy (Lipson 2003). Democracies might also recognize the need for a legal third party solution as confrontations over contentious issues heat up. As we described earlier, however, democracies are more likely to exhibit a preference for binding third party conflict management strategies over nonbinding ones. Because conflict management studies (Dixon 1993, 1994) often focus their attention on the most conflictual set of cases, ones where bilateral negotiation has often failed, it explains why democratic dyads would seem to exhibit a greater affinity for third party conflict resolution empirically. Analyses that broaden the scope of contentious issues to include cases that do not become militarized should exhibit a greater tendency for bilateral settlement among democracies. But if things heat up militarily, democracies may view legal third party conflict resolution as a useful option. The democratic peace proposition, however, indicates that very few democratic dyads will accrue a history of militarized disputes. Thus, while democratic conflict management strategies may depend on militarized dispute history, their empirical effects may be limited to a relatively small range of prior disputes.

The Greek-Turkish maritime conflict over the Aegean Sea illustrates both possible processes. Militarized clashes between naval boats and fishing vessels in 1974 lead to an additional militarized confrontation in January 1975. Both governments presented relatively hard line positions to the international media about their claims in the Aegean. At the same time, increased escalation of militarized incidents prompted the two governments to submit their dispute for binding settlement to the International Court of Justice in 1976. The potential costs for two NATO allies escalating their maritime dispute to war helped to ramp up peaceful efforts to settle the issue. Given the long conflict history between the two sides over multiple issues (including Cyprus), the two democratic countries saw the merits of binding conflict management for resolving this particular issue.

Relative Capabilities and Democratic Conflict Management Strategies

If democracies are reluctant to involve third parties in the dispute resolution process, this may be a function of power politics. In the last century, the major powers have tended more often than not to be democracies, and their security interests are broader and farther ranging than minor powers. Whereas minor powers tend to have conflicting issues with their neighbors, major powers experience them around the world. Consequently, the expectation is that major powers will be involved in disputes more often than their weaker counterparts. Prior to the creation of organizations like the EU and OAS, major powers had little incentive to surrender their advantages of strength, even if they did not intend to go to war with their democratic competitors. If powerful Great Britain had an issue with newly independent Canada in the latter nineteenth century, what did British leaders stand to gain by letting someone else try to affect the outcome? Powerful democracies might employ different conflict management strategies when facing other powerful democracies in comparison to situations where they are confronting weaker democratic adversaries. Two distinct theoretical possibilities present themselves in the international relations literature.

One classical take on relative power and conflict, as articulated clearly by power transition theorists (Organski and Kugler 1980), predicts that militarized

conflict is most likely when two adversaries have similar capabilities and when at least one side is dissatisfied with the global, regional, or issue status quo. A plethora of empirical studies support the claim that power parity is more dangerous than power preponderance (see Kugler and Lemke (1996) and DiCicco and Levy (1999) for reviews of this literature). Relative power distinctions are significant for explaining peaceful conflict management practices as well, with third party and IGO conflict management occurring more frequently in situations of power parity (Wall and Lynn 1993; Hensel 2001; Hansen, Mitchell, and Nemeth 2008). We expect all forms of conflict management to be more prevalent in dyads characterized by power parity in comparison to dyads where one state has an asymmetric power advantage. Yet, for democracies, parity should be less dangerous overall, given that these states are more likely to be satisfied with the status quo (Lemke and Reed 1996). If democracies have a preference for legal settlement, we should see a stronger propensity for evenly matched democratic adversaries to turn to binding forms of third party conflict management.

A good example of evenly matched democracies agreeing to binding settlement involves Denmark and Norway's maritime dispute over an area of the North Sea. Norway argued that the median line between Jan Mayen (Norway's island) and Greenland should be the border, while Denmark argued that the insignificance of Jan Mayen with no permanent population should be a factor in the delimitation of the border and, thus, Greenland should be entitled to more sea area. The two sides were very similar in military, economic, and demographic power throughout the history of the dispute (since 1958), which was one factor pushing them to take the case to the International Court of Justice in 1993 for a legal ruling.

A more recent theoretical perspective, developed by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), paints a different picture about how regime type and relative capabilities might interact to influence interstate conflict management. The democratic peace might be strongest in situations of parity because powerful democracies may be willing to employ coercive tactics against weak democracies (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003:242). This implies that militarized conflicts may be more frequent in asymmetric democratic dyads and that peaceful negotiations should be less likely in these dyads. When asymmetric democratic dyads do negotiate, this theoretical perspective would predict that it would take the form of bilateral negotiations, since the stronger side can coerce the weaker side into making concessions. In other words, militarized conflict and bilateral negotiations should be more frequent in asymmetric democratic dyads in comparison to symmetric democratic dyads.

A good example of stronger democratic states coercing weaker democratic adversaries is Venezuela's claims to territory between the Essequibo and Orinoco rivers, which brought it in direct conflict with Guyana. While Britain and Venezuela contested this area before Guyana achieved independence in 1966, Venezuela became much more aggressive in pressing its territorial claims once the British withdrew. Venezuela was 87 times more powerful than Guyana in the mid-1960s, a power advantage it used to occupy key islands (Ankoko) in the contested area. Venezuela also used its power advantage to expand its geopolitical claims to the maritime area flowing into the sea from the mouth of the Essequibo River from 3 nautical miles to 12 miles in 1968.

Issue Salience and Democratic Conflict Management Strategies

Hensel (2001) and Hensel et al. (2008) demonstrate the importance of issue salience for understanding how states resolve contentious interstate issues. All forms of peaceful and militarized settlement are more likely over salient issues in general, such as territorial claims, and over more salient issues of a particular type (for example, a territory with great strategic and resource importance or a

maritime area with vast fishing and oil resources). Militarized conflict over an issue is five times more likely if the issue at stake is extremely salient to both sides, while peaceful settlement attempts are more than twice as likely over highly salient issues (Hensel et al. 2008). While issue salience increases nearly all forms of conflict management, different regimes may respond to important interstate issues in distinct ways. Since democracies make more credible commitments, only highly salient claims that face serious obstacles for successful issue resolution may lead democratic leaders to seek out third party assistance. While Allee and Huth (2006a,b) find a general propensity for democracies to employ legally binding conflict management tools as a form of domestic political cover, this proclivity might be modified by issue salience, with democratic leaders seeking political cover only for highly visible and salient issues. Autocratic leaders, on the other hand, may seek out third party conflict management regardless of issue salience since they are less able to credibly commit to bilateral settlements (Kadera and Mitchell 2005).

Furthermore, the democratic peace may face its limitations at high levels of issue salience. Democracies may be willing to employ militarized force to pursue their highly salient issue related goals to increase the chances for success in peaceful negotiation rounds. A highly salient issue may ignite domestic opposition to accommodative policies and thus push democratic leaders into threats and uses of force. Colaresi (2004) observes democratic publics rewarding leaders for more hawkish policies against rival states. Electoral punishment for real or perceived foreign policy failures may compel certain democratic leaders to risk armed conflict if such actions demonstrate resolve and leadership skill. Yet, democratic publics are fickle. They do not tolerate high degrees of casualties (Gartner and Segura 1998), which implies that democracies will avoid escalation of disputes against other democratic adversaries, especially given the fighting advantage democracies have in interstate wars (Reiter and Stam 2002).

A good example of the conditioning influence of issue salience comes from the Gulf of Paria conflict between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela from 1962 to the present. The contested maritime area is rich in multiple resources including fisheries, oil, natural gas, and hydrocarbons. Competition over these valuable resources resulted in three militarized disputes between these two democratic countries between 1996 and 1999, sparked by Venezuelan Coast Guard vessels firing on Trinidadian trawlers. This is similar to competition between the United States and Canada over rich fishing areas in the Gulf of Maine, Beaufort Sea, Juan de Fuca Strait, and Dixon Entrance, disagreements which have contributed to six distinct militarized disputes between these states in the past century. While democracies have avoided escalation of these maritime conflicts to interstate wars, they have shown a proclivity to protect their maritime resources with threats, displays, and uses of military force.

Research Design

To evaluate the conditioning effect of prior militarization, power asymmetry, and issue salience on democratic states' conflict management strategies, we employ a data set on contentious issues collected by the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project (Hensel 2001; Hensel et al. 2008). The ICOW project identifies contentious issue claims based on explicit evidence of contention involving official representatives of two or more nation-states over the issue type in question.¹⁰ For example, the ICOW territorial claims data are based on evidence that officials from at least one state make explicit statements claiming sovereignty over a specific piece of territory that is claimed or administered by another state. Beyond

¹⁰ We employ version 1.0 of the data, available at <http://www.paulhensel.org/icow.html>.

territorial claims, the ICOW project has collected data on two additional distinct types of contentious issues: *maritime claims*, which involve contention between two or more states over the ownership, access to, or usage of a maritime area; and *river claims*, which involve conflict over the ownership or usage of an international river. The spatial-temporal domain of the data used in this paper is the set of all qualifying claims to territory from 1816 to 2001, maritime zones from 1900 to 2001, and cross-border rivers from 1900 to 2001 in the Western Hemisphere (North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean), Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. In these regions, the ICOW project has identified 191 dyadic territorial claims, 143 dyadic maritime claims, and 82 dyadic river claims.

The unit of observation in this analysis is the claim dyad-year. The ICOW dyad-year claim data set includes a case for each year of every ongoing dyadic claim. For example, the Belize territorial claim involves two dyads: Guatemala-United Kingdom (1868–1981) and Guatemala-Belize (1981–present). There are 114 dyad claim years for the Guatemala-UK dyad and 21 dyad claim years for the Guatemala-Belize dyad (through the end of the data set in 2001). For all issue claims, we have a total of 9,939 claim dyad years. We also incorporate information from the ICOW settlement attempt data set, which codes information on each peaceful and militarized attempt to resolve the contentious issue claim. These settlement attempts include direct bilateral negotiations between the parties, as well as all forms of third party conflict management (see Appendices 1 and 2). For example, in the Belize territorial claim, the ICOW project records 16 settlement attempts between Guatemala and Great Britain and 12 settlement attempts between Guatemala and Belize. We also analyze militarized disputes (MIDs) over the contested geopolitical issues, with information taken from the Militarized Interstate Dispute data set (Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004). The ICOW project examines all militarized disputes between a pair of states during an ongoing issue claim and determines which disputes are directly related to the issue at stake (Hensel et al. 2008).

We use a probit estimator with robust clustered errors (on the claim dyad) to evaluate the relationship between regime type and conflict management.¹¹ We estimate separate models for each of the five separate peaceful and militarized strategies used to resolve issue claims. We enter the interaction terms in separate models to facilitate an easier interpretation of our findings and to help avoid the high levels of multicollinearity that would arise from entering all three interaction terms simultaneously.

Dependent Variable

Our analysis sheds light on the conflict resolution mechanisms states use to resolve contentious issues. Three pacific strategies and two violent ones are evaluated. On the pacific side, we model bilateral negotiation, nonbinding third party conflict resolution, and binding third party settlement. On the militarized side, we consider whether the claimants resorted to militarized force over the issue at stake and whether or not those uses of force resulted in battle deaths.

With five separate settlement options, a multinomial model designed for categorical data seems appropriate (Maddala 1983). However, such an estimator requires mutually exclusive categories and the ICOW Project actually records multiple settlement efforts in any given year. Not only can bilateral negotiations

¹¹ We cluster standard errors by claim dyad to account for duration dependence and cross-claim correlation. Some dyads, like US-Canada, have multiple issue claims ongoing at the same time and these issues are often negotiated simultaneously.

or militarized conflict be used more than once in a year to resolve an issue claim, both can be used in the same year as well.¹² Hensel (2001), thus, maintains that aggregated analyses using ordered logit models are inappropriate since multiple types of settlement attempts may be used by states in any given year. Hensel further argues that separate analyses on each settlement attempt type are required rather than generating a selection rule that defines mutual exclusivity.¹³ Following Hensel (2001), then, we run separate probit models on five separate settlement attempt types: bilateral negotiations, nonbinding third party settlement, binding third party attempts, militarized conflict, and militarized conflict with fatalities.

Independent Variables

Democracy

Democracy scores for claimants are taken from Marshall and Jaggers' Polity IV data (2002). Scores are assessed for governments ranging from 0 to 10 on both autocracy and democracy scales, with 0 being the least democratic/autocratic and 10 the most democratic/autocratic. A weak link measure is used for the -10 to +10 democracy-autocracy score. We consider dyads to be jointly democratic if they are characterized by a weakest link score of six or higher. Approximately 26% of our cases involve joint democracy.

Militarized History

We argued that a history of militarized conflict alters states' behavior, making them more amenable to third party assistance. However, we anticipated that the influence of militarized conflict history would be stronger in democratic dyads than mixed or autocratic dyads. Our measure of militarized history codes the number of previous militarized interstate disputes over territory, river, or maritime issues in the past 5 years (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Ghosn et al. 2004). This variable ranges from zero to six in our data.¹⁴

To test the relationship between regime type and conflict resolution strategy, conditional on past militarized conflict, we create an interaction term multiplying the weak link regime measure by the measure of past militarized conflict over the past 5 years. Democracies are better able to avoid militarized disputes, as the democratic peace literature suggests, thus it is not surprising that the range of militarized history is smaller, having a maximum value of 3 (compared to 6 for nondemocratic dyads).¹⁵ Where both prior MIDs and joint democracy

¹² The settlement options we model also likely violate the multinomial assumption of independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). Presumably settlement options such as bilateral negotiations, nonbinding and binding third party arbitration are more likely to be chosen by governments than militarized conflict. That is, the choices of non-violent conflict resolution are more similar to one another than violent conflict (Crown 1998). Further, in establishing mutually exclusive categories necessary for use with a multinomial model, we ignore important information about state decision making. Given that both peaceful and coercive moves can be taken by governments in the same year, a selection rule must ignore one of the actions taken in favor of the other. This yields a nonrandom deletion of information on our dependent variable that could in theory effect our results. Hensel (2001) finds that nearly 20% of all claim years with settlement attempt involve multiple attempts. Obviously a considerable amount of information is thrown away by using a multinomial estimator. Separate analyses of each settlement type, while admittedly confining different actions to the base category, avoid such a loss of information.

¹³ In an earlier version of this paper, we created a decision rule to allow for the use of a multinomial estimator. However, reviewers have been uniformly concerned about the arbitrariness of the coding rules created to establish mutual exclusivity. Most appear to agree with Hensel (2001) that separate analyses of each settlement attempt type remain more methodologically defensible.

¹⁴ We also considered longer time periods for militarized disputes (10 and 15 years), finding similar empirical patterns.

¹⁵ Regimes with democracy-autocracy scores of 6-8 have a maximum of three past MIDs. Regimes with democracy-autocracy scores of 9 or 10 have only a maximum of two past MIDs. Democratic states are more successful at avoiding low level violent conflict, which frequently leads to retaliation, the development of rivalry, and war.

are present, we anticipate more frequent peaceful settlement attempts (bilateral and third party), although we recognize that electoral pressures may also push democratic leaders into low level uses of force.

Saliency

Issue saliency is the importance attributed to a particular issue claim by the claimants (Hensel 2001; Hensel et al. 2008). ICOW's saliency index scores the importance of each claim on a 0–12 scale.¹⁶ The project employs different indicators to capture the saliency of territorial, maritime, and river issues, but all are aggregated into a single 12-point scale for ease of comparison. Hensel et al. (2008) show that more highly salient issues heighten the likelihood of peaceful and militarized settlement attempts. In addition to entering issue saliency in our models, we also create an interaction term multiplying issue saliency times democracy (weakest link) to capture the contingent effect of issue saliency on democracies' conflict management strategies.

Relative Capabilities

Powerful states typically have stronger bargaining power. We measure the stronger side's relative capabilities (% of dyad), which ranges from 0.50 (complete equality in power) to 1.0 (complete preponderance by one side in the dyad). Our capabilities measure comes from the Correlates of War Project and captures each country's global share of demographic (total and urban population), military (spending and personnel), and economic capabilities (iron and steel production and energy consumption)¹⁷. We also calculate an interaction term by multiplying the relative capabilities score in the dyad times the weakest link democracy score.

Issue Management

The ICOW project collects information on successful and unsuccessful peaceful attempts to resolve contentious issues. Similar to past militarized conflict activity, a weighted count of past unsuccessful peaceful settlement attempts over the last 10 years is included in the models. According to Hensel (2001:97), unsuccessful attempts include both bilateral and third party efforts that did not produce lasting agreements.

Empirical Analyses

Table 1 presents probit analyses for the impact of regime type on *peaceful* settlement attempts for states with issue claims, while Table 2 runs the same models for *militarized* settlement attempts. Since the primary concern of the analyses involves interactive relationships, we present graphical results in Figures 1–4.¹⁸ To offer specifics about each model and synthesize the results to offer an overall summary of the empirical results, the discussion is divided into two parts. First, the impact of regime type is evaluated for each conflict management strategy conditional on past violent conflict, issue saliency, and relative power. Second, the conditional effects are compared across separate conflict management strategies to better assess how democratic states resolve contentious issues.

¹⁶ For details about the indicators that comprise the saliency scales, see Hensel et al. (2008).

¹⁷ Our measure is the standard composite indicator of national capabilities (CINC).

¹⁸ In Figures 1–4, we present multiple graphs of the conditional predicted probabilities and marginal effects. When referring to a particular illustration, we cite the Figures 1–4 and the cell number (which starts at the top left and moves across the row and then down the column). For example, Figure 3, cell 5 displays the marginal effect of regime type on nonbinding third party settlement conditional on issue saliency. All of the marginal effects were calculated using Brambor, Clark, and Golder's (2006) STATA commands.

TABLE 1. Probit Models of Peaceful Conflict Management

	<i>Bilateral negotiation</i>			<i>Nonbinding third party conflict management</i>			<i>Binding third party conflict management</i>		
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Regime type	.012*** (.0044)	-.005 (.0115)	.0544** (.0253)	.003 (.0054)	.008 (.0158)	-.056** (.0264)	.022*** (.0074)	-.028 (.0228)	.001 (.0387)
Democracy-Autocracy)									
Recent MID activity	.047 (.0559)	.051 (.0536)	.051 (.0534)	.290*** (.0447)	.299*** (.0430)	.300*** (.0432)	.210*** (.0666)	.258*** (.0654)	.254*** (.0638)
Regime type × recent	-.003 (.0077)	-	-	-.005 (.0051)	-	-	-.020** (.0106)	-	-
MID activity	.030*** (.0119)	.032*** (.0121)	.031*** (.0118)	.057*** (.0174)	.056*** (.0172)	.057*** (.0173)	-.033* (.0207)	-.033* (.0215)	-.034** (.0206)
ICOW Salience Index									
Regime type × salience	-	.002* (.0016)	-	-	-.001 (.0020)	-	-	.007** (.0033)	-
Relative capabilities	-.495*** (.2119)	-.498*** (.2116)	-.505*** (.2124)	-.506** (.2544)	-.502** (.2549)	-.462** (.2553)	-1.655*** (.3110)	-1.639*** (.3101)	-1.642*** (.3135)
Regime type × capabilities	-	-	-.052* (.0305)	-	-	.070** (.0327)	-	-	.022 (.0500)
Unsuccessful attempts	.252*** (.0251)	.252*** (.0244)	.250*** (.0251)	.192*** (.0237)	.191*** (.0232)	.195*** (.0225)	.055** (.0330)	.043 (.0346)	.048* (.0341)
<i>N</i>	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939
Log pseudo-likelihood	-2980.11	-2978.15	-2975.85	-1374.68	-1374.85	-1371.05	-355.86	-355.07	-357.39
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.0603	.0610	.0617	.1043	.1042	.1067	.0797	.0848	.0758

(Notes. ICOW, Issue Correlates of War; MID, militarized dispute. One-tailed significance tests. ****p* < .01; ***p* < .05; **p* < .10. Robust standard errors clustered on claim dyad. Numbers in bold are statistically significant.)

TABLE 2. Probit Models of Militarized Conflict Management

	Militarized dispute			Fatal militarized dispute		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Regime type (weak link Democracy–Autocracy)	-.008* (.0053)	-.026** (.0150)	.016 (.0254)	-.037*** (.0108)	-.051* (.0358)	-.034 (.0413)
Recent MID activity (past 5 years)	.482*** (.0359)	.466*** (.0345)	.468*** (.0352)	.347*** (.0484)	.299*** (.0480)	.303*** (.0499)
Regime type × recent MID activity	.009** (.0047)	–	–	.017*** (.0067)	–	–
ICOW Salience Index	.063*** (.0157)	.068*** (.0166)	.064*** (.0160)	.072*** (.0246)	.083*** (.0264)	.073*** (.0248)
Regime type × salience	–	.003* (.0019)	–	–	.003 (.0040)	–
Relative capabilities	-.711*** (.2201)	-.717*** (.2198)	-.742*** (.2239)	-.800*** (.3276)	-.803*** (.3207)	-.797** (.347)
Regime type × capabilities	–	–	-.027 (.0311)	–	–	.005 (.0522)
Unsuccessful attempts	.082*** (.0235)	.084*** (.0234)	.082*** (.0231)	.013 (.0368)	.016 (.0361)	.013 (.0379)
<i>N</i>	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939	9,939
Log pseudo-likelihood	-1192.23	-1192.36	-1192.79	-318.67	-319.74	-319.96
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.1230	.1229	.1226	.1053	.1023	.1017

(Notes. ICOW, Issue Correlates of War; MID, militarized dispute. One-tailed significance tests. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$. Robust standard errors clustered on claim dyad. Numbers in bold are statistically significant.)

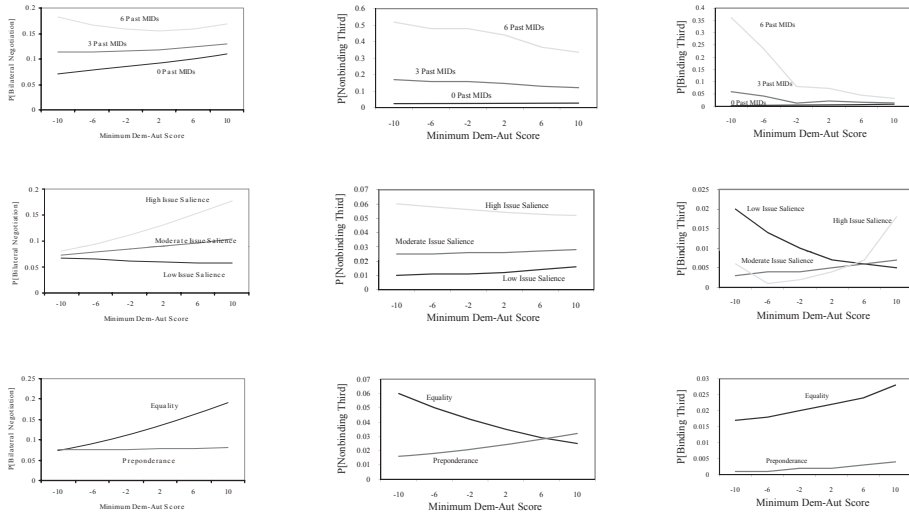


FIG 1. Predicted Probabilities for Peaceful Conflict Management

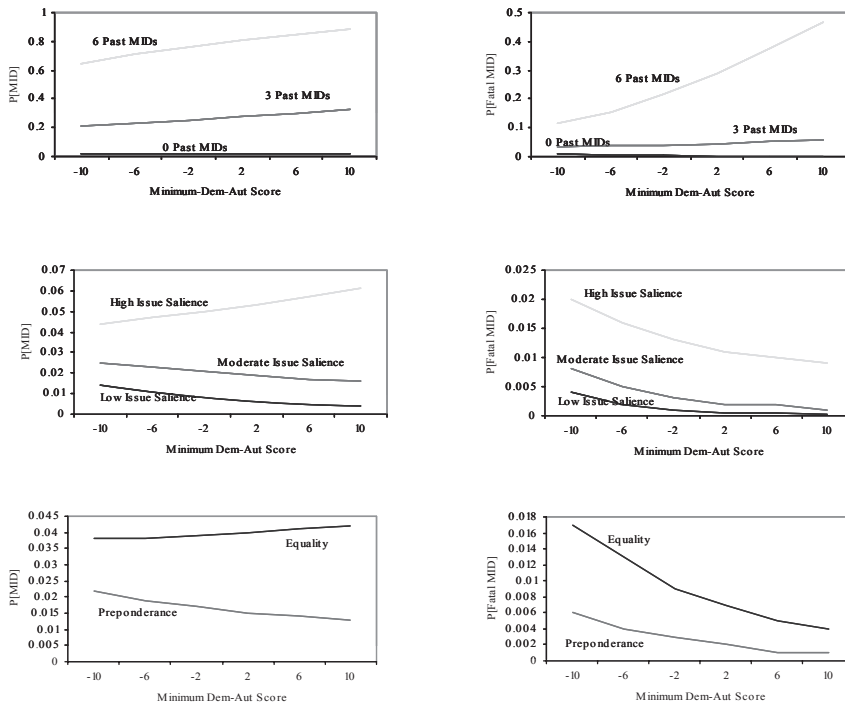


FIG 2. Predicted Probabilities for Militarized Conflict Management

Bilateral Negotiation

Model 1 (Table 1) shows democratic states to have a higher probability of using bilateral negotiations than autocratic states to resolve issue claims, but only when little or no past violent conflict characterizes the dyadic relationship

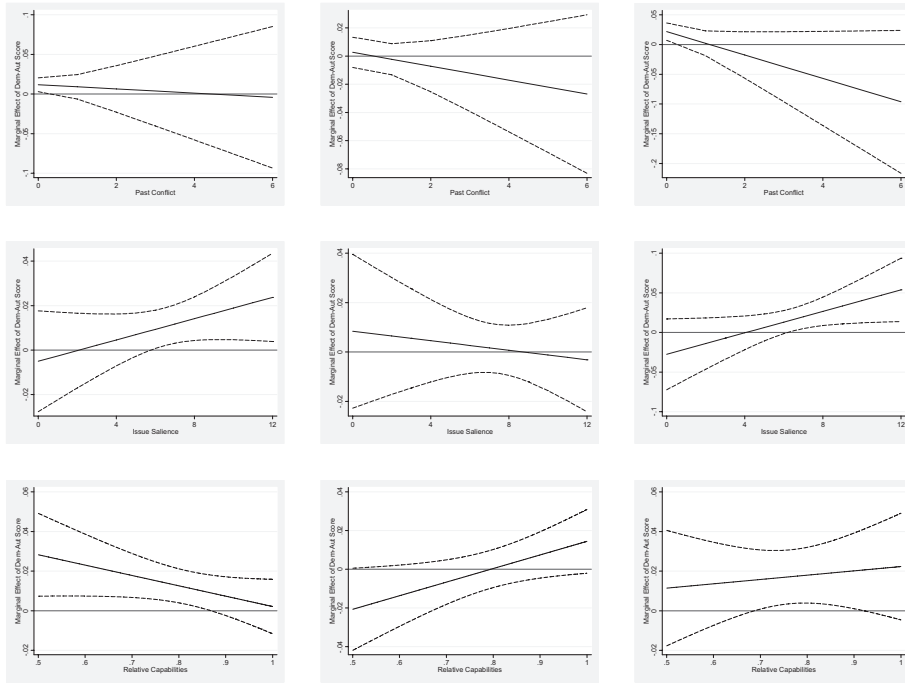


FIG 3. Marginal Effects of Minimum Democracy–Autocracy Score on Probability of Peaceful Settlement Strategies

(Figure 1, cell 1). In fact, with no previous militarized conflict, the model predicts a 50% increase in the use of bilateral negotiations when going from a weak link score of -10 to $+10$. However, when previous bouts of militarized conflict define the relationship, regime type appears to have less influence on the use of negotiations to settle issue claims. With three past MID, there is a much smaller 13% increase in the use of bilateral negotiations. At six past MID, though, democratic states actually have a lower probability than autocratic states of relying on bilateral negotiations to resolve contentious issues. This could conceivably indicate that democratic states are turning to third parties to help settle these claims as the number of past militarized incidents increases. Both normative and institutional arms of democratic peace theory anticipate democratic leaders to actively seek nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms even when violent conflict characterizes the relationship. While there is little evidence from our analyses that democratic states are turning to third party assistance, it is also true that our model cannot reliably predict democratic behavior at six past militarized conflicts since no weak link score above 5 has more than three past MID (over the issue at stake) and no score above 8 has more than two previous MID. Figure 3, cell 1 confirms that the impact of regime type on bilateral negotiations only applies when the count of previous MID = 0. At 0, the democracy–autocracy measure has a positive and significant effect on the likelihood of a negotiated settlement. After one previous MID onset, however, there is no difference between democratic and non-democratic states in the use of bilateral negotiation. Past conflict, then, appears to neither encourage nor discourage direct talks.

A stronger regime effect on bilateral negotiations emerges conditional on issue salience (Model 2, Table 1). When issue claims remain relatively unimportant, democratic and autocratic states behave similarly. As claim salience

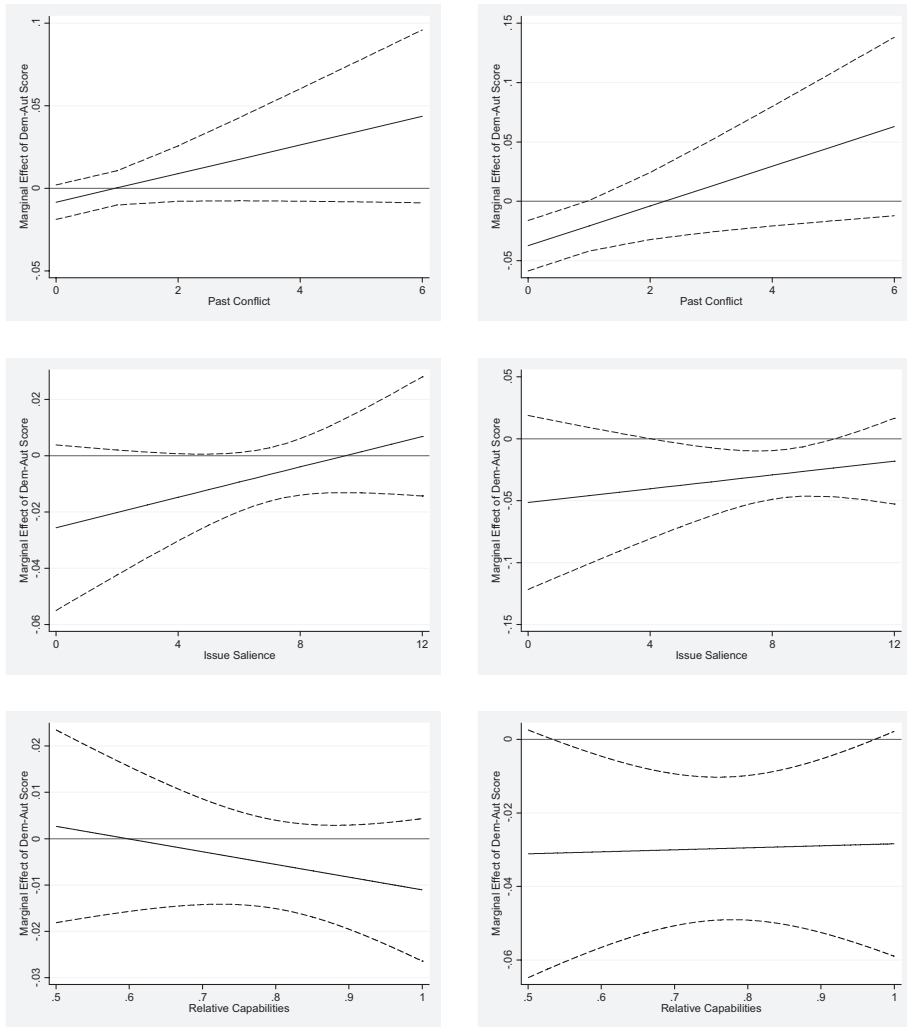


FIG 4. Marginal Effect of Minimum Democracy–Autocracy Score on Probability of Militarized Settlement Strategies

increases, however, democratic leaders increasingly turn to diplomatic channels to resolve the contentious issue. For high-salience issues, democratic states are more than twice as likely as nondemocratic states to negotiate important claims. This suggests democratic leaders recognize the salience of certain claims and seek to avoid escalation through active diplomacy. The marginal effect of democracy conditional on issue salience is illustrated in Figure 3, cell 4. High-salience claims are much more likely to be resolved through bilateral negotiations as the least democratic state in the dyad becomes more democratic (Figure 1, cell 4).

Model 3 (Table 1) offers some support for Bueno de Mesquita et al.’s (2003) contention that powerful democracies may initiate militarized conflict at higher rates than weaker democracies and thus pose an exception to the liberal peace. Our evidence indicates that relatively strong democracies are less likely to yield to negotiations than their weaker counterparts. Indeed, the likelihood of a democratic state resolving a contentious issue via bilateral negotiations is twice as

high at parity than at preponderance (Figure 1, cell 7). Further, nondemocratic states show no greater propensity at either parity or preponderance to initiate diplomacy, and compared to democracies, the rate of bilateral negotiation tends to be lower. So democratic states in general resolve contentious issues through diplomacy at higher rates than nondemocracies and much higher when dyadic power is relatively equal. Figure 3, cell 7 clearly demonstrates that the effect of democracy is to increase the probability of bilateral negotiation between .5 and .9 on the CINC measure of dyadic power. Only at extreme preponderance is there no regime effect on bilateral negotiations.

*Nonbinding Third Party Settlement*¹⁹

For nonbinding third party settlement, the empirical results tend to be weak. Regime differences are not observed for either the past conflict or the issue salience interactions.²⁰ However, a strong effect is uncovered for regime type conditional on relative power (Figure 1, cell 8). Nondemocratic states at parity are substantially more likely to utilize nonbinding forms of third party settlement than democratic states at parity; more than 50% in fact (Figure 3, cell 8). Powerful democratic states, in contrast, are twice as likely as powerful nondemocracies to seek out such mediation efforts to help resolve salient issues. These effects are statistically significant, but only at the extreme ends of the CINC power measure. It remains unclear why nondemocracies would be more likely than democracies to use nonbinding conflict resolution at parity, while less likely at preponderance. Perhaps autocratic leaders are more likely to press a power advantage when they have it. Democratic leaders, on the other hand, accept a more equitable settlement procedure.

Binding Third Party Settlement

Extant research largely shows democratic states submitting to binding forms of third party settlement at higher rates than nondemocracies. Our evidence supports such a conclusion, with two exceptions. First, at low issue salience, nondemocratic leaders show a greater propensity to settle claims with binding third party efforts compared to their democratic counterparts (Figure 1, cell 6), although this finding is not statistically significant (Figure 3, cell 6). Second, with very high levels of past militarized conflict, nondemocratic states submit to binding third party settlement attempts at much higher rates than democratic states (Figure 1, cell 3). This may indicate efforts by intergovernmental institutions and developed democracies to help resolve entrenched conflicts among authoritarian states to prevent escalation. Potential arbitrators presumably go to the hotspots and issue claims among nondemocracies tend to be 'hotter' than those between more liberal states. This finding, however, remains statistically significant only once a pair of states surpasses six militarized disputes; this is rare even for nondemocracies (Figure 3, cell 3).

Democratic states do show higher probabilities for binding third party settlement when issue claims are extremely important and when violent conflict does not characterize the past relationship (see Figure 1, cells 3 and 6). These relationships present a puzzle. Why does issue importance push democratic leaders to binding forms of settlement, but violent conflict does not? We suggest that

¹⁹ We have 415 instances of third-party settlement attempts in the data; 63 are binding and 351 are nonbinding.

²⁰ Admittedly, there is some difference in regime type behavior when past violent conflict is at its maximum (six MIDs in last 5 years). However, since there are no cases of democratic states having more than three militarized disputes, this prediction of the model remains unreliable.

militarized conflict may introduce electoral considerations that demand a more hawkish foreign policy response. For democracies, armed conflict may simply have a very strong conditioning effect on any type of contentious issue, pushing leaders away from more accommodative policies. While democratic norms may increase the likelihood of binding third party settlement, past conflict seems to limit the effect of such norms and therefore eliminates the regime difference. We also find preponderance in democratic dyads related to binding forms of conflict management (Figure 1, cell 9). Moving from a CINC score of 0.65 to 1.0, we find that increasing levels of democracy increases the probability of binding third party settlement; the effect is stronger at 1.0 than .65 (Figure 3, cell 9). This observation once again casts doubt on Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) conjecture regarding the coercive behavior of powerful democracies.²¹

Militarized Conflict

Moving on to armed conflict, the models in Table 2 show sizable regime type differences, but sometimes in unexpected ways. Perhaps the most striking relationship involves the likelihood of MID onset conflict given past armed conflict. For countries with little or no past violent conflict, the probability of MID onset is <3% and <1% for fatal MID onset. For democracies, the probabilities are even smaller at about 1.5% for MID onset and one-tenth of 1% for fatal MID onset (Figure 2, cells 1 and 2). As expected, violent conflict pushes states toward more violent conflict. For nondemocracies, the probability of MID onset jumps 800% and over 300% for fatal MID onset. What is interesting is that these probabilities are even higher for democratic states. In fact, with three past militarized disputes, the likelihood of an additional MID onset for democratic states is above 0.30. Violent conflict pushes both democratic and nondemocratic states toward continued violence to settle contentious issues, but the rate increase is considerably larger for democratic leaders.

However, notice that the marginal effect of regime type is only statistically significant at 0 previous MIDs, and here the effect is negative (that is, pushing democratic states away from armed conflict). After one previous MID, democracies behave no differently than nondemocracies in their MID onset propensity (Figure 4, cell 1). When it comes to fatal MID onset, the trend appears similar to overall MIDs, but democracy reduces the probability of fatal MID onset up until nearly two past armed conflicts (Figure 4, cell 2).²² This finding appears to support Fearon's (1994) conclusion that audience costs may at times motivate democratic leaders to escalate militarized quarrels.

In general, democracies are less likely than nondemocracies to resort to force regardless of the salience of the issue claim, with one exception. High-salience claims lead democracies into militarized conflict at higher rates than nondemocracies, nearly 40% higher in fact (Figure 2, cell 4). This result, however, is not statistically significant (Figure 4, cell 2). For moderate and low issue salience, democratic leaders are considerably less likely than nondemocratic leaders to use military force and this result is statistically significant. For nearly all categories of issue salience, democratic states have a smaller probability of fatal MID involvement than nondemocratic states. For high-salience claims, the likelihood is less

²¹ Admittedly, parity remains associated with binding third party settlement for democratic and nondemocratic states alike. That is, holding regime type constant, going from 0.50 to 1.0 on the CINC measure decreases the probability of binding third party settlement. This may offer some empirical support for the Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) hypothesis if the comparison of interest is democracy to democracy or autocracy to autocracy and not across regime type categories.

²² Previous conflict activity does increase the probability of MID and fatal MID onset across all values of the regime type index. Compared to nondemocracies, though, democratic states have a lower propensity for both MID and fatal MID onset with low levels of previous armed conflict activity.

than half that of nondemocracies. This supports previous arguments that democracies may experience more frequent MIDs at lower levels of escalation (Senese 1997). Democracies may utilize militarized threats to demonstrate resolve, especially over highly salient issues, but they tend to back down when facing other highly resolved democratic opponents.

Figure 2, cell 6 once again shows little support for Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) expectation for powerful democracies being more conflict prone. Not only are the probabilities of MID and fatal MID involvement smaller for democracies than nondemocracies for all levels of relative power, but very powerful democracies actually have the lowest probability of militarized and fatal militarized conflict. Democratic leaders rarely take advantage of their preponderant power to target weak adversaries with military challenges.

Conclusion

Our study seeks to understand how democracies manage interstate conflicts and under what conditions democratic states utilize different forms of peaceful and militarized conflict management strategies. Many existing studies identify tendencies for democracies to prefer bilateral negotiation or legalistic third party settlement, yet it is not clear when democratic leaders will select these conflict management strategies, especially in light of the fact that democracies employ all forms of peaceful and militarized conflict management tools at different points in time. We argue that the answer lies in a better understanding of the context within which interstate negotiations take place. The conflict management strategies that democracies will employ depend upon the history of militarized conflict to date, the salience of the issue at stake, and the relative capabilities of their adversaries.

The evidence we find strongly indicates that dyads with histories of armed conflict increasingly resort to force to settle contentious claims. However, all forms of conflict resolution increase with past violent conflict. The probabilities of bilateral negotiation, nonbinding third party settlement, and binding third party settlement are considerably higher as the number of past militarized disputes increases. This confirms the intuition of the conflict management literature that third party mediators go to the hot spots, and that these efforts intensify as militarized histories accrue. However, the trends displayed in Figure 1 further suggest that dyads with entrenched histories of past militarized conflict, such as enduring rivals, at some point eschew peaceful negotiation and opt for force to resolve the contentious issue. Since democratic dyads rarely reach such high levels of past militarized conflict, this trend toward greater militarization rarely appears. For autocratic dyads with very high levels of past militarized conflict, the probability of resorting again to militarized violence reaches 60% and over 10% for fatal militarized violence. Using a broader set of contentious issues, these findings confirm results offered by Hensel (2001); past militarized conflict increases both peaceful negotiation and militarized attempts to resolve contentious issue claims.

Our results also suggest that the pacific effects of democracy may be upset by the domestic-political pressures imposed by violent conflict. Lektzian, Prins, and Souva (2010) observe a similar conditional effect for democratic institutions. Outside of rivalry, democracy substantially reduces the probability of conflict onset for states with territorial claims. However, inside rivalry, democracy has no such effect. Such political pressure can apparently overwhelm the institutional constraints and social norms that generally propel democratic leaders away from violent conflict. Indeed, consider the 1981 engagement (Paquisha Incident) between Ecuador and Peru. Despite the presence of (admittedly newly emergent) liberal institutions, disagreements over the demarcation of the border

coupled with past militarized conflict resulted in fatal militarized hostilities. It seems, then, that even democratic leaders must be careful to avoid crossing the militarized threshold.

For most reasonable values of past conflict, democratic dyads have a substantially higher probability of binding third-party conflict management compared to nondemocratic dyads. However, while past conflict increases the probability of binding third-party settlement for all dyads, it substantially increases it for non-democracies. Because autocrats do not enjoy the same degree of transparency, reliability, and audience costs as democracies, they find it more difficult to make credible commitments. In these situations, third party guarantors may facilitate agreements and help parties carry out the terms of the agreement. This may help to explain why a strong democratic community seems to produce more frequent third party conflict management in nondemocratic dyads, even though the willingness to accept third party assistance is arguably a democratic norm (Mitchell 2002; Crescenzi et al. 2010).

We should again point out that a willingness to employ legalized third party forms of conflict management could make bilateral settlement more likely and more successful. For example, democratic states are significantly more likely to recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice than nondemocratic states, which may create more efficient out of court bargaining for democratic dyads (Powell and Mitchell 2007). Looking only at the frequency of actual binding third party efforts may be misleading if democracies are strategic actors that anticipate the possibility of these binding judgments, and hence prefer to negotiate more efficiently on their own. Independent analyses not reported herein reveal that democracies are significantly more likely to reach agreements that entail roughly even concessions, compared to agreements reached in nondemocratic dyads that involve asymmetric outcomes (either favoring the challenger or target). Democratic dyads are not only able to employ bilateral negotiations more frequently; they are also better able to reach fair agreements that are carried out by both sides.

Two last points; first, salient claims also increase all forms of conflict management. However, in general, democratic dyads are less likely than nondemocratic dyads to resort to serious armed conflict and much more likely to use binding third party settlement mechanisms and bilateral diplomacy to resolve highly salient issues. Second, the empirical evidence does not offer much support for Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (1999, 2003) conjecture regarding powerful democracies. If audience costs induce risk-aversion in democratic political elites, as many institutionalists argue, then the costless campaigns powerful democracies likely face when confronting much weaker opponents cannot explain the relationships we observe. Indeed, powerful democracies eschew the use of force against weak democratic adversaries and opt for procedures more in line with their domestic conflict resolution norms.

Appendix 1: Cross-tabulation of Issue Claim and Settlement Type

<i>Settlement type</i>	<i>Type of issue claim</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Territory</i>	<i>River</i>	<i>Maritime</i>	
Bilateral negotiations	625	107	235	967
Nonbinding third party	185	51	121	357
Binding third party	41	5	18	64
Militarized dispute	196	18	90	304
Fatal militarized dispute	45	6	7	58

Appendix 2: Cross-tabulation of Issue Claim, Settlement Type, and Regime Type

Settlement type	Democratic states				Nondemocratic states			
	Territory	River	Maritime	Total	Territory	River	Maritime	Total
Bilateral negotiations	151	40	156	347	474	67	79	620
Nonbinding third party	35	13	68	116	150	38	53	241
Binding third party	8	1	14	23	33	4	4	41
Militarized dispute	18	1	50	69	178	17	40	235
Fatal militarized dispute	2	0	3	5	43	6	4	53

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