

Liberal Determinants of Systemic Interstate Peace*

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Abstract

The success of the democratic peace research agenda has led scholars to search for additional externalities of liberal politics and economics. Among the most promising venues is the system itself. The diffusion of democratic norms or identities could discourage conflict even among non-democracies. Yet, reconciling systemic claims with dyadic findings appears to require hypocrisy; democracies must press for peace among autocracies, while themselves continuing to use or threaten force against non-democracies. No such tension exists for other elements of the Kantian liberal triad. In particular, trade appears to consistently contribute to a systemic liberal peace.

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1 Introduction

Inspired by the democratic peace observation, researchers have begun to look for, and to find, evidence of a systemic liberal peace (Oneal & Russett 1999). Constructivist interpretations of democratic peace theory (Risse-Kappen 1995, 1997; Wendt 1999) and other normative explanations (Kant 1957[1795], Harrison 2004) can be construed as making system-level predictions (Huntley 1996). If adherence to norms of non-violence and deliberation, or a liberal identity explain the lack of conflict among liberal regimes, then perhaps these processes also affect conflict behavior at the system level, not just within democratic dyads (Harrison & Mitchell 2007). A growing list of studies find that democracies discourage conflict, not just dyad-by-dyad, but in the system as a whole (c.f., Crescenzi & Enterline 1999; Mitchell 1997; Kadera, et al. 2003; Mitchell, et al. 1999).¹

Even as claims of systemic peace accumulate, available perspectives pose an important logical conundrum. For the democratic community to influence non-democracies (as systemic theories require), democratic norms or behavior must be exported or “externalized” beyond democratic dyads. Conversely, for democracies to appear peaceful largely only in pairs (as the dyadic observation entails), democratic ideals or identities cannot matter much to the interaction of democracies and non-democracies. “A dyadic approach to the democratic peace predicts peaceful dispute resolution only between democracies, while a systemic approach recognizes the potential for democratic interactions to influence the behavior of nondemocratic states” (Mitchell 2002, page 749).

To reconcile dyadic and systemic versions of the democratic peace, democracies and/or autocracies must adhere to pacific ideals within their own communities, while continuing to practice violence in interactions with member states from the other community. It is tempting to suppose that the autocracies are the ones misbehaving. However, it is difficult to imagine why autocracies would feel obliged to honor peace-producing practices promoted by democracies, while not at the same time feeling obliged to honor those practices with democracies. Dyadic democratic peace advocates have long argued precisely that autocracies fail to play fair, adhering to traditional Hobbesian politics and ignoring institutional or normative rules. But dyadic approaches emphasize

¹Published studies generally rely on indirect tests of the systemic democratic peace phenomenon. Oneal & Russett (1999) constitute a significant exception to this tendency and as such form the focus of the empirical analysis here.

the exclusivity of the liberal peace. Autocracies are not privy to the benefits of liberal peace.

In contrast, the challenge for systemic liberal peace theorists is to find a way to bridge the gap between democracies and autocracies without including the interaction of democracies and autocracies. If autocracies adopt democratic norms willingly, then it is not clear why autocracies would refrain from practicing adopted norms with the democratic originators of the norms. If instead democracies must compel reluctant autocracies to play by liberal rules, then presumably democracies should be most interested in, and effective at, obtaining compliance in situations involving interaction between democracies and autocracies. It remains difficult to explain why *both* democracies and autocracies would play by democratic rules, but *fail to do so with each other*.

No equivalent tension exists for other variables in the liberal triumvirate. While the dyadic democratic peace observation requires that liberal polities function as an exclusive club, the effects of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and trade can operate beyond the dyad. Indeed, the impact of trade in particular may be greatest at the system level. Research has established that trade dependence (Oneal & Ray 1997) and, to a lesser degree, IGO membership diminish conflict monadically, while the monadic effect of democracy on disputes is weak or non-existent (Rousseau, et al. 1996). Claims of a dyadic effect of trade or IGO memberships are much more controversial, with evidence often resting on debatable assumptions in statistical tests (c.f. Boehmer, et al. 2004).

This study takes a critical look at whether the democratic peace can be generalized to the system level. I argue that trade in particular and intergovernmental organizations to a secondary degree are more eligible candidates as determinants of systemic liberal peace than is democracy. To assess these claims, I substantially expand one of the few existing studies that actually directly analyzes systemic liberal peace (Oneal & Russett 1999). After discussing logical problems with systemic democratic peace, I show that the size or strength of the democratic community is not generally a significant determinant of conflict outside of democratic dyads. In its place I offer evidence that another element of the liberal triad is effective in diminishing systemic conflict. Trade dampens disputes at the system level, though it has little or no pacific effect within liberal dyads. Instead, liberal states are “hypocritical,” advocating adherence to a systemic liberal peace for other states that they themselves do not follow. IGOs have little or no impact on systemic peace and conflict.

2 How (Much) Does a Liberal World Change World Politics?

The holy grail of liberal international relations is an empirically-grounded theory of beneficent systemic change. Recent efforts make it appear that we may be closing in on this goal, with the democratic peace propelling scholars to explore the global consequences of liberal domestic politics. Yet, there remains considerable ambiguity in attempting to generalize from the dyad to the system.

Theorizing about entire systems is notoriously difficult (Jervis 1997). Once viewed as the height of scientific political analysis (Kaplan 1957, Waltz 1979), system theories went out of style as scholars began to conclude that its primary manifestation, neorealism, had failed to generate a progressive research program (Vasquez 1997). System theories were supplanted by micro-level theories and dyadic empirical analysis, including the democratic peace finding. Dyadic research has been characterized by a “strategic-choice approach” that uses partial-equilibrium analysis—attempting to hold most of the system constant while examining one or a few relationships—based in part on a methodological bet that “strategic interactions at one level [of analysis] aggregate into interactions at other levels in an orderly manner” (Lake & Powell 1999, pg. 4). This strategy has proven extraordinarily productive, and is certainly worth continuing. That said, while research at the system level failed in large part because the system proved so unruly as to appear almost indeterminate (especially in the absence of strong micro-level theories), there is a danger that the methodological bets associated with the strategic-choice approach have led the field to neglect the degree to which causal effects may not aggregate across levels of analysis in expected ways. Indeed, findings at one level of analysis can even imply relationships at other levels that are not what one would casually predict. Part of the effort here is thus to contribute to a reawakening of systemic analysis, certainly not abandoning the advances of the last few decades, but taking seriously the possibility that there will also exist important but unexpected regularities at the level of the system.

2.1 Democracy

If interactions aggregate in an orderly manner across levels of analysis, then systemic research would serve primarily as a useful forum for testing and confirmation of dyadic hypotheses. The increasing prevalence of democracies could be expected simply to change the global mix of jointly

autocratic, mixed, and jointly democratic dyads, which would in turn affect the prevalence of conflict in the system as a whole.² Hypotheses about systemic conflict trends hinge on the relative dispute propensity of different types of dyads. If democracies are monadically more peaceful (Benoit 1996; Ray 1995; Rummel 1996; Rousseau et al. 1996), or mixed dyads are comparable in their conflict behavior to jointly non-democratic dyads (Maoz & Abdoladi 1989, Bremer 1992, Morgan & Campbell 1991, Maoz & Russett 1993, Oneal & Russett 1997), then increasing the proportion of democracies in the system should result in a monotonic decrease in system-wide conflict.³ If, however, mixed dyads are particularly war-like, then systemic conflict will be non-monotonic: the initial introduction of democracies creates more warlike mixed dyads than peaceful democratic dyads. At some point, however, enough democracies exist that new jointly democratic dyads counteract the impact of additional mixed dyads, incrementally decreasing systemic conflict (Gleditsch & Hegre 1997; Kadera et al. 2003). This non-monotonicity argument has generated significant interest, and also controversy (Gleditsch & Hegre 1997; Crescenzi & Enterline 1999; Mitchell et al. 1999).⁴

Students of the democratic peace have also adopted theoretical perspectives that, on closer examination, are in tension with simple extrapolations from the monadic and dyadic levels of analysis. Democratic norms or modes of behavior are said to be “externalized” to non-democracies (Harrison 2002). Huntley (1996) fired the first salvo, noting that Kant’s conception of perpetual peace was fundamentally systemic: the nature and organization of the anarchic global environment plays a critical role in conditioning peaceful co-existence. Indeed, social theories of world politics are a crucial component of systemic democratic peace research (Wendt 1999, Harrison 2006, Harrison & Mitchell 2007). Likewise, Mitchell (2002) argues and finds evidence that democratic norms of peaceful dispute resolution are adopted by non-democracies as the world becomes more democratic.

The systemic democratic peace offers an ideal forum for assessment of constructivist theories, which although influential theoretically have seldom been subjected to rigorous empirical tests.⁵

²Ray (2001) notes the possibility that democratic peace hypotheses may differ at different levels of analysis.

³The actual empirical relationship remains the subject of dispute. Initial studies found that systemic democracy increased the prevalence of minor disputes (Maoz & Abdoladi 1989, Senese 1997, Maoz 2001), but more recent research reports the opposite effect (Russett & Oneal 2001; Oneal et al. 2003; Gortzak et al. 2005; Ray & Tucker 2005).

⁴Regime type difference may be the source of tensions (Werner 2000; Henderson 2002; Peceny, et al. 2002; Bennett 2006). Indeed, difference is arguably a generic source of conflict (Huntington 1993a, 1996; Kacowicz 1995).

⁵See Finnemore & Sikkink (2001) for a review of the literature. Constructivists and quantitative researchers have tended to view the other (no pun intended) as emblematic of traditional pathologies in the discipline. For some on

Indeed, a growing number of studies buttress systemic democratic peace arguments with statistical support (Mitchell 2002, Kadera et al. 2003, Crescenzi et al. 2005, Kadera & Mitchell 2005). Still, confidence in these findings must be conditioned by our ability to reconcile systemic and dyadic evidence. Researchers will want to explain how the democratic community makes non-democracies less warlike without simultaneously affecting how democracies and non-democracies interact.

Findings that democracy causes not just dyadic, but systemic interstate peace have tremendous normative appeal. If the diffusion of democracy in the developed North helped western powers escape the Hobbesian logic of anarchy (Russett 1993, Doyle 1997), much of the world remains mired in insecurity (Eriksson & Wallensteen 2004). Yet, for those eager to bestow the benefits of peace and stability on developing regions (Talbot 1996, Rice 2005), implications of the dyadic democratic peace are not entirely uplifting. The world's remaining autocracies have proven extremely difficult to displace. Even when leadership turnover occurs, the stated allegiance of putative reformers to democratic transition too often proves to have been strategic rather than sincere. Nor, perhaps, should we be optimistic about efforts to impose democracy, given results of the adventure in Iraq (Enterline & Greig 2005, Owen 2005). In short, though democracy has been on the rise, the demise of autocratic rule is hardly imminent (Huntington 1991, McFaul 2002). In this context, a systemic democratic peace offers special promise precisely because such a relationship does not require that nations democratize in order to experience some of the benefits of the democratic community.

It is perhaps because of this normative appeal that scholars have failed to recognize an intrinsic tension between dyadic and systemic democratic peace findings.⁶ The preponderance of evidence indicates that democratic peace is substantially a dyadic phenomenon (Rousseau, et al. 1996; Oneal, et al. 2003). Claims that democracies externalize norms of behavior depend on the conviction that the democratic peace is not a uniquely dyadic phenomenon. If there is relative peace among democracies, but the presence of democracy does not make heterogeneous dyads less dispute prone, then this is important *prima facie* evidence against arguments that democracies externalize peace.

If the attributes of democracy fail to predominate in dyads in which democracies are members, it

each side, the paradigmatic divide is too great to bridge, but abandoning such a rich dialectic would be unfortunate.

⁶Even apparently disconfirmatory evidence has been assimilated and interpreted as support for systemic democratic peace claims. For example, the discovery that democracy has less impact on systemic peace in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth has been interpreted as evidence of political learning (Cederman 2001, Harrison 2006).

seems less likely that democracy impacts peace in dyads in which democracies are not members.

How could systemic and dyadic versions of the democratic peace coincide? The democratic community could have effects that are not characteristic of the behavior or consequences of any individual democracy. Indeed, this is precisely the view of systemic democratic peace advocates. Yet, for this to occur in a way that is consistent with the dyadic democratic peace observation, systemic effects of the democratic community must not only *not* operate through individual democracies, but these systemic effects must not *correlate* with unit or dyadic relationships. Put most simply, systemic democratic peace cannot have any differential impact on heterogeneous dyads. In order for dyads in which democracies are present to be less prone to fight, it would be necessary for scholars to observe an apparent *monadic* effect of regime type on dispute behavior. Researchers might well misattribute such a systemic peace as monadic democratic pacifism, but this is beside the point. Systemic democratic peace in the presence of a unique dyadic democratic peace, but without monadic democratic pacifism requires that system effects *not coincide with democracy*.

Imagine that in addition to the dyadic democratic peace, systemic democracy made every state less war prone. All dyads would become less disputatious. But since this would coincide with the rise of democracy as *both* a systemic and dyadic phenomenon, one would observe a correlation between democracy and peace at the monadic level. Heterogeneous and non-democratic dyads in systems with few democracies would be relatively war prone. As more states became democratic, the systemic effect of the democratic community would increase. All democratic-autocratic and autocratic-autocratic dyads might become more peaceful, but in pooled time-series at least some (if not most) of the effect of systemic democracy would appear to be attributable to monadic democracy. The apparent effect of monadic democracy would vary temporally, but since standard regression analyses of the democratic peace pool time-series, researchers would have identified a “monadic” democratic pacifism. Of course, researchers do not observe such a relationship.

Given this tension between dyadic and systemic versions of the democratic peace, and given the natural affinity of students of world politics for more good news about democracy, researchers may wish to exercise some degree of caution. The need to examine other possible causes is particularly great in the context of global change because of the large number of ways in which systemic changes

could have come about. In particular, the literature has identified intergovernmental organizations and economic interdependence as alternate potential forces for systemic peace that have expanded over the same period that democracy has made so much headway in spreading around the globe.

2.2 Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

Scholars have long debated the utility of IGOs (Mearsheimer 1995, Schweller & Preiss 1997, Martin & Simmons 1998). Constructivists, functionalists, and institutionalists argue that global politics is increasingly organized around regimes and institutions that foster cooperation by providing information and organizational structure, promoting norms and common belief systems, and reducing transaction costs (Haas 1964, Keohane & Nye 1989, Young 1986, Ruggie 1983, Rosenau 1992).

Neoliberal institutionalists embrace much of the functionalist/Kantian perspective on IGOs, but they also accept realist tenets about systemic anarchy, the centrality of power, and the importance of state interests (Keohane 1984, Axelrod 1984, Axelrod & Keohane 1985, Powell 1991, Snidal 1991). They argue, however, that collective security and cooperation are nevertheless feasible, since with many countries in the world, states often value absolute over relative gains and usually interact repeatedly. IGOs facilitate cooperation by encouraging reciprocity through regularized interaction.

While conceptual work by functionalists, liberals, and realists is extensive, the empirical literature on institutions is more limited. Oneal and Russett argue that dyads that share more IGO memberships are less likely to experience disputes (Oneal, et al. 2003; Oneal and Russett 1999; Russett, et al. 1998). This result appears sensitive to the choice of estimator and sample, however. IGOs either increase conflict or have no effect when assessing all dyads or when adding econometric controls for temporal dependence. Other studies find little or no indication that IGOs bring peace. Jacobson, et al. (1986), and Domke (1988) find no statistically significant relationship between intergovernmental organizations and conflict or peace. Oneal and Russett (1999), and Gartzke, et al. (2001) offer results suggesting that IGO participation can even *increase* disputes among members.

Differences in sample and model specification may help to explain some disparities in findings relating IGOs and conflict. In addition, states with extensive interests abroad are also more likely to act internationally and are more likely to be members of international organizations. Even IGOs

that are successful in reducing tensions between rivals may *appear* unsuccessful if at least part of the impetus for membership in IGOs follows from diplomatic need. States that share in common many IGOs are more likely to interact—cooperatively, competitively, and occasionally violently—than other states. Boehmer, et al. (2004) show that a measure of diplomatic recognition can be used as an effective proxy for international engagement, compensating for apparent selection bias.

Conceptualization and analysis of IGOs at the system level involves cumulative effects. A “dense web” of IGO linkages may exceed in impact the sum of individual memberships. Several research programs explore IGO networks. For example, Dorussen & Ward (2008) examine both direct and indirect linkages between states through IGOs and trade. Hafner-Burton and Montgomery (2006, 2008) incorporate network effects into a dyadic analysis, capturing states’ relative positions in IGO networks. Ingram et al. (2005) show that global trade flows are affected by the structural equivalence of states in a network. Ingram (2007) evaluates the determinants of IGO survival.

Both theoretical (c.f. Wendt 1999) and empirical (Mitchell 2002; Kadera et al. 2003) research suggests that IGOs seek to externalize or impose certain behaviors on non-member states. Conflicts that occur between members and non-members can draw in other members or injure the interests of member states. Intergovernmental organizations mediate between members and non-members, impose sanctions, offer aid, or even intervene by force. To the degree that these efforts yield peace, increases in the size and overlap in systemic IGO memberships could dampen interstate conflict.

2.3 Economic Interdependence

The least examined aspect of the liberal Kantian triad in terms of systemic conflict and cooperation is trade interdependence. Only one study I am aware of directly assesses the effect of systemic levels of economic interdependence on interstate conflict. Oneal & Russett (1999) supply evidence that the triumvirate of liberal variables (democracy, international organizations, trade) that have been used to such effect in dyadic studies operate in a more-or-less identical fashion at the system level. Average international levels of regime type, IGO membership, and trade dependence correlate negatively with conflict within dyads, even accounting for the “usual suspects” dyadic determinants of dispute behavior. Taken at face value, this is striking evidence of an expansive liberal peace; not

only does it appear that democracy, trade, and international organizations inhibit conflict directly (in the dyad), but their prevalence also seems to affect whether non-liberal states choose conflict.

Still, there are reasons for some caution. The principal analysis in Oneal & Russett (1999) contains 149,372 observations in the period 1885-1992, roughly a third of the 464,953 observations reported in a more recent study by the same authors (Oneal & Russett 2005). The origins for this disparity are not entirely clear, but it appears that the earlier analysis suffered from a considerable amount of missing data. At the same time, there are important theoretical discrepancies between the dyadic behavior of the key liberal variables and predictions of their systemic impact. Oneal & Russett (1999) make no effort to reconcile the exclusive nature of the dyadic democratic peace with the expansiveness necessary to consider their results for systemic democracy as empirically valid. Understanding the role of trade in promoting systemic peace requires further analysis and insight.

Systemic liberal peace research has sought to establish law-like relationships comparable to the dyadic observation.⁷ Unfortunately, systemic arguments and evidence run into problems with the very relationship on which they are modeled. Empirical laws have withstood numerous critical tests. Advancing systemic peace research thus requires criticism and revision. A closer look at the systemic democratic peace suggests that current findings are not robust, but a link between modernity and peace can be sustained through economic processes, such as trade interdependence.

3 Theory: Trade, Hypocrisy, and Systemic Stability

The literature identifies a number of ways liberal variables could contribute to systemic peace. There is room for greater clarity as to causal processes, however. Indeed, as I have already noted, reconciling putative dyadic and systemic effects can even lead to predictions of liberal hypocrisy.

Consider first democracy. If democratic community creates externalities that impact all dyads, then there should be an apparent monadic effect of democracy. Indeed, the only way to generate a systemic effect of democracy while also retaining existing monadic and dyadic observations is for the democratic community to *only* influence non-democratic dyads. Imagine that democracies are just

⁷Harrison (2006) argues that systemic approaches are already compatible with the Lakatosian “core” of the democratic peace research program, though he differs with Ray (2003) in interpreting Lakatos (1970). Standard references to the law-like status of the dyadic democratic peace observation include Levy (1988) and Russett (1990).

as warlike as other regimes, but that they prevail on other, non-democratic nations to refrain from war. As any parent can attest, “do as I say, not as I do” is expedient and may reflect self-interest, but it is hardly compelling as an ethical act. Adherence to norms under such conditions requires coercion, not persuasion. Irrespective of domestic politics, powerful nations may find it tempting to seek to exercise influence over other nations to force them to conform to normative expectations, while flouting these same expectations themselves. If democracies are disproportionately powerful, as indeed they have been for much of the last century, then it could be the case that democracies prevail on non-democracies to be more peaceful, while democracies ignore their own advice.

Though certainly not unique to democracies, hypocrisy can be a particularly appealing form of politics for popularly elected leaders. The Machiavellian dilemma is most acute when a leader is answerable for both his or her rhetoric and performance in office. Autocrats can retain office through shrewdness, or by buying off key constituents (Bueno de Mesquita, et al. 2003). Popular rule involves at least the appearance of principle, though practice may fall short of national aspirations. In contrast, foisting normative strictures on other nations offers the advantage of upholding principles without having to practice them. Democracies may or may not be hypocritical. I simply note that something like hypocrisy is needed to reconcile systemic arguments and dyadic evidence.

Intergovernmental organizations, in contrast, are intended to link nations together in ways that offer the potential to extend the impact of liberal principles beyond the dyad. No empirical limitations exist that might prevent IGOs from acting as a systemic conduit for liberal peace. As such, IGOs are a natural locus for systemic liberal arguments. Constructivists and others view IGOs as propagating norms or a liberal identity globally, enhancing peace even among states that are not members of a given organization (Ruggie 1998, Wendt 1999, Barnett & Finnemore 2004).

While plausible, treating IGOs as global or regional norm entrepreneurs again poses a tension, this time between two logics of liberal peace. Others have argued that IGOs function to inhibit conflict primarily by creating overlapping linkages (Hafner-Burton & Montgomery 2006, Dorussen & Ward 2008). It is not membership in the organization per se, but the cumulative impact of a “dense network” of overlapping relationships that is capable of promoting peace. While the accumulation of IGOs at the system level is an important adjunct to the theory, the dense network

approach actually argues against an effect of IGOs beyond the dyads jointly inhabited by members. Again as with democracy and different levels of analysis, either IGOs are exclusive in their behavior, impacting only members, or they are expansive, influencing non-members as well as member states. To the degree that IGOs operate through dense networks of entwining commitments, the absence of such linkages would seem to indicate the former. Dense network explanations for IGO influence thus really imply that non-members are not likely to be as significantly affected by the systemic abundance of IGOs. The systemic accumulation of IGOs can still contribute to interstate peace, but this can be captured at the dyad level, by counting the number of joint IGO memberships.

Of the three variables represented in conventional dyadic models of liberal peace, trade dependence may be the most eligible candidate for salience at the systemic level. Like IGOs, trade links states across international boundaries. Networks of international trade nominally parallel the action of international organizations, making it difficult or costly for nations to fight. Yet, trade has some important differences from democracy and intergovernmental organizations when viewed in the context of interstate conflict. War creates negative economic externalities; fighting is costly, not just for participants in a contest, but also for non-combatant trading states whose commerce is diminished or costs of exchange are increased. Nominally neutral parties face additional uncertainty about trading relationships and other difficulties that make the presence of the war in the international system harmful. If war hampers even nations that are not participants, creating an incentive for third parties to combat conflict, then the intensity of interest in obstructing disputes should increase in the damage anticipated to result from ecological conflict. The rise of trade and other forms of interdependence in the international system in the past century and a half has greatly increased interest in efforts to prevent international war. Indeed, the rise of intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations can be understood in terms of growing opposition to international conflict among non-combatant trading states. As nations benefit more from cross-border trade, they are more willing to invest in efforts to maintain peace. Major trading states may even have an encompassing interest in “policing the global commons,” discouraging the use of force by other nations that hamper profitable trade and investment (Kindleberger 1986, Gilpin 1981, Krasner 1999).

It does not necessarily follow, however, that opposition to ecological war equates to a reluctance

to fight dyadically. A tension exists between the interest of nations in pursuing their own objectives, through force if necessary, and the desire to restrain others from acting in a similar manner when force creates negative externalities. This tension can be described in terms similar to that of democratic duplicity. A liberal hypocrisy of “do as I say, not as I do” is important because it reflects both the liberal logic of international stability to promote commerce and of egoistic actions in continuing to pursue military foreign policies where such actions benefit the interests of the state. Powerful trading nations possess strong incentives to discourage *other* countries from fighting, even as they themselves continue to coerce through the threat or use of violence. The intensity of this liberal hypocrisy should conform to the systemic importance of trade. Attempts by powerful trading states to maintain international stability should be expected to grow with the rising importance of globalized trade. Interestingly, research on norms of territorial integrity tends to reinforce the notion of liberal hypocrisy motivated by commerce (Fazal 2007). The United States, France, the United Kingdom and other major powers have consistently sought to punish states for impinging on the territory of other nations, while these same states have shown themselves willing to use force to impose their will, a critical distinction that is explored further elsewhere (Gartzke & Rohner 2009).

4 Assessing Explanations for Liberal Systemic Peace

The analysis below is designed to better understand how systemic liberal variables affect conflict. I first replicate the analysis in Oneal & Russett (1999), using the much more complete sample and model specification of Oneal & Russett (2005). I then conduct tests using measures of democratic duplicity and liberal economic hypocrisy. I discuss the research design, data, and results below.

4.1 Research Design and Data

Oneal & Russett (2005) offer a detailed discussion of data and model specification for their dyadic analysis of the liberal peace. I briefly summarize this discussion here. The variables involved will be well known to students familiar with democratic peace research. The dataset consists of annual permutations of all member states of the Correlates of War project country list from 1885 to 2001.

The list of key variables for the baseline (dyadic) analysis begins with democracy, measured

using the Polity IV data (Jagers & Gurr. 1995, Marshall & Jagers 2002). Separate variables are included for the lower and higher democracy scores in the dyad. Oneal and Russett measure economic interdependence as the lower of the two monadic trade-to-GDP ratios. These authors do not include a measure for intergovernmental organizations, though this has been a fixture in previous studies (c.f., Russett & Oneal 2001). I add a count of joint IGO memberships (Pevehouse, et al. 2004), the same data used by Oneal and Russett in earlier studies.⁸ Following Oneal & Russett (1999), I create systemic versions of each of the key variables by coding global averages. Other constructions of systemic variables are explained where appropriate in discussing the results.

In addition to the key variables, Oneal and Russett include variables for alliance status, the ratio of national material capabilities, contiguity status, the distance between countries, and major power status. Further details of data and variable construction appear in Oneal & Russett (2005).

4.2 Results

Table 1 lists three regressions consisting of the basic dyadic conflict model from Oneal & Russett (2005), plus the key systemic liberal variables, which I add iteratively. I also include *System size*. Global trends associated with liberal variables could easily be confused with the growing number of countries in the world over time. Model 1 introduces the systemic democracy measure, *Proportion of democracy*, which is statistically significant as a determinant of dispute behavior, and also positive (rising systemic democracy increases conflict). As other scholarship has already demonstrated, initial growth in the proportion of democracies in the world raises the number of heterogeneous (one democracy, one non-democracy) dyads faster than the change in homogeneous dyads. If heterogeneous dyads are more dispute prone, then the rise in democracies actually increases conflict associated with democratization, at least initially (Gleditsch & Hegre 1997; Kadera et al. 2003).

The positive and significant relationship between the proportion of democracies in the world and MIDs must be seen as problematic for explanations involving externalization of democratic norms. Democracies are not making the international system less dispute prone as they become more prominent. If regime type heterogeneity is the culprit, as theory and evidence suggests, then

⁸Though not used in the study itself, the count of IGO memberships is included in the Oneal & Russett (2005) dataset. Oneal recommends using the more recent dataset (2005, rather than the 1999 data, personal correspondence).

Table 1: Logit Models of the Onset of Militarized Disputes with Liberal Systemic Variables

DV: MID onset	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Democracy		IGOs		Trade	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Systemic Variables						
Proportion of democracy	1.192***	(0.303)	-0.203	(0.509)	-0.292	(0.511)
Avg. # IGOs per state			0.0074	(0.0057)	0.0083	(0.0057)
Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio					-20.12*	(8.440)
Dyadic Variables						
Joint IGO memberships			0.0118*	(0.0048)	0.0119*	(0.0048)
Lower Democracy	-0.0739***	(0.0085)	-0.0765***	(0.0079)	-0.0766***	(0.0079)
Higher Democracy	0.0371***	(0.0068)	0.0342***	(0.0066)	0.0340***	(0.0066)
Lower trade-to-GDP ratio	-27.35**	(8.473)	-29.95***	(9.044)	-29.36**	(8.979)
Allies	0.0696	(0.102)	-0.0613	(0.103)	-0.0644	(0.103)
Capability ratio (log)	-0.284***	(0.0305)	-0.270***	(0.0320)	-0.271***	(0.0321)
Contiguous	1.125***	(0.152)	1.081***	(0.151)	1.083***	(0.152)
Distance (log)	-0.288***	(0.0538)	-0.282***	(0.0547)	-0.282***	(0.0548)
Major power	1.051***	(0.134)	1.061***	(0.140)	1.063***	(0.141)
System size	-0.494***	(0.0382)	-0.484***	(0.0383)	-0.485***	(0.0384)
Constant	-1.090*	(0.441)	-0.983*	(0.441)	-0.888*	(0.443)
Wald χ^2 (14,16,17)	3949.9		3968.3		4084.5	
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-8104.1		-8085.5		-8082.4	
Pseudo- R^2	0.3783		0.3797		0.3799	
N	464,953		464,953		464,953	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. All tests are two-tailed (Standard errors in parentheses).

this trend will reverse itself if and when democracy becomes the predominant form of polity.

Model 2 adds the measure of the average number of inter-governmental organizations, *Avg. # IGOs per state*. As the international system becomes more densely populated with intergovernmental organizations, the probability of a MID increases, though this effect is not statistically significant. I also include a count of the number of IGOs to which both states of a dyad are members. This variable proves to be statistically significant, but again in the positive direction (dyads whose members participate in many of the same IGOs are more likely to experience militarized disputes). While disappointing, this is again not unanticipated (Gartzke, et al. 2001). Given the tendency of IGO membership counts to reflect variation in the level of national engagement in world politics, it will make sense eventually to introduce a variable that measures national engagement.

The final regression reported in Table 1 adds the global average trade-weighted GDP variable. The greater the importance of trade to the world economy, the less likely dyads are to experience a MID. Systemic democracy and international organization are not statistically significant. Of the three systemic liberal peace variables, only interdependence seems salient as a determinant of disputes.⁹ This is not to say that the Kantian tripod does not operate at the dyadic level, only that differences appear between the functioning of democracy in particular within dyads and in the system as a whole. Trade dependence alone operates in a manner that is similar (behaviorally) at both dyadic and systemic levels. Joint IGO memberships actually increase dyadic disputes. Other variables in the standard Oneal and Russett model operate as anticipated by previous research.

Table 2 contains a second set of three regressions, this time using the ReLogit estimator designed to deal with rare events, such as disputes (Tomz, et al. 1999; King and Zeng 2001).¹⁰ I make several changes to the models in Table 2 to address possible concerns about variable construction, model specification, and to assess robustness. First, the dependent variable differs in intensity across the three regressions (all MIDS, fatal MIDS, wars). As can be seen from the coefficients and standard errors in Table 2, varying conflict intensity still yields comparable results. Second, I examine another way to measure systemic democracy. In Table 1, I coded the percentage of states in the world system that reached a certain democratic threshold (PropDem). In Table 2, I use instead the

⁹The systemic trade variable produces comparable results with other systemic variables omitted from the model.

¹⁰Estimator choice is for exposition; equivalent results are obtained using logit in Table 2, or ReLogit in Table 1.

average polity level for the system. This variable construction is similar to that adopted by Oneal & Russett (1999). Results for the two measures of systemic democracy are interchangeable. Third, results from Table 1 suggest that membership in IGOs is actually harmful for interstate peace, at least within dyads. Nations that are more active internationally in terms of involvement in conflict tend also to be more prone to participate in IGOs. I add a measure of diplomatic recognition that has proven useful in addressing this relationship in previous IGO research (Boehmer, et al. 2004).

Table 2: ReLogit Models of the Onset of MIDs, Fatal MIDs, and Wars with Systemic Variables

DV: MID onset	(4)		(5)		(6)	
	All MIDs		Fatal MIDs		Wars	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Systemic Variables						
Average democracy	0.0600**	(0.0223)	0.0389	(0.0410)	-0.0921	(0.0845)
Avg. # IGOs per state	0.0025	(0.0048)	0.0144	(0.0086)	-0.0033	(0.0136)
Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio	-40.38***	(9.089)	-52.78**	(20.01)	-144.2***	(43.55)
Dyadic Variables						
Diplomatic recognition	0.0002***	(0.0000)	0.0002***	(0.0000)	0.0002*	(0.0000)
Joint IGO memberships	-0.0084	(0.0051)	-0.0199	(0.0110)	-0.0581**	(0.0201)
Lower democracy	-0.0618***	(0.0080)	-0.0806***	(0.0165)	-0.106**	(0.0355)
Higher democracy	0.0321***	(0.0065)	0.0353**	(0.0110)	0.0435	(0.0243)
Lower trade-to-GDP ratio	-30.71**	(10.39)	-100.3**	(35.55)	-143.8*	(72.30)
Allies	0.135	(0.105)	0.000551	(0.201)	-0.118	(0.401)
Capability ratio (log)	-0.234***	(0.0327)	-0.390***	(0.0565)	-0.824***	(0.114)
Contiguous	0.916***	(0.153)	1.004***	(0.256)	0.719	(0.432)
Distance (log)	-0.305***	(0.0538)	-0.473***	(0.0802)	-0.497**	(0.153)
Major power	0.790***	(0.144)	1.009***	(0.253)	1.842***	(0.526)
System size	-0.472***	(0.0389)	-0.464***	(0.0641)	-0.496***	(0.112)
Constant	-0.0851	(0.433)	-0.272	(0.640)	0.250	(1.200)
<i>N</i>	443,083		442,834		443,083	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (Standard errors in parentheses.)

The results in Tables 1 & 2 help to reconcile logical and empirical tensions between systemic and dyadic predictions about the nature of liberal peace. Of the systemic versions of the three Kantian variables, only average trade dependence is consistently statistically significant in the anticipated direction. Concern about negative externalities leads to a lessening of global conflict regardless of

whether potential disputants are trading states or not. Systemic democracy exacerbates conflict, though this relationship does not persist for fatal MID or wars. During initial stages of democratization, disputatious heterogeneous dyads form in greater numbers than democratic dyads. Regime heterogeneity in turn leads to increased interstate conflict. Global average IGO membership has no significant impact on whether states fight, once the effects of variable engagement in the international system are taken into account. Other variables perform in line with previous research.

The analysis conducted so far establishes the basic relationships between systemic variables and militarized disputes. What remains open to debate is how these relationships have come to pass. I have argued that egoistic state interests and the efforts of powerful or influential states are more likely the cause of liberal peace than collective security or the formation of social identities. One way to assess contrasting claims about the causes of the effects of systemic variables on dyadic conflict is to look for places where the impact of the systemic variables vary. For example, as already suggested, the externalization of norms or social identity imply that systemic democracy or trade should lead most nations to become less disputatious, though the strongest effects should presumably remain with those states that most closely resemble the ideal (i.e., democracies). Egoistic motives would instead lead powerful nations to behavior more consistent with liberal hypocrisy.

Table 3 lists three more regressions, this time using the probit estimator.¹¹ I return to the basic dependent variable (all MID onsets). However, I omit the dyadic and systemic IGO variables, which have proven less germane in determining dispute behavior. The regressions in Table 3 introduce a series of interaction variables that are designed to unearth evidence for or against liberal hypocrisy. The first model (7), examines whether power mitigates the effects of systemic variables. Normative approaches argue that nations act out of a sense of obligation or moral pertinence. Norms or social identity presumably impact most those states that are most able or inclined to fight. As the depth and strength of the democratic community grows, one might expect to see conflict decrease in dyads containing capable countries (weak states are not really deterred from doing what they cannot).

On the other hand, capable countries have the physical ability to flout normative strictures or social pressure if they so choose. Powerful states should be less affected by systemic variables to

¹¹ Again, estimators are interchangeable in these analyses. I use probit here to reflect the robustness of the findings.

Table 3: Probit Models of MID Onset, Assessing Democratic Duplicity and Liberal Hypocrisy

DV: MID onset	(7)		(8)		(9)	
	Power		Dyad		Power \times Dyad	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Systemic \times Dyadic						
$\frac{Avg. dem.}{Higher cap.}$ †	1.171	(1.120)				
$\frac{Avg. trade}{Higher cap.}$	-0.0231***	(0.0051)				
Avg. dem. \times Lower dem.			-0.0045***	(0.0012)		
Avg. trade \times Lower trade			-553.8	(845.4)		
$\frac{Average democracy}{(Lower dem. \times Higher cap.)}$ †					-4.036**	(1.261)
$\frac{Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio}{(Lower trade \times Higher cap.)}$ ‡					-2.794***	(0.647)
Systemic Variables						
Average democracy	0.0256**	(0.0092)	0.0128	(0.0092)	0.0295***	(0.0082)
Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio	-11.97**	(3.767)	-17.93***	(4.161)	-17.10***	(3.737)
Dyadic Variables						
Lower capability	9.786***	(1.048)	9.718***	(1.057)	9.871***	(1.079)
Higher capability	1.834***	(0.379)	2.027***	(0.374)	1.963***	(0.377)
Diplomatic recognition†	9.357***	(0.932)	10.35***	(0.941)	9.874***	(0.951)
Lower Democracy	-0.0289***	(0.0033)	-0.0278***	(0.0032)	-0.0287***	(0.0033)
Higher democracy	0.0087***	(0.0025)	0.0091***	(0.0025)	0.0090***	(0.0025)
Lower trade-to-GDP ratio	-16.24**	(5.345)	-12.98**	(4.994)	-17.08**	(5.618)
Allies	0.0517	(0.0416)	0.0176	(0.0420)	0.0239	(0.0423)
Contiguous	0.343***	(0.0737)	0.352***	(0.0739)	0.365***	(0.0738)
Distance (log)	-0.229***	(0.0254)	-0.220***	(0.0246)	-0.219***	(0.0251)
Major power	-0.0593	(0.0773)	-0.0362	(0.0780)	-0.0339	(0.0777)
System size	-0.140***	(0.0156)	-0.143***	(0.0156)	-0.135***	(0.0157)
Constant	0.101	(0.215)	0.0069	(0.207)	-0.0095	(0.211)
Wald χ^2 (19,19,19)	3071.53***		3133.24***		3104.48***	
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-7356.6		-7380.6		-7207.34	
Pseudo- R^2	0.3997		0.3977		0.3990	
N	443,083		443,083		432,652	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Standard errors in parentheses. Some values rescaled by † $\times 10^5$, or ‡ $\times 10^{15}$.

the degree that behavior is driven by interests more than a sense of propriety or obligation. To assess the effects of power, I identify the more capable state in the dyad using states' CINC scores. This approach is broadly analogous to the "weak link" assumption familiar from dyadic democratic peace research. Weak dyads differ from dyads in which at least one state is capable because peace may be imposed by circumstances. Dyads where at least one state is physically capable of fighting must show some restraint, or alternately not be interested in fighting in order for peace to prevail.

Using the higher capability variable as the denominator to construct a ratio, I can now examine whether systemic variables differ in their effects on weak or capable dyads. The variable $\frac{Avg. dem.}{Higher cap.}$ should demonstrate whether dyads with capable countries respond differently to changes in the systemic level of democracy. Similarly, $\frac{Avg. trade}{Higher cap.}$ indicates whether average systemic trade levels have different effects on dyads containing capable countries than on dyads consisting of weak states.

The coefficient for the ratio of average democracy to higher capability variable is positive but insignificant. Either norms or social identity equally affect weak and strong alike, or the strength of the democratic community has no significant effect on the conflict behavior of dyads. The dispute propensity of capable countries in particular is unaffected by the advance of systemic democracy, implying that the socialization of norms or democratic identities is ignored by powerful states.¹²

In contrast, the effect of systemic trade does appear to differ for powerful countries. The variable $\frac{Avg. trade}{Higher cap.}$ is negative and statistically significant. As with the original systemic interdependence variable, rising global trade (numerator) tends to dampen interstate disputes. Second, the effects of systemic trade on conflict are not uniform. Capable states are *less pacified* by systemic trade than are weaker powers. It seems unlikely that capable countries benefit less from trade than weak countries. It also appears implausible that weak states are restraining themselves more than powerful countries, or that the weak are spearheading efforts to promote liberal economic peace. Instead, powerful commercial nations appear to be engaging in liberal hypocrisy, encouraging or compelling weak nations to refrain from using force, while violating these strictures themselves.

To be consistent in how I measure power in these regressions, I disaggregate the *Capability ratio* variable into two variables, much as conventional democratic peace research does with democracy.

¹²I also examined an interaction substituting *Lower capability*. This variable is also statistically insignificant.

Lower capability and *Higher capability* report, respectively, coefficients for the less powerful state, and the more powerful state in each dyad. Both variables are positive and significant. Increasing threshold capabilities or the difference in power invite conflict. *Diplomatic recognition* is also positive and significant in this and subsequent regressions. The other systemic and dyadic variables from the standard Oneal and Russett model all perform as anticipated by previous research.

Model 8 examines interactions between dyadic and systemic liberal variables. Here, the relationships between systemic democracy, trade, and their threshold dyadic counterparts reverses itself, with the democracy interaction negative and statistically significant, while the trade interaction is not significant. Dyads with high levels of trade are not much less likely to fight in the face of trade globalization than they are without globalization.¹³ Put another way, social pressures to refrain from force have not trickled down from the system to trading states any more than they have influenced non-trading states. This does *not* imply the absence of such pressures. We have already seen that weak states respond to rising international trade by becoming more peaceful. Instead, these results demonstrate that, whatever incentives there are to refrain from fighting, they are applied irrespective of the *benefits* of trade, a finding consistent with liberal economic hypocrisy.

Democracy, in contrast, does appear to coincide with an interaction between system and dyad. Increasing systemic democracy tends to make *non-democratic or heterogeneous dyads* relatively less dispute prone. However, the reason for this appears to be that a stronger democratic community is *more* disputatious internally.¹⁴ Rising systemic democracy has reduced the difference in dispute propensity between democratic dyads and other types of dyads, but this is not because non-democracies are less conflict prone. As we have seen, the net effect of these two forces is to increase systemic conflict, since the number of autocratic and mixed dyads far exceeds democratic dyads. The democratic peace is not discouraging non-democracies from using force against other autocracies or even against democracies, but instead is quite exclusive to democratic dyads.

The final regression in Table 3 introduces measures that combine elements of the first and second interaction variables. $\frac{\text{Average democracy}}{(\text{Lower dem.} \times \text{Higher cap.})}$ is a ratio of systemic democracy to capability-

¹³ *Avg. trade* × *Lower trade* and *Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio* correlate at 0.1129. *Avg. trade* × *Lower trade* and *Lower trade-to-GDP ratio* correlate at 0.8319. *Lower trade-to-GDP ratio* and *Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio* correlate at 0.0180.

¹⁴ *Avg. dem* × *Lower dem.* correlates with *Average democracy* at -0.4890, while *Average democracy* and *Lower democracy* correlate at 0.3163. *Avg. dem* × *Lower dem.* and *Lower democracy* correlate at a much lower -0.0898.

weighted dyadic threshold democracy. Democratization tends to increase the value of this variable, while dyadic capabilities and regime type diminish values. As the results in Model 7 revealed, capable states are generally no more or less likely to be affected by the extensiveness of the democratic community. However, the results in Model 9 show that powerful democracies are especially prone to ignore admonitions or norms about their conflict behavior associated with the democratic community. The results of Model 8 indicate that systemic democracy interacts with dyadic regime type. Democracies are *relatively* less peaceful with each other as democratization increases, while democratization is accompanied by an increase in intra-regime fighting. Taken together, these findings suggest that powerful democracies may value peace, but they don't necessarily practice it, particularly when confronting weaker non-democracies. In effect, the democratic community is exporting conflict, not pacific norms or a more cooperative identity. While the conflict behavior of capable countries in general is unaffected by the secular trend toward democratization, democracies fight more with non-democratic countries, and the most capable democracies fight the most.

The results of interacting systemic interdependence with capabilities and dyadic interdependence appear to yield much the same results as with democracy. However, the two interactions differ considerably in the direction and impact of each respective component systemic variable. Increases in *Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio* decrease dyadic disputes (Model 7), while rising *Average democracy* has the opposite effect, at least for the levels of democratization seen thus far. This is important because it governs interpretation of $\frac{\text{Avg. trade-to-GDP ratio}}{(\text{Lower trade} \times \text{Higher cap.})}$. Here again, powerful trading states appear to be the most immune to the conflict inhibiting effects of systemic trade. Less capable countries are more inclined to refrain from fighting in the face of substantial global trade. As Model 8 demonstrated, there is little interaction between systemic and dyadic dependence. Instead, it appears that powerful trading states prevail on *other nations* to curtail conflict, while not restraining themselves. Capable countries fight when it behooves them to do so, regardless of whether this harms systemic trade or democracy. At the same time, powerful trading states appear eager to convince or compel other countries to adhere to liberal economic norms, even while violating these same norms themselves. This “do as I say, not as I do” behavior of powerful countries may not be all that surprising, though certainly the failure of moral suasion to generate restraint is disappointing.

5 Conclusions: Whence, Whither, and Why?

Equipped with new theoretical and empirical tools and motivated by the dyadic democratic peace observation, the last generation of international relations scholars shifted focus away from systemic theoretical debates and toward the dyad. The literature on the systemic democratic peace provides a valuable reminder that dyadic interactions take place in a broader international context. To the degree that dyads are enmeshed in the larger system, researchers cannot simply treat interactions among units as if they will aggregate up in a predictable manner. This need to assess and identify effects uniquely indicative of systemic processes is at the core of a revival of systemic research.

The systemic correlates of democracy posited in previous studies are encouraging. Existing theoretical justifications for these claims are at times less clear than one would like, however. Alternative accounts may also be due more thorough consideration. The results presented here perhaps provide reason to pause before declaring the democratic peace systemic, even as they reaffirm that liberal systems can be more peaceful. In place of a virtuous republican community externalizing norms, I find that “liberal hypocrisy” involves trading states that impose standards of behavior that they themselves fail to adopt. Though filtered through power and self-interest, trade plays a more important role in encouraging global cooperation than previously imagined.

Lacking central authority, scholars, leaders, and ordinary citizens have sought in liberal politics mechanisms that can tame anarchical international politics. It is tempting to believe that democracy can improve the nature of world politics, just as many have believed now and in the past that perfecting individuals or societies was the surest route to better government within national borders. To paraphrase James Madison, if states were angels, no world government would be necessary.¹⁵ But Adam Smith offered another organizing mechanism that did not require the participation of angels. Even in a world of nations governed by egoists, we still obtain through trade a form of systemic peace, as long as we accept that citizens and leaders can respond to very human incentives. A world politics of people, and not angels, can still be made more peaceful.

¹⁵ “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” (Madison 1961, page 322)

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