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Permanent Friends? Dynamic Difference and the Democratic Peace[1]

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Perhaps the simplest explanation for where fault lines lie in a political process involves the presence of an "other." Difference divides and similarity unites. These similarities and differences can in turn orient and propagate conflict. Yet, similarity and difference are also dynamic, evolving in response to changing population characteristics or a new reference point. We offer a simple explanation for interstate conflict in which the salience of similarity or difference varies with the prevalence or capabilities of groups. We apply our argument in the context of the democratic peace. When democracies are scarce or weak, and autocracies plentiful and powerful, democracies face a common threat. As the democratic community strengthens, however, the threat from autocracies declines and differences among democracies appear more salient. Our findings contrast with standard expectations about how democratization shapes world affairs.

Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests – Lord Palmerston

The world is a dynamic place. Change is unending, even as the continuity of change creates knowable patterns of cause and effect. Yet, to say that change is constant is not to say that change is *a constant*. Such may be the case with interstate hostilities across the divide of domestic politics. Regime type differences may be one source of international conflict, just as similarities may promote relative peace (Rousseau, Gelpi, Reiter and Huth 1996; Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates and Gleditsch 2001; Bennett 2006).[2] However, the assumption has been that the effects of similarities and differences (whatever they may be) do not change, that regime type is about as conflict-inhibiting or conflict-inducing at one moment in history as another, and that tensions within dyads remain unaltered by the ecology of regime types in the global system.

Lord Palmerston's famous dictum suggests the need to assess the durability of friendships and enmities in world politics. Affinities may endure, but they should not be assumed to do so. The debate over the "autocratic peace"—whether jointly autocratic dyads are more peaceful than heterogeneous dyads, while remaining somewhat less peaceful than paired democracies—is a particularly prominent situation where researchers of all perspectives conceive of the impact of regime type as fixed with respect to time and place. We relax the assumption that conflict propensity is a static attribute of different types of dyads and instead treat the effect of regime difference or similarity as a dynamic product of changes in the systemic distribution of regimes. In so doing, we allow for the possibility that the impact of regime type as an organizing principle or focal point evolves with secular changes in the global distribution of regimes. Conflict among democracies is pathological when democracies are scarce and vulnerable. As democracies become more common, however, preference heterogeneity increases, while the need to cooperate declines.

This dynamic is so common as to escape conscious attention among international relations researchers. Biologists note that intraspecies competition ebbs with growing threats from other species (Zuk and Kolluru 1998). Railroad collusion increased with the emergence of other forms of transit (Conant 1962). Alliances and identities form or collapse conditional on an "other" (Walt 1987; Wendt 1992). Notions of democratic cooperation and identity have already become more varied as democracy has become more common (Zakaria 1997). Our analysis has implications for the broader logic of cleavages and the activation of political identities. Rather than an endpoint for history (Fukuyama 1992), or the beginning of an end (Marx 1957[1867,1885,1894]; Wendt 1999), our age may be yet another interlude before history repeats itself "all over again." States, like groups and individuals, have numerous identities. Regime differences will be more or less salient depending on ecological conditions and on the identity and behavior of other states. Our research also reflects growing interest in integrating systemic and dyadic theories and empirical models (Harrison 2002).

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[2] "Source" here refers to both incentives to fight, such as different preferences, and permissive conditions. Our argument does not require that difference directly cause conflict, only that it influences which actors fight with whom.

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Literature: Democracy, Autocracy, and Difference

That democracies do not fight each other, or that they fight only rarely, is now one of the most widely accepted empirical findings in political science.[3] Initial studies that found what later came to be known as the democratic peace (Babst 1964; Small and Singer 1976) encountered skepticism, as the discovery was incompatible with the realist precept that second image politics was largely irrelevant to international affairs. Early challenges to the democratic peace, both qualitative (Layne 1994) and quantitative (Spiro 1994; Farber and Gowa 1997; Gowa 1999), often originated from the realist camp. Over time, however, more extensive and careful quantitative research, most notably a series of studies by Russett, Oneal, and coauthors (Maoz and Russett 1992, 1993; Oneal, Oneal, Maoz and Russett 1996; Oneal, Russett and Berbaum 2003; Oneal and Ray 1997; Oneal and Russett 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Russett 1993;Russett and Oneal 2001), have addressed many methodological concerns with prior studies, creating a consensus within the field that the empirical relationship between joint democracy and peace is genuine.[4]

An intense but increasingly one-sided debate has occurred between those who treat democratic peace as a dyadic observation (Maoz and Abdoladi 1989; Bremer 1992; Morgan and Campbell 1991; Maoz and Russett 1993; Oneal and Russett 1997; Russett and Oneal 2001) and those who argue that democracies are generally more peaceful (Benoit 1996; Ray 1995; Rummel 1996; Rousseau et al. 1996). This debate has clear normative implications, even as its results sharpen theoretical insight: An explanation for the monadic relationship is typically unable to account for a dyadic observation, and vice versa. For example, Kant's assertion that citizens in a republic are naturally loath to spill their own blood (Kant 1972 [1795]) implies a monadic, not a dyadic phenomenon.

With evidence mounting that the democratic peace is primarily a dyadic phenomenon, attention has increasingly focused in recent years on theoretical arguments designed to explain why democracy inhibits conflict only in dyads. Growing consensus on empirics has not been paralleled by agreement about *why* such a relationship should exist, however. In this "second generation" of democratic peace research, scholars face a major obstacle to theoretical advancement. Since efforts to theorize the democratic peace are largely inductive, the central empirical prediction of any new theory is something that is already known (or believed). Assuming that theoreticians have done a competent job, it becomes increasingly difficult to select among competing democratic peace theories based on the theory's ability to explain the democratic peace (Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson and Smith 1999; Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson and Morrow 2003; Huth and Allee 2002, 2003). In this context, a premium must be placed on the generation of novel theoretical predictions. Extending the empirical domain of democratic peace theories is the only way to adjudicate among multiple explanations, all of which nominally account for the democratic peace observation.[5] Partly for this reason, the initially heterodox assertion that peace among like regimes may not be limited to democracies has attracted increasing attention (Oren and Hays 1997).

The "autocratic peace" involves a class of arguments about the conflictual consequences of regime similarity and difference. Theories disagree over whether democratic and autocratic relations are distinct or equivalent. Early studies of the autocratic peace typically focused on certain geographic regions. Despite having little democracy, low levels of economic development, arbitrary national borders, and widespread civil conflict, Africa experiences surprisingly little interstate war. Several studies attribute the "African peace" to historical norms and to the strategic behavior of insecure leaders who recognize that challenging existing borders invites continental war while encouraging secessionist movements risks reciprocal meddling in the country's own domestic affairs (Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Herbst 1989, 1990).[6] However, these arguments fail to address tensions between individual (state, leader) interests and social goods. The security dilemma implies precisely that leaders act aggressively despite lacking revisionist objectives (Jervis 1978).

Initial statistical evidence of an autocratic peace emerged in a negative form with the observation that mixed democratic–autocratic dyads are more conflict prone than either jointly democratic or jointly autocratic dyads (Gleditsch and Hegre 1997; Raknerud and Hegre 1997). Studies have sought systematic evidence for or against an autocratic peace. Oren and Hays (1997) evaluate several data sets, finding that autocracies are less war prone than democracy–autocracy pairs. Indeed, they find that socialist countries with advanced industrialized economies are more peaceful than democracies. Werner (2000) finds an effect of political similarity that coexists with the widely recognized effect of joint democracy. She attributes the result to shared preferences arising from a reduced likelihood of disputes over domestic politics. Peceny, Beer and Sanchez-Terry (2002) break down the broad category of autocracy into multiple subgroups and find evidence that shared autocratic type (personalistic dictatorships, single-party regimes, or military juntas) reduces conflict, although the observed effects are less pronounced than for joint democracy. Henderson (2002) goes further by arguing that there is no empirically verifiable democratic peace. Instead, political dissimilarity causes conflict. Souva (2004) argues and finds that similarity of both political and economic institutions encourages peace. In the most sophisticated analysis to date, Bennett (2006) finds a robust autocratic peace, though the effect is smaller than for joint democracy and limited to coherent autocratic regimes. Petersen (2004), in contrast, uses an alternate categorization of autocracy and finds no support for the claim that similarity prevents or limits conflict. Still, the bulk of evidence suggests that

[3] Many scholars cite Levy's (1988) claim that the democratic peace is "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations" (page 662), or Russett (1990), who calls the democratic peace "one of the strongest nontrivial and nontautological generalizations that can be made about international relations" (page 123).

[4] Consensus but not unanimity (Gartzke 2007). There remains considerable ambiguity about causal mechanisms.

[5] Given their inductive origins, the deductive basis for many democratic peace theories is open to challenge (Gates, Knutsen and Moses 1996; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, , 2003). Yet, the strength of available evidence has lead to the conviction that *some* explanation links democracy with peace. Theoretical critiques thus face an uphill battle (Rosato 2003).

[6] Along similar lines, Martín (2006) argues that the surprising dearth of interstate conflict in twentieth-century South America is a consequence of shared interests among military dictatorships that all faced internal threats.

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similar polities are associated with relative peace, even among nondemocracies.

The autocratic peace poses unique challenges for democratic peace theories. Given that the democratic peace highlights apparently unique characteristics of joint democracy, many explanations are predicated on attributes found only in democratic regimes. An autocratic peace implies that scholars should focus on corollaries or consequences of shared regime type, in addition to, or perhaps even instead of democracy. In this context, arguments about democratic norms (Maoz and Russett 1993; Dixon 1994), improved democratic signaling ability (Fearon 1994; Schultz 1998, 1999, 2001), the peculiar incentives imposed on leaders by democratic institutions (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, 2003), and democratic learning (Cederman 2001a) all invite additional scrutiny. While it is theoretically possible that a democratic peace and an autocratic peace could arise from independent causal processes, logical elegance and the empirical similarities inherent in shared regime type provide cause to explore theoretical arguments that spring from regime similarity in general.

Another source of novel empirical variation for second-generation democratic peace research involves temporal dynamics in the relationship between regime type and conflict behavior. Cederman (2001a) raised this possibility in arguing that an appropriate interpretation of Kant requires viewing the democratic peace as a macro-historical learning process in which the effects of the democratic peace strengthened over time. Indeed, criticisms of the democratic peace often focus on "near misses," most of which occur in the nineteenth century (Layne 1994; Elman 1997). At the same time, however, there is evidence that the democratic peace may have weakened after the Cold War (Sobek, Clark and Kimball 2006; Gowa 2010). Of course, such dynamic effects may be spurious, arising from failures to control for variables that trend with democracy over time (Gartzke and Weisiger 2012b) or even more prosaically from deficiencies in standard measures of democracy that may overstate the prevalence of democracies in earlier time periods.[7] To the extent that they exist, however, temporal dynamics in the relationship between shared regime type and conflict behavior provide another novel empirical relationship that can be used in refining theories of liberal peace.

A third empirical characteristic of democracy that deserves mention is its distinctly non-random distribution. Today, Europe is almost entirely democratic; Africa and the Middle East are predominantly autocratic.[8] Indeed, it is impossible to fully explain transitions to and from democracy without reference to the regional mix of regime types (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). This clustering in turn influences the democratic peace: A country may be more likely to democratize (Gleditsch 2003), and a new democracy may be more likely to survive, if the country finds itself in a democratic neighborhood (Cederman and Gleditsch 2004). Clustering by regime type is certainly appealing given the key prediction of the democratic peace; democracies should prefer democratic neighbors, as this makes conflict unlikely. However, regime type clustering does not emerge in an organic fashion from conventional democratic peace theories, since none of the most common arguments (norms, constraints, information, identity) explicitly considers geography. Further, the rationale used to reconcile geographic clustering by regime type with democratic peace theory implies precisely that it is difference in regime type that is particularly pernicious to peace. The desire of democracies to encourage or compel regime change in autocratic neighbors must mean that the security dilemma is especially intense between unlike regimes. Autocracies, in turn, must prefer autocrats as neighbors, if for no other reason than that insecure democrats incline toward undermining autocracies.

Social constructivism both anticipates and contrasts with our own perspective (Ruggie 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Hopf 2002). "Identities" coalesce in reaction to an "other," paralleling the logic of cooperation and conflict surrounding similarity and difference. However, constructivism is not clear about what happens when one identity begins to dominate another. Wendt (1995) argues for an evolution in state preferences, driven largely by the weight of communal dynamics and norms promulgated by the international community. As more countries become liberal, world politics becomes Kantian and cooperative. Risse-Kappen (1995) explicitly connects the evolution of a liberal international identity to democratic peace. Yet, there is a logical tension in these arguments. To the degree that an "other" is deemed critical in defining an identity, it is not clear why the identity is sustained once that other subsides. Given the basic precepts of constructivist logic, one might suppose instead that identities decay or fracture in the absence of a given other.

One of the normatively appealing aspects of social constructivist theory is its ability to "boost" the impact of the democratic peace. A growing list of researchers have provided evidence suggesting that the spread of democracy reduces systemic conflict (Mitchell, Gates and Hegre 1999; Russett and Oneal 2001; Oneal et al. 2003; Rasler and Thompson 2005; Gortzak, Haftel and Sweeney 2005; Ray and Tucker 2005; Harrison and Mitchell 2007). Yet, it may take a very long time before the world thoroughly democratizes. Those impatient for a more rapid global transformation can point to claims that democracies are able to externalize their pacific propensities, even to nondemocratic nations. As Huntley (1996) has pointed out, Kant's conception of perpetual peace was fundamentally systemic. The community of liberal states could increase the pacific effects of representative government beyond the nominal impact of joint democracy (Harrison and Mitchell 2007; Harrison 2010). Several studies find that increasing systemic democracy raises the probability that *nondemocracies* resolve their disputes short of force (Mitchell 2002; Crescenzi, Kadera, Mitchell and Thyne 2011; Mitchell, Kadera and Crescenzi 2009). More widespread democracy is also said to enhance the survival of democratic regimes (Crescenzi and Enterline 1999; Kadera, Crescenzi and Shannon 2003). The basic claim of this literature—that the benefits of the spread of democracy "spillover" to nondemocracies—offers a testable contrast to our claims here.

At the same time, however, important questions remain about how democracy causes peace among nondemocracies, especially in light of the focus on democratic dyads as the locus of empirical liberal peace. The spread of democracy is far from the only major change to the international system over the past two centuries. Indeed, Gartzke and Weisiger (2012b) find that economic

[7] Thus, for example, the Polity IV data set codes the United States as a full democracy (polity = 10) in the second half of the 1840s despite the presence of legalized slavery and the exclusion of women from political suffrage.

[8] Western reactions to democratization in the Middle East have by no means been uniformly enthusiastic.

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development is a better explanation than systemic democracy for a broad global decline in interstate conflict.

Our theoretical perspective thus contrasts with constructivism and the systemic democratic peace literature in at least two ways. First, we view the impact of the system on states as resulting from innate attributes of states, dyads, and the system, rather than from some social consensus about similarities or difference. Whether identities form in a largely malleable social context, or whether preferences and identities are largely exogenous factors that are then triggered differently by evolving strategic conditions, is interesting, vastly important, and difficult to observe. Either is possible. We believe we have found a context in which each prospect can be explored vigorously.

Second, we give more weight to the possibility that system effects may not be benign or progressive. Rather than assuming that world politics will become more cooperative as nations become increasingly democratic, we consider the possibility that systemic change can impact dyads in positive or negative ways. Theories of social identity formation that depend on an "other" imply that sameness must be reevaluated as difference declines. If enemies can become friends as context evolves and differences evaporate, then friends can also become enemies as similarities become ubiquitous and remaining differences seem more salient. Democracy has not made the world any less finite. Resources must be distributed and prerogatives allocated, and so frictions remain. Whether democracies will be able to resolve these frictions peacefully (or not) is a worthy subject for debate.

A Dynamic Theory of Difference and Disputes

By integrating constructivist-inspired insights about identity and the other with a more general conception of the effects of similarity and difference on the preferences or coordination of actors in competition, and applying our approach in the context of the autocratic peace, we are able to propose a dynamic theory of difference that explains or anticipates at least three features of the liberal peace. First, the theory can account for any connection between shared regime type (not just democracy) and peace. Second, the theory makes testable predictions about the ways in which the relationship between regime type and conflict may change over time. Third, it is compatible with the tendency of neighboring countries to share a given regime type. No existing theory does all of these things simultaneously. Explanations for the dyadic democratic peace ignore the prospect that similar regime types might cooperate more than dissimilar regimes.[9] Explanations for the autocratic peace are typically dyadic and static, ignoring the possibility that system dynamics transform the impact of similarity and difference over time. Arguments about systemic regime dynamics focus on democracy, ignoring the possibility that difference is salient for cause and effect.

Regime Similarity and Peace

An underappreciated feature of anarchy is that it leads to cooperation; individuals in a "self-help" world are drawn together for mutual benefit and protection (Hobbes 1962). Waltz (1959) argues that nations ally to counter threats or to capitalize on opportunities. Left unresolved, however, are questions of coalition selection: Who should join with *whom*, against *whom*? In the Waltzian view, the only rationale for allying is power (or security); weaker nations band together to form coalitions to balance more powerful states (Walt 1987). Yet, there are a huge number of combinations of states that nominally address the security objective expressed by balancing (Schweller 1994). Given nominal equivalence among coalitions, why favor one over another?

Moving beyond the specific question of alliance formation to the more general issue of identifying friends and enemies, we can imagine a supply and demand for affinities. States presumably prioritize security objectives, just as they prioritize spending on social programs, or investment in economic or political reforms. Nations are bound to confront their biggest or most immediate threats first. As primary challenges to the government are addressed, it is likely that new or secondary challenges rise in priority. However, this does not mean that the level of threat remains the same. Objective or subjective factors may vary the intensity of opposition. Terrorism has long been a concern for the United States, but the collapse of communism meant that terrorism could be viewed as the main threat, even as fighting fascism led to an alliance with the communist Soviet Union.[10]

The supply side can be conceived of in terms of the notion of natural alliances. States that want similar things can cooperate and ignore remaining differences as long as the compromises necessary to collaborate are less risky or onerous than not cooperating, or less costly than cooperating with a different set of collaborators. If all states have equally incompatible goals, then no natural allies exist.[11] However, if states vary in what they want, even minutely, then some coalitions pose better trade-offs than others, and the world can be differentiated, even arbitrarily, into "us" and "them."

The ambiguity of equivalent coalitions is resolved if states consider differences or similarities beyond respective security (defensive) or power (offensive) criteria. We can think of social "cues," indicators of affinity that are used in the absence of full information about preferences (Tajfel 1981). If one can accept that states find natural affinity in nations with similar goals, then states probably prefer coalitions with like polities, ceteris paribus. Empirically, democracies are more likely to co-ally (Siverson and Emmons 1991; Lai and Reiter 2000).[12] More generally, we observe a variety of affinity behaviors among democracies that are absent between democracies and nondemocracies.

Of course, regime type is only one dimension along which countries might be arrayed and identities can be formed or activated. Other dimensions of identity and difference have existed and will continue to exist in the future. The Concert of Europe, for example, essentially pitted the status quo powers of Europe against any potential challenger, regardless of regime type (Cronin 1999;

[9] Debate about the autocratic peace rests in part on model specification, something we are refining here.

[10] The United States may well have overestimated the threat from terrorism, which is almost certainly less critical than threats from fascism or communism, and may be seen in the future as less important than relations with China.

[11] Defensive realism poses a logical conundrum in advocating collective action (balancing), while at the same time disparaging most other forms of international cooperation as inconsistent with egoistic incentives (Schweller 1996).

[12] Gibler and Wolford (2006) argue that democratization follows alliance formation in democratic alliances. Simon and Gartzke (1996) distinguish between democratic alliance propensity and the available supply of democratic allies.

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Hall 1999).[13] In the Cold War, a professed commitment to capitalism or socialism often trumped regime type in determining interstate cooperation (Mearsheimer 1990; Kissinger 1994; Gaddis 2005). More recently, debates in the Doha Round of WTO negotiations have been characterized by regional cleavages (Mansfield and Reinhardt 2003) and by levels of economic development (Thies and Porche 2006), rather than by regime type. Huntington (1996) argues that the post-Cold War world is characterized by a clash of civilizations in which race and religion (culture) are emphasized over other bases for cooperation or conflict. Constructivists and other scholars of identity face difficulties explaining behavior in the presence of overlapping identity claims (Gartzke and Gleditsch 2006). It may be debated, then, whether shared regime type is a uniquely or even particularly potent basis for cooperation, or whether it is simply one among many cues for political cleavage or identity.[14]

That said, we view regime type as unusual in terms of its combination of malleability and staying power.[15] On the one hand, politics can change. A foreign power can readily alter a nation's form of government, so that efforts at regime change appear on some level more practical than, say, efforts at linguistic, religious, or especially ethnic transformation. On the other hand, regime type is durable. A country's form of government does not change often. If political structure and norms influence the policies nations adopt, then the transition of regime type in another nation can lead to friendlier relations. This dynamism is of course a large part of the normative appeal of democratic peace theory: If democracies are less warlike, then regime change can propagate peace.

Indeed, the very malleability of regime type may render it a more salient cue in international politics. War over identity attributes that cannot be changed logically cannot end until either both sides stop using identity as the basis for conflict or one identity is utterly destroyed.[16] By contrast, regime type may be changed both internally and externally, with the result that abandoning an allied government may not only cost you a friend but net you an enemy when a new regime takes over. To the degree that individual people and interest groups have similar wants and expectations everywhere, the construction of similar political decision-making apparatus should lead to similar results. Adopting socialism built greater solidarity with other socialist nations, opened up markets and access to technology, etc. Moreover, leaders of similar regimes are likely to face similar threats.[17]

Similarity is not a guarantee of absolute or permanent friendship, however. To the degree that local conditions vary, or when issues have strong distributional implications, political similarity may not always be enough. Tito and Mao found that they could not cooperate with Moscow, even under the banner of socialism. Affinity for democracy has not lead the United States to embrace leftist or fundamentalist governments, no matter how popular their mandates. Thus, while similar politics can make countries more alike on one dimension of potential conflict, it cannot make them identical on other dimensions, and even identical objectives often lead to conflict when payoffs cannot be shared. The trade-off between malleability and incomplete transformation mean that the propagation of similar regimes will at most only partially affect the affinity of nations. Other forces, including the zero-sum nature of resource distribution in any political system, will lead to a change in the focus on a given set of cues of difference as these cues become less capable of differentiating categories of actors. Race or ethnicity are not salient in societies with homogeneous populations, but competition remains a part of politics, and so other cleavages appear and are propagated. It is the need to authoritatively allocate limited resources or prerogatives that causes differentiation.

Dynamic Difference and the Democratic Peace

We can go farther in assessing implications of regime similarity in varied circumstances. As with any cue or motive for cooperation, regime type relies on the presence of a threat to align *against*. When a cue becomes ubiquitous, it loses much of its informational value. The proliferation of democracy means that democracy is less of a distinguishing characteristic, even as other cues, identities, or actual determinants of preference variability tend to increase in salience. One can no longer be sure that democracies will cooperate when there is a diminishing "other." As democratization progresses, this logic implies that some democracies will form alignments that exclude other democracies, or even that some democratic coalitions will come into conflict with other democratic coalitions.

Combining the affinity of regime types, the dynamic nature of natural allies, and the demand for security, we must imagine that the impact of regime type on conflict and cooperation could change over time. Initially, the scarcity of democracies in the world meant that there were few opportunities for direct conflict. Even more important, in a world full of threats, democracies had enough in common that cooperating, or at least not opposing one another, was prudent. As democracy has proliferated, however, preferred policies of democratic countries have become more diverse even as the threat from nondemocracies has declined. While autocratic threats remain, many of the most powerful countries are democracies. Differences that were patched over, or overlooked, in fighting fascism and communism have now begun to surface. Perhaps most notable in the last decade has been a basic tension among developed democracies over both means and ends in "the war on terror." There is also a rising sense that there exists a two-tiered system of democracy, in which elected leadership is not sufficient to qualify as "liberal."[18] Finally, inroads of democ-

[13] Slantchev (2005) argues that preference change is not necessary to explain the Concert of Europe.

[14] The autocratic peace literature contains some speculation about why similarity might reduce conflict, focusing on congruent preferences (Werner 2000; Peceny et al. 2002; Souva 2004). None of these studies provides a compelling explanation for why preferences cluster by regime type, although Werner's position is most compatible with our own.

[15] We offer several explanations for the salience of regime type, but we do not rely on any particular argument. It is even possible that regime type is a largely arbitrary cue in forming cleavages, much like race at the individual level.

[16] Conflicts over ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences—as opposed to conflicts over other issues that involve identities instrumentally—are much less common than casually perceived (Chiozza 2002; Gartzke and Gleditsch 2006).

[17] In regions with few democracies, democratization increases difference and may exacerbate interstate conflict (Peceny et al. 2002). Attempts to use democratic peace theory to argue that regime change in Iraq could lead to peace in the Middle East (Rice 2005), for example confront the inconvenient truth that the region is predominantly autocratic. The same is true for the system as a whole: Democratization has initially increased regime type heterogeneity, leading to a rise in inter-regime conflict (Gleditsch and Hegre 1997; Raknerud and Hegre 1997; Ray 2000).

[18] Note, for example, the new concept of illiberal democracy (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2005; Zakaria 1997).

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racy into the Middle East and elsewhere have begun to reveal what popular rule might mean in societies with profoundly different traditions and interests than those of the West. At least initially, the chief beneficiaries of the "Arab Spring" may prove to be Islamist parties, which is unlikely to prove popular in London, Paris, Berlin, Tel Aviv, or Washington DC. These differences are certainly not yet sufficient to lead to democratic warfare, but tensions appear more salient than in the past. In the absence of a common foe, nations with similar regime types but different preferences may increasingly find that they are unable to justify glossing over their differences.

Modeling Dynamic Difference

The theory proposed above builds on a basic insight into social behavior with parallels in human and animal biology and diverse fields in the social sciences: The more actors that share a given trait, the less distinguishing that trait is, and the less the trait matters as a cue for differentiating "us" from "them." In the extreme, when every member of a group shares a given trait, the trait cannot form the basis for differentiation. This proposition has the advantage of parsimony. Difference divides and similarity unites, but by declining degrees as similarity becomes ubiquitous and therefore uninformative. Does this proposition also hold for interstate conflict? A simple agent-based model serves to illustrate the dynamics we envision and to assist us in deriving hypotheses.

In the model, actors are endowed with ideal points on two dimensions: a dichotomous regime dimension and a continuous second dimension. For convenience, we will refer to this second dimension as economic, but it could capture any other salient difference or identity. Each actor receives utility that is a function of similarity to other actors in the system, subject to a weight that decreases the relative significance of the regime dimension as the actor's regime becomes more common in the system. Specifically, given dimensions r (regime) and s (economic) along which ideal points vary, actor i receives utility $u_i(R,S) = -\sum_{j\neq i}(r_i - r_j)^2 - \alpha\sum_{j\neq i}(s_i - s_j)^2$, where α is a monotonically increasing function in the proportion of the system sharing i's regime type. In each round of interaction, one actor is randomly selected and permitted to conquer another actor and replace its existing regime, thus substituting the conqueror's ideal point for the target's prior preference.[19] All actors then experience a random shock to their ideal points in both dimensions, after which the next round of action begins with the selection of a new conflict initiator. A central assumption of this model is that democracies and autocracies are identical to each other except for the label that they apply to themselves. This specification thus intentionally abstracts away from characteristics of regime type that have been used in other theories to account for interstate peace.

This model is obviously not striving to capture international politics in any realistic detail. The salient question, however, is whether the model reflects enough reality to mimic key elements of the liberal peace. To evaluate this question, we present the results from representative runs of the model in graphs below. The democratic peace has been observed in an empirical world that has varied between roughly 3% and 46% democratic; we thus focus on a similar range in the model.

Table 1 presents results for a representative run of the model within the specified range of democracy values (that is, between 3% and 46%).[20] Prior research reveals that democratic dyads experience less violence than autocratic dyads, but that jointly autocratic dyads fight less than mixed dyads (c.f. Bennett 2006). As the results of the model confirm, a jointly democratic dyad is likely to experience conflict only 0.57% of the time, while a jointly autocratic dyad experiences conflict 0.83% of the time. The model thus conforms quite closely to observed reality, despite the fact that regime type is simply a label around which otherwise identical actors sort themselves. The role of regime type as a cue becomes apparent when comparing the relative probability of conflict across different dyad combinations for the entire sample (that is, from 0% to 100% democracy in the system). Across the whole sample, jointly democratic dyads experience conflict in 0.77% of interactions, compared with 0.78% of interactions in jointly autocratic dyads.[21] Once all possible values are considered, jointly democratic dyads behave no differently than jointly autocratic dyads.

A closer investigation of the model reveals additional patterns of interest. In particular, we highlight two relationships not predicted by prior research, which are captured in Figure 1. First, jointly democratic dyads are more likely to experience conflict as democracy becomes more common in the model. To be more precise, given that a democracy is chosen to act, the probability that it targets another democracy increases as the system becomes more democratic. Second, and less obviously, an increase in the proportion of the system that is democratic is associated with a clear decrease in the probability that a given mixed dyad will experience conflict. In other words, as we move from a system dominated by autocracies to one with a more equal mix of autocracies and democracies, the model predicts that the probability of inter-regime conflict will decrease. These novel predictions from our extremely simple dynamic model are amenable to empirical testing.[22]

Table 1. Model Predicted Probability of Conflict by Regime Type and System Status

	3% to 46% Systemic Democracy	*Full Range of Democracy Levels*
Joint Democracy	0.0057	0.0077
Joint Autocracy	0.0083	0.0078
Mixed Dyad	0.037	0.038

[19] A variant of the model in which actors similarly target opponents (fight), but where ideal points are not endogenous to conflict—instead changing only in response to exogenous shocks—produces substantively similar results.

[20] These values come from runs of the model with 50 actors interacting over 25,000 rounds. Values in Figure 1 are from a run using 75 actors interacting over 20,000 rounds, with the per-round probability of autocratization set higher than democratization so that the system remains predominantly autocratic, which is of interest for the graphs.

[21] In the restricted sample, a Mann–Whitney U test yields a z-statistic of 6.063, significant at better than the .001 level. In the full sample, the same test gives a z-statistic of 0.547, insignificant at conventional levels.

[22] Our predictions differ from those of Gleditsch and Hegre (1997) and Ray (2000). Previous studies assume that the probability of conflict is fixed for different regime pairings. The prevalence of conflict *at the system level* should change, however, in response to changes in the mix of regime types in the system. We predict by contrast that the probability of conflict *at the dyadic level* is variable, changing in response to the distribution of regimes in the system.

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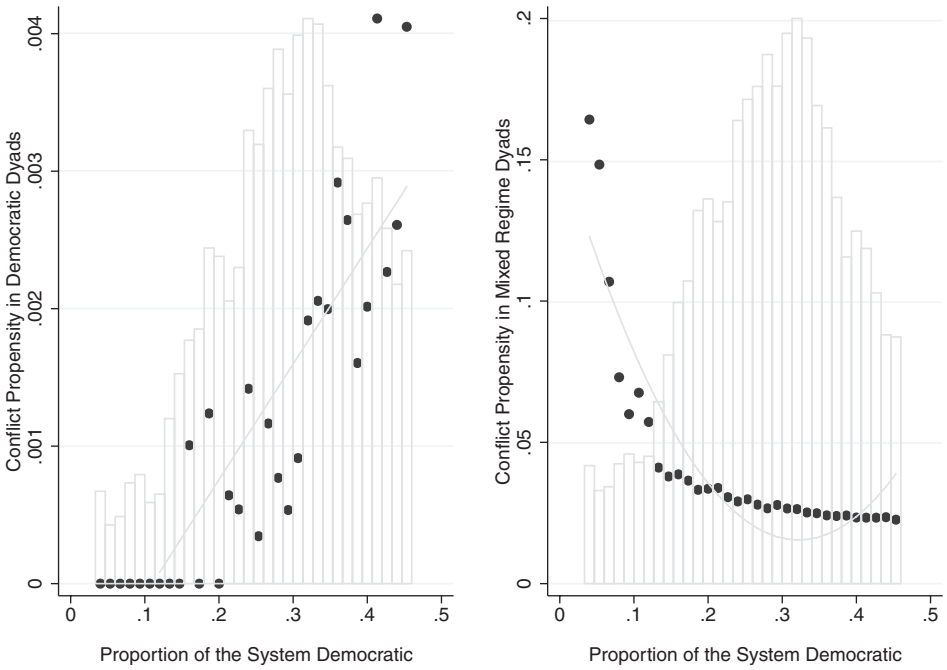

Fig 1.. Predicted Probability of Conflict for Observed Levels of Systemic Democracy

H1: *The probability of conflict in democratic dyads grows conditional on systemic democracy levels.*

H2: *The probability of conflict in mixed dyads declines as the system moves from being mostly autocratic to one in which democracies and autocracies are found in roughly comparable proportions.*

Note that the pacific effect of dyadic democracy is predicted to vary inversely with the extent of systemic democratization. Thus, it is not the impact of *either* dyadic or systemic democracy alone that is anticipated by the theory, but the *interaction* of each with the other. Accordingly, tests of the hypotheses necessitate an interaction term between dyadic and systemic regime type. We will explore the substantive and statistical significance of this interaction in the next section.

Research Design and Analysis

Our assessment of relationships between dyadic and systemic regime type and interstate conflict cover the period 1816–2000.[23] While our argument incorporates systemic variables, it ultimately makes predictions at the dyadic level: Relations become less peaceful *within democratic dyads* as the system becomes more democratic. It is the interaction between dyadic and systemic democracy at the dyadic level that is the key causal relationship. We thus work at the dyadic level of analysis.

To ensure comparability with existing research, we adopt a research design and basic statistical models from the democratic peace research program (Bremer 1992; Oneal and Russett 1999a). Independent variables are lagged by one year to address endogeneity. We correct standard errors for clustering in dyads and introduce temporal splines for duration dependence (Beck, Katz and Tucker 1998).[24]

Data

It is not practical to examine all or even most possible covariates of interstate conflict.[25] Methodologists also emphasize the value of keeping statistical models simple (Achen 2005; Clarke 2005; Ray 2005). We therefore focus on variables that consistently appear in the relevant literature.[26]

Militarized Disputes: The dependent variable in most studies of democratic peace is some version of the Militarized Interstate Dispute data set (MIDs). MIDs involve threats, displays, uses of force, or war (Gochman and Maoz 1984; Jones, Bremer and Singer 1996). We code a

[23] We find a similar relationship for cooperation in the form of alliance relationships. See Gartzke and Weisiger (2012a).

[24] Given the potential for bias induced by the large disparity between events ("1's") and nonevents ("0's"), we also estimated coefficients using rare events logit, which produced comparable results (King and Zeng 2001a, , 2001b).

[25] Most of our variables are generated using the EUGene software program (Bennett and Stam 2000). Other sources are detailed where relevant. A *Stata* "do" file is available from the authors that replicates all aspects of the analysis.

[26] We omit other legs of the Kantian "tripod." The effects of IGO membership on conflict are limited and shift depending on somewhat arbitrary changes in model specification (c.f. Boehmer, Gartzke and Nordstrom 2004). Adding trade dependence drops the sample size by almost 40% (to 387,706). More importantly, it substantially reduces the time period covered (to 1950–2000), of concern since our argument focuses on change in the democratic community over time. Still, to check, we added a standard trade dependence (low) variable to model 4 from Table 2. Of the key variables, regime type difference is significant at the 5% level and the proportion of democracies in the system is significant at the 10% level. Democracy (low) and the interaction term between difference variables are not statistically significant.

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TABLE 2.. Effects of Systemic and Dyadic Difference on MIDs

DV: MID Onset	*Proportion of Democracy (PropDem)*			
Variable	*2.1*	*2.2*	*2.3*	*2.4*
Democracy (low)	−0.071 (0.015)***	0.038 (0.017)*	0.040 (0.021)†	0.023 (0.020)
Democracy (high)	0.109 (0.015)***			
Dyadic Difference		0.109 (0.015)***	0.111 (0.017)***	0.255 (0.031)***
Systemic Diff.			−0.154 (0.436)	1.704 (0.498)***
Dyadic × Systemic				−0.513 (0.094)***
Distance (ln)	−0.394 (0.017)***	−0.394 (0.017)***	−0.394 (0.017)***	−0.394 (0.016)***
Contiguity	−0.298 (0.047)***	−0.298 (0.047)***	−0.297 (0.047)***	−0.295 (0.045)***
Alliance	0.059 (0.111)	0.059 (0.111)	0.062 (0.112)	0.070 (0.110)
Capability Ratio	1.355 (0.371)***	1.355 (0.371)***	1.350 (0.373)***	1.357 (0.365)***
Major Power	1.386 (0.151)***	1.386 (0.151)***	1.378 (0.156)***	1.404 (0.154)***
Intercept	−0.791 (0.351)*	−0.791 (0.351)*	−0.768 (0.360)*	−1.245 (0.362)***
N	634684	634684	634684	634684
Log-likelihood	−10886.9	−10886.9	−10886.66	−10858.813
$\chi^2_{(11,11,12,13)}$	2117.645	2117.645	2156.348	2250.805

Significance levels: †10% ; *5%; **1%; ***0.1%.

dummy for MID "onset" as defined by Maoz (1999), where (1) is a dispute, and (0) is no dispute.[27]

Democracy: We measure democracy using the standard Polity IV data (Jaggers and Gurr 1995). Polity data provide two eleven-point indexes of regime type based on formal constraints on the executive (AUTOC) and institutional support for democracy (DEMOC) (Gurr, Jaggers and Moore 1989). We construct monadic values by combining DEMOC and AUTOC as follows, $[(\text{DEMOC}_i - \text{AUTOC}_i) + 10]/2$, (where $i \in$ [A,B]). *Democracy (Low)* reports the lower of the two democracy values in the dyad in a given year, while *Democracy (High)* lists the higher value.

Dyadic Difference: Using the same Polity IV data set, we code regime difference as the absolute value of the difference in constructed monadic polity scores for dyad members. The maximum value of the resulting variable occurs when one state is a "pure" autocracy (democracy score of zero), while the other dyad member is a "pure" democracy (democracy score of ten).[28] Dyad members with the same Polity statistics result in a *Dyadic Difference* score of zero.[29]

Systemic Difference: There are several ways to measure systemic regime type heterogeneity. *Proportion of Democracy* (*Prop. Dem.*) offers a ratio of the number of states with a threshold level democracy score (in our case a value of seven), divided by the total number of countries in that year, as identified by the Correlates of War listing of system members (Mitchell et al. 1999; Cederman 2001b). A system with no democracies produces a *Prop. Dem.* score of zero, while a system of all democracies produces a score of one. A second way to measure systemic difference is to consider the portion of global capabilities controlled by a given regime type (in our case again, democracy). *Dem. Power* also produces a value in the unit interval indicating the potency of the democratic community (Kadera et al. 2003). While both of these measures are widely referenced in the literature, each is directional in the sense that they measure difference from the perspective of a particular regime type. Analytical neutrality can be enhanced by measuring variation in regime type, rather than differentiating from some reference (such as whether a state is or is not a democracy). *Dem. Std. Dev.* reports the standard deviation in country democracy scores for the international system in a given year.

Geographic Distance and Contiguity: Neighbors are typically more likely to fight than states that are geographically distant. In part, this can be explained by opportunity, but contiguity also increases conflict, independent of distance, suggesting increased willingness to fight. Regime type also tends to cluster geographically (Gleditsch 2003; Cederman and Gleditsch 2004). *Contiguity* is an ordinal variable for six categories of decreasing physical proximity, from shared land border to separated by more than 500 miles of water, either directly or through colonial possessions. *Distance* is the natural logarithm of the great circle distance between national capitals, or closest major cities for some large countries.[30]

Allies: Alliances are formed to influence interstate conflict. Research also suggests a relationship between regime type and alliance ties (Siverson and Emmons 1991; Simon and Gartzke 1996; Lai and Reiter 2000). Studies of the democratic peace commonly include a dyadic alliance dummy (Oneal and Russett 1997; Russett and Oneal 2001). *Alliance* codes the presence of a defense pact, neutrality pact, or entente in the dyad based on the COW Alliance Data set (Singer and Small 1966; Small and Singer 1990; Gibler and Sarkees 2004).

Capabilities: Capabilities determine the ability of states to conduct warfare. The COW Composite Indicators of

[27] MID onsets are most appropriate given our theory (which predicts states likely to experience MIDs, not how long MIDs last), methodology (temporal splines minimize the estimated effect of subsequent dispute years), and past practice (MID onsets are conventional in the literature). Some studies focus on fatal MIDs, but nonfatal MIDs are of interest here, since minor MIDs are most likely to provide evidence of initial changes in the effect of regime type on conflict. If democracies stop cooperating, the first indication of this will presumably be in terms of minor disputes.

[28] The democracy scores are scaled Polity scores, so a democracy score of 0 corresponds to a Polity score of −10.

[29] Bennett (2006) offers a more elaborate coding of dyadic regime type difference, using the product of democracy scores, as well as the product of this product. Since the Polity data are ordinal, it is not clear how to interpret higher-order effects. Further, squaring the product of democracy scores also inflates the apparent impact of extreme values.

[30] Research suggests that contiguity and distance are *not* measuring the same things (Hensel 2000; Senese 2005). Neighbors fight more often *either* because they are near (opportunity), or because they have more grievances (willingness). As is conventional, including distance at least partially separates the effects of proximity from preferences.

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National Capabilities (CINC) score computes the weighted average of a state's share of total system population, urban population, energy consumption, iron and steel production, military personnel, and expenditures. *Capability Ratio* measures the CINC owned by the least powerful state, divided by the sum of CINC's in the dyad $(\frac{\text{CINC}_{\text{low}}}{\text{CINC}_A+\text{CINC}_B})$.

Major Power Status: If major powers are also more (or less) likely to be democracies, then this could potentially bias our results. We include a dummy variable, *Maj. Power*, that is coded "1" if at least one state in a dyad is a major power as specified by the COW criteria.

Temporal Dependence: Finally, we control for temporal dependence (Beck et al. 1998). We construct four spline variables using the *Stata* "ado" program provided by Tucker (1999).

Results

We report the results of statistical tests in two tables and three figures. Table 2 lists four regressions detailing the relationship between dyadic regime type difference, systemic democracy, and militarized disputes.[31] Model 2.1 confirms the basic democratic peace result. We need next to estimate the effects of dyadic difference. However, note that *Democracy (high)* already includes difference:

$$\begin{aligned}&\beta_1 * \text{Democracy(low)} + \beta_2 * \text{Democracy(high)}\\ &= \beta_1 * \text{Democracy(low)} + \beta_2 * [\text{Democracy(low)}\\ &\quad + \text{Dyadic Difference}]\\ &= (\beta_1 + \beta_2) * \text{Democracy(low)} + \beta_2 * \text{Dyadic Difference}\end{aligned}$$

The two democracy variables and dyadic difference are perfectly collinear and so cannot be included together in the same regression. Fortunately, we do not need to include *Democracy (high)*. Democratic peace researchers often use only the threshold democracy variable. Since the higher democracy variable conflates the effects of threshold democracy and regime type difference, it seems more appropriate to adopt this approach here. Model 2.2 provides separate estimates of the effects of threshold democracy and regime type difference. The difference variable is positive and highly statistically significant. As expected, with the exception of threshold democracy, coefficients and standard errors in Model 2.2 are identical to Model 2.1. *Democracy (low)* becomes positive and modestly significant, but as we will see, this relationship does not persist in later models.[32]

Adding systemic regime type difference in Model 2.3 does not seem to have a significant effect on whether states fight. Indeed, there is no expectation from the theory presented here that systemic regime type should have an *independent* effect on whether dyads fight. To the contrary, the assertion of a monotonic effect of systemic democracy comes from the systemic democratic peace literature. Dyadic democracy is only a marginal contributor to dispute onset (at the 10% level) in Model 2.3.

As predicted, the effect of systemic regime type heterogeneity changes considerably when we introduce the interaction term between dyadic and systemic difference. As Model 2.4 demonstrates, both dyadic and systemic political differences now appear to significantly increase MID propensity. In contrast, the interaction between dyadic regime affinity and systemic democracy is negative, while the effect of threshold democracy is now statistically insignificant.[33] As anticipated by our theory, similar regimes are less likely to fight, but this effect is declining in the relative abundance of similar polities in the system. Difference divides, but it does so dynamically, with regime affinity within a dyad becoming more or less salient for conflict as the level of democracy varies systemically.

Figure 2 details the substantive effects of systemic regime type variability on conflict for a democratic dyad. The horizontal axis lists observed values of *Proportion of Democracy*, starting at 3% of the system democratic and increasing to a maximum of 46% of the system democratic. The vertical axis lists the probability of a MID, as predicted by Model 2.4.[34] The democratic peace predicts that democracies should be very unlikely to fight each other (the probability of a democratic dispute is very low in absolute terms). Democratic peace research can be interpreted as anticipating that the rise in global democracy will lead to a temporary increase in conflict at the systemic level (Ray 1995; Gleditsch and Hegre 1997). However, this is clearly not the same as arguing that conflict in democratic dyads will increase as more nations become democratic. Even autocratic peace theories—that argue that similar regime types are generally less disputatious—fail to contemplate dynamism in democratic conflict propensity. The probability of a MID among democracies almost triples over the observable domain from two democracies in the system to just short of half of all states as democracies. This finding is anticipated by our theory of dynamic difference. The special peace among democracies may be diminishing as democracy proliferates.

Figure 3 reports the complementary image, where estimates are for dissimilar dyads. The horizontal axis again varies the proportion of democracies in the international system, while the vertical axis reports the probability of a MID. The likelihood of conflict among dissimilar regimes is initially much higher than among democracies, but this

[31] The agent-based model uses quadratic loss utilities to simplify exposition. While linear regression is consistent with weak concavity, a strict approach to testing the model implies the need for a quadratic difference variable. Adding squared terms to the regressions reported in Table 2 actually strengthens our results. However, this more baroque specification complicates presentation. We limit discussion here to the more general linear model.

[32] The Polity IV data contain many missing values. We follow the scheme recommended by the codebook to replace these values. We also examine the entire period of the MIDs data (1816–2000). Oneal and Russett use the standard Polity data with transitions treated as missing. In most studies, they also limit their analysis to the post-World War II sample. With either of these changes, *Democracy (low)* in Model 2.2 becomes statistically insignificant.

[33] Removing threshold democracy has no effect on these findings. Results hold for the pre-World War II sample. Green, Kim and Yoon (2001) advocate conditional (fixed) effects to address "dirty" pooled cross-section time-series data. Democratic peace advocates and other methodologists point out that 2fixed effects regressions are a heavy-handed solution to spatial dependence (Oneal and Russett 2001; Beck and Katz 2001; King 2001). We replicated Table 2 with fixed effects (dyads). Though as expected results are generally weaker, all key relationships persist. Finally, it is possible some omitted variable might account for the dynamic changes attributed to regime type difference. Adding the year as an independent variable in Model 2.4 leads Systemic Diff. to become insignificant, while the dyadic difference variable and the interaction term remain highly significant and democracy remains insignificant.

[34] The graph was generated using Clarify, holding all other variables at their medians, setting both countries in the dyad to full democracies (lower democracy score of 10 and no difference), and varying the level of systemic democracy across the range that has been observed historically. *It is important to note that, while the results in* Figure 2 *follow from an analysis of all dyads in our sample, the predicted probabilities reported here focus on a fully democratic dyad.*

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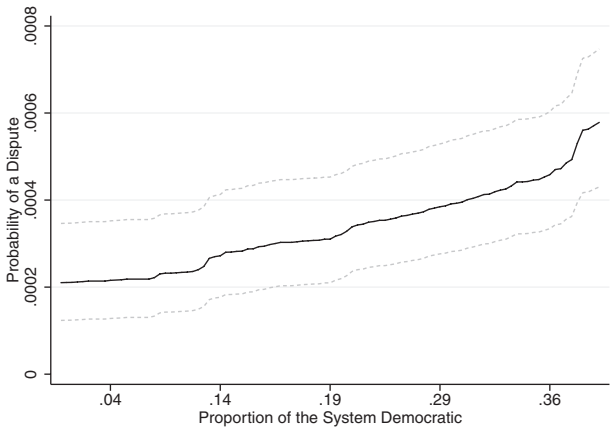

FIG 2.. p(MID) [Dem (low) = 10, Dyadic Diff. = 0]

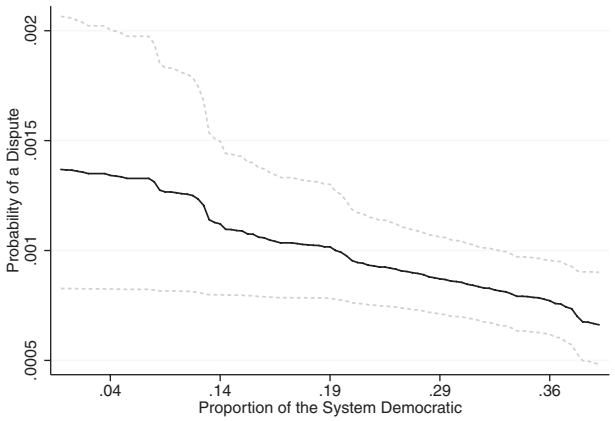

FIG 3.. p(MID) [Dem (low) = 0, Dyadic Diff. = 10]

probability is decreasing with rising systemic democracy. The lowest estimated point in Figure 3 (roughly a 0.07% chance of a MID) is almost identical to the highest probability of dispute behavior in Figure 2 (approximately 0.06% probability of a MID) when roughly half of the dyads in the world are democratic. The difference in conflict behavior between democracies and heterogeneous dyads diminishes as the proportion democracies in the system increases. This result is consistent with, and helps to account for, recent evidence that the democratic peace has weakened in the post-Cold War period (Sobek et al. 2006; Gowa 2010). Rather than democratization simply making the world more peaceful (Mitchell 1997; Crescenzi and Enterline 1999), it appears that increasing democracy may begin to shift the locus of conflict away from inter-regime to intraregime disputes. Again, dynamic difference implies that democratic and autocratic dyads will appear most similar in their conflict behavior when each regime type represents approximately half of all states in the system.

At first blush, our analysis might seem to have confused or conflated two distinct properties of the sample of democracies. Students of the democratic peace have long understood that the democratic peace is "weakest" where democracy is most scarce, in the nineteenth century, and "strongest" where democracy has become more commonplace, in the contemporary world. This form of weakness refers to the standard errors associated with estimated effects, not to the estimated size of the coefficient relating democracy and conflict. Our prediction about the effects of dyadic and systemic democracy really concerns changes in the coefficient size rather than the degree of statistical significance. In the nineteenth century, democracy was rare and so according to our argument democratic dyads were particularly unlikely to fight. The democracy coefficient is quite large, but the small number of observations necessitates greater caution about whether the effect differs from zero. In the contemporary world, there are many more democracies, so one can have more statistical confidence in a nonzero effect for the measures of democracy and difference, even if, consistent with our argument, the size of the effect of liberal democracy has begun to shrink. Thus, the effect of the democratic peace can appear "weakest" in the nineteenth century in conventional studies (because of large confidence intervals), even though we report a large impact in this period.

Finally, Table 3 offers additional tests of the relationship between dyadic and systemic regime type and the onset of militarized disputes, using different measures of systemic regime difference. Model 3.1 and Model 3.2 measure systemic difference using *Dem. Power*, the proportion of global capabilities controlled by democracies. Models 3.3 and 3.4 rely instead on the standard deviation of polity scores in the international system. *Dem. Std. Dev.* has the advantage that it does not rely on an arbitrary threshold for democracy. Models 3.1 and 3.3 estimate the impact of dyadic and systemic regime type similarity and difference, while Models 3.2 and 3.4 add the interaction term between dyadic and systemic difference variables. All of the coefficients and standard errors are as anticipated, though here *Democracy (low)*, while again positive, is never statistically significant.

The regressions in Table 3 provide similar substantive results to those reported in Figures 2 and 3. To a surprising degree, it appears that the special relationship of democratic dyads, or even of similar regime types, is contingent on the global distribution of political similarity and difference. As the number of democracies in the international system changes, so too does the relationship of democracies with other democracies, and of democracies with autocracies. As democracy becomes less exclusive, there is a tendency for democracies to find more reason to differ, to dispute, and possibly eventually to fight among themselves.[35] Conversely, declining autocracies may have more reason to cooperate, and less incentive to provoke conflict with increasingly powerful democracies.

Will We Ever "All Just Get Along?"

Analysis in the previous section provides evidence that the likelihood of war among like polities has varied in proportion to the prevalence of the regime type in the international system. Given the worldwide trend toward greater democracy, research on the democratic peace has concluded that the world may eventually benefit from a substantial and durable lessening of international conflict (Weart 2001). It is precisely this extrapolation from democratic peace research that accounts for much of the

[35] There are other reasons why developed countries are less prone to warfare than in previous times. These factors may prove sufficient in themselves to maintain peace in the developed world (Gartzke 2007; Gartzke and Rohner 2009).

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Table 3.. Alternative Measures of Systemic Regime Type Difference

DV: MID Onset	*Sys. Dem. Power*		*Sys. Dem. Std. Dev.*	
Variable	*3.1*	*3.2*	*3.3*	*3.4*
Democracy (low)	0.033 (0.021)	0.017 (0.020)	0.028 (0.019)	0.022 (0.018)
Dyadic Difference	0.106 (0.017)***	0.295 (0.038)***	0.099 (0.016)***	0.501 (0.106)***
Systemic Diff.	0.190 (0.312)	1.508 (0.329)***	0.115 (0.061)†	0.287 (0.060)***
Dyadic × Systemic		−0.399 (0.073)		−0.057 (0.015)***
Distance (ln)	−0.395 (0.017)***	−0.395 (0.016)***	−0.397 (0.017)***	−0.398 (0.016)***
Contiguity	−0.301 (0.047)	−0.299 (0.045)***	−0.309 (0.047)***	−0.304 (0.045)***
Alliance	0.057 (0.111)	0.073 (0.109)	0.024 (0.113)	0.039 (0.113)
Capability Ratio	1.364 (0.373)***	1.364 (0.365)***	1.402 (0.376)***	1.404 (0.369)***
Major Power	1.400 (0.158)***	1.424 (0.155)***	1.457 (0.163)***	1.467 (0.160)***
Intercept	−0.852 (0.375)*	−1.424 (0.368)***	−1.482 (0.537)**	−2.713 (0.518)***
N	634684	634684	634684	634684
Log-likelihood	−10886.159	−10854.907	−10877.645	−10856.559
$\chi^2_{(12,13,12,13)}$	2167.189	2253.434	2261.044	2388.811

Significance levels: †10% ; *5%; **1%; ***0.1%.

excitement about the observation. Even autocratic peace research, which views static dyadic difference as the cause of conflict, predicts that conflict should subside as democracy becomes the predominant form of polity. If instead the strength of the democratic peace subsides as democracy proliferates and becomes the norm, then these expectations may prove overly optimistic.

What scenario for the future most clearly follows from our findings? As the world has never been more than partially democratic, we cannot address this question directly. Out-of-sample extrapolation from our statistical analysis provides the best available insight, but given the complexity of international politics, readers will want to treat this portion of the analysis as speculative. Optimistic predictions are no less speculative, however, and may be more so, given an equivalent need for out-of-sample projections and arguably inferior model specification. We thus offer what we view as a "best guess," given available data and the insights highlighted in the last section.

Figure 4 depicts the estimated probability of a militarized dispute for the entire range of dyadic and systemic regime type heterogeneity. The *x* axis measures the proportion of the countries of the world that are presumed to be democracies. The *y* axis measures the Polity IV regime score of the least democratic state in a given dyad. The resulting relationship forms a saddle function, with high probabilities of MIDs among democratic–autocratic dyads when most states in the system are autocracies and among democratic dyads when most members of the system are democratic. Beginning with a democratic dyad (lower democracy score near 10) in an autocratic system, we can see that the probability of a contest in a given dyad is very low, but increases as more states in the system become democratic. This is precisely the prediction made from the dynamic difference argument; differences among democracies become more salient (and may in fact be larger) as more states join the democratic club. In contrast, differences across regime type become less salient (and may even decline) as the number of autocracies diminishes. The probability of conflict for different regime types is not a constant but changes with the proportion of the system that is democratic.

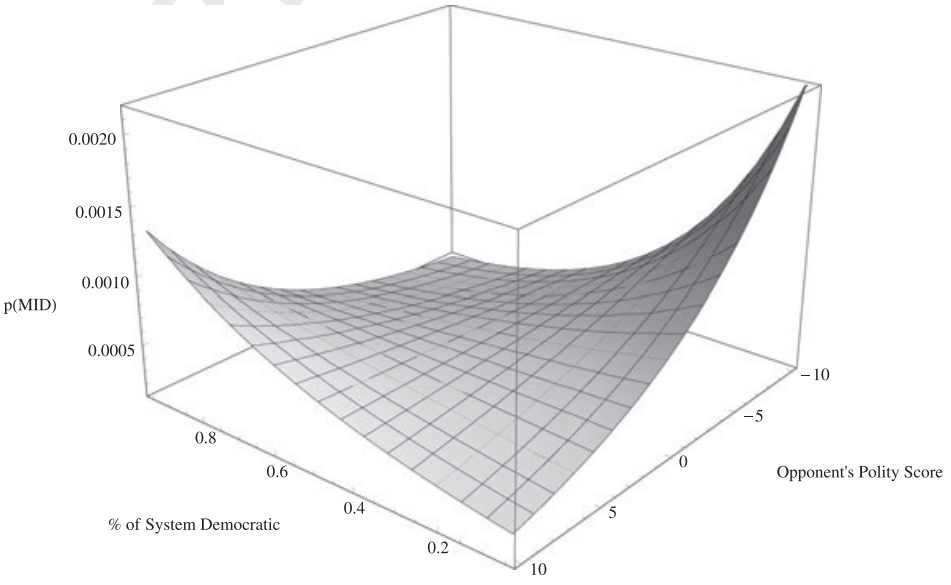

Fig 4.. Predicted Probabilities of MIDs for Values of Dyadic and Systemic Democracy

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Conclusion

Democratic peace research offers a vision of the future of politics here on earth that has tremendous normative appeal. We all hope that the countries of the world can continue to form a more cooperative system. However, the role of scholarly research is not to enunciate our hopes and dreams (or our fears), but to focus as nearly as possible on what we can derive from logic and infer from available evidence. If the results of such an inquiry are not so optimistic as we should like, we may at least be forewarned. News that the world is not necessarily going to become more peaceful with the fruition of democracy may even mobilize efforts to achieve normative change by other measures, efforts that may not materialize if we become complacent in our optimism. Today and in the recent past, democracies exhibit higher levels of cooperation, and less conflict, than other regime types (Doyle 1997). Our research suggests the need to treat democratic peace as conditional.

No endeavor as important and tenuous as world peace should be allowed to rest on a single support. Certainly no one wants to abandon democracy. Instead, researchers should be helping to bolster existing positive insights about the causes of peace, an effort that will no doubt also impact normative initiatives as well. If there are many paths to peace, or possibly even synergies or complementarities in promoting international cooperation, the discovery and elucidation of such relationships is one of the most important contributions international relations researchers can make to seeking to improve the human condition. While this analysis may raise more questions than it answered, we hope that our efforts serve as a stimulus to "think outside the democratic peace box" which has informed but also constrained so much of resent research in international relations.

One implication of this study is the need to pay much greater attention to system-level influences on the behavior of dyads. Research of a generation or two ago was dominated by systemic theories, models, and empirical work. The system fell out of favor as theory and evidence pointed to the critical role of the dyad as the locus of interstate conflict. Rather than advocating a return to systemic analysis, we believe that the maturation of dyadic theory and statistical analysis may afford an opportunity to begin to re-examine systemic influences in the context of dyadic analysis, as we have done here. Dyads do not function in isolation. Dyadic behavior, properly understood, includes the system. Thus, "bringing the system back in" is a logical next step for international relations. Indeed, it is system-level effects that uniquely characterize international politics.

A second, related implication involves identity. Debates about the self, community, and the other are endemic to the study of politics on all levels because politics is social. The dyad is too small a unit to contain everything of relevance in international relations, just as ignoring or downplaying dyadic "micro-foundations" is a mistake. Dyadic research will increasingly find it necessary to draw on insights of constructivist theory to explain the origin of affinities even as constructivists can benefit from using incentive-based dyadic models as a framework to examine how identity becomes behavior. Our findings suggest that a growing democratic community need not lead to reduced conflict among democracies, while increasing cooperation among autocracies is perhaps best explained by a growing sense that they are under threat by powerful democracies. The development of antagonisms may be based on socially constructed categories, but this is not the same as saying that no such antagonisms exist. Competition may persist, even as the specific structure of friendships and enmities is likely to evolve. Nations will continue to compete in a material world. Yet, who is "us" and who "them" will depend on malleable notions of the other. Recognizing that social identity is not itself a remedy for the security dilemma should help to focus attention on where fissures are likely to develop and what kinds of fault lines are most pernicious.

This in turn leads to a third implication of our research. Difference *is* most likely an important proximate determinant of conflict. Following Fearon (1995) and the bargaining school of war causation, it would be incorrect to say that difference "causes" disputes, since states or other opponents will often forge bargains by mutual consent. Instead, difference provides the basis for conflict and serves to define the realm where force becomes an option. Regime type difference is just one among many possible bases for difference. Realist theory emphasizes power disparities as a cause of conflict. While in our view power relations are less salient as a precipitant than other factors, it is important that realist theory has captured one other possible basis for tension among states. Other differences (ethnic, religious, linguistic, ideological, cultural) can serve to create groups with different interests. These relationships may operate in similar ways to that reported here for dynamic changes in the distribution of regime type. Future research may explore these possibilities, mindful that reality is invariably more complex and surprising than we anticipate.

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