

Chapter 2

Conflict Resolution by Democracies and Dictatorships: Are Democracies Better in Resolving Conflicts?

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The chapter deals with the capacities of various regimes to master conflicts. Does the regime character make a difference? Are democratic regimes better in resolving conflicts than autocratic or transitory regimes? The study draws from a wide range of indicators for the independent variables ‘challenges’ and ‘support’ (both are put together in order of ranking with indices as to their management capacities) for each existing state. Besides these explanatory factors, regime factors are calculated independently. The dependent variable ‘conflict’ draws on the data set Kosimo in two ways: first, with the number of conflicts occurring between 1945 and 2000; and second, with the weighted number of internal and neighboring conflicts only. These conflicts are then confronted with the management capacities of each state. Cross-calculations show that, not surprisingly, on the whole democracies have had a better record in the management of conflicts than other regimes.

1 INTRODUCTION: FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

The discussion about the so-called ‘democratic peace’ has been going on for some decades.¹ What is at stake is not the observation that democracies are not going to war against democracies. The ‘democratic peace’ comes “as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations” (among many others Levy, 1988: 662; Bremer, 1992; Maoz and Russett, 1993; Gleditsch and Hegre, 1997; Raknerud and Hegre, 1997). The discussion concentrates rather on the theoretical foundation of that “law”.²

¹. Foremost in the journals *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Security*, *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, and *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Three approaches can be distinguished in this debate: one position holds that internal factors cause democratic behavior (Mousseau and Shi, 1999). Realists (among others Layne, 1994; Russett et al., 1995) put forward external factors that cause such behavior. A third position states that both internal and external factors equally cause peace between democracies (Czempiel, 1996). According to a variant of this position the international environment is responsible not per se but through democratic institutions (Moravcsik, 1998; Randall and Peceny, 2002).

In these camps differentiations are being proposed: on the domestic side, structural factors such as parliaments, checks and balances, public opinions, elites (Owen, 1994; Russett et al., 1995) or the media (van Belle, 1997) are responsible for the peaceful behavior, and on the normative side factors such as culture, democratic values or the media (Layne, 1994; van Belle 1997) are mentioned.

As to the external factors, studies related to the following themes have been made: the perception of states of each other (Owen, 1994), the disposition towards military interventions (Kegley and Hermann, 1996; Tures, 2001), the diffusion of democracy through democracies (Randall and Peceny, 2002). Does the intensity of trade relations between states guarantee peace? (Gowa, 1994; Mansfield, 1994; Hegre, 2000). What is the role of the power status, of alliances and international regimes or of the existence of a hegemon (Weede, 1983; Bremer, 1993; Maoz and Russett, 1993; Henderson, 2002)? Are existing power constellations and their perception of any importance (Owen, 1994)? In these debates, realists and liberalists confront each other. The realists question the 'democratic peace' approach by stressing anarchy, competition and self-help instead.

Some authors look at the relationships between internal and external factors: external threats tend to lead to authoritarian structures (Hintze, 1975; Baade, 1962); some argue that external crises do not change democratic structures (Mousseau and Shi, 1999). Another area of concern is the adequacy of Kant's propositions in his philosophical sketch "Zum ewigen Frieden" (Layne, 1994; Robinson, 2001; Randall and Peceny, 2002).

As against these studies, my investigation proposes the following steps of inquiry:

First, we deal with the *explanandum*, i.e. the conflicts that have occurred during the fifty years of the second half of the 20th century; this investigation

². Some other formulations read as follows: Democracies do not start wars against each other; democratic nations are rarely, if ever, on opposite sides in wars, democracies join other democracies in case they are at war (Hegre, 1997). "Democratic dyads are far more peaceful than non-democratic and mixed dyads" (van Belle, 1997: 405). However, democracies are on the whole not more peaceful than other regimes; most of the wars after World War II have been fought by democracies but not against one another.