

James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review*, 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 577-592.

-abstract: in international crises, states have three choices (attack, back down, escalate) and their decision is influenced by the "audience costs" (relative military capabilities or relative interests have no direct effect). Democracies are less likely to back down (they have higher audience costs).

-crisis is modeled as a 'war of attrition'; they are public events and this fact is critical

-three choices are available: attack, back down, escalate [577]

-if a state decides to back down, "its leaders suffer *audience costs* that increase as the crisis escalates." [577]

-this helps explain one of the causes of war

-audience costs can serve as a proxy for a state's true intentions [577]

-each crisis has a unique *horizon*, a point where neither side will back down, and fighting is preferred to any negotiated settlement [577]

-moreover, "regardless of the initial conditions, the state more sensitive to audience costs is always less likely to back down in disputes that become public conquests." [577]

-if this is true, then escalation by a regime with high domestic audience costs conveys much more information about the state's true intentions

-that implicates the 'democratic peace' debate (loosely): state structure is important—democracies are less likely to 'bluff' or act strategically—they will signal intentions clearly and with more commitment than non-democracies, mitigating the security dilemma [578]

-relative military capabilities irrelevant: main argument is that rel. military capabilities do not influence crisis behaviour; main reason is that this factor is already factored in before a crisis starts; the actual resolution of a crisis depends upon the relative audience costs [578]

-the audience costs are both domestic and international, although the domestic audience costs are more important [581]

-similarly, the audience costs are higher for democracies than for non-democracies [although Fearon admits that there are cases where non-democracies can have significant audience costs] [582]

-Fearon's work supports the democratic peace: "In the model, democratic leaders have a structural incentive to pursue more escalatory, committing strategies when they face authoritarians than when they face fellow democrats, and this can generate a greater overall chance of war." [586]