

Domestic Structure, Decision Constraints, and War : So Why Kant Democracies Fight?

Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol.35, pp.187-211
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October 15, 2001

* Main argument

Previous studies, which researched the relationship between the domestic structure and war, resulted in the subsequent conclusion; **democracies fight as often as other states**. However, these works misspecified theoretical argument and consequently led to the incorrect conclusion. To clarify this relationship between two factors, it is necessary to focus on **specific mechanisms** by which the decisions of leaders are constrained rather than on **composite conceptual and operational definitions of democracy**. Based on this reformulation, it is confirmed that in the case of **major powers**, higher levels of decisional constraints lead to a lower probability that conflict will escalate to war.

1. Introduction

Kantian theorists have claimed that “democracies are more peace loving than are countries with other forms of government.” However, the empirical evidence does not support this argument. Rather, it proves that “democracies are no less war-prone than other forms of government.”

- ⇒ Counter-argument against this empirical evidence
- : It misspecified the causal mechanisms leading from democracy to peacefulness.

2. Theoretical Reformulation

* Some conceptual framework.

- 1) War: growing out of conflicts of interest between two state actors.
- 2) When wars occur: neither side is willing to acquiesce to other's demands and when both adopt fairly large scale military means to press their claims.

* Analysis

: how the domestic structure of nation-states affects decisions which lead to war

* Two key assumptions of Kantian theorists

- 1) a democratic political structure imposes constraints on the decision-making process by restricting the key decision maker's freedom of choice.
=> the main focus of the theoretical elaboration in this article.
- 2) with regard to decisions for war, these constraints push toward peace.

* Main interest: **the ways in which the decision-making process in a state can be constrained by the domestic structure of that state.**

*Three means by which decisions are constrained

- 1) the method of selecting executives within a country
 - ⇒ the more broadly based the “electorate” for leadership selection in a state and the more regularized the leadership selection process, the greater the decisional constraints on the leader.

- 2) the nature of political competition in a state
 - ⇒ states in which political competition is expressed through formal, institutionalized channels should be less likely to engage in war.
 - 3) the degree to which the leader must share decision-making power
 - ⇒ the greater the number of individuals and the greater the number of institutions that must approve a decision for war within a state, the less likely the leadership of that state is to decide for war.
- ⇒ Among those three means, **the most important should be the ability of another institution to block directly a decision for war.** However, in previous studies, states as democratic have been the existence of a **broad based electorate**, which is the least important constraining variable in this article.

3. Previous Empirical Studies

* Some mistakes of previous studies in making models.

1) Although independent variable (democracy or freedom) is a multidimensional concept, little attention has been paid to identify each dimension and the construction of indicator was not appropriate to determine the independent effect of each variable.

⇒ **Alternative: the individual variables rather than composite indicators.**

2) Most previous studies have focused only on the proportion of states of various types that have fought wars in a particular period or on the proportion of wars that involved states of particular types. **However, there is no reason to assume that the rates are constant.**

*Test

: Characterize states on variables reflecting these constraints rather than on some overall democracy scale, and control for the opportunity to decide for war.

4. Research Design

1) Hypothesis

: The greater the societal constraints on the chief decision maker of a state, the less likely a dispute involving that state will escalate to war.

2) Independent variable

: Executive selection process, Decisional Constraints and Political Competition

These variables are trichotomized based the degree of decisional constraints by decision-making authority in a way of high, medium and low constraints

3) Dependent variable

: Dispute outcome (DisOut): whether the dispute resulted in war for that state.

4) Data

: The militarized interstate dispute (MID) data set.

Cf) MID is “A set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force. 1816-1976 period.”

5. Data Analysis

* The interpretation from Table 3

: Dispute participants in the high constraint category of each variable are less likely to become involved in war than other states, but the differences across the full range of constraints are not large. It means that the **decisional constraints are not crucial determinants on dependent variables.**

* Let's see other variables which affect the constraint/war relationship.

: In this article, **the power status of dispute participants** is considered as another variable. To prove this variable, the data are reanalyzed with power status included as a control variable.

* Results

: There are some consistent interaction effects between power status and constraint levels based on Table 4 and 5. However, **this interpretation is only applied to the major powers.** In the case of minor powers, they are so constrained by their environmental that internal politics has little impact on decisions for war.

6. Conclusion

* Next research

: Specifying the conditions under which domestic structure has each impact.

* Only one conclusion in this article

: When only the great powers are considered, the relationship between the domestic political structure and war exists.