

Bruce Russett. 1993. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). Note: This summary covers Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6; it does *not* cover 3 (Dem Peace in Ancient Greece) or 5 (Dem Peace in Non-industrial societies) since they are only marginally relevant to IR. I pay little attention to his quantitative findings/empirics, focusing instead on the theories.

Quick summary: *Democracies are less likely to use lethal violence toward other democracies than toward autocratically governed states or than autocratically governed states are toward each other. Two models for the 'democratic peace' are examined: a cultural/normative model (culture, perceptions, and practices are externalized and permit compromise and peaceful resolution of conflicts between democracies) and a structural/institutional model (institutional constraints make it difficult for democratic leaders to move toward war so democracies will not fear surprise attack from one another). Russett finds greater empirical support for the cultural/normative model.*

What is the central puzzle?

In the modern international system, democracies are less likely to use lethal violence toward other democracies than toward autocratically governed states or than autocratically governed states are toward each other. 'Democracies almost never fight each other.' Why do democracies rarely/never fight each other yet still fight non-democracies?

What is the central answer(s)?

The relationship of relative peace among democracies is a result of some features of democracy, rather than being caused exclusively by economic or geopolitical characteristics correlated with democracy (alternative explanations). Since democracies are not more pacific in general, explanations can not focus on the characteristics of *single* states; it must explain what is unique about the democracy-democracy *dyad*.

THE CULTURAL/NORMATIVE MODEL (p. 35)

Assumptions (states *externalize* their *internal* norms)

1. In relations with other states, decision-makers (whether they be few or many) will try to follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize their domestic political processes.
 2. They will expect decision-makers in other states likewise to follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize those other states' domestic political processes.
- A. *Violent conflicts between democracies will be rare because:*
3. In democracies, the relevant decision-makers expect to be able to resolve conflicts by compromise and nonviolence, respect the rights and continued existence of opponents.
 4. Therefore democracies will follow norms of peaceful conflict resolution with other democracies, and will expect other democracies to do so with them.
 5. The more stable the democracy, the more will democratic norms govern its behavior with other democracies, and the more will other democracies expect democratic norms to govern its international behavior.
 6. If violent conflicts between democracies do occur, at least one of the democracies is likely to be politically unstable.
- B. *Violent conflicts between nondemocracies, and between democracies and nondemocracies, will be more frequent because:*
7. In nondemocracies, decision-makers use, and may expect their opponents to use, violence and the threat of violence to resolve conflict as part of their domestic political processes.
 8. Therefore nondemocracies may use violence and the threat of violence in conflicts with other states, and other states may expect them to use violence and the threat of violence in such conflicts.
 9. Democratic norms can be more easily exploited to force concessions than can nondemocratic ones; to avoid exploitation democracies may adopt nondemocratic norms in dealing with nondemocracies.

THE STRUCTURAL/INSTITUTIONAL MODEL (p. 40)

A. *Violent conflicts between democracies will be infrequent because:*

1. In democracies, the constraints of checks and balances, division of power, and need for public debate to enlist widespread support will slow decisions to use large-scale violence and reduce the likelihood that such decisions will be made.
 2. Leaders of other states will perceive leaders of democracies as so constrained.
 3. Thus leaders of democracies will expect, in conflicts with other democracies, time for processes of international conflict resolution to operate, and they will not fear surprise attack.
- B. *Violent conflict between nondemocracies, and between democracies and nondemocracies, will be frequent because:*
4. Leaders of nondemocracies are not constrained as leaders of democracies are, so they can more easily, rapidly, and secretly initiate large-scale violence.

5. Leaders of states (democracies and nondemocracies) in conflict with nondemocracies may initiate violence rather than risk surprise attack.
6. Perceiving that leaders of democracies will be constrained, leaders of nondemocracies may press democracies to make greater concessions over issues in conflict.
7. Democracies may initiate large-scale violence with nondemocracies rather than make the greater concessions demanded.

Without delving into the details of Russett's empirics, he first establishes that a democratic peace exists (but democracies are still likely to fight non-democracies). He then tests his two theories, controlling for alternative explanations for the democratic peace (wealth, economic growth, alliances, contiguity). To compare across his two cases, he identifies two categories of dyads in which the two models give opposite predictions (dyads with low political stability but high political constraints – normative model predicts conflict, structural model predicts low conflict; and dyads with high political stability but low political constraints – normative model predicts low conflict, structural model predicts conflict). He finds that normative constraints help prevent both the occurrence of conflict and the occurrence of war. Institutional constraints prevent escalation to war, but they do not by themselves prevent states from becoming involved in lower-level conflicts. He therefore concludes that norms, as measured by the absence of violence in domestic politics and the duration of democratic regimes, were somewhat more strongly associated with peace between democracies than was his measure of structural/institutional constraints.