

Copenhagen Business School
BSc International Business & Politics

Why are democracies less likely - than non-democracies - to go to war with each other?

Political Science

Final Exam

Student number: 

Date: December 22nd 2021

Number of characters: 20.482

Number of pages: 10

Referencing: APA 6th edition

State security is an essential component of a functioning society. It involves protecting a country's citizens, natural resources, and infrastructure from threats both internal and external. It also encompasses ensuring the safety of national borders, alleviating poverty and promoting economic development, and preserving cultural identity. State security is important because it helps maintain a stable political, social, and economic environment, contributes to global security, and serves to protect the public from war. (Baylis et al., 2020). Ultimately, it helps to ensure a nation's continued prosperity and stability. An important point to make is the role of the international institutions in state security. By forming mutual international alliances and other international treaties, countries are able to reduce the risk of war and conflict. (Baylis et al., 2020). The question then becomes whether democratic states are more likely to enter these agreements, and hence protect themselves, than non-democratic regimes. **Therefore, this assignment will argue that democratic states are less likely, than non-democratic regimes to go to war, because by entering international alliances their gain more state security.** This assignment will consist of firstly, a short presentation of the liberal theories of international relations. Subsequently there will be introduced six arguments based on the theoretical part that will support the line of argument. Then follows a line of counterarguments with a theoretical background in realism which then will be refuted. And finishing of a conclusion that will connect the previous arguments of the assignment.

This assignment is informed by liberal theories of international relations including neoliberal institutionalism and liberal internationalism. Liberalism which takes its starting point in with thinker such as Immanuel Kant and John Locke, is a political ideology that promotes freedom and equality. (Baylis et al., 2020). Liberalism in international relations emphasize the peaceful coexistence of states in an open and equitable system. It emphasizes the role of international institutions, the idea of collective security, and the importance of dialogue and negotiation in resolving conflicts. (Ashbee, 2022). Liberalism also promotes liberal democratic values, including the importance of ensuring justice and human rights around the world. (Baylis et al., 2020). Liberal internationalism emphasizes international interdependence and cooperation, as well as the need for international organizations and institutions to promote peace and prosperity. It is the belief that global problems such as poverty, climate change, terrorism, and war only can be solved through international cooperation and collaboration. (Ferdinand et al., 2018). Liberal internationalism seeks to build a world order in which all states are active agents in constructing and managing a global system of multilateral institutions and agreements, and in which states recognize their shared responsibility for global problems. These efforts are built upon the ideas of secreting democratization, international law, political integration

and international organizations. (Dunne, 2020). Neoliberal institutionalism, first developed in the 1990s by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, seeks to explain international systems and dynamics by focusing on both the role of international rules, institutions, and regimes, as well as the power of ideas in shaping global outcomes. Based on the belief that states and international organizations must work together for the international system to be successful. (Keohane et al., 1998). This approach focuses on how states interact and form alliances to create an international order with better outcomes for all. It emphasizes that international institutions can limit state power and promote collaboration. (Baylis et al., 2020).

The first argument to be made is democracies emphasize the use of diplomacy, negotiation, and compromise to resolve conflicts, while non-democratic regimes can be more willing to resort to the use of force and military confrontation. In addition, the Cold War demonstrated how a conflict between two ideologies, the West was largely influenced by democracy, capitalism, and free markets, while the East, led by the Soviet Union, influenced by authoritarian, and embraced communism and socialism as its alternative to the capitalist system. (Armitage, 2011). The Cold War thereby shows the formation of a security dilemma. In a security dilemma, states will take measures to protect their interests, which may lead to conflict with other states. (Jervis, 1978). As between the United States and the Soviet Union, if one state increases its military capabilities, the other state may feel threatened and respond by increasing its own military capabilities. This could lead to a spiraling arms race and increased tension between the two states. (Ikenberry, 2009). Thus, the Cold War caused by a constant rearmament of military capabilities, competing economic and political systems attempting to dominate the global order could be managed and contained without a major armed conflict. Ultimately, the Cold War ended due to a combination of factors, including improved international relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as due to negotiation and diplomacy both states could declare the Cold War over. (Baylis et al., 2020).

The second argument is that democratic states are bound by international institutions that promote peaceful resolutions to disputes. Democracies are usually part of international organizations like the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO. These organizations codify and promote rules and measures designed to foster peace and protect human rights. According to the ideas of neoliberal institutionalism, states will join international institutions that help create peace by creating alliances. (Keohane, 2001). At the same time as the Cold War took place the United States together with the other allied states formed the military defense institution North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO.

NATO works to ensure the security of its member states by working to deter potential threats, strengthen defense capabilities, and respond to crises. It does this through a number of different initiatives, such as collective defense and collective security. (Baylis et al., 2020). By being a member of NATO, member states are able to benefit from increased security, improved diplomatic relations, access to resources, technology, and equipment, increased interoperability of military forces, access to intelligence and information sharing, improved economic ties and investment opportunities, and the opportunity to contribute to NATO operations and activities around the world. (Ferdinand et al., 2018). The NATO alliance therefore sets several requirements that member states undertake to provide in relation to being able to benefit from the security they receive. In addition, it can be argued that NATO could be considered a military build-up in connection with the Cold War, resulting in the Soviet Union feeling further pressure for military capabilities and has pushed to the security dilemma. (Jervis, 1978).

Thirdly, Democracies that are part of international institutions have an ingrained culture of respect for human rights and international law from the European Union that discourages war as one is bound to achieve cooperation in a globalized world. (Reus-Smit, 2020). Liberal internationalism emphasizes that peace is maintained through law. (Baylis et al., 2020). United Nations and the European Union's commitment to international law provides an important layer of security for its member nations. International law helps to ensure that countries can cooperate with each other in a peaceful, secure, and mutually beneficial way. (Cobaleda et al., 2020). By participating in international agreements and treaties, the EU can ensure that its member states are not threatened by aggressive behavior or hostile military activity from other nations. Furthermore, international law helps to guarantee that all countries abide by the same standards and regulations, which in turn can help to reduce the risk of conflict. (Chakrabarty, 2000). Additionally, the EU's commitment to international law ensures that its member states have access to the international legal system, allowing them to seek redress if they feel their rights or interests have been violated. As such, international law helps to strengthen the security of EU member states by providing a framework for international cooperation and mutual respect and creates a framework for cooperation. For example, the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy provides a framework for countries to cooperate on security issues and pursue peaceful solutions to conflicts. (Dunne, 2020). Democracies are also often members of regional security organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which works

to reduce potential sources of conflict such as human rights abuses, arms build-ups, international cooperation, and the maintenance of the European single market.

A fourth argument: when democracies have strong economic ties with one another, it means that countries are interdependent on each other for trade and other activities, they are less likely to start war, because of mutual dependency. Liberal internationalism emphasizes international interdependence and cooperation. (Baylis et al., 2020). By having this kind of mutual dependency, it creates an incentive for these countries to cooperate and avoid conflict. The Kantian triangle is an important tool for understanding security in a globalized world. (Parish et al., 2002). It is based on Immanuel Kant's idea of a perpetual peace, which suggests that three conditions must be met in order for peace to be maintained: international institutions and organizations, international law and interdependence. (Baylis et al., 2020). The Kantian triangle helps to explain why these conditions are important for security by showing how they interact with one another. International institutions and organizations provide a system of checks and balances which prevents any one state from gaining too much power, international law provides a framework for resolving disputes without resorting to violence, and interdependence encourages states to think of the world as a single community, reducing potential for conflict. (Dunne et al., 2013). Together, these three conditions help to create a secure environment in which countries can interact and resolve their differences peacefully. (Dunne, 2020). This is because a war or negative economic behavior by one democratic state could cause an economic crisis or disruption in another. Thus, countries are likely to rely on diplomacy instead of war in order to resolve their differences.

Fifthly, democracies must ensure human rights and have a responsibility to protect their population from war. Democracies prioritize the protection of human rights by adhere to international law. (Ashbee, 2022). According to liberal internationalism, democratic states are also characterized by ensuring human rights and liberal freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion. To achieve this, they support international organizations such as the NATO, EU and United Nation. (United Nations Peaekeeping, 2022). For example, at the United Nation World Summit in 2005 there was codified the Right to Protect which is a three pillars framework set on how state security is secured. The first pillar states that states have the primary responsibility to protect its citizens. The second pillar outlines that other states and regional organizations should offer assistance at the request of the states. The third pillar mandates that the international community take prompt and decisive action, including the use of force, providing coercive measures, and support from the

UN Security Council. (Baylis et al., 2020). Although it is primarily the state's own responsibility to ensure peace in their country, then the countries are also responsible for their civilian population, by taking care of human security. (Jamison, 2022). International institutions like UN is still responsible for maintaining collective security and can limit state power through international legislation and thereby promote cooperation in the globalized world.

Sixthly, Democracies typically value peaceful resolution of disputes due to the importance of public opinion. This is precisely why it is also important that a democratic state secures the citizens' rights and observes human rights and freedoms as defined by international law. Democratic countries generally prioritize peaceful resolution of disputes in order to maintain public trust and prevent political unrest. (Dunne, 2020). This can be seen in the way democracies often rely on diplomatic solutions to resolve international disputes, rather than resorting to war or other forms of physical aggression. This is also reflected in the prevalence of international courts and dispute resolution mechanisms which exist to allow for peaceful negotiations and settlements between states. (Baylis, 2020). Legitimacy is a measure of a government's acceptance and support by its citizens. Securing basic liberties is a key factor in increasing a government's legitimacy. When governments protect their citizens' rights to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and other civil liberties, citizens are more likely to trust and support the government. (Morgenthau, 1886). This trust and support leads to increased rational-legal legitimacy. (Jamison, 2022). Because the leader serves the public interest which is based on a system of laws and procedures that are highly institutionalized. Additionally, when citizens are able to exercise their basic liberties, they are more likely to take part in the political process, which further increases the legitimacy of the state. (United Nations, 2008). This can be seen in the way democracies often rely on diplomatic solutions to resolve international disputes, rather than resorting to war or other forms of physical aggression. (Ferdinand et al., 2018). This is also reflected in the prevalence of international courts and dispute resolution mechanisms which exist to allow for peaceful negotiations and settlements between states.

A counterargument to the liberal approach of this assignment is a realist perspective. This security is sought through power and the pursuit of self-interest. Realism posits that states are inherently suspicious of each other and will act in ways to ensure their own safety, even if it means sacrificing the interests of other states. (Baylis, 2020). Realism in international relations is a theory that posits that states are the primary actors in international politics and that their primary goal is to ensure their own security. (Wessel, 2022). Another contrary argument is that there is less open communication

and dialogue between non-democracies, thus reducing the chances of diplomatic tensions escalating into armed conflict. In order to better manage global peace, governments can use direct and indirect diplomacy to foster dialogue between non-democracies. (Dunne, 2020). Governments can also work to increase transparency and mutual understanding between countries, by hosting international conferences and other diplomatic forums. (Ferdinand et al., 2018). Additionally, regional organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union can serve as mediators between countries and help to facilitate communication and cooperation. Finally, governments can invest in sustainable development and economic growth to reduce economic disparities between nations and create a more equitable global economic system. (Smith, 1986).

Authoritarian regimes typically have more autocratic leaders who are less receptive to public opinion, thus making war a less desirable option. Realism emphasizes the importance of power in international politics and the need for states to be prepared to use military force when necessary. In a non-democratic setting, decisions are made by a single authority or a small group of leaders, who may have their own motivations and interests in mind. (Baylis, 2020). This structure allows for fewer checks and balances, making it easier for leaders to make decisions that are not in the public interest. War may be seen as a way to further the interests of the ruling party, rather than the interests of the people. In addition, non-democratic governments often lack transparency and accountability, meaning that leaders may not be held accountable for their decisions. This can make it easier for leaders to make decisions that are not in the best interest of the people, such as going to war without consulting the public or without a clear justification for doing so. (Dunne, 2020). Finally, non-democratic governments tend to be more oppressive and less responsive to public opinion. This can lead to citizens feeling powerless and frustrated, which could lead to greater resistance and even unrest if war is declared. Overall, non-democratic governments are less likely to go to war than democracies, as they are less likely to be receptive to public opinion and lack the necessary checks and balances to ensure that decisions are in the best interest of the people.

Non-democracies often lack the balances and popular support found in democracies that can prevent war from being declared based on a single leader's decision. In non-democratic systems, the leader has complete control over the decision to go to war. This lack of balances and support from the population can lead to war being declared without the approval of the people, and without consideration for the consequences. This can cause unnecessary suffering, as well as economic and environmental devastation. (Ferdinand et al., 2018). The lack of transparency in non-democratic

systems also means that those in power are not accountable for their decisions. In contrast, democracies can provide a better check against war, as the decision requires approval from the population. This approval process can involve public debates and discussions, which can help ensure that the decision is well-informed and takes into account public opinion. (Sørensen, 2011). Furthermore, democracies can also provide a platform for citizens to express their concerns, which can help prevent war. (Baylis, 2020). Overall, democracies provide a better system of checks and balances that can help prevent war. This is because they provide a platform for the people to have a say in the decision-making process and ensure that the leader is held accountable for their actions.

In conclusion democracies are less likely than non-democracies to go to war with each other because democracies are based on the principles of liberal internationalism that respect for human rights, rule of international law and equality and international cooperation , make them more peaceful states. Democracies also have shared interests due to increased economic interdependence, trade and social cooperation, resulting in closer ties and an increased desire to seek resolution to disputes through diplomatic means rather than resorting to violence. Furthermore, democratic governments are more transparent and accountable to the people they represent, so they must take into account public opinion and the potential costs of conflict when considering going to war. Furthermore, democratic states are less likely to go to war than non-democratic regimes because they gain more security by entering into international alliances. This is due to the fact that democracies have more to lose than non-democratic regimes and it is in their best interest to maintain good relations with their allies. Democratic states are also more likely to use diplomatic channels to resolve disputes and are less likely to resort to military force to achieve their goals. This is because democracies tend to be more open about their foreign policy intentions and are willing to negotiate for mutual benefit. In addition, democracies are typically more transparent and accountable which reduces the chance of a surprise attack or escalations of a conflict. All of these factors make democracies less likely to engage in armed conflict than non-democratic regimes.

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