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Institutional Constraints, Political Opposition, and Interstate Dispute Escalation: Evidence from Parliamentary Systems, 1946–89*

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Research on the ‘democratic peace’ has received considerable attention in the last few years. Democracies, though, are often thrown together when examining the propensity of different regime types to become engaged in international conflict. Yet, democratic governments vary dramatically across nation-states. Whether it be presidential versus parliamentary, or multi-party versus single-party, democratic states clearly differ in the structure of their governing institutions. This article examines the relationship between government type, domestic political opposition, and the threat, show or use of military force. The analysis finds that Western parliamentary governments are rarely involved in militarized interstate disputes, but when they are they tend to be the targets of aggression by non-democratic states. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that these democratic governments are much more likely to reciprocate disputes when their opponent is a non-democracy. Reciprocal, though, also tends to be influenced by the type of government in power during a dispute. Coalition democratic governments, rather than single-party governments, are much more likely to reciprocate militarized disputes. In fact, the findings suggest that coalition governments are more likely to reciprocate disputes in general, and particularly more likely to reciprocate with the actual use of military force. The results also suggest that the level of polarization of a parliamentary government tends to decrease the probability of dispute reciprocation.

Democracies and the Democratic Peace

Evidence increasingly demonstrates that the presence of two democratic states is a near sufficient condition for peaceful relations between them (Gleditsch & Hegre, 1997; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Raknerud & Hegre, 1997; Rousseau

et al., 1996; Russett, 1993). While these dyadic level findings have held up to rigorous empirical scrutiny, the evidence at the monadic level is less than consistent (Benoit, 1996; Chan, 1984; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Weede, 1984). Indeed, most studies have found politically free polities to be as conflict-prone as non-free polities. Maoz & Abdolali (1989: 20) concluded that ‘regime type is generally not an important predictor of national conflict involvement’. This mixed dyad result is anomalous and continues to confound students of international politics.

The lack of monadic level findings, however, may be partly a result of method-

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ological weaknesses (see Raknerud & Hegre, 1997). Benoit (1996) re-examined the monadic level findings and his evidence provides support for the idea that freedom promotes pacific behavior (see also Hewitt & Wilkenfeld, 1996). Furthermore, recent research suggests that democracies are often targets of aggression by non-democratic states, inflating their incidence of war-proneness (Gowa, 1998; Leeds & Davis, 1997). Raknerud & Hegre (1997) found the incidence of conflict for democracies to be related to their propensity to come to the aid of other democratic states (see also Gleditsch & Hegre, 1997).¹ Therefore, democratic conflict involvement appears to be higher than it should be due to war-joining behavior rather than the actual initiation of conflict. It would appear that questions remain regarding the monadic-level relationship between democracy and peace.

In this article, we extend two lines of inquiry into the democratic peace research program. First, we address foreign policy behavior that falls short of the threshold for war (see, for example, Gowa, 1998; Senese, 1997). There is a need to better understand foreign policy decisionmaking that involves lower levels of conflict. Are low levels of force prohibited between democratic governments, or are threats and shows of force common responses to dispute situations regardless of the regime type of the opponent? Indeed, a diversionary theory of conflict seems to imply that low-level disputes can potentially provide electoral rewards to those in power (see, for example, Ostrom & Job, 1986; Smith, 1996; Stoll, 1984).²

¹ Evidence also suggests that democracies are rarely the targets of military intervention by other democratic states (see Hermann & Kegley, 1996; Kegley & Hermann, 1996).

² The use of covert military force in one sense suggests that democracies are willing to engage other democracies militarily (Cohen, 1994). In another sense such actions, if fully disclosed, would not be welcomed by the general public and executives feel that undercover operations are the only way to achieve the desired political goals (see Elman, 1997).

Second, we explore variation in foreign policy decisionmaking within the democratic community. Such variation has received little empirical attention (exceptions include Hagan, 1993; Schjølset, 1996). However, Benoit (1996) insisted that the dichotomous categorization of regime type ignores important information with regards to government characteristics and foreign policy behavior. Certainly, one might guess that different institutional arrangements would have a differential impact on foreign policy decisionmaking (see Risse-Kappen, 1991). Waltz (1967), in his study of the foreign policies of the UK and the USA, insisted that institutional differences between these two democratic states contributed to the influence which domestic political forces had over foreign policy decisionmaking and to the stability and success of those policies. We must not forget, then, that there are significant institutional differences even among the states of the democratic community. As such, attention needs to be given to how these differences affect foreign policy decisions.

Political Constraints

The conspicuous growth of democracy over the past 200 years potentially constitutes a fundamental shift in world politics. Given that democratic countries rarely fight one another, the ascendancy of such regimes could be the path to global peace. Two arguments have been posited to account for the lack of conflict between democratic nations. The normative or cultural model insists that domestic decision processes tend to be externalized, establishing conflict resolution procedures between liberal states that are grounded in compromise and the rule of law (Gowa, 1995; Maoz & Russett, 1993). The normative model also implies that relations between democratic states and non-democratic states will be dominated by

the politics of the latter, forcing democratic leaders to remain wary of the promises and actions of authoritarian diplomats (Maoz & Russett, 1993). The structural model, in contrast, grounds the pacific tendencies of democratic states in their domestic political institutions. Indeed, democratic leaders must secure support from multiple domestic groups to successfully accomplish foreign policy objectives (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992). Consequently, as Elman (1997: 12) wrote, 'democratically elected leaders cannot easily commit the state to war'.

Both the normative and structural models have received empirical support. It seems, though, that the former argument cannot explain variation found between different democratic states with regards to their conflict-proneness. However, if differences do exist, as we think they should, then institutional variation must be a critical factor. Maoz & Russett (1993) insisted that the structural argument necessarily implies that conflict behavior should vary across democratic systems: 'Presidential systems should be less constrained than parliamentary systems, in which the government is far more dependent on the support it gets from the legislature. Coalition governments or minority cabinets are far more constrained than are governments controlled by a single party' (Maoz & Russett, 1993: 626). Frogner (1993) similarly found the single-party/coalition distinction to account for a large portion of the variance in cabinet decisionmaking. To date, however, there is little, if any, empirical support for Maoz & Russett's suppositions.

Schjølset (1996) is one of the few students of international politics to examine variation in conflict behavior within the democratic community. Similar to Morgan & Campbell (1991), Schjølset (1996) argued that institutional constraints should prevent leaders from engaging in poten-

tially costly interstate conflicts. She investigated whether belligerency varied across different types of democratic systems due to their different levels of institutional constraints. Majoritarian democracies, she argued, possess fewer constraints than consensus democracies and therefore should be more likely to engage in interstate conflict. Schjølset found that majoritarian democracies are not only more war-prone than consensus democracies, but even more war-prone than non-democracies. She also found centralized and parliamentary democracies to be more belligerent than federal and presidential democratic states.

According to Hagan (1993), Morgan & Campbell (1991), Morgan & Schwebach (1992), and institutional constraints have an important and substantial influence on a leader's foreign policy behavior. The need to secure political support from multiple domestic sources implies, according to Maoz & Russett (1993), that foreign policy decisions which involve the use of military force will often tend to be politically difficult to make. As a consequence, democratic leaders often move cautiously in order to avoid electoral punishment. The potential costs incurred by non-democratic leaders for poor decisionmaking are considerably fewer than democratic chief executives given the fact that the non-democratic heads of state are generally accountable to a much smaller group of individuals. Furthermore, democratic institutions convey a visible sign of the political constraints these leaders face (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992), and therefore, according to Elman (1997: 12), 'serve as a useful indicator of a state's trustworthiness, legitimacy, and reliability'.

Morgan & Campbell (1991) offered three sources of executive constraint. First, decisional constraints increase as both the heterogeneity of the electorate and the fre-

quency of electoral selection increase. Second, the choices of leaders are constrained by political opposition.³ Lastly, the use of force should respond inversely to the number of individuals and institutions required for such an authorization. Therefore, the dispersion of executive authority among institutions and individuals should inhibit the escalation of interstate disputes (Morgan & Schwebach, 1992). In the USA, for example, competing demands among the foreign policy players, such as the State Department, the National Security Council, and the Pentagon, help restrain executive decisionmaking in foreign affairs.

Expectations

When it comes to parliamentary systems, Fognier (1993), Hagan (1993), Maoz & Russett (1993), and all insisted that single-party governments should possess the greatest freedom in foreign policy decisionmaking. This assumes, however, that the party is ideologically unified (see Hagan, 1993). Disparate policy views within rank should increase the constraints on the cabinet and thus lead to inefficient leadership. Coalition governments, on the other hand, face numerous difficulties in policy decisionmaking of any kind. Indeed, one of the main criticisms of proportional representation is that conflicts over policy objectives are not resolved prior to government formation. Therefore, such disagreements form an integral source of cabinet instability. Budge & Keman (1990) additionally suggested that concessions made by parties in order to successfully form a coalition government often lead to increased

³ In the USA, for example, the Republican led Congress presented a formidable political obstacle for the Clinton Administration in both domestic and foreign affairs. The military interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia as well as relations with Beijing all met with considerable disapproval from Republicans on Capitol Hill. Opposition such as this clearly constrains and inhibits executive action.

conflict among members of each party. Furthermore, in a coalition no single party has the ability to unilaterally direct foreign policy decisionmaking, and there may not be enough of a shared interest between the coalition parties to generate and sustain a long-term foreign policy objective (Hagan, 1993: 72–73).⁴

Minority governments should demonstrate the least ability in developing and sustaining a coherent and stable foreign policy regardless of whether the minority cabinet consists of a single party or a coalition of parties. Fognier (1993) contended that minority cabinets possess the least amount of freedom in decisionmaking because of the necessity of acquiring outside support to implement a policy option. Moreover, if minority governments are a result of fragmentation within the electorate at large, as Budge & Keman (1990) have argued, then executive decisionmaking will seemingly tend to be fraught with confusion and uncertainty.⁵ We hypothesize, then:

*H*₁: Single-party governments will have the fewest decisional constraints and therefore the greatest freedom to reciprocate militarized disputes. These governments should then be the most willing to escalate disputes in which they have been targeted.

*H*₂: Coalition and minority governments will possess greater constraints on decisionmaking and as a result the likelihood of reciprocation should decrease while these types of governments hold the reins of power.

⁴ Hagan (1993) did admit that some coalition governments may succeed in securing a consensus which subsequently insulates the government from domestic opposition.

⁵ On the other hand, Strøm (1990: ch. 4) found minority governments to be nearly as durable as alternative cabinet types, therefore contesting the argument which Budge & Keman (1990) have espoused, that such cabinets are a result of confusion and instability. Nonetheless, because these governments must seek support from outside parties, the constraints they face tend to be greater than either single-party or coalition majority governments.

Interestingly, though, there exists considerable disagreement over the relationship between government type and decision-making. Strøm (1990), in fact, argued that coalition governments may be less accountable and thus less constrained than single-party cabinets. Furthermore, Alesina & Rosenthal (1995) suggested that coalition governments may provide greater stability in certain policy areas than their single-party counterparts. Indeed, given that single-party governments often face opposition parties that intend to redirect public policy in a very different direction, they may act extremely cautiously to avoid providing political ammunition to the parties out of power. Furthermore, the relatively higher level of domestic uncertainty that surrounds coalition cabinets may, as Downs & Rocke (1995) have argued, encourage greater risk-taking behavior. With coalition governments, the voting public may be less able to attach responsibility to any one party for policy failures. Presumably, then, coalition leaders would have greater flexibility in their handling of foreign affairs. Therefore, two alternative hypotheses are posited:

- H_3 : Single-party governments will tend to avoid costly actions that could be seized upon by opposition groups. Therefore, these governments should be less likely to risk reciprocating militarized disputes.
- H_4 : Coalition governments tend to be less accountable than single-party cabinets and as a result should be less constrained in decisionmaking. These types of governments should be more willing to reciprocate militarized disputes.

Government type, however, only targets one dimension of potential constraint. We must not forget the parliament more generally in an examination of political constraints and executive action. The degree to which the legislature is splintered along partisan lines reflects to a certain extent the polarization of

the electorate over the appropriate direction of government policy. Such disagreement should only exacerbate the difficulties governments face in arriving at and implementing government policies and programs. Seemingly, the more unified and homogeneous an electorate the greater the ability of lawmakers to construct government policy. In particular, a strong political opposition manifest in the legislature should tend to inhibit executive decisionmaking by threatening to expose deficiencies in government policies. This leads to the final hypothesis:

H_5 : Higher levels of disagreement among political parties and greater oppositional strength should both increase the decisional constraints on the executive body and consequently decrease the likelihood of dispute reciprocation.

Research Design

In our opinion, the structure, composition, and ideological consensus of a cabinet indirectly provide important information with regards to foreign policy behavior. If cabinet structure influences government duration, as many scholars have shown, it seems logical to assume that such factors may additionally affect foreign policy decisionmaking. To be sure, interstate disputes are relatively rare events, and they involve behavior which might deviate from more routine relations between nations. In fact, it is conceivable that the escalation of a dispute involves decisionmaking within a government that avoids partisan and policy differences. If this were true, decisionmaking at higher levels of conflict would tend to rely more on issues of national security. We argue that the threat, show, or use of force occupies a middle ground between common interstate relations and the more extreme behavior associated with crisis bargaining. Furthermore, as Chan (1993: 208) insisted, the international relations community needs

to examine 'whether democracies are less likely to engage in a variety of conflict behavior that falls short of the threshold of war'. Indeed, this is precisely what we are attempting to do in the analysis that follows.

Unlike Morgan & Campbell (1991), we are concerned only with Western parliamentary democracies and how they differentially respond to militarized dispute situations. Furthermore, we are not solely interested in disputes that escalate to war or no war, but include foreign policy decisions that involve both threats and shows of force. One of the difficulties in expanding the dependent variable in this fashion is that we are faced with a substantial number of disputes that involve low levels of violence. In fact, 77% of the disputes involved no casualties and 35% lasted no longer than a single day. So, although 40% of the disputes involved the use of force by at least one side, we are faced with the fact that these disputes often revolve around low levels of force, such as the seizure of fishing trawlers. To avoid these types of disputes, we concentrate on the reciprocation of militarized disputes, and the domestic political determinants of this decision.⁶

Morgan & Campbell (1991) included both democracies and non-democracies in their study and measured constraints utilizing Gurr's Polity dataset (1974, 1978). The nations included in our study are all Western parliamentary democracies. Therefore, the variable they coded for executive selection is absent in our analysis. All fifteen of the countries included here select their executive through competitive elections. Similarly, with regards to decisional constraints and political opposition, the fifteen governments drawn from Strøm demonstrate very little variation. Indeed, generally all possess legislative parity and all have insti-

tutionalized political opposition.⁷ However, this is not to say that the fifteen nations presented here do not demonstrate variation in institutional constraints. In fact, we hope to show that there exists such variation even among those countries which Morgan & Campbell (1991) coded as the most structurally inhibited.

If, as we argue, political leaders are constrained by institutional attributes and political competition, then variation should exist within the democratic community with regards to foreign policy decisionmaking. Yet, we must acknowledge the importance of factors associated with a realpolitik vision of international relations. Thus, we propose here a modified realist model along the lines of Huth (1996).⁸ First, militarized disputes take place because of some underlying issue of contention between one or more parties. As numerous authors (Hensel, 1994; Holsti, 1991; Mitchell & Prins, 1999; Vasquez, 1993, 1995) have demonstrated, territorial issues have been one of the major points of contention between nations over the centuries. Even disputes between democratic governments appear to involve higher levels of violence when the issue in disagreement is territory (Mitchell & Prins, 1999). Therefore, the parliamentary governments examined here should be more willing to reciprocate disputes that involve this kind of issue. In our model, then, we account for whether the dispute involves a question of territory, as coded by the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) dataset.

Second, realism has placed a great emphasis on the role of power and capabilities through the years. Indeed, the decision

⁶ As an alternative means of dealing with the issue of low-violence MIDs, Gleditsch & Hegre (1998) restrict themselves to disputes with at least 25 casualties.

⁷ Only Spain, Portugal and Israel scored less than 10 on the Polity III democracy scale. Spain scored 8 or 9; Portugal 9 or 10; and Israel scored 9 or 10. Thus there is very little variation on the level of democracy scale.

⁸ Opportunity presents another problematic issue. Presumably large states with economies highly involved in the international arena will have a greater opportunity to become involved in disputes. Similar to Morgan & Campbell (1991), we define a dispute as an opportunity.

to escalate a dispute naturally involves a consideration of the capabilities of both sides. Therefore, we code both the military expenditures and military personnel for each of the states involved in a given dispute at the start of each dispute. From these data, a ratio of military capabilities is constructed (i.e. $A/A + B$). For multilateral disputes, the capabilities of the states in each coalition are summed to produce the ratio. We argue that as the ratio of capabilities of a state increases, the probability of reciprocation increases.⁹

Third, we include a dummy variable for contiguity to control for the costs involved in projecting influence abroad.¹⁰ Not only do borders present opportunities for states to interact, which inevitably leads to the rise of issues over which fundamental differences exist, but also states should be less willing to incur the political costs required to respond ardently to geographically distant disputes. Consequently, we would expect contiguous states to be more likely to reciprocate disputes. Vasquez (1993: 127), in fact, reported that war is 35 times more likely between contiguous states than non-contiguous ones.

Lastly, to help control for serial dependency, we include a variable that measures whether the disputes are temporally related. Drawing on Beck et al. (1998), we count the number of months between disputes for each of our fifteen countries. When a dispute began prior to the resolution of a previous one, the count was coded 0. Our months-peace variable is meant to coincide with their peace-years variable (see Beck et al., 1998:

⁹ The ratio of military capabilities is measured in two different ways. One variable uses military personnel and the other uses military expenditures. The expenditures variable presented the best fit and therefore was chosen over the personnel variable. High collinearity prevented both from being used.

¹⁰ The variable is coded 1 if the states involved in the dispute share a land border or are separated by less than 150 miles of open water. France and the UK are considered great powers and therefore are coded here as contiguous to all of their opponents. Colonial disputes are not coded as contiguous, though we ran the analysis both ways and the results largely remain unchanged.

1276), and its inclusion is intended to help prevent misleading results as a result of temporal dependence.

Empirical Beginnings

In our analysis, the unit of observation is international dispute involvement. Therefore, the MID dataset provides an appropriate data source. Gochman & Maoz (1984: 587) defined a dispute as 'a set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force'. Additionally, they argued that the coded acts 'must be explicit, overt, non-accidental, and government sanctioned'. While the MID dataset includes all instances involving the threat or use of force from 1816–1992, the dataset containing information on cabinet structure only codes from 1946 until 1989. Our analysis thus will be limited to the post-World War II era. Data for the independent variable – cabinet structure – come from Strøm (1990). Characteristics of fifteen Western parliamentary democracies are coded for an approximately 40-year period.¹¹ The relevant disputes are matched with the governments coded by Strøm, and the variables selected are designed to match the ones used by Morgan & Campbell (1991). Thus, nearly all disputes involving the fifteen democracies Strøm coded in his study have been paired with the governments which were in power at the time of the conflicts.

To be clear then, our concern here is with the reciprocation of militarized disputes, and whether domestic political forces influence the decision by a government to respond to an act of aggression with a threat, show, or

¹¹ The fifteen nations are, Belgium (1946–88), Canada (1946–89), Denmark (1946–88), Finland (1946–87), France IV (1946–59), Iceland (1947–88), Ireland (1948–89), Israel (1949–89), Italy (1946–88), Netherlands (1946–89), Norway (1946–89), Portugal (1975–87), Spain (1977–86), Sweden (1946–88) and the UK (1946–87).

use of military force. Given that these democratic governments are targets in a dispute, are some governments more likely to reciprocate than others? Like Senese (1997) we code a dispute in which a target state responds with a two or greater on the MID hostility level scale as reciprocal.¹² Drawing upon Strøm (1990) and Downs & Rocke (1995), we argue that single-party governments which face highly polarized legislatures and strong political opposition should be the most constrained in their decisionmaking. In contrast, coalition governments with low polarization and weak political opposition should be the least constrained in their ability to respond to militarized disputes.

Table I presents the domestic political variables utilized in the following analysis and how they compare to the three categories established by Morgan & Campbell.¹³ The decisional constraint measures are relatively straightforward. However, the two variables measuring general parliamentary instability are slightly more complex. Polarization refers to the proportion of legislative representation possessed by extremist political parties (see Powell, 1982).¹⁴ This measure attempts to account for the extent of conflict and extremism within the legislature. According to Strøm (1990: 14), 'such conflict adversely affects the a priori willingness of political parties to negotiate for government participation'. Therefore, developing a consensus, forming coalitions and

general cabinet decisionmaking should be more difficult as the polarization of the legislature increases. The fractionalization variable is drawn from Rae (1971) and according to Strøm (1984: 207), 'is a measure of the probability that two randomly selected legislators will belong to different parties'. The measure is a function of the number and size of the political parties within the legislature. Strøm (1990: 13) wrote, 'the more parties, and the more evenly they split the electorate, the greater the degree of fractionalization'. In other words, Rae's measure suggests that as the number of political parties increases the greater the dispersion of interests. Strøm additionally cites Sartori (1976) and Dodd (1976) who agree that high fractionalization leads to miscalculation and greater uncertainty for party leaders.

The final category – political opposition – involves an attempt to measure the strength of political opposition within parliament (Strøm, 1984: 219). This variable quite simply indicates the percentage of parliamentary seats held by the major opposition bloc. Conflict at home can be either a catalyst or a constraint to foreign policy adventurism. Diversionary theory would suggest the former, while a structural constraints argument may suggest the latter. In the literature there does not appear to be a clear consensus on this question. However, Gleditsch & Ward (1997) found the Polity democracy score to be predominantly influenced by executive constraints. Given the dearth of violent conflict between democracies, plus the recent monadic-level evidence presented by Benoit (1996), the finding of Gleditsch & Ward (1997) suggests that constraints on the chief executive, such as an effective political opposition, may serve to inhibit diversionary uses of force.

¹² We find that the parliamentary governments included in our analysis reciprocated their disputes 51% of the time. The other 49% were resolved in some manner short of militarized reciprocation.

¹³ The econometric models presented only show the results of the final form of the model. Due to high pairwise correlations between some of the variables, all could not be run in the same model. However, the variables listed in Table I were designed to provide different operationalizations of the three important domestic political variables.

¹⁴ Strøm (1984: 207) defines extremist parties as those parties that possess one or more of the following characteristics: (1) a well-developed non-democratic ideology; (2) a proposal to break up or fundamentally alter the boundaries of the nation; and (3) diffuse protest, alienation, and distrust of the existing political system.

Targets of Aggression

Of the 291 disputes involving Strøm's 15

Table I. Domestic Political Variables Drawn From Strøm (1990)

<i>Decisional Constraints</i>	<i>Political Opposition</i>	<i>General Instability</i>
1 Single versus multi-party		
2 Majority versus minority	1 Percentage of seats held by major opposition bloc	
3 Percentage of seats held by the government		
4 Number of parties in the coalition		1 Polarization

Western parliamentary democracies, over 85% of the opponents were non-democracies.¹⁵ Given that these democratic governments were also the targets of aggression in nearly 70% of the 291 disputes, the evidence supports the findings of Leeds & Davis (1997) and Rousseau et al. (1996) that democracies are less likely to initiate disputes, and are often targeted by non-democracies (also see Gleditsch & Hegre, 1998).¹⁶ Furthermore, our findings support the argument advanced by Lemke & Reed (1996) and Kacowicz (1995) that democracies tend to be satisfied with the international status quo. These democratic governments were classified as revisionist in only 57 (20%) of the 291 disputes they were involved in.

¹⁵ In the logit analysis that follows, we concern ourselves only with the reciprocation of militarized disputes. Therefore, of the 291 MIDs, we selected 193 where Strøm's governments were the targets of aggression in the disputes (i.e. side 'b' in the MID dataset). This clearly prevents us from examining why democratic governments initiate, and subsequently escalate, disputes in the first place. However, we find that a substantial number of the disputes initiated by Strøm's governments involved minor incidents, many of them fishing disputes with other democratic states. Dropping these cases is not the ideal solution, but it effectively allows us to control for opportunity, and address the more narrowly defined question of why some parliamentary governments reciprocate disputes when targeted and why others do not. We were additionally forced to drop 17 of the 193 disputes because there were a number of disputes that spanned two or more governments. We were unable to ascertain which government made the decision to reciprocate.

¹⁶ Hewitt & Wilkenfeld (1996) found the level of violence to diminish as the proportion of democracies involved in a dispute increased. We find that although casualties were generally quite low in the disputes here, when these parliamentary democracies were the targets of aggression the number of casualties was on average over two times greater than when they initiated the disputes.

The democratic governments examined here also tended to respond to aggression very differently when they were targeted by a non-democracy. Reciprocation was over 50% when a non-democracy was the opponent, while less than 30% when targeted by another democratic government. A closer look reveals that this higher incidence of reciprocation in part has to do with the issues in contention. Some 35% of the disputes involving a non-democratic opponent were over territory. Territory, though, was the issue in dispute only 20% of the time when democratic states were the opponents. Moreover, the territorial disputes that involved democratic opponents were reciprocated only 45% of the time. In contrast, over 75% of the territorial disputes involving a non-democratic opponent were reciprocated. So, the combination of territory and a non-democratic opponent appears to incite a dispute response by Western parliamentary democracies. Having a democratic opponent, in contrast, appears to help restrain reciprocation, even when the issue in contention involves territory.

Institutional Constraints and Political Opposition: Bivariate Results

Initial bivariate results suggest that certain domestic political forces influence the reciprocation of militarized disputes. Coalition governments, in particular, appear at first glance to be much more likely to reciprocate than single-party parliamentary governments (see Table II). This supports the

argument made earlier, however it does not support the contention made by Maoz & Russett (1993). They insisted that single-party cabinets should possess the greatest freedom in handling issues of foreign policy. Presumably, the direction of the relationship we find reflects strategic behavior on the part of the parties in power. Coalition governments may be more inclined to risk a foreign policy venture inasmuch as a failure cannot be attributed solely to one political faction. Indeed, the responsibility is diffused through the coalition and therefore attaching blame to any one party becomes more difficult. Single-party governments may respond more cautiously because they recognize that the responsibility for any mistake will rest squarely on their shoulders alone (Waltz, 1967).¹⁷

Political opposition also seems to be related to reciprocation. The results of a bivariate logit model show the number of seats in the legislature held by the major opposition bloc to be inversely related to dispute reciprocation ($p = 0.067$). Consequently, political opposition, as we argued above, does appear to act as a constraint on the escalation of militarized disputes. Additional bivariate models show majority governments to be more likely to reciprocate disputes than minority governments, though this result remains rather questionable due to the small number of minority cabinets present in our sample. Lastly, both polarization and fractionalization appear to be generally unrelated to dispute reciprocation. Therefore, both political extremism and a dispersion of interests within the legislature do not seem to influence cabinet decisionmaking in dispute situations.

¹⁷ It may also be the case that these coalition governments are seizing opportunities in foreign affairs to demonstrate competence and leadership skill to constituents back home.

A Modified Domestic Model: Multivariate Results

Clearly, bivariate models can be very misleading. What is needed is a multivariate logistic model that controls for additional variables of import. In order to test the impact that domestic political structures have on dispute reciprocation, in this section we construct a modified realist model that incorporates both domestic considerations and realist concerns.

Table III presents the results of the model controlling for the realist factors indicated above.¹⁸ While the three realist variables appear extremely relevant in the decision to reciprocate a dispute, two of the three domestic variables seem to be important as well. In this multivariate model, coalition governments are once again much more likely to reciprocate disputes than single-party cabinets. Interestingly, polarization, which was insignificant in the bivariate analysis, now appears marginally significant, and the sign is in the hypothesized direction; greater instability tends to diminish the likelihood of reciprocation.

As is to be expected, disputes involving contiguous states are much more likely to be reciprocated as well. Presumably the costs of projecting force or influence increase as the distance between two states increases. While economic or political interests may involve states in regions outside their own, it clearly becomes more

¹⁸ The logistic regression models were run with robust standard errors. Due to the difficulty in examining residuals, a robust estimator may provide more reliable estimates if model assumptions are potentially being violated. Particularly problematic in the analysis presented above is the assumption of independence of observations. A robust estimator, even with dependence, provides correct estimates of the standard errors of the coefficients. While the standard errors of the coefficients are nearly identical in both regressions, the small changes that do occur are systematically related to the variable type. The standard errors of the two realist variables, relative military capabilities and the territory issue dummy, become smaller using the robust estimator. The standard errors of the three domestic variables plus the regime type of the opponent, on the other hand, all become slightly larger.

Table II. Parliamentary Government Type and the Reciprocation of Militarized Disputes (1946–89)

<i>Reciprocation?</i>	<i>Single-party Governments</i>	<i>Coalition Governments</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	49	37	86
Column %	58%	41%	
Yes	36	54	90
Column %	42%	59%	
Total	85	91	176

$n = 176$. $\chi^2 = 5.08$ ($p = 0.024$).

Source: Strøm (1990) and the Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset version 6.04 (1994).

Table III. Logit Estimation Results with the Effects of Domestic Political Variables on the Reciprocation of Militarized Disputes, Controlling for Realist Factors (1946–89)

<i>Variable Type</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust Standard Error</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Decisional Constraints	Single Party/Coalition	1.27	0.51	0.013
Political Opposition	% Seats Held by Opposition Block	1.37	1.72	0.428
Legislature Instability	Polarization	-3.87	2.32	0.096
Realist Factor	Military Expenditures	1.48	0.68	0.030
Realist Factor	Territorial Issue Dummy	1.60	0.44	0.000
Control	Opponent Type	-0.61	0.62	0.32
Control	Timing ²	-0.000	0.005	0.94
Control/Realist	Contiguity	1.37	0.52	0.009
	Constant	-4.43	1.41	0.002
Log Likelihood = -95.91 Pseudo $R^2 = 0.2135 \chi^2 (8) = 39.58$ (0.0000) $n = 176$				

Models estimated in Stata 5.0. Standard errors are robust. Percent predicted correctly: 70.45%. Null model: 51.14%. ²Control for temporal dependence (See Beck et al., 1998).

Source: Strøm (1990) and the Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset version 6.04 (1994).

difficult to respond to militarized dispute situations when distances are substantial. Interestingly, the regime type of an opponent is not significantly related to dispute reciprocation, although the sign does fall in the appropriate direction. This result may indicate that low-intensity conflicts are not prohibited among democratic states. Given a dispute, Western parliamentary democratic governments appear equally willing to use threats and shows of force against other democratic governments as they are against non-democratic ones.

An alternative multivariate model was also run to assess potential differences between governments that reciprocate disputes with a threat or show of force, and governments that

are willing to actually respond to aggression with the use of military force. A dichotomous dependent variable was constructed that was coded 1 when one of Strøm's states reciprocated with a 4 or 5 on the MID hostility level scale, and 0 otherwise. In the previous analysis, a threat or a display of force was coded 1 as well. In this model, only three variables are related to reciprocation: territory, contiguity, and government type. Disputes involving issues of territory are much more likely to incite a response that involves the use of military force rather than a mere threat or display of force. Similarly, reciprocation using force is much more likely when the opponent is contiguous. Once again, coalition governments continue to show a greater propensity

to reciprocate, but with the actual use of military force.¹⁹

Predicted Probabilities

Due to the non-linear nature of logistic regression coefficients, the influence of the explanatory variables on the probability of using force fluctuates. Using the logit formula to ascertain the predicted probabilities presents a more tractable method of evaluating the relative influence of each of the exogenous variables. What we find is that the average probability of reciprocation given dispute involvement is about 53%.²⁰ Using the logit formula, we find that coalition governments are over one and a half times more likely to reciprocate MIDs than single-party cabinets. Relative military expenditures and whether the issue in contention involves territory also have a substantial impact on the probability of reciprocation. When the ratio of military expenditures equals 0, the likelihood of reciprocation is 32%.²¹ When the ratio equals 1.0, the likelihood of reciprocation is nearly 70%. Similarly, the likelihood of reciprocation is nearly two times greater for territorial issues than non-territorial ones.

Polarization of the legislature additionally affects the likelihood of dispute reciprocation. When the variable is fluctuated from its

¹⁹ A reviewer suggested that the relationship between government type and dispute reciprocation may in fact be endogenous; in other words, coalition governments are formed because of the threat of attack. While the analysis here cannot conclusively answer this intriguing possibility, we do find that the duration and fatality level of disputes involving coalition versus single-party cabinets are not statistically different. The main difference is that the disputes involving coalition governments are much more likely to concern a question of territory. However, we control for this in the multivariate logistic model.

²⁰ This is calculated by using the mean values of all the explanatory variables and plugging them in to the logit formula: $P_i = E[Y=1|X] = [1/(1 + \exp - (\beta_1 + \beta_2 X_i))]$.

²¹ This point may seem slightly puzzling. As one reviewer queried, how can a state with no military capabilities reciprocate? However, threats and shows of force also qualify as legitimate responses. Furthermore, even Iceland has the ability to seize foreign ships, which could be coded as a use of force by the MIDs.

empirical low (0.00) to its empirical high (0.43), the probability of reciprocation decreases from 62% to 23%. Finally, not surprisingly, reciprocation tends to be much less likely when substantial distance exists between the dispute opponents. The likelihood of dispute reciprocation when the opponent is contiguous is 58%, and only 27% when the opponent is not contiguous.

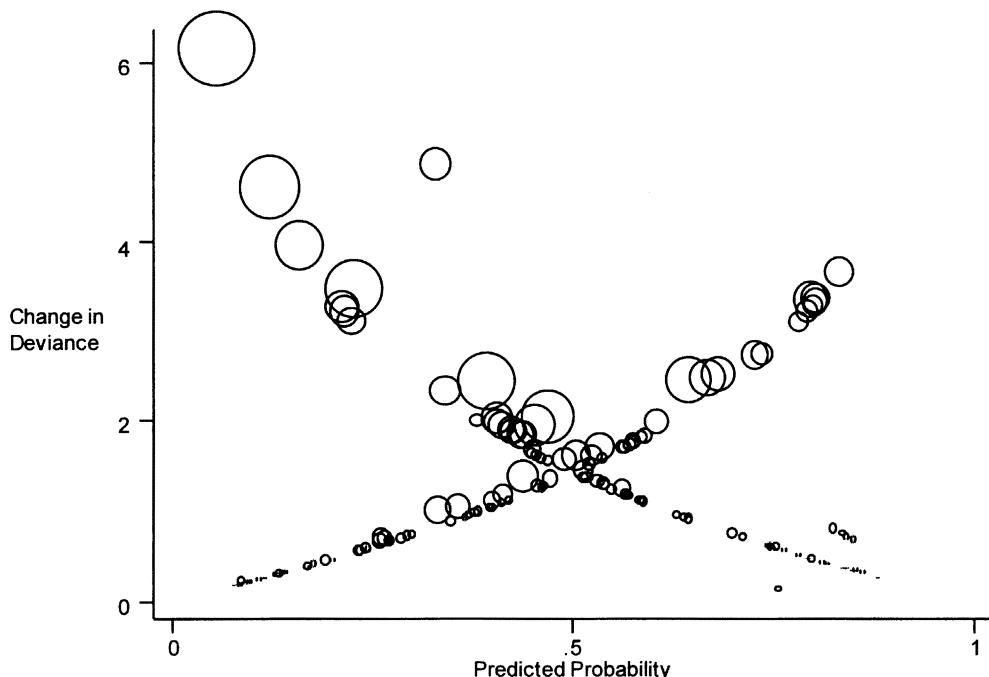
The predicted probabilities demonstrate that both domestic and realist variables influence the reciprocation of militarized disputes. Indeed, when all variables are at their maximum values (and polarization and opponent are at their minimum values) the probability of reciprocating a militarized dispute is over 95%. This dramatically drops to less than 1% when all variables are at their minimum values (and polarization and opponent are at their maximum values). Additionally, it is evident that the realist variables are not driving the probability. Both cabinet composition and polarization are important factors in a government's decision to reciprocate a MID.

Diagnostics

With a logistic model, an examination of the residuals generally involves evaluating the influence of each observation on the probability of Y . Such a robust technique provides insight into whether certain disputes are unduly affecting the overall logistic results. Diagnostic tests may also provide information regarding the influence of specific combinations of X values that may be shared by numerous observations. When a combination of exogenous values contradicts the general pattern estimated across the remaining disputes, it may have a substantial influence on the coefficient estimates.

Plotting the change in deviance versus predicted probability shows that a dispute between Italy and Iran does not fit the general pattern. The change in deviance measures the size of the poor-fit pattern's

Figure 1. The Presence and Influence of Certain Outliers on the Probability of Dispute Reciprocation (1946–89)



influence on the probability of Y. Figure 1 shows that not only does this dispute fit the overall pattern poorly, but it additionally appears to be highly influential in estimating the model coefficients. This dispute between Italy and Iran occurred in September of 1987 and involved a disagreement over government policy. The model predicts a low probability of reciprocation by Italy due to the non-territorial nature of the dispute and the substantial distance that exists between the two nations. Furthermore, Italy was experiencing a highly polarized legislature at the time which also tends to decrease the likelihood of reciprocation. Despite the model's prediction, Italy responded to Iran's raid by deploying naval vessels in the area.

Three of the four remaining outlier disputes involve the Soviet Union; one with Sweden, one with Norway, and one with Italy. All three of these disputes involved a

show of ships or a border violation by the USSR. Both Sweden and Norway reciprocated with a seizure even though the model predicted a small likelihood of reciprocation given the overwhelming military advantage held by the Soviets and the non-territorial nature of the disputes. Furthermore, both states had single-party cabinets and both faced only modest political opposition. Italy faced similar conditions and the model once again predicted only a small likelihood of reciprocation. Italy, though, met the Soviet border violation with a show of ships.

The final outlier case involved the UK against Argentina in 1976. British territory seems to have been occupied by the South American state and even though the UK held a substantial military advantage over Argentina, the British government in power at the time failed to reciprocate with even a threat of force. The dispute only lasted a

Table IV. Revised Logit Estimation Results with the Effects of Domestic Political Variables on the Reciprocation of Militarized Disputes, Controlling for Realist Factors and After Five Poor-fit Cases Have Been Removed (1946–89)¹

Variable Type	Variable	Coefficient	Robust Standard Error	p-value
Decisional Constraints	Single Party/Coalition	1.72	0.62	0.005
Political Opposition	% Seats Held by Opposition Block	1.60	1.94	0.409
Legislature Instability	Polarization	-7.12	2.72	0.009
Realist Factor	Military Expenditures	2.39	0.77	0.002
Realist Factor	Territorial Issue Dummy	2.01	0.50	0.000
Control	Opponent Type	- .62	0.69	0.364
Control	Timing ²	0.004	0.006	0.517
Control	Contiguity	1.96	0.57	0.001
	Constant	-6.28	1.59	0.000
Log Likelihood = -83.65 Pseudo R ² = 0.2942 χ ² (8) = 50.93 (0.0000) n = 171				

Models estimated in Stata 5.0. Standard errors are robust. ¹Percent predicted correctly: 73.10%. Null model: 50.30%.

²Control for temporal dependence (See Beck et al., 1998). Source: Strøm (1990) and the Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset version 6.04 (1994).

week, and the overthrow of Argentina's President Isabel de Peron in 1976 may have contributed to the raid by Argentinean forces.

By removing these five poorly fit cases the model shows substantial improvement. The pseudo R² increases from 0.21 to 0.29, the log likelihood value increases from -95.9 to -83.65, and the model now predicts 73.10% of the cases as opposed to 70.45% by the final model presented above. Removing these five cases, as Table IV demonstrates, additionally improves the significance of all eight of the variables considerably. Coalition governments clearly show a greater propensity to reciprocate militarized disputes and polarization is now significant at an alpha level of 0.01. Political opposition continues to have only a slight impact on the decision to reciprocate, while relative military expenditures and the territory dummy remain highly significant. Lastly, proximity continues to exert a strong influence on these governments' decision to reciprocate MIDs, while the regime type of

the opponent remains largely inconsequential.

Clearly removing these five cases to improve the statistical fit of the model is poor science. The diagnostic tools, though, do point out that a few disputes may deserve further attention. Indeed, the most appropriate course of action would be to theoretically and methodologically account for these deviant cases. Certainly further attention needs to be devoted to distinguishing foreign policy decisionmaking when states are primary dispute actors versus those disputes in which states find themselves involved as third party participants. Furthermore, attention needs to be given to saliency of the issue under contention. Clearly non-territorial issues can be equally as important as territorial ones to the states involved. This analysis, though, does demonstrate that domestic political variables have an influence on a government's decision to reciprocate a militarized dispute, and the effects of these variables are not confined to a few influential cases.

Conclusion

Previous studies have demonstrated that domestic political constraints influence foreign policy decisionmaking. However, most research has failed to examine variation within the democratic community. To be sure, realist factors, such as military capabilities and territorial concerns, continue to play a role in the foreign policy decisions made by parliamentary governments. Our results, though, indicate that domestic political differences among Western parliamentary governments also matter in the decision to reciprocate militarized disputes. Indeed, in the post-World War II era, among Western parliamentary democracies, coalition governments appear to be more likely to reciprocate when targeted in a MID. In fact, coalition governments are more likely to reciprocate disputes in general, and particularly more likely to reciprocate with the actual use of military force. This may be more a result of single-party governments avoiding the electoral risks involved in escalation, rather than a clear-cut active attempt by coalition governments to militarily engage dispute opponents.

Polarization, as well, tends to be strongly related to dispute reciprocation. Indeed, polarization is highly significant ($p = 0.009$) when the five poorly fit disputes are removed, and the variable appears to restrain the decision by a parliamentary government to reciprocate a MID. Given that polarization reflects domestic turmoil, governments presumably are attending to these domestic concerns rather than attempting to divert attention to foreign affairs. Interestingly, this latter result is not consistent with Hagan's (1986) findings. Hagan found political turmoil to decrease the number of cooperative foreign policy decisions, and to moderately increase the number of conflictual foreign policy actions. Our results, however,

tend to show that domestic unrest decreases the likelihood of militarized responses to dispute situations.

Our results additionally illuminate the relationship between foreign policy decisionmaking and the proximity of the opponent. Clearly, contiguity matters in dyadic-level conflict initiation analyses. However, it additionally appears to affect the projection of influence abroad. Even threats and shows of force are less likely as the distance between the two dispute opponents increases. Finally, it seems that low-intensity conflicts may not be totally unlikely among democratic states. No significant relationship was found between dispute reciprocation and the regime type of the opponent.

Admittedly, these results are only tentative, but the evidence is perhaps strong enough to warrant further theoretical and empirical attention. If variation does truly exist within the democratic community of nations then this seemingly indicates the importance of domestic governing institutions and political opposition in determining foreign policy behavior. Indeed, only by examining domestic political factors more closely can we hope to fully understand the relationship between democracy and peace.

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