

**Bruce Russett and John Oneal. 2001. *Triangulating Peace: democracy, interdependence and international organizations*.**

**Main Claim:**

Democracy, interdependence (commerce through trade), and international organizations systematically and symbiotically enhance the absence of warfare and the creation of enduring peace. These three mechanisms are self-reinforcing and provide substantial constraints and disincentives to the creation or maintenance of the vicious cycle of international conflict that result from the neo-realist security dilemma. Basic ideas can be traced back to 18th-century liberal philosophy, especially those of Kant. His dream was that all countries become incorporated into a web of political, commercial, and organizational arrangements that are mutually reinforcing and rewarding and thus dampen, if not eliminate, the probability of conflict.

**Mechanisms:**

*1. How does democracy promote peace?*

- leaders of democracies as well as the citizens generally benefit from avoiding conflict, especially with one another because the political costs of fighting wars are higher for democratic leaders. If they lose the war, they almost certainly will lose power, but even if they win a costly war, the domestic political costs may be quite high.
- Higher transparency of democratic choice leads democracies to see a greater likelihood of successful negotiation with potential belligerents who will have to pay high costs if negotiation is unsuccessful (i.e., other democracies).
- democracies are less likely to be dissatisfied with the status quo in part because they have historically tended to be among the richest countries.

*2. How does commerce promote peace?*

- trade raises costs of conflict and also the benefits of conflict avoidance and conflict management.
- trade causes greater economic well-being and, as a result, greater satisfaction with the status quo
- synergy between commerce and democracy because economically powerful groups are likely to have political power and are more likely to benefit from the credible commitments that result from stable international commerce regimes.

*3. How do International governmental and nongovernmental organizations promote peace?*

- international governmental organizations foster ways in which countries may peacefully resolve their conflicts while expanding the ways in which they view commonalities among their interests with wide-ranging sets of potential belligerents as well as potential allies.
- these mechanisms convey private information to everyone involved, thereby further reducing uncertainty.

**Evidence:**

Dyadic binary Logit models: Y is occurrence of militarized disputes between states. Data contains all (politically relevant) dyad-years all conflicts among modern nations since 1886 to 1992. Politically relevant dyads are characterized either by territorial contiguity or inclusion of a great power in the dyad.

Three independent variables: the degree of democracy in the less democratic member of the dyad, the degree of economic interdependence (dyadic trade / GDP) in the more trade dependent member of the dyad, and the number of common memberships in intergovernmental organizations. Notice that they use a 'weak link'-approach to assess the degree of democratization or trade dependence of a dyad by reference to the less democratic or less trade dependent member.

Controls: alliances, political power, distance between potential belligerents

Findings: The more democratic a dyad, the lower the risk of militarized disputes. The more trade dependent the members of the dyad, the lower the risk of disputes becomes. The trade and democratization effects are similar in order of magnitude, but the trade effect might be even stronger than the democratization effect. The more memberships in international organizations (IGOs) two states share, the lower their dispute risk becomes. This final

or IGO effect is less robust and weaker than the democratization or trade effects. Taken together these three effects reduce the likelihood of a dispute by 71 percent (under certain specified conditions)

### **Where does it fit in the literature?**

- critique of neo-realism's belief in the enduring logic of inter-state rivalry and power balances because they show that moving to a Kantian peace is possible. Anarchy can be defeated by organization, although they acknowledge that relative power, alliances, and geography matter for whether states start wars.
- Sometimes this all sounds similar to theories of economic integration that have slowly built the European Union over the past several decades but on a global scale
- Invalidate Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis by clearly demonstrating that there is no correlation between recent conflicts and the civilization setting of the states concerned
- Also rejects idea of Gowa and others that common interests cause peace, they argue that the Kantian triad causes common interests.

### **Critique:**

- Little microfoundations on the mechanisms. States are treated as unitary actors and the battles of domestic politics are set aside.
- Interpretation of Statistical tests is wrong when they talk about causal effects of lets say trade on peace. All they can really show are correlations.
- One might ask the question whether a redefinition of the dependent variable, i.e., a focus on war – rather than on mere militarized disputes which are about thirty times as frequent as war – might affect results.
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