

# Wrapping Up: What Do We Know About International Conflict?

POSC 3610 – International Conflict

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## Puzzle for Today

*What do we know about war? And what's still left as a matter of disagreement?*

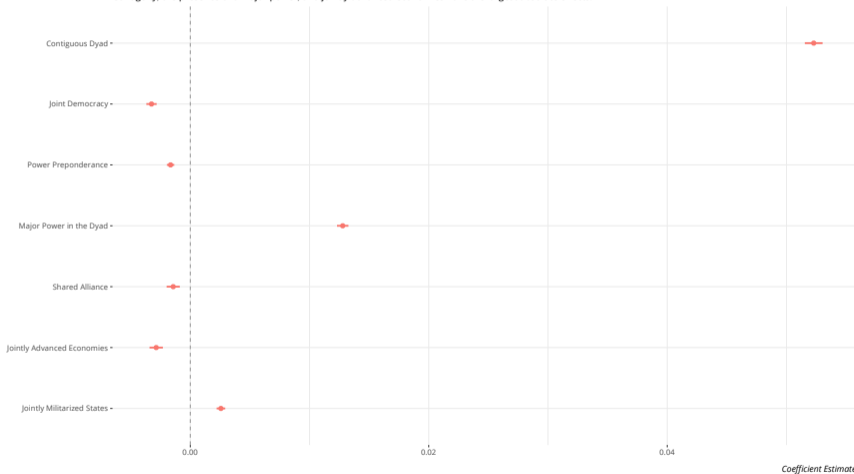
# Dangerous Dyads

Bremer's (1992) "dangerous dyads" still holds up well.

1. Contiguity
2. Joint democracy
3. Power preponderance
4. Major powers
5. Joint alliance
6. Advanced economies
7. Militarization

## A Simple 'Dangerous Dyads' Model of MID Onset for All Dyad-Years, 1816-2010

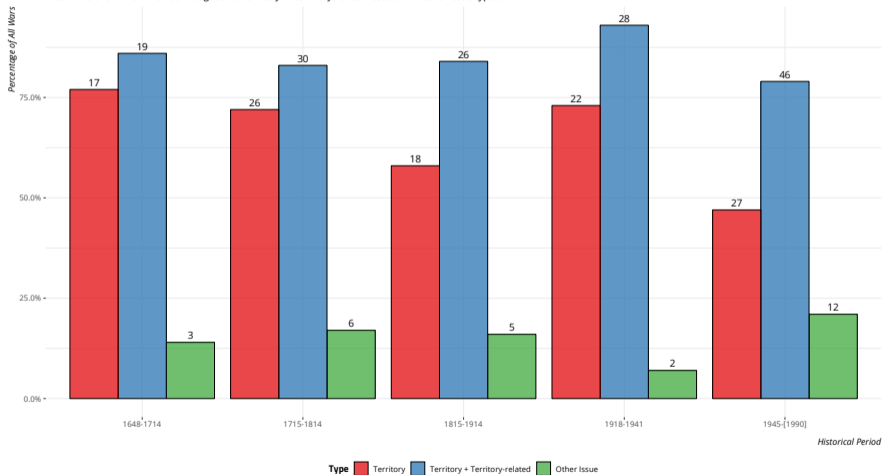
Contiguity, the presence of a major power, and jointly advanced economies have the largest absolute effects.



Conflict data: GML-MID (v. 2.03). Democracy: Polity project (v. 2016). All others: Correlates of War.

## Percentage and Frequency of Wars By Issue Type, 1648-1990

Most wars over time have been fought over territory or territory-related issues than other issue types.



Data: Vasquez (1993) via Holsti (1991). Note: counts appear on top of the bars by issue-type.

# Democracies Are a Peculiar Class of Countries

We'll note disagreement later, but generally democracies are a unique class of countries.

- Democracies find ways to avoid war with each other.
- Democracies tend to perform well in war.
- However, democracies are no more or less war-prone than other state types.

That we even observe this defies received wisdom from our structural theories.

# War is Bargaining

We generally see war as bargaining failure (or, alternatively, bargaining via other means).

- Issue indivisibility
- Commitment problems
- Asymmetric information

## When Does Deterrence Work?

Deterrence is a long-standing debate, but we tend to believe it works the more credible threats are.

- Unilateral deterrence offers more paths to peace.

Worth noting: credible threats make deterrence more likely to succeed, but does not guarantee it.

- It won't guarantee it if challengers are highly motivated.



## Not All Wars Look Like the “Big Ones”

...and thank god, but it does mean we're mindful of what we're studying. Generally:

- Expansion follows opportunity and willingness.
- Easier to rethink it as an expected utility calculation.

## Not All Wars Look Like the “Big Ones” (Continued)

Further correlates of war's cost and outcomes:

- “Rougher” terrain
- Balance among disputants
- More troops in the combat zone.
- *Fewer* states involved

One caveat: modeling “costs” of war is tricky, and we tend to do it ex post.

# Conflict and War are Concentrated in a Handful of Countries

Wars are definitely not “independent and identically distributed.” There are usual suspects.

- Rivalry explains a big part of this.
- Commitment problems following bargaining

Table 1: Dyads With the Most MIDs (and Type of MIDs), 1816-2010 (GML MID Data, v. 2.03)

Country A	Country B	No. of MIDs	No. of Wars	No. of Fatal MIDs
United States	Russia	43	2	2
Russia	China	41	3	5
India	Pakistan	39	4	15
Greece	Turkey	37	3	5
China	Japan	35	3	7
Syria	Israel	32	1	9
Russia	Japan	30	2	3
Egypt	Israel	29	1	14
Myanmar (Burma)	Thailand	28	0	7
Ecuador	Peru	27	0	7

# Are Alliances War-Prone or Paths to Peace?

There is still a fair bit of debate about what role alliances play in conflict onset.

- Recent exchanges between Leeds and Johnson (2017) and Vasquez et al. (2017) highlight this disagreement.

You generally saw this in our lectures.

- No relationship between alliance proliferation and war at system-level.
- Allies are unlikely to fight each other.
- Some allies *are* likely to fight each other.

# Are Conflict Processes the Same for Onset and Escalation?

Recall Diehl (2006) encouraged us to think of different phases.

- Different phases may have different contextual influences.

We generally don't want to stray too far from a "dangerous dyads" framework, but we've found:

- Power parity leads to MIDs, but MIDs between equals are less likely to lead to war.
- Joint democracy leads to fewer MIDs, not necessarily fewer wars.
- Satisfied states have fewer MIDs, not necessarily fewer wars.
- Allies still have disputes; just unlikely to escalate to war.

# Power Matters, but How?

“Power” is a central topic in IR, but how it matters is unclear.

- Is it the contested benefit or the source of bargaining breakdown?
- Simple explanations of power via CINC do poorly.

Whatever role “power” has in conflict onset, we tend to eschew “neorealist” explanations.

# Does the Democratic Peace Have Anything to Do With Democracy?

Democratic peace might be the most important finding in IR, but doubts persist:

- “Capitalist peace” (ed. there are a laundry list of problems with this argument)
- Common systems or common interests? (ed. we don’t adequately model temporal variation)
- Territorial peace (i.e. have we put the cart before the horse?)

In other words, democracies don’t fight each other, but does that have anything to do with democracy?



# What Are the Consequences of War?

War sucks and it creates costs, but there's still some major disagreement:

- Effects can be permanent and temporary, short-term and long-term, direct and indirect, positive and negative.

Discussions of “Phoenix” factors compound what we can say about war's lasting consequences.

# Conclusion

We've done a lot of work on the causes of war.

- We have lots of answers.
- We generally don't have a single answer.

I enjoyed this class; I hope you did too.

- We'll discuss your final exam next.

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