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CONFLICT



A NEW QUEST  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Seung-Whan Choi and Patrick James



# CIVIL–MILITARY DYNAMICS, DEMOCRACY, AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

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# CIVIL–MILITARY DYNAMICS, DEMOCRACY, AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

A New Quest for  
International Peace

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*To my mother and the memory of my father*  
Seung-Whan Choi

*To Carolyn, with much love*  
Patrick James

[The foreign policy] decision-making process can be equated with one or a few leaders, *with the roles of civil and military bureaucracies*, legislatures, interest groups. . . . (Emphasis added)

—Brecher 1999: 231

If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without a free press or a free press without a government, I would prefer the latter

—Thomas Jefferson

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Since the massive volume of democratic peace studies appeared in full force during the 1990s, several rounds of criticism have been directed toward their theoretical arguments and empirical findings. The present study seeks to contribute to that dialogue with a special emphasis on factors that go beyond the synthesis achieved in Russett and Oneal's (2001) recent and prominent volume, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*.<sup>1</sup> This work, which combines dyadic and systemic factors to create an overall picture of international conflict and peace, is a major step toward a theory that includes a full range of macro (i.e., systemic) and micro (i.e., unit) linkages, that is, macro–macro, macro–micro, micro–macro, and micro–micro linkages (Bunge 1996; James 2002). For example, consider these extensions: Bilateral rivalries might be dampened by increasing economic interdependence and organizational infrastructure at the regional level—a macro–micro connection. A micro–macro-oriented link would be from increasingly common pairs of democracies upward to more peaceful norms regarding negotiation and bargaining at the regional level (Mitchell 2002). Further examples would not be difficult to derive for Russett and Oneal's state-of-the-art exegesis of neo-Kantianism.

In the present study, it is argued further that civil–military dynamics, like the degree of civilian control over the military and whether or not conscription exists, along with factors related to political communications, such as the openness of media and availability of diplomatic channels for conflict management, are essential to a more comprehensive explanation for international conflict, crisis, and war. In this sense,



*Triangulating Peace* provides a foundation for the work at hand.

Today's world revolves around Washington, DC. This statement, in spite of expectations to the contrary based on imperial overextension and even exhaustion, is likely to remain true for decades to come. Thus, the present study places an emphasis on examples related to American foreign policy in making its key points throughout the remainder of this book. Implications from research findings as related to the United States, the unofficial system leader and manager for the foreseeable future, take on special interest.

While the present volume seeks relevance to foreign policy in applied terms, as related to both the United States and the world as a whole, its fundamental motivation is to contribute to scientific knowledge through innovative theory and reproducible evidence. More specifically, Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs), which provide the focal point for so much of the systematic literature on conflict processes as related to the democratic peace, may be affected by factors not currently included in the most thorough dyadic or micro-micro specifications.<sup>2</sup> The present study represents a commitment to identifying factors with high theoretical relevance to MIDs that remain outside of Russett and Oneal's (2001) triangular model of neo-Kantian peace constructed so far. New factors, such as civil-military dynamics and political communications, are placed within a theoretical model of foreign policy decision-making to better explain MIDs and international conflict in general.

Put differently, despite the seemingly impressive accumulation of findings about interstate dyads and conflict processes, an alternative to the emerging consensus can be summed up as follows: "even if there is a correlation between regime type and conflict or war proneness, the pattern might be produced by some third factor that has an impact on both war proneness and regime type" (Ray 1998: 36).<sup>3</sup> More recently, in "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," Rosato (2003)

contends that existing democratic peace scholarship does not provide compelling causal mechanisms between regime type and conflict and calls for an investigation of other factors. Although some recent studies on the democratic peace take that possibility into account,<sup>4</sup> this body of research still seems relatively “thin” in the range of factors explored—both domestic and international—that could explain the most persistent and salient results. The present study introduces additional, potentially important factors from the realm of comparative politics, most notably civil–military dynamics that include *civil–military relations* and *military manpower system*.<sup>5</sup> It also focuses on political communications in terms of *diplomatic channels* and *media openness*.<sup>6</sup> In other words, this study bridges across sub-fields of political science in pursuit of a more complete sense of the democratic peace. As will become apparent, the preceding set of regime-oriented and interstate factors, which are not as yet represented in any systematic way within the vast literature already noted, can help to account for the path from interstate dispute to peace. Taken together, these additional factors permit a complete set of linkages, from micro–micro to macro–macro, to be postulated and tested.

Epigraphs from Brecher (1999: 231) and Jefferson that appear at the outset of this study provide the stimulus for further research. (Brecher’s observations, to be more exact, are part of his summing up of rational choice as an increasingly conventional approach to the study of international conflict.) Taken together, these commentaries convey the importance of the factors under scrutiny, namely, civil–military dynamics and political communications. Brecher and Jefferson also indirectly draw attention to how little is known about the above-noted properties in combination with each other as related to international conflict. This study is the first attempt to link civil–military dynamics and political communications to the democratic peace, and a theoretical model of the foreign policy decision-making process, as it has developed so far, to enhance understanding of international conflict. In this sense, the

present study can be seen as a new quest for a more peaceful world in the millennium.

As a new look at the democratic peace, a potential “Rosetta Stone” for International Relations, this study includes eight additional chapters.

Chapter 2 reviews extant literature. Rather than going through all of the literature in detail, this chapter tries to briefly point out major arguments of the democratic peace studies—to summarize various criticisms in four points: (a) paradigmatic debates, (b) neglected issues related to covert intervention and democratization, (c) methodological predicaments, and (d) problematic assertions from rational choice theory. The chapter assesses ten major articles from seven prominent democratic peace scholars—including Oneal and Russett in response to their critics—and then concludes by calling attention to important “third factors” that have been missing from the democratic peace studies.

Chapter 3 presents theoretical arguments about how interstate disputes occur in light of a model of the foreign policy decision-making process. The first section explains how foreign policy decision-making process model building came about in the first place. The second section presents a flow chart of the foreign policy decision-making process to convey ideas in a visual and potentially helpful way. Four new variables—(a) civil-military relations, (b) military manpower system, (c) diplomatic channels, and (d) media openness—are portrayed as key components of the model. The third section provides two historical exemplars: (a) Israeli Response to Egyptian Military Actions, May 1967 and (b) the KAL 007 Shootdown, September 1983. The fourth and final section is the conclusion.

Chapter 4 presents hypotheses, data, and measurements along with logistic regression and neural network models. This research design chapter, in greater detail, focuses on the introduction of the four new elements outlined in the foreign policy decision-making process model. The four variables are intended

to complement Russett and Oneal's (2001) triangular peace model. Both standard logistic regression and potentially path-breaking neural network models are constructed for the empirical testing discussed in chapter 5. The former technique is used to achieve consistency with the established literature, while the latter brings out some otherwise hidden, nonlinear aspects of the findings.

Chapter 5 discusses empirical results in terms of various statistical model specifications, study periods, and methods. Using logit and neural network analysis, this chapter evaluates how MID involvement can be explained and understood in the context of the foreign policy decision-making model outlined in chapter 3. In addition, the role of diplomacy is examined through a contemporary case: U.S. interactions with North Korea over its nuclear program during the first term of President George W. Bush. Qualitative analysis is employed to look into the most persistent anomaly in the quantitative findings in the previous two sections, namely, the apparent connection of diplomatic channels with MID involvement.

Chapter 6 discusses results from a data analysis of fatalities in MIDs.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to learn more about the most intense and lethal MIDs, which is an intriguing issue for both the theory and practice of international relations. We analyze the determinants of fatal MIDs with a focus on the newly introduced variables from the foreign policy decision-making process model. The analysis provides a further test for both civil–military dynamics and political communications as signposts in the new quest for international peace.

Chapter 7 explores a key measurement issue about civil–military relations. More specifically, we measure the degree of civilian versus military control in each state by utilizing the increase and decrease in military expenditure. Military expenditure, however, might be regarded as an indicator of the severity of threats to national security felt by national leaders—in other words, more serious threats could produce higher

military expenditures. We look into this possibility by endogenizing military expenditure and other variables such as military manpower.

Chapter 8 elaborates the role of media openness in both theoretical reification and empirical testing. Empirical results in chapters 5 and 6 reveal that the world may become more peaceful and harmonious when interstate dyads interact with a high degree of media openness. This particular finding stands out within an exhaustive data analysis. The two chapters reflect on the foreign policy decision-making process model put forward in chapter 3, so they do not examine the underlying causal linkages between media and conflict. In addition, the study period for chapters 5 and 6 is relatively short, from 1950 to 1974. Chapter 8 attempts to deal with these limitations by assessing the power of media openness in a more comprehensive and nuanced manner.

The ninth and final chapter summarizes research findings, derives policy recommendations, and suggests directions for future research. Among the four new factors, media appears not only to account most effectively for international conflict and peace, but also rivals or exceeds the standard components of neo-Kantianism. This result implies that, as compared with other, institutional aspects of democracy, media openness stands out as the most defining element of a democratic system. The importance of media in both theory and practice justifies the new quest for international peace that unfolds in this study.



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