Territorial Peace and Democratic Clustering[*]

Douglas M. Gibler[†]   Jaroslav Tir[‡]

Abstract

A consistent and robust finding in the democratic peace literature is that democracies tend to cluster together. The explanations for clustering rely on several factors, including democratic demonstration effects and aid from democracies to nascent opposition groups in non-democratic countries. This paper questions the logic of the clustering approach, both theoretically and empirically. Further, we develop an argument predicting democratic transitions based on the level of territorial threat targeting the state: high levels of threat cause political centralization and inhibit democratization; low levels of threat allow for decentralization and democratization. This approach explains how democratic transitions are linked to international borders and imply geographic clustering. Analyses of the post-World War II period are supportive of our arguments even when controlling for clustering-based predictors.

1   Introduction

If we were asked to choose a state that is likely to transition to democracy in the future, the best guesses would probably include any of the remaining non-democracies in the America or Europe.[1] This is no accident. While one of the best predictors of democracy and democratic transitions remains per capita wealth (Epstein et al. 2006, Przeworski 2000) the proximity of other democracies seems to be one of the most robust indicators of which states are likely to democratize. Of course the key question is, *why?*

Most existing explanations of spatio-temporal clustering among democracies focus on the strength of the democratic community (Gleditsch 2002*a*, Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Nearby democracies provide, among many other factors, support for pro-democracy groups and demonstrations of successful democratic governance. The empirical tests of these explanations have received wide confirmation—the number of regional democracies is strongly correlated with democratic transitions, and the findings are robust to many different specifications. As a result, democracies cluster together regionally.

Nevertheless, we challenge a key premise of the clustering logic. We argue that the likelihood of a country transitioning to democracy is not driven so much by potential demonstration effects and support by the regional democratic community. Rather, building on our previous work showing that democratic transitions are likely following the peaceful resolution of a country's territorial issues with its neighbors (Gibler and Tir 2010), we maintain that democratic transitions depend heavily on the level of territorial threats affecting the state. With border issues settled and territorial threat lowered, the country is able to transition to democracy. Our empirical tests strongly support the premise that a country facing lower territorial threats stands an increased likelihood of transitioning to democracy—importantly, while controlling for factors commonly used in previous studies of democratic clustering.

A key conceptual innovation in this logic is that we focus on the concept of territorial threat rather than actual conflict involvement. That is, while many previous studies of democratic clustering control for conflict environment, they do so with blunt indicators of militarized conflict or rivalry onset. Threat is a different concept than conflict involvement, however, because countries can be threatening each other without actually involving themselves in militarized conflict. A perception of threat, regardless of whether actual conflict involvement is observed, will require countries to adopt defensive postures and strategies which, in turn, necessitate centralized political decision making and increased militarization, leading to increased power for the military. Each of these moves decrease the chances for democratic transitions. Thus, by changing the ontological focus to explicitly model the territorial threat a country faces in a given

year, we are able to show that territorial threat predicts democratic transitions while accounting for the "traditional" neighborhood and regional democracy variables favored by the clustering approach.

In addition to challenging a key premise of the clustering approach regarding why democratic transitions occur, our findings on territorial threat provide an important implication for the origin of the democratic clustering phenomenon itself. The settling of the state's borders also means lower territorial threat to its neighbors. This implies that neighboring countries will also experience greater chances of transitioning to democracy as well since their territorial threats have been lowered, too. Lower territorial threat thus creates fertile conditions for the emergence of a democratic cluster, and, in this way, we provide an argument for how the first democracy transitions in a region, which something left unexplained by most current clustering theories.

We begin our argument in the next section with a review of extant explanations of democratic clustering. The next section then reviews the literature on territorial threat and state development and develops an argument for why territorial threats inhibit democratization. Our empirical tests begin with the construction of an indicator of territorial threat, and we use that indicator to examine democratization. We close with a brief discussion of the implications of our research.

2   Explanations of Democratic Clustering

Gleditsch (2002a) and Gleditsch and Ward (2006) provide persuasive evidence that democracies do, in fact, cluster over space and time. The best current explanations for the spatial clustering of democracies focus on the strength of democratic support for fledgling governments, whether that support comes from the international system or the regional environment. For example, Gleditsch and Ward (2006, 919) argue that democracies and non-governmental actors in democracies tend to give support to pro-democracy opposition groups in non-democracies, to encourage the rise of similar regimes. Demonstration effects also may have influence. Other democracies provide proof to hesitant elites that democracy can work without populist redistribution and social upheaval. This is probably even truer in the current international system, which, with the demise of the Soviet Union, now favors developed, democratic governments. There are probably incentives in today's international environment for less-developed countries to alter their political institutions in order to encourage investment and curry favor within the region and abroad (Gleditsch and Ward 2006, 920).

Further underlying all these mechanisms is the possibility that the networks of democracy are creating a regional climate that makes a "tipping point" likely to occur, in which one democratic transition leads to several others in neighboring states (for tipping points, see Schelling 1971). These tipping points

allow for critical time periods of event clustering and reinforce the mechanisms of democratic diffusion, which rely on processes that wane in strength over distance. After all, opposition support is best found nearby, and proximate demonstrations will be more noticeable. Combined, these explanations account for the spatio-temporal clustering of democracies, making them dependent on the strength, number, and policies of the democracies in their neighborhood.

The system-level explanations of democratization rely on similar mechanisms of democratic support. Studies like Kadera, Crescenzi and Shannon (2003) are very good at showing the reciprocal relationship between systemic-level militarized conflict and democratic survival. As Gleditsch and Hegre (1997) first argued, there is a critical point in the levels of systemic democracy and militarized conflict in which the survival of newly democratic regimes becomes more likely. An increasing number of democratizations in the system also increase the number of conflict-prone mixed dyads, and this increased level of militarized conflict impinges upon both the security of the democratic community and, hence, the likelihood of new regime survival.[2] The mechanisms are important here. Assumed is a relationship between regime survival and the strength of the systemic democratic community—measured as the cumulative power of all democracies in relation to the summed power of all non-democracies.

Despite appealing logics and supportive findings, the extant clustering approaches fail to elucidate the issues at the very core of the clustering phenomenon: what accounts for whether a *specific* non-democratic country will transition to a democracy and when? Spatial influences related to demonstration of successful democratic governance, support by established democracies for pro-democratic opposition movements in non-democracies, pressure to democratize stemming from a "high" proportion of regional or global democracies, etc..., are arguably all better at predicting that some non-democracy will transition rather than telling us which specific non-democracy will do so (see Ray 2001). That is, in a partially democratic region, why do some countries transition faster than others while still others seem not to have a path to democracy at all? In the case of the former socialist Europe, why has, for instance, Poland transitioned to democracy soon after the end of the Cold War while Croatia took an additional 10 years? Why has Bosnia, despite nearly two decades of massive pro-democracy aid, failed to become a functioning democracy? Furthermore, how can these diffusion-oriented approaches account for the first democratization in a region? These issues suggest that the accepted logic may be more nebulous than it seems and that the origins of the clustering phenomenon may suffer from notable under explanation.

Our approach to the core issue of why a specific country would democratize (and when) begins with previous attempts to link the phenomena of militarized conflict and democratization. These

---

[2]See Mitchell, Gates and Hegre (1999) for slightly different empirical results, though Kadera, Crescenzi and Shannon (2003, 236) suggest the two studies are compatible.

3

arguments tend to emphasize the role of peaceful regions in liberalizing the state (Kacowicz 1995). Most notably, Thompson (1996) argues that democracy (and the democratic peace) are derivative of the emphasis nearby states place on certain types of foreign policy. If leaders emphasize a conquering strategy, in which regional dominance is the goal, the state must gird for war and centralize its institutions in order to properly wage war. The absence of these foreign policies allows decentralization of the state, and also peace, both of which create the association between democracy and the lack of conflict. The key point from Thompson (1996) for our study is the relationship between external environment and the transition to democracy. Thompson's case studies support the argument well, but later quantitative tests of the effects of rivalry on democracy also demonstrate a feedback loop for democracy (Rasler and Thompson 2004). Though the absence of rivalry promotes democratization, bordering democracies also have an effect.

Gleditsch and Ward (2006) also test this argument with a measure of years of peace, but both this measure and the dichotomous rivalry measure are imperfect proxies for the role that *threat* may play in the development of the state. Lack of conflict can conceal many different levels of threat—compare the positive peace commonly found across settled borders like the United States and Canada to the tense, negative peace of armed deterrence on the Korean Peninsula or between India and Pakistan. Rivalry better captures the concept of a threatening environment, but even rivals have significant variation in their dyadic contests which a dichotomous measure will not capture. War is imminent between some rivals; in others, rivalry breeds competition that produces much low-level conflict but no actual threat to the core territories of the states involved.

In no existing large-N study does the role of militarized conflict or external threat supplant or even rival the effects of the regional or systemic democratic community in determining transitions. The problem with these studies, though, is how they have modeled peace and conflict. In the next section we revisit the peace-to-democracy arguments with a more specific contention: that not all threats are equal. We focus on the threat of territorial conflict because, we argue, threats over these issues are more likely than threats over other issues to lead to the centralization of state power. We also take the important step of moving beyond dichotomous measures of militarized conflict involvement and model threat perception. We begin in the next section by discussing how territorial issues affect domestic political bargaining.

4

3 Territorial Threats to the State and Democratization

3.1 Why Territorial Issues Lead to Centralization

For over 100 years, scholars have argued that international relations can have dramatic effects on the type of regimes states adopt (Hintze 1975, Tilly 1985, Thompson 1996, Desch 1996). These peace-to-democracy arguments suggest that states surrounded by threatening neighbors develop large, land-based military forces and adopt authoritarian forms of government in order to better defend themselves. A key component of this threat is territory: territorial issues have repeatedly been found to be the prime correlate of peace and militarized conflict (Vasquez 2009, Senese and Vasquez 2008), and the pursuit of territorial goals is more likely than other issue types to require states to develop large, standing armies (Huth 1998) and centralize political authority. Conversely, countries enjoying relative (territorial) safety from their neighbors can afford to demilitarize, decentralize authority, and democratize. Indeed, Hintze-type arguments have been supported by a large number of important case studies that detail the links between peace, decentralization, and the development of democracy (see for example, Thompson 1996, Tilly 1985, North and Weingast 1989, Moore 1966).

Following Hintze's early insights, we argue that the presence of active or latent unresolved territorial problems has palpable effects on a state's polity. More so than questions of policy or ideological difference, the defense or pursuit of homeland territory prompts states to engage in provocative and violent behavior (Vasquez 2009, Senese and Vasquez 2008). Using territorial threats to keep and expand their power (Tir 2010), leaders will argue in favor of the creation of large standing armies to defend the homeland—or to acquire pieces of the homeland that are under the enemy's control. The problem for domestic politics is that the development of these standing armies changes the nature of domestic political bargaining. Armies require high levels of taxation as well as a broad centralization of authority in order to acquire, arm, equip, feed, and otherwise maintain the troops. Because high levels of military spending and frequent conflict also depress domestic consumption and economic growth, the chief executive requires greater political autonomy to maintain power. The executive finds this autonomy because of the many rally-type effects associated with salient threats to the state (Tir 2010). Indeed, the populace generally becomes nationalistic (Gibler, Hutchison and Miller 2013), more trusting of the executive (Hutchison 2011), and intolerant of minority groups (Hutchison and Gibler 2007), and these domestic changes prevent opposition parties from politically challenging the leader when the state is under direct threat (Gibler 2010). Thus, threats to the homeland and the large, standing armies that they produce are correlated with the rise of large bureaucracies that are dominated by the military and a centralization of political power in the hands of the elites that govern the militarily-dominated state (Gibler 2012). Much like Hintze's (Hintze

1975) argument, and the war-making/state-making literature that followed (Tilly 1985, Thompson 1996, Desch 1996), we view the presence of territorial threats to the state and a strong, land-based military as threats to democratic competition among domestic groups.

Conversely, lower levels of territorial threat from neighboring countries undermine the need for large standing armies and consequently prevent their pernicious effects. Military subsidies and procurements become less tenable for governments when leaders cannot rely upon territorial rivalries and threats to the homeland to increase their domestic bargaining position and the repressive capacity of their government. Further, without the standing army, other interests within government and the broader society are better able to check the growth in executive power (Rasler and Thompson 2004). Indeed, without the power of the military, domestic interests have strong incentives to decentralize the power of the government and democratize. Given the necessary prerequisites for democracy (e.g., wealth per Przeworski 2000), states without notable external territorial threats are more likely to become democracies.

3.2 Implications for Regime Change and Clustering

According to this logic, countries transition to democracy much differently than current democratic clustering approaches would suggest. Recall that the clustering approach relies on democratic success demonstration, pro-democracy opposition support, and tipping point pressure to democratize, etc. . . , as the reasons why a non-democratic country would begin a transition. Thus, territorial threat as a key determinant of democratic transitions challenges the core premise of clustering explanations for democratic transitions. Specifically, all else equal, we expect that:

Hypothesis 1 *Higher levels of territorial threat decrease the likelihood that a non-democratic state will transition to democracy.*

In addition to challenging a key premise of the clustering approach regarding why democratic transitions occur, our argument provides an important implication for the origin of the democratic clustering phenomenon itself. Empirical support for our hypothesis would indicate that much of the regional democratic clustering can really be interpreted as the spread of territorial peace and state liberalization. Stabilized borders decrease the need for militarization and centralization of political authority in more countries than just the focal state. The reduction in territorial threat also reduces the neighboring states' need for large standing armies, centralization of authority, etc, and increases the domestic pressure to demilitarize and decentralize as well. Regional "zones of peace" can thus be understood as the product of stabilized borders, as democratic neighbors cluster in time and space following the removal of dyadic territorial issues.

Also, note that the competing, null, hypotheses are not only well established, but the associated extant explanations actually argue against the influences we favor. Specifically, previous studies in comparative politics have assumed a negligible role for external factors influencing democratization, relying instead on the importance of per capita wealth. Meanwhile, although democratic clustering studies highlight the influence of factors external to the state on the likelihood of democratic transitions, they concern themselves almost exclusively with the strength of regional and system-wide democratic communities; the (territorial) conflict environment is assumed to provide little additional explanatory power. Our theory suggests a substantive effect for territorial threat environment that is at least comparable to the role of regime-based communities, providing much leverage in explaining when and where democratizations are likely to occur.

4   Constructing a Measure of Territorial Threat

Most previous research has only considered rather blunt instruments for evaluating the effects of external threat on the state, usually relying on realized militarized conflict, which is much different from the threat of such conflict. To introduce a continuous measure of threat, we follow Gibler (2012) and construct a predictive measure of probable threat to the state—specifically, a measure of threat to the territorial core of the state—and we use this section to describe our procedures. Throughout, we rely on some common relationships that have been identified as predictors of territorial conflict, and, since our goal is to identify the threat of conflict, we use the predictive abilities of these relationships to identify a state's likely level of perceived threats from its neighbors.

We begin with a basic assumption that the threat to core territories is most likely to originate from contiguous states. Seldom do conquering armies cross other states or oceans in order to occupy a country's homeland. Our second assumption is that the presence of threat on any of the state's borders will dominate the perceptions of threat for that state's leaders. Thus, even if three of a state's four borders have been completely pacified, and all states consider those borders to be legitimate, the threat from the fourth border will be sufficient to generate the centralizing processes we outlined above.

Given these assumptions, we begin with a dataset of all contiguous states, in a directed-dyad format from 1816 to 2001, with contiguity defined as direct, land-contiguity (Stinnett et al. 2002). Using this sample we rely on several common correlates of territorial conflict in these dyads. For example, we identify countries that were previously separated by the colonial borders of different empires. Both Gibler (2007) and Carter and Goemans (2010) have shown that international borders that follow historical salients like these are less likely to be conflict prone in future years. We use *CIA Factbook* data to identify

the colonial heritage of each country, 1816 to 2000. Dyads of contiguous states that share the same colonial heritage (i.e., that lack historical salients) are coded as 1 and 0 otherwise.

Previous work has also noted that borders are more likely to be peaceful in the future if the leaders of both states have exchanged lands peacefully in order to better demarcate their borders; the peaceful exchange of territory denotes mutual acceptance of the border and creates legitimacy and positive peace between both states (Gibler and Tir 2010). Violent transfers of territory, however, create incentives for revisionism within targeted states, and those states that have successfully captured territory must remain armed in order to maintain these territories. Such cases are likely to lead to additional territorial conflict in the future. We use the territorial transfer data from the Correlates of War Project to identify transfers and whether they were peaceful or violent (Tir et al. 1998).

We account for the presence of an active defense pact with all neighbors. Gibler and Wolford (2006) have demonstrated that such regional pacts can reduce external threats and the level of militarization within the state.

Political events in neighboring states often put in question the legitimacy of international borders (Vasquez 1995). The outbreak of civil war may lead other leaders to fear the spread of violence or the revision of territorial divisions by revolutionary regimes. Therefore, we include the onset of an intra-state war in any border state as an indicator of potential border instability. Using Correlates of War definitions (Sarkees and Wayman 2010), we lag the indicator one year prior to the year examined.

We also identify the highest level of militarization among neighboring states. High levels of militarization often signify threats or the potential for threats to the homeland territories. We use the Composite Index of National Capabilities from the Correlates of War Project (Singer, Bremer and Stuckey 1972) to identify the number of military personnel in the state and divide that number by the total population listed in the dataset. The highest level of militarization among neighbors is then lagged by one year prior to the year examined.

Militarized territorial disputes of course represent realized threats to the states involved, so we also code for the presence of *any* territorial dispute that targets either state in the dyad during the 5 years prior to the year examined. We use Maoz's (2005, 2004) dyadic dispute data to identify territorial disputes among neighbors, with contiguity again based on Correlates of War definitions (Stinnett et al. 2002).

Finally, we include the number of years since the last militarized dispute as well as the age of the border. Spells of peace help us properly estimate coefficient effects in binary, cross-sectional time-series studies like this one (Beck, Katz and Tucker 1998, Carter and Signorino 2010), but the length of peace constitutes a theoretically interesting variable as well. Traditional, realist theories often assume a constant rate of militarized conflict over time, but it is probably more reasonable to expect that peaceful past

8

relations are likely to condition future relations. We define the age of the border using a (logged) count variable for the number of years since the last system entry date in the dyad (Stinnett et al. 2002), and we define the spell of peace as the time since last Militarized Interstate Dispute (Ghosn, Palmer and Bremer 2004). We control for temporal dependence in the analyses by including the square and cube terms of the peace spell (Carter and Signorino 2010).

Our dependent variable for the first analysis is the presence of any fatal Militarized Interstate Dispute (fatal MID) in the dyad-year (Maoz 2005, Ghosn, Palmer and Bremer 2004). We use all fatal MIDs because, though we are mostly interested in territorial threat, the predictors of territorial threat are often associated with the onset and management of other types of disputes (Wiegand 2011). In other words, underlying territorial threat may manifest itself in different ways, including conflict over other issues. Regardless, we present results using all fatal MIDs, but models restricted to fatal MIDs over territorial issues are almost identical to those presented here. We estimate the basic model of conflict using logistic regression, with robust standard errors clustered on each state, and we present the results in Table 1.

Table 1: Predictors of Fatal MIDs in Contiguous Dyads, 1816 to 2001

	(1)
Predictors of Territorial Conflict:	
Same Colonial Master	0.220*
	(0.102)
Peaceful Territorial Transfer in Dyad	-0.491**
	(0.179)
Violent Territorial Transfer in Dyad	0.498***
	(0.114)
Defense Pact with All Neighbors	-0.915***
	(0.247)
Civil War in Either State	0.195*
	(0.099)
Highest Militarization Level among Neighbors	13.51***
	(1.423)
Previous Territorial MID against Either State	0.458***
	(0.084)
Temporal Controls:	
Border Age (Log)	0.218***
	(0.030)
Peace Years	-0.422***
	(0.036)
Peace Years (Squared)	0.012***
	(0.002)
Peace Years (Cubed)	-0.000***
	(0.000)
Constant	-2.972***
	(0.119)
N	19,026

Logistic regression, clustered by state with robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As the results in the table show, the predictors of fatal militarized conflict perform quite well in

the analysis. The indicators of unstable borders—former colonies with poorly-differentiated borders, borders with violent transfers, borders separating states from civil wars, militarized borders, and borders with previous territorial conflict—all increase the likelihood of a fatal MID occurring in any given year. Peaceful territorial transfers, defense pacts with all neighbors, and the presence of peace in the dyad for some time tend to pacify relations in the dyad. The logged age of the border is also associated with an increased likelihood of conflict.

We are not really concerned with the substantive effects of each variable.[3] Rather, we wish to use the entire model as a guide to identifying threat perception in the form of territorial challenges. Returning to our second assumption regarding territorial threat, we believe the maximum level of cross-border threat will dominate leader attentions. Therefore, we identify the maximum predicted probability of conflict for each state in any given year, across all dyads that include the state. Regardless of whether the state actually engaged in territorial conflict, the predicted probabilities from this model should give us a general idea of the territorial threat states perceived in a given year. As we describe above, the threat of territorial conflict is likely to drive state centralization, and we use these predicted probabilities for each state-year as an independent variable in the analyses of democratization that follow.[4]

5   Predicting Democratic Transitions

Our primary contention is that democratic transitions result from good border relations rather than any condition endemic to the types of regimes found in the region. To test this contention, we prepared a dataset of all countries from 1950 to 2001—these years define the combined limits of available GDP (1950) and militarized interstate dispute (2001) data. Our first dependent variable is the transition of a state from non-democracy to democracy, which we define as any state that passes from 5 or below to 6 or above on the -10 to 10, 21-point combined autocracy-democracy indicator from Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2002).

---

[3]Nevertheless, post-estimation analyses suggest the model does well at predicting militarized territorial conflict. For example, we reviewed predicted outcomes from the model, using both mean predicted probabilities of militarized territorial conflict and mean plus one standard deviation as cut points. Using mean probabilities, the model accurately predicted 225 of 348 fatal territorial MIDs; the higher cut point predicted 142 of 348. These compare to a random guess rate of 125 of 348 for the first model and 55 for the second. (Both chi-square statistics for predicted versus actual distributions are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.) We also re-estimated the model based on a split sample of cases, 1816-1945 and 1946-2001. The only difference between either of these models and the full model is that peaceful territorial transfers is not statistically significant in the pre-Cold War model.

[4]We should note that we estimate threat separately from democratization because we are interested in the theoretical and substantive relationship between *predicted* threat levels and *actual* measures of democratization. Modeling these processes separately is not problematic because the errors in the models are not likely to be correlated substantively. Of course, by estimating these processes separately, we lose the uncertainty from the prior estimates of threat in the second model of democratization. To partially compensate for this, we also estimated separate models using the bounds of the confidence intervals for the state-year threat predictions. Models using the 5% minimum predicted state-year threat and the 95% maximum predicted state-year threat do not differ substantively from the mean state-year, predicted probabilities we present here.

Regional Environment Variables

In the previous section we described how we modeled territorial threat. We now use the predicted probabilities from that model as an independent variable in the analyses below. The threat variable theoretically ranges from 0 to 1, of course, but our state-year data set has a range between .009 and .350 and a mean of .102 during the years we examine. Thus, during times of the highest threat, we would expect a state (Iran in 1984, in this case) to have a 35% chance of having a new fatal MID onset in that particular year and would be least likely to transition to democracy. Australia in the late 1990s had the lowest level of threat in the dataset. We also include the two-year change in this variable over time, from state-year *t-3* to *t-1* so as to avoid overlap with our observation of threat levels at time *t*.[5]

To approximate the likely regional support for democracy, we mimic Gleditsch and Ward (2006) and create a measure for the proportion of states that are democratic within 500km of each state-year. Since our concern again rests primarily with border relations, we also create a separate measure for the number of democracies on each state-year's border. To make this a proportional estimate, similar to the regional democracy score, we also include the number of borders for each state-year; a large number of borders also presents a greater opportunity for territorial threat. We control for the lack of land borders with an island state dummy. Island states will naturally have fewer opportunities for democratic demonstration effects by neighbors and fewer opportunities for threats by neighbors to their territories. Each of our measures of contiguity and borders is derived from Correlates of War Project definitions found in Stinnett et al. (2002).

We also follow Gleditsch and Ward (2006) who argue, based on Schelling (1971), that certain actions can serve as "tipping points" in which one event causes a cascade of similar events. For democratization, proximate regime changes may provide the impetus for repressed citizens to challenge authorities within the state, creating a chain reaction of democratic transitions, which was the case with the toppling of communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. To identify these periods of cascade effects we create a count variable that sums all democratic transitions in the Correlates of War region in the previous year.

---

[5]An anonymous reviewer asked whether the level of territorial threat or changes in territorial threat affect regime transitions, which prompted us to include the two-year change variable. We are able to test both with this design. Our analyses of the level of territorial threat variable and the proportion of democracies in the region variable we describe below also demonstrate that the mean rate of change for both variables is approximately the same. The average rate of change for the territorial threat variable is -0.008, with a standard deviation of 0.164; the average rate of change in proportion of democracies in the region is -.007, with a standard deviation of .109. Thus, there is variation in the level of territorial threat affecting the state, and we assess its effects independent of recent changes in the threat environment.

Systemic Environment

We include in our analyses two measures that we use to proxy the strength of democracy globally. As Kadera, Crescenzi and Shannon (2003) argue, the strength of democracy in the system may be an important indicator of the overall support available to new democracies. We test this argument in our dataset using a simple calculation of the proportion of the states in the system that are democratic. Second, the Cold War may have inhibited the ability or willingness of democracies to support regime changes, we also control for all Cold War years between the start of our analyses, 1950, and the beginning of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990.

State-Level Controls

Finally, we employ five state-level variables that often serve as predictors of democracy and regime change. First, we include the (logged) level of per capita GDP in each state during the previous year using the recently updated data that was first released in Gleditsch (2002b). Wealthier states may be more likely to have democratic transitions (Epstein et al. 2006, Przeworski and Limongi 1997). Second, we identify states in which at least one-third of all exports are based on fuel. As Ross (1999) has argued, there is a strong correlation between high oil and gas exports and non-democracy. We use the data in Fearon and Laitin (2003), which are derived from World Bank data, to code this dichotomous variable. Third, we control for the length of time a state has been a non-democracy. We lag these counts by one year. Fourth, empirically, those states that have had incomplete or failed democratic transitions in the past may be more likely to experience transitions in the future. We therefore provide a count variable for the number of these transitions that each state has experienced in previous years. Last, we include the Polity IV score of the state from the previous year; democratic transitions are more likely as Polity IV scores approach our threshold of 6 on the combined scale.

6   Empirical Analysis

Table 2 provides the results of our estimates of democratic transitions. Our cases are restricted to all non-democratic years in the data set and all democratic transition years; democratic states have obviously already experienced their transitions. We provide three separate analyses to better demonstrate the effects of the regional environment variables, which are somewhat inconsistent across specifications. First, we should note that our expectations are confirmed; external territorial threat is a strong, negative predictor of democratic transitions. This is true for both the current level of territorial threat and also the trend of increasing threat over time; high and/or increasing territorial threat levels inhibit democracy. Second,

there is indeed evidence for "tipping points" as the presence of previous transitions in the region predict well future transitions in the state; this variable is consistent across all models we tested.

Estimating the influence of the proportion of democracies in the 500km region and the proportion of democracies on the border of the state variables is, however, complicated by a great deal of correlation between the two variables ($\rho = .73$). Investigating this further, we actually found only three cases (Cyprus in 1968, Haiti in 1994, and Ghana in 2001) in which a transition occurred when there were no democracies on the border and at least one state in the 500km region was democratic (in each case, there was only one state democratic in the 500km region). This means that *the 500km-region variable is almost always a proxy for the border-based regime variable.*[6]

The three models in Table 2 demonstrate well the effects of this collinearity. In the first model, neither the 500km-democratic-community measure nor the number-of-democracies-on-the-border measure is statistically significant at any conventional level. It is impossible to differentiate the effects of either variable because their independent variation is minimal. Estimate the measures separately, however, as we do in models two and three, and we find statistically significant results for both indicators. The substantive effects of these measures are also quite similar. Since the samples are the same, we used models two and three to generate substantive effects for each variable. We find that an increase of one standard deviation from the mean regional democracy score produces an increased likelihood of democracy just over 30% in model two, which matches well the 27% change found from altering the number-of-democracies measure similarly in model 3. The substantive effect of territorial threat is also in this range, with an estimated mean of 27% for a one-standard-deviation change and similar confidence intervals in both models. Given 95% confidence intervals around these estimates, the expected changes are statistically the same. Finally, the absence of statistically significant results for the number of borders variable, along with the strong effect for territorial threat, provides good evidence that the quality of border relations matters much more than proximity or the opportunity for poor relationships.

Turning to system-level influences, the proportion of the states that are democratic in the system has little effect. While there is a modest, though statistically insignificant relationship in our data for a bivariate specification ($\rho < .20$), the addition of a control for the Cold War renders the association meaningless. Note that our specification of systemic community focuses on the demonstration effects of democracies and does not weight for the capabilities of democracies, so we differ from Kadera, Crescenzi and Shannon (2003); this suggests the military strength of the democratic community may matter more

---

[6]Extending the distance for the regional democracy measure to 1000km does not alter the correlation between proportion of democracies in the neighborhood and the number of bordering democracies. Ten additional democratic transitions are added in which the regional democracy score was above zero, but in only three of the transitions is the neighborhood score above 40%. Overall, the regional measure remains strongly correlated with bordering democracies ($\rho = .52$), and the results of the three models remain substantively the same when using 1000km as the cut-off.

than the mere ratio of democratic countries in the system.

Table 2: Predictors of Democratic Transitions, 1950 to 2001

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Regional Environment:			
Territorial Threat Level	-13.61***	-13.60***	-13.24***
	(3.287)	(3.282)	(3.331)
Territorial Threat	-11.71**	-11.68**	-11.76**
(2yr Change)	(3.733)	(3.760)	(3.675)
Proportion Democratic, 500km	1.402	1.582***	
	(0.731)	(0.424)	
# of Democracies on Border	0.0578		0.361*
	(0.235)		(0.147)
# of Borders	-0.005	0.018	-0.132
	(0.125)	(0.054)	(0.093)
Island State	0.299	0.371	-0.209
	(0.696)	(0.600)	(0.599)
# Democratic Transitions, Region (lag)	0.365*	0.366*	0.365*
	(0.153)	(0.151)	(0.154)
Systemic Environment:			
Proportion Democratic, System	-6.526	-6.514	-6.167
	(5.605)	(5.633)	(5.466)
Cold War Year	-0.953	-0.950	-0.959
	(0.814)	(0.816)	(0.811)
State-level Controls:			
GDP per capita (lag)	0.303*	0.313*	0.282
	(0.148)	(0.145)	(0.151)
Polity IV Score (lag)	0.137***	0.139***	0.136***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)
Oil State	-0.498	-0.493	-0.538
	(0.456)	(0.452)	(0.488)
# Previous Transitions in State	1.427***	1.428***	1.491***
	(0.397)	(0.399)	(0.393)
Years as Non-Democracy	0.011**	0.011**	0.011**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Constant	-3.055	-3.204	-2.531
	(2.785)	(2.791)	(2.711)
N	3,884	3,884	3,884

Logistic regression, clustered by state with robust standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

We find consistent and statistically significant results for the regime type indicators. For example, non-democracies with regime scores closer to the threshold of democracy are more likely than autocracies to complete the transition to democracy. In other words, few are the cases of radical regime change, and, actually, none of the -10 regimes transitioned in our dataset. Similarly, the longer a regime is non-democratic, the more likely it is to transition to democracy. These findings are consistent with Gleditsch (2002b) and the larger literature on democratization, including the arguments of Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) and Chiozza and Goemans (2004) who find that autocratic leaders have shorter tenures. Finally, the count of previous transitions in the state has a strong effect on the likelihood of future transitions; failed democratizations are a good identifier of the states most likely to attempt

14

future regime changes.

Among the other state-level controls, we confirm the large literature associating democratization with wealth in two of the models. As GDP per capita improves, so does the likelihood of experiencing a democratic transition. Controlling for wealth that comes from fuel exports—the oil states—has no effect on the likelihood of a democratic transition. This is robust to every model specification. The variable itself changes little for each country over time, and no states have exhausted their oil resources yet, so the presence or absence of oil has little purchase over such a rare event as democratization.

Assessing Causal Mechanisms

What do our findings regarding democratic transitions imply for the phenomenon of democratic clustering? We contend that, since our empirical findings show democratization to be linked to lowered territorial threats to the state, clustering is, in part, a function of pacified borders. As neighboring states settle their borders, the chances of them turning democratic increase, providing the foundation for a democratic cluster. But, what about the extant competing explanations and their contributions to the phenomenon of democratic clustering?

From our findings, it is apparent that system-level democracy is a poor predictor of why countries turn democratic. Similarly, the role of regional democracy is difficult to establish, as the proportion of democracies in the region seems to be simply proxying the number of democracies on the state's border. However, since non-bordering democracies in the region is clearly not linked to democratic transitions, democratic clustering can really only be understood as a border phenomenon.

Among other extant explanations, Gleditsch and Ward (2006, 919-920) note that democracies are likely to cluster together because: 1) existing democracies support pro-democracy movements or opposition groups interact and receive support from neighboring democracies, 2) previous democratic transitions create a demonstration effect or "tipping" mechanism (Schelling 1971), 3) "zones of peace" emerge (Thompson 1996), 4) existing democracies prove that the democratic form of government works, and 5) the lack of Cold-War strategizing leads less-developed countries to curry favor with the rest of the democratic region and world. We examine these arguments in turn, yet find only partial support for the mechanisms that are supposed to encourage democratization.

First, our findings show that bordering democracies are a good predictor of democratization. The finding is consistent with and seems to lend support to the argument that transitions occur by nearby democracies supporting pro-democracy opposition movements within the state. Proximity should increase the number of interactions, all else equal. Of course it would be best if proponents of this argument could somehow measure the likelihood of finding opposition/neighboring-state ties, but, absent that, proximity

suggests a relationship. Nevertheless, having a democracy on one's border may also be a symptom of the underlying (good) border relations between the states.

Second, our models reveal statistical support for the tipping mechanism, as previous democratic transitions nearby increase the chances that the state will become democratic. Indeed, 28 of 79 transitions occurred in Correlates of War regions that had at least one transition in the previous year. Correlates of War regions can, however, be quite large. If the region is limited to 500km from the state-year, only nine transitions occurred following previous year democratic transitions in that spatial range. A related explanation is that large, geo-strategic changes such as the collapse of the Soviet Union create the tipping point. The fall of the Soviets accounts for six of these democratic transitions within five years, including Russia itself in 1991. Overall, despite initial statistical evidence in favor of the tipping point explanation, a closer look at the data does not support an argument for tipping as an explanation for clustering in a substantial number of cases.

Third, turning to the zones of peace explanation, we estimated multiple additional models (available from the authors) that included regional threat indicators. Nevertheless, in no instance was the average, minimum, or maximum level of threat in the 500km region related to democratic transitions in the following year; meanwhile, neighboring territorial threats continue to drive transitions. Regional threat levels are not linked to democratic transitions and therefore cannot be the reason behind democratic clustering. Thompson (1996) argued that democracy occurs when leaders give up ambitions for regional hegemony. Our results suggest this theory may be better cast as a theory of border revisionism: when foreign policies change to respect local borders, peace and democracy follow.

We also have reasons to question the credibility of the fourth mechanism—demonstration of democratic success—theorized to drive democratic transitions and explain clustering. Forty-three of 79 cases of transition occurred with nearby democracies that had been established for more than two years (within 500km of the state-year). However, in 29 of those 43 cases the nearby "successful democracy" experienced at least one reversion within the previous ten years. It seems rather implausible that these reversion-prone cases demonstrated that democracy could succeed.

Finally, in no analysis was the Cold War variable statistically significant. There was no change in the likelihood of regime transition due to the systemic shift from bipolarity to a globe dominated by democracies. We thus find little support for a competition-based argument for democratization in the post-Cold War era. Separately, we also estimated models with a variable for the distance from the United States but again found no relationship. In other words, post-Cold War politics holds little explanatory power for why countries transition to democracy, and, as such, this argument does not offer a good

explanation for democratic clustering.[7]

In sum, our analysis of the data narrows substantially the possible explanations for democratic clustering. While aid to emerging opposition groups remains a plausible mechanisms, proponents of this view do not provide systematic data to measure this support directly. Further, that aid will only consistently work when it comes from a neighboring democracy. Meanwhile, the tipping mechanism argument, though supported in our models, explains relatively few actual cases. We found no support for arguments based on zones of peace, systemic democracy, and post-Cold War, and we provide evidence that the regional democracy logic is actually a proxy for bordering democracies.

We believe that this pattern of findings lends added confidence to our argument that a state's democratic regime type is not a mere reflection of the neighborhood (or region) being democratic. Even though the presence of democracies on the border increases the likelihood of democratic transition, it is not clear why. The only causal mechanism in the literature consistent with this finding is the level of support given by democracies to emerging opposition groups, but we have no explanation for why this works for neighboring democracies but not other democracies in the region. Overall, the external influences of conflict on regime status are driven through border relations, and this supports our overall argument that territorial threats to the state inhibit democratic transitions.[8]

6.1   Case Illustration: Central Europe and former Yugoslavia

Our results find resonance in some familiar examples from recent history. Returning to cases mentioned early on in the paper, the standard clustering logic would suggest that the success (and support from) Western European democracies should make democratic transitions in formerly socialist countries of central Europe after the end of the Cold War a relatively straightforward proposition. While many of these countries, such as Poland, did transition to democracy relatively quickly, that was not so for some of the countries emerging from the former Yugoslavia. This was a notable surprise because, during the Cold War, Yugoslavia was such a politically and economically progressive country relative to other countries in the region.

Our territorial threat approach helps explain why countries such as Poland had an easier time transitioning. Long the subject of major territorial disputes, Polish borders were settled after World War II, with both Poland and its neighbors dropping any future territorial aspirations. Poland then transitioned

---

[7]We agree with Gleditsch and Ward (2006, 919) that the imposition of democracy by foreign states is rarely a cause of clustering. Using imposition data from (Enterline and Greig 2005), we find no relationship between new democracies that were imposed by other states and the spread of democracy within 500km.

[8]Also implied by our argument is the idea that increasing territorial threat will sometimes strain the domestic political relations of democratic countries, causing reversion to non-democratic forms of governance. We find empirical support for this and describe these results in the Web Appendix.

to democracy soon after Soviet troops ended their occupation. Meanwhile, some parts of the former Yugoslavia faced major problems at the end of the Cold War—and the core of these problems was territorial.

After Yugoslavia's breakup, the variation in territorial threat across the former country provides a good explanation for the spatial and temporal variation in subsequent democratic transitions. Slovenia, facing little territorial threat after becoming independent, transitioned quickly. For Croatia, Serbian territorial threats resulted in an abortive transition attempt in the early 1990s. By the end of the decade, however, territorial issues with Serbia were resolved, and Croatia transitioned to democracy soon thereafter. Despite the resolution of its territorial issues with Croatia, however, Serbia's transition was further delayed due to the Kosovo crisis. With Serbia effectively losing control of Kosovo to NATO forces after 1999, major threats to Serbia's territorial integrity ceased, and the country transitioned to democracy around 2003. Meanwhile, despite almost two decades of massive amounts of aid and pro-democracy support from Western democracies, Bosnia has yet to become fully democratic. Arguably at issue are serious threats to Bosnia's territorial integrity, coming notably from Serb nationalists who would like to see roughly one-half of the country annexed to Serbia.

In sum, our territorial threat logic provides an explanation of why certain countries transition to democracy and when these transitions are likely. In contrast, the standard clustering logic would expect—based on the presence of successful Western European democracies nearby—for all the former socialist central European countries to have transitioned to democracy relatively quickly after the end of the Cold War.

7 Conclusion

Our results provide important refinements on the relationship between democratic governance and the regional environment. First, as hypothesized, we found that territorial threats to the state—identified using predicted probabilities from a militarized territorial conflict model—do indeed inhibit democratizations in non-democracies. This finding was robust. Territorial threat was statistically significant and among the substantively most powerful indicators of regime change in every model we estimated. We were also able to isolate the role of territorial threat to border relations only. Measures of regional territorial threat had no effect in any of our models, despite some persuasive theoretical arguments to the contrary (Thompson 1996).

We also demonstrate that the number of democracies in the system has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood of regime changes. This is true when modeled in isolation or with a control for the

presence of the Cold War system, which also had no independent or joint effect on regime change. These findings suggest that the politics of democratization have not changed much over time, and the effects of post-Cold War competition among developing states is over-estimated.

Finally, we provide evidence that what we previously have known as regional democracy may actually, in fact, be better labeled bordering democracy. The number of democracies on the border of a state is an almost perfect proxy for the proportion of democracies in the region (for distances of either 500km or 1000km). Clustering is indeed just that: democracies are more likely to occur *on the border* with other democracies. These results for bordering democracies severely constrain the causal mechanisms that could possibly explain democracies affecting neighboring democracies. Pushed even further, we believe these results may even indicate an underlying process of clustering that is dependent upon long-past territorial threats to the state. Our territorial threat measures predict transitions well, which suggests that contiguous states' regimes are substantially dependent on the level of threat from their own neighbors. Democratic clustering is likely to be the result of this process of lowered territorial threats across the border.

References

Beck, Nathaniel, Jonathan N. Katz and Richard Tucker. 1998. "Taking Time Seriously: Time-Series-Cross-Section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(4):1260–1288.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce and Randolph M. Siverson. 1995. "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 89(4):841–855.

Carter, D.B. and C.S. Signorino. 2010. "Back to the future: Modeling time dependence in binary data." *Political Analysis* 18(3):271.

Carter, D.B. and HE Goemans. 2010. "The Making of the Territorial Order: New Borders and the Emergence of Interstate Conflict." *International Organization* .

Chiozza, G. and HE Goemans. 2004. "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still Ex Post Inefficient?" *American Journal of Political Science* 48:604–619.

Desch, Michael. 1996. "War and Strong States, Peace and Weak States?" *International Organization* 50(2):237–268.

Enterline, A.J. and J.M. Greig. 2005. "Beacons of Hope? The Impact of Imposed Democracy on Regional Peace, Democracy, and Prosperity." *Journal of Politics* 67(4):1075–1098.

Epstein, D.L., R. Bates, J. Goldstone, I. Kristensen and S. O'Halloran. 2006. "Democratic transitions." *American journal of political science* 50:551–569.

Fearon, J.D. and D.D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American Political Science Review* 97(01):75–90.

Ghosn, F., G. Palmer and S.A. Bremer. 2004. "The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21(2):133.

Gibler, D.M. and J. Tir. 2010. "Settled Borders and Regime Type: Democratic Transitions as Consequences of Peaceful Territorial Transfers." *American Journal of Political Science* .

Gibler, Douglas M. 2007. "Bordering on Peace: Democracy, Territorial Issues, and Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 51(3):509–532.

Gibler, Douglas M. 2010. "Outside-In: The Effects of External Threat on State Centralization." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54(4):519–542.

Gibler, Douglas M. 2012. *The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict.* Cambridge University Press.

Gibler, Douglas M., Marc L. Hutchison and Steven V. Miller. 2013. "Individual Identity Attachments and International Conflict: The Importance of Territorial Threat." *Comparative Political Studies* . Unpublished Manuscript. University of Alabama. Tuscaloosa, AL.

Gibler, Douglas M. and Scott Wolford. 2006. "Alliances, Then Democracy: An Examination of the Relationship between Regime Type and Alliance Formation." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(1):129–153.

Gleditsch, K.S. 2002*a*. *All international politics is local: The diffusion of conflict, integration, and democratization.* Univ of Michigan Pr.

Gleditsch, K.S. 2002*b*. "Expanded trade and GDP data." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(5):712–724.

Gleditsch, K.S. and M.D. Ward. 2006. "Diffusion and the international context of democratization." *International Organization* 60(04):911–933.

Gleditsch, N.P. and H. Hegre. 1997. "Peace and democracy." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41(2):283–310.

Hintze, Otto. 1975. Military Organization and State Organization. In *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Originally published in 1906.

Hutchison, Marc L. 2011. "Territorial Threat and the Decline of Political Trust in Africa: A Multilevel Analysis." *Polity* 43.

Hutchison, Marc L. and Douglas M. Gibler. 2007. "Political Tolerance and Territorial Threat: A Cross-National Study." *Journal of Politics* 69(1):128–142.

Huth, P.K. 1998. *Standing your ground: Territorial disputes and international conflict.* University of Michigan Press.

Kacowicz, A.M. 1995. "Explaining zones of peace: democracies as satisfied powers?" *Journal of Peace Research* 32(3):265.

Kadera, K.M., M.J.C. Crescenzi and M.L. Shannon. 2003. "Democratic survival, peace, and war in the international system." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(2):234–247.

Maoz, Zeev. 2005. "Dyadic MID Dataset (version 2.0)." http://psfaculty.ucdavis.edu/zmaoz/dyadmid.html.

Marshall, Monty G. and Keith Jaggers. 2002. "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-1999." University of Maryland, Center for International Development and Conflict Management.

Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin, Scott Gates and Hvard Hegre. 1999. "Evolution in Democracy-War Dynamics." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43(6):771–792.

Moore, B. 1966. *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world.* Allen Lane The Penguin Press.

North, D.C. and B.R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and commitment: The evolution of institutional governing public choice in seventeenth-century England." *The journal of economic history* 49(4):803–832.

Przeworski, A. 2000. *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990.* Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, A. and F. Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and facts." *World Politics* pp. 155–183.

Rasler, Karen and William R. Thompson. 2004. "The Democratic Peace and a Sequential, Reciprocal, Causal Arrow Hypothesis." *Comparative Political Studies* 37(8):879–908.
URL: *http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/8/879*

Ray, J.L. 2001. "Integrating levels of analysis in world politics." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13(4):355–388.

Ross, M.L. 1999. "The political economy of the resource curse." *World Politics* 51(2):297–322.

Sarkees, M.R. and F. Wayman. 2010. *Resort to War.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Schelling, T.C. 1971. "Dynamic models of segregation." *Journal of mathematical sociology* 1(2):143–186.

Senese, Paul D. and John A. Vasquez. 2008. *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press.

Singer, J. David, Stuart A. Bremer and John Stuckey. 1972. Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965. In *Peace, War and Numbers*, ed. Bruce Russett. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stinnett, Douglas M., Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F. Diehl and Charles Gochman. 2002. "The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 19(2):58–66.

Thompson, William. 1996. "Democracy and Peace: Putting the Cart before the Horse?" *International Organization* 50(1):141–174.

Tilly, Charles. 1985. War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press pp. 169–191.

Tir, J. 2010. "Territorial diversion: diversionary theory of war and territorial conflict." *Journal of Politics* 72(2):413–425.

Tir, J., P. Schafer, P.F. Diehl and G. Goertz. 1998. "Territorial changes, 1816–1996: Procedures and data." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 16(1):89.

Vasquez, John A. 1995. "Why Do Neighbors Fight? Proximity, Interaction or Territoriality?" *Journal of Peace Research* 32(3):277–293.

Vasquez, John A. 2009. *The War Puzzle Revisited.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wiegand, K.E. 2011. *Enduring Territorial Disputes: Strategies of Bargaining, Coercive Diplomacy, and Settlement.* Univ of Georgia Pr.

8 Web Appendix: Predicting Democratic Reversions

In an additional set of analyses, we change the dependent variable to democratic reversions. Recall that these are instances in which the regime score dipped from democracy (6 and above on the Polity IV scale) the previous year to non-democracy in the current year. Table 3 presents our results of tests performed on the universe of post-WW II democratic countries.

We once again find confirmation for the role of territorial threat. The variable is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, and, substantively, a change of one standard deviation from the mean of territorial threat makes a democratic reversal approximately 40% more likely. This holds true in each of the three models we present and remains robust in models we analyzed separately. Democracies in threatening environments do not last.[9] Unlike the democratic transition models, we found no evidence of regional democratic environment affecting reversals. There were no statistically significant relationships when region and bordering democracies were estimated separately or jointly. Similarly, we find that system-level democracy has no effect. The level of democratic community makes no difference as to whether a regime moves from democracy to non-democracy in our sample.

For the state-level variables we find that only wealth and years as a democracy are statistically significant predictors of reversion. Poorer countries and newer democracies are more likely to suffer reversions. Both of these findings once again support the large literature on democratization that emphasizes democratic consolidation and wealth as antidotes to regime reversals (Epstein et al. 2006, Przeworski 2000).

Cumulatively, we are left with rather poor results for the democratic community variables. In none of our analyses do they matter. Meanwhile, the level of territorial threat measure we developed performs well as a robust predictor of the democracies most likely to fail.[10]

---

[9] We should note one caveat to this finding. **?** found that territorial threats need not cause regime reversals, provided the democracy has a mature and independent judiciary. The mechanisms of regime reversal are built on rally-based changes within the government, and these can be stymied with counter-majoritarian institutions like strong courts.

[10] We also experimented with the change in the level of territorial variable in these models. However, in none of the models was this variable statistically significant. Further, among democracies, change in threat and overall level of threat are collinear at a much higher rate than among non-democracies, and the inclusion of the change variable renders statistically insignificant all the predictors of reversions.

Table 3: Predictors of Democratic Reversions, 1950 to 2001

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Regional Environment:			
Territorial Threat Level	11.67*	11.66*	11.89*
	(6.158)	(6.051)	(5.926)
Proportion Democratic, 500km	-1.023	-0.526	
	(1.717)	(0.863)	
# of Democracies on Border	0.160		-0.0361
	(0.360)		(0.181)
# of Borders	0.0321	0.0822	0.0976
	(0.115)	(0.121)	(0.132)
Island State	-1.440	-1.313	-1.136
	(0.927)	(0.961)	(0.993)
# Democratic Reversions, Region (lag)	-0.379	-0.370	-0.352
	(0.454)	(0.460)	(0.465)
Systemic Environment:			
Proportion Democratic, System	-3.284	-3.383	-4.443
	(9.722)	(9.581)	(8.668)
Cold War Year	-1.044	-1.063	-1.141
	(1.464)	(1.428)	(1.327)
State-level Controls:			
GDP per capita (lag)	-0.664**	-0.634*	-0.674**
	(0.250)	(0.269)	(0.247)
Polity IV Score (lag)	0.029	0.032	0.029
	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Oil State	0.254	0.266	0.222
	(0.496)	(0.521)	(0.531)
# Previous Reversions in State	-0.136	-0.185	-0.197
	(0.300)	(0.315)	(0.320)
Years as Democracy	-0.052*	-0.054*	-0.055*
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Constant	2.255	1.949	2.440
	(4.703)	(4.879)	(4.443)
N	1,600	1,600	1,600

Logistic regression, clustered by state with robust standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$