Democracy and the Settlement of International Borders, 1919-2001

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Abstract

There is increasing evidence that territorial conflict is associated with centralized and non-democratic regimes. We explore whether this relationship is due to the facility of democratic regimes to settle their international borders. Using Owsiak's (2012) dataset of all territorial settlements since 1919, we find little evidence that democratic regimes are more likely than other types of regimes to settle their borders. In fact, joint democracy rarely precedes the first border agreement or full settlement of the border, and there is almost no qualitative evidence suggesting a link between democracy and border settlement in the rare instances of successful agreements. Democracies are also not more likely to keep their borders settled or even to be more peaceful during settled-border years. Overall, our findings suggest that border settlements lead to peace in the dyad and affirm a clear temporal sequence of border settlement, then peace and democracy for neighboring dyads.

Keywords
International Conflict; Territorial Peace; Democratic Peace; MIDs

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Why do democratic dyads have fewer territorial disputes than non-democratic dyads? There are two common explanations. First, there may be some characteristic inherent to democratic states that affords them a conflict management advantage. Institutional constraints (e.g., checks on executive authority), electoral accountability, a shared respect for peaceful dispute management, and an ability to signal resolve more credibly theoretically provide democratic dyads greater incentives for peaceful conflict management or buy additional time for conflict management efforts to occur (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, Maoz & Russett 1993, Dixon 1994, Schultz 1999). The second explanation focuses on the distribution of territorial issues. Democratic dyads rarely possess salient, conflict-prone issues, such as those over the delimitation of mutual borders, because these territorial issues are most often settled before both dyad members become democratic (Gibler 2012). As a result, peace obtains not because democratic regimes are inherently more peaceful but, rather, because democracy develops after dyad members clear the most conflict-prone issues from their foreign policy agenda. Any issues that democratic dyads might dispute are therefore of significantly lower salience than those resolved in their non-democratic past, and democracies are simply a subset of the larger number of states resting at territorial peace.

These two theories provide much different explanations of what causes peace among democracy, of course, and we use this paper to determine whether regime type alters the distribution of territorial issues or the settlement of these issues precedes regime type. Towards that end, we derive and test three theoretical arguments linking democratic dyads with increased border settlement, defined as the formal delimitation of a contiguous dyad's mutual borders via interstate agreement. Drawing upon democratic peace research, we first consider that democratic dyads may possess characteristics that allow them to start and/or complete the border settlement process more successfully than non-democratic dyads. This constitutes the democratic peace's conflict management thesis. A second argument provides a slight variation on the first: even if democracy does not directly facilitate border settlement, it may help borders remain settled once delimited. Under this argument, democracy consolidates peace by preventing the re-emergence of contentious issues. Finally, we consider whether democracy and border settlement are independent of one another. According to territorial peace theory, borders generally settle before dyad members both become democratic, precluding the possibility that democratic peace arguments operate during the border settlement process. This, of course, need not mean that democracy does not promote peace, and so we also consider the possibility that an independent democratic peace exists as well, across all issues that might lead states to conflict.

Although the democratic peace has a strong empirical tradition of correlating regime type with conflict propensity, we find little evidence that democracy contributes to border settlement or produces a peace within contiguous dyads that is independent of border settlement. Four main findings underscore this broad conclusion. First, democratic dyads do not start or complete the border settlement process more successfully than non-democratic dyads. Not only do very few democratic dyads possess unsettled borders, but a qualitative examination of these cases also demonstrates that democratic characteristics and processes played no role in introducing border settlement into these democratic dyads. Because the vast majority of dyads are not democratic during the border settlement process, joint democracy cannot explain why borders settle. Second, democratic dyads are no better able than their counterparts at keeping their borders settled. Third, we find little evidence of an independent democratic peace in contiguous dyads after controlling for border settlement. Finally, throughout our analysis, border settlement still fosters peace independently of regime classification. Such results provide strong evidence in favor of the

issue-based approach to conflict. They also suggest that democratic contiguous dyads do not possess a conflict management advantage over non-democratic dyads – at least during the border settlement process.

In pursuing an answer to the above question, our study advances research in three ways. First, we present the first examination of the determinants of border settlement across a large spatial and temporal domain. Although research shows how border settlement contributes to numerous phenomena (Gibler 2012, Owsiak 2013, Rider & Owsiak 2015), we do not yet fully understand the factors that lead states to settle their borders.[1] Second, scholars increasingly uncover numerous caveats to the thesis that democratic dyads enjoy a conflict management advantage (e.g., see Park & James 2015, Gibler 2012, Ghosn 2010, Mitchell & Prins 1999). It is therefore appropriate to revisit this thesis while considering the settlement of interstate borders–a topic on which contemporary work continues to build.

Finally, research connecting democratic dyads to territorial issues in particular remains underdeveloped (for an exception, see Huth & Allee 2002). We find only one theory explicitly linking democratic dyads to the likelihood of settling territorial issues (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). This theory, however, is not clear on what form a democratic advantage takes, and its predictions on the matter have not garnered empirical support (Owsiak 2016). Moreover, although this theory stresses cooperation and the resolution of issues, most scholars use it to study conflict behavior and threat. Our data allows us to reconsider the argument through its principally intended concepts. We therefore not only consider the possibility that a democratic advantage might take various theoretical forms, but also offer an analysis that fairly evaluates its merits on its own terms.

Democracies and Conflict Management

The idea that democracies handle their disputes more peacefully than non-democracies has a long tradition—at least dating back to Kant (1796). Nonetheless, Russett & Oneal (2001, 79) provide a modern, succinct articulation of this phenomenon and its rationale (emphasis ours): "democracy promotes *cooperation* and *peaceful conflict resolution internationally* through (1) its domestic legitimacy and accountability, (2) institutional checks and balances, (3) the transparency that emerges from free communication and political competition, (4) the credibility of international agreements, and (5) its sensitivity to the human and material costs of violent conflict" (for overviews of the democratic peace research program, see Chan 2010, Mitchell 2012). As a result, when two democratic states (i.e., a democratic dyad) experience a disagreement with one another, one or more of these mechanisms operates within both states, increasing the likelihood that they manage their dispute via peaceful, diplomatic channels, as opposed to violence.

Many of the above mechanisms fall under a broader institutional argument—namely, that democracies possess domestic institutions that inhibit the use of violence in interstate disputes. Public opinion, for example, holds leaders accountable through elections, and these elections produce three effects. First, they compel democratic leaders to pay close attention to and work to minimize the costs of conflict. Leaders who incur too many costs lose elections. Second, they

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[1]Existing research on the management of territorial claims provides a partial answer (see Hensel et al. 2008, Huth & Allee 2002). Nonetheless, territorial claims and border settlement are distinct concepts that capture related, but different phenomena (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016).

generally make leaders more reluctant to use force than non-democratic leaders; if a leader does not win the conflict that follows or engages in an unpopular conflict, they risk losing their job (Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson & Woller 1992, Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson 1995, Reiter & Stam 2002).

Finally, as a result of the first two effects, democracies are better able than non-democracies to signal resolve (an informational effect; see Schultz 1999). Because their constituents will punish them electorally for appearing weak or losing, democracies must commit fully to any conflict they join. Thus, a democracy's threat to escalate a conflict carries less uncertainty about whether the democracy would follow through on escalatory rhetoric (Fearon 1994, Schultz 2001). Other institutional mechanisms, such as checks against executive authority (e.g., the need for funding or approval from another branch of government) and the public position of opposition parties (the result of an open press; see Schultz 1999), can likewise both credibly signal resolve and hinder the ability of democratic leaders to escalate disputes quickly. By removing uncertainty and slowing escalation, these institutions increase the time and opportunities during which peaceful conflict management can occur.

A second, related path to peace depends upon democratic norms. Underlying this normative position is the belief that "democratic states locked in disputes are better equipped than others with the means for diffusing conflict situations at an early stage" (Dixon 1994, 14). The focus here shifts from constraints that prevent leaders from easily engaging in aggression (e.g., public opinion or checks on executive authority) or signaling resolve more credibly to a unique *skill set* that democracies possess. Dixon (1994) calls this skill set "the norm of bounded competition." If democracies indeed possess this norm, two predictions follow. First, democracies should be more likely to manage and resolve their disputes "by third-party conflict management, by [negotiated] agreement ..., and by strategies of reciprocation" (Maoz & Russett 1993, 625). Second, as the number of democracies in the system expands, we would expect the norm of bounded competition to dominate dispute management in the system as well (Mitchell 2002), thereby producing a more peaceful world.

Disagreement remains on the exact mechanism linking democracies to peace, but empirical studies repeatedly confirm a link between democracies and fewer militarized conflicts (for prominent examples of such research, see Bremer 1992, Russett & Oneal 2001). Studies of conflict management also regularly suggest that democratic dyads employ peaceful conflict management strategies more frequently than non-democratic dyads (see Hensel et al. 2008, Ghosn 2010). Nevertheless, ongoing research increasingly attaches caveats to these broad findings and narrows the conditions under which the democratic peace logic might work—as seen through three sets of empirical findings. First, democratic dyads are not always less violent than non-democratic dyads. Park & James (2015), for example, conclude that the pacific relationship between democratic states breaks down when highly salient territory is at stake. Gibler (2012) similarly finds that democratic, contiguous dyads are not less likely to use violence than their counterparts when borders remain unsettled (see also Senese 1997, Owsiak 2016). Second, democratic dyads do not necessarily use peaceful conflict management more frequently than non-democratic ones. Studies of various conflict management tools support this conclusion, including work on cooperative action generally (Clare 2014), mediation (Beardsley 2011), and arbitration/adjudication (Gent & Shannon 2011). Finally, when democratic dyads resort to peaceful conflict management, scholars often find that these dyads are no more successful at conflict management than their counterparts (e.g., see Ghosn 2010, Brochmann & Hensel 2011). As Mitchell & Prins (1999, 178) conclude,

democratic dyads "not only were incapable of settling the immediate issue in dispute, but also failed to permanently resolve the substantive issue or issues under contention as well."

All of this evidence runs counter to what the democratic peace arguments would predict. As a result, whether democracies handle their conflicts more peacefully than non-democratic dyads—and the exact conditions under which they might do so (if at all)—remains theoretically possible but empirically unclear. Moreover, as we discuss in the next section, although the democratic peace is meant to apply to all types of issues, few studies consider the fact that democracies seldom fight each other because they rarely have unresolved territorial issues. Since territorial issues remain the most dangerous issue for states to resolve, the relative dearth of democratic peace theorizing on territorial issues is problematic for establishing the cause of peace in these dyads.

What is the Relationship between Settled Borders and Democracy?

An important empirical connection exists between democracy and territorial issues: democratic dyads simply do not fight over territorial issues and, with few notable exceptions, almost always have settled borders (e.g., see Mitchell & Prins 1999, Gibler 2012, Hensel 2000). Why this is so, however, remains an open question because it is difficult to determine the direction of the causal process that associates democracies with peace.

Democratic peace research has provided little help. Despite the wealth of scholarship it has generated, we find only one theory that explicitly ties democratic peace theories to variations in the types of issues over which states fight. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) argue that leaders wish to remain in power, which they achieve by distributing a mix of public and private goods among their supporters (see also Morrow et al. 2006). Different institutions, however, lead to different preferences over this distributional mix. Non-democratic leaders typically possesses smaller constituencies (i.e., winning coalitions), leading them to favor the use of private goods (e.g., money or other benefits distributed directly to the individual supporter). In contrast, democratic leaders generally have much larger constituencies and, therefore, favor the distribution of public goods to maintain their political support (e.g., education or healthcare).

Territory is not a public good. It cannot be easily divided among large populations, and the gains from occupation do not translate well to added benefits for individuals in the large constituencies that comprise democracies.[2] Thus, Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999) expect that democracies resolve territorial disputes peacefully; their leaders do not profit from territorial division and have strong incentives to reach border settlements prior to armed conflict (e.g., to prevent sinking resources into a conflict they must subsequently win to retain office).

Unfortunately, the above argument contains little specificity regarding when or where the democratic preference for territorial settlement generally—and border settlement more

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[2]One might argue that strategically valuable territory offers greater security—a public good—while economically valuable territory provides monetary gains that are less amenable to public distribution. If true, democracies will favor disputes over strategic territory and eschew disputes over economic territory. Two points are worth noting about such an argument. First, it does not change the aggregate expectations derived from Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) that we discuss here. Second, Owsiak (2016) tests two variants of this more specific argument and finds support for neither. We are therefore not confident that the specific type of territory alters the expectations we outline.

specifically—is supposed to work. We therefore theoretically derive four possible relationships between settled borders, joint democracy (i.e., dyads composed of two democratic states), and peace. These possibilities include:

1) Democracies Settle Borders More Easily

Democratic dyads may have an easier time settling their mutual borders before conflict breaks out—for any of the reasons advanced by democratic peace scholars that we outline in the previous section. If true, then we can leverage the temporal sequence of regime type and border settlement to determine whether there is some form of democratic advantage during the border settlement process—that is, we can compare how democratic and non-democratic dyads work toward border settlement. Importantly, however, joint democracy must be present in the dyad prior to border settlement in order for such a democratic advantage to exist. If joint democracy instead does *not* precede border settlement temporally, then arguments linking democratic dyads to any heightened proclivity for border settlement would be empirically untenable.

To address this possibility, we examine sequencing before both the first border agreement and full settlement of the border within contiguous dyads (see also Owsiak & Vasquez 2016). Doing so provides a conservative empirical test. For example, even if joint democracy does not facilitate *full* border settlement, it may exert a less dramatic, yet still empirically valuable effect by generating lower-level cooperation on border issues. Mindful of this, we consider both partial and full border settlements to examine whether democratic dyads can settle border issues better than their counterparts during their history.

2) Democracies Keep Borders Settled

Perhaps joint democracy plays no role in border settlement—either because borders settle at random points in time as a result of idiosyncratic factors or because factors unrelated to democracy facilitate border settlement instead. This, however, need not mean that democracy plays no role in the border settlement process. Leader incentives, as well as democratic structures and culture, could alter dyadic relations once border issues have been settled. In particular, theories linking democratic institutions to increased credibility (Fearon 1994), more stable commitments (Leeds 1999, Martin 2000), and/or policy inertia (Tsebelis 2002) might take hold in the post-border settlement context—after the involved states have resolved one of their most contentious issues (Park & James 2015). In this case, although joint democracy does not produce border settlement, what makes borders *remain* settled and peaceful are the democratic characteristics that maintain cooperation over time (e.g., see Owsiak, Diehl & Goertz 2016).

This possible relationship constitutes a more limited, context-dependent form of the first relationship we outline above. It is an interactive effect, in which dyads with settled borders leverage their democratic characteristics to maintain border settlements they previously reached. If true, then jointly democratic, settled-border dyads should be more peaceful than any other regime types that also have settled borders.

3) Democratic Peace and Border Settlement are Independent

The different types of peace that follow from joint democracy and border settlement may also be conceptually and empirically unrelated to each other for one of two reasons. First, democracy may play no role in settling border issues or keeping those issues settled. Second, democratic dyads may be more peaceful than non-democratic dyads—as democratic peace scholars argue—but this constitutes a separate peace that is qualitatively different from the settled-border dyads. After all, joint democracy is a relatively rare phenomenon in the international system that has only recently gained prominence (Russett & Oneal 2001, Mitchell 2002). Settled borders, too, may only really affect the limited number of contiguous states in the international system. Such independent effects are therefore theoretically plausible and easily testable with multiple regression; if both factors have a pacifying effect on dyadic conflict, then both joint democracy and settled borders will remain statistically significant in models where both effects are estimated simultaneously.

4) Border Settlement Leads to Peace and Democracy

Finally, border settlement may yield peace and a more benign environment in which democracy can emerge. This argument rests upon the issue-based approach to interstate conflict, which suggests that certain types of conflict—such as unsettled territory generally, or interstate borders in particular (for an overview, see Vasquez 2009)—possess more domestic and international salience than other issues, constitute external threats to the state, and are therefore often more difficult to resolve (Mansbach & Vasquez 1981, Huth 1998). Such dangerous threats to homeland territories tend to fester and cause centralization of both public opinion and domestic institutions. Individuals become more nationalistic (Gibler, Hutchison & Miller 2012) and intolerant (Hutchison & Gibler 2007), and this shift in public opinion pressures opposition groups to support the executive. Absent effective opposition, and often with a strong military force backing the leader, any executive is likely to try to curtail or eliminate the political institutions that can prevent centralized executive powers (i.e., those that often accompany democratic states Gibler 2010). Once territorial border issues are settled, however, then decentralization of public opinion and institutions follow, thereby creating an environment conducive to democratization (Owsiak 2013). This implies that any peace observed within democratic dyads is spurious to the territorial peace that exists temporally prior to it (Gibler 2007, Gibler 2012).

Our theoretical expectations align most closely with the fourth and final potential relationship and are well specified in several related studies (for example, see Gibler 2012). The implications derived from this territorial peace argument have been confirmed several times, using rather different research designs (Gibler 2012, Gibler & Tir 2010, Gibler & Braithwaite 2013, Gibler & Miller 2013). Nevertheless, these studies contain three shortcomings. First, they overlook the temporal sequencing argument between joint democracy and border settlement. If, for example, many democratic dyads possess unsettled borders (i.e., democracy does not generally follow border settlement), then this would provide strong contradictory evidence against the territorial peace. Our study therefore offers a significant piece of evidence necessary to evaluate the relative merits of the democratic and territorial peace arguments. Second, existing work focuses on conflict behavior rather than cooperation, and models threat rather than the removal of

contentious issues. Cooperation and the resolution of contentious issues, however, underlie the democratic and territorial peace arguments, which creates a slight disconnect between the arguments and their evaluation. Moreover, if democracies engage in cooperation to remove contentious issues, existing work will miss many of the peaceful efforts that democracies employ. Our work, in contrast, captures these efforts. Finally, we go beyond the territorial peace argument to consider the possibility that democratic dyads behave more peacefully than non-democratic dyads after border settlement occurs. In the end, if joint democracy has no significant effect on interstate conflict behavior after border settlement, and joint democracy does not precede border settlement, then little evidence remains to argue that the democratic peace is more than a subset of a larger, settled-border peace.

Research Design

Our unit-of-analysis is the contiguous dyad-year during the time period 1919-2001, and two points are worth noting about these spatial and temporal domains. First, for our purposes, contiguity requires that dyad members share an inland or river boundary (Stinnett et al. 2002). This spatial restriction derives from theoretical considerations about borders and their settlement—namely, only land contiguous dyads have (land) borders to settle (Gibler 2012, Owsiak 2012). Dyad members separated by larger bodies of waters (e.g., gulfs, seas, or oceans) have no land boundary to settle, thereby obviating the need to negotiate or sign international border agreements.[3] Second, the post-1919 temporal domain not only results from data availability, but also focuses our analyses on the period when democracies started to become more prevalent in the international system.

Dependent Variables

We analyze the predictors of four different types of dependent variables. First, we use a dichotomous variable to predict *any agreement* about the delimitation of borders in a contiguous dyad (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016). Second, we define full *border settlement* as the year after which neighboring states sign one or more interstate agreements that delimit the entirety of their mutual border(s) (Owsiak 2012). This variable focuses on the international legal status of the border (see also, Kocs 1995) and is therefore distinct from territorial claims (Huth & Allee 2002, Hensel et al. 2008).[4] A few points are worth noting about this variable. First, if a border settles in pieces (e.g., Afghanistan-Iran), then a border achieves full settlement only after the dyad members sign agreements delimiting all parts of the border. Second, new states might inherit potential border agreements from previous states—particularly if the new state results from decolonization. Dyads in which a new state raises a claim to border territory in the first year after independence get treated in the data as if they have an unsettled border—until they sign agreements that delimit it. In contrast, those dyads that have a historical (e.g., colonial)

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[3]Future research might extend our arguments into maritime borders as well. Nonetheless, existing research suggests that states treat land and maritime space differently (Hensel et al. 2008), which supports our decision to focus exclusively on land borders in this study.

[4]A claim exists when a government's officials demand sovereignty over territory that sits within another state's sovereign jurisdiction (Hensel et al. 2008). The raising and settling of these claims remains distinct from international legal treaties that states sign (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016). For example, a state can renounce a claim without signing an agreement with its neighbor. Similarly, states might sign an agreement that delimits their border, but the official language of a claim could still persist for a variety of reasons (e.g., demarcation has not yet occurred).

agreement that delimits their border and whose members raise no claim in the first year after the dyad enters the system are treated as if their borders are settled (under the principle of *uti possidetis*).[5]

Our third dependent variable concerns *destabilized borders.* We define destabilized (or previously settled) borders as cases in which a state raises a territorial claim (as defined by Huth & Allee 2002) after previously settling their border in full. Although relatively rare, such cases exist. Moreover, it is theoretically plausible that democracies are better equipped than non-democratic states to keep their borders settled, thereby avoiding the conflict that can accompany destabilized borders. Because the territorial claim data we employ end in 1995, we supplement it using Gibler & Miller's (2014) coding rules for the 1996-2001 years.[6] In the end, these coding rules allow us to distinguish between three types of borders: unsettled, destabilized (i.e., previously settled), and settled.

Finally, we also examine whether conflict occurs in dyads with and without border settlements. To do this, we use the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) dataset that defines conflict as the threat, display, or use of force between two or more states (Jones, Bremer & Singer 1996). Two of our models also restrict the conflict dependent variable to MIDs categorized by the Correlates of War Project (CoW) as fights specifically over territorial issues. In each of these conflict models, border settlement becomes an independent variable.

Independent Variables

Our primary independent variable is the presence of joint democracy in the contiguous dyad. Using Polity IV, we code a state as democratic if it scores 6 or higher on the 21-point combined democracy-autocracy scale (Marshall & Jaggers 2002). Dyads with two democratic states are "democratic dyads," while we classify the remainder as "non-democratic dyads." In the conflict analyses, we also include interactions between joint democracy on the one hand and either settled borders or destabilized (i.e., previously settled) borders to differentiate between democracies in and out of settled-border environments. This allows us to test whether contiguous democracies require border settlement to avoid dyadic conflict.

Our control variables include several factors potentially related to both democracy and either border settlement or conflict. First, dyads containing at least one major state may behave differently than other dyads, and democracies are relatively more populous among that subset of states in the international system. We use a dichotomous variable derived from the CoW Project for this measure. Second, dyad members who belong to a common defense pact may be more likely to cooperate, and we code this dichotomous variable using data from Gibler (2009). Third, we control for relative capabilities among dyad members by identifying the stronger state's share of dyadic capabilities (or CINC score; Singer, Bremer & Stuckey 1972). Fourth, a border's age may affect the settlement process, especially if dyads experience positive duration dependence with respect to the border settlement process (Clay & Owsiak 2016, Vasquez 2009). Fifth, it may be that certain borders have little impact on dyadic relations because the involved states are so

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[5]Detailed coding rules for the agreement dataset appear in Owsiak (2012).

[6]We do not consider the rare occurrence of peaceful border changes across already-settled borders to be destabilizing. According to Tir et al. (1998), 40 peaceful transfers exist within our sample of contiguous states (1919-2001), but only three of these transfers occur after the border would be considered "settled." Another six cases were part of the initial year of full settlement in our dataset, and the remaining 31 cases were only partial border settlements.

remote from the population centers of one another. We therefore control for the logged distance between the capital cities of dyad members.[7] Sixth, in our border settlement models, we control for the existence of an active territorial claim in the prior dyad-year under observation. Democracies are less likely to have such claims, and when present, these claims can complicate settlement—relative to dyads working to settle borders for which no active claims exist.[8] Finally, we control for autocratization in the dyad within our destabilized border models—to determine whether autocratic movements might be related to the destabilization that occurs. This dichotomous variable tracks whether one or more members of the dyad changed from being democratic ($> 5+$ on the Polity scale) to non-democratic ($< 6+$ on the Polity scale) during the previous year (Marshall & Jaggers 2002). An alternative, temporally less stringent version of this variable also uses a five year window to check the sensitivity of any results.

To test our propositions, we rely on a series of Cox proportional hazard models and constrain the sample appropriately to cases that have a chance of experiencing each particular dependent variable. We use the Cox model because it allows us to avoid making any *a priori* assumptions about the distributional form of the underlying duration time (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004).

Summary Statistics

Before turning to our analyses of how democracy and border types interact, we first present a summary of the bivariate distribution of these variables in Table 1. Immediately noticeable, most borders since the First World War have been settled at one point in time, and the vast majority of those settlements persist. A total of 11,027 dyad-years (out of 12,914) contain borders that were settled, and only 8% (n=915) of these cases subsequently destabilized after settlement occurred. In contrast, only fourteen percent of our dyad-year observations in our dataset contain unsettled borders (n=1,887).

Table 1: The Distribution of Border Types and Joint Democracy, 1919-2001

Border type	Mixed and Non-democratic		Jointly democratic		Total
Unsettled	1,721	(1,580.9)	166	(306.1)	1,887
Destabilized (previously settled)	758	(766.6)	157	(148.4)	915
Settled	8,340	(8,471.6)	1,772	(1,640.4)	10,112
Total	10,819		2,095		12,914

(Actual cell counts with expected counts in parentheses.)

The data also underscore the rarity of joint democracy among the unsettled-border cases. There are only 166 dyad-years in which joint democracies have unsettled borders, and an analysis of the cases underlying these dyad-years suggest that they are dominated by a few dyads. The United Kingdom and Ireland, for example, account for 47% of these observations (78 dyad-years), with the Turkey-Cyprus and India-Bangladesh dyads responsible for another 11% (19 dyad-years) and 8% (13 dyad-years) of these observations respectively. Indeed, the expected counts in Table 1 indicate that joint democracy is under-represented among unsettled-border dyad-years and over-represented among settled-border dyad-years. These data establish well that there exists at least a correlation between regime type and settled borders (see also Owsiak 2012), and this suggests border settlement is at least an intervening variable in the overall democracy-peace relationship. We investigate this further in the next section.

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[7]These data come from Kristian Gleditsch, available online at `http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/data-5.html`.
[8]These cases are theoretically possible. See (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016).

Democracy, Border Settlements, and Militarized Conflict

Our first set of analyses examines the effects of joint democracy on both the proclivity of contiguous dyads to settle their borders and the likelihood that a full settlement will breakdown in future years. These results appear in Table 2. Throughout the table, we employ Cox proportional hazard models, allowing for multiple failures within cases but no changed hazard rate across those failures.[9] We report the coefficients from the estimates and cluster the errors on each dyad.

The first column of estimates presents the effect of each variable on the likelihood of signing any border delimitation agreement, and the second column uses full border settlement as the dependent variable. Because dyads must have borders to settle, this model—as well as the second—includes only those contiguous dyads that have not fully settled their borders through agreement.[10] Within over 2,800 contiguous dyad-years, there is only one statistically significant predictor of signing a border agreement in either model: the presence of a territorial claim reduces the likelihood that a dyad reaches a full settlement. Cumulatively, this echoes previous research, which finds that common conflict variables cannot predict peaceful territorial transfers well (Gibler & Tir 2010).

These null results are important for two related reasons. First, because we use common correlates of conflict as predictors in these models, the lack of any statistical relationships confirms that border agreements are not endogenous to conflict processes. Moreover, this remains true for factors that convention suggests are peace-inducing—namely, the presence of joint democracy in the dyad. Neither any partial border agreement in the dyad nor full border settlement, which itself often results from a cumulative process of partial agreements (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016), can be predicted by the presence of two democracies prior to settlement. This makes sense, of course, considering our discussion of the unsettled, jointly democratic borders in the previous section. Few such cases exist, the dominant case (the United Kingdom-Ireland) required 78 years to settle their border, and remaining cases often revert quickly back to non-democracies or have yet to achieve border settlement.

The relative dearth of unsettled border dyad-year observations in the first two models stands out, especially when compared to the samples with settled border dyad-year observations that are analyzed in the remainder of the table. Although this might appear to result from the time period under investigation—post-1919, or when democratic dyads become prevalent in the international system—time period alone cannot explain it. Rather, new states often adopted colonially-drawn borders when they entered the post-1919 international system.[11] Many of these states also subsequently adopted democratic regimes as well, which is why the majority of contiguous borders settled before joint democracy spread through the international system. This trend provides indirect evidence that border settlement is a precursor to the observation of democratic dyads more generally (see also, Gibler & Tir 2014, Owsiak 2013). We return to this point below.

Columns three and four next examine moves from fully settled borders to destabilized borders—previously settled borders that subsequently develop Huth & Allee (2002) territorial

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[9]Neither allowing hazards to vary after each failure nor analyzing only dyad-years containing an active territorial claim substantively changes the results.

[10]A dyad must, therefore, exist for at least one year with unsettled borders to be included in the analysis. Upon settling its borders, a dyad exits the analysis. Dyads occasionally sign border agreements after fully delimiting their borders, but the reporting on these agreements is often inconsistent (see Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016).

[11]Because these dyads adopt colonially drawn borders at independence, they never exist with unsettled borders and are therefore excluded from the agreement-making analyses.

Table 2: The Effects of Joint Democracy on Border Settlement and Maintenance, 1919-2001

DV:	Border Agreement		Destabilized Border	
Independent Variables	Any Agreement	Full Settlement	Huth & Allee dispute	
One or more majors involved	-0.043	0.247	0.961**	0.915**
	(0.409)	(0.433)	(0.395)	(0.400)
Defense pact	-0.375	0.127	-1.376**	-1.354**
	(0.327)	(0.326)	(0.542)	(0.548)
Stronger state's capability	-0.552	-0.536	-2.149**	-2.161**
	(0.775)	(0.754)	(0.959)	(0.957)
Border age	0.006	-0.007	0.014***	0.013***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Distance between capitals (logged)	-0.078	-0.179	0.039	0.059
	(0.152)	(0.140)	(0.160)	(0.168)
Joint democracy	-0.498	-0.368	-0.324	-0.220
	(0.531)	(0.591)	(0.394)	(0.400)
Huth and Allee dispute (lagged)	0.086	-0.803***		
	(0.369)	(0.310)		
Autocratization in the dyad			-37.302***	
			(0.383)	
Autocratization in the dyad				0.267
(past 5 years)				(0.389)
Observations	2,846	2,846	10,133	10,133

Cox regression coefficients displayed, with errors clustered on dyadic border.

$*p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01$

disputes—to determine whether jointly democratic dyads are better than non-democratic dyads at preserving border settlements. We find no evidence for this position. The move from fully settled to destabilized borders is a rare event, but its occurrence is associated with increased levels of several commonly-used predictors of conflict. The presence of a major state, as well as older borders, increase the likelihood of these disputes over time, while defense pacts and dyads with a more asymmetric power distribution face significantly fewer destabilized borders. Joint democracy and capital-to-capital distance, though, exert no statistically significant effect on border destabilization.

When combined with the first two models, our findings suggest that border agreements—whether partial or full—may occur idiosyncratically, but the maintenance of fully settled borders rests on several factors associated with conflict. Nevertheless, the overall impact of these variables on destabilization is quite small, even when combined. For example, the substantive effect of all four statistically significant variables, set to the values most likely to cause a destabilized border in the model—a major state, no defense pact, parity (i.e., CINC ratio of 0.55 or lower), and borders 50+ years old—produce an approximately 18% increase in the probability of border destablization over the average contiguous dyad. Of course, only 10 dyad-years match these conditions, and they are all in the Russia-China dyad—a border that has never been fully settled. The substantive effect on most *settled* borders will therefore be lower.

The destabilized border models in Table 2 also reveal noteworthy effects for periods during which one or both states move away from democracy (i.e., autocratization). These, too, are relatively rare events among settled-border states, with a rate of autocratization that is half that of dyads without settled borders (1.82% for unsettled-border dyads and 0.85% for settled-border dyads). Indeed, we find no cases in which destabilization occurs during a move toward autocracy, suggesting that such movements are associated strongly with stable borders instead. To check the

robustness of this finding, the fourth column of Table 2 uses a variable to track whether autocratization occurred during the previous five years in the dyad—as opposed to the last year alone. That variable fails to achieve statistical significance in our reported model, as well as any robustness models we estimated.

We believe these results suggest that moves away from democracy produce a focus on domestic policy within the initial year, thereby significantly reducing the likelihood of border destabilization. This domestic focus, however, wears off quickly (i.e., within five years) and returns the dyad to average levels of conflict-proneness. Because these cases also occur among dyads with borders that remain settled, autocratization itself is unlikely to be related to foreign policy decisions about border destabilization. Nevertheless, the rareness of autocratization among settled-border dyads, as well as the null effects of regime changes on whether those borders remain settled, imply support for the territorial peace arguments. This evidence, for example, is consistent with the claim that settled borders increase state decentralization and the removal of territorial issues from state foreign policy agendas. It also suggests that democracies may not be better-equipped to keep contentious issues off their foreign policy agenda—for democratic dyads are no more likely than non-democratic dyads to prevent border destabilization.[12]

Table 3: The Effects of Joint Democracy and Border Settlement and Conflict, 1919-2001

DV:		Militarized Dispute		
Independent Variables	Any MID	Any MID	Territorial	Territorial
Joint democracy	-0.897***	-0.647	-0.620	-0.829
	(0.288)	(0.692)	(0.406)	(0.629)
Previously settled border	0.001	0.006	-0.095	-0.045
	(0.236)	(0.236)	(0.404)	(0.405)
Settled border	-1.289***	-1.263***	-2.751***	-2.855***
	(0.186)	(0.185)	(0.288)	(0.286)
One or more majors involved	0.229	0.215	-0.251	-0.224
	(0.229)	(0.229)	(0.450)	(0.450)
Defense pact	-0.481***	-0.480***	-0.115	-0.093
	(0.163)	(0.165)	(0.259)	(0.257)
Stronger state's capability	-0.925*	-0.950*	-0.769	-0.766
	(0.498)	(0.491)	(0.703)	(0.700)
Distance between capitals (logged)	-0.212**	-0.211**	-0.167	-0.174
	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.145)	(0.147)
Border age	-0.003	-0.003	0.002	0.001
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Interaction: joint democracy X		-0.180		-0.340
Previously settled border		(0.834)		(0.913)
Interaction: joint democracy X		-0.382		0.838
Settled border		(0.753)		(0.798)
Observations	12,858	12,858	12,858	12,858

Cox regression coefficients displayed, with errors clustered on dyadic border.
$*p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01$

Do border settlements matter for peaceful interstate relations? In Table 3, we present analyses of the full sample of contiguous dyads between 1919 and 2001 and use interaction terms with joint

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[12]These results differ somewhat from previous analyses of these types of territorial disputes (Mattes 2008). This is likely due to operationalization decisions. Mattes codes autocratization as dispute cases that began between democracies who then experience a subsequent regime change during the course of the dispute. In contrast, although Huth & Allee (2002) claims sometimes persist for long periods of time, we focus on the first five years of regime change. Mattes (2008) also does not differentiate among unsettled, destabilized (i.e., previously settled), and settled borders.

democracy to differentiate regime effects among unsettled borders, settled borders, and destabilized borders (i.e., the previously settled borders—cases that had reached full agreement but then subsequently experienced a Huth and Allee territorial disputes). The first two conflict models—columns one and two—use the onset of any militarized interstate dispute (MID) as the dependent variable. Four variables perform consistently across these models. First, the presence of a defense pact and more asymmetric relative capabilities significantly decrease the likelihood of a MID—by about 40% and 65% respectively, for each variable in both models. Second, distance between capitals exerts a much smaller effect, with the closest capitals having a 10% greater likelihood of conflict than the most distant capitals. Finally, and most pertinent to our study, the presence of a settled border also significantly decreases the likelihood of a MID. It also demonstrates the strongest substantive effect in these models, reducing the likelihood of any MID by about 90%. That high substantive effect only diminishes slightly with the addition of the interaction terms in the second model.

The results for joint democracy are mixed when predicting any conflict. The coefficients associated with this variable are always negatively signed. Yet, joint democracy is statistically significant only in the first conflict model (column one). Including the interaction of joint democracy with settled borders eliminates the relationship (column two)—a finding we confirmed by graphing the marginal effect of joint democracy on settled borders.

The second model is preferable for both empirical and theoretical reasons. First, it performs empirically better than the first model—differentiating best between dispute onset and peace. We reach this conclusion by examining the predicted probabilities of both models and comparing their correct and incorrect predictions of conflict/peace using various cut-points in the predicted probability to determine when the model thinks conflict onset should occur. The first model assumes an unconditional relationship of democracy in the sample and correctly predicts substantially fewer cases in the data. For example, if we assume a cut-point of 20% to predict a dispute in each model—which is approximately two-thirds the range of all predictions in both models—then the model with unconditional effects for democracy correctly predicts 100 fewer cases. The differences are even greater when predicting peace in a given dyad-year, with the unconditional democracy model again performing less well. A likelihood ratio test of the two models confirms the poorer fit for the unconditional democracy model, revealing a statistically significant difference between both estimations.

Moreover, the second model matches the state of the literature better as well. Several studies, for example, suggest that the absence of territorial threat decreases the likelihood of conflict in a dyad and is necessary for observing a dyadic democratic peace (Gibler & Tir 2010, Gibler & Tir 2014). Owsiak (2013), too, demonstrates that settled borders are important for developing democracy—a point that is confirmed by examinations of our data: joint democracy is much more likely after border settlement. Finally, many democratic peace theorists assume at least a reciprocal relationship between peace and democracy (see, for example, Russett & Oneal 2001), suggesting that the former might lead to the latter (at least in part). Regardless, our large-N results preclude us from dismissing the possibility that democracy has a small added effect that reduces general conflict in contiguous dyads. This, however, would be separate from the settled-border peace we identify, and columns three and four of Table 3 suggest such an effect would not extend to the most dangerous state-to-state issues.

Most democratic peace arguments assume a uniform, peaceful effect across all issue types. [13].

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[13]For an exception, see Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), which we discussed earlier.

Issue-based arguments, however, propose that a selection effect exists: democracies do not fight because they have settled borders and therefore rarely fight over territory—the most dangerous of interstate issues. We analyze the discrepancy in these predictions in columns three and four of Table 3, with estimates of whether the dyad experiences a militarized interstate dispute that specifically concerns territory. Only settled borders predict these cases, and their effect is pacifying as the territorial peace argument predicts. More specifically, settled borders reduce the likelihood of territorial MIDs in contiguous dyads by approximately 180%, and this is true whether joint democracy is included in the model separately or with interactive effects (a point we confirmed by analyzing the marginal effects of each interaction and base component). Because we study only contiguous dyads, contiguity itself is removed as a predictor, and no other variable—not even joint democracy—explains the actual issue content of the disputes in these dyads well. In other words, it does not appear that joint democracies are better able to prevent their territorial disagreements from turning violent.

Overall, our large-N findings suggest that commonly-used conflict variables do not predict the dyad-years in which states either sign partial border agreements or reach full border settlement. Moreover, once borders are settled, they rarely destabilize; territorial claims, in other words, generally do not develop between dyad members who have settled their borders. When destabilization occurs, it is also only weakly related to increased levels of the structural predictors of conflict. Finally, joint democracy is an inconsistent predictor of border settlement (either partial or full), border destabilization, and conflict across our models. Only settled borders consistently predicts pairs of states at peace. We examine the cases that produce these results in the next section.

Are democratic states more likely to settle their borders?

The results we present in Table 2 demonstrate that there is no systematic evidence since 1919 that pairs of democracies are more likely to settle their borders than other types of dyads. Nonetheless, we also looked for evidence in our sample that could provide at least a modicum of justification for the joint-democracy-to-settlement argument—at least in the few cases with the proper temporal sequence of joint democracy, followed by settlement. Even in these cases, though, any connection between democracy and settlement remains weak. For example, there are only four cases in which the *first* border agreement in the dyad was signed at a time when both states were democratic: Germany with Czechoslovakia (1919), Denmark (1919), and Poland (1919), and the Czech Republic with Slovakia (1994). The Germany-neighbor agreements were mandated by the Versailles Treaty after World War I. These agreements cannot properly be described as cases of democracy spurring settlement, as third parties (not all democratic) mandated the agreements and Germany did not even take part in the negotiations that stripped their territory of thousands of square miles and millions of people.

The fourth case—the 1994 agreement between the Czechs and Slovaks—describes a rather unique event involving the dissolution of Czechoslovakia following the breakup of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact. The settlement process was not two regimes negotiating. Instead, the agreement process started within Czechoslovakia prior to the breakup and was cemented by state leaders following dissolution, including a small border adjustment a few years after. When added to the World War I Germany cases, these agreements provide little evidence that joint democracy causes the first border agreement in contiguous dyads. Again, these were the only four cases in our entire sample in which joint democracy was *present* in the dyad prior to the first border agreement

between the states—a sample that includes 83 cases of dyads signing such agreements. The paucity of joint democracy and the politics surrounding these few cases of initial border agreement suggests no relationship between regime type and the first border agreement contiguous dyads sign.

Nonetheless, it could still be the case that joint democracy exerts an effect on border settlement after a contiguous dyad signs its initial border agreement. Our sample includes 79 contiguous dyads that reach full border settlement during the period 1919-2001, and once again, we find very little support for the proposed pacifying effects of joint democracy. Of the 79 dyads, 12 were jointly democratic prior to completely settling their borders. These cases appear in Table 4.

Table 4: Dyads that were jointly democratic at full border settlement

State A	State B	Year	Years Democratic	Border Age	Notes on Settlement
255 - Germany	390 - Denmark	1920	2	52	Post-WWI, treaty-mandated settlement
255 - Germany	315 - Czechoslovakia	1920	2	3	Post-WWI, treaty-mandated settlement
305 - Austria	315 - Czechoslovakia	1921	2	3	Post-WWI, treaty-mandated settlement
255 - Germany	290 - Poland	1922	4	5	Post-WWI, treaty-mandated settlement
290 - Poland	315 - Czechoslovakia	1924	6	7	Seven-Day War, Spa Conference mandate
551 - Zambia	565 - Namibia	1991	1	2	Namibian post-war settlement
565 - Namibia	571 - Botswana	1991	1	2	Namibian post-war settlement
091 - Honduras	092 - El Salvador	1993	5	95	ICJ decision, initiated prior to democracies
560 - South Africa	565 - Namibia	1994	3	5	Namibian post-war settlement
316 - Czech Republic	317 - Slovakia	1995	2	3	State division, post-Warsaw Pact
155 - Chile	160 - Argentina	1996	8	147	Most of border settled in 1984, after war loss
200 - United Kingdom	205 - Ireland	2000	78	79	

The majority of the full-settlement cases in Table 4 were initiated during post-war conferences—either World War I (five cases) or the independence of Namibia in 1990 (three cases). German borders were dictated by the Versailles Treaty, while the Treaty of St. Germain dissolved Austro-Hungary and mandated the creation of Czechoslovakia and several other territories. These agreements were imposed by victorious allies following World War I, and only a few of these victorious states were democracies.

Another settlement followed intense fighting between two democracies and a separate, imposed settlement by the Entente. This was the Seven-Day War between Poland and Czechoslovakia (MID1268), that took place from January 23, 1919 to February 1, 1919. The fighting concerned a piece of territory called Cieszyn Silesia along the Polish-Czech border that both sides claimed after the armistice at the end of World War I. The Czechs had decided that Cieszyn Silesia was rightfully theirs and issued an ultimatum to the Polish side demanding that they move back to an area around the Biala River. The Poles refused, and Czech soldiers crossed into the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia in an attempt to prevent a Polish election. By January 27, the Czechs occupied the entire piece of territory without resistance. They then continued to gain territory in Poland until January 31, when the Polish army finally stopped the Czech advance and the Entente pressured the Czechs to stop fighting. The Czech army subsequently withdrew to the new Green Line that was established by an international commission agreement signed on February 3, 1919, and the territory of Cieszyn Silesia was permanently divided with an imposed settlement at the Spa Conference in July 1920.[14]

The Namibian cases hardly fit the democracy-to-settlement thesis either. The South African Border War lasted between 1966 and 1989, as Namibians and several other native independence

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[14]Eight states were represented at the Spa Conference, but only two democracies were included—Britain and France.

movements tried to break away from South Africa. Importantly for our argument, the accords that ended the conflict and affirmed prior colonial boundaries were mediated by the United Nations, the United States, and the Soviet Union, and were agreed upon well *before* Namibian independence. There is, therefore, no possible link between democracy and border settlement in these particular cases.

Two other agreements also involved mediation that began prior to either side becoming democratic. First, Honduras and El Salvador were not able to resolve their border dispute and appealed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a ruling; this application, however, followed a peace treaty signed in 1980, well before joint democracy appeared in the dyad. Chile and Argentina also requested international arbitration for their border dispute, with Papal mediation beginning in 1979, well before democracy in either state. Following the British rout of Argentina in the Falklands War, a newly democratic Argentina finally accepted Chilean overtures and the outcome of Papal mediation by signing a friendship treaty in Rome in 1984. That agreement largely resolved all border issues, including the Beagle Channel dispute. Settlement of the final stretch of the border came 12 years later with a ruling by the Organization of American States (OAS). All Argentina-Chile settlement efforts began before joint democracy appeared in the dyad, though Argentinian reluctance to settle did coincide with a newly democratic government.

Finally, our analysis uncovers one case in which democracy could plausibly play a role: the United Kingdom and Ireland, who resolved their outstanding dispute in 1998 following many decades of joint democracy. Of course, that lengthy stretch of history with active fighting and no settlement begs the question why joint democracy took so long to have an effect. Regardless, as this listing of cases demonstrates, we find very little systematic evidence for the argument that joint democracy causes, or even precedes, international border settlement. Our examination of the cases instead suggests only one possible border settlement arrived at by sovereign democracies, and that case followed seven decades of fighting.

Are democratic states less likely to contest their territories without need of border settlement?

The last section considered the effect of joint democracy on formal border agreements, but it could also be the case that democracies do not need formal agreements to foster cooperation. This argument ignores studies such as Dixon (1993) and Dixon (1994) that suggest democracies are often more likely than other states to sign agreements and formally negotiate their disputed issues, which has become well-accepted among much of the democratic peace literature. Nevertheless, it remains theoretically plausible that jointly democratic dyads do not need border settlements to serve as a mediating variable for peace. We consider that possibility here.

First and foremost, the large-N analyses presented in Table 2 suggest that there are very few cases of joint democracy that do not reach full border settlement. We confirm that in our sample: only five contiguous dyads experienced joint democracy (at any point in their history) but never reached a complete settlement of their border's delimitation. These dyads include Venezuela-Guyana, Cyprus-Turkey, South Africa-Lesotho, India-Pakistan, and India-Bangladesh. Each of these cases contains long-standing border disputes, which could undercut the claim that reduced territorial threat leads to democracy, but the democratizations in these cases are important to examine. Many of these states were former colonies that entered the international

system as democracies or were substantially aided in their democratization by outside parties. Regardless, the fact remains that there are only five jointly-democratic dyads without border settlements in a sample that includes 112 joint democracies with complete border settlements. This establishes well that democratic dyads seldom avoid the formal border settlement process.

Comparing the sample of settlement dyads by regime type adds additional evidence to our argument. Full settlements occur prior to almost 77% of the non-joint democracy dyad-year observations in our sample (10,969 of 14,282). However, for joint democracies, the dyad-year rate of full settlement prior to observation is almost 93% (2,047 of 2,213), a difference of means that is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. Moreover, there were a total of only 166 joint democracy dyad-years that did *not* have a previous border settlement. Of these, 78 (almost half) belonged to the United Kingdom/Ireland dyad. Joint democracy prior to border settlement is, therefore extremely, rare.

Does joint democracy increase the likelihood that a border, once settled, remains settled?

Once again, we know from the results in Table 2 that contiguous, joint democracies are not more likely than other dyadic types to maintain the settlement of their borders. Instead, increased threats to the dyad seem to be the only predictors of border breakdowns. However, the large-N results may mask the role of democracy in certain cases, so we investigate the relationship between joint democracy and border breakdown in this section.

Table 5 lists all cases of border settlement breakdown, which we define as borders that had previously been settled but then developed a Huth & Allee (2002) by one or both states in the dyad. Column one of the table lists the dyad, and column two provides the years of the territorial claim, with the years the dyad was jointly democratic in parentheses. We note whether joint democracy was present at claim initiation or settlement in the next two columns, and the fifth column provides notes on how the claim was settled.

Six of the 18 cases in Table 5 began when the dyad was not a joint democracy, though in half these the claim began just a few years prior, and all but three cases ended while both states were democratic. These data suggest limited support for the possibility of democracy's maintenance of border settlements. However, a look at the resolution methods in these cases—or the lack of resolution of claims—demonstrates that regime type has only modest leverage over claim mediation even in this sample.

Three of the claims did not end during our sample, and each was jointly democratic for much of their histories. Another four cases were settled by joint democracies, but the method of settlement was already prescribed by the Paris Peace Conference that followed World War I, which we described earlier as comprised of both democracies and authoritarian states. The decision rule was often democratic in some sense since plebiscites were the preferred decision rule on disputed territories, but the conference itself was hardly the outgrowth of democratic norms. Instead, local votes were an easy method of distributing small territories that still lingered following the war and were often equivalent to coin flips among negotiators (Goldstein 1991).

Third-party decision making by the International Court of Justice and multi-party talks provide some suggestion that democracies behave differently when confronting these issues, but this

Table 5: Dyads that were jointly democratic during settlement breakdown

Dyad	Years (as Joint Democracy)	Joint Democracy Start	End	Resolution Method
2-United States/20-Canada	1973-2001 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Unresolved
130-Ecuador/135-Peru	1950-1998 (1980-1998)	No	Yes	Bilateral and third-party negotiation
140-Brazil/165-Uruguay	1919-2001 (1958-1960; 1985-2001)	No	Yes	Unresolved
145-Bolivia/155-Chile	1919-2001 (1989-2001)	No	Yes	Unresolved
210-Netherlands/211-Belgium	1922-1938; 1945-1959 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Third party (ICJ)
210-Netherlands/260-W Germany	1955-1960 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Occupation, third party
211-Belgium/255-Germany	1919 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Paris Peace Conference
211-Belgium/255-Germany	1925-1940 (1925-1932)	Yes	No	Invasion
220-France/230-Spain	1919-1928 (1919-1922)	Yes	No	Multi-party conference
220-France/255-Germany	1919 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Paris Peace Conference
220-France/255-Germany	1922-1936 (1922-1932)	Yes	No	Affirmed occupation
220-France/260-West Germany	1955-1956 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Plebiscite, bilateral negotiation
255-Germany/290-Poland	1919-1922 (1922)	No	Yes	Paris Peace Conference
255-Germany/390-Denmark	1919-1920 (1920)	No	Yes	Paris Peace Conference
290-Poland/315-Czechoslovakia	1919-1924 (1924)	Yes	Yes	Paris Peace Conference
375-Finland/380-Sweden	1920-1921 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Bilateral negotiation
560-South Africa/565-Namibia	1990-1994 (1994)	No	Yes	Bilateral negotiation
565-Namibia/571-Botswana	1992-1995 (entirety)	Yes	Yes	Third party (ICJ)

conclusion must ignore the near-war between Ecuador and Peru and the outright occupation of several previously German territories by the Netherlands following World War II. Perhaps the strongest support for a democratic peace can be found between Finland and Sweden, but that concerns a conflict and border breakdown that may never have occurred. Biger (1995, 221-222) suggests there never was a dispute in this case and the border was completely settled, without changes, almost 100 years prior and well before democracy in either state.

Overall, we found a total of 18 dyads that had at least one year of joint democracy during a period of border settlement breakdown, which represents 32% of the 57 different dyads experiencing border breakdowns in our sample. The distribution of joint democracy between settled and previously settled cases roughly matches their distribution of all borders that have been settled at one time. There are not relatively fewer joint democracies in this category, as is confirmed by our large-N results. Ultimately, we find little evidence of democratic difference in the ability to maintain settled borders or re-establish settlements once border settlements have broken down.

Conclusion

At the outset of this work, we asked: why do democratic dyads possess fewer territorial disputes than non-democratic dyads? The common answer from the democratic peace research program is that democracies possess characteristics that encourage conflict management—institutional constraints, electoral accountability, norms, or an advantage when signaling resolve (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, Maoz & Russett 1993, Dixon 1994, Schultz 1999). Regardless of the exact characteristic responsible, the conclusion is that democratic dyads *handle* their territorial disputes more peacefully – that is, they enjoy a conflict management advantage over non-democratic dyads. A second plausible answer, however, derives from the issue-based approach to international politics (e.g., see Vasquez 2009, Gibler 2012). It argues that contiguous dyads settle their most salient, conflict-prone disputes—those over the delimitation of interstate borders—*before* becoming democratic. As a result, democratic dyads behave more peacefully because any issues they might dispute possess significantly less salience than those resolved in their non-democratic past. Simply put, the *issues* facing democratic and non-democratic dyads are substantially different.

From these theoretical arguments, we develop and consider numerous potential theoretical relationships between democracy and border settlement, including that: (1) democratic dyads

enjoy a conflict management advantage during the border settlement process; (2) democratic dyads enjoy a conflict management advantage that sustains border settlement, although these characteristics do not contribute to border settlement directly, and; (3) democratic dyads experience a peace independent of border settlement. Our subsequent evaluation of these arguments uncovers no evidence that democracies enjoy a conflict management advantage with respect to border settlement. Very few dyads are democratic when they begin or conclude the border settlement process, thereby logically precluding the possibility that such an advantage exists. Moreover, when we qualitatively examine the few democratic dyads that work toward border settlement, we find that democratic characteristics and processes played no role in introducing border settlement into these dyads. In addition, democratic dyads are neither better than other dyads at maintaining settled borders nor more peaceful than other dyads after border settlement occurs. Thus, although our analysis repeatedly shows that border settlement fosters peace in contiguous dyads, it also leads us to conclude that democratic characteristics do not contribute to, sustain, or foster peace independent of or in conjunction with border settlement.

Despite the strength of evidence behind our conclusion, we do not intend this work to provide the final answer regarding these relationships. Future work might build upon our study in two noteworthy ways. First, our models indicate that scholars do not understand the border settlement process well. Theoretical arguments, for example, link democratic dyads with conflict management via numerous mechanisms; yet it is *non-democratic* dyads that overwhelmingly start and complete border settlement. Moreover, the variables common to conflict models poorly predict when border settlement or border destabilization occurs, suggesting that the cooperative behavior that underlies border settlement and the conflict behavior scholars typically study are not two sides of the same coin. We therefore need better theoretical arguments that explain the factors responsible for promoting or inhibiting border settlement. Once constructed, recently released data on the border settlement process—including the actions of colonial powers, third-parties, and a plethora of common conflict management tools (e.g., negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and post-war conferences, among others)—would then permit an empirical evaluation of these theories (Owsiak, Cuttner & Buck 2016).

Second, we need greater theorizing about the explicit connections between regime type and the *issues* over which states fight. Our study, for example, adds yet another caveat to the conflict management advantage that democracies supposedly enjoy—one that existing work partially foresees (Gibler 2012, Park & James 2015). In particular, we demonstrate that contiguous democratic dyads neither traverse the border settlement process nor sustain their settled borders more successfully than other dyads. Because territorial issues—of which border delimitation concerns comprise a significant part (Huth & Allee 2002)—constitute the most dangerous issues over which states can fight (Vasquez 2009), and the vast majority of conflict occurs within contiguous dyads (Bremer 1992, Buhaug 2005), our finding substantially limits any theoretical democratic advantage. Of course, this need not imply that democracies do not enjoy a conflict management advantage in other spatial or issue-based contexts, but we need more developed mechanisms that specify not only what form this advantage takes, but also the domain in which it operates.

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