Neoidealism and the Democratic Peace*

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While analysts hail the democratic peace as an empirical vindication of neoidealist precepts of world politics, actually it is inconsistent with them. Neoidealism focuses on the role of international regimes - not shared political regime type - in reducing the probability of interstate conflict. In this article, I suggest a more consistent neoidealist conceptualization of the stability among democratic dyads. Focusing on the postwar era, I maintain that a combination of factors, including bipolarity, nuclear deterrence, alliance membership, and trade links, contributed to the formation of an international security regime among the major power democracies and their minor power democratic allies. Further, I maintain that the presence of this international regime and not simply joint democracy allowed for the postwar stability among democratic dyads. While democracy may have been associated with the creation of a security regime at the behest of the Western democracies led by the USA, the expansion and maintenance of this regime (and its conflict dampening attributes) are rooted, to a greater extent, in the interplay of alliance-aggregation and security externalities of trade. This argument is consistent with neoidealist precepts and by focusing on the role of security regimes it contributes to the neoidealist research program.

Introduction

Neoidealism is the most recent variant of the classical idealist paradigm, which emphasizes the prospects for interstate cooperation in world politics. Though neoidealists largely focus on the role of international regimes in fostering cooperation among state actors who are conceived as egoistic, rational, expected utility maximizers, scholars view the empirical findings on the democratic peace thesis as a vindication of neoidealist perspectives.1 For example, Bremer (1992: 388) points out that his findings, which support the democratic peace thesis, 'suggest that a deeper examination of the idealist position might bring us closer to understanding the conditions that foster peace' and that 'perhaps it's time to seriously entertain neoidealism'. Nevertheless, while neoidealism rejects the 'utopic' and normatively based Wilsonian version of international relations, the democratic peace prop-

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1 Technically, the democratic peace thesis is Rummel's (1979, 1983) notion that 'libertarianism' reduces international violence such that democratic states should be less likely to initiate wars. The consensus is that this thesis has been refuted (see Russett, 1993; Ray, 1995). The 'joint freedom proposition' (a phrase coined by Rummel), which maintains that pairs of democracies are less inclined to fight, drew its earliest empirical support from Babst (1964) and was first replicated by Small and Singer (1976). A lexical shift has resulted such that today the democratic peace label is assigned to the joint freedom proposition when actually they are conceptually and empirically separate. Unfortunately, the tyranny of convention has led scholars to use these phrases interchangeably to refer to the decreased likelihood of war among pairs of democratic states.
osition — ostensibly, the empirical cornerstone of neoidealism — appears to derive its most robust empirical support from its normative rather than its institutional dimension (Maoz & Russett, 1993; Russett, 1993; Weart, 1994). A neoidealist reliance on explanations that presuppose a variation in a state’s propensity to conflict as a function of its regime type is equivalent to neorealists deriving their strongest empirical support from analyses that rest on the centrality of ‘human nature’ rather than system structure. If neoidealists are to reconcile democratic peace findings with their own theoretical arguments, they must furnish a consistent neoidealist explanation for the interstate stability accorded to joint democracy. Such an explanation should focus on the taproot of neoidealism — international regimes — in explicating the reduced conflict among democratic dyads. In this paper, I provide such a neoidealist exegesis of the democratic peace. Focusing on the postwar era where evidence for the democratic peace is most apparent, I contend that a combination of factors, including bipolarity, nuclear deterrence, alliance aggregation, and trade links, contributed to the formation of an international security regime among the major power democracies and their minor power democratic allies. Further, I maintain that it was the intervention of this international regime — more than joint democracy alone — that allowed for postwar joint democratic stability. This argument is consistent with neoidealist precepts and by focusing on the role of security regimes it contributes to the neoidealist research program.

The article proceeds in several sections. First, I outline the classical idealist perspective on interstate cooperation and differentiate it from neoidealism. Second, I demonstrate how the democratic peace thesis is inconsistent with neoidealism. Recognizing that studies which support the notion of a temporal bound on the democratic peace have been less than compelling, I demonstrate that, nonetheless, the temporal bound thesis focuses on the postwar epoch as a potential beachhead for neoidealist explanations of joint democratic stability. One of the more important explanations is that an international regime may have emerged which reduced the levels of conflict among democracies in the postwar era. In the third section, I make the argument that although neoidealists emphasize the role of international regimes in reducing interstate conflict they have to address the neorealist contention which suggests the emergence of international regimes is circumscribed by relative gains problems. After a brief discussion of how these problems were overcome in the postwar era, I show, in the fourth section, how the interplay of bipolarity, nuclear deterrence, and alliance aggregation increased the general stability of the postwar system and helped to reduce the levels of major power conflict and interstate violence among democratic dyads. In the next two sections, I delineate the factors that give rise to security regimes and discuss how intra-alliance trade links among democracies laid the groundwork for a democratic security regime. Finally, I conclude with a brief recapitulation of the main argument.

It is not my intent to deny the obvious fact that democratic pairs of states have rarely fought each other in the last two centuries. My main point is that the assumption that political regime type is responsible for the stability of democratic dyads in the postwar era is inconsistent with neoidealism and draws attention away from more consistent neoidealist factors which might account for the democratic peace. This study is also motivated by my view that if neoidealists fail to direct their analyses toward an examination of the impact of international security regimes on the democratic peace, then their scholarship on international security will
remain heuristically interesting but empirically less than compelling.

Classical Idealism and Neoidealism

Neoidealism, conceived as a unified school of thought only with great difficulty, is actually more an amalgam of precepts and prescriptions of classical idealists and assorted neofunctionalists, transnationalists, hegemonic stability theorists, and neoinstitutionalists. The use of the term 'neoidealism' is in keeping with the identity of the paradigmatic predecessors of today's 'neoliberalism' in much the same way as 'neorealism' is to classical 'realism'. Classical idealism is multi-faceted (Russett & Starr, 1996; Stein, 1990; Zacher & Matthew, 1995) with a strong normative dimension which draws on the Enlightenment belief that 'maladaptive behavior is a product of counterproductive institutions and practices that can be changed by reforming the system that produces it, and that human nature ... is subject to modification and not permanently governed by an ineradicable lust of power' (Kegley, 1993: 141). Kegley (1995: 4) suggests that the core of idealism includes the view that (i) human nature is essentially 'good' or even altruistic; (ii) the fundamental human concerns are those of social welfare; (iii) bad behavior is the result of bad institutions; (iv) war is not inevitable and international institutions can help eradicate it; and (v) human progress is possible. Another core precept of classical idealism is that a state's foreign policy derives from its domestic policy; therefore, states that observe the rule of law domestically (e.g., democracies) are more likely to observe international law in their foreign affairs (Kober, 1994) and those that are more repressive/altruistic domestically are more likely to be aggressive/quiescent abroad. In essence, states that are predisposed towards norms of peace and justice, domestically, should be similarly disposed in their foreign policies. This is evocative of Wilson's assertion that 'a steadfast concert of peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations' (cited in Russett & Starr, 1996: 173).

Idealism can also be understood as a synthesis of commercial, regulatory, and republican liberalism (Viotti & Kauppi, 1993: 231). Commercial liberals such as Cobden and the Manchester School argued that the expansion of trade in the international political economy made the cost of war prohibitive so that states would be disinclined to fight and risk severing profitable trade links. Regulatory liberals such as Grotius emphasized the role of international law and international institutions in providing rules of interstate behavior and organizations that would contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Republican liberals such as Kant argued that with the spread of republicanism decisions for initiating war would no longer be the sole domain of monarchs but of leaders who would have to appeal to an ostensibly less bellicose public opinion, thus reducing the likelihood of some wars. Republican liberalism also builds on Kant's notion of a 'League of Peace' and Wilson's view that the operation of such a League within a collective security system would increase the likelihood of global stability.

Classical idealism, then, focuses on free trade, the rule of international law and the prominent role of international institutions, and the proliferation of democratic states as factors encouraging interstate cooperation and global stability – as epitomized in Wilson’s Fourteen Points. It is this idealist conceptualization of world politics that was derided as ‘utopian’ by realists before it fell into utter disrepute as it became associated with the failed policies of Western states in deterring Germany, Italy, and Japan's aggression in the interwar period. Following World War II, with increased international
cooperation in the postwar era largely borne of the Marshall Plan, Japanese reconstruction, and incipient European integration, perspectives that emphasized interstate cooperation began to have greater currency in world politics. Such approaches drew on aspects of the classical idealism of the interwar period but emphasized the functional (and neofunctional) incentives for interstate cooperation (Haas, 1958; Mitrany, 1943) instead of the normative (or in some cases, altruistic) motivations suggested by classical idealists. Following the US abrogation of Bretton Woods, détente, and the rise of OPEC, a transnationalist/interdependence perspective emerged that emphasized the role of international regimes in fostering cooperation among states (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Following closely thereafter, a neoidealistic approach became discernible among the strands of 'neoliberal' and neoinstitutionalist approaches that suggested the possibility of 'governance without government' (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992) in the global system and the likelihood of 'cooperation under anarchy' (Oye, 1986; Stein, 1990).

Neoidealists retained the core idealist concern for interstate cooperation but proposed different mechanisms for its emergence. For neoidealists, the motivation for international cooperation derived primarily from the interests of state actors viewed as egoistic, rational, expected utility maximizers. Eschewing the 'utopic' aspects of classical idealism, neoidealists relied on functionalist arguments rooted in Axelrod’s (1984) explication of the emergence of cooperation among egoists and Keohane’s (1984) emphasis on the role of market failure in order to account for interstate cooperation. The basic neoidealistic argument is that state (and non-state) actors pursue cooperation in order to deal effectively with recurring problems of market failure in important issue areas and they construct international regimes in order to secure gains through interstate cooperation. Interstate cooperation ensues from a reduction in transaction costs, decreased uncertainty, and the formation of institutions to reward cooperation and punish non-cooperation with the rules and norms of the international regime. This cooperative behavior results, in part, from a homogenization of interstate behavior by a process similar to that proposed by Waltz (1979: 73–77). That is, the impact of international anarchism, sovereignty, and self-help serves to regularize the behavior of states throughout the system – in the neoidealistic view – with regards to their motivations for cooperation; however, neoidealistic arguments are amenable to both second and third image interpretations and are unencumbered by the contradictions that derive from Waltz’s (1979) attempt at delineating a pristine systemic theory of world politics (see Keohane, 1986).

The importance of international regimes to neoidealists is that they effectuate the coordination of international behavior in issue areas in ways that comport with expectations from rational actor models. Moreover, their focus on decision-makers as egoistic rational actors distinguishes the neoidealistic version of homo politicus from the classical idealist variant (in fact, it largely appropriates the realist version). The result is that just as neorealists rejected Morgenthau’s emphasis on the role of human nature in foreign policy – substituting the impact of system structure on world politics – neoidealists reject the Wilsonian reliance on shared international stability.

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2 There is some disagreement on whether regimes require a hegemon for their establishment and maintenance. Keohane (1984) suggests that regimes can persist after hegemony and Young (1989: 200) maintains that hegemony is not required to produce agreements 'so long as a contract zone or a zone of agreement exists'. Gilpin’s (1981) analysis is consistent with neorealist assessments in general, which view hegemony as necessary for the establishment of regimes and, more broadly, the provision of international stability.
norms and, in some cases, altruism as motiva-
tion for international cooperation.

While their focus on international regimes is evident, up to now, neoidealists have primarily advanced game-theoretic and functionalist models of interstate cooperation in security affairs and these are yet to be integrated into a model of interstate cooperation that explicates democratic peace claims. What is more, it is commonly assumed that democratic peace findings are consistent with neoidealist approaches to international security (Bremer, 1992: 388) but this is incorrect. In the next section, I offer support for this contention.

Inconsistencies Between the Democratic Peace and Neoidealism

The democratic peace thesis contends that while democratic states are as war prone as other regimes, they are less likely to fight wars against each other (Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Russett, 1993; Small & Singer, 1976). Different versions suggest that democratic states have fought fewer wars against each other in the past two centuries (Bremer, 1992; Lake, 1992; Small & Singer, 1976) or that they have never fought each other (Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Ray 1993, 1995; Rummel, 1979). The notion that democracies are generally less likely to fight wars than non-democracies has been refuted (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992; Chan, 1984; Small & Singer, 1976; Weede, 1984); however, the joint freedom proposition promulgated by Rummel (1979) has been empirically supported in multivariate analyses that control for a variety of potentially confounding variables (Bremer, 1992, 1993; Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992; Gleditsch, 1995; Henderson, 1998; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Maoz & Russett, 1992, 1993; Oneal & Ray, 1996; Oneal & Russett, 1997; Russett, 1993; Small & Singer, 1976). Though there are continued challenges from detractors (Cohen, 1994; Farber & Gowa, 1995, 1997; Layne, 1994; Oren, 1995; Spiro, 1994), the robustness of the democratic peace thesis has led to Levy’s (1989: 88) famous suggestion of its status as an ‘empirical law’. The findings with regard to the democratic peace thesis are not only important in and of themselves, but initially they also seem to supply a powerful support to neoidealist approaches to world politics. A closer examination of the theoretical lattice-work undergirding the democratic peace proposition reveals that — far from providing support for neoidealism — it actually is more consistent with the classical idealist perspectives which neoidealists eschew.

For example, theoretical explanations of the democratic peace emphasize the role of normative and/or institutional constraints in reducing joint democratic conflict (Doyle, 1986; Kober, 1994; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Morgan & Campbell, 1991; Morgan & Schwebach, 1992; Owen 1994). The former assumes that democracies are less disposed to fight each other due to the impact of their shared norms which proscribe the use of violence between them while the latter posits that constraints on the policymaking choices of democratic leaders act as a brake on their foreign policy decision-making with regard to escalating conflict with other democracies. For example, Kober (1994: 254) provides an institutional explanation of democratic peace that focuses on the alleged conflict dampening impact of democratic control over a state’s military resources since, for him, ‘the structure of a government determines how aggressive it can be’. Specifically, ‘dictatorships will be more aggressive than parliamentary democracies since dictators can undertake military actions on their own initiative without having to obtain prior consent from popular elected legislatures’ (Kober, 1994: 254). Kober, like Kant, maintains that republican control of military institutions and decisions for war militate
against the use of force. Since such institutional control is most pronounced within democracies, it follows that democracies should be less likely to pursue aggressive foreign policies than non-democracies. Nevertheless, this position is opposed by the consistent findings that democratic states are no less likely to participate in – and even initiate – war than other types of states (Chan, 1984; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Weede, 1984). In fact, Chan (1984) finds that democracies are often more war-prone than non-democracies. Further, Starr (1992: 52) maintains that 'if constraints per se are the explanation, they should apply to all states so constrained' but the evidence does not support this claim. Moreover, Morgan & Campbell (1991: 204) conclude that 'structural constraints on chief decision makers are not important determinants of the probability that disputes escalate to war', while Owen (1994: 91) maintains that such constraints are as likely to lead to war as to prevent it.

Kober's (1994) analysis is reminiscent of Rummel's (1979) monadic cultural/normative perspective, which maintains that 'libertarian' norms prescribe violence among democracies and that even the presence of a single democracy in a dyad reduces the likelihood of interstate violence. Although, Bremer (1992) and Ray (1995) provide partial support for the monadic thesis, on the whole the monadic cultural/normative thesis is refuted by the evidence that democracies are no less inclined to violence than non-democracies. On the other hand, the dyadic version of the cultural/normative argument has been more successful in accounting for the conflict dampening impact of joint democracy (Maoz & Russett, 1993; Weart, 1994).

Maoz & Russett (1993) provide an empirical test of the explanatory capacity of both institutional and normative factors among postwar dyads and find that although the former are negatively associated with dyadic war, cultural norms account for dyadic peace more generally (i.e. both dispute escalation and war involvement). They conclude that while the two factors are related, it appears that shared cultural norms form the hub around which the democratic peace revolves. Although Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman (1992) take the opposite view and Ray (1995: 37) suggests that the dichotomy between cultural/normative and structural/institutional versions is overstated and probably not very useful; nonetheless, there appears to be a general assent – though clearly not a consensus – that normative more than institutional factors account for the democratic peace (Russett & Starr, 1996).

Owen (1994) attempts to synthesize both normative and institutional arguments in his explanation of the democratic peace. He asserts that liberal ideas in democracies generate liberal ideologies that proscribe war against other democracies while promoting institutions that encourage free and open debate of important issues. The combination of these forces, for Owen, constrains democratic governments from fighting wars with other democracies. Although Owen seeks to reconcile the two dominant explanations of democratic peace, his explanation obscures more than it illuminates. First, Owen seems to focus on the role of elite perceptions of the ‘democratic-ness’ of their adversary as an intervening factor between shared democracy and conflict; however, the manner by which the processes Owen outlines reduces conflict is not apparent. For example, he maintains that ‘[l]iberalism is … more tolerant of its own kind’ and that ‘[o]nce liberals accept a foreign state as a liberal democracy, they adamantly oppose war against that state’ (Owen, 1994: 95). This thesis, for Owen, follows from liberal premises but in such an idiosyncratic way that democracy is pretty much in the eye of...
the beholder. In fact, if the democratic peace
is borne of perceptions (and misperceptions) then the relationship between joint democracy and conflict is subject to decision-maker’s (and their public’s) myopia, biases, and politically expedient rationalizations for violence (see Oren, 1995). Therefore, Owen’s (1994) thesis is not an explanation of the conflict dampening impact of joint democracy but more an explanation of how perceptions of affinity can govern foreign policy decisions. For example, among Owen’s cases, he cites Franco–American relations from 1796–98 where US perceptions of France as a liberal democracy, ostensibly, quelled tensions between them. Beyond the fact that it is quite a stretch to label 18th-century America as democratic, Owen (1994: 105) himself maintains that ‘France [during the 1790s] does not qualify by my definition as a liberal democracy’. If joint democracy is largely determined by perceptions – and in this case misperceptions – such that its alleged conflict dampening impact is manifest even when both states are not democratic, then it follows that the ‘liberal peace’ is less a ‘perpetual peace’ as Kant suggested and more a ‘perceptual peace’ for Owen. Again, this begs the question of the role of perceptions – as opposed to regime type – on conflict, while failing to provide a compelling explanation for the democratic peace.

Owen’s positing of the primacy of perceptions as a factor in joint democratic conflict rises or falls on the merits of arguments on the role of perceptions/misperceptions in international conflict (e.g. Jervis, 1976; Levy, 1983; Singer, 1958) in general. Although hardly conclusive, the literature on these relationships suggests that in many cases democratic states suffer from problems of misperception as readily as non-democratic states. In a case study of the impact of perceptions on decisionmaking in World War I, Holsti et al. (1968) found that the democratic Allies underperceived the level of conflict directed to their coalition while the non-democratic Central Powers overperceived the level of conflict directed towards them by the Allies. Although the directions of the misperceptions were different, it appears that the political elites of the World War I democracies were just as subject to misperceptions as those of their non-democratic adversaries (for other examples, see Stoessinger 1998).

From Owen’s analysis the manner by which democracies overcome the problems of misperception in order to avoid war between themselves is not clear. One may counter that decisionmakers with more complete information are less likely to misperceive the intentions of their adversaries. Since democracies evince greater freedom of information, their elites and publics, ostensibly, would be less likely to suffer from misperceptions borne of limited information and would therefore be less likely to ‘stumble’ into war (see Fearon 1994); however, Stein (1990: 86) reminds us that ‘[a]lthough misunderstanding and misperception can cause otherwise avoidable conflict, full information does not guarantee cooperation and harmony. In fact, a certain amount of interpersonal ignorance may provide a lubricant of social interaction. Think what would happen if people could suddenly read each other’s thoughts … “the first effect would be to dissolve all friendships” … [and] “by nightfall human society would be in chaos”’.

While the overall mechanism for the democratic peace is yet to be convincingly demonstrated, joint democracy remains the most widely hailed instrument for international coordination in security affairs; nonetheless, scholars such as Gates et al. (1996: 4) remind us of several striking inconsistencies in the democratic peace literature. First they point out that democratic peace theorists faithfully rely on Kant’s oft-cited pronouncements in *Perpetual
Peace, which actually are often inconsistent with modern democratic peace propositions, while ignoring the works of authors such as Godwin, Paine, Rousseau, and Montesquieu who proffer arguments that are much more consistent with today's joint freedom proposition. Second, they maintain that the democratic peace literature 'lacks a firm theoretical foundation that can identify a convincing causal mechanism'. They quarrel with institutional constraints arguments that, for them, appear to rely too much 'on an Enlightenment faith in the pacific preferences of free citizens' while assuming that these preferences are exogenous and that decisionmakers actually follow them. Further, they allege that it is not at all clear why citizen's aversion to interstate conflict is 'only evident in cases of a democratic adversary' but it does not preclude (as noted above) conflict with non-democracies, third party interventions, or colonial expansion. Cultural arguments, for Gates et al. (1996: 5), do not adequately fill the theoretical void left by institutionalist rationalizations; in fact, normative/cultural arguments, for them, actually teeter on tautology: 'relations between democratic states are peaceful because they are informed by a common perception that democracies are peaceful'. They suggest that beyond parsing democracy across its dimensions as shown by Maoz & Russett (1993), democratic peace researchers should attend to several important problems in their basic research design such as the definition of democracy and the potential for endogeneity among the variables in democratic peace models. As regards the former, Gates et al. (1996: 5) ask the important question that since 'political theorists have spent millennia trying to distinguish the nature of democracy; why are contemporary authors satisfied with mere coding rules?'. In addition, they point out that scholars often ignore a potential endogeneity problem in the research design, which suggests that joint democracy and peace may be mutually causal. Such a relationship would have to be analyzed through the use of non-recursive models, which allow for correlations between the residuals and the explanatory variables; however, this specification is markedly absent from most democratic peace research designs and therefore the empirical findings on the democratic peace may be biased (Gates et al., 1996: 5).

In fact, the study by James et al. (1995) provides one of the rare attempts to estimate the democratic peace utilizing a non-recursive model. While their findings are tentative at best, they reinforce the concerns outlined by Gates et al. (1996). James et al. (1995: 28) find that the relationship between joint democracy and peace is not monotonic and that rates of change in levels of hostility within dyads depend on the degree of joint democracy while the level of hostility within the dyad influences the level of joint democracy in the dyad. In addition, the authors suggest that 'the interactions that characterize an epoch [i.e. the Cold War era] ... may be the dominant force [in interstate conflict] rather than democratic or non-democratic institutions that are proposed to hold across various eras' (James et al., 1995: 22).

Beyond the critique of the basic research

3 The study by James et al. is clearly preliminary and its results are somewhat ambiguous. For example, the authors suggest that joint democracy 'is sometimes consistent with increased levels of conflict' including the escalation of conflicts to war (James et al., 1995: 16); however, considering their coding rules for joint democracy, which are from Russett (1993) and their use of Correlates of War militarized interstate disputes data, I am at a loss to find any case of joint democratic war in the period 1950–86, which they analyze — Russett (1993: 20) does not code the Turco-Cypriot conflict of 1974 as a case of joint democratic war. In addition, their use of the JOINREG indicator is problematic since it does not increase monotonically with increases in the scores of the constituent states (Oneal & Russett, 1997: 274, footnote 9). Nevertheless, it appears that their strongest findings are consistent with those of Senese (1997), which do not refute democratic peace arguments but only suggest that disputing democracies are just as likely to escalate their conflicts short of war than non-democracies.
design found in the democratic peace literature, democratic peace findings are generally assumed to be supportive of neoidealism, although they are actually at odds with it in two important ways. First, neoidealism rejects Wilsonian idealism’s focus on the ostensibly peaceloving nature of democracies (which empirical evidence refutes, e.g., Chan, 1984; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Small & Singer, 1976) that assumes a ‘harmony of interests’ among democracies and the conflict dampening impact of shared norms. By contrast, the democratic peace proposition appears to derive its most robust empirical support from its normative rather than its institutional dimension (Maoz & Russett 1993). Thus, when viewed as support for neoidealists, the salience of cultural norms in the democratic peace is equivalent to neorealists deriving their strongest empirical findings from analyses that rest on the centrality of ‘human nature’ instead of system structure. This is not to suggest that the democratic peace relies on altruism as an explanatory factor; for example, Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman (1992) derive democratic peace relationships from their international interaction game, which is rooted in rational actor assumptions. Nonetheless, the classical idealist argument in favor of a ‘harmony of interests’ is consistent with the normative version of the democratic peace more than with neoidealists’ pronouncements.

Second, and more importantly, neoidealism is inconsistent with both the normative and institutional arguments of democratic peace theorists. Neidealists argue that, ceteris paribus, the coaction of states (of varying political regime types, economic systems, cultural composition, military capabilities, etc.) beset by problems of market failure leads to the construction of international regimes to facilitate agreements, institutionalize rules, and provide norms for interstate interaction in a specific issue area. In this way, norms emerge from international regimes and thus are extrinsic to states and not incumbent on political regime type. This, I submit, is a core tenet of neoidealism. Both the normative and institutional versions of the democratic peace thesis, however, are at odds with the neoidealists’ perspective insofar as they suggest that norms and institutional constraints that prescribe the use of force between democracies are intrinsic to the state – specifically, democratic states – such that where two of them pair off the likelihood of war diminishes greatly. These two views are not consistent and unless this conceptual breach is closed the democratic peace thesis hovers outside of the neoidealism paradigm.

The apparent disjuncture between neoidealism and the democratic peace has two significant implications: (i) it challenges the view that both perspectives are congruent; and (ii) it challenges scholars to proffer explanations of the democratic peace that clearly devolve from neoidealistic precepts. Having provided support for the first point, focusing on the second point draws our attention to certain characteristics of the democratic peace that suggest the possibility that neoidealistic factors might account for the stability that is often ascribed to the presence of joint democracy. For example, Ray (1997: 14) reminds us that while the relationship between joint democracy and war is robust, it is ‘a long way from being perfect, and is in fact so modest in strength according to most of the techniques utilized to evaluate it that it is something of a minor miracle that it has yet to be eliminated by most of the “controls” to which it has been introduced [original emphasis]’. To support this assertion, he reports the phi coefficients of the correlation between the presence of joint democracy and the incidence of war in several prominent studies (Bremer, 1993; Russett, 1993, 1995) as 0.01, 0.01, and 0.07, respectively. Thus, while the relationship is statistically signifi-
cant the actual magnitude of the association is negligible. Factors more clearly devolving from neoidealistic precepts might fill this empirical gap in democratic peace findings.

In addition, there is a segment in the world politics literature represented in the works of Cohen (1994) and Farber & Gowa (1995, 1997) maintaining that the democratic peace is primarily a product of the postwar proliferation of democratic dyads within the Western Alliance under the US nuclear umbrella. Although these specific analyses have been quite persuasively challenged (Gochman, 1996; Maoz, 1997; Oneal & Russett, 1997; Thompson & Tucker, 1997), the argument that the democratic peace is largely a postwar phenomenon is plausible. The plausibility of the temporal bound on the democratic peace is not necessarily due to shortcomings in the proposition itself but derives, in part, from the statistical rarity of both war and democracy, which leaves few observations through which to acquire significant findings on the relationship between democracy and war in the prewar period. In addition, of the various ‘candidate cases’ of joint democratic conflict that Ray (1995: 103–124) analyses, the majority (12/20) occur in the prewar period suggesting that joint democracy may have had a weaker conflict dampening impact prior to the proliferation of democracies in the postwar era. Nevertheless, the plausibility of a temporal bound on the democratic peace is not central to my main argument, it simply draws our attention to the possibility that during the postwar epoch rival explanations of the democratic peace might have some currency. This is not to preclude the application of rival perspectives on the democratic peace to the prewar era; however, this is not my main concern here. Moreover, since the postwar democratic peace appears to have been overdetermined there is a strong likelihood that, at least in this period, factors beyond joint democracy may have given rise to joint democratic stability.4

To be sure, since neoidealistic arguments focus on the role of international regimes in providing interstate stability, if these arguments are to be persuasive then one would have to demonstrate that international regimes played a significant role in the stability among democratic dyads in the postwar era. In addition, neoidealists must contend with the fact that an emphasis on international regimes is consistent with both neoidealism and neorealism (Stein, 1990: 54); therefore, simply focusing on the impact of international regimes may not provide a perspective that is sufficiently discernible from neorealist arguments. A more discriminating analysis would maintain the neoidealistic focus on international regimes but would concentrate on an issue area where there is a clear demarcation between neoidealists and neorealists. On one subject there is a clear divergence between the two approaches: the role of relative and absolute gains in the emergence of international security regimes. With the exception of various game theorists whose paradigmatic leanings are not readily apparent (e.g. Morrow, 1997), neoidealists are virtually alone in their advocacy of the view that states can overcome relative gains problems and form international security regimes that pro-

4 Beyond statistical analyses, the more propitious path of analyzing the democratic peace should be pursued through case-studies such as that of Layne’s (1994), which suggested that decisionmaking in several joint democratic disputes followed realpolitik more than normative processes. His conclusions challenge popular explanations of the democratic peace and suggest that the inferences drawn from statistical analyses may be misleading. While Layne’s assertions are hardly definitive, they remind us that we must not rely on statistical relationships to provide theoretical arguments for substantive claims. Since causality can not be demonstrated statistically, quantitative approaches should be buttressed by case-studies in order to determine if the factors that are statistically significant are substantively significant. To be sure, the decreased salience of normative factors in Layne’s ‘near miss’ cases – if his conclusions are supported – should be treated no less seriously than low $R^2$ values and insignificant beta coefficients.
scribe the use of force. Therefore, neoidealists should determine whether the democratic major powers and their minor power democratic allies were able to establish an international security regime among themselves that proscribed their use of force against each other. Moreover, they need to determine how (or if) democratic dyads might have overcome relative gains problems and created such an international security regime.

Again, whether or not the democratic peace is basically a postwar phenomenon is not central to the main argument here because it is unambiguously established for the postwar era. Even if one grants that the democratic peace is demonstrated for the entire period since the Congress of Vienna it does not denude the basic argument that international regimes might just as well account for the democratic peace in the postwar era because an international regime may operate as an intervening variable in the relationship between joint democracy and war (at least in this era). Previous research has not controlled for the non-recursive relationships generated by the potential feedback between an international regime, joint democracy, and war suggested by a model that assumes that international regimes are an intervening variable in the democratic peace process. Prior to attempting to evaluate these relationships systematically, neoidealists should flesh them out more fully. Further, in order to explicate the democratic peace in the postwar era in a manner consistent with neoidealism, one should first consider whether there were developments in world politics particular to that period that may have given rise to interstate cooperation in security affairs. Two immediately come to mind because they were unprecedented: global bipolarity and the presence of nuclear weapons. As will be shown below, both appear to have significantly contributed to the development of an international security regime among democracies. Before discussing the impact of these two factors, we should review the neoidealist position on relative gains problems in world politics because only by challenging the realist position on relative gains can neoidealists provide the template for their arguments on the emergence of a security regime among democratic states. It is to these concerns that I turn in the next section.

Overcoming Relative Gains Problems in the Postwar Era

The postwar stability among democratic dyads suggests that during this time democracies might have been able to construct an international security regime that reduced conflict levels among them. This is not to argue that the mere absence of war suggests the presence of a security regime or vice versa, because the absence of war may not result from purposive policies but might emerge from a random process or mere coincidence. Similar to regimes in general, a security regime is an institutionalized set of principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures (Keohane, 1984); however, it is focused on security issues. If a security regime had emerged among democracies, these states would have had to overcome relative gains problems that allegedly inhere in security issues and make cooperation difficult if not impossible (Grieco, 1988). Realists remind us that even though absolute gains may accrue from cooperation, if such cooperation enables one state to gain relative to another, then one must consider that relative advantages might be used to increase the capability of the gaining state, which may then use these increased capabilities against

5 Although Hopf (1991) suggests that there was a period of bipolarity between the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires from 1521–59, clearly his focus is regional, not global, and most scholars agree that global bipolarity emerged only after World War II (see Gaddis, 1992; Waltz, 1979).
the losing state. States will forego cooperation, the argument goes, if they conclude that the benefits of absolute gains are offset by the danger of relative losses. Thus realists insist that states must be concerned with relative—more than absolute—gains that might accrue from cooperation (Grieco, 1988). Relative gains problems, it is argued, are more severe in security issues because of the nature of security itself. In the realist view, security is primarily a function of a state's relative capability, which provides the basis for a state's protection of its sovereignty and largely determines a state's rank in the international hierarchy. State leaders have great difficulty in assessing other state's capabilities (or its leader's intentions) and the security dilemma makes it difficult to attain (or accurately know) the requisite capability level that will provide for security. Since relative gains or losses in the security sphere have major implications for state survival, realists insist that interstate cooperation in this realm (beyond flexible alliance making) is unlikely.

Scholars have effectively challenged the neorealist relative gains argument and have showed that relative gains problems emerge only in special circumstances while they have only negligible effects on the likelihood of interstate cooperation in situations involving many actors with opportunities to link issues (Snidal, 1991a,b). Werner (1997: 291) argues that 'even if there is no central authority and violence is an effective and efficient tool of state policy such that security fears predominate, states do not necessarily maximize relative gains and that cooperation is far more possible than neorealists claim'. In fact, she has demonstrated that security concerns themselves may provide the basis for cooperative relations. These conclusions reinforce Powell's (1991) assertion that a permissive environment for the use of force does not necessarily follow from the assumption of anarchy but depends on the decreased costs of the use of force and the increased fear of interstate aggression. Only where the costs of the use of force are low are relative gains markedly salient and likely to preclude cooperation; however, where the costs of the use of force are high cooperation is indeed likely, even in the absence of a central authority.

Among the various challenges to neorealist relative gains arguments, Matthews' (1996) analysis has important implications for neidealists explanations of the democratic peace. He points out that the debilitating impact of relative gains on interstate security cooperation is overcome in issue areas where the defense is dominant and the cumulation effects of cooperation are low. Where such conditions obtain, leaders do not fear that relative gains in one bargaining round can be used to increase the likelihood of gains in the next round (Powell, 1991). Because defense is dominant and unilateral action is possible, states do not fear preemption or surprise attack. Utilizing this perspective, Matthews (1996) explains how nuclear weapons agreements (an issue area where the defense is dominant and cumulation effects are low) such as the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), and agreements on anti-ballistic missile (ABM) deployment were successfully concluded during the Cold War while conventional weapons agreements (an issue area where the offense is dominant and cumulation effects are high) such as the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) were not. Recognition of the role of cumulation effects in fostering interstate cooperation in security affairs provides neoidealists a means to circumvent relative gains problems in security issues and suggests the basis for the emergence of international security regimes in world politics.

Further, if certain types of nuclear weapons agreements are not circumscribed by relative gains problems, as argued by Matthews, then nuclear-armed states—pri-
arily the major powers – might be more inclined to cooperate in important nuclear weapons issues such as non-proliferation and strategic arms limitation. Since the major powers were polarized into rival camps we would not expect them to be cooperative in general, which is why superpower competition colored the postwar canvas. Nonetheless, during the postwar period of ‘dual hegemony’ (Gaddis, 1992), one by-product of interbloc competition was the creation of certain intrabloc relationships that helped provide stability within each bloc. There was not only a tightening of the links among bloc members and their respective superpower hegemon but trade ties lubricated the links among bloc members, particularly those in the Western bloc where most major power (and conflict prone) democratic states were situated. Building on the reduced salience of relative gains problems in important security issues in the postwar context, democratic major powers and their democratic allies appear to have been motivated to create an international security regime through their alliance networks. I consider these points more fully in the next section.

The Impact of Bipolarity, Deterrence, and Alliance Aggregation on Security Regime Formation

In the postwar period, the two alliance systems, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), became the principle alignment mechanisms for the major powers who were largely bifurcated across ideological lines. In fact, Simon & Gartzke (1996: 633) maintain that ‘the superpower-led alliances of the Cold War period were more ideological in nature than alliances have been throughout the past 180 years’. In this environment, the prospect for nuclear annihilation provided an absolute loss threshold that states dared not traverse. From the promulgation of NSC-68 in 1950 to the successful management of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Superpowers came to appreciate that the possession of nuclear weapons made their use suicidal since a first strike by either of them would result in a devastating counterstrike against the initiator. Early in the Cold War, the dominant perspective in strategic circles had been to view nuclear weapons simply as bigger bombs. Following publication of Brodie’s (1946) work, the broader implications of the ‘absolute weapon’ were such that deterrence more than victory, and success in crises more than wars, became primary objectives of superpower military strategy. A nuclear taboo slowly emerged that restricted war to the conventional level while mutual assured destruction (MAD) provided for superpower stability wrought from a delicate ‘balance of terror’ (Wohlstetter, 1959).

The nuclear taboo provided a security threshold for all states in the system and their refusal to violate it reflected their greater concern with potential absolute losses (i.e. nuclear conflagration) from advanced capitalist society intent on promoting, inter alia, global trade in order to maintain its power position – appeared to be salient, in the realist view, because it served the military interests of the hegemon. For realists, it was actually superstructure to the more capability driven base. For neoidealists, the ascendancy of ideology primarily reflected the free trade imperatives borne of the capitalist global economy in opposition to those emanating from the socialist camp. While early strategic thought was marked by prudent analyses such as Brodie (1946), a rival school emerged around theorists such as Wohlstetter (1959) and Kahn (1960) who argued for war-fighting, war-winning, and war-surviving approaches to nuclear strategy.
‘going nuclear’ than with relative gains borne of short-term military victory that might have resulted from their use. In this way, the threat of nuclear holocaust in a context where the defense was dominant alleviated relative gains problems among bloc members as they became more concerned with the potential for absolute loss (nuclear annihilation) that might result from interbloc instability but also might emerge from intrabloc disruptions that drew the Superpowers into interbloc conflict. Specifically, the Superpowers were intent on reducing the likelihood of: (i) interbloc conflict that might precipitate superpower war; and (ii) intrabloc conflict that might waste resources of alliance members and thereby reduce interbloc war-fighting capabilities by weakening allies and leaving them vulnerable to insurgency. One implication of the limitations on the use of nuclear weapons was the increased significance of conventional (and increasingly, special operations) forces as leaders sought to develop a ‘flexible response’ capability for international crises. Bipolarity and the nuclear stand-off further heightened the utility of conventional forces as the Superpowers responded to, intervened in, or initiated militarized disputes below the nuclear level. Such use of force allowed the Superpowers to solidify their respective blocs and to defend the perimeters of their respective spheres of influence.

The nuclear stand-off provided for interbloc stability through effective nuclear deterrence. In a study of militarized disputes, Small & Singer (1979: 77) point out that ‘the fact that the 20 major versus major confrontations since V-J Day have gone to neither conventional nor nuclear war ... strongly suggests that the nuclear deterrent, as clumsy and fragile as it is, seems to exercise an inhibiting effect’.8 In addition, bipolarity increased the salience of intrabloc stability through its impact on postwar alliance aggregation, specifically, the emergence of the two major alliances, NATO and the WTO. Although alliances are more often associated with wars (Levy, 1981) – especially large wars (Siverson & King 1979) – and allies are more likely to fight each other (Bueno de Mesquita, 1981), enduring alliances – those that are more long term – evince more benign effects (Ostrom & Hoole, 1978; Wayman, 1990). Therefore, while alliances are positively associated with war in the short term, they are negatively associated with war in the long term.9 Postwar bipolarity and the nuclear stand-off gave rise to long-term alliances that were more peaceful, thus reducing the likelihood of conflict among allied dyads.

Moreover, since democracies were more likely to be allied, low levels of intra-alliance conflict may have resulted in low levels of joint democratic conflict. Siverson & Emmons (1991: 295) found that from 1946–65, ‘democracies allied with each other at almost 80% more than the rate they would have by chance’. During this period there were 129 exclusively democratic alliances out of 367 alliances that included at least one democracy (35.2%) compared with the interwar period, 1919–39, where there were only ten out of 97 (10.3%) such alliances. In addition, Siverson & Emmons (1991: 302) found that ‘democratic major powers formed considerably greater numbers of alliances with democratic minor powers’, at a rate more than 300% than would be expected. At the same time, democratic major powers evinced ‘no particular proclivity to enter into alliances with non-democratic minor powers’, which, for Siverson

8 For an opposing viewpoint, see Vasquez (1991).

9 There is a slight disagreement among Ostrom & Hoole (1978) and Wayman (1990) on the timing of the reversal of the positive relationship between alliance membership and war. The former point out that the dampening effect occurs after only four years while the latter suggests that it occurs between six and seven years, and after ten years.
& Emmons, reflects the tendency of democratic major powers to ‘protect the weaker democracies’ (Siverson & Emmons, 1991: 302). In addition, democratic minor powers were far less likely to ally with non-democratic minor powers.

A fear of destabilizing the Western Alliance through internecine conflict might also have motivated the democratic states to limit violence among themselves. In addition, the fear of sanctions from the USA, which furnished collective goods – especially security and access to trade – provided additional incentive for intrabloc stability. In such a context, it appears that ‘nations allied with the same superpower effectively lose the decision-latitude to make wars against the other allies of the same superpower’ (Weede, 1992: 378).

Evidence of intrabloc stability is provided by Weede’s (1983) study, which found that formal allies of superpowers did not fight wars from 1962–80. Ray (1993: 429) noted that ‘no two formal allies of states with nuclear weapons and not allied to each other fought wars against each other from 1945 to 1986’. The implication for democratic pairs of states was that since most of the democracies – especially those that were more conflict prone (i.e. major powers) – were clustered, then their joint alliance membership more than their regime type may have accounted for their reduced conflict levels in the postwar era. Moreover, since the Western Allies were dominated by the global hegemon, the USA, it stands to reason that its presence would increase the conflict dampening impact of intrabloc stability for its alliance members than would be evident in the rival WTO alliance. Therefore, while superpower alliance aggregation would tend to dampen both jointly democratic and jointly non-democratic conflict, the effect on the former would be appreciably greater than that on the latter. It may be assumed that were the global hegemony in the socialist camp then we might be considering the ‘socialistic peace’.

One may point out that the alleged intervening role of alliances in the democratic peace is opposed by the various multivariate analyses that have demonstrated that the presence of alliances does not vitiate the impact of joint democracy on peace (e.g. Bremer, 1992; Maoz & Russett, 1992; Oneal & Ray, 1996; Oneal & Russett, 1997). In addition, in a later study, Weede (1992) found that a joint democracy model performed better than his ‘peace through subordination’ model. However, the observation that democracies often ally does not suggest that they ally because they are democracies. We are reminded of the earlier discussion of the endogeneity problem in the democratic peace literature because there might be a feedback relationship between alliance aggregation and joint democracy such that alliance membership might lead to democracy just as democracy might lead to alliance membership.

For an interesting discussion of some of the factors driving the alliance–joint democratic conflict relationship, see Raknerud & Hegre (1997).

Several analyses challenge the common inferences drawn from these studies (Farber & Gowa, 1997: 401–403; Ray, 1997: 12–13). For example, Ray points out that since alliance membership is more likely an intervening rather than a confounding variable in the democratic peace then it should not be included as a predictor variable in an equation that includes joint democracy because the findings do not permit a straightforward interpretation.
One need only reflect on the process of alliance-aggregation in NATO to appreciate these effects. Clearly, the establishment of NATO was driven by the leadership of the democratic states of the Atlantic Alliance, primarily the USA and the UK, and its preamble clearly states that it is ‘founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law’. Interestingly, it appears that alliance membership for several NATO states preceded – and more than likely helped to make possible – their subsequent democracy. For example, Portugal was an original signatory of the NATO Treaty in 1949 but it did not become democratic until 1976. Stuart (1989: 78) notes that although attempts made to assuage ‘Western consciences’ by suggesting that participation in a ‘democratically oriented alliance system might have a reformatory effect on the Portuguese regime over time’; nonetheless, the autocratic Salazar regime made public pronouncements that it would resist such ‘meddling’ in Portugal’s affairs. Only following the revolution of 1974 did Portugal move towards its present democratic form of government. In addition, Greece joined NATO in 1952 when it also was clearly not democratic. According to Polity III data, Greece did not become a democracy until 1975. Turkey, which, like Greece, joined the alliance in 1952 was democratic in that year (regime score of 10); however, for the years 1953–59 it descended into anocracy (regime score of 4) and has fluctuated regime types over the years prior to settling into its present democratic form of government. It follows that alliance membership may have induced both the democratization of these states and the concomitant reductions in the likelihood of their experiencing jointly democratic conflict.

In addition, while Simon & Gartzke (1996) partly corroborated the findings of Siverson & Emmons (1991) they point out that the finding that democracies are more likely to ally with one another is primarily a postwar phenomenon. Controlling for the Cold War superpower alliances (7% of all alliances in their study) reduces the correlation between alliance aggregation and shared regime type by 47% (Simon & Gartzke, 1996: 628). Furthermore, they point out that ‘[t]he overall correlation between regime type and alliance partner choice is weak; although statistically significant, the relationship is substantively insignificant’. In fact, they find ‘a strong tendency for regimes of most types to prefer alliances with dissimilar regimes’ while maintaining that ‘it may be the case that regimes of similar type prefer each other as alliance partners for primary or major alliances in bipolar systems only’ (Simon & Gartzke, 1996: 633).

Nonetheless, the present argument does not rely simply on the mitigating impact of alliances on interstate conflict, per se, but it centers on the interdependent impact of alliance aggregation and trade on the development of an international security regime which reduced the levels of joint democratic conflict. This security regime emerged in a context of global bipolarity and the superpower nuclear stand-off, both of which provided the impetus for reductions in postwar interstate conflict among the major powers, in general, while the interplay of alliance aggregation and intra-alliance trade (as will be shown below) provided the lubricant for the emergence of an international security regime which reduced interdemocratic conflict, specifically. Importantly, it was the interaction of alliance aggregation and trade that provided the proximate cause for the rise of an international security regime among democracies. In the next section, I discuss the manner by which the alliance–trade relationships emerged and helped reduce joint democratic conflict in the postwar era.
The Significance of Trade in the Postwar Democratic Peace

One is reminded that bipolarity and the superpower standoff not only inspired a nuclear arms race but also encouraged alliance aggregation, which served to increase trade links among bloc members as the interests of the Superpowers (especially the USA) came to guide global and intrabloc trade. Gowa (1994: 3) reminds us that, without exception, NATO members became signatories of GATT and WTO members joined COMECON. Empirical evidence demonstrates a consistent negative relationship between trade and interstate conflict at both the dyadic (Polachek, 1980) and system (Mansfield, 1994) levels. Since trade ‘follows the flag’ (Pollins, 1989a, b) one can assume that state decisionmaker’s utility function with regard to trade includes not only the potential economic benefits that might accrue from commerce, but also the extent to which the foreign policy interests of partners are convergent with one’s own. This is consistent with Gowa’s (1994) view that there are security externalities borne of trade since the returns of trade can potentially be used to increase the military capabilities of states. She maintains that potential trading partners recognize such externalities and coordinate their trade accordingly. One result is that free trade is more likely within rather than across alliances. Gowa (1994) and Gowa & Mansfield (1993) demonstrate that in bipolar systems there is an increased likelihood of intra-alliance trade and a decreased likelihood of inter-alliance trade.14

Further, in bipolar (more than multipolar) systems, alliances have a greater impact on trade and an increased likelihood of evolving into free-trade coalitions.

14 In contrast, Liberman (1996) maintains that multipolar systems are more likely to reduce relative gains problems in trade and encourage cooperation among rivals in a manner evocative of Deutsch & Singer’s (1964) classic argument with regard to the impact of ‘interaction opportunities’. Considering the consistent negative relationship between trade and conflict, and the increased impact of alliances on trade in bipolar systems, one can argue that bilateral trade links among alliance partners within the largely democratic Western bloc exerted a dampening effect on intrabloc – thus joint democratic – conflict. It follows that common trade links – largely borne of alliance membership and system structure – contributed to reductions in joint democratic conflict levels. If such relationships actually obtained, one would expect that, inter alia, controlling for trade interdependence would wash out the impact of joint democracy on interstate conflict in the postwar era. In fact, this is exactly what has been demonstrated in several recent studies (Oneal & Ray, 1996; Oneal et al., 1996). The significance of this finding seems to be downplayed in the democratic peace literature, in part, because the impact of joint democracy on conflict washes out only when democracy is measured on an interval scale – the impact remains significant if democracy is measured as a dichotomous variable. Nevertheless, the use of dichotomous measures of regime type is ill-advised for two reasons.

First, the selection of the dichotomous over the interval measure seems to be little more than ‘quantoid quibbling’ since the democratic peace thesis suggests that the greater the extent of shared democracy within the dyad the greater the ability of shared democratic norms and institutions to prevent war. This is clearly an argument with respect to the degree of democracy and not simply its presence or absence; therefore, an appropriate indicator of joint democracy should be intervally scaled. Second, if the democratic peace is so tenuous that it is contingent upon minor revisions of the indicator then one must question the robustness of earlier empirical findings that often failed
to distinguish between the two operational measures.

Recently, Oneal & Russett (1997) proffered an analysis of the impact of trade interdependence on the democratic peace utilizing an intervally scaled measure of joint democracy. Drawing on the 'weak-link' thesis of Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman (1992), they purportedly demonstrate that the impact of joint democracy on conflict does not wash out once they control for economic interdependence even though they admit that 'bilateral economic relations are the best predictor of the tenor of dyadic relations' (Oneal & Russett, 1997: 281). This new formulation, however, is not without its own problems. First, Oneal & Russett (1997) are arguing against the conclusions of Maoz & Russett (1993) on the role of normative over institutional factors in the democratic peace. To supersede the earlier findings, the authors need to supply a rationale for the greater salience of institutional constraints. Following that, they should conduct a critical test to determine whether institutional measures, in the context of the weak-link thesis, are more robust predictors to democratic peace than normative ones. Failing this, their analysis is at odds with the body of empirical findings to date on the two models because the weak-link hypothesis, which allows them to 'assume the likelihood of conflict to be primarily a function of the degree of political constraint experienced by the less constrained state in each dyad' (Oneal & Russett, 1997: 274), is contradicted empirically by the earlier evidence on the reduced role of constraints in precluding interstate violence.

Second, there appears to be conceptual problems with the weak-link thesis itself; namely, that it assumes that democracies are drawn into conflicts by non-democracies and that democracies are less inclined to initiate wars. Again, this is undermined by the empirical findings on the war proneness of democratic states. To confront these concerns, the authors would have to bifurcate their population between democratic and non-democratic states and show that the non-democratic states consistently drew democratic states into conflict while the reverse did not obtain. For example, one would have to argue that it was Spain, and not the USA, that initiated the Spanish–American War; or that the Orange Free State, and not Britain, initiated the Boer War; or that the Philippines, and not the USA, initiated the Second Philippines War. In addition, the authors would have to demonstrate that the weak-link thesis does not apply to pairs of democracies that are differentially constrained. If the weak-link thesis holds, one would expect that the less democratic state of a democratic dyad could potentially draw a more democratic state into conflict (and therefore, joint democratic war would be possible). This point is consistent with Russett’s (1993: 35) view that ‘If violent conflicts between democracies do occur, at least one of the democracies is likely to be politically unstable’. This argument might be used, for example, to challenge the democratic status of both France’s Second Republic and the Papal States and thereby exclude the War of the Roman Republic as a joint democratic conflict.\textsuperscript{15} If, on the other hand, joint democracy is somehow immune to these weak-link relationships, one would have to provide a theoretical argument for why this is so – requiring a return to the normative/institutional debate.

Moreover, Oneal & Russett’s (1997) weak-link argument seems to rely on a unit

\textsuperscript{15} Small & Singer (1976) include this case as a war between democracies while Ray (1995: 109–110) dismisses it on the basis that France’s Second Republic had not established the precedent of the governing party losing an election while the Roman Republic failed to survive ‘a sufficiently long time to establish its democratic credentials . . .’.
level operationalization of the democracy variable rather than a dyadic one. For example, if one focuses on the divergence, or distance between the regime scores of the two states in the dyad – as is done in Oneal & Ray (1997) – then clearly one is operating at the dyadic level. If instead, one simply focuses on the state with the lower democracy score in the dyad – following Oneal & Russett (1997) – then one has descended to the unit level of aggregation (or, as Jim Ray suggests, some intermediate level between unit and dyad). One should not then infer from findings on the unit level (i.e. the weak-link thesis) to relationships at the dyadic level (i.e. the democratic peace proposition). In short, Oneal & Russett’s (1997) study appears to suffer from a levels of analysis problem.

Third, while Oneal & Russett (1997) appear to substantiate the democratic peace relationship (controlling for trade independence) through the use of a continuous measure, their findings appear at odds with Oneal & Ray’s (1996) recent work on the subject. In their analysis, Oneal & Ray (1996) utilize several dichotomous and continuous measures of joint democracy to ascertain whether trade interdependence reduces the impact of joint democracy on interstate conflict across the population of postwar disputes. After replicating the major finding of Oneal et al. (1996) (i.e. that controlling for trade interdependence erodes the impact of joint democracy on conflict except when the dichotomous democracy indicator is used), they report that, among their diverse indicators of joint democracy, the geometric mean of the democracy scores of the dyad is the most consistent of the continuous indicators of joint democracy (Oneal & Ray, 1996: 10). The geometric mean indicator is much more straightforward than Oneal & Russett’s (1997) weak-link formulation (see Oneal & Ray, 1996: 5–6) and findings using it substantiate democratic peace claims. Further, Oneal & Ray (1996) find that regardless of the specific continuous measure of joint democracy used, trade interdependence diminishes the impact of joint democracy on conflict for all politically relevant dyads and it washes out the impact of joint democracy on conflict for contiguous dyads. Oneal & Russett’s (1997) apparently monadic findings do not appear to refute the clearly dyadic level findings of Oneal & Ray’s (1996) study.

On the other hand, Beck et al. (1997), in a replication of the study of Oneal & Russett (1997), largely concur with the authors that the impact of joint democracy persists even when controlling for trade interdependence and they maintain that the impact of trade interdependence on the democratic peace is actually a statistical artifact of the temporal dependence in the model. While an important contribution to the study of diagnostics for binary cross-sectional time-series models (a common method of data analysis in studies of the democratic peace), the primary shortcoming of Beck et al. replication is that it is just that – a replication – and as such their conclusions are tainted by the use of the same problematic construction of the democracy variable that is found in the original article. In a more recent study, Gartzke (1998) suggests that affinity in UN voting – more than economic interdependence – washes out the impact of joint democracy (when democracy is coded on an interval scale); however, he includes his affinity variable in equations that also include, inter alia, measures of joint democracy (using the problematic JOINREG indicator) and economic interdependence. Since it has already been demonstrated that economic interdependence washes out the impact of joint democracy then including affinity in the same equation results in Gartzke (1998) attributing to ‘affinity’ the capacity to vitiate the democratic peace
when this more likely results from the presence of the interdependence variable in the same model (see Gartzke, 1998: 23, equations 1 and 1a, Table 2). In order to substantiate his claims, Gartzke would have to demonstrate that in the absence of economic interdependence the presence of affinity washes out the effect of joint democracy—but he does not do this. Clearly, adding almost any moderately relevant variable (such as affinity) in a regression model of the democratic peace that includes interdependence and an intervally scaled measure of joint democracy will lead to spurious inferences that the impact of the ‘new variable’ rather than trade interdependence diminishes the democratic peace relationship.

Notwithstanding the debate on the impact of trade on the democratic peace, it appears that in the postwar era, major power democratic allies coordinated their trade ties in order to realize security externalities, and in so doing reduced the levels of conflict among their states while providing the basis for an international security regime. Further, the system’s bipolar structure provided a supportive context for the formation of a free-trade coalition among democratic allies while US hegemony provided a resin for the cooperative linkages among the major power democracies and their minor power democratic allies. The convergence of these factors did not simply reduce the conflict levels among democracies but also encouraged the creation of a democratic security regime. An appreciation of the factors that give rise to security regimes will allow us to more clearly discern the manner by which democracies constructed their own international security regime in the postwar period.

On the Emergence of a Democratic Security Regime in the Postwar Era

Research on the etiology of international security regimes has been relatively sparse largely due to neoidalists conceding much of the security realm to neorealists (e.g. Keohane, 1984). Scholars differ on whether security regimes exist(ed) in the postwar era. For example, Jervis (1983) maintains that while the Concert of Europe was a regime, MAD and Superpower arms agreements in the postwar era did not constitute security regimes because superpower agreements and precedents were neither ‘unambiguous or binding’. Further, these postwar agreements, for him, simply reflected the ‘narrow and quite short-run self-interest[s]’ of the major powers and these interests – more than regimes ‘can account for most of the restraints’ on the Superpowers in this era (Jervis, 1983: 187). Nye (1987) agrees that there is an absence of an overall superpower security regime in the postwar era; however, he recognizes regimes in ‘subissues’ related to nuclear weapons, including the destructive power of nuclear weapons, control problems, proliferation, and deterrence force structure. Smith (1987) takes the view that the postwar era witnessed the emergence of a security regime in nonproliferation (in a manner inconsistent with hegemonic stability or functionalist perspectives) while Tate (1990) and Brzoska (1992) differ on whether the NPT was a regime.

Although this literature is interesting (though inconclusive), it deals mainly with the existence of a security regime between superpowers. However, the neoidalist argument presented in this essay does not rely on the existence of a security regime between the Superpowers but only the presence of a security regime among the democratic major powers concentrated in the Atlantic alliance and other multilateral and bilateral relationships among democracies. What is necessary to reconcile the postwar absence of conflict among democratic dyads with neoidalism is evidence that a security regime existed among democracies that constrained violence between them. A case could be made
that a security regime is an independent variable in the democratic peace process if alliance membership (and resultant trade links) actually preceded democracy within some of the major democracies (as noted above); therefore, we might suggest that the security regime is not simply an epiphenomenon of joint democracy. As it stands, the present argument suggests that a security regime is an intervening variable – following the pattern outlined in Krasner (1983a: 36) – in the democratic peace relationship. Clearly, however, if regimes are independent variables in the democratic peace relationship then democratic peace arguments should be reconsidered. What is more, if regimes are intervening variables in this process, as I suggest, then there are potentially feedback linkages in the democratic peace relationship that have not been captured in earlier research on the phenomenon. This would suggest that the democratic peace literature has tended to rely on misspecified models – as argued by Gates et al. (1996) and James et al. (1995) – and that regime type and democratic peace in the postwar era, at least, may be mutually causal.

Regardless of whether regimes are independent or intervening variables, first we need to determine whether there is evidence – beyond conjecture – of the existence of a security regime among democracies in the postwar era. Pursuant to that, I utilize Jervis’ (1983) index of the factors that give rise to security regimes in order to provide support for the view that the conditions that give rise to security regimes obtained for the postwar democracies.

Jervis (1983) suggested the following criteria for security regime formation: (i) the major powers want to establish a regime (i.e. a regulated issue area); (ii) the actors perceive that others share their security interests; (iii) major powers eschew expansion as a security option; (iv) war is perceived as costly; and (v) ‘offensive and defensive weapons and policies are distinguishable but the former are cheaper and more effective than the latter, or they cannot be distinguished but it is easier to defend than attack’ (Jervis, 1983). Even a cursory review of the historical records reveals that Jervis’ criteria are satisfied for the postwar major power democracies and their democratic allies and trading partners.

First, the USA and its democratic major power allies were intent on creating a security sphere as a result of the exigencies of the Cold War that began with the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine. Since power alone did not define the adversarial relationship between the Superpowers (they had been formal allies in World War II), ideology – especially the espousal of capitalism (and later the presence of democracy for membership in NATO) became an important determinant of alliance membership and a causeway to the realization of economic gains that would accrue to allies (Simon & Gartzke, 1996: 633). Second, the democratic major powers appear to have desired a regime because it was clear that following World War II US power was unmatched and only the USA could provide the collective goods of free trade and security for the capitalist democracies – and arguably the global system as a whole. The Marshall Plan and the World Bank laid the basis for the reconstruction of the Western European states that were laying prostrate after the devastation of World War II. Also, unlike in the interwar period, the US aggressively pursued both an activist foreign policy and international economic leadership evident in its dominance of the major postwar IGOs: the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions. Third, the Western bloc sought to check perceived Soviet expansionism and rationalized its own foreign adventures through the policy of containment. Actually, both superpowers sought to solidify their respective spheres of influence more than expand
them. US foreign policy, in particular, was largely one of developing the capacity of former and potential trading partners in Western Europe and East Asia. Fourth, major power war was clearly viewed as costly (especially following the Korean War) and superpower war was proscribed (though this did not preclude proxy wars). Fifth, the spread of nuclear weapons ushered in a period of unsurpassed defense dominance in military strategy even though many nuclear weapons systems had both offensive and defensive applications. In sum, utilizing Jervis’ criteria, it appears that conditions facilitating the emergence of a democratic security regime were present in the postwar era.

While Jervis’ criteria allow us to determine whether the conditions were ripe for the formation of a democratic security regime, Gowa’s (1994) and Gowa & Mansfield’s (1993) research explains the process behind its emergence. Specifically, Gowa (1994: 45) asserts that ‘countries can use their ability to affect their terms of trade to correct the market failure produced by trade in an anarchic system’. Her research on security externalities of trade establishes a clear connection between market failure (the fulcrum on which neoidalist arguments on interstate cooperation rests) and contextual factors such as bipolarity, alliances, and trade links in the development of security regimes. Since the extent to which allies trade with each other depends largely on the risk of exit (which is lower in bipolar systems) then free trade is more likely to emerge in bipolar systems because the security externalities of free trade agreements are likely to remain internalized in alliances under bipolarity (Gowa, 1994: 41, 53). Enforcement problems in international regimes are also reduced in agreements among allies because incentives to defect (that are rooted in political and economic interests) are limited. All told, just as international regimes generally form in response to market failure, security regimes have a similar etiology and they are more likely to form from intra-alliance trade relationships in bipolar systems where cumulation effects are low (Gowa, 1994; Gowa & Mansfield, 1993; Matthews, 1996). Again, this etiology of regime formation dovetails with neoidealistic arguments that specify that the emergence of an international regime is not dependent upon the regime type of the state. What I argue here – building on Gowa’s arguments – is that international security regimes are more a function of the alliance and trade ties among states under conditions of bipolarity as they seek to confront problems of market failure in the global anarchy.

In the Cold War era, it appears that allied democratic states realized security externalities of trade – that are more pronounced under bipolarity – while intrabloc stability provided by ‘dual hegemony’ and nuclear deterrence led to the creation of a security regime among the vast majority of democratic states, which resulted in the absence of war between them. Following this logic, the democratic peace is likely to have emerged from an international security regime molded largely from the interplay of unit and systemic level variables and supported by alliance and trade links rather than from shared political regime type. Further, the alliance-trade linkages that reinforced the democratic security regime were less evident among the non-democratic states. Though the impact of bipolarity and alliance-aggregation are similar for non-democratic states, as explained above, non-democracies did not demonstrate the affinity to ally and develop free-trade links as their democratic counterparts.

The conflict dampening impact of the security regime on the foreign policy of joint democratic dyads results largely from the fact that free-trade links appear to have been more pronounced among democratic allies.
than among their non-democratic contemporaries. This is hardly surprising considering the fact that the global hegemon happened to be situated in the democratic bloc. Intrinsically, the states’ regime type probably mattered less than the fact that the bipolar global system was dominated by this particular hegemon that operated in a bipolar environment, and encouraged a particular pattern of alliance aggregation and intrabloc patterns of trade. It is important to remember that the emergence of a democratic security regime of the global scope suggested by the democratic peace phenomenon rests primarily on the activity of the major power democracies – chief among them, the USA, the global hegemon. Clearly, the international regime can have global scope and impact even if every minor democracy is not tied to it through intra-alliance trade links. Instead, less powerful democracies often become linked to the international regime informally through the acceptance of the basic rules, norms, procedures, and institutions of the regime. This is evocative of Kant’s argument with regard to the impact of a ‘federation of free republics’, on the behavior of states outside of the federation, of which Huntley (1996: 56) observes: ‘once initiated, the federation’s benefits to its members create competitive pressures on nonmembers to reform themselves sufficiently to join as well’. This is consistent with Krasner’s (1983b: 361) analysis of the feedback relationship among international regimes, basic causal variables, and foreign policy behavior and outcomes in that ‘[o]nce principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures [regimes] are entrenched they may alter the egoistic interests and power configurations that led to their creation in the first place’. The centerpiece of this arrangement – less a Kantian federation and more an international regime – was underwritten by forces beyond political regime type. While democracy may have been associated with the creation of a security regime at the behest of the Western democracies led by the USA, the expansion and maintenance of this regime (and its conflict dampening attributes) are rooted, to a greater extent, in the interplay of alliance aggregation and security externalities of trade. One result of this international regime was to reduce the likelihood of conflict between democratic states.

All told, by linking the reduction in joint democratic conflict to the emergence of a democratic security regime, I have attempted to point the direction towards a neoidalist explanation of the democratic peace. I maintain that neoidalist arguments can successfully account for the postwar democratic peace without violating the core assumptions of the paradigm; therefore, following the argument presented here, neoidalism is reconciled with the democratic peace. Although, the extent to which the relationships outlined above obtained in the postwar era can not be conclusively demonstrated in this article, it should be clear that a neoidalist rendering of the democratic peace has more than a modicum of theoretical and empirical support. What is most important is that the basic argument outlined in this article allows us to reconcile the postwar stability among democratic dyads with neoidalist precepts and in this way it contributes to the literature on the democratic peace while simultaneously building on the incipient neoidalist paradigm of world politics.16

Future research on the issues examined herein should augment my basic arguments with analyses of case-studies of individual states such as a game-theoretic assessment of the rise of security regimes in the postwar era similar to Zurn’s (1997) analysis of the rise of an intra-German trade regime in postwar Europe. Another direction for future research is also akin to those promulgated by Deutsch (1957).
research is to study the more systemic level neoidealist arguments on the democratic peace. For example, one may posit that since domestic level (i.e. normative/cultural and institutional/structural) explanations of the democratic peace have been less than persuasive, then concentrating on the impact of more systemic level variables including those proposed here might be more fruitful. Clearly, neoidealist arguments are consistent with third image analyses of world politics, but not uniquely so. The argument in this article relies largely – though not exclusively – on systemic rather than unit (dyadic) level factors but future research might concentrate even more on the former. For example, one may examine the likelihood of the development of international security regimes in multipolar as opposed to bipolar systems or in open or closed international trading systems; and whether these processes have had a significant impact on the absence of joint democratic conflict in the prewar period. In this way, one might provide further insights into the democratic peace while applying neoidealist arguments beyond the postwar era. On the other hand, considering the significance of alliance aggregation and trade in the present analysis, it would be interesting to analyze the impact of dyadic or state level factors on the propensity of actors to respond to problems of market failure in other security issue areas. In this way, neoidealist arguments below the system level may be brought to bear on the analysis of enduring rivalry, third party intervention, and international peacekeeping. Regardless of the level of aggregation that one focuses on, the application of theoretically consistent neoidealist arguments to the crucial area of international security may help to illuminate the causes of conflict and cooperation in our too often violent world.

17 Liberman’s (1996) analysis may be instructive in this regard.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that the Cold War era witnessed the convergence of several conflict dampening factors: bipolarity, which is negatively correlated with large wars (Wayman, 1984); nuclear deterrence, which decreased the likelihood of great power war (Small & Singer, 1976); enduring alliances, which are negatively correlated with war (Ostrom & Hoole, 1978; Wayman, 1990); heightened alliance aggregation among democracies, which reduced their conflict levels (Simon & Gartzke, 1996; Siverson & Emmons, 1991); increased trade among allies (Gowa, 1994), which is negatively correlated with interstate war (Mansfield, 1994; Polachek, 1980); ‘dual-hegemony’ among superpowers, which decreased the conflict levels of their respective blocs (Weede, 1983); and the emergence of an international security regime (following Jervis, 1983), which ultimately reduced the level of conflict between pairs of democratic states. Gaddis (1992) is correct that the stability of the postwar era is overdetermined; nonetheless, an analysis of the democratic peace focusing on the impact of a democratic security regime not only provides a compelling explanation for the postwar stability among democratic dyads, but a consistent neoidealist one as well. Nevertheless – and evocative of Mearsheimer (1990) – policymakers must consider that if the democratic peace is best understood as the result of a democratic security regime borne largely of Cold War exigencies, then since that era has ended how can we be sure that the irenic structures that emerged from it will persist? By focusing on the impact of a democratic security regime in conflict reduction, we are more likely to depend less on the spread of democracy, per se, and more on the establishment of international institutions that help foster interstate cooperation. While democracy as a political system has many virtues – and
should be generally supported, interstate peace, in light of this analysis, requires much more than the proliferation of democratic states. It also seems to require a commitment to international regime building. In addition, although the spread of democracy may be desirable, democratization should not be viewed simply as a positive good because – as Chan (1984) reminds us – democratic states are often more war prone than other states. Also, while there has been an absence of war among democratic dyads in the postwar era, states did not create a ‘functional equivalent of war’, which Vasquez (1993) suggests is a prerequisite for enduring peace. Moreover, while the democratic major powers limited intra-alliance violence among their fellow democracies and held their allies in check in order to maintain the balance of power, they either supported or participated in the slaughter of millions in the wars that were endemic throughout the periphery. Therefore, instead of marveling at the fine empirical silks of the democratic emperor one should acknowledge that the larger ethical accouterments of the democratic ‘peace’ is threadbare.

Nevertheless, it appears that during the postwar era democracies successfully fashioned a peace among themselves through the establishment of an international security regime that emerged from a number of factors (i.e. bipolarity, nuclear deterrence, alliance-aggregation, trade links) most of which had little to do with political regime type. Whether or not the major contentions of the present analysis are borne out by future studies, it should be clear that scholars should direct their analytical lenses towards examining the emergence and impact of security regimes in world politics more fully. I trust that analyses of the factors related to the emergence of such regimes will allow us to more effectively provide mechanisms for peace throughout the global system.

References


However, Mansfield & Snyder’s (1995) findings that democratization is associated with war rather than peace have been seriously challenged by Oneal & Russett (1997), Thompson & Tucker (1997), and Ward & Gleditsch (1998). Also, Gleditsch & Hegre (1997) suggest an inverted U-shaped relationship between the number of democratic states and the likelihood of conflict in the system (for a contrasting view, see Ray, 1997: 20–25).


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