

Settled Borders and Regime Type: Democratic Transitions as Consequences of Peaceful Territorial Transfers*

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Abstract: In this study, we build on the research demonstrating that external threats toward a state affect regime type – by causing militarization and centralization of authority – and in particular on the argument that democracy is fostered by the removal of territorial threats between neighboring states. While previous studies note that the resolution of territorial issues promotes domestic decentralization and liberalization, none has directly tested the role of border legitimacy in democratic transitions. We provide precisely such a test by relying on the phenomenon of peaceful state-to-state territorial transfers (i.e. peaceful border adjustment). Peaceful transfers increase cross-border trust and demonstrate a credible commitment regarding territorial dispute resolution. In this sense, peaceful transfers often signify international borders accepted as legitimate. Importantly, our focus is thus on the consequences of positive peace and not simply on the effects of the mere absence of conflict, as is commonly the case in the reverse causality research on the democratic peace. Our findings support the expectations that the settling of territorial issues via peaceful transfers leads to demilitarization, border stability, and, critically, democratic transitions. Our tests also show that regime type has no bearing on the occurrence of peaceful territorial transfers, that is that they are not endogenous to some long-term democratization process. In tandem with some other recent works, our study supports an alternative explanation for the democratic peace: both democracy *and* peace may be a function of settling the territorial threats.

Note: * The order of the authors is alphabetical, with equal co-authorship. This paper has been prepared for presentation at the Sixth Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Torino, Italy, September 11-15, 2007.

INTRODUCTION

Vasquez (1993) argues that the need to control territory is an essential human characteristic. Similarly, others note that people become socialized to the territory they inhabit, as it becomes an inseparable part of their identity (Duchacek 1970; Gottman 1973; Sack 1986). These principles are well recognized in the Westphalian system of states, which defines political entities (states) precisely by noting their right to sovereign control over territory. Yet, when the control of homeland territory is brought into question, states react to this threat by not only altering their foreign but also their domestic politics.

More so than questions of policy or ideological difference among states, the defense or pursuit of homeland territory prompts deleterious domestic changes as states shift toward preparation for war and establish large standing armies. The problem for domestic politics is that the development of these standing armies requires high levels of taxation as well as a broad centralization of authority – to acquire, arm, equip, feed, maintain, and, ultimately, use the troops effectively. Thus, large standing armies are correlated with the rise of large bureaucracies, dominated by the military, and also a centralization of political power that co-exists with the militarily dominated state (Hintze, 1975 [1906]; Thompson, 1996; Tilly, 1992; North and Weingast, 1989; Moore, 1966; Boix, 2003; Alesina and Spolaore, 2003). But when the threat to the territorial integrity of the state is less salient and less consistent, there is also no need for large standing armies, little justification for centralized authority, and more ability to decentralize power. The absence of territorial threat thus allows domestic liberalization and increases the potential for transitions to more democratic regimes.

In this study, we build on research demonstrating that external threats toward a state affect regime type (e.g. Gibler and Wolford, 2006; Thompson, 1996; Rasler and Thompson, 2004) and in particular on Gibler's (2007) argument that a necessary condition for democracy is the removal of territorial threats posed by neighboring states. While previous studies are consistent with the contention that the resolution of territorial issues promotes domestic decentralization and liberalization, none has directly tested the role of border legitimacy in fostering democratic transitions. We provide precisely such a test by relying on the phenomenon of peaceful state-to-state territorial transfers (Tir, 2003; 2006). By focusing our analysis on international borders that have been altered by mutual consent (e.g. the Israeli-Egyptian boundary's adjustment via the Camp David Accords), we are able to identify a set of border cases that enjoy a greater degree of legitimacy because the neighboring states have demonstrated positive motivation, trust, and credible commitment toward territorial dispute resolution. Thus, borders settled through peaceful transfers can provide a critical set of cases for testing the democratization through peace thesis.

The theoretical importance of our work lies in the development of the argument linking the settling of borders with regime type. While many prior works (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita, et al. 2003; Huth and Allee, 2002) have argued that regime type influences how states deal with problematic international issues, including territorial disputes, we argue that the methods used for settling territorial issues affect regime type. Our paper, therefore, potentially has important implications for the theory of democratic peace, as it helps demonstrate that both democracy *and* peace in a dyad may be a function of settling the related territorial threats.

Another quite important and unique advance provided by our work's focus on the phenomenon of peaceful territorial transfer is that we go beyond the simple examination of the effects of negative peace associated with the absence of militarized conflict. Instead, we are

unique in that we examine the effects of positive international peace, demonstrated by the mutual acceptance of international borders. Our approach will therefore help address King's (2001) criticism that too many international relations studies suffer from an important omitted variable bias by failing to capture the degree of hostility within the dyad. As King describes, the hostility in the India and Pakistan dyad is fundamentally different from the hostility found in the US-Canadian dyad. We argue that this difference is the direct result of border acceptance, and peaceful territorial transfers allow us to test this argument with a valid, reliable and non-tautological operationalization of border legitimacy.

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. First, we begin with a discussion of previous research regarding the reversed-causal-arrow hypothesis and argue that the literature on international factors influencing democratization has not demonstrably connected peace to democratic development. The lack of consistent results in this literature is the product of two factors related to research design. First, almost all studies consider conflict in its general form, rather than isolating the deleterious effects of more salient issues like territorial threats to homeland territory. Second, the sample of cases in these studies almost always represents the absence of conflict and not the positive peace found when leaders relinquish claims against their neighbors.

We follow this literature review by presenting some recent work that demonstrates the importance of separating threats to homeland security from other forms of conflict. This theory argues that there is a strong connection between the absence of territorial threat, democratization and conflict; in fact, the lack of territorial threat may determine both peace and democracy. In the third section we connect the research on territorial transfers to these territorial threat studies. The peaceful transfer cases constitute the positive peace absent from prior reversed arrow scholarship. In the final section we demonstrate that controlling for territorial threat and positive peace is indeed important. Our findings indicate that the occurrence of peaceful territorial transfers, though not predicted by regime type, reduces the level of militarization in the state, reduces the level of territorial threat, and increases the likelihood of democratization.

DOES PEACE CAUSE DEMOCRACY?

The democratization literature has traditionally focused on factors within the state as determining the prospects for democracy. Economic development, class inequality, democratic norms and values, and social capital have all been linked to the presence of democracy (see for example, Lipset, 1960; Vanhanen, 1990; Rueschemeyer, et al., 1992; Almond and Verba, 1963; and Moore, 1966). However, recent work by Przeworski and Limongi (1997) and Przeworski, et al., 2000) argues that these traditional correlates of democracy do not predict democratization but are instead associated with democratic survival. Transitions to democracy, they argue, are relatively random events, unpredictable by any factors endemic to the state itself.

The lack of consensus on internal factors predicting democratization has led some to look outside the borders of the state for the causes of domestic change. Gleditsch (2002), for example, convincingly demonstrates how democracies have clustered together spatially since 1945. Found initially in North America and Western Europe, the gradual spread of democracies through time has been geographically linked to existing democracies. This led Gleditsch to argue that the strength of regional democracies plays an important role in the development of neighboring regimes—mostly because strong neighboring democracies can influence the relative power of various domestic groups within their neighbors. Increases in trade, wealth, and even direct aid to government opposition groups increase the chances for democratization as political

power is redistributed within the state. Demonstration effects also encourage democratization since peaceful democratic transitions in neighboring countries can assure autocratic elites that widespread retaliation and redistribution need not coincide with domestic institutional change (Gleditsch and Ward, 2006). Further, the collective security associated with regions dominated by democratic governments lessens the likelihood of unprovoked, direct attacks on the state, and, hence, few governments need to maintain war footings that may impair the decentralization of authority (see also Deutsch, 1954). Collectively, this explains why an increase in the number of democracies in the system, and also the strength of those democracies, are correlated with increases in the number and survival of democracies (Kadera et al., 2003).

Disentangling the reciprocal effects of regional democracy and democratization is obviously difficult. Nevertheless, the number of democracies in the region can now be considered one of the strongest predictors, external to the state, of both the presence of democracy and also the likelihood of democratic transitions. This relationship holds true even after the addition of basic controls for temporal dependence, wealth, trade, and also the presence of civil and international conflict. We argue, however, that these strong results are also somewhat misleading. Missing from the regional democracy analyses is an examination that considers the role of external threat in jointly determining the strength of the democratic community and the level of conflict in the region. If democracy itself is a product of reduced threat to the state, as we argue in the next section, it is entirely possible that strong democratic regions are really proxying the prior effects of settled borders when predicting the likelihood of either future conflict or democratization. If true, controls for peace in the region are biased substantially downward in studies of either conflict or democratization that rely on regional measures of democracy. More importantly, the findings for regional democracy become further support for the argument that a lack of external threat leads to democratic transitions (Braithwaite and Gibler, n.d.).

Among the studies that focus on the role of conflict in determining regime type, the analyses thus far have converged mostly on state formation (Tilly, 1992; Hintze, 1975 [1906]) and provided evidence principally through case study (Thompson, 1996; Desch, 1996). The few large-N examinations that have provided consistent results often concentrate on government growth rather than the centralization of authority (Peacock and Wiseman, 1961; Rasler and Thompson, 1989; Thies, 2004; 2005). One notable exception is Rasler and Thompson's (2004) examination of major powers since 1816. Testing the broad outlines of the peaceful neighborhood thesis, Rasler and Thompson find that the presence of external rivalry leads to democratization. Nevertheless, the domestic level effects of rivalry are not substantial enough to also account for the reciprocal effect democracy has upon conflict. While peace leads to democracy among major powers, democracy still increases the likelihood of peace.

The findings suggesting peace causes democracy are also tempered by the studies that demonstrate international conflict has no domestic-level effects. Oneal and Russett (2000: 207), for example, find no evidence that militarized disputes influence democratization, and Oneal et al., (2003) cannot link democratization processes to an increase in conflict. Together, these results seemingly isolate democratic transitions from the processes leading to international conflict and protect the larger democratic peace literature from arguments regarding the endogeneity of peace, democracy, and conflict. Further evidence of this isolation can be found in Reiter's (2001) duration analyses of democratic and autocratic regime survival which uncover regime effects only for war involvement. Militarized disputes have no statistically significant effect on regime survival, democratic or autocratic.

As Rasler and Thompson (2004: 884) argue, the uncertainty in this literature is most likely a consequence of research design choice. Different questions asked, different time periods examined, and different samples used have all led to confusion regarding the general thesis that peace causes democracy, even though each work often advances particular theses appropriately. Thus, while general conflict has little or no demonstrable effect on democratization (Oneal and Russett, 2000; Reiter, 2001), the presence of rivalry (Rasler and Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 1996) and increases in the level of regional democratic peace (Gleditsch, 2002; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006) can each have important consequences for state formation and regime change. We continue this trend by isolating a particular type of threat in the next section. We argue that threats to homeland territory often lead states to processes of centralization that inhibit the formation of democratic regimes.

TERRITORIAL THREAT AND DEMOCRATIC CLUSTERING

Gibler (2007) argues that the geographic clustering of democracies is best understood in conjunction with the findings linking territorial issues to conflict. Territorial issues represent the most conflict-prone, difficult-to-resolve political crises in international politics (Vasquez 1993, 1995; Gibler 1996, 1997; see also Kocs 1995; Hensel 1994; Goertz and Diehl 1992; Holsti 1991; Senese and Vasquez 2003, 2005), as disputes over territory typically result in higher fatality rates (Senese 1996), are more likely to result in crisis recurrence (Hensel 1998), and significantly increase the probability that the dispute will escalate to war (Hensel 1996; Vasquez 2004; Senese and Vasquez 2003, 2005). That territorial issues are dangerous internationally is in actuality a product of the domestic changes these conflicts create. More so than questions of policy or ideological difference, the defense or pursuit of homeland territory prompts states to engage in provocative and violent behavior. Threats to the homeland by revisionist neighbors are uniquely most likely to result in the creation of large standing armies, in contrast to far-flung conflicts and disputes over policy which do not often translate to wars fought with large, land-based armies.

The problem for domestic politics is that the development of these standing armies requires high levels of taxation as well as a broad centralization of authority – to acquire, arm, equip, feed, and otherwise maintain the troops. Because high levels of military spending and frequent conflict also depress domestic consumption and economic growth, greater political autonomy must be found for the chief executive to maintain power. Thus, large standing armies are correlated with the rise of large bureaucracies, dominated by the military, and also a centralization of political power that co-exists with the militarily dominated state. When threat is lower and less consistent, there is little need for large standing armies, no justification for centralized authority, and decentralization of power follows (see Gibler, 2007; Hutchison and Gibler, 2007; Gibler and Wolford, 2006).

That the level of external threat should play a role in shaping forms of military and domestic organization is hardly a new idea, emerging at least a century ago in the work of German historian Otto Hintze (1975 [1906]). Hintze argued that continental states facing persistent threats to their security build highly centralized state apparatuses in order to support the large standing armies needed for security, whereas states protected by geography, like islands, tend to build more decentralized militias and democratic regimes. The problem for Hintze's original theory, though, is that many of the Central European autocracies followed the path of Britain and Switzerland and have since decentralized and democratized, even clustering together in regional zones of democracy (Gleditsch, 2002). Further, while some important case study evidence supports the prospect of a link between peace and the development of democracy

(Thompson, 1996; Tilly, 1992; North and Weingast, 1989; Moore, 1966), most large-n examinations of democratization find little or no association between external threat and centralization (see Oneal and Russett, 2000; Reiter, 2001); only direct participation in war seems to matter.

There is now, however, some empirical evidence supporting the link between external threat and resultant regime type. Gibler and Wolford (2006), for example, demonstrate that a typical international behavior, such as alliance making, can have important consequences for the state itself. Specifically, they argue that entering into defense pacts with all neighbors effectively eliminates external territorial threats and positions the state as a likely candidate for democratic transition. Removal of the threat also removes the need for large land armies and centralization, and these processes ease barriers to the development of democratic competition and decentralization within the state. Their results show that the three large, regional alliances developed after World War II – NATO, the OAS, and the WEU – were effective in reducing the number of territorial disputes targeting member states and, importantly, the level of militarization in the state. This is why the three alliances are associated with an increased likelihood of democratic transitions in their study.

Hutchison and Gibler (2007) provide micro-level support for this theory. Beginning with the observation that political tolerance varies systematically across countries, they demonstrate that external territorial threat conditions domestic publics to be less tolerant of their least-liked minority groups. Previously, democratic learning was thought to explain this variation in tolerance levels, but the addition of territorial threat to models of political tolerance eliminates the statistical significance of democracy as an explanatory variable in each model. In the end, territorial threat even explains the variations in tolerance across democracies, or in other words, why New Zealand and Australia (both islands) tend to be tolerant, while Israel and India (both states contiguous with rivals threatening their territorial integrity) tend to be politically intolerant. These findings suggest territory matters because the issue provokes domestic level changes that greatly constrain the possible reactions of leaders, and this is true regardless of regime type.

The argument has also been extended to explain the empirical regularities surrounding the democratic peace. Gibler (2007) argues that a necessary condition for democracy is the removal of territorial threats posed by neighboring states. In the presence of territorial threats, the maintenance of large land armies and centralized administrations created to guard effectively against foreign intrusion, significantly hamper the state's ability to transition to democracy. For states already democratic, external territorial threats lessen the likelihood that democracy will endure. Since conflicts over territory also represent one of the most dangerous types of international issues, their absence is likely to foster peace between states, and thus, the absence of territorial issues accounts for both the development of democracy and the existence of a jointly democratic peace. Gibler's (2007) findings support this conclusion as the addition of geographic variables hypothesized to be consistent with the likelihood of territorial issues correlate with joint democracy and territorial claims. Separately, the addition of these same variables eliminates the statistical significance of democracy as a predictor of dyadic conflict, 1945 to 1999.

While each of these previous studies is consistent with the contention that territorial issues promote domestic changes, none has directly tested the role of border legitimacy in fostering democratic transitions. The tests in Gibler (2007) come closest by linking several geographic factors to the observance of joint democracy in the dyad, but this is not the same as

identifying border legitimacy. The legitimacy of the border is established by mutual consent of the leaders (and often publics) of both states in the dyad. For example, it seems reasonable to contend, as Gibler (2007) does, that international borders are likely to be unstable when a border divides ethnic groups, when few geographic salients (like rivers, lakes and mountains) reinforce border divisions, or when states emerged from poorly defined colonial holdings (2007: 517-521). But even these types of borders can sometimes be considered legitimate by both states of the dyad. Further, even borders reinforced by advantageous geography are not always accepted as legitimate. Increases in migration, power shifts, or any number of factors may cause leaders and publics to heed border-changing calls.

The next step in testing the territorial threat argument, then, is identifying cases of accepted borders *ex ante*. Establishing a connection between accepted borders and the emergence of democracies in the dyad would constitute strong evidence supporting the claim that territorial peace is necessary for democratization. We begin this process in the next section by explaining one type of accepted border – the international borders that follow peaceful transfers of territory between states in the system.

STATE-TO-STATE TERRITORIAL TRANSFERS AND TERRITORIAL THREAT

The phenomenon of state-to-state territorial transfers can be used to critically evaluate the key expectation posed by the territorial threat argument. Transfers are adjustments in the boundaries between two states, where the physical location of the border is changed. Transfers occur as a result of a typical territorial dispute: country A wants a portion of country B's territory (e.g. Alsace-Lorraine, Kashmir, Golan Heights, Spratly Islands). If country A's wishes are fulfilled, country A increases the territory under its control, while state B loses territory. One example of these cases is the transfer of the Sinai Peninsula from Israeli to Egyptian control following the Camp David Accords. While this particular transfer occurred peacefully, this is not necessarily the case with all the transfers. For instance, Israel seized the same territory by military force during the 1967 Six Day War.

Peaceful versus violent transfers represent the two extremes by which a border can be seen as settled or unsettled, respectively. Violent transfers of course indicate that the international border is far from agreed upon, as its location has been adjusted by force, without the consent of at least one party. This state of affairs is likely to cause the countries sharing the border to feel quite threatened by each other. On the other hand, peaceful transfers arguably show that the border is accepted by the two neighbors. By peacefully adjusting their common border, the countries have shown that they can deal with the disagreement about their boundary without the reliance on force; rather, they have resolved the issue by mutual consent.¹ Settling the border is in turn expected to lead to the removal of the territorial threat between the two states. Support for this part of the argument can be found in Tir's (2003; 2006) work on the aftermath of territorial transfers. His findings clearly show that the manner in which territorial transfers are conducted has a considerable impact on the post-transfer relations between the participant countries. Specifically, violent transfers are followed by militarized interstate disputes over territory at rates that are 2-3 times higher than is the case for peaceful transfers. Moreover, the conflict rate following the peaceful transfers is the same as (and in some of Tir's

¹ While it is admittedly possible that a very strong state could simply coerce an inferior neighbor into a border change (e.g. the Munich Conference), imposed transfers more typically occur following overwhelming victories in war (e.g. the US vs. Mexico in the US-Mexican War of the 19th century) and not peacefully. See Tir (2006) for more on this issue.

tests even lower than) the average global rate at which countries fight; post-peaceful transfer relations can therefore be considered “normal.” In short, peaceful transfers indeed signify a lowered state of territorial threat following the transfer.

Between peaceful and violent territorial transfer rest borders that have not been adjusted. Even though these status quo borders have not experienced actual alterations, unsuccessful attempts to adjust the boundary may have occurred and some may have involved the use of military force. We argue that even in the presence of past attempts to alter the border by force, the amount of territorial threat expected from status quo borders should be somewhat lower than is the case when violently adjusted borders are in question. While both sets of borders may have been fought over, violently adjusted borders make the threat even more acute because they are a proof that the border may not be easily defensible and that the land may be lost. A status quo border that has been fought over, in contrast, at least remained intact. More importantly, and concerning the other extreme, even if a status quo border has not been fought over, it is arguably not as settled as a peacefully adjusted border. The peacefully-altered border indicates a high degree of trust between states and motivation to settle the border. In comparison, a status quo border may only be a sign that the states cannot agree on a better distribution of land between them – even if they are dissatisfied with the current situation.

In short, we argue that the state of the border has an impact on the amount of threat states feel vis-à-vis their neighbors regarding their territorial integrity. The most settled borders ought to be the ones that have been adjusted via peaceful territorial transfers; they should pose the least amount of future concern. More problematic borders are the ones that have not experienced any adjustments (i.e. the status quo borders). And finally, violently-altered boundaries should be even more troublesome and generate the greatest feelings of future insecurity between the states. Linking this logic with Gibler’s (2007) argument, we further maintain that these varying levels of territorial threat ought to have an impact on the state’s internal politics. The greater levels of territorial threat felt by the state will translate into greater degrees of political centralization. Only when the territorial threat level is reduced will the state’s politics be allowed to liberalize, eventually leading to a democratic transition.

METHODOLOGY

Our key explanatory variable is the presence of a territorial transfer. By their very nature, transfers are relational, dyadic phenomena because of their role in adjusting an international border between two countries. Tracing the effects of transfers becomes a bit more complicated when the outcome of interest is a country level variable, monadic in nature, such as democratization. We address this level of analysis problem by conducting separate tests with both dyadic and monadic dependent variables. Nevertheless, we believe the dyadic analysis captures the degree to which a border is settled much better than the monadic analysis since our argument is that democracy diffuses *across* stable international borders. The monadic analysis is unable to appropriately identify the level of territorial threat a particular border may pose. It is therefore not particularly well suited to determining the effects of pacific border relations.

Territorial transfers can either be performed peacefully, by mutual agreement, or violently, by conquest. Territorial transfers are considered violent if there was a “violent conflict between organized forces of both sides, within a year [prior to the transfer]. . . . Unorganized violence, such as riots, is not so classified” (Tir et al., 1998: 94). Tir (2003; 2006; see also Tir et al. 1998) has identified 114 cases of non-colonial transfer during the 20th century. Sixty-four of

these transfers (approximately 56%) have been performed peacefully while the remainder involved the use of force and are coded as violent transfers.

Dyadic Analyses

We begin our analyses by demonstrating that peaceful state-to-state territorial transfers are not a function of regime type. This is important since our argument rests on the ability of peaceful territorial transfer to diminish interstate threat and encourage democratization. For these analyses, the dependent variable is the presence of a peaceful transfer between two states in any given year.

In our second set of dyadic analyses the dependent variable is the transition to joint democracy by the dyad. A dyad becomes jointly democratic when both of its members achieve the score between 6 and 10 on the Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002) scale of democracy-autocracy. From 1900 to 2000, there have been 93 instances of a dyad transitioning to joint democracy. This includes the rare case of both states transitioning at once and the more common case of one state transitioning after its neighbor had already become democratic.

Monadic Analyses

We test three separate variables in our monadic analyses. First, we examine whether countries that have experienced peaceful transfers in their past are more likely to transition to democracy at some point in the future. Thus, our dependent variable is the presence of a democratic transition in the state, which we label as any case that moves from the range of -10 to 5 to the range of 6 to 10 on the Polity IV scale of democracy-autocracy. There are 67 countries that transitioned to democracy during the 20th century.

Our second and third dependent variables capture other domestic-level effects of transfers that are consistent with our argument regarding territorial threat. Gibler (2007) and Gibler and Wolford (2006) argue that unstable borders are likely to witness increased militarization in the state. We measure militarization consistent with these studies by using the ratio of military personnel to total population in each country-year. We finally explore the ability of peaceful transfers, our proxy for settled borders, to decrease the likelihood of a state being targeted by a territorial Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) (Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer, 2004). Positive cases of targeting are coded as those states involved in a MID in which the other state of the dyad is considered revisionist over territory. We only include initiating dyads and not joiners. Additional research design details are provided below in conjunction with the discussion of the related analyses.

FINDINGS: REGIME TYPE AND PEACEFUL STATE-TO-STATE TERRITORIAL TRANSFERS

We begin our analyses by demonstrating that peaceful territorial transfers are not a function of regime type. Since our later analyses examine the regime effects of peaceful transfers once they occur, we would like to establish first that the peaceful transfer of territory is not endogenous to some long-term democratization process. To do this, we present results from four Cox regressions (Cox, 1975) that predict peaceful territorial transfers between the years 1946 and 2000.

(Table 1 about here)

Our explanatory variables in the first model of Table 1 are the regime scores of each state in the directed dyad, based on a continuous measure of Polity IV's autocracy-democracy 21-point scale. As one can see, the regime score has no statistically significant effect on the

likelihood of peaceful territorial transfer. In Model 2, we collapse each regime score to dichotomous variables representing different types of regime combinations within the dyad. Again, we find no evidence of regime type predicting territorial change as none of the dyadic combinations are statistically significant at any meaningful level.²

In models 3 and 4 we add several additional predictors of territorial conflict and/or transfer (Tir, 2003; 2006; Gibler, 2007; see also Goertz and Diehl, 1992). From data available through the Correlates of War Project, we include the capability ratio of the states in the dyad, measured as the ratio of weaker to stronger Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score, the presence of a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID), and the age of the border; these data are obtained from the EUGene software (Bennett and Stam, 2000). Since Gibler and Wolford (2006; see also Gibler, 1995; 1997) note that alliances may also serve as methods of settling territory peacefully, we include a dichotomous indicator for the presence of an alliance. Because the likelihood that a border is altered may depend on whether the contentious homeland territory is contiguous to the states involved (e.g. Alaska, East Pakistan, Cabinda), we include a control for the presence of a non-contiguous territory that is a part of the state's homeland.³ Finally, we use all dyads in our sample and include a measure for contiguous states; however, analyses using only contiguous states mirror the results presented in Model 1.

The addition of the control variables does not affect the coefficients for the different regime types in Models 3 and 4. In neither case does regime type have an effect on the likelihood of peaceful territorial transfer. The additional variables present few surprises as most are statistically insignificant. Only the presence of an alliance consistently encourages peaceful territorial transfer. The presence of non-contiguous homeland territory is significantly associated with peaceful transfer in Model 4 and almost weakly significant ($p < .12$) in Model 3, which specifies regime type with two continuous measures.

These results clearly indicate that regime type exercises little influence in bringing about peaceful territorial transfers. This is in itself interesting since one prominent work argues that democracies are more likely to exchange territories peacefully given the incentives that public institutions place on popularly elected leaders (see Bueno de Mesquita, et al., 2003: 412-414). In contrast, and consistent with our own results, Huth and Allee (2002) find that democracy may be an impediment to settling territorial disputes as increased audience costs make it difficult for democratic leaders to offer territorial concessions (which is probably a necessary condition for peaceful territorial transfer between democracies). These dynamics are revealed in the current territorial dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, both nascent democracies. Even though the dispute is relatively minor, the countries have been unable to make much progress in dealing with it over the past 16 years. A several year old agreement between the Prime Ministers has not been ratified by either country's Parliament due to the lack of popular support. As of August 2007, the leaders have agreed to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice, but Slovenian opposition parties are mounting vocal protests over sending the case to adjudication that could mean a ruling against Slovenia. This initial analysis provides a necessary first step for our argument connecting peaceful border relations and democratization. Regime type is not

² Because we are trying to present what are essentially negative findings, we experimented with many different operationalizations of regime type in both the smaller model specification (Models 1 and 2) and the extended specification (Models 3 and 4). However, in none of these models was regime type significantly associated (negatively or positively) with territorial transfers.

³ We also experimented with variables measuring the presence of ethnic groups that straddle the border and the presence of sharp changes in geography across the border. Neither of these indicators was significant in any of our models. Similarly, the presence of a civil war in one of the states had no effect.

associated with peaceful territorial transfers. The next step is to determine whether, once peaceful transfers occur, democratization follows.

FINDINGS: DOES PEACEFUL TERRITORIAL CHANGE LEAD TO DEMOCRATIZATION?

Dyadic Analyses

Table 2 reports the results of an analysis with the dyadic transition to joint democracy as the dependent variable. We include only cases of non-joint democracy in these analyses as these are the only cases that can actually experience such a transition. The key explanatory variables in the table are the peaceful and violent territorial transfers. The reference category is an unaltered (i.e. status quo) border.

(Table 2 about here)

For our control variables, we convert several country-level variables to relational measures. For example, economic development and polity score are specified with a weak-link method in which the dyadic value is equal to the value of the lowest ranked state. Thus, the lowest per capita GDP (from the Penn World Tables) in the dyad and the lowest regime score – a continuous variable following the Polity IV democracy-autocracy scale – serve as dyadic measures of development and regime type. The percentage of the population that is Muslim (Reiter, 2001) is measured using the highest scoring state. Power is again a ratio of weakest to strongest state in the dyad. We also include two dichotomous variables – one that is positive if one of the states experiences a civil war (Sarkees, 2000) and one that is positive if one country receives significant income from oil production (Reiter, 2001). Both domestic conflict and the presence of oil have been associated with non-democracy (Hegre, et al., 2001; Ross, 2001). Finally, the presence of any MID captures immediate threats to the state.

As the results in Model 1 show, peaceful territorial transfers have a statistically significant and positive effect on the likelihood of a dyad becoming jointly democratic following the transfer. This finding supports the key expectation of our argument that settling the border removes an important mutual threat in the dyad and leads to domestic liberalization and eventual democracy. Additional threat does not seem to have a negative effect on democratization, however, as violent territorial transfers are not statistically significant at any conventional level.

A look at the raw data underlying the finding reveals the following trends. Peaceful transfers are, of course, not a strict pre-requisite for having democratic transitions—border issues can be resolved in many ways. However, once peaceful transfers do occur, democratic transitions are much more likely. The rate at which transitions to joint democracy occur in the absence of peaceful transfers is .0086 per year. In the aftermath of peaceful transfers, however, this rate jumps to .0173 per year—an increase of 101%. A similar pattern holds when the yearly observations are grouped so that the rival dyad becomes the unit of analysis. Rivals not experiencing peaceful transfers become democracies about 23% of the time, but rival dyads that have experienced a peaceful transfer become democratic at more than twice this rate, about 54% of the time.

Our finding regarding the beneficial impact of peaceful transfers on dyadic transition to democracy is, importantly, obtained while controlling for several factors already associated with transitions to democracy. Higher regime scores are naturally going to be associated with transitions since the states in the dyad need to surmount fewer institutional hurdles to become democratic. Also consistent with some findings in the democratization literature (Reiter, 2001), countries with large Muslim populations and/or large amounts of oil revenue have fewer transitions toward democracy, though the latter result is not statistically significant.

Interestingly, lower levels of economic development and the presence of civil war are positively associated with democratic transitions. These variables may simply indicate dissatisfaction with the extant regime and an increased likelihood of regime change. When we change the dependent variable to transition to autocracy, the coefficients kept their directions of impact, so these results may only imply that civil wars and poverty bring about regime change.⁴ More likely, however, is that the high level of collinearity between violent transfers, civil wars, and economic development are at least partially driving these results. Indeed, when we shift to monadic analyses in the remainder of this section, civil war becomes negative, though poor economic development also remains correlated with democratic transitions.

The final control variables provide alternate measures of mutual threat and added confirmation for our argument linking mutual threat to territorial control. Yet, whether this type threat is measured behaviorally – by noting how much time has elapsed since the last militarized confrontation (Model 1) – or more abstractly – by taking into account the relative power distribution within the dyad (Model 2) – the results are statistically insignificant. Both variables remain insignificant even when jointly included in the model.

That the MID and power variables are statistically insignificant in all tests, while the peaceful transfer variable remains robust and positive as a predictor of democratization, confirms our argument that only certain types of threats matter domestically. Peaceful borders remove an important threat to the state, abating the need for centralization or militarization and thus encouraging democratization. More general international disputes and parity without the presence of a contentious issue carry little salience at the domestic level. We investigate this argument further in the rest of this section with two sets of monadic analyses.

Monadic Analyses

In Table 3, we further investigate the effects of territorial transfer, this time at the monadic level, by modeling the likelihood of observing a democratic transition in any country. Note that these are static, cross-sectional analyses, meaning that our unit of analysis is the country and not county-year. The reason for the shift to the cross-sectional analysis is the monadic analysis' inability to capture the effects of a border being settled particularly well, in large part because it cannot match a specific border with the related source of potential threat (i.e. the dyadic partner that may disagree with the border's location). Yet, with the cross-sectional approach, we are at least able to evaluate whether a state with a greater portion of peacefully settled borders is more likely to undergo a democratic transition at some point in the future.

Accordingly, the main independent variables are operationalized by noting the portion of a state's borders that have been altered peacefully or violently (i.e. percent of borders experiencing peaceful transfers, percent of borders experiencing violent transfers, and the percent of status quo borders, which serves as the reference category). We use the monadic versions of the control variables described above, by relying on their over time average values. An exception is the logged sum of MIDs experienced by the country; this proxies an alternate level of threat faced by the state. Finally, a new control variable in this analysis captures the strength of the regional democratic community; its value is based on the percentage of democracies in the Correlates of War region.

(Table 3 about here)

⁴ These results are available from the authors.

Our logit analyses of these cases yield results that are quite similar to the ones reported for the dyadic analyses in Table 2. Borders adjusted via peaceful transfers significantly increase the likelihood of democratic transitions. Violent transfers, in contrast, have no effect discernible from borders that have not been altered. Therefore, peaceful transfers once again emerge as a process that decreases the level of (territorial) threat countries feel, allowing them to eventually transition toward democracy. In the absence of a peaceful transfer, countries transition to democracy at the rate of about .226, while this rate goes up to about .552 (a 144% increase) in the aftermath of a peaceful transfer.

Of the control variables in Model 1, a small Muslim population and the presence of democracy in the country's region both encourage democratization. This latter finding may be evidence for the effects of democratic contagion (Gleditsch and Ward, 2006), but importantly for our argument, peaceful transfers remain statistically significant even when controlling for the effects of the neighboring democratic community.⁵ Economic development still has a negative effect on democratization in our analyses. None of the other variables exhibits statistical significance in these analyses, including the alternate measures of threat the state may be feeling. Whether this threat is measured behaviorally – by noting the (logged) number of MIDs the state has been involved in (Model 1) – or more abstractly – by taking into account the state's power (Model 2) – the results are statistically insignificant. Both variables remain insignificant even when jointly included in the model.

FINDINGS: MILITARIZATION AND TERRITORIAL MID TARGETING

In Table 4, we examine additional domestic-level implications of our argument. In these tests we focus on the subset of countries that have undergone territorial transfer and differentiate between peaceful and violent transfers as the two potential extremes by which a country's border has been determined. For these analyses we add a variable for the presence of a defense pact with all neighbors as these alliance conditions are also correlated with a reduction in territorial threat to the state (see Gibler and Wolford, 2006). We also control for the number of borders for each country; an increase in the number of neighbors also increases the number of opportunities for territorial threat to the state.

In our first analysis we investigate whether a state's level of militarization depends on its past engagement in peaceful or violent transfers. Because the dependent variable in Model 1 is the level to which a state is militarized, we use ordinary least squares regression to examine this hypothesis. As expected, violent transfers are associated with substantially greater levels of militarization than peaceful transfers. The findings for the control variables are consistent with prior expectations. Wealthier and more powerful states, as well as states that have experienced militarized interstate disputes tend to be more militarized. In contrast, more democratic states and states that have reduced the threat to them by entering into defense pacts are less militarized. Democracy in the region also decreases the level of militarization. Finally, the number of borders coefficient has the anticipated sign, but falls just below the conventional levels of significance.

In Model 2, we test whether peacefully-altered borders decrease the level of territorial threat targeting the state. Using territorial MIDs as the dependent variable, Model 2 results strongly support this expectation. Countries that have settled their borders with peaceful

⁵ Note that there is no corresponding measure of regional threat in the analyses that employ variables measuring neighboring democratic community. Braithwaite and Gibler (n.d.) argue that the presence of regional threat largely accounts for the diffusion effects of democratic neighborhoods.

transfers have a significantly lower expectation of being targeted by a territorial MID; violent transfers increase the subsequent territorial threat. These results are consistent with the dyadic tests found in Tir (2003; 2006). As for the control variables, democracies, powerful states, and countries with defense pacts are all less likely to find themselves targeted by militarized disputes over territory. Countries with a greater number of borders are, in contrast, more likely to be the victims of such attacks.

CONCLUSION

The above-presented tests provide notable support for our argument that settled international boundaries decrease the level of threat to the territorial integrity of states. The reduction in this threat in turn allows countries to liberalize their internal politics, eventually leading to democratic transitions. The clearest support comes from the dyadic analyses presented in Table 2, where we are able to show that peaceful transfers are prominent among the factors increasing the rate by which dyads experience transitions to joint democracy in the future. Our monadic findings in Table 3 again show the beneficial nature of peaceful transfers as countries that have settled a greater portion of their borders peacefully are more likely to be democratic in the future. Importantly, these results are not a simple byproduct of a potential reverse relationship by which democracy leads to a peaceful transfer. Table 1 findings clearly demonstrate that regime type has no appreciable influence on peaceful transfers. Finally, we also show that there is empirical support for critical sub-parts of our argument. First, when comparing the effects of peaceful versus violent transfer – or more properly, settled versus unsettled borders – our results reveal that peaceful transfers are followed by significantly lower levels of militarization within the country. Therefore, settled borders are indeed associated with a decrease in the extent to which domestic politics is focused on military affairs in response to active territorial threats. Second, peaceful transfers significantly reduce the chances that a state will be targeted in the future by military force over its border, thus confirming our sub-argument that peacefully-adjusted borders are indeed more settled.

These findings have a bearing on several prominent, but related, research tracks. At the broadest level, the findings are consistent with Przeworski and Limongi (1997) and Przeworski et al.'s (2000) observation that the reasons for transitions to democracy have to be found among the factors that are not endemic to the state itself. In pursuing this line of thought, we, however, go beyond the argument that the transition to democracy is chiefly caused by the neighborhood demonstration effect (Gleditsch, 2002; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006; Kadera et al., 2003). Missing from the regional democracy analyses is an examination that considers the role of external threat in jointly determining the strength of the democratic community and the level of conflict in the region. This brings us to the literature that focuses on the role of conflict in determining regime type (e.g. Oneal and Russett, 2000; Oneal et al., 2003; Reiter, 2001; Rasler and Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 1996; Tilly, 1992; North and Weingast, 1989; Moore, 1966). Unfortunately, as a group, these reverse-causality studies of the democratic peace fail to agree on whether peace causes democracy.

To advance on these works, our approach to this question heeds King's (2001) criticism that too many studies of the potential reverse causality relationship between peace and democracy suffer from an important omitted variable bias, by failing to capture the degree of hostility within the dyad. Taking stock of King's argument, we go beyond the simple examination of the effects of negative peace associated with the absence of militarized conflict and instead examine the effects of positive international peace – demonstrated by the mutual

acceptance of international borders. We argue that the varying difference in hostility among dyads is the direct result of affirmative border acceptance. In other words, we isolate a particular, and arguably the most serious, threat a country faces, the threat to its territorial integrity. While territorial disputes represent the most conflict-prone, difficult-to-resolve political crises in international politics (Vasquez 1993, 1995; Gibler 1996, 1997; see also Kocs 1995; Hensel 1994; Goertz and Diehl 1992; Holsti 1991; Senese and Vasquez 2003, 2005), more relevant to our study is the argument that like no other issue, territorial threats can cause unwelcome centralization and militarization of the domestic polity (see Hintze, 1975 [1906]; Gibler, 2007; Hutchison and Gibler, 2007; Gibler and Wolford, 2006). Yet, conversely, when this threat is lessened, de-militarization and decentralization of political authority can follow, eventually leading to a democratic transition.

By utilizing the phenomenon of peaceful territorial transfers (Goertz and Diehl, 1992; Tir, 2003; 2006) – which indicates a high degree of a border being settled – we are able to provide clear empirical support for the expectations that the settling of territorial issues via peaceful transfers leads to demilitarization, border stability, and, critically, democratic transitions. In pursuing this line of reasoning, we also develop the argument linking the settling of borders with regime type. While many prior works (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita, et al. 2003; Huth and Allee, 2002) have argued that regime type influences how states deal with problematic international issues, including territorial disputes, we demonstrate that the methods used for settling territorial issues instead affect regime type. That is, through a battery of tests, we show that this is not a circular relationship: regime type has no bearing on the method of territorial settlement, operationalized in this study as a peaceful territorial transfer. In combination with Gibler's (2007) study, our paper hence has important implications for the theory of democratic peace, as it helps demonstrate that both democracy *and* peace in a dyad may be a function of settling the related territorial threats.

The policy implications of our study are potentially tremendous. The failure to deal with territorial disputes proactively and constructively – by seeking a peaceful adjustment in existing borders – not only continues to create conflict between states (i.e. the very real danger of militarization of territorial disputes found by Huth, 1996; Hensel, 2001; Vasquez and Henahan, 2001; Senese and Vasquez, 2003; Senese, 2005) but also seriously undermines the states' ability to transition toward democracy. Seen in this light, for example, the African Union/Organization of African Unity's norm against border changes has serious negative and unanticipated consequences. While this norm has prevented but a few border changes in Africa, it has failed in delivering territorial security for the African states. As Tir and Diehl (2002) show, the norm has not prevented the challenging of Africa's borders by the use of military force. Moreover, per our study, the norm can be added to the already lengthy list of reasons for why democracy has a hard time thriving in Africa despite massive amounts of aid and Western democratization pressure dedicated to the continent.

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Table 1: Cox Regressions Predicting Peaceful Territorial Transfers

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Combined Polity Score <i>State A</i>	0.988 (0.012)		1.002 (0.022)	
Combined Polity Score <i>State B</i>	0.986 (0.012)		0.997 (0.019)	
Democracy to Autocracy		0.643 (0.430)		1.944 (1.321)
Autocracy to Democracy		0.860 (0.519)		2.581 (1.587)
Autocracy to Autocracy		1.855 (0.958)		1.224 (0.652)
Democracy to Democracy		0.987 (0.523)		1.324 (0.715)
Allied Dyad			3.818 (1.560) **	4.065 (1.678) **
Capability Ratio <i>(Weaker/Stronger)</i>			0.823 (0.580)	0.953 (0.669)
Militarized Interstate Dispute			0.999 (1.021)	1.012 (1.035)
Age of Border			0.993 (0.005)	0.993 (0.005)
Contiguous			102.343 (108.2) **	115.257 (122.1) **
One or both states have non- contiguous homeland territory			2.006 (0.839)	1.930 (0.812)
N	98946	98946	98946	98946
Chi-square	1.74	2.89	96.13 **	98.61 **

Note: Cell entries report Cox coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The unit of analysis is the directed dyad-year. The dependent variable are all directional transfers of territory from State A to State B. Significance levels are one-tailed: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 2: Cox Regressions of a Dyad Becoming Jointly Democratic Following a Territorial Transfer

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Peaceful Transfer	0.570 (0.287) *	0.544 (0.286) *
Violent Transfer	0.078 (0.355)	0.058 (0.354)
Economic Development (low)	-0.226 (0.059) **	-0.233 (0.059) **
Civil War	0.824 (0.389) **	0.870 (0.389) *
Polity Score (low)	0.105 (0.022) **	0.109 (0.022) **
Muslim Population (high)	-0.014 (0.004) **	-0.015 (0.004) **
Oil Producer	-0.025 (0.291)	0.084 (0.303)
Peace Years	0.000 (0.008)	
Power Ratio		-0.088 (0.077)
N	9311	9311
Chi-square	58.100 **	59.43 **

Note: Cell entries report Cox coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The unit of analysis is a dyad-year. All independent variables are lagged one year with respect to the dependent variable. Observations that are already jointly democratic have been dropped. Significance levels are one-tailed: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3: Logit Analyses of a Country Experiencing a Democratic Transition Following a Territorial Transfer

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Peaceful Transfer	1.487 (0.832) *	1.632 (0.803) *
Violent Transfer	-0.419 (1.046)	-0.426 (1.012)
Economic Development	-0.167 (0.093) *	-0.182 (0.095) *
Muslim Population	-0.012 (0.005) *	-0.012 (0.005) *
Oil Producer	-0.042 (0.496)	-0.106 (0.488)
Percent Democracies in the Region	2.875 (1.645) *	1.435 (1.509)
Militarized Interstate Disputes (ln)	0.110 (0.214)	
Power		0.167 (0.128)
Constant	-0.585 (0.662)	1.039 (1.063)
N	134	144
Chi-square	16.33 *	18.26 **

Note: Peaceful and Violent Transfer variables indicate the portion of a state's borders that have been adjusted by the related method. Cell entries report logit coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The unit of analysis is a country. Observations that were already democratic prior to the transfer have been dropped. Significance levels are one-tailed: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4: Analyses of Militarization and Being a Target of a Militarized Interstate Dispute over Territory for Countries that Have Experienced a Territorial Transfer in the Past

	<i>Model 1 OLS of ln(Militarization)</i>	<i>Model 2 Cox Regression of Being Targeted by Territorial MID</i>
Violent Transfer	0.389 (0.035) **	0.850 (0.315) **
Regime Score	-0.178 (0.054) **	-0.744 (0.411) *
Economic Development	0.064 (0.004) **	
Power	0.022 (0.013) *	-0.187 (0.112) *
Defense Pact	-0.039 (0.008) **	-0.344 (0.110) **
Militarized Interstate Dispute	0.183 (0.038) **	
Percent Democracies in the Region	-0.407 (0.089) **	0.342 (1.160)
Number of Borders	0.012 (0.009)	0.248 (0.090) **
Constant	-5.088 (0.120)	
N	2528	1027
F-test	82.21 **	
Chi-square		24.57 **

Note: Cell entries report regression coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The unit of analysis is a country-year. All independent variables are lagged with respect to the dependent variable.

Significance levels are one-tailed: * p < .05; ** p < .01