

**Red Herrings?
Fishing Disputes, Regime Type, and Interstate Conflict**
A Research Note

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1. Introduction

The relationship between regime type and conflict is the focus of one of the most prolific areas of research in international relations. Scholars have established rather conclusively that democracies tend not to fight wars with each other. But what remain open for debate are the causal mechanisms driving this singular behavior.² Much international relations research in recent decades has therefore focused on patterns of militarized conflict between states with different regime types. Such scholarship has relied heavily on the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) data set, which contains information about all disputes since 1816 “in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property or territory of another state” (Jones, Bremer, Singer 1996, 169). Thousands of journal pages have been devoted to analyzing MIDs, often with the goal of determining how regime type influences the occurrence of conflict, states’ chosen strategies of escalation, and states’ propensity to use violence to settle disputes once they have become militarized.

As such, scholars have implicitly assumed that the MID data set has captured an appropriate and useful set of cases as a basis for inference about states’ decisions to use military force vs. other means of dispute resolution. More specifically, scholars have typically assumed that MIDs are comparable across different types of dispute dyads – in other words, that the average dispute between democracies can be meaningfully compared to the average dispute between mixed and non-democratic dyads. For example, scholars have often argued that disputes that arise between democracies tend to be settled more peacefully than disputes between mixed dyads, and have framed this finding as evidence in favor of democracies’ superior ability to reach peaceful compromise with other democracies. To make inferences of this sort, however, scholars must assume one of two things: either that, on average, disputes between autocracies and democracies have the same *ex ante* likelihood of escalation as disputes

² Research has tended to center on two proposed mechanisms. The first suggests that the absence of conflict between democracies is linked to normative restrictions on the use of force against another democracy. The second mechanism suggests that the structure of democratic political systems, in which leaders are more constrained, and hence more selective, in their foreign policy decision-making.

between democracies, or that the MID data set contains covariates that allow one to account for other factors that would predict dispute escalation.

This paper argues that the MID data set contains a specific class of disputes whose inclusion in a data set of militarized disputes is questionable on theoretical grounds – in particular, fishing disputes in which the primary issue at stake is rights over fishing in a contested area of the ocean— and that the tendency of fishing disputes not to escalate is not picked up by other variables in the data set. Moreover, the inclusion of fishing disputes in the MID data set biases inferences about the relationship between regime type and conflict behavior, because fishing disputes are both more likely to be settled without a militarized response by the target country *and* appear to occur disproportionately between mature democracies.

The paper proceeds as follows. We first provide a theoretical rationale for excluding fishing disputes from the MID data set. Using standard data sources³, we code each MID in this subset dichotomously as being a fishing dispute or not, identifying a total of 69 fishing disputes from the 567 democratic-target disputes for which we could find sufficient information. We next demonstrate how inferences about the relationship between regime type change once fishing disputes are excluded from the set of disputes in which democracies are the “target” of an initial threat or use of force (Side B)⁴. This is followed by a discussion of potential implications for existing work. Finally, we propose research questions for which fishing disputes may be an interesting class of cases in their own right.

³ We systematically searched Facts on File, Lexis-Nexis, Keesing’s, the London Times Online Archive, and the Diehl/Goertz data on Rivalries.

⁴ We ultimately plan to expand this research project to the remaining observations in the MID data set; however, our original research design called for coding only the MIDs in which democracies were the “target” of a threat, show, or use of force.

2. Fishing Disputes: Small Fry?

What are MIDs, exactly? And why are fishing disputes included in the MID data set? We begin by exploring the definitions and coding rules for the MID data set. We then turn to the question of why fishing disputes have typically been coded as militarized disputes. Finally, we present an argument for why fishing disputes do not belong in the data set, providing historical examples that illustrate why typical fishing disputes are not comparable to typical MIDs.

What are MIDs? Definitions and Coding Rules

MIDs are defined as “united historical cases in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property or territory of another state” (Jones, Bremer Singer 1996, 168). Militarized disputes consist of at least one “militarized incident,” or “a single military action involving an explicit threat, display or use of force by one system member state towards another system member state” (Jones, Bremer, Singer 1996, 169).

Further criteria are used to define militarized incidents, including the following: a militarized incident is (1) an explicit, non-routine and governmentally authorized action or (2) an overt action taken by the official military forces or government representatives of a state. Additionally, (3) actions taken by the official forces of one state against the private citizens of another state are not typically considered to be militarized incidents. The exceptions are seizures of personnel or material within the confines of disputed territory, attacks on international shipping and the pursuit of rebel forces across international boundaries.

The authors of the MID data set do not provide an explicit discussion regarding the coding of fishing disputes. However, from the above coding rules we can deduce why fishing disputes may have been included in the MID data set. Fishing disputes involve governmentally-authorized, overt action and seem to fit squarely within the exception of criterion (3), as stated above. That is, fishing disputes are, by definition, actions taken by the government of one state (e.g. the Coast Guard or Navy) against the private citizens (e.g. fishing vessels) of another

state, and involve the seizure of ships and, occasionally, the seizure of those onboard, in the confines of “disputed territory” (e.g. the contested ocean waters). As such, they meet the technical definition of a MID as described by the authors.⁵

What is a fishing dispute?

We define fishing disputes as interstate disputes in which the primary issue at stake involves states’ rights to fish contested waters, and in which any threat or use of force is directed exclusively at private citizens or a private vessel. Were one only to look at the MID codings, one would have the impression that the seas are a hotbed of international conflict. Ninety-one percent of all disputes we coded as fishing disputes are coded in the MID data set as involving the “use of force” by one state (Side A, the perpetrator of the first individual militarized incident) against a target state (Side B). But it is questionable whether fishing disputes meet most scholars’ conception of military actions.

One such example is MID 3900, a dispute between Canada and the U.S. that took place on December 11, 1989. The data set has coded this incident as an attack by Canada on the U.S. However, our research reveals that the incident involved a Canadian Forces destroyer “chasing” an American scallop-fishing boat out of Canadian waters in the Georges Bank after firing warning shots at the vessel (Facts on File). Moreover, we found no indication that the United States viewed this incident as an act of war, yet it is coded in MID data set as involving the highest codeable level of hostility, short of war, between two nations.

Another example of how the coding of fishing disputes may exaggerate the significance of an incident is MID 3105. This dispute occurred on October 25, 1980 between Ecuador and the U.S. Our research reveals that the MID involved the Ecuadorian seizure of U.S. fishing boats

⁵ *An aside on limitations of the MID data set*

As useful and ubiquitous as the MID data set is for scholars of international relations, it suffers from a serious limitation on its practicality: it lacks narratives of the events that constitute each MID. Substantial research is required in order to identify the substance of the dispute in question. In some cases, even with the limited information provided by the data set, such as start and end dates and the dispute participants, a dispute simply cannot be located in general historical or news sources. This lack of replicability is a serious problem for the data set and presents a real challenge to scholars who want to understand the substantive issues at stake in a dispute. Even after carefully checking against the five sources we used, we were unable to verify the occurrence of about 10% of the MIDs in our data set.

that Ecuador believed were encroaching on its exclusive economic zone (Rivalry data set). Again, this MID is coded as a “use of force” by Ecuador against the United States. We argue that considering this act to be an interstate use of force is stretching the common conception of a militarized interstate action.⁶

Methodological Issues and an Argument for Removing Fishing Disputes

How do we evaluate whether fishing disputes merit inclusion in the MID data set? One criterion is whether the dispute constitutes a case in which the threat, display or use of military force “is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property or territory of another state” (Jones, Bremer Singer 1996, 168). Based on our reading of the fishing disputes coded as MIDs, we argue that it is unclear that the seizure of a fishing vessel or shots across the bow of a private ship are typically construed by either the initiating or target states as an interstate military action. Rather, the inclusion of fishing disputes in the MID data set appears to be a consequence of a well-intentioned, but inappropriate, coding rule.

A second way of evaluating the appropriateness of treating fishing disputes as “regular” MIDs is whether including them is consistent with the broader goal of the data set; namely, explaining “the empirical regularities that differentiate those disputes that do and do not escalate to war” (Jones, Bremer Singer 1996, 166). The authors of the MID data set argue that the intention of the MID project is to identify disputes that “carry the implication of war” (ibid). In our view, fishing disputes do not meet this test. To our knowledge, no fishing dispute has ever sparked a war, and we think it is unlikely that even the most fishing-dependent of states would ever sacrifice significant resources and lives to assure continued access to fishing waters.

⁶ Often, it is difficult to ascertain what happened during a particular dispute. For example, the data set indicates that there was a dispute between Argentina and Japan on February thirteen, 1987 (MID 28-thirteen). Our research revealed that this dispute was a fishing dispute, although we could only locate a very short description of the MID in one of the sources we checked. We know from *Keesing’s Record of World Events* only that two Japanese fishing vessels were detained by Argentine vessels and we know from the data set that the action was not reciprocated. But, due to the fact that the dispute was not major world news, there is very little information about the substance of the conflict.

This paper represents the first systematic examination of the implication of including fishing disputes in the MID data set. But other scholars have noted that fishing disputes may be inherently unlike other MIDs. For example, Gleditsch and Hegre (1997) argue, in a footnote:

Many of the MIDs between democracies are fisheries disputes (e.g. the Cod Wars between Iceland and its neighbors). In such conflicts, the threat or use of force is usually acted out between the government on one side and a private fishing vessel on the other. The intergovernmental action is generally limited to diplomatic exchanges and it is questionable whether such conflicts have any place in a data set on international disputes (288, footnote 7).

Criticisms of this type echo the fact that including fishing disputes in the MID data set is more of an artifact of the MID coding rules than the result of a carefully considered methodological or theoretical purpose. There is no reason to expect that, *ex ante*, fishing disputes a) carry the same meaning for state participants as other militarized disputes and b) carry the same potential to escalate as other types of militarized interstate disputes. Of course, this critique would be moot if treating fishing disputes like other MIDs did not entail meaningful consequences for our understanding of interstate conflict. The following section, however, will demonstrate that including fishing disputes in the MID data set has important implications for inference about the relationship between regime type and conflict.

3. Fishing Disputes and Regime Type: Implications for Key Dependent Variables

The MID data set contains 1616 disputes since 1946. Given this large number of disputes, it was infeasible to code our “fishing dispute” variable for this entire set of disputes. As an initial probe, we therefore decided to focus on a manageable subset of these disputes: all MIDs in which “Side B” of the dispute was a democracy. We chose this subset because it would, preliminarily, allow us to draw inferences about the response of democracies to threats by other states.

In this first wave of coding, we identified all 609 MIDs in which Side B is a democracy. 102 of these are disputes in which both states are democracies; the rest are disputes in which the initiator of the dispute (Side A, the side that took the first coded militarized action in the dispute) is a non-democracy.⁷ Table 1 shows variation on a range of the dependent variables cited in the literature on regime type and conflict, according to the type of MID (fishing disputes vs. all other disputes).

Table 1: Summary of Key Dependent Variables by Dispute Type

Dispute Type	Hostility Level ⁸ Side A	Reciprocated? (0/1)	Hostility Level Side B	Negotiated? (0/1)	N
Fishing⁹	3.9 (.35)	.16 (.37)	1.4 (.96)	.14 (.35)	69
Non-Fishing	3.7 (.60)	.56 (.50)	2.5 (1.4)	.11 (.31) ¹⁰	498
Total	3.7 (.58)	.51 (.50)	2.3 (1.4)	.11 (.32) ¹¹	567
<i>T-test p-value¹²</i>	<i>0.001</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.38</i>	

The above table indicates that fishing disputes differ from non-fishing disputes on a number of key dimensions. The first pattern to note is that the average highest level of hostility reached by Side A during the dispute, *host1*, is actually higher in fishing disputes than in remaining disputes. This appears to be because fishing disputes in the MID data set typically include either seizures of vessels or the firing of (warning) shots by Side A. Both of these actions are coded as “uses of force”, making it seem that Side A in fishing disputes escalated to higher-than-average levels of force.

⁷ We coded democracy as a dichotomous variable, with all states scoring a 7 or above on Polity III being democracies, and all states scoring 6 or lower as autocracies. We note that there are also 23 disputes in which side B is a democracy and the regime type of side A is not available in the Polity III data set.

⁸ The “hostility” level of the dispute, coded for each side, ranges from 1 to 5:

1 = No militarized action

2 = Threat to use force

3 = Display of force

4 = Use of force

5 = War

⁹ Using Keesing’s Record of World Events, Facts on File, Lexis-Nexis, and the London Times and the Diehl-Goertz data set, we were unable to determine the substance of the dispute for 65 out of the 632 crises in which side B was a democracy.

¹⁰ N=477 since “Settlement” variable missing for some MIDs.

¹¹ N=546.

¹² T-test on the difference in means between fishing and non-fishing disputes, p-value reported for

The second pattern, in contrast, is that militarized actions by Side A are much less likely to be reciprocated by Side B in the context of fishing disputes than they are during other kinds of disputes. The data indicate that states are less likely to respond with military threats or force when their fishing vessels are seized or attacked than are states who are threatened over other contentious issues. Columns 2 and 3 of the data set show that in fishing disputes, Side B reaches significantly lower levels of hostility, as well as being less likely to respond with *any* militarized action. Finally, fishing disputes are slightly more likely to be resolved by negotiated settlement, as opposed to an “imposed” settlement or failure to resolve the dispute.

Fishing Disputes and Regime Type

The patterns identified above would not pose a problem for our inferences about regime type and conflict behavior if fishing disputes were equally distributed throughout the set of MIDs. This, however, is not the case. The table below shows the distribution of MIDs by dispute dyad type.

Table 2: Proportion of MIDs that are Fishing Disputes by Regime Type

Dispute Dyad Type	Percent of disputes that are fishing disputes
Democratic-Democratic	28.1 % (25/89)
Autocratic-Democratic	9.6 % (44/459)

Clearly, fishing disputes represent a much higher percentage of disputes in which a democracy targets another democracy, compared to disputes in which a non-democracy targets a democracy. An interesting question follows from this: why do democracies disproportionately engage in fishing disputes with each other? The answer may lie in geography and economics. First, a large number of democracies are closely clustered around the North Atlantic, which contains many important fisheries. Second, using data from the United Nations Common Database, we found that democracies, on average, catch more fish per capita than non-

H0: $p(\text{mean}(\text{fishing}) = \text{mean}(\text{non-fishing}))$

democracies. They may therefore have more opportunity for engaging in fishing disputes than countries that catch fewer fish.

How do patterns of escalation by regime type change when we take out fishing disputes?

The final question is whether or not apparent relationships between dispute behavior and regime type change when fishing disputes are removed from the MID data set.

Table 3: Summary of Key Dependent Variables by Regime and Dispute Types

Type of Dispute Dyad	Hostility Level, Side A		Hostility Level, Side B		Reciprocation? (0/1)		Negotiation? (0/1)	
	<i>Full</i>	Without Fishing	<i>Full</i>	Without Fishing	<i>Full</i>	Without Fishing	<i>Full</i>	Without Fishing
Autocratic - Democratic	3.7 (.57) 459	3.7 (.59) 415	2.3 (1.4) 459	2.4 (1.4) 415	.52 (.50) 459	.56 (.50) 415	.11 (.31) 442	.11 (.31) 398
Democratic - Democratic	3.7 (.60) 89	3.6 (.64) 64	2.3 (1.5) 89	2.6 (1.5) 64	.47 (.50) 89	.58 (.50) 64	.13 (.34) 85	.10 (.30) 60
All	3.7 (.58) 548	3.7 (.60) 479	2.3 (1.4) 548	2.5 (1.4) 479	.51 (.50) 548	.56 (.50) 479	.11 (.32) 527	.11 (.31) 458

This table points to a number of important implications of removing fishing disputes from the MID data set (interpret by comparing the columns along the same dependent variable). The most interesting, and potentially important, finding is that when fishing disputes are removed from the MID data set, democratic states actually appear to respond with *more* force against fellow democracies than they do against autocratic challengers (an average hostility level of 2.6 on the democracy-democracy dyads vs. an average hostility level of 2.4 on the autocracy-democracy dyads). Particularly interesting are the third and fourth dependent variables. When fishing disputes are included in the MID data set, it appears that democratic regimes are *less* likely to respond militarily when the challenger is a democracy. This relationship is, however, reversed when fishing disputes are excluded – notably, democracies in this case are *more* likely to reciprocate militarily against other democracies. Similarly, when fishing disputes are included, democracies appear more likely to settle disputes through negotiation when their counterpart is a democracy. When fishing disputes are removed from the data set,

democracies are actually *less* likely to settle a dispute through negotiation with other democracies than with autocracies.

Until we have coded all disputes in which Side B is a non-democracy, it is difficult to determine whether patterns such as the ones indicated above will lead to new inferences about regime type and conflict once additional control variables are included. The following section will discuss a number of findings that could be re-analyzed on the set of all non-fishing disputes.

4. One Fish, Two Fish, Old Fish, New Fish: Fishing Disputes and Previous Research

In this section, we review the findings in recent articles that may be affected by removing or controlling for fishing disputes. We first review a series of articles whose findings we believe might be weakened by removing the fishing disputes. We then turn to an example of an article whose central premise might be strengthened by removing the fishing disputes. Finally, we turn to an article where it is unclear how our results will affect its findings.

Potentially weakening previous findings

--Michael Mousseau, "Democracy and Compromise in Militarized Interstate Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998).

Analyzing MIDs from 1816-1992, Mousseau argues that democratic norms lead democracies, when in conflict, to compromise more readily with one another. Removing the fishing MIDs from Mousseau's analysis would potentially disproportionately reduce the number of democracy-democracy dyads in the data set. Doing so could potentially weaken his results.

--William Dixon, "Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict," *APSR* (1994). William Dixon and Paul Senese, "Democracy, Disputes, and Negotiated Settlements," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2002).

Using another data set, Dixon argues that Democratic opponents are significantly more likely to reach peaceful settlements than other types of opponents. Later in *JCR* (2002), Dixon and

Paul Senese do the same analysis using the MID data set, and finds “the more democratic the less democratic member of a conflictual dyad, the more likely it is their dispute will be resolved through a negotiated settlement.” Removing the fishing MIDs would potentially weaken these results.

--Brandon Prins and Christopher Sprecher, “Institutional Constraints, Political Opposition, and Interstate Dispute Escalation: Evidence from Parliamentary Systems, 1946-89,” *JPR* (1999).

Prins and Sprecher find that democracies are much less likely to reciprocate disputes against democracies than non-democracies. Again, removing the fishing disputes from their analysis could potentially reverse their results —we have found that democracies are as or more likely to reciprocate against democracies as autocracies.

--Kenneth Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001).

One of Schultz’s key dependent variables is the conflict reciprocation rate of democracies and autocracies. Our findings might impact these reciprocation rates. It will be interesting to see whether results change once we collect the remaining data.

Potentially strengthening previous findings

--Mark Peceny, Caroline Beer, Shannon Sanchez-Terry, “Dictatorial Peace?” *APSR* (2002)

The authors argue that there is evidence for a separate peace amongst autocracies, and verify the previous finding that democratic regimes are extremely unlikely to fight each other. By omitting the fishing disputes, the authors would lose a portion of their “use of force” observations amongst the democracy-democracy dyads. The result might be that democracies are even less conflict prone than the authors speculate.

Unclear effect on previous findings

--Michael Ward and Kristian Gleditsch, “Democratizing for Peace,” *APSR* (1998).

Ward and Gleditsch find that democratization is accompanied by a reduction in the risk of war. But what if the pattern of fishing disputes is such that they occur in new democracies more often than in old ones? This would reduce the number of conflicts in new democracies and thus make them seem as pacific as old democracies.

5. All Aboard! Where do we go from here?

Our initial findings leave us with a puzzle. First, we find that within in the class of fishing disputes, democracies do not significantly vary reciprocation rates according to the regime type of the adversary. This result would be predicted by realist theorists, who would argue that the regime type of the opposing states should not matter—a threat from another state should be reciprocated merely because it is a threat, and should on average be similar across regime types. It is, however, inconsistent with previous work that has found that democracies are less likely to engage in escalatory behavior in disputes with each other.

Our findings also indicate that democracies engage in militarized disputes with each other even less than previously thought. Removing the fishing disputes from the MID data set reveals that democracies fight each other even less frequently than is widely believed. Our results, therefore, also strengthen the finding of the democratic peace that democracies very rarely engage in conflictual behavior at all.

These patterns, however, leave us with a final question. Why is it that democracies rarely engage in militarized conflicts with each other, but once they are engaged in a dispute, they reciprocate in the same manner as they would against autocracies? This finding could be consistent with an argument that democracies and autocracies do not handle disputes differently, but rather that they simply do not have as many common interests over which to fight. Thus, the tendency of democracies not to fight wars with each other cannot be attributed to unusually conciliatory behavior once a dispute has already begun – rather, it may be due to the low frequency of any militarized disputes at all.

Our next step will be to finish coding the remaining MIDs since 1945. This will allow us to replicate previous work and determine the extent to which excluding fishing disputes from the MID data set changes existing findings about regime type and conflict.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that fishing disputes are not comparable to other disputes in the MID data set. We maintain that the inclusion of fishing disputes in the data set was an artifact of a confluence of coding rules. We show that omitting fishing disputes from the MID data set would reduce the number of MIDs between democracies and would also serve to alter the levels of hostility and rates of reciprocation, as compared to the current data set. We have also suggested ways in which existing research may be altered by our innovation.

Appendix:
The Ones That Got Away: Can Fishing Disputes Shed Light On Some Questions?

This paper argues that fishing disputes represent a distinct class of disputes in theoretically important ways. Our view is that these conflicts are not comparable to disputes in which the *ex ante* probability of escalation is higher, and are not viewed by decision-makers as belonging to the same class as “typical” threats.

Despite these reservations with including fishing disputes in the larger MID data set, it is nevertheless possible that fishing disputes may provide insight into important research questions. In particular, fishing disputes are interesting as a class of disputes simply because the stakes *across* various disputes are likely to be similar. One possibility is to analyze how democracies resolve fishing disputes as compared to how autocracies and mixed regime dyads do. Such an analysis would provide further evidence—either for or against—the arguments for how democracies perceive each other in the international system. This study would help us to test the common belief (and the assertion of liberals and constructivists that democracies see each other as “fair” opponents or as part of a community of democratic states.)

Do democracies “reel-y” like each other? A brief review of the relevant theory

Normative explanations for the democratic peace are theoretically based on Immanuel Kant’s vision of “perpetual peace” between liberal democracies, and more recently, on the work of scholars like Maoz and Russett (1993). Maoz and Russett base their explication of the norms model on two central assumptions. First, they argue that states externalize the norms of behavior that are developed within their domestic political institutions. Democratic regimes, they maintain, contain domestic institutions which support a sense of stability and fairness across all level of personal and political life. Audiences in democratic states, therefore, learn that political conflicts can be resolved through compromise and mutual respect; in essence, democratic regimes breed democratic norms. Conversely, because audiences in non-democratic regimes must live with autocratic institutions, in which political conflict is resolved through violence and oppression, autocratic regimes breed non-democratic norms.

The second central assumption they make is that democratic norms are dominated by non-democratic norms. Therefore, when democratic states and autocratic states have political conflicts, democracies are more likely to shift their norms when they are confronted with a non-democratic state in order to avoid being exploited. This idea is based on Axelrod's (1984, 1986) research on cooperative game theory, in which a non-cooperative strategy forces a cooperative player to become non-cooperative.

What follows from these two assumptions is a controversial assertion. Maoz and Russett argue that when two democracies face a political conflict "they are able effectively to apply democratic norms in their interaction, thereby preventing most conflicts from escalating to a militarized level, involving the threat, display or use of military force..." (Maoz and Russett 1993, 625). However, when democracies conflict with non-democracies, the democratic state adopts the non-democratic norms of conflict, and crises are more likely to escalate.

Democratic Identity

Other arguments about the role of norms in the democratic peace are based on the idea of a collective democratic identity, which is related to, but not identical to, the shared democratic norms argued advanced by Maoz and Russett. Constructivists argue that democratic states (or, in some formulations, liberal democracies) share a set of common interests and goals and, as such, formulate their foreign policy based on a collective identity (Hellman and Herborth 2001, p. 9).

An initial test of the theory

A study of the class of fishing disputes would serve as a test for this assertion. Although fishing disputes typically involve low real levels of force, they may provide a class of cases that allow us to compare variation in dispute resolution by dyad type. Russett (1993) argues that "...To use or to threaten to use force is not usually normatively acceptable behavior in disputes between democracies even in the form of symbolic, ritualized bargaining behavior." (42). Thus, even in low-level disputes like fishing disputes, we should expect democracies to threaten or use force at lower rates against fellow democracies than against non-democracies.

In the context of fishing disputes, are democracies likely to employ their institutionally-based democratic norms when dealing with each other? Do democracies see themselves as part of a community of like-minded states? Or do democracies treat other democracies the same way that they treat autocracies?

Based on the data we have collected to date, our initial findings indicate that democracies behave similarly towards democratic and autocratic opponents. That is, in the context of fishing disputes, they are no more likely to negotiate a settlement, and no less likely to use force, against fellow democracies than non-democracies. This finding casts some doubt on the claim that democratic norms or a sense of collective identity is determining democratic behavior in interstate conflict.

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