

**A Study of Conflict Escalation between
Democratic and Non-Democratic Dyads**

*How does China Solve Military Disputes
with Its Democratic Neighbors?*

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CHARLES CHONG-HAN WU

*Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina, Columbia*

Abstract:

While several studies have been focused on the democratic peace and occurrence of war, not so many researches have been done on the conflict escalation between democratic and non-democratic dyads. I add to this ongoing discussion by evaluating the effect of national affinity and power preponderance to escalate international disputes between different types of regimes. My finding suggests that national affinity scores are statistically significant on conflict escalation among democratic and non-democratic dyads while power preponderance provides non-statistical influences on escalation. Then, this paper combines empirical evidence with several cases showing how China has tried to prevent military disputes escalating against the democratic countries. I focus on China about its conflicts management with several democratic rivals. The effect of “Cats and Dogs” probably may disappear once China has similar policy preferences or points of view with its democratic rivals. The first part of this essay contains the statistical analysis proving the theory. The second part introduces several cases corresponding to my theory, such as the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing, and the 2001 American EP-3 incident which provide sufficient evidence showing that closer affinity can mitigate the hostility level to certain points.

In recent years, the “joint democracy produces peace” theory has received substantial attention. The main stream of the evidence appears to favor the conclusion that democracies rarely go to war with one another (Kant 1975; Doyle 1985; Russett 1993; Ray 1995; Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett and Oneal 1996). Liberals have proposed that when states are forced to decide on which side of a world war they will fight, and liberal states all wind up on the same side and democratic countries will not fight with each other (Kant 1975; Doyle 1983). Democratic peace theorists accomplish tremendous work on proving dyadic effects created by democratic dyads; however, there are still several interesting points deserve more attention between the democratic and non-democratic parties.

As Senese (1997) points out, the onset of dispute and onset of war between dyadic democracies are the areas where the most convincing evidence has been found. It leads us to question if once pairs of democracies or mixed dyads enter into lower level conflict with each other, will they necessarily escalate the level of conflict? Senese’s empirical results only tell us that jointly democratic dyads are more likely to escalate their disputes under some conditions. Also, Rousseau et al. (1996) find that joint democracy has a weak pacifying effect on escalation. Few empirical works have been focused on the study of conflict escalation between different types of regimes.

This article tries to answer the phenomenon of conflict escalation between democratic and non-democratic countries. Is it more likely for the democratic and non-democratic countries to escalate conflicts once they enter a military conflict? Under what conditions would the mixed dyad prefer escalating the disputes? At the core of this article is the expectation that national affinity and power parity are two key sources of conflict escalation between democratic and non-democratic dyads. National affinity means a perception of belonging to a given group,

organization, culture or political movement (Maoz, Kuperman, Terris, Talmud 2006). It also means “similarity” that may be based on subjective perceptions or observable attributes. In general, if two countries have similar national affinity, it means they probably share certain degrees of common traits on political or economic patterns. Hence, there will be fewer conflicts between states with similar characteristics. We can expect that national affinity may have a compound impact on dyadic conflict.

Thus, this paper combines empirical evidence with several cases showing how China has tried to prevent military disputes escalating against the democratic countries. As my theory indicates, if the authoritarian regime in a mixed dyad has close affinity with the democratic target, they are more willing to limit the hostility level at the lower level instead of the higher level of military activities. I focus on China about its conflicts management with several democratic rivals. The effect of “Cats and Dogs” probably may disappear once China has similar policy preferences or points of view with its democratic rivals. The first part of this essay contains the statistical analysis proving the theory. The second part introduces several cases corresponding to my theory, such as the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing, and the 2001 American EP-3 incident which provide sufficient evidence showing that closer affinity can mitigate the hostility level to certain points.

Previous Theories on Escalation

Conflict escalation means the conflict will go from light to heavy, small to large, or doing well to hurt (Pruitt & Kim 2004). One of the participants in conflict is using heavier tactics than before, which stimulates its adversary to respond with heavier tactics. This comes with a conflict spiral which increases the possibility of more intensive violent behavior. Pruitt and Kim (2004) elaborate in their book that conflict escalation will go through certain incremental

transformations, and under these transformation the conflict is intensified in ways that are sometimes exceedingly difficult to undo.

It is interesting to find out why some countries are more likely to escalate conflicts than others once they pass the threshold of military dispute. Recent research focuses on several reasons that cause conflict escalation--the distribution of capabilities, and national affinity. It is necessary to have a basic discussion about these three developed arguments on conflict escalation which will also lead to my hypotheses in this research project.

Democratic Peace

The most prominent of current explanations for the democratic peace fall into two general categories. First, some scholars argue that democracies do not fight each other. Cultural or institutional structures are the main reasons that preclude or greatly hinder recourse to conflicts behavior between democratic pairs (Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett 1993; Schweller 1992). The other argues that liberalism or some other factor owned by democratic government is the fact responsible for constraining conflict between democracies. Moreover, some other scholars argue that democracies do not fight each other because most of them are trading partners (Barbieri 1996; Polachek 1980, 1997; Polachek and McDonald 1992).

The normative explanation implies that jointly democratic dyads are less likely to get involved in disputes. However, scholars of international politics believe that once they have committed to a military dispute, they are more likely to escalate to war and obtain victory (Fearon 1994). Senese's work (1997) examined the influence of joint democracy on the escalation of interstate conflict that has already passed the initial threshold into a militarized dispute. From his results obtained through an ordered logit analysis of a four-tiered hostility level-dependent variable, he found that democratic dyads have no pacifying effect on escalation.

In contrast, it shows that joint democracy on the escalation of disputes is positively significant on the “Use of Force” level which contradicts his expectations. This empirical work offered a new interpretation on issues of escalation to democratic dyads.

Since the pacifying effect of democratic dyads has been well questioned and studied, we also need to pay attention to the dyadic relationship between democracies and non-democracies. Russett and Starr mention that “Dyads composed of two autocracies are much more war and dispute prone, as are dyads containing a democracy and an autocracy (Russett and Starr 2000).” From their words, the mixed dyads of democracy and autocracy are not that much more peaceful than democratic dyads. The reason is probably because the farther apart the two states in political distance on a democratic to autocratic spectrum, the greater is the probability of violence. Scholars of international conflicts thus conclude that “Democracies and autocracies get along like cats and dogs.” (Oneal and Ray 1997; Oneal and Russett 1997) It provides us some incentives to focus on the conflict process once countries with different regime types enter into militarized disputes. Will the dyad composed by different types of regimes show a more pacifying effect on conflict escalation than democratic dyads? Once engaged in a dispute, does the mixed dyad lower the probability that confrontation will escalate to war? We might reach a conclusion that the mixed dyad is not as peaceful as the democratic dyad. However, it needs more empirical evidence to prove the real cause that might escalate the military conflict.

Power Preponderance

Balance of power and power transition provide different predictions in conflict research. They have opposite predictions on the relations of national capability and war. A fundamental assertion of balance of power thought is that interstate conflict will be avoided when their power is approximately equal (Morgenthau 1946; Waltz 1979). Conversely, war will be more likely

between nations that diverge in their power. Power transition theory argues that it is precisely when power is equal between nations that war is most likely (Organski 1958; Organski and Kugler 1980). When nations have nearly equal power, each will believe it has a chance of winning, thus making war more likely. In converse, when one nation is significantly more powerful, peace is more likely.

Although two of the dominant theories in international relations are able to explain certain international phenomena, most of the theoretical arguments support the theory of balance of power. In fact, there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that the comparative national capabilities between states should influence the likelihood of conflict escalation. Within a dispute, when states have equal amounts of power, they may recognize that the costs of war may be quite high and the outcome uncertain. Conflict escalation becomes less likely among such dyads and the dispute may be less prone to escalate to war.¹

Thus, it will be necessary to see whether power preponderance plays a crucial role between democratic and non-democratic dyads once they have military conflicts. Is a democratic country with strong national capability able to prevent escalating conflict against its non-democratic rivalries? Or neither the power parity nor preponderance creates sufficient condition for conflict initiation as Most and Starr has argued (Most and Starr 1989)? It deserves a deep and careful study to apply this concept to the research of international conflict escalation.

National Affinity

Democratic states possess cultural or institutional attributes that are more effective at

¹ Reed (2000) has demonstrated the dyads characterized by power parity are less prone to escalate disputes to war. In his selection model, it also shows that power parity decreases the probability of escalation by 5 percent. Moreover, Siverson & Tennefoss (1982) attempted to assess the relative merits of the power preponderance model and the balance of power model in accounting for the escalation of conflict to war. By drawing upon 255 dyadic conflicts between 1816 and 1965 that had at least one major power participant and using a three point scale to measure escalation, their analysis shows clearly that conflicts were more likely to escalate when power was unequal.

preventing escalation of disputes and promoting negotiation or other forms of nonviolent dispute resolution. Although these advantages within democratic societies work toward peace, democracies must continue to interact with states that fail to share democratic convictions. Unless they respond in kind, democracies are vulnerable to preemptive or opportunistic behavior from non-democratic countries. Thus, war may occur between democracies and non-democracies.

Theories of international conflict treat affinity as some form of “reveal preferences.” There are several types of national affinity, such as strategic affinity, which means states decide to pool resources for the purpose of common security. Trading partners may also reflect their economic preferences that form a kind of trade-related affinity. Other types of affinity include an intergovernmental organization-related affinity which might create a negative impact on international conflicts.

Scholars emphasize latent notions of affinity as empirical indicators (Bueno de Mesquita 1981; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992). We are more likely to observe conflicts between nations that have greater differences in world views than those nations that see the world similarly. Thus, the notion of national affinity needs to be considered when we focus on the theory of conflict escalation. The reason is that a variety of cultural, social, ethnic demographic as well as political factors encourage the Western industrial democracies to view the globe in similar ways. They do not fight often or they do not fight each other due to those similarities. Scholars of international conflicts have long accepted that nations differ in their objectives in global relations and that these differences are an important contributor to conflict behavior (Bueno de Mesquita 1981; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1986; Gartzke 1998).

Kim et al. (1991) who draw from the work of Bueno de Mesquita calculated the indicator

for national affinity called “tau-b” score. From their argument, it is convincing that states constructing their alliance structure similarly to the dominant power share a common view of the international system. Such similarities are very important indicators for deciding whether two countries are politically or strategically close to each other or not. However, since the tau-b score is only about alliance commitment, there are some reasons to doubt tau-b applicability here. A tau-b score only examines the direct affinity between two states without considering a broader relationship within several states. Maoz et al. (2006) argue that there are still limitations on tau-b scores, which cannot detect certain aspects of international affinity from cultural or political (e.g. regime) attribution.

Maoz (2006) offer another critical indicator which can identify the relationship between two or several countries in this world. His “structural affinity” reflects “the extent to which actors are similar to each other in terms of their relations with other actors, or in terms of the similarity of their traits, in relations to other actors’ traits² (Maoz et al. 2006).” Structural affinity here means a compound behavioral consequence of affinity and it may be more complex than those posited by each of the separate paradigms. High affinity on one relationship may offset the effects of a different type of affinity. For example, economic interdependence may offset difference in alliance portfolios as a determinant of the probability of conflict. Thus, a compound or integrated degree of affinity between two states may create some effects on international conflicts.

By this indicator, structure affinity, we can realize how close any two countries in this world are. It also offers a new perspective of the effects of affinity by direct or indirect relationships in the system. This opens the door to new or more complex ideas about the structure of relations

² Maoz et al. elaborate that there are two types of conceptions on national affinity. One is direct affinity, which means the extent to which two actors are directly related to each other (e.g., has an alliance, trade with each other), share certain traits (e.g., have multiple IGO memberships in common), have positive attitudes toward each other. Another is so-called structural affinity.

among states and their effects on conflict and cooperation.

My goal is to provide a link between the escalation literature and national affinity. Like Maoz et al., I believe that there are strong theoretical expectations for a relationship between international affinity and conflict escalation. Also, similar to Maoz et al, my concern is that states with similar world views, on the similarity of alliance, trade interdependence and joint international organizations, will attempt to lower the conflict intensity between them. Yet, it is true to expect that a closer national affinity between the dyads within different types of regimes may create some peaceful relationships. Finally, this study of national affinity, if successful, can also offer a framework for the systematic study of relationships among different individuals, groups, organizations, and states that is eminently suitable for international relations.

If this empirical study can be successfully applied to the explanation of past military disputes between China and the democratic countries, we are probably able to find the pattern of how to mitigate China's military disputes against those involved democracies in the future. The U.S. and U.S. backed allies and associations, such as Taiwan and Japan are the possible candidates who might have military disputes with China. However, structural affinity, which contains tight economic relationship and joint membership in the international organizations may help two camps move to the same direction of world view, and even provide communicative channels once military disputes exist between them.

Research Design

Previous research has shed light on some substantial observations that disputes between democracies are rare and democracies do not fight largely. In contrast to focusing only on joint democratic dyads, this paper attempts to explore some unobserved research questions about how national affinity and power difference influence the conflict escalation between two nations with

opposite regimes. I hypothesize that once democratic and non-democratic nations experience conflicts, it is more likely for them to escalate the conflicts under certain conditions, such as dissimilarity of national affinity. I expect once the mixed model of regime types has more similarity on their national affinity, their disputes are less likely to escalate.

Affinity means how close two countries are in the international society. The tau-b measure of ordinal association to assess the similarity of alliance portfolios of dyad members is quite useful. Similar alliance portfolios indicate high affinity while negative values indicate conflicting interests. In addition, Maoz's structural affinity score also gives us a better measurement for national affinity. In this paper, I will adopt both measurement (tau-b and structural affinity) and compare which measurement can decrease the possibility of conflict escalation between different types of regimes. It leads to my hypotheses:

H1. Once the dyads of democracies and non-democracies enter into conflicts, close national affinity will make them less likely to escalate military disputes.

It is theoretically essential to follow up what Most and Starr has instructed us about the concepts of opportunity and willingness (1989). States are said to possess opportunity and willingness for some act or outcome. Willingness constitutes a nation's resolve to accomplish a given task. Opportunity constitutes the relative difficulty of accomplishing a task. From what I argue above, if affinity is one element of willingness, national capability definitely needs to be considered as opportunity criterion. The goal of this paper is to provide a link between escalation literature, power preponderance theory, and conflict escalation. I feel that there are strong theoretical expectations for a relationship between the difference of power, regime, and

escalation. Leaders of democracies prefer fighting a winning war. Democratic initiators generally attack vastly weaker foes (Gartzke 1998). Much of the military action conducted by democracies against other states in the past five decades has been against states with inferior military, economic, and political capabilities (Forsythe 1992; James and Mitchell 1995). Thus, I expect that power preponderance has such pacifying effects on conflict escalation.

H2. Power preponderance will be more likely to escalate the military disputes between the democratic and non-democratic dyads.

The empirical domain for the study is the population of non-directed dyads of international disputes given in the MID data set from 1946 to 2001. I focus on the disputes that have different levels of escalation and also there is the highest level of escalation for a state (*hostility*). The MID data codes the highest action taken by each side in a dispute into 22 categories, which are then aggregated into five general categories: 1) no military action, 2) a threat to use military force, 3) a display of military force, 4) the actual use of force, and 5) interstate war. The sequence of hostility escalation that a dispute can go through looks like Graph 1:



Graph 1. Four Categories of Conflict Escalation

Dependent Variable- Conflict Escalation

The updated MID set contains 2712 cases of disputes from 1946 to 2001. The reason I mainly focus on the non-directed dyads instead of directed dyads is because the final stage of hostility between two sides is shown as one single variable in the MID data set. It represents a total score of hostility without any specific directions between two parties. Side A's final hostility level is similar with side B's hostility level. Thus, non-directed dyads seem to be enough and appropriate for my empirical examination.

As I am primarily interested in examining the propensity of democratic and non-democratic pairs of disputants to engage in more or less intense forms of conflict compared to other pairs of adversaries, the MID hostility indicator is an appropriate measure. I recode the dependent variable as four hostility levels from 0 to 3. The starting level of 0 means "Threat" in the MID dataset. I recode the hostility level as 1 for "Display of Force", 2 as the "Use of Force" and 3 as the interstate "War." The total cases for the conflict escalation are 2712 while most cases locate at the use of force level (1702 observations). There are 1184 observations for the mixed dyads (democratic and non-democratic dyads), and 1400 observations for the non-democratic dyads.

Explanatory Variables

Affinity

The main explanatory variable in this research is national affinity. Kim (1991) who draws from the work of Bueno de Mesquita calculated a third kind of indicator for national affinity called tau-b score. This index ranges between 1 to -1. Positive values indicate similar alliance portfolios while negative values indicate dissimilarity. I expect that the higher tau-b score will result in a lower possibility of conflict escalation. The tau-b score is produced by the EUGene software. I also employ Zeev Maoz's "Structural Affinity" as another substitution of BDM's

tau-b scores to test the influences on conflict escalation. Maoz's structural affinity attempts to combine different types of relationship between countries. It not only contains strategic relationships between nations but also trade relationship and IGO memberships.³(Maoz 2006) This variable *structural affinity* bound between -.4 to .9. Higher value represents closer relationship between two countries in overall situation.

Power Preponderance

To indicate dyads characterized by power preponderance, I employ the data set from the Composite National Capability (CINC) in the Correlates of War project. In order to demonstrate the difference in national capability between two nations, I simply subtract country B's capability by country A's capability, and take the absolute value. The results tell us how far two nations' capabilities differ with each other. The index ranges between 0 to 1. The higher value represents bigger capability gap.

Regime Types

I take my measure of democracy from the Polity III data set (Jagers and Gurr, 1995). The Polity III data code the level of a state's democracy on a 10 point "institutionalized democracy" score. Several levels of executive and decision constraints are coded to arrive at the 10 point index. I operationalize a state as democratic if it has a 6 or higher on the Polity III scale. Then, I divide all the countries into three different groups of dyads. (Democratic Dyads, Mixed Dyads, and Non-Democratic Dyads).

Contiguity

To determine whether dispute antagonists are geographically proximate to one another, the

³ According to Maoz, they used alliances, trade, and IGO sociomatrices to generate a hypermetric by joining the three separate matrices for each year where data were available for all three. They then computed the integrated SEq scores using the multiple correlation algorithm for the combined matrix (2006). Data available at: <http://psfaculty.ucdavis.edu/zmaoz/datasets.html>

Correlates of War contiguity data set is used (Gochman 1991). I simply recode the countries with different levels of geographic contiguity from 1 to 6. 6 means the countries directly share borders and 1 means the countries may be separated by 151-400 miles of water. The dataset is also produced by the EUGene software.

Military Expenditure

The effect of arms races on the escalation of disputes has been proved by several scholars (Wallace 1979; Siverson & Miller 1993). Wallace demonstrated a strong relationship between escalation and arms racing. Morrow (1989) argues that “nations choose to escalate a dispute to war when they hold a temporary military superiority over their opponent that is beginning to slip away as the opponent begins a new armament program.” Since scholars almost believe arm racing will increase the escalation, I would also include the military expenditure of both countries into the model. The measure of military expenditure is borrowed from COW dataset which is also produced by the EUGene software.

Empirical Results

To evaluate my hypotheses about the relationship between regime types, power preponderance, and dispute escalation, I estimate a series of ordered probit models. Since my data on conflict escalation are ordered but not continuous, ordered probit model is an appropriate statistical technique to estimate parameters representing the relationship I wish to explore. As I mention above, MID data of hostility levels take on four ordered categories (I recode as 0 to 3 in my data set).

(Insert Table 1)

In Table 1 the maximum likelihood estimates are presented for my ordered probit analysis of different regime types and conflict escalation once they pass the onset of military disputes. I

first run the statistical model with BDM's tau-b score as the indicator for affinity.⁴ The statistical results of mixed types in Table 1 give us some interesting outcomes. The tau-b score reveals a negatively statistical significance on the conflict escalation. My expectation regarding the effect of mixed regime and national affinity on conflict escalation is confirmed; the negative coefficients (-.400) and statistical significance suggest that the mixed dyads, once they have close alliance portfolio (tau-b), are less likely to escalate the conflicts. In contrast, it is more likely for democratic and non-democratic countries to escalate the conflicts if they do not share the similar interests and common view of the international system.

Another explanatory variable, power preponderance, does not provide any statistical significance for two different dyads here, which shows no sympathy to my hypotheses above. In general, the tau-b score provides barely any effects on conflict escalation for different dyads. Thus, I also employ Maoz's alternative measurement of national affinity, the structural affinity score, to examine the effects of affinity on conflict escalation. The results are shown in Table 2.

(Insert Table 2)

Maoz's structural affinity score gives us better results about how national affinity influences escalation among different dyads. It still has no effects on democratic dyads due to the insufficient observations and the non-significant impacts from the ordered probit model as I have mentioned previously.

Maoz's affinity score has negatively significant effects on conflict escalation for the mixed

⁴ Since the final observations for democratic dyads are only 108, the results produced by the ordered probit model are problematic for the democratic dyads. I thus decide not to list the results for democratic dyads here. However, my theory and hypotheses are mainly focusing on the mixed and non-democratic dyads. It also corresponds to what Senese (1997) has reported in his analysis about the non-significant impact on hostility escalation for democratic dyads in the ordered logit model. Senese reports in his paper that there is no effect of dyadic democracy on the occurrence of disputes and wars from ordered logit analysis; however, multivariate analyses of the hostility scale reveal some evidence indicating a significant positive impact for joint democracy on the escalation of disputes underway.

dyads. The negative coefficient of affinity (-.458) represents that if both countries share similar institutional or economic interests, it is less likely for them to escalate the conflicts. The empirical results are consistent with the hypotheses I provided previously. It is also interesting that mixed model have stronger effects of affinity on conflict escalation than the non-democratic model, which probably informs us leaders of democratic countries may pay more attention to the relationship with their rivals during military disputes. If the democracies find that they share closer relationship with their rivals, they are more likely to de-escalate the hostility level.

As I have discussed above, national affinity indicator provided by Maoz is able to de-escalate the hostility level between democratic and non-democratic dyads. Table 3 just gives us an overall outcome explaining how affinity influences the escalation. It will be useful to investigate how the changes of the main explanatory variable, affinity, affect the predicted probability on different levels of escalation.

(Insert Table 3)

The method to investigate how the main variable influences our outcome variable is to allow the main explanatory variable “affinity” to vary from its minimum to maximum, while all other independent variables are fixed at their means. As we let structural affinity vary from minimum to maximum, the probability of level of threat increases about 4% (mixed dyads). The level of display also has the probability of 14% increase if we vary affinity from minimum to maximum, holding other to the mean. However, it should be noticed that the predicted probabilities of “use of force” and “war” both decrease when we vary the variable affinity from minimum to maximum. It decreases the possibility of use of force by 5% and 13% for war.

Why may closer affinity increase the possibility of threat or display? The reasonable explanation will be that countries with similar interests or closer relationships are more likely to

adopt verbal or military threats to each other at the beginning of disputes instead of entering a conventional war immediately. A closer relationship may strengthen the leader's belief that threats and displays of force are enough and may coerce the other side withdraw from the deadlock. Since both sides have similar considerations to adopt threat or display of force only, lower levels of hostility are popular among the combatant parties.

In contrast, the results also inform us that affinity may provide negative effects on higher levels of hostility. From the empirical evidence above, it shows that the closer the two countries are, the less likely for them to escalate disputes to use of force or war. The reason is that leaders are more hesitant to step into real fight once they consider their tight relationships with each other. Closer economic or institutional relationships might provide strong incentives for leaders to constrain their military behavior once they pass the threshold of conflict. Higher levels of interaction between democracies and autocracies, the less possible for them to engage in the high level of military disputes.

Conflict Escalation between China, the U.S. and Japan

China and the U.S.

The combustible mix of domestic politics and Taiwan policy almost has ignited a war between China and the United States in the mid-1990s. The visit to Cornell University for Taiwanese President Lee Tung-Hui in the spring of 1995 did have the tremendous vibration on the cross strait relations, and caused the damage to the 1992 consensus between China and Taiwan. And the American issuing of visa to President Lee was also the main fuse to the Taiwan Strait crisis. Jiang Zemin had faced the domestic hawkish power, especially from the leaders of PLA, needed to compel Taiwan to heed China's warning not to declare independence and stay the course with "One China" policy. In 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, Jiang' first consideration was to

give a lesson to the increasing Taiwanese identity, but his real preference was avoiding war actually. In January 1996, Jiang proposed an eight-point with a “one China, two systems” formula to reconcile with Taiwan. The 1996 presidential election was the symbol of separation from motherland. Therefore, China began a military escalation that would last into early 1996. On July 18, the PRC announced that it would be holding one week of tests of its surface-to-surface missile program, to begin just a few days later. Missiles that China fired over the following week were targeted toward Taiwan, and splashed down less than one hundred miles from the island’s coast. In addition to the missile tests, China had massed large numbers of troops in Fujian province, just across the Strait from Taiwan. China’s goal is to declare the sovereignty and territorial integrity, and China tried to show their determination.

The U.S. sent out two aircraft-carriers “Independence” and “Nimitz” to Taiwan Strait with careful negotiation with China and Taiwan, warned that either side should control themselves. Clinton also warned to use economic sanctions to China on several aspects, which showed the worst relationship with China after the 1972 Shanghai communiqué and 1979 Joint communiqué on establishment of diplomatic relations. The Clinton administration even considered increasing the U.S. numbers of troops in East Asia; however, he understood the China’s military inability to invade Taiwan after deep consideration. Therefore, instead of sending troops and increasing the amount of army in East Asia, Clinton administration ended up this crisis with dispatching naval forces cruising across Taiwan Strait.

The case above demonstrates that both China and the U.S. have seriously considered the possibility of escalating the 1996 conflict while none of them indeed moved the final stage to the level of use of force or war. The reason that two sides attempted to maintain a more peaceful decision rather than a harsh movement is that they already have certain kind of consensus about

the “status quo” scenario in the Taiwan Strait. As early as Christopher, the Secretary of the State, sent the letter to Jiang and mentioned about the “Three No Policy,” the U.S. has already planned not to escalate the military dispute in the Taiwan Strait. I argue that both of them have certain common policy interests and constructively communicative channels that prevent potential conflict escalation. Thus, even the symbolic cruising of two aircraft-carriers across the Taiwan Strait, the conflict just ended up on the display of force level. This does correspond to my theory that both sides in the mixed dyad prefer lower level of hostility rather than real use of military activities.

The 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing and the 2001 American EP-3 incident both showed the same phenomena on the conflict management for both sides. After the 1995-96 crisis, Beijing and Washington intensified their efforts to avoid war by communicating better with one another- Presidents Jiang and Clinton exchanged state visits in 1997-98, and the two sides spent more time in open-ended “strategic dialogues” about the state of the world (Shirk 2008). Washington thus viewed China as the “strategic partner” instead of competitive partner. Two states not only economically connected with each other, but also started a whole new page of strategically cooperation. At this point, neither of Beijing nor Washington prefers any more severe military actions on any types of disputes. The embassy bombing and EP-3 incident has ended up with mass demonstrations and violent protest on Beijing street. According to Susan Shirk’s analysis, she believes that China’s success and the leaders’ own power depend on cooperation with the United States. If the United States declared China the enemy in a new Cold War and tried to tie an economic noose around it, China’s economic growth and job creation would be slowed and domestic problems would mount (Shirk 2008, 219). Thus, even though China has totally different regime type from the United States, their common interests in East

Asia and national affinity probably help them to de-escalate several potential military disputes.

China and Japan

Scholars believe the bilateral frictions on a variety of economic, historical, and security issues between China and Japan are becoming increasingly competitive and conflictual. It seems unrealistic and naïve to argue that China and Japan have pretty similar world view and close structural affinity. However, Mochizuki adopts a different point of view arguing that since China-Japan relations are now in a period of adjustment, these two major powers of East Asia are more likely to establish a new equilibrium than to slide into a downward spiral (Mochizuki 2006). He believes that the competitive elements in the relationship can be contained. There are increasing number of coinciding interests and policies between the two governments that further auger for stability and expanded cooperation between China and Japan.

The new equilibrium mentioned by Mochizuki brings out several critical points how China attempts to improve its relationship with Japan recently. Chinese leaders have become more accommodative of Japanese complaints and concerns. They do not want to drive Japan to support strategic cooperation with the United States. This can be viewed as one important step on improving the national affinity between two countries. Besides, during recent years, mid-level officials in both China and Japan who are in charge of managing bilateral relations have developed relatively effective ways to deal with common challenges in the region. This problem-solving mechanism is now evident in a variety of areas relating to the issues of economic relations, security, history, and the territorial dispute. Third, neither China nor Japan has such intention to be the regional hegemon. Thus, there is a less tension on China and Japan bilateral relationship and the good competition to enhance their appeal and influence in the rest the region might have a positive effect on promoting regional economic integration and security

stability.

The close economic relationship also demonstrates a much stronger affinity between these two countries. In the 1990s, Japan manufacturers set up many plants in China to produce goods explicitly for export back to their home markets. China has shown its large, domestic, demanded-led economy, and Japan has played such an important role importing manufactured goods from China (Ohashi 2006).⁵ Besides, China is now the fastest growing export market for Japan. The two sides even attempt to resolve relative trade dispute with Beijing agreeing to a form of columbary export restraints and with Tokyo lifting its safeguard measures. In April 2002, Japan and China agreed to institutionalize a dialogue to manage bilateral economic problems in a cooperative manner. Trade frictions are bound to occur given the rapid increase in bilateral trade. Two-way trade between China and Japan now exceeds \$100 billion, and Japan is China's largest trading partner while China is Japan's second largest trading partner after the United States.

A close economic relationship provides strong incentives for China and Japan to move back from the edge of war. One of the case is the intrusion of Chinese oceanographic research vessels into the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claimed by Japan. It has irritated the Japanese. The dispute starts from the issue of Okinotorishima islands. Okinotorishima is an unusual territorial issue in that this is not a case in which two or more countries claim control of a territory. China does not dispute Japanese territorial claims to Okinotorishima. The heart of the dispute is whether Japan can legitimately claim an EEZ by defining the unmanned rocks as islands, thereby obtaining an EEZ. In denying the Japanese EEZ claim in the area, China lays claim to the right to freely investigate the seabed in the surrounding area. Chinese concerns also center on the right to conduct submarine operations in the event of military conflict involving Taiwan. After Japanese

⁵ Subsidiaries of Japanese manufacturers in China exported \$7.8 billion of manufactured goods to Japan, accounting for 12.6 percent of Japan's total imports from China in the fiscal year of 2001. See Keizai Sangyosho (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry). The 32nd 2002 Basic Survey on Overseas Business Activities, June 2003.

complaints, China and Japan agreed in February 2001 to a mutual prior notification framework for marine research in areas near each country in the East China Sea.

Another territorial dispute is about the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands. It's a dispute between China, Japan, and Taiwan. Deng Xiaoping has prevented the sovereignty dispute from blocking the development of China-Japan relations for long time. Japanese government is also able to control the nationalistic forces. Problems over the territorial dispute flared up again when the Japanese government renewed its lease of three of the contested island in January 2003. This irritated Chinese government and Beijing just lodged a formal protest. There is more diplomatic wrestling than real military activities or fight between these two militarily strong powers. I believe this scenario comes from a mutual understanding of self-control and tight structural affinity. Once two countries start certain degrees of interaction, including economic activities or governmental visiting, it will provide some pacifying effects on the military disputes. Stronger affinity scores will help them lower the level of hostility, such as merely adopt verbal protest or display of military forces. China and Japan represent another essential case for my theoretical model. A mixed dyad which contains one democracy and one autocracy not necessarily gets into an intense military activity. Close affinity may help them think twice before delivering military activities, and diplomatic methods followed will mitigate the level of hostility.

Conclusion and Future Research

When one state is democratic, the further apart the two countries are in political distance on a democratic to autocratic spectrum, the greater the probability of violence (Russett and Starr 2000). It seems that it is always dangerous between a democracy and a non-democracy. However, this paper provides an additional thought for considering conflict escalation between democratic and non-democratic dyads.

There are strong theoretical reasons to believe that the regime types, affiliations and conflict escalation are related to each other. The results of this study suggest the hypothesized relationships are empirical regularities. It provides some evidence that if democracies and non-democracies have closer relationships in terms of either economics or international institutions, it will decrease the probability of conflict escalation, especially on the level of use of force and war. It is consistent with previous studies about the pacifying impact from dyadic democracies on the occurrence of disputes and wars. Since I focus on the mixed dyads, I believe it is the monadic pacifying effect provided by the democratic side from the mixed dyads. The democratic leader of the mixed dyad may face strong domestic pressure and also needs to adopt appropriate foreign policy. Thus, he will be more hesitant to step into the higher level of hostility once they have closer national affinity during the military disputes.

However, the results of this study imply that democracies are quite willing to escalate their hostilities against non-democratic countries on some lower level of hostility, such as threats and displays. This finding corresponds to some recent investigations. Recent studies suggest the difficulties that democratic leaders have in persuading their citizens to support certain levels of conflict. If it is true that leaders of democratic countries incur greater action costs when they propose engaging with other non-democratic countries, the process of overcoming these costs seems to gain them enough political capital to propel them with an increasing probability through lower levels of conflicts. Thus, it is theoretically convincing that threat and display will create some lower costs for leaders and may coerce rivals to withdraw from the deadlock.

For autocratic regimes, it is quite reasonable for them to manipulate its relationship with the democratic countries because the relationship between democratic and autocratic countries reveals the effect of one-way mirror. A one-way mirror tells us that the democratic individual is

unable to see much of their autocratic rival while the democratic individual is quite clearly visible to the authoritarian. China probably realizes its advantage on this type of scenario, but Beijing administration does not inhibitedly manipulate this advantage. As my theory points out, once both countries in the mixed dyad have close national affinity, they will constraint themselves on military activities, especially on high level of hostility. China realizes its power and international status nowadays, especially in Asia. When facing threat from the democratic countries, Beijing administration carefully deals with all kinds of possible conflict scenario with necessary conflict management. However, we cannot conclude that China will not declare war with any democratic countries in the world. What I attempt to argue here is that a sound and constructual relationship with economic and political interaction is beneficial for potential military disputes. Structural affinity provides mitigation on conflict escalation, and China probably is the best example illustrating the causal relationship.

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Table 1. Ordered Probit Analysis of Conflict Escalation between in Different Regime Types (by BDM's Tau-b score), 1946-2001

	Non-Democratic Dyads	Mixed Dyads	Democratic Dyads
Tau-b Score	.002 (.015)	-.366** (.138)	-.126 (.259)
Contiguity	.033* (.013)	.028 (.081)	-.096 (.255)
Power Preponderance	1.073 (.790)	-.581 (.540)	2.459 (2.298)
Military Expenditure	-.000 (.000)	4.95e-06 (.000)	-.000 (.000)
τ_1	-1.944 (.092)	-1.991 (.099)	-1.859 (.284)
τ_2	-.580 (.059)	-.761 (.064)	-.832 (.240)
τ_3	1.199 (.061)	1.093 (.065)	1.726 (.344)
N	1278	1085	108
LR	9.78*	12.50*	3.20
Prob> Ch²	0.04	0.014	0.524
Pseudo R²	0.003	0.006	0.017
Hausman Test	1.11 (.089)	4.04 (.257)	3.08 (0.545)

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

**Table 2. Ordered Probit Analysis of Conflict Escalation between in Different Regime Types
(by Maoz's Structural Affinity score, 1946-2001)**

	Non-Democratic Dyads	Mixed Dyads	Democratic Dyads
Structural Affinity	-.251* (.114)	-.458*** (.142)	-.124 (.329)
Contiguity	.056** (.018)	.010 (.017)	-.105 (.062)
Power Preponderance	1.344 (.947)	-.509 (.547)	3.443 (2.513)
Military Expenditure	-.000 (.000)	4.52e-06 (.000)	-.000 (.000)
τ_1	-1.923 (.116)	-2.143 (.103)	-1.815 (.321)
τ_2	-.848 (.086)	-.902 (.066)	-.843 (.284)
τ_3	1.174 (.083)	.942 (.067)	1.704 (.384)
N	894	1034	99
LR	27.39***	13.77**	3.60
Prob> Ch²	0.000	0.008	0.463
Pseudo R²	0.016	0.006	0.021
Hausman Test	9.49* (0.05)	4.39 (0.222)	1.21 (0.877)

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 3. Predicted Probability (List structural affinity only)

	<i>Regime Type</i>					
	<i>Non-Democratic Dyads</i>			<i>Mixed Dyads</i>		
	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>	ΔP	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>	ΔP
Threat	2%	3%	1%	1%	5%	4%
Display	12%	19%	7%	14%	28%	14%
Use	68%	67%	-1%	64%	59%	-5%
War	18%	11%	-7%	21%	8%	-13%