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Interest Similarity and Cross-Strait Peace

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Abstract

Studies in this article support the peace-building effects of interest similarity, and we have to re-evaluate the current world peace through a new lens of interest. Previous research has informed us that states with similar security and/or economic interests will experience fewer conflict onsets. This study begins with research treating interest similarity as a “facilitating condition for conflict,” and argues that in addition to security interest, capitalist economic policies that lead to the deeper integration of an economy into international markets should be considered one of the ultimate driving forces of peace. By discussing a brief description of bilateral peace in the China–Taiwan dyad, this article concludes that the China–Taiwan dyad has less possibility of encountering military conflict if both governments can maintain similarity in their security interests. Moreover, the author distinguishes different models in capitalist peace theory, which include the free-market and the social-market. Accordingly, this article examines three different prestigious capitalist models: trade, capital openness, and contract-intensive economy as social-market theory. The results suggest that the China–Taiwan case is an appropriate case for the trade (Weede, Economic development, social order, and world politics, [1996](#)) and capital openness models (Gartzke, *Am J Polit Sci* 51(1):166–191, [2007](#)). Future studies need to be more aware of the model chosen for capitalist peace on cross-Strait relations.

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Fig. 1

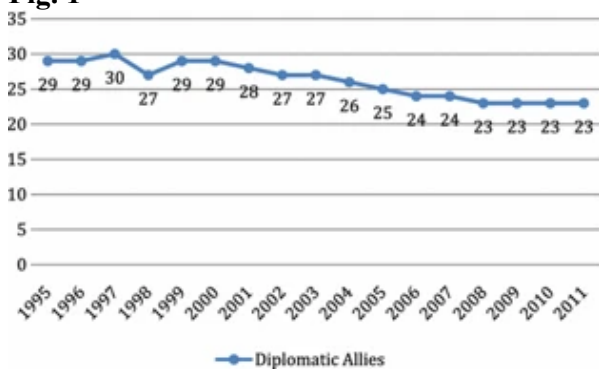
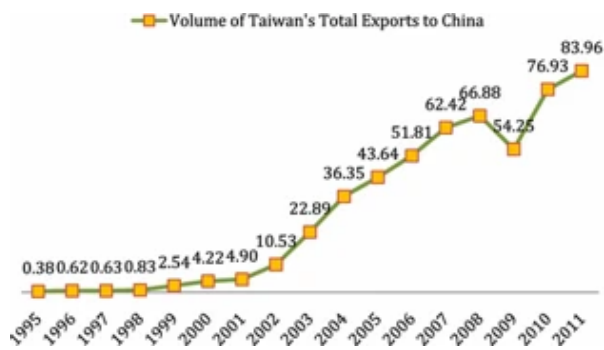


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Notes

1. 1.

Concerning the issue of interests, Layne (1994) provides several critical cases showing that the reason why democracies will not declare war against each other is based on interests rather than regime types. Farber and Gowa (1995, 1997) adhere to the argument that interest similarity brings more peace. They connect democratic peace with the Cold War scenario, and argue that the onset of the Cold War precipitated strong common interests among a large number of democracies. Gartzke (1998, 2000) goes one step further and asks whether interest similarity and international conflict are related statistically. He argues that democratic states may still fight because they have different policy preferences.

2. 2.

Realists see alliance ties as a key indicator of shared strategic interests. Liberals treat trade or IGO membership as the basic element of states' interest affinity.

3. 3.

For instance, there have been different voices about the One China policy between Beijing and Taipei. Abiding by the One China ideal has become a critical issue in preventing any further armed confrontation in the Taiwan Strait. For discussion of the One China policy after 2008, please see Chen (2013). In fact, the consensus on the One China policy could be viewed as a type of interest similarity. Consensus on this policy (that Taipei does not abandon the One China policy, and Beijing's continuous willingness to "dispense benefits" to cross-Strait relations) can create positive impacts across the Taiwan Strait.

4. 4.

Thinking carefully about the origins of interests shows the critical issue in this study. One argument informs us that these interests are determined by enduring subnational interests that dominate the formation of national interests. As Frieden (1999) proposes, scholars can derive national motives from the interests of bureaucrats or individual actors. National interests are often traced or influenced, more narrowly, to the ideological perspectives of governmental elites. Each individual player has its own personal interests and roles, and these interests and roles will influence the final decision outcomes. Thus, we can say that the revealed national policy interests are the compositions of those groups that engage in political interaction over different economic, political, or social interests.

5. 5.

Specifically, scholars calculate a satisfaction index score for each country, reflecting the similarity of its alliance portfolio, with the assistance of Signorino and Ritter's S algorithm.

6. 6.

Starting from Weede's first systematic attempt to weave the organization of markets into a more general liberal argument, an increasing number of studies has been produced on how capitalist markets create peaceful preferences and how dyadic capitalist countries create more peaceful relationships. There exist at least three theories of capitalist peace, all backed up with evidence.

7. 7.

I do not focus on a specific dispute or contest for certain geographic spots or resources which are viewed as incompatible interests. There is no reason a state will give up its incompatible interest which may endanger its survival or vital interest.

8. 8.

Interest similarity in this project means a more general representation of ideological and institutional similarity, which is different from what we recognize as the ordinary incompatible interests.

9. 9.

Morgenthau (1967, p. 20) called them imperialistic and status-quo powers. Schweller (1998) defines national interests by positing several types of states based on the degree to which they desire to change or preserve the status-quo and their military capability to do so. As Schweller points out "...[Classical] Realists invariably distinguished between two types of states: Morgenthau called them imperialistic and status-quo powers; Kissinger referred to revolutionary and status-quo states; Carr distinguished satisfied from dissatisfied powers; Johannes Mattern, among other geo-politicians, divided the world into 'have' and 'have-nots,' Wolfers referred to status-quo and revisionist states; and Aaron saw eternal opposition between the forces of revision and conservation." From the definitions above, we are able to discover that states' security interests have played an influential role in the realist literature. Besides, Moravcsik (1997) also offers a similar dichotomy on these two types of states, including revisionist or status-quo states. The clear dichotomy can also be seen in realist literature.

10. 10.

Hu deliberately failed to mention any issue related to reunification during the two Pan-Blue leaders', Lien Chan's and James Soong's, visit to China in 2005. He then shows that Beijing had strong national interests in promoting more peace with Taiwan because war would only destroy the established economic order and generate too many uncertainties, such as domestic instability, a military stalemate, and a potential war with the US.

11. 11.

Gurtov and Hwang (1998) argue that the military became outraged and took initiative in pressing for a harsh response.

12. 12.

Even Gambia decided to cut ties with Taiwan on 15th November 2013, and this break leaves Taiwan with only three diplomatic allies in Africa now, the Chinese government said that Beijing had nothing to do with the decision by the Gambia to terminate its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. Please see <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20131116000124>.

13. 13.

Recent contributions to the democratic peace debate, or more broadly, the liberal peace debate, have sought to shift the focus away from the Kantian triad of economic interdependence, democracy, and IGO membership toward economics and institutions which are associated with capitalism as causes of peace. This is because, for the past two decades, numerous studies have identified democracy as a cause of democratic peace, but there are still some unknowns on the predictive capability of the democratic peace theory.

14. 14.

In Mousseau's contract-intensive theory, a society making contracts with strangers more frequently prefers a peaceful environment. Different from the clientelist economies (individuals depend on group leaders, called "patrons," who promote loyalty by providing economic and physical security) leaders in contract-intensive economies pay more attention to the enforcement of contracts and the equal application of the rule of law. More importantly, leaders in contract-intensive economies are constrained by voters to promote economic growth and secure markets abroad and thus have common interests in protecting and enhancing the global market by maintaining the supremacy of international law and world peace.

15. 15.

In both McDonald's article and book, democracy exerts an independent effect with a less significant effect than capitalism. The critics of these results remind us that this outcome might stem from his inclusion of a measure of similar alliance portfolios to indicate shared interests. Russett pointed out that since alliance preferences may be endogenous to regime type, as the opposing Cold War alliances each sought to defend political and economic interests shared across similar regimes, alliance similarity could obscure the effect of democracy on conflict.

16. 16.

The empirical examination shows that the public sector model is weakly related with other capitalist variables, which indicates that it has the weakest relationship with capitalism. In addition, there are serious shortcomings in McDonald's public sector model. I decided to exclude the public property model from my theoretical discussion and latent framework analysis.

17. 17.

Following Bremmer, Aligica and Tarko (2009) further develop the theory that state capitalism in countries like modern-day China and Russia is an example of a rent-seeking society. They argue that, following the realization that the socialist systems could not effectively compete with capitalist economies, former communist political elites are trying to engineer a limited form of economic liberalization that increases efficiency, while still allowing them to maintain political control and power.

18. 18.

In Huang's book (2008, p. 279), China can be fitted in the pattern of those NIEs economic entities that contain strong government intervention and controls. Huang argued that Chinese capitalism today is closer to those East Asian countries. In 2002, the percentage of short-term loans to the private sector was 19 %, and close to the static era of Taiwan in 1953. Other analysis identified China with East Asia in terms of performance. They point to the fast GDP growth, rising export competitiveness, and rapid industrialization as common features in both China and East Asia. Since the late 1990s, China has been investing a rising portion of its GDP—almost half in 2005. This is a similar phenomenon to the investments of other countries in East Asia. In *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the State*.

19. 19.

This paper has also acknowledged that the cross-Strait relationship is not a two-person game involving KMT and CCP only. Some scholars argue that we should put the third player, DDP, into consideration. The consideration of DDP may add some different angles on relevant studies. However, as this paper begins with the international relations framework, I adopt the state as the level of analysis. In addition, there are still different perspectives concerning economic cooperation with Mainland China between members of DPP, which came from different factions and divisions of power. These types of divisions have weakened their opposition strength.

20. 20.

Not only Taiwan, but also South Korea has a strong state-intervened economy. The South Korean government fully sponsored some symbolic entrepreneurs, such as Hyundai, Samsung, Kia, and LG during the country's economic takeoff. South Korea adopts import subsidies, tax return, and other import and export policies to help these indigenous industries to develop. Taiwan can be another state-sponsored economy entity in East Asia. In Huang Yasheng's book, he mentions during the Chiang Ching-kuo era, the father of Taiwan's economic miracle, Li Kuoting constantly exhorted his government and leader to develop the information technology industry. Besides, being a government official, he also supported the country to develop the technology on plastic (PVC), and eventually helped Mr. Wang Yong-ching to establish the first plastic company called Formosa Plastics.

21. 21.

McDonald's public sector model has several problems that we need to exclude from the application to the China-Taiwan dyad. The public sector model in the capitalist peace theory suggests that the commitments of nations with large public sectors are less credible than others, and these nations should be in more militarized conflicts than others. On the contrary, more private sectors in domestic politics will promote more peace. Therefore, whether the China-Taiwan dyad poses a challenge to this model depends on whether both

countries in the dyad possess comparatively small public sectors. In fact, China relies on some mix of tariffs, consumption taxes on alcohol and tobacco, and loans to fund most public expenditures such as public infrastructure or railroads. China thus can be viewed as a country with large public sectors. However, I also investigate McDonald's dataset on Taiwan's public sector. Unfortunately, there is no data on Taiwan's public sector from 1960 to 2000. This creates a serious problem for me to apply the public sector model to the China–Taiwan dyad.

22. 22.

Please see Mainland Affairs Council, "Cross-Strait Economic Statistics Monthly." 213 (27th January [2011](#)), <http://www.mac.gov.tw>.

23. 23.

In Mousseau's explanation, high values of life insurance contracting indicate a highly institutionalized norm of contracting in a society because it requires a great deal of trust to contract life insurance with unfamiliar entities. Contractors need to trust that the third party will fulfill the terms of the contract after death.

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