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**External Threat and Democratic Institutions:
The Parliamentary Control of Military Missions**

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Abstract

Although the democratic peace proposition has been successfully defended against a broad range of criticisms, the degree of reverse causality (i.e. peace enabling democracy in the first place) has remained contested. This article presents new data on the absence or presence of parliamentary veto power over military missions in 49 countries, 1989 to 2004, and examines the possible sources of this variance. It demonstrates that the presence or absence of a parliamentary veto is best explained by the level of external threat, indicating a link between a state's external security environment and its domestic democratic institutions. Moreover, countries whose constitution has been influenced by the British 'royal prerogative doctrine' are likely to have no parliamentary veto. Other possible explanations cannot be confirmed by the data: A country is not likely to have parliamentary veto power if it recently suffered a failed military operation. Nor are presidential political systems more likely to have a parliamentary veto over military missions than parliamentary political systems.

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Introduction²

The Democratic Peace, i.e. the finding that democracies rarely if ever fight each other, has enjoyed an exceptionally wide acceptance in the scientific community. The success story of the Democratic Peace and the ensuing "democratic distinctiveness program" (see Owen 2004) has been built on the refutation of a wide range of theoretical, methodological and empirical critiques (Gates, Knutsen and Moses 1996:5; Chan 1997:84). One of the few remaining challenges to Democratic Peace Theory is reverse causality. According to this line of criticism, Democratic Peace Theory overestimates the explanatory power of "joint democracy" on peace because it fails to appreciate the reverse causal arrow from peace to democracy.

Although general acknowledgements of reverse causality can be found among both proponents and critics of the Democratic Peace (e.g., Russett 1993:137; Russett and Oneal 2001:199 f.; Layne 1994), empirical research has remained inconclusive. Based on several long-term case studies of great powers, William Thompson (1996) argued that insulation from extremely competitive, regional politics has been a pre-requisite for both democratization and the establishment of peaceful relations in a region (see also, Rasler and Thompson 2004, 2005). James, Solberg and Wolfson (1999) even suggested that accounting for the impact of MIDs on regime type rendered the Democratic Peace spurious. However, Oneal and Russett (2000) found no support for the latter claim when using a more recent measure of "joint democracy" and controlling for the impact of capability ratios on the likelihood of conflict. Testing the antecedent impact of major wars on the democracy score of states involved, Mousseau and Shi (1999) found about as many cases of states becoming more democratic as cases of states becoming less democratic. For the period 1960 to 1992, Reiter (2001) found no evidence that lower levels of participation in international conflict facilitate democratic transition or survival, with the limited exception that participation in an international war blocks democratic transition. Using a simultaneous equation model, Reuveny and Li (2003)

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found that dyadic conflict reduces both the lower and higher levels of democracy in a dyad but not to an extent that rendered the Democratic Peace spurious.

One of the problems in the study of the effects that insecurity and war have on liberal-democratic institutions and processes may well lie in the fact that insufficient attention is paid to different aspects of democracy. Ronald Krebs, for instance, recently argued in his review of research on the link between insecurity and democratic institutions that "the most widely used data (Polity, which focuses on democratic structures, and the less-reliable Freedom in the World, which focuses on civil liberties) are not sufficiently fine-grained" (Krebs 2009:181).

This article aims at improving our understanding of the democracy/conflict nexus by introducing a more fine-grained measure. Rather than investigating the effect of external conflict on democracy more broadly, we specifically examine its effect on the democratic control of decisions to use armed forces. A new data set on the presence or absence of a parliamentary veto power over military missions in 49 established democracies, 1989-2004, allows us to focus on the very dimension of democratic control that is of immediate relevance for a state's propensity to engage in armed conflict.³ Although this focus on issue-area specific institutional constraints does not allow for assessing the potential spuriousness of the Democratic Peace as such, it improves our understanding of the democracy/conflict nexus by distinguishing between levels of democratic control in the security realm, on the one hand, and in the overall democratic polity, on the other hand. Our findings suggest that high levels of external threat make the presence of a parliamentary veto power over military missions significantly less likely—without necessarily reducing the quality of democratic contestation at large.

The article proceeds as follows: We first introduce a new data set, PARLCON, which assembles information on levels of parliamentary control in 49 democracies, 1989-2004. We then present our research design and examine the effect of external threat on levels of parliamentary control while controlling for other potential influences. A concluding section discusses the results of this analysis.

³ For a recent study establishing the importance of parliamentary powers on democracies' likelihood to join the 2003 Iraq war, see Dieterich, Hummel and Marschall (2008).

PARLCON: A New Data Set⁴

In order to analyze the effect of external threat on a country's parliamentary control over military missions we have created a new data set which contains information on parliamentary control powers in democracies around the world. As levels of parliamentary control may change over time, the country-year is the unit of analysis. Included in our data set are all country-years that meet three selection criteria. First, a country's overall democratic character in a given year must not be contested, limiting the analysis to established democracies. Thus, we included only countries that have a POLITY score of 9 or 10 in the POLITY IV database, which is the most common measure for democraticness in peace and conflict studies. We then excluded those countries that do not have military forces (namely Costa Rica, Mauritius, and Panama) as well as Taiwan because of its special status as an entity with very limited international recognition and its concomitant special role with regard to military missions. Finally, we limit our analysis to the period after the end of the Cold War when "wars of choice" became more frequent and highlighted the executive's discretion over participation in armed conflict. Thus, we collected data for the period from 1989 to 2004. All in all, we have gathered data on 49 countries over varying periods of time,⁵ yielding a total of 616 country-years (for a complete list of countries and time periods covered, see the appendix).

For each country-year, we established whether prior parliamentary approval was required before the government could send armed forces on a military mission. Thus, our PARLCON variable is a dummy variable that equals 1 if prior parliamentary approval is required and 0 if this is not the case. Countries in which there are exemptions from a general parliamentary veto power were coded 1 if the exemptions concerned only cases of minor importance.⁶ For countries with major exceptions from a general requirement of prior parliamentary approval we coded PARLCON 0. This holds especially for countries in which parliamentary approval is required only for declarations of war but not for military missions short of war because it is the latter kind of operation that accounts for the bulk of deployments

⁴ The data set and the concomitant descriptions of deployment provisions will be published in Wagner, Peters and Glahn 2010.

⁵ For 27 countries, POLITY's measure of democraticness is above our threshold for the entire time period. On the other hand, eight countries meet this criterion for only five years or less.

⁶ For example, Ireland is coded 1 even though no prior parliamentary approval is required for missions with less than 12 soldiers.

in the period under consideration. It also holds for NATO members which have exempted participation in NATO operations from the general rule of parliamentary approval.

To establish whether parliament enjoys a veto over military deployments, we studied constitutional and legislative texts as well as actual political practice. In most cases, constitutional and legal texts were sufficiently clear or clarified by constitutional courts, and political practice complied with the respective provisions. In a few cases, however, the question whether parliament enjoyed a veto over deployment decisions was heavily contested among the political actors involved because the constitutional and legal basis was either missing or inconclusive, and no accepted interpretation or practice had evolved. Altogether, we coded 51 country-years as "inconclusive"⁷ and excluded them from our analysis.

In the majority of cases in our data set (356 country-years), governments do not have to seek prior approval from parliament when sending troops abroad (although, of course, government remains free to do so, as e.g. the UK's Labour government did before the Iraq war in 2003). Yet still in more than a third of our cases (209 country-years), armed forces may not be sent on a military mission without prior approval by parliament.

There is also a high degree of continuity in our data set. In 37 out of 49 states, no changes in parliamentary control have been discernible throughout the period covered. We found substantial changes in control institutions only in five states.⁸ In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic, parliamentary provisos have been abolished after 2000 whereas Cyprus introduced them in 2003.⁹

⁷ Overall, these inconclusive cases comprise three categories: first, countries with contested legal rules concerning military deployments, i.e. Germany (1989-1994, until the Federal Constitutional Court delivered its authoritative interpretation of the constitution), Italy (whose conflicting legal provisions have remained contested among political parties throughout the entire period), and Chile (in 2004, when the government sent troops abroad without prior parliamentary consent although such consent is apparently required by law); second, countries for which the deployment of military forces was no political option and which therefore had no legal rules governing the issue, i.e. Switzerland (1989-2001), South Africa (1994-1996), and Lithuania (1991-1992); and thirdly one country for which we could not establish the necessary data, i.e. Mongolia (1992-2001).

⁸ In the remaining seven states evidence about control procedures has been inconclusive for some years or for the whole period covered (see appendix).

⁹ Case studies suggest that imminent accession to NATO and the concomitant participation in multinational rapid reaction forces was responsible for all cases of abolishing parliamentary veto powers. However, the inclusion of a "NATO" or "NATO accession" variable has not yielded any significant results for explaining variance in deployment provisions and will not be reported further below.

Research Design

To examine whether external threat affects parliamentary control powers we choose two indicators for external threat: a country's defense effort and its involvement in Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs). In what follows we discuss this operationalisation of threat in some more detail. We also discuss several alternative explanations of parliamentary control levels besides external threat levels. These potential alternative explanations will help us later to control for possibly confounding influences. In particular, we will look at a country's experience with past military failures; parliament's overall position in the wider political system; and whether the country is in a process of democratic transition.

Independent Variable

Our independent variable is the level of threat to which a country is exposed in a given year. Previous analyses of the threat/democracy nexus have used the number of land borders as an indicator for the level of threat a state is exposed to (e.g., Midlarsky 1995). This operationalisation builds on the commonly accepted finding that contiguous states are more likely to fight each other than other pairs of states (Bremer 1992),¹⁰ yet it has several important shortcomings. First, the *number* of adjacent states (as measured by land borders) is far less important than these states' capabilities, interests, intentions etc. Second, although the significance of land borders for conflict propensities is well established in general, it no longer captures the main area of military activity of democracies, namely military missions short of war in theatres far away from a country's borders. Therefore, we use two alternative measures for a state's threat level. First, we take a country's involvement in MIDs as an indicator for the degree to which its security has been threatened. For any MID a country is involved in, we assign the value "1" to any country-year in which the MID took place. In order to account for the lasting, though decreasing importance of past MIDs for the current

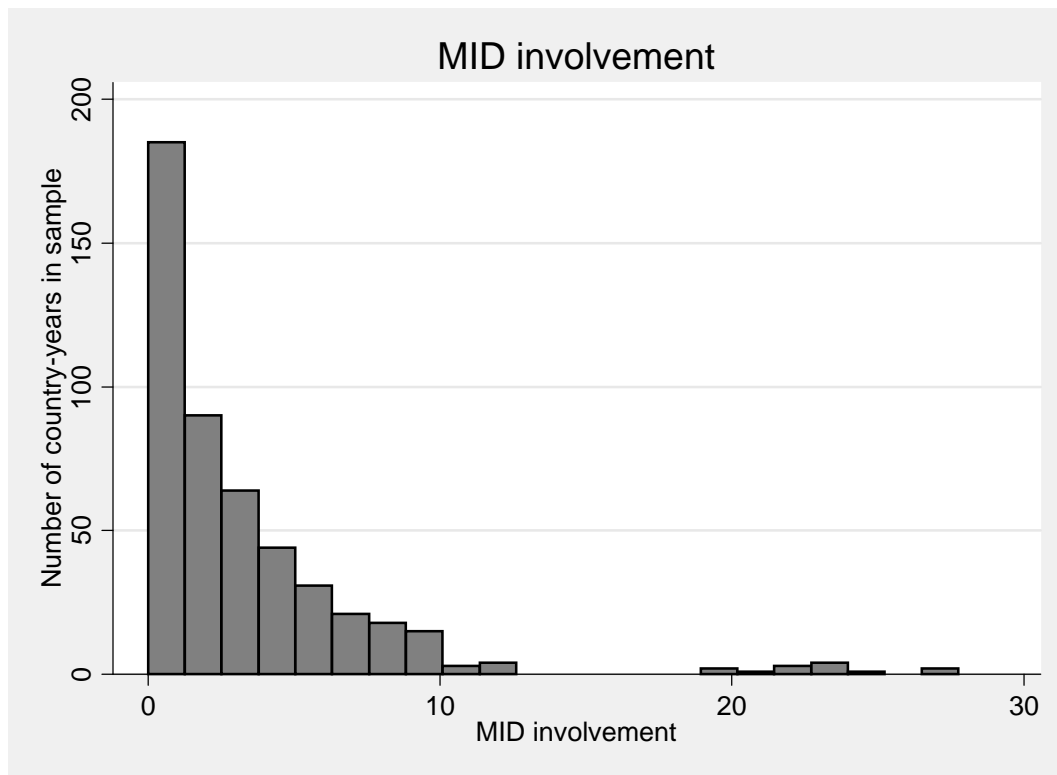
¹⁰ This operationalisation also concurs with Otto Hintze's notion that sea powers are more likely to become democracies than land powers. According to Hintze land powers (e.g. Prussia) "could not make its armed forces dependent on the resolutions of changing parliamentary majorities" because that would run counter to any prudent defense policy. In contrast, sea powers (e.g. England and the USA) did not run any higher risk of being attacked if they made the army responsible to parliament (thereby tilting the overall power balance towards the legislative) because they relied on a navy the control of which by any monarch or executive did not threaten democracy as a navy cannot be sent against domestic opponents (Hintze 1975:210).

level of threat, we follow Chiozza and Goemans (2004) and use a hyperbolic transformation for our data, i.e. we divide our measure for MID involvement by the number of years that have passed since their end. Because the MID dataset ends in 2001, we only have data for this indicator for 1989 - 2001.

The values of this variable cover a considerable range from 0 (Trinidad and Tobago, 1989-95) to 27.8 (USA, 2001). As Figure 1 illustrates, the distribution has a positive skew with most country-years lying well below the mean of 3.3. Most importantly, the United States can count as an outlier here. All its years have a value above 19.7, followed only by Greece (2001) with a value of 12.2.

FIGURE 1

Distribution of MID involvement



As an alternative indicator for a state's threat level, we use that state's "defense effort" (i.e. the percentage share of its defense budget from its GDP). In contrast to MID involvement which

is a measure of actual conflict, the defense effort reflects the perception of external threat.¹¹ It is important to note that we can rule out that the defense effort is a result rather than a cause of PARLCON because all parliaments in our sample, whether they have a veto power over military missions or not, have the "power of the purse", i.e. the competence to increase or reduce a country's defense effort.

Since we do not assume that small, incidental changes in defense efforts, which may occur in single years, affect parliamentary control institutions, we use moving averages instead of single year data for this variable. For each year, then, we calculate the mean defense effort of the year in question and the two preceding years.

There are two major data collections on which we could rely to measure military expenditure, data in *The Military Balance*, published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, and data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which is also updated on a yearly basis. The IISS data meets the requirements of our study better than the SIPRI data mainly because it covers a greater number of our cases and its missing data is more evenly distributed among our cases.¹² We therefore rely on IISS data, which is sufficiently correlated with the SIPRI data¹³ and allows us to cover a broader range of countries. According to this data, average defense efforts range considerably from 0.4% (Trinidad and Tobago, 2001) to 14.5% (Israel, 1989). Yet they are more evenly distributed than states' MID involvements. As Figure 2 illustrates, most countries' defense effort are close to the statistical mean of 2.45%. Israel is an outlier which accounts for all country-years with a value larger than 8% in our sample.

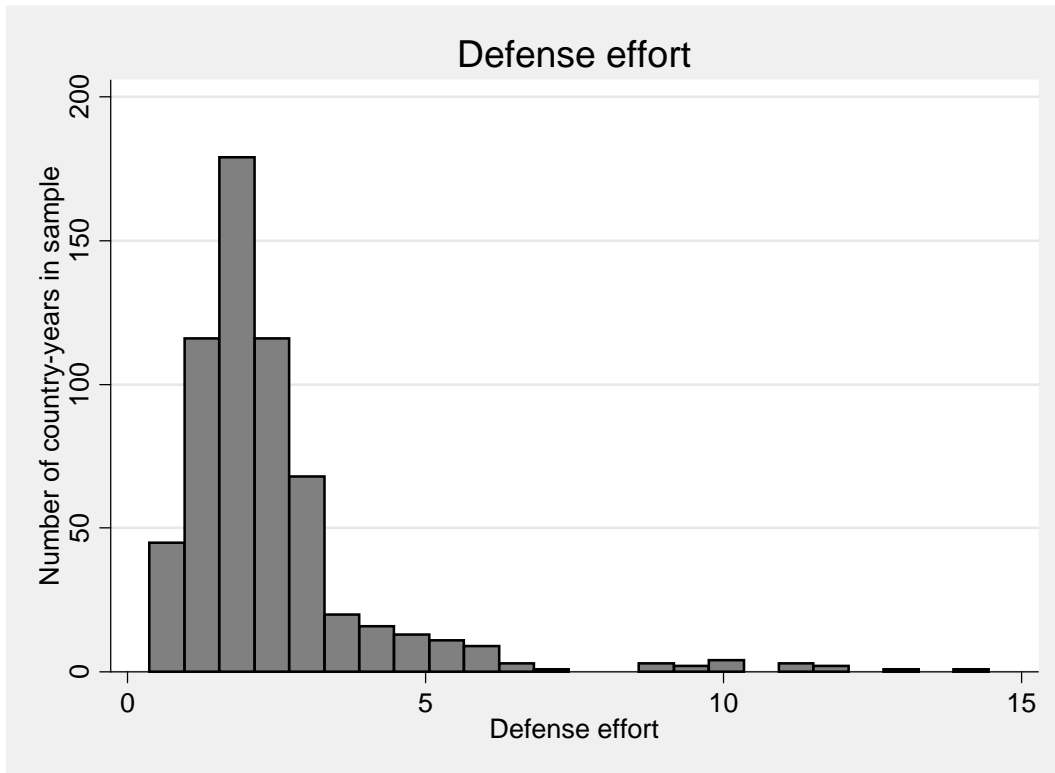
¹¹ Of course, the two measures are not independent of each other. As Lektzian and Prins (2008) demonstrated, states' military spending responds immediately to changes in their security environment.

¹² SIPRI data is missing for 68 of our country-years. What is worse, the missing cases are unevenly distributed within our sample especially with respect to one of our control variables which is introduced below, British constitutional tradition as measured by a country's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations. When relying on SIPRI data we would have to exclude 16 percent of our country-years from Commonwealth members, yet only 9 percent of the country-years from other states.

¹³ The correlation coefficient in our dataset is 0.96. We replicated all calculations reported below with SIPRI instead of IISS data and found no significant differences in the results. In general, results of statistical significance tests for the variable DEFENSE EFFORT tended to improve somewhat when SIPRI data was used. In logistic regressions the statistical significance of BRITISH TRADITION dropped due to the high number of missing cases when SIPRI data was employed.

FIGURE 2

Distribution of defense efforts



Control variables

To account for possibly confounding influences, we include four control variables in our analysis, namely a country's lessons learnt from previously failed military missions ("MILITARY FAILURE"), its political system ("PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM" and "BRITISH TRADITION") and whether it has been in a transition from autocratic rule ("DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION").

Military failure

Levels of parliamentary control may be related to past experiences and especially the experience of military failure. Therefore we control for the potential impact of previous military failures on a state's provisions for parliamentary control of military missions. As studies of public policy have demonstrated, policy failures in general create windows of

opportunity for large-scale changes in policies and institutions (e.g., Hall 1993; Walsh 2007). Against this background, military failures may result in strengthened institutions for the parliamentary control of deployment decisions. Since the executive is responsible for carrying out military deployments, military failures represent a failure of the executive. This accords well with empirical findings indicating, for instance, that US presidential approval rates drop as US casualties in a military conflict rise (Mueller 1973). Since parliaments are the principal institutions in representative democracies through which executive power is controlled, they are most likely to be strengthened when control over the executive is to be strengthened after a major failure. Equally important, the experience of a military failure may work as a future check when debates about reforming control institutions resurface. As long as the experience of failure remains alive it will provide a strong rationale against loosening control of the executive. Such a nexus between large-scale military failures and the form of control institutions has been demonstrated by Thomas Berger (1998), who found that military defeat in World War II led to a radical reorganization of civil-military institutions in Germany and Japan and ultimately even to a shift in these countries' military cultures. Military failures may therefore not only result in institutional change when they occur but also stabilize parliamentary control institutions in the long run.

To account for the lasting impact of military failure we include a variable `MILITARY FAILURE`, whose value is based on the number of casualties suffered in interstate wars since 1939.¹⁴ We rely on the war participants and casualties data provided in the Interstate War Participants data set of the Correlates of War Project (version 3.0, Sarkees 2000). Since the data set ends in 1997 we added data for the wars occurring between 1998 and 2004.¹⁵ While the casualties data captures the idea that higher numbers of casualties indicate more severe failures, which will affect control institutions more strongly, we make three adjustments. First, we divide the number of casualties by the state's pre-war population (battle deaths per 1,000 population) to account for the differential impact of casualties depending on a state's size. Second, we account for the fact that casualties suffered in a lost war and those suffered in a war initiated by the government will be more important in indicating executive failures than those suffered to win a war or to respond to an attack. We therefore use the information

¹⁴ Our findings do not change significantly if we also include extra-state wars.

¹⁵ To identify the wars we relied on the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset, Version 4-2007, 1946-2006 (Harbom and Wallensteen 2007). Accordingly we added two interstate wars relevant for our sample: the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999 and the Iraq War in 2003. Casualties figures were taken from Ganguly (2001: 117) for the Kargil War and from the Iraq Coalition Casualties Count at <http://icasualties.org> [31 January 2010].

about war initiation and outcomes provided by the Correlates of War Project and multiply casualties figures for lost wars by 100 and those for initiated wars by 100 as well.¹⁶ Finally, we take into account that the impact of military failures will decline over time. Therefore we again use a hyperbolic transformation for our data, i.e. we divide the weighted casualties by the number of years that have passed since the end of the war in which the casualties were suffered.

The figures for MILITARY FAILURE have a highly uneven distribution across our sample. Germany, which initiated and lost World War II and whose figures range from 7474 (2004) to 10021 (1989) constitutes an extreme case. All other country-years in our dataset cluster at values of below 200. These can again be divided in 342 country-years with a positive value for the variable (stemming from 27 countries) and 258 country-years (from 21 countries) with a value of 0.

Type of democracy

We also control for the type of democracy, i.e. for the possibility that the level of parliamentary control of deployment decisions is a function of parliament's overall position and role in a state's political system.

To establish parliament's overall position we, first, use the distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems (Shugart 2006; Lijphart 1984 and 1999) as a proxy.¹⁷ Parliamentary systems are characterized by the parliament's power to unseat the government whereas parliament lacks such powers in presidential systems. At first glance, parliament therefore has a dominant role in parliamentary systems. In practice, however, parliament's power to unseat the government has led to a close entanglement between the government and a supporting majority in parliament buttressed by tight party discipline. In parliamentary systems, the task of controlling government is then exercised less by parliament as such but by the opposition in parliament, which is equipped with special minority rights to fulfill its control function. A formal veto right of parliament over executive decisions to use military

¹⁶ For the Kargil War we coded India as the initiator and the outcome as a tie (see Ganguly 2001; Rothermund 2002). The Iraq War was initiated and, as of 2004, won by the US-led coalition.

¹⁷ Of course, "the parliamentary-presidential distinction does not bear directly on the distribution of power in executive-legislative relationships" (Lijphart 1999:127) because executive-legislative relations are also influenced by the electoral system (see Shugart and Carey 1992).

force would not seem an obvious component of such a system. In contrast, the control of government remains a key task of the parliamentary majority in presidential systems. As a consequence, parliaments in presidential systems are *de facto* in a stronger position than those in parliamentary systems. A formal veto power over executive deployment decisions more obviously fits the logic of such a system of checks and balances. Comparative empirical studies have confirmed the notion that parliaments' powers of control are generally greater in presidential than in parliamentary systems (Strøm 2000; Harfst and Schnapp 2003).

To distinguish between parliamentary and presidential systems we use the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Beck, *et al.* 2001) because this is the only database we are aware of that provides time-series data for all countries in our sample. DPI includes a "system" variable whose value may be either "direct presidential", "strong president elected by assembly" (i.e. semi-presidential) or "parliamentary". Due to the small difference between the latter categories and the small number of countries in the second category we decided to dichotomize the variable by including semi-presidential systems into the parliamentary category.

Overall our sample includes 14 countries (135 country-years) with a presidential and 37 countries (479 country-years) with a parliamentary system.¹⁸ 15 of the latter country-years are from countries with a semi-presidential system.¹⁹

Second, we account for the peculiarities of the British constitutional tradition by creating a dummy variable BRITISH TRADITION. Via the British Empire the main characteristics of the British constitution have been diffused far beyond its borders and influenced constitution-making in many formerly dependent territories. In contrast to other colonial powers, in the British case the diffusion of constitutional ideas has been eased by a comparably peaceful process of decolonization (Goldsmith/He 2008) and the establishment of the Commonwealth as a post-colonial institutional setting. Controlling for the impact of the British tradition is warranted because a distinct doctrine on military missions emerged in the process of parliamentarization and democratization in Britain according to which decisions on the use of military force are part of the "royal prerogative" and, as a privilege of the executive, do not require the consent of parliament. Thus, to the extent that formerly dependent territories have taken the British constitution as a role model, we expect decisions on military missions to be a privilege of the executive and not require prior parliamentary approval. We

¹⁸ According to the DPI, a change from a semi-presidential to a presidential system occurred in Mongolia in 1994 and one from a parliamentary to a presidential system in Israel in 1997.

¹⁹ Two country-years (Lithuania and Slovenia in 1991) are coded non-available.

code BRITISH TRADITION 1 if the country under consideration is a member of the Commonwealth and 0 if this is not the case. Overall, our sample includes eleven countries which are Commonwealth members (157 country years) and 38 countries which are not (459 country years).

Democratic transition

Finally, we control for the special incentives to introduce institutional checks on the executive in countries undergoing a transition to democracy. Institution-building in young democracies occurs under a high degree of uncertainty about the future. As long as democracy has not taken root in a state its long-term existence cannot be taken for granted. A strong executive may be inclined to reverse the transition process and to re-establish an autocratic system of rule. Mansfield and Snyder (1995/96; 2005) have also argued that states are particularly prone to engage in military conflict during the transition to democracy. Therefore democratic political elites in democratizing countries have strong incentives to make both a return to autocratic rule and the use of military force to divert from domestic problems as difficult and unlikely as possible.

One strategy to do so is to lock in current policies by delegating competencies to independent institutions (e.g., North 1990; Pierson 2004). Andrew Moravcsik (2000), for instance, argues that liberal democracies used the Council of Europe's European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) to lock in human rights policies. By delegating competencies to monitor compliance with human rights to an international institution, incumbent governments interested in a high standard of human rights increased the costs of violating ECHR standards for any future government that may have a less ambitious human rights policy. Similarly, future governments' room for action can also be restricted by strengthening the most important domestic institutional player controlling government, i.e. by strengthening the control competences of parliament. To be sure, in parliamentary systems government and parliamentary majority can be considered almost merged into a functional unit (King 1976). But even in these systems, strengthening parliamentary control competences is a viable way of restricting executive discretion. For one thing, such a strengthening helps the opposition in parliament to voice its concerns and to hold government to account. Moreover, such competences strengthen the position of backbenchers from the parliamentary majority and may provide them with a crucial bargaining chip vis-à-vis their leadership. In both parliamentary and presidential systems, a strengthening of parliamentary control competences

therefore impinges on the executive's room for action. It is thus an important tool for securing a successful democratization in the face of an uncertain future. In stable and mature democracies, in contrast, citizens show a high level of confidence that future governments may deploy troops only under conditions that also appear appropriate to the public and formalized control institutions are of lesser importance.

Hence we include a dummy variable DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION which equals 1 for countries which have recently undergone a democratic transition and 0 for all other countries. In determining transition democracies we follow the operationalisation proposed by Mansfield and Pevehouse (2006, 2008). Accordingly a country in our sample (which is a democracy by definition) is coded as a transition democracy in a particular year if it had a combined POLITY score of 6 or above for less than five years.

Transition democracies are a rather rare phenomenon and make up less than 7% of our dataset. Overall there are 12 countries which are coded as democracies in transition during 46 country-years.

Analysis

Employing these variables, what can we say about the relation between external threat and the parliamentary control rights over military deployments? We perform two basic tests and both indicate that there is indeed a negative relation between threat levels and levels of parliamentary control, regardless of the indicator employed and even if alternative explanations are taken into account. Our first test compares the means of the independent and control variables across the two groups of countries in PARLCON, i.e. those with high and low levels of parliamentary control. It shows that both groups face substantially different levels of threat—a difference that is also statistically significant, as a t-test indicates. Secondly, to assess the possibly confounding impact of the control variables, we perform a logistic regression. Its results indicate that the effects of our threat level indicators remain discernible even if other variables are taken into account. Finally, to demonstrate the utility of looking at the specific institutions of parliamentary control instead of POLITY scores at large we replace our dependent variable, level of parliamentary control, with the countries' POLITY scores. This final comparison of threat level means for countries with POLITY scores 9 and 10 indeed provides no evidence for any link between threat levels and overall POLITY scores.

One important aspect of the PARLCON dataset that interferes with all analyses is the high degree of autocorrelation we noted above. In 37 countries the level of parliamentary control has not changed throughout the period in which they are part of our sample. In what follows, we therefore do not look at all the years in our dataset combined but analyze the data on a yearly basis to avoid distortions stemming from autocorrelation. To keep the tables simple we report the results not for every single year but in steps of five years.²⁰

The comparison of means for all variables across the two levels of parliamentary control is reproduced in Table 1. The table shows that there is a stable and consistent pattern concerning the level of threat to which a country sees itself exposed. In all years, countries with a low level of parliamentary control face considerably larger threats as measured by either indicator. These countries have, on average, higher military spending per GDP and a greater involvement in MIDs. In other words, countries with a high level of parliamentary control tend to face less severe threats from the outside. This difference is not only substantial but also statistically significant as the results of the t-tests demonstrate.²¹

A closer look at the data reveals that the high figures on defense efforts and MID involvement for countries with a low level of parliamentary control are partly due to the presence of outliers in this group. Israel has by far the highest defense spending, the US the highest measure for MID involvement across all years. As parliaments in both countries do not have the competence to veto troop deployments they both support our hypothesis that high levels of threat reduce the probability of strong parliamentary control institutions. To rule out that these outliers bias the results in favor of our hypothesis we re-ran the analysis with the outliers excluded. The results are reported in Table 2.

²⁰ Thus we report results for the years 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. Where figures in other years deviate substantially from reported results we note this explicitly in the text.

²¹ Taking into account the years which are not separately reported in Table 1, the difference in means is statistically significant ($p < 0.1$) in 7 of 16 years for the indicator DEFENSE EFFORT (1993-95, 1997-2000), and in 6 of 13 years for the indicator MID INVOLVEMENT (1993-95, 1997-99).

TABLE 1

Distributions of independent variables and control variables²²

Year	1989		1994		1999		2004	
Level of parliamentary control	high	low	high	low	high	low	high	low
N	11	17	12	21	14	23	13	28
DEFENSE EFFORT (mean)	2.0	3.7	1.9	3.2	1.6	2.7	1.4	2.1
Standard Dev.	1.0	3.1	0.6	2.1	0.5	2.1	0.7	1.6
Min/Max	0.9/3.4	1.0/14.5	0.9/2.7	0.9/9.9	0.8/2.4	0.7/10.0	0.5/2.9	0.4/9.0
T-Test	p=0.113		p=0.057		p=0,016		p=0.113	
MID INVOLVEMENT	2.5	4.3	1.1	4.2	1.9	4.6	n/a	n/a
Standard Dev.	3.4	5.6	1.5	5.5	2.9	4.8	n/a	n/a
Min/Max	0.1/11.3	0/23.3	0.04/5.4	0/24.4	0.1/10.3	0.1/23.1	n/a	n/a
T-Test	p=0.351		p=0.066		p=0.074			
MILITARY FAILURE (mean)	14.7	11.3	14.8	7.0	594.8	5.3	584.3	5.6
Standard Dev.	35.3	45.3	30.9	31.1	2179.2	24.0	2070.1	19.1
Min/Max	0/110.8	0/187.2	0/100.1	0/149.8	0/8165.6	0/110.9	0/7473.6	0/96.7
T-Test	p=0.825		p=0,494		p=0.330		p=0.333	
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM (Share of Parliamentary Systems)	0.73	0.82	0.75	0.76	0.79	0.78	0.77	0.82
Fisher's exact test	p=0.653		p=1.000		p=1.000		p=0.692	
BRITISH TRADITION (Share of Commonwealth members)	0.09	0.41	0.08	0.33	0.07	0.43	0.15	0.32
Fisher's exact test	p=0.099		p=0.206		p=0.027		p=0.451	
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION (Share of transition democracies)	0.09	0	0.25	0.14	0	0	0.08	0.04
Fisher's exact test	p=0.393		p=0.643		n/a		p=0.539	

²² The p values of the t-tests were calculated under the assumption of unequal variances when Levene's test indicated statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) differences in variances. This concerns all years for the variable MILITARY FAILURE and the years 1999 and 2000 for the variable DEFENSE EFFORT.

TABLE 2

T-test for threat indicators with outliers excluded (Israel for defense effort, US for MID involvement); figures in cells are means with standard errors and numbers of observations in parentheses; two-tailed significance tests²³

PARLCON	1989		1994		1999		2004	
	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement
High	2.0 (0.3) (N=10)	2.5 (1.0) (N=11)	1.9 (0.2) (N=12)	1.1 (0.4) (N=12)	1.6 (0.1) (N=14)	1.9 (0.8) (N=14)	1.4 (0.2) (N=13)	n/a n/a n/a
Low	3.0 (0.4) (N=16)	3.1 (0.7) (N=16)	2.8 (0.3) (N=20)	3.2 (0.7) (N=20)	2.4 (0.3) (N=22)	3.7 (0.6) (N=22)	1.9 (0.2) (N=27)	n/a n/a n/a
	p=0.066	p=0.618	p=0.050	p=0.034	p=0.014	p=0.068	P=0.075	n/a

Apparently, the pattern does not change much. This is to say that, even if the cases which support our hypothesis most prominently are not taken into account, differences in means remain clearly discernible. They concern both indicators and are statistically significant in most years.²⁴

As to the control variables reported in Table 1, only one variable displays an unambiguous pattern across all years. Countries within the British constitutional tradition cluster in the group of countries with low parliamentary control levels. The difference in shares of Commonwealth members between both groups is quite sizeable and can be observed in all years in our sample.

MILITARY FAILURE also appears to display a consistent pattern across the years, especially after 1994. However, two caveats are in order. First, the giant gap between countries with high and low levels of parliamentary control after 1994 is primarily due to the presence of Germany, which has very high values on this variable and which enters into the sample from 1995 on, when the German Constitutional Court had clarified parliament's veto right over military deployments. Second, in all years standard deviations are high in both

²³ Again, we calculated statistical significance on the basis of the results of Levene's test. Unequal variances were assumed for defense efforts in the years 1990-1991 and 1998-2000.

²⁴ Taking into account the years which are not separately reported in our tables, differences in means are statistically significant ($p < 0.1$) in 10 of 16 years for defense efforts (1989-90, 1993-95, 1997-2000, 2004) and in 5 of 13 years for MID involvement (1993-95, 1998-99).

groups indicating that the difference in means masks significant overlap of military failure levels across both groups. Not surprisingly, then, the t-tests indicate no statistical significance regardless of whether Germany is included.

With respect to our other control variables we cannot spot systematic differences between countries with low and high levels of parliamentary control. The share of parliamentary systems varies unsystematically as does the share of transition democracies. With regard to the latter, the small number of democratizing countries in our sample makes it difficult to arrive at any conclusion at all.

To understand the common impact of both the level of threat and the control variables on the level of parliamentary control we enter the variables in a multivariate model and perform a logistic regression. However in our case a logistic regression faces some important problems. First and as noted above, there are only a few instances of democratizing states in our sample. Consequently our data includes many years in which there is either no democratizing state at all or in which all democratizing states fall into one category of the dependent variable.²⁵ In such a situation the calculation of logistic regression models will run into severe difficulties. We therefore exclude DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION from the analysis. Secondly, the relatively small number of cases in any year²⁶ poses additional problems for a maximum likelihood estimation.²⁷ Suggestions for minimum case numbers range from 60 to 100 (Eliason 1993; Long 1997:54). However, performing the estimation with fewer cases will come especially with the danger of producing false negatives, whereas the risk of false positives is small for small sample sizes (Hart and Clark 1999:4). Bearing this in mind we performed a logistic regression. For each year we calculated two models each of which included one of our indicators for the threat to which a country is exposed (defense effort or MID involvement). The results are presented in Table 3.

²⁵ The former problem concerns the years 1999-2000, the latter the years 1989-1990 (in which all democratizing states have a high level of parliamentary control) and 1996-1998 as well as 2001 (with all democratizing states having low or inconclusive levels of control).

²⁶ The number of observations ranges from 28 (1989) to 42 (2002).

²⁷ This discussion of the implications that small sample sizes have for maximum likelihood estimation is based on McCall Smith (2000:170).

TABLE 3

Logistic regression results. Figures in cells are odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses

Independent Variable	1989		1994		1999		2004
DEFENSE EFFORT	0.30** (0.18)		0.16** (0.14)		0.13** (0.12)		0.27* (0.18)
MID INVOLVEMENT	0.80 (0.11)		0.31** (0.18)		0.23*** (0.13)		no observations
MIL. FAILURE	1.01 (0.02)	1.02 (0.02)	1.02 (0.02)	1.16 (0.18)	1.00 (0.01)	1.22 (0.23)	1.02 (0.02)
PARLIAMENTARY SYS. (dummy; 1= parliamentary)	0.86 (1.25)	0.63 (0.69)	0.53 (0.57)	2.23 (2.76)	0.23 (0.28)	1.73 (2.50)	0.40 (0.38)
BRITISH TRADITION (dummy; 1= British tradition)	0.06** (0.08)	0.13* (0.16)	0.07* (0.10)	0.11 (0.16)	0.08** (0.09)	0.03** (0.05)	0.37 (0.36)
N	27	28	33	33	37	37	41
Log Likelihood	-12.04	-15.26	-15.28	-12.26	-17.39	-9.13	-20.73
Chi-square	11.50	6.99	12.71	18.74	15.18	30.82	9.77
p	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
McFadden's pseudo R ²	0.32	0.19	0.29	0.43	0.30	0.63	0.19

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The results vary somewhat across the years and the models. When comparing the impact of the predictors on our dependent variable, however, there is a discernible pattern. We can be quite confident that the level of threat is associated with the level of parliamentary control even when we control for possibly confounding factors. Both indicators produce statistically and substantially significant results (albeit at different levels). Among the control variables there appears only one important influential factor, namely whether or not a country has been influenced by the British constitutional tradition.

The impact of defense spending and MID involvement varies somewhat over the years but remains substantial throughout. According to the models a one percentage point increase in the ratio of military expenditure to GDP reduces the odds of having a high level of parliamentary control quite formidably, namely by factors ranging from 0.3 to 0.13 (1989 vs.

1999). Similarly there is a substantial impact of MID involvement with a one point increase in the variable reducing the odds of high parliamentary control by factors from 0.80 to 0.23 (1989 vs. 1999).²⁸

According to our analysis, then, the security situation of a country appears to heavily affect a country's democratic institutions. This effect can be demonstrated even if one employs different indicators of threat, as we did above. The effect disappears, however, if we join the main body of literature and choose democracy at large as our dependent variable rather than our more differentiated measure of parliamentary control institutions. To demonstrate this we performed additional t-tests using a country's POLITY score as grouping variable instead of its level of parliamentary control. The results are reproduced in Table 4.

There are no statistically significant differences in either threat indicator between countries with POLITY scores 9 and 10 in any year in our sample. Even if one was to put aside statistical significance tests for a moment the actual differences in means do not point to a consistent pattern. In terms of MID involvement, countries with POLITY score 9 have sometimes higher, sometimes lower values than those with POLITY score 10. Thus there appears to be no indication that the threat to which a country sees itself exposed affects its overall democraticness as measured by the POLITY score. Yet, as we have demonstrated above, there are strong indications that the threat level affects particular democratic institutions for controlling the country's use of external force.

This suggests that it is worthwhile to differentiate among democratic institutions when investigating the link between threat and democracy. Yet although our analysis suggests a link between the level of threat to which a country sees itself exposed and the parliamentary control rights over military deployments, there remain some open questions. One of them relates to the stability of the models over time. There is considerable variance in the magnitude of the threat level's effect on the parliamentary control institutions, for which we cannot readily account. A second important open question concerns the differences between our threat indicators. Although the effect in question can be demonstrated with both indicators the defense effort generally produces more stable results. Since average defense spending is generally quite stable over the years this may suggest that it is a useful indicator for the baseline security situation of a state. One may also argue that military spending per GDP tends to incorporate threat *perceptions* better than the actual involvement of a country in

²⁸ The range of odds ratios becomes somewhat wider if we include the years not reported in the table above. MID involvement reaches its strongest impact in 1998 with an odds ratio of 0.14. The impact of the defense effort drops to an odds ratio of 0.64 in 2003.

MIDs. This may help to refine the causal link between threat and democratic institutions and suggest that the perception of threat amplifies the effect that an insecure environment has on a state's democratic institutions. Thirdly, our investigation could not establish firm evidence regarding the influence of democratization on parliamentary control institutions. The number of democratizing states is simply so small that statistical analysis becomes impossible. A qualitative analysis which traces the development of parliamentary control institutions could remedy this and also demonstrate how in concrete cases the security environment affects the design of democratic institutions. Yet taken together this does not call into question our overall result that the threat to which a state sees itself exposed affects the character of its domestic political institutions.

TABLE 4

T-test for threat indicators with POLITY score as grouping variable; figures in cells are means with standard errors and numbers of observations in parentheses; two-tailed significance tests²⁹

POLITY score	1989		1994		1999		2004	
	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement	Defense effort	MID involvement
9	4.13	4.49	3.19	2.79	2.45	2.76	2.31	n/a
	(1.76)	(1.74)	(0.72)	(1.03)	(0.42)	(0.79)	(0.30)	n/a
	(N=7)	(N=7)	(N=11)	(N=11)	(N=10)	(N=10)	(N=12)	n/a
10	2.60	3.27	2.49	3.17	2.19	3.69	1.81	n/a
	(0.28)	(0.98)	(0.25)	(0.92)	(0.33)	(0.85)	(0.27)	n/a
	(N=23)	(N=24)	(N=27)	(N=27)	(N=30)	(N=30)	(N=31)	n/a
	p=0.424	p=0.555	p=0.247	p=0.810	p=0.681	p=0.553	p=0.301	n/a

Conclusion

In terms of parliamentary control of military missions, democracies differ vastly. Whereas some democratic governments do not even have to consult parliament before they launch a

²⁹ Based on the results of Levene's test, statistical significance was calculated under the assumption of unequal variances for defense efforts in 1989-1990, 1992 and 1997-1998.

military mission, others cannot deploy the armed forces without prior parliamentary approval. Since all states under consideration score high on the most established measure of democracy in conflict research (9 or 10 on the POLITY IV scale), these differences cannot be attributed to different degrees of democratic government.

Our analysis suggests that a key explanation for these differences are different levels of external threat: whereas countries exposed to high levels of threat tend to grant government discretion over the use of the armed forces, states that do not consider themselves under threat tend to grant parliament a veto power over deployment. Thus, the liberal ideal that the use of armed force is subjected to the checks and balances of democratic institutions and, via representative assemblies, conditioned on the consent of those who bear the costs of fighting, seems to require some qualification. Moreover, the liberal notion that a pacifist sovereign may establish institutional checks on bellicose governments is not confirmed by our analysis. Even though anecdotal evidence suggests that military failure is frequently followed by enhanced parliamentary control, we find no support for generalizing this notion in our data.

This analysis suggests that reverse causality indeed is part of the nexus between democracy and international conflict. However, our new data on levels of parliamentary control of military missions enables us to paint a more complex picture than studies examining the effect of conflict involvement on a country's polity at large. We found no evidence that a high level of external threat tends to be associated with a lower level of democraticness as such. Instead, a high level of external threat may lead democracies to exempt defense policy from tight parliamentary oversight. Thus, high levels of external threat have a significant impact on the democratic control institutions but this effect remains limited to the issue-area of defense policy.

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Appendix: Levels of parliamentary control of military missions

Country	Country-years	Level of parliamentary control
Australia	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Austria	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Belgium	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Bolivia	1989-2002	Prior parliamentary approval required
Botswana	1997-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Bulgaria	2001-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required (2001-2002) No prior parliamentary approval required (2003-2004)
Canada	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Chile	2000-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required (2000-2003) Inconclusive (2004)
Colombia	1991-1994	No prior parliamentary approval required
Cyprus	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required (1989-2003) Prior parliamentary approval required (2004)
Czech Republic	1993-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required (1993-2000) No prior parliamentary approval required (2001-2004)
Denmark	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Ecuador	1989-1996 1998-1999	No prior parliamentary approval required
Finland	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
France	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Germany	1989-2004	Inconclusive (1989-1994) Prior parliamentary approval required (1995-2004)
Greece	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Hungary	1990-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required (1990-2003) No prior parliamentary approval required (2004)
India	1995-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Ireland	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Israel	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Italy	1989-2004	Inconclusive
Jamaica	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Japan	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Lithuania	1991-2004	Inconclusive (1991-1992) Prior parliamentary approval required (1993-2004)
Macedonia	2002-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required

Country	Country-years	Level of parliamentary control
Madagascar	1992-1996	No prior parliamentary approval required
Mongolia	1992-2004	Inconclusive (1992-2001) No prior parliamentary approval required (2002-2004)
Netherlands	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
New Zealand	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Norway	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Papua New Guinea	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Peru	2001-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Poland	1995-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Portugal	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Romania	2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Slovakia	1998-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required (1998-2000) No prior parliamentary approval required (2001-2004)
Slovenia	1991-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
South Africa	1994-2004	Inconclusive (1994-1996) No prior parliamentary approval required (1997-2004)
Spain	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Sweden	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Switzerland	1989-2004	Inconclusive (1989-2001) Prior parliamentary approval required (2002-2004)
Thailand	1992-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Trinidad	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Turkey	1989-1992	Prior parliamentary approval required
United Kingdom	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
United States	1989-2004	No prior parliamentary approval required
Uruguay	1989-2004	Prior parliamentary approval required
Venezuela	1989-1991	Prior parliamentary approval required