

PS 0500: The Democratic Peace Theory

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Outline

- Brief History of IR Theory
- The Democratic Peace
- Explanations for the Democratic Peace?
- Correlation Does Not Imply Causation
- The McDonald's Peace Theory
- Economic Interdependence

Roadmap

- Before: Unitary actor assumption
- Now: Perhaps type of government matters
- Next week: Perhaps leaders matter

Intellectual History

- For the majority of IR's history, scholars assumed that states were identical except for in relative power (Realists)
- Other scholars challenged this assumption in the 1980s
 - Evidence overwhelmingly supports the second group

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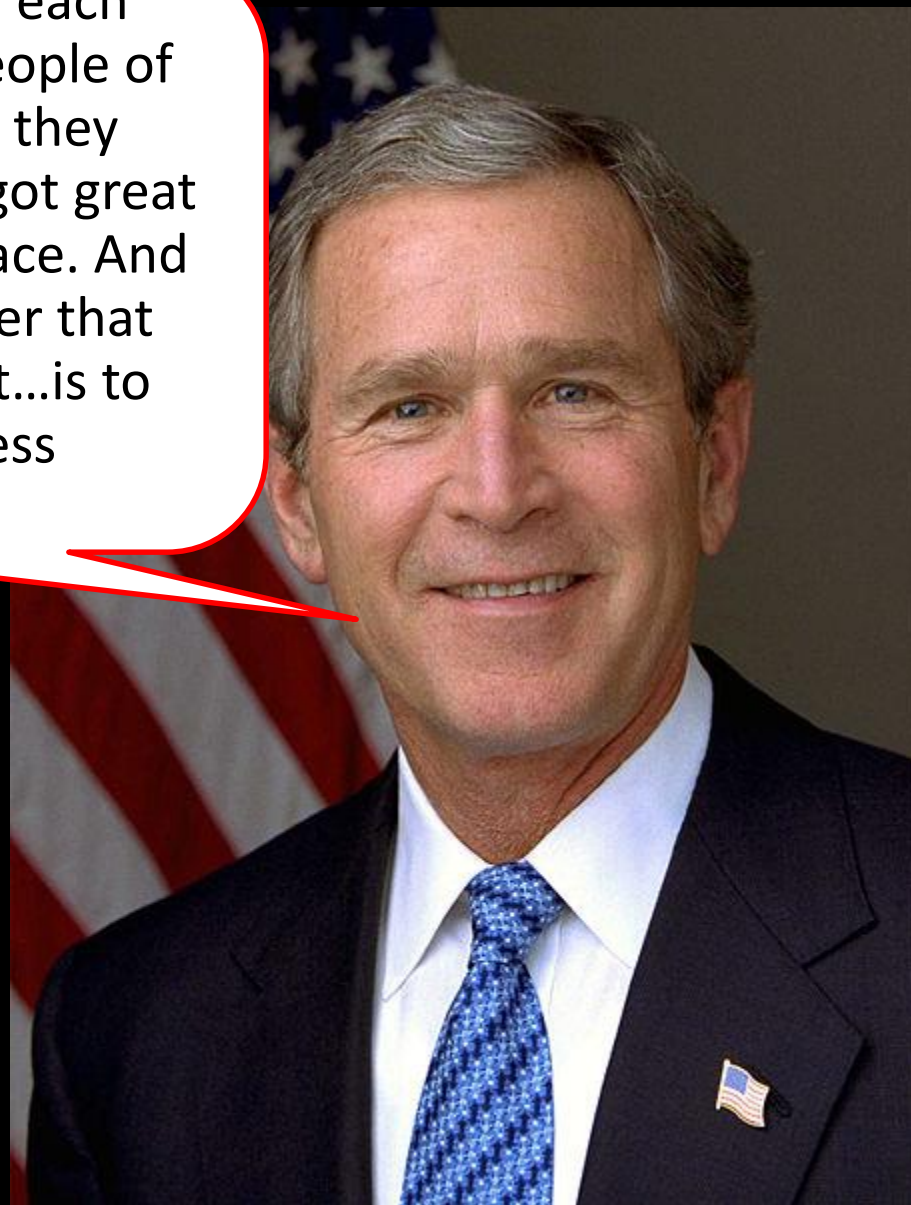
The Democratic Peace Theory

Democracies tend not to fight other democracies.

Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other.
(1994 State of the Union)



Democracies don't go to war with each other. And the reason why is the people of most societies don't like war, and they understand what war means.... I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East...is to promote democracy. (2004 Press Conference)



Are democratic countries more
peaceful?

Answer: Kind of.

Democracy + Democracy = Little
War

Democracy + Democracy = Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

Democracy + Democracy = Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

Some Caveats

- How do we define democracy?
 - Is Mexico a democracy?
 - Is Russia a democracy?
 - Was the United States in 1796 a democracy?

Some Caveats

- How do we define war?
- Correlates of War is the standard dataset for war (1816-present)
 - Requirements
 - 1000 battle deaths (lots of death)
 - At least 100 battle deaths per side or 1000 troops committed (balanced fight)
 - Continuous conflict

Some Caveats

- Democracies sometimes do fight other democracies
 - Ancient Greece
 - War of 1812
 - Spanish-American War
 - Lebanon/Israel Six Day War
 - Kargil War

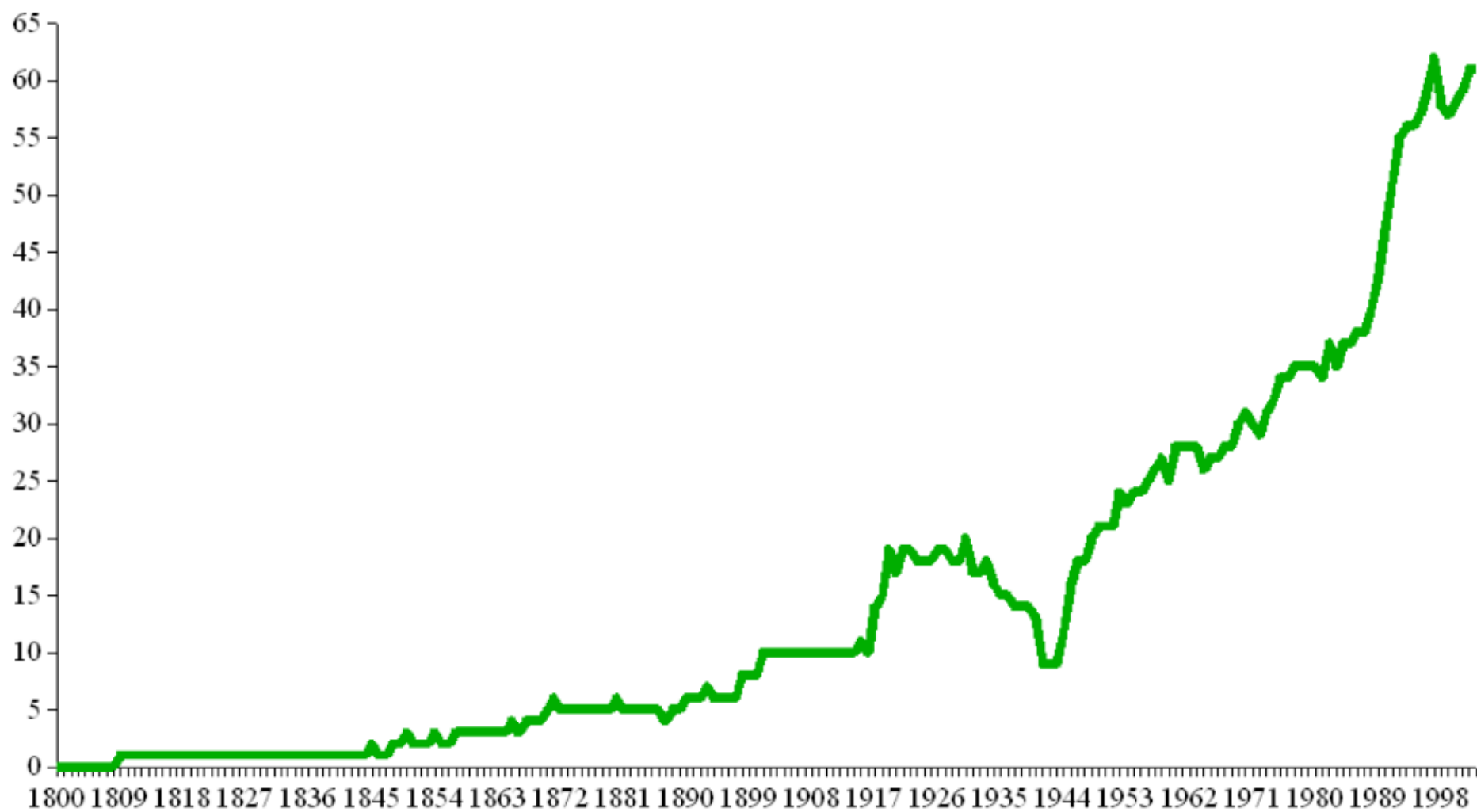
Some Caveats

- Democracies aren't always friendly to democratic ideals
 - Iran 1953
 - Indonesia 1957
 - Chile 1973
 - Nicaragua 1984

Some Caveats

- Very few democracies existed before the end of World War II

Number of nations scoring 8 or higher on the Polity IV scale 1800-2003



Some Caveats

- Most democracy versus democracy data we have comes from the Cold War
 - Almost all democracies allied against communism

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How does democracy cause
peace?

Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives

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Culture of Contracts

- Behavioral explanation for the democratic peace
- In democracies, citizens have incentive to cooperate through contractual agreements
 - Violence is not allowed

Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives

Transparency

- Rationalist explanations for war: uncertainty about resolve causes conflict
- How can rival states be uncertain about a democracy's level of resolve?
 - Public polling data is readily available to *everyone*, including the evil dictators of the world
 - Less private information → less war

Theories of the Democratic Peace

1. Culture of contracts
2. Transparency
3. Electoral incentives

Electoral Incentives

- *Selectorate*—the pool of individuals who can make up winning coalitions
- *Winning coalition*—a group of individuals necessary to remain in power
 - Democracies: Half of all voters plus 1
 - Autocracies: Military commanders, a handful of politicians

Electoral Incentives

- War is costly, but some benefit
- Easy to buy off a small number of people
 - Saddam Hussein → steal Kuwaiti oil → buy off his cronies
- Hard to buy off a large number of people
 - Since democracies share the burden of war relatively equally, democratic leaders have less incentive to fight

Democracy + Democracy → Little War

Democracy + Democracy → Little War

Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy → Some War

Democracy + Democracy → Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy → A Little More War

Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy → Some War

Democracy + Democracy = Little War

Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

Non-Democracy + Non-Democracy = Some War

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What is the difference between
correlation and causation?

Correlation

- When A is present, B tends to be present as well and vice versa

Correlation

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 - When two democracies are present, peace tends to be present as well

Correlation

- When A is present, B tends to be present as well and vice versa
 - When two democracies are present, peace tends to be present as well
- This tells us nothing about causation!

Correlation

- For the moment, assume there actually is a causal relationship
 - Correlations can exist randomly
 - A fair coin appears biased every now and then
 - We have statistical tests to tell us the relationship between democracy and peace is extremely unlikely to be due to chance

Problems with Inferring Causation

1. B causes A.
2. A and B cause each other.
3. C causes A and B.
4. A causes C which causes B. But D also causes C which causes B.

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- Presence of United Nations troops is correlated with the outbreak of civil war. Therefore, we should not station U.N. troops in hotspots.

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- Presence of United Nations troops is correlated with the outbreak of civil war. Therefore, we should not station U.N. troops in hotspots.
 - But U.N. troops go to the *hardest* places to keep the peace
 - They *should* fail frequently

Peace Causes Democracy

- Democracies are not as efficient as autocracies
 - Benefit: check and balance on power
- With external threats, citizens might be willing to concentrate power
 - So democracies only arise in places not prone to war

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 - Benefit: check and balance on power
- With external threats, citizens might be willing to concentrate power
 - So democracies only arise in places not prone to war
 - Or democracy recedes when conflict is likely



Problems with Inferring Causation

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Example: Wealth and Democracy

- Democracy is correlated with high domestic wealth. Therefore, democracy causes wealth.

Example: Wealth and Democracy

- Democracy is correlated with high domestic wealth. Therefore, democracy causes wealth.
 - Yes.
 - But wealth also gives the middle class political power. So wealth causes democracy. The relationship goes both ways.

Democracy and Peace

- Perhaps democracies causes peace but peace also causes democracy
- We cannot estimate the effectiveness of democracy by looking at the correlation between democracy and peace

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Example: Arms Races

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Example: Arms Races

- Arms races are correlated with the outbreak of war. Therefore, arms races cause war.
 - No. Bargaining problems cause war. States engage in arms races to prepare for war.

ARMS RACES



WAR

**BARGAINING
PROBLEMS**

```
graph TD; A[BARGAINING PROBLEMS] --> B[ARMS RACES]; A --> C[WAR];
```

A diagram illustrating the relationship between bargaining problems and the outcomes of arms races and war. At the top, a red rounded rectangle contains the text 'BARGAINING PROBLEMS'. Two red arrows point downwards from this rectangle to two separate rounded rectangles below. The left rectangle is green and contains the text 'ARMS RACES'. The right rectangle is purple and contains the text 'WAR'.

ARMS RACES

WAR

Democracy, Economics, and War

- Perhaps wealth causes democracy
- Perhaps the creation of wealth (i.e., trade) causes peace

WEALTH

```
graph TD; WEALTH[WEALTH] --> DEMOCRACY[DEMOCRACY]; WEALTH --> PEACE[PEACE];
```

DEMOCRACY

PEACE

Problems with Inferring Causation

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Cold and the Cold

- Cold weather and sickness are correlated.
Therefore, cold weather causes sickness.

Cold and the Cold

- Cold weather and sickness are correlated.
Therefore, cold weather causes sickness.
 - Not quite. Cold weather forces people indoors.
Sharing cramped spaces allows germs to spread more easily.

```
graph LR; A[COLD WEATHER] --> B[BEING INDOORS]; B --> C[SICKNESS]
```

COLD
WEATHER

BEING
INDOORS

SICKNESS



COLD
WEATHER

BEING
INDOORS

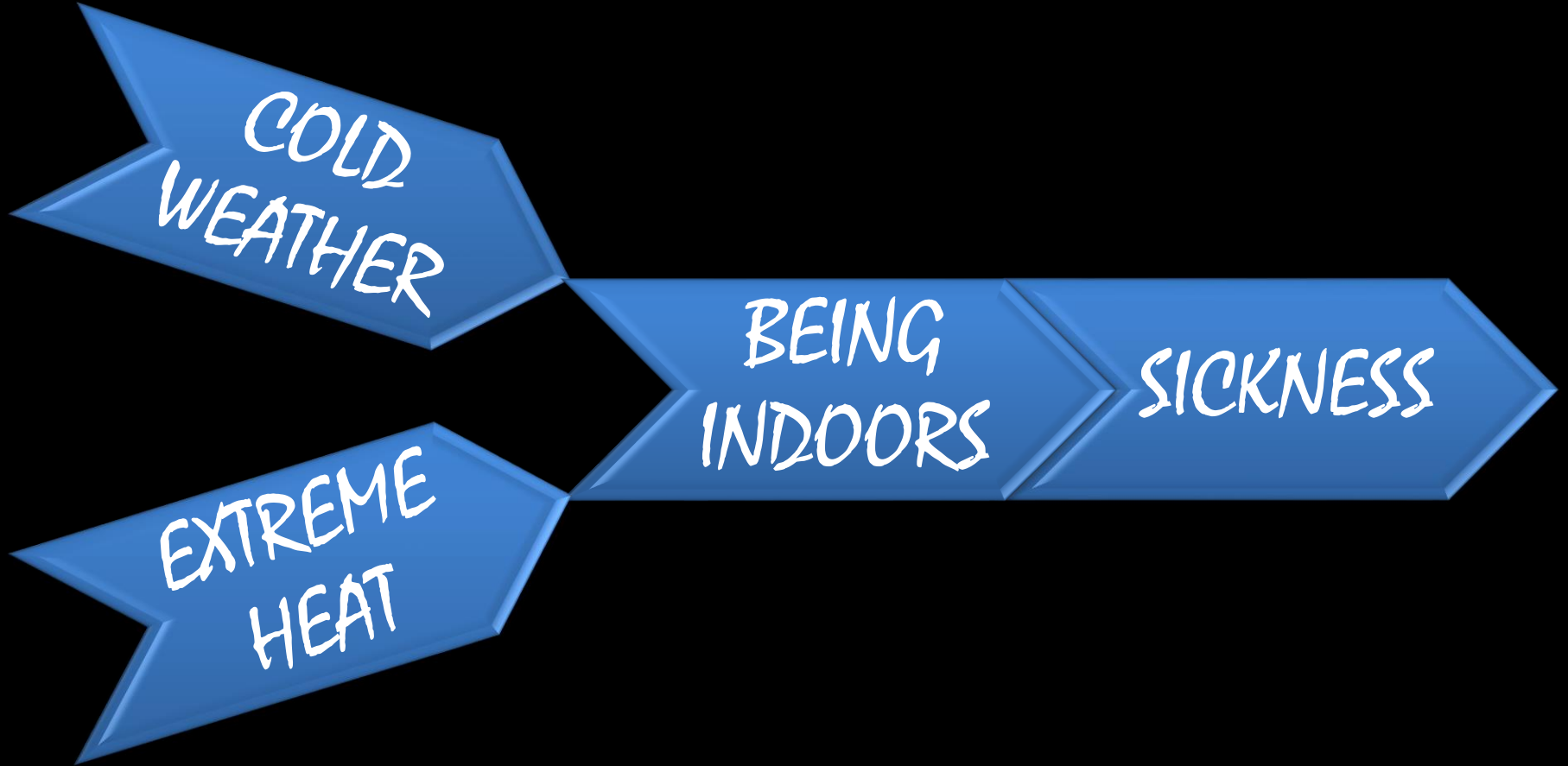
SICKNESS

COLD
WEATHER

BEING
INDOORS

SICKNESS

EXTREME
HEAT





DEMOCRACY

BEING
INDOORS



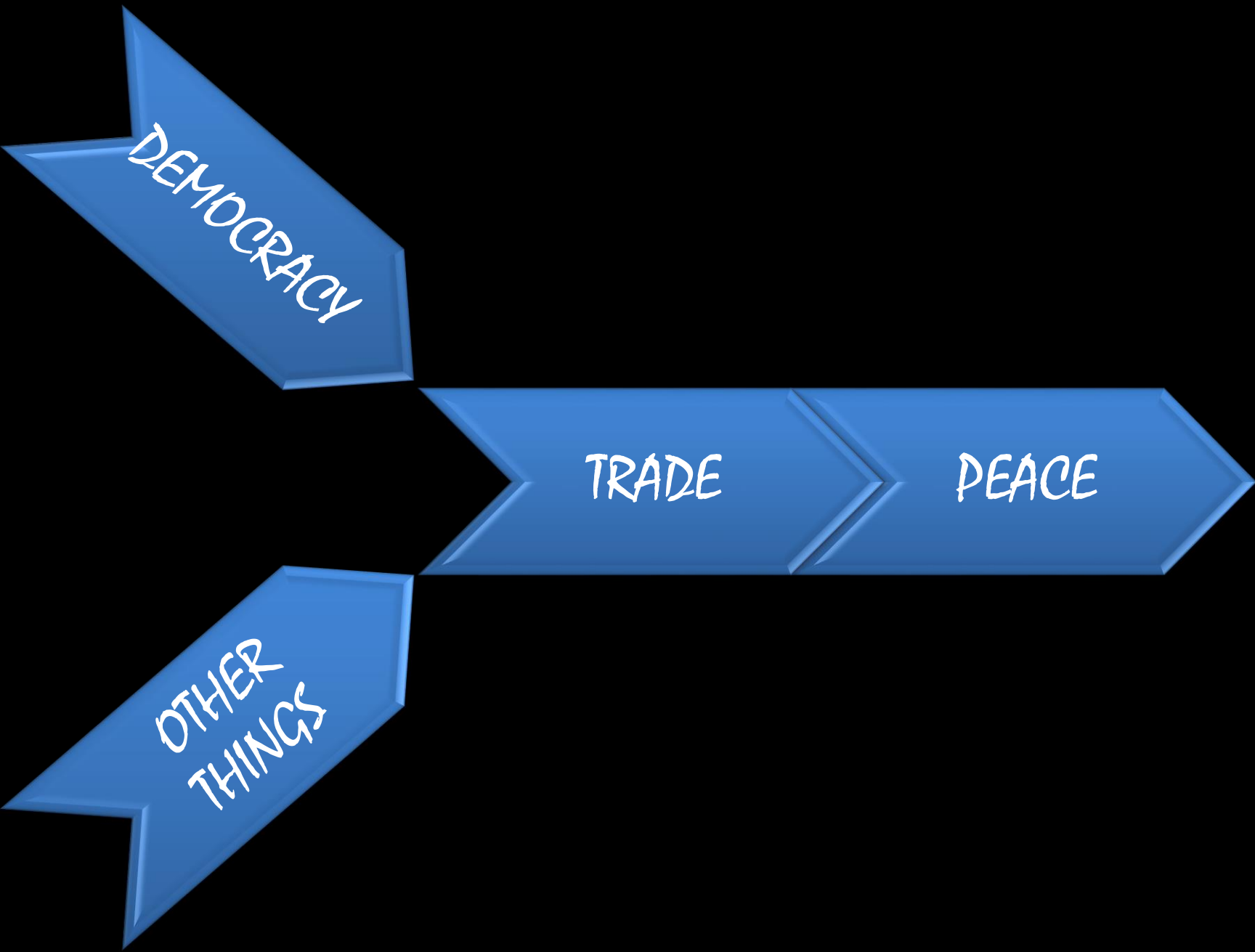
PEACE



DEMOCRACY

TRADE

PEACE



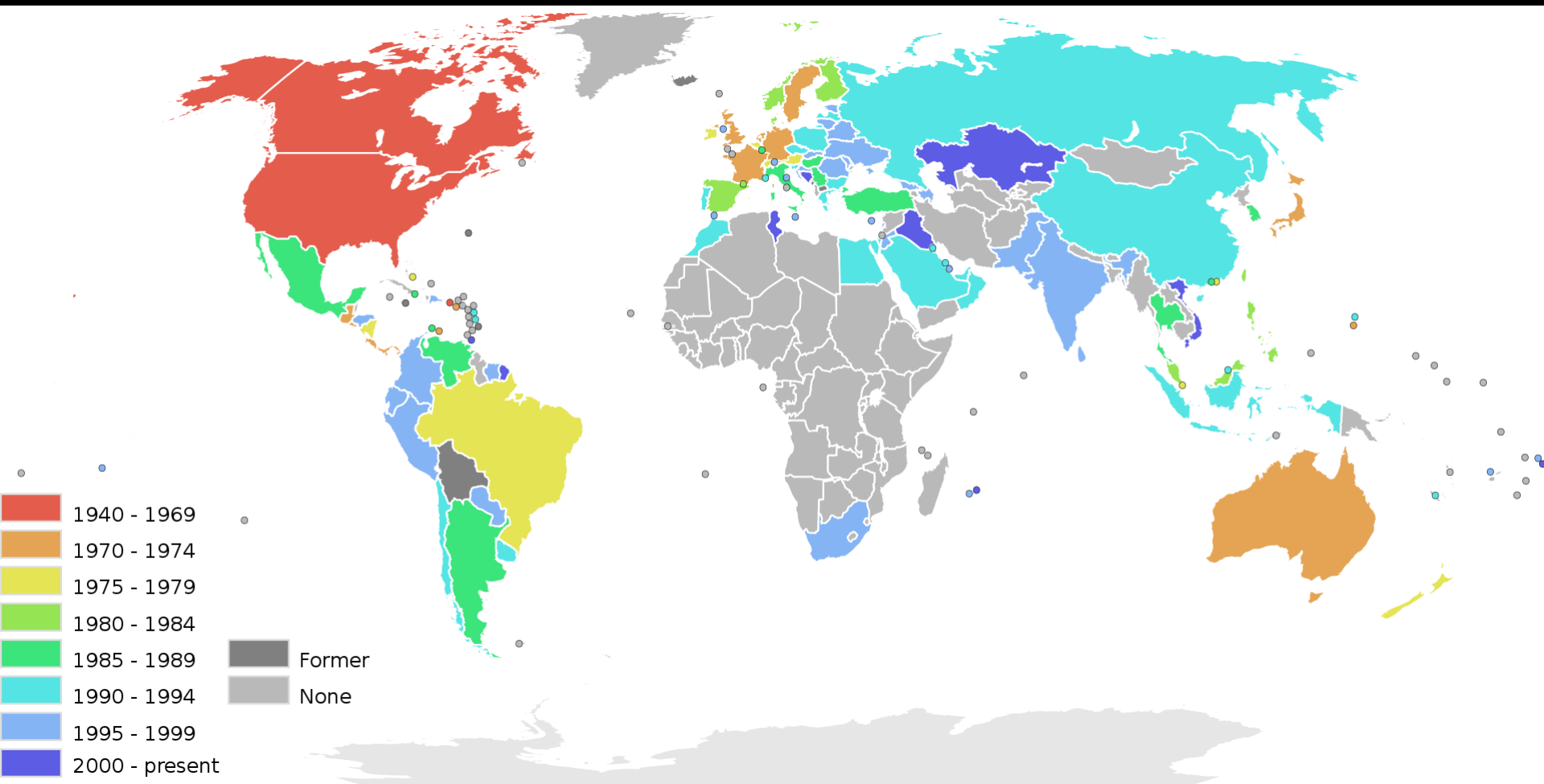
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McDonald's Peace Theory

- Countries with McDonald's restaurants tend not to fight other countries with McDonald's restaurants
 - Originates from a 1996 NYT article by Thomas Friedman



Perfect Theory?

- Yes!

Perfect Theory?

- Yes...until it wasn't





Correlates of War

- Sustained combat between regular armed forces of two states
- At least 1000 combat fatalities total
- Each side has at least 100 combat fatalities or at least 1000 armed forces



Old

SOBERANA

ATLAS

era.

PANAMA

LAVANDERIA

RAP

KRAGUJEVAC ARM AND MV PLANT CRVENA ZASTAVA, SERBIA





M Asser: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/masser/198909816/>





Correlation versus Causation

- Clearly, Big Macs do not cause peace
- But countries with McDonald's tend to be better developed and open to trade
 - McDonald's only expands to rich countries integrated into the global supply chain
 - Perhaps open trade is causing the peace

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Economic Interdependence

- Countries that trade with each other tend not to fight each other
 - True for disputes and wars
 - Finding controls for other factors

Economic Interdependence

- Correlation does not imply causation
 - Perhaps causation goes the other way
 - Can we explain why trade relations might *cause* peace?

Explaining the Peace

- Last unit: trade creates a surplus
 - Splitting the surplus makes everyone better off

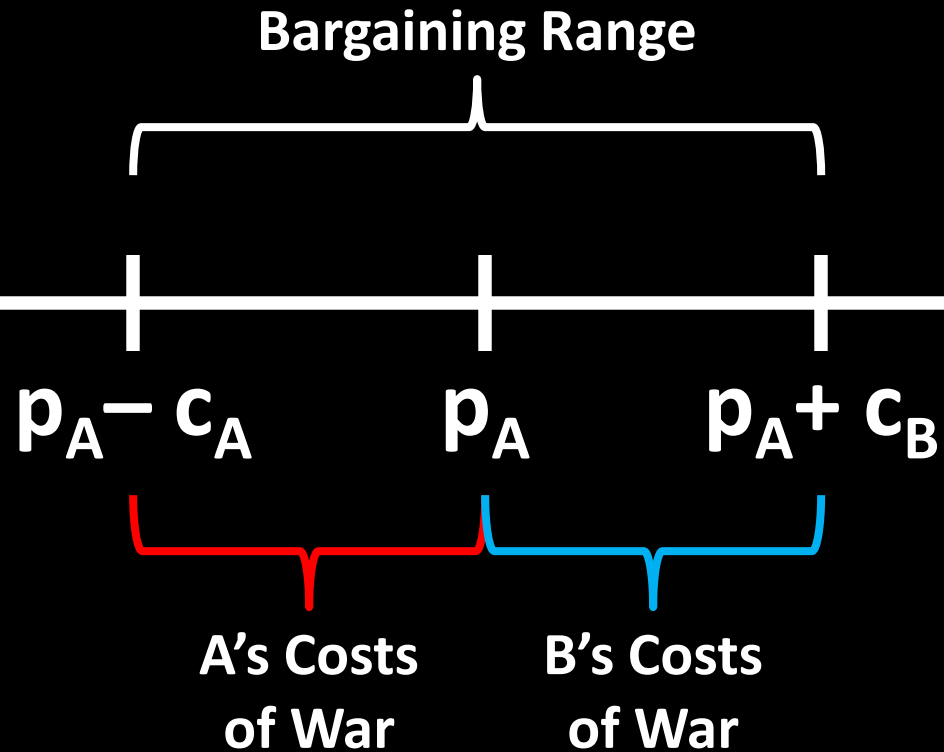
Explaining the Peace

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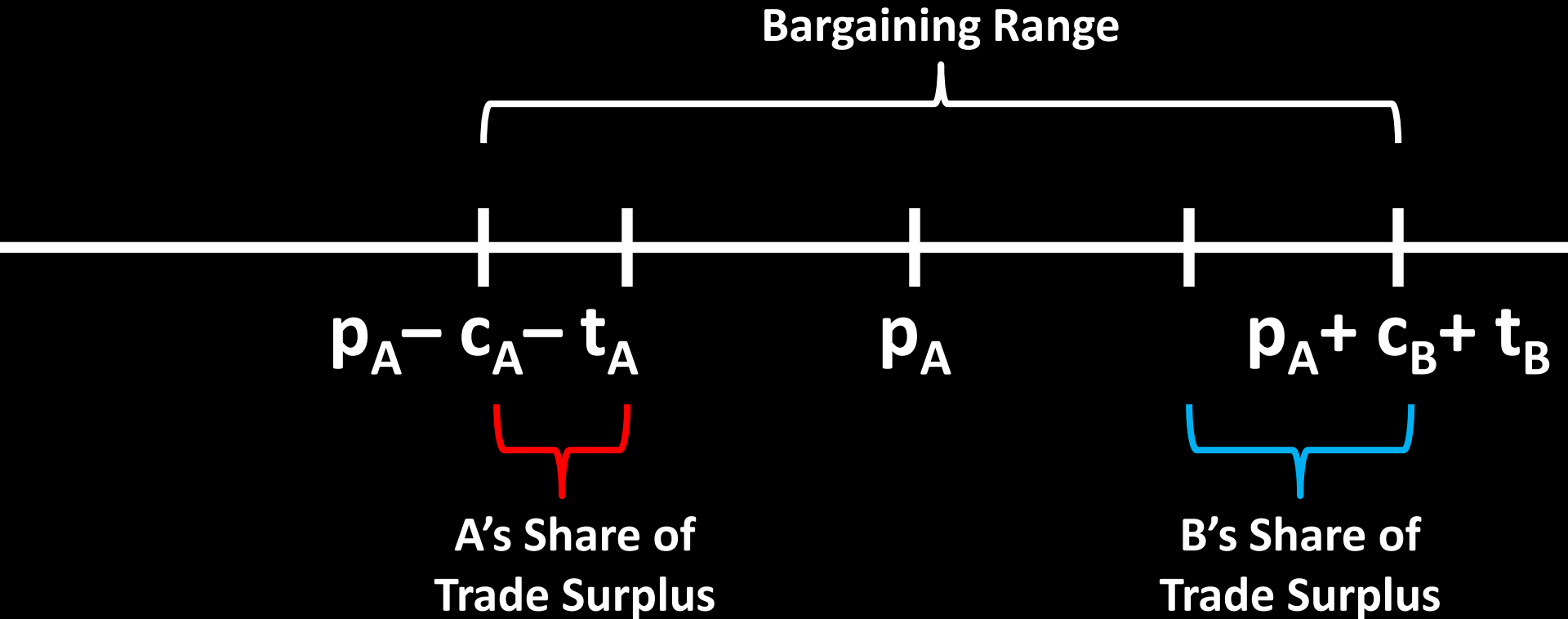
Explaining the Peace

- Last unit: trade creates a surplus
 - Splitting the surplus makes everyone better off
- Two units ago: range of mutually preferable settlements grows larger as costs grow
 - States cannot trade if they are at war
 - Trade surplus makes war costlier

Bargaining without Trade



Bargaining with Trade



Bargaining Range with Trade



Bargaining Range without Trade



Explaining the Peace

- Trade makes war less appealing
- The less appealing war is, the less likely bargaining breaks down for most explanations for war

Umlauffähig im ganzen Regierungsbezirk
Aachen. Gültig bis zum 1. April 1924.

Gutschein über Fünfzig Billionen M · a · r · k

Reihe A

DIESER GUTSCHEIN WIRD VON DEN STÄDTISCHEN KASSEN IN
ESCHWEILER u. STOLBERG SOWIE VON DEN BANKEN DES ESCHWEILER
STOLBERGER INDUSTRIEG. IN ZAHLUNG GENOMMEN. ER VERLIERT
SEINE GÜLTIGKEIT VIER WOCHEN NACH AUFRUF DURCH D. ÖFFENTL. BLÄTTER.

ESCHWEILER u. STOLBERG, DEN 17. NOV. 1923
DIE BÜRGERMEISTER:

50



Elser i.v. Döbbelmann



№ 715041

50 Trillion Marks





No Food or Beverage
Permitted in this Area.
Thank You for
Helping us Preserve
this Part of our History.



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

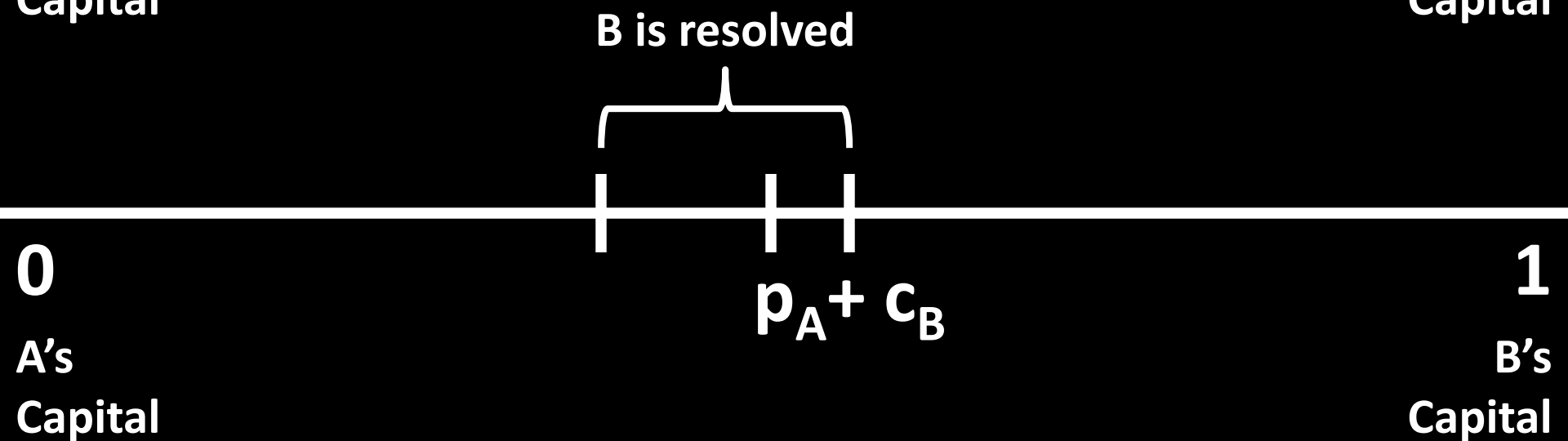
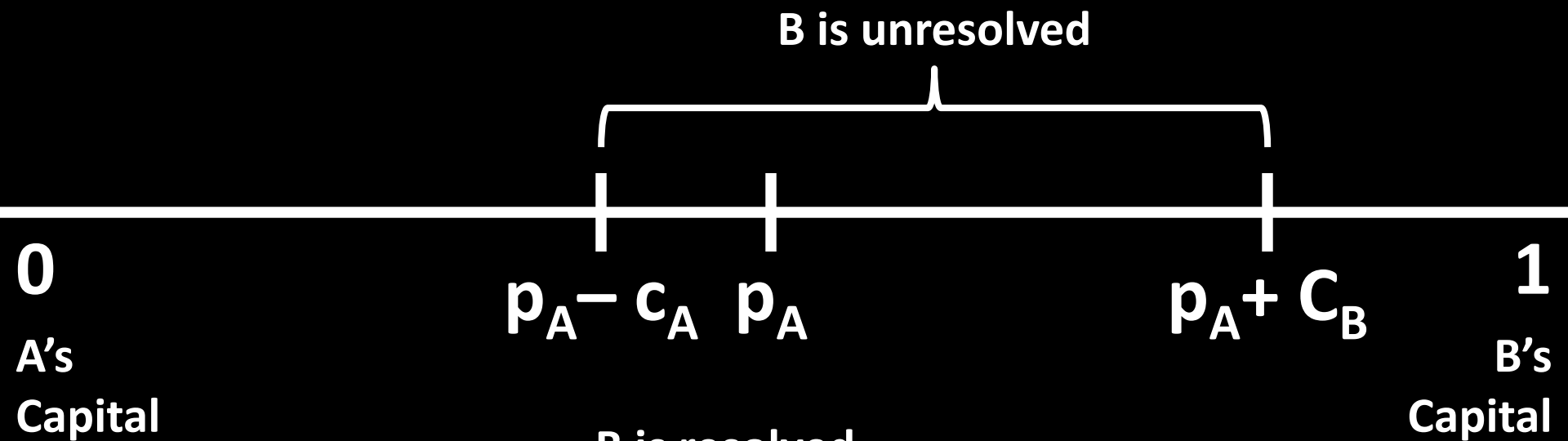


THE WORLD BANK



Other Interdependence Theories

- Exchange of information



Other Interdependence Theories

- Exchange of information
- Changing of underlying preferences