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Locarno: a democratic peace?

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Abstract. Explanations for the lack of war between democracies are many, various and contested. The main thrust of research is quantitative but there is also a growing literature of case studies. Such studies can throw light on the issues by showing in particular contexts the complex interaction of different factors, those both consistent and inconsistent with democratic peace theory. The détente in the 1920s between France and Germany offers an interesting example for several reasons. Both were democracies but one (Germany) was still undergoing democratisation. In addition, neither was content with the status quo, the distribution of power between them was unstable and that instability was not resolved by an over-arching alliance system (such as NATO) or strong international institutions. A complex interaction resulted between France's security dilemma, the German Republic's need for foreign policy success and the democratic values of political leaders on both sides.

Introduction

The literature on democratic peace theory offers an impressive variety of possible explanations for what is widely accepted on certain definitions as a statistical correlation, that democracies do not go to war with each other.[1] As is commonly noted there is, however, no consensus about causation. Are democracies war averse in relation to each other because they are democracies or because they happen to exist in zones of peace? If the former, is it because their institutions, their values, the rational calculations of their leaders, some other factors, or combination of them lead to peaceful resolution of disputes? If the latter, what creates such a zone and could the causation run the other way with the external environment helping to promote democracy? These are but a few of the more basic questions that remain open and it is not clear if and how they can be resolved. That is not in itself surprising as the problems involved are both of definition and method, the large number of variables involved and their differential importance over time.[2] One area

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[1] For example, Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (eds), *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge Mass and London: MIT Press, 1996); Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise', *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41 (1997), pp. 56–91; Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners. How Democracies have made a Separate Peace* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003); Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, *Puzzles of the Democratic Peace Theory, Geopolitics and the Transformation of World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[2] For trenchant criticism of the static definitions over time of democracy, war and the state in much of the literature, see Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey (eds), *Democracy, Liberalism and War. Rethinking the Democratic Peace Debate* (Boulder and London: Rienner, 2001), pp. 1–23.

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which is still comparatively under-represented in the literature is that of detailed historical case studies, as recommended by Joseph Nye, 'to look at what actually happened in particular instances'.[3] The most interesting examples will naturally be those where there is not an obvious alternative explanation, such as for instance where the distribution of power between states or geographical remoteness or simply the lack of any significant conflict of interest makes war highly improbable in any case regardless of the possible influence of democratic institutions and values. Where such conditions do not obtain, historical case studies offer the opportunity of seeing the complex interaction of different factors – those both consistent and inconsistent with democratic peace theory – at work.[4] Such case studies may also suggest the ways in which democratic peace norms may be strengthened over time as a result of a learning process from past failures.[5]

One example which suggests itself is the détente between France and Germany in the 1920s for which the Locarno pact of 1925 – guaranteeing the inviolability of the Rhineland frontier – was the main symbol. This case is relevant for democratic peace theory in several ways. Most simply, France and Germany were both democracies in the 1920s when they were at peace. The previous period had seen war between Imperial Germany (whose status as a democracy is at the very least disputed)[6] and the French Republic, and the subsequent period again ended with war between Nazi Germany and France. So at the most basic level there is a perfect correlation between both being democracies and not at war and, on the other side, Germany as being either an authoritarian – though constitutional – state or a dictatorship and France a democracy and war.[7] This is potentially more interesting in that the Weimar Republic was not a consolidated democracy but a

[3] Joseph S. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History* (6th edition, New York et al.: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 49.

[4] For an important collection of 'hard' case studies of this kind, see Miriam Fendius Elman (ed.), *Paths to Peace. Is Democracy the Answer?* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997).

[5] For a quantitative argument that there has been a learning process allowing democratic peace norms to become increasingly effective over time, see Lars-Erik Cederman, 'Back to Kant: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace as a Macrohistorical Learning Process', *American Political Science Review*, 95 (2001), pp. 15–31.

[6] On this controversy see Ido Oren, 'The Subjectivity of the "Democratic Peace": Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany', *International Security*, 20 (1995), pp. 147–84. He makes the important points that the definition of democracy has changed over time, the perception of Imperial Germany as not a democracy was in part a product of the First World War and since the 1980s the whole idea that Germany followed a separate path of development from an assumed standard model of France, Britain and the US has been shown to be simplistic. On the last, see David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History. Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). On the other hand, it remains the case that although from 1871 at national level Germany had a democratic (male) franchise; it did not have a democratic government. Ministers were appointed by the Crown and not responsible to the Reichstag, and, in addition, the Social Democrats – the largest single party after 1912 – were excluded from power. For a recent reassessment of the 'special path' question, see, Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany. The Long Road to the West*, 2 vols. (Engl. edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 2007).

[7] The analysis could be extended to relations between France and the German Federal Republic since the Second World War but the contrasts with the earlier period are more evident than the similarities. The German Federal Republic was also committed to work for change in the international system – German reunification – but the distribution of power after 1945 ruled out a military option. In addition the development of international institutions and the Federal Republic's incorporation into them – notably NATO and the European Community – gave the FRG a stable role within a Western alliance system and in turn assisted the consolidation of German democracy. After the experience of Nazism and the Second World War, that was in any case dominated by

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state undergoing a process of democratisation, where – as some authors would predict – displaced elites resorted to hyper-nationalism in an attempt to regain power and where the problems of integrating a variety of newly represented groups into the state also made nationalist policies a natural tactic for governments to follow.[8]

Peace between the two Republics can also not be explained by an absence of significant conflicts of interest between them. The post-war situation in Europe was marked by multiple conflicts, over borders, over reparations and war loans and over rival alliances and alignments. Germany was clearly not a satisfied power in the 1920s. Its foreign policy priority was the revision of the Versailles Treaty. The same argument can be extended to France. France was also dissatisfied, having failed to achieve its aim of the separation of the left bank of the Rhine at the peace conference and subsequently having lost the promised *quid pro quo* of American and British guarantees when the US Senate refused to ratify the Treaty and the British thereupon withdrew their undertaking as well. Although France had military preponderance over Germany until Hitler's rearmament in the 1930s, it feared for the future given Germany's greater demographic and economic resources. Germany wanted to revise the Versailles Treaty; France at the very least to enforce it strictly, if not to improve on it. Peace between them cannot therefore be explained by either being content with the status quo.

These conditions are sufficient to establish the Locarno détente as an interesting test case for democratic peace theory. But in order to see what role, if any, democratic institutions or values played in the process, or more specifically – as some authors contend – particular political parties and leaders, one must first evaluate alternative explanations.[9] The most obvious is a simple Realist account. It can be argued that the Locarno détente represented a temporary *modus vivendi* in the mid-1920s because there was no better power political alternative for either France or Germany in the short term. France had military superiority but was unable to ensure itself against a revival of German power. It therefore adopted a policy acceptable to its erstwhile allies, Britain and the US, both of whom by the mid-1920s wanted to achieve the conciliation of Germany. Germany, for its part, was effectively disarmed and therefore had no alternative in the short term but to work for gradual revision of the Versailles Treaty by negotiation. The result, on this argument, was a temporary accommodation at Locarno – more of a democratic truce than a democratic peace. In both countries, the *modus vivendi* was also unpopular with significant sections of the electorate. If the prospects of using force successfully had been better it might have enjoyed majority support, undermining the claims of democratic peace theory.

democratic parties committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes to a far greater extent than during the Weimar Republic.

[8] On the problem of democratising states, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and the Danger of War', in Brown et al. (eds), *Debating the Democratic Peace*, pp. 301–34 and Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York and London: Norton, 2000). On the constituents of a consolidated democracy, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[9] On the importance of parties and leaders, see Elman (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 483–5.

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Prehistory: the 'near miss' of the Ruhr occupation

The Realist argument appears all the more persuasive in relation to the events which immediately preceded the détente. In January 1923 France and Belgium (also a democracy) occupied the Ruhr to break German resistance to delivering the reparations due under the Versailles Treaty. This was not war under the definitions used in democratic peace theory but it was not exactly peace between democracies either.[10] Forty five thousand French and 2,500 Belgian soldiers were deployed in the occupation. Unable to offer military resistance, the German government responded by declaring 'passive resistance', a general strike supported by government funds. The occupiers in turn expelled some 5,000 German civil servants and railway-men who refused to co-operate, together with their families, and a further 31,850 from the other zones of the Rhineland which were already under military occupation under the Treaty. Between 130,000 and 147,000 people were expelled in all and, in addition, some 300,000 children were evacuated because of food shortages and disease. Apart from passive resistance, there was also an active German campaign of sabotage and reprisals against the separatist movements which were sporadically encouraged by the French and Belgian authorities. The German government connived at these acts of resistance and in some instances supported them directly. Inevitably there were casualties. According to the French High Command in the Ruhr in the first twelve months 76 Germans and 20 French and Belgian soldiers were killed in direct conflicts and a further 300 Germans were killed by their own countrymen for breaches of passive resistance.[11]

At the same time, on Germany's eastern frontier preparations were made to resist a possible threat from Poland, at this date also a democratic Republic with free elections and a competitive party system, though one facing the problem of large ethnic minorities including a German population in the former Prussian provinces used to being a ruling class and hostile to the Polish state. Polish attempts to pre-empt the new frontiers were resisted by force. Volunteer German paramilitary units (the *Freikorps*) were used against Polish insurgents in Upper Silesia in 1921; subsequently the German military authorities assisted in training various right wing organisations in breach of the Versailles Treaty. The Social Democrat dominated Prussian government, in whose provinces this activity took place, tried to get it stopped but the Reich Minister of Defence and also the Reich President – at that time the Social Democrat, Friedrich Ebert – protected the army. This shows how Republicans were divided by the imperatives of national defence,

[10] As already noted by Christopher Layne in his discussion of 'near misses', 'Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace', in Brown et al. (eds), *Debating the Democratic Peace*, pp. 185–90. The Ruhr occupation is included in the category of Militarised Interstate Disputes in the Correlates of War Project, version 3.02; for details of this data set, see Faten Ghosn, Glenn Palmer and Stuart A. Bremer, 'The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding, Rules, and Description', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 21 (2004), pp. 133–54. There is a detailed study of French policy in Stanislas Jeannesson, *Poincaré, la France et la Ruhr (1922–1924)* (Strasbourg: Presse Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1998) and of the effect on Germany in Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis 1923–1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[11] Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1924* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 279. Perhaps because of the definitions used there, the occupation is recorded as ending on 11 July 1923 and causing zero fatalities in the Correlates of War Project data set (see preceding footnote). In fact it continued until July 1925 though economic control of the area was restored to Germany in October 1924.

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with some prepared to allow even the arming of anti-Republican groups for the purpose.[12] In this early post-war period there was not much evidence on either the Polish or the German side of democratic norms working towards a peaceful solution to a bitter frontier dispute.

The period of acute conflict short of war was transformed in the three years that followed with the Dawes Plan providing in 1924 a provisional solution to the reparations issue leading to French and Belgian evacuation of the Ruhr, the Locarno pact and associated treaties in 1925, and Germany's entry into the League of Nations with a seat on the Council in 1926 and the détente continued, though not at the same pace, to 1929 when the Hague Conference saw a supposedly final settlement of reparations with German acceptance of the Young Plan and agreement by France to evacuate the last of the occupied Rhineland zones in 1930, five years ahead of the date set by the Versailles Treaty. What explains this dramatic turnaround and does it provide support for democratic peace theory? It may be objected that the theory is concerned only with war avoidance not degrees of peacefulness and therefore the Locarno détente is not relevant. But that is a pedantic objection. If 'near misses' are part of the argument then so too should be the process of retreating from confrontation into more stable relationships. The Locarno Pact was explicitly a pact for war avoidance.

The immediate explanation for the recovery from the Ruhr conflict is that both sides had been badly damaged by it and both were therefore open to new ideas. The depth of the crisis helped to create the opportunity for change. Germany was the more obviously damaged. Support for the general strike (and loss of revenues from the Ruhr) gave a savage twist to inflation leading to the final collapse of the mark. An alternative currency could be stabilised only by abandoning passive resistance, which itself put the future of all the occupied territories – Rhine and Ruhr – at risk, leaving them to make the best terms they could with the occupiers. The abandonment of passive resistance in September provided the pretext for right-radical groups to try to overthrow the Republic, culminating in the Hitler putsch in Munich in November. At the same time in the central German states of Saxony and Thuringia, where there were Communist-Socialist coalition governments, there was loose talk of and some preparations for a Communist rising. The army under its ambitious commanding officer, General von Seeckt, meanwhile wanted to use the crisis to force the resignation of the elected government and replace it with an authoritarian directorate effectively under military control. It looked in the Autumn of 1923 as though the Weimar Republic might break up in chaos.

Though in less dramatic fashion, France too suffered from what was at best a pyrrhic victory. Its major miscalculation had been to underestimate the reaction of the German working class which supported the general strike and rallied to the mine-owners against the occupiers. The French and Belgians fell back on coercion and support of the generally weak and unrepresentative separatist movements but this only made the occupation more difficult. Although in October 1923 the mine-owners were forced to resume production to avoid bankruptcy, mass unemployment and starvation, the French still had no viable political strategy. Would a French Republic be able to rule an unwilling German population of some

[12] F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 147–63.

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ten millions – taking the occupied territories as a whole – indefinitely as a kind of European colony? That was a problem clearly related to the constraints that operate on democratic governments and consistent with the claim that democratic norms favour negotiation over the use of force.[13] In addition, France found itself isolated from its wartime allies. Britain and the US initially adopted a neutral attitude but in August the British government declared the occupation illegal and by October both governments were increasingly concerned at the direction of French policy.[14] They did not want to see a French dominated Western Europe any more than they had a German one. Nor did they think that such a violation of the rights of millions of Germans would be stable. At the end of October the head of the French government, Raymond Poincaré agreed to allow an inter-allied commission to investigate Germany's ability to pay reparations. Thereafter his position weakened. In January 1924 there was a fall in the value of the franc and in elections in May Poincaré's *Bloc National* lost power and was succeeded by a government of the so-called *Cartel des Gauches*. In August at a conference in London, the powers involved in reparations accepted the Dawes Plan for (mainly) American loans to Germany to enable it to make annual payments pending a final settlement, and France agreed to evacuate the Ruhr within a year.

The French attempt at unilateral enforcement of the Treaty was over. It had failed because it lacked a viable political strategy as to how one democracy was to rule over part of another and because its action alienated its two most important allies, themselves democracies, which viewed with alarm the prospect of Germany breaking up with unforeseeable political and economic consequences. For its part, Germany having been brought to the brink of collapse endorsed a solution which restored its territorial integrity at the price of agreeing to a schedule of reparations payments and accepting a degree of international control over its economy. The settlement was a compound of Realist calculations and democratic values. Had France been an authoritarian state, it might more easily have imposed direct rule on the occupied territories. Had Germany been an authoritarian state, France might have found greater acceptance for its actions both at home and from the US and Britain. As it was, none of the powers had a viable alternative to a settlement which served the interests of the existing political order, economic recovery and peace. That order was based on respect for national self-determination and the importance of Germany to the international economy.[15] If

[13] This example tends to confirm the quantitative argument that 'power preponderance' on one side to a dispute (in this case France) does not lead to a lower likelihood of a negotiated outcome. If, as in this example, victory is not a viable result because of democratic norms, then military power alone will not be decisive. For the quantitative analysis, see William J. Dixon and Paul D. Senese, 'Democracy, Disputes, and Negotiated Settlements', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46 (2002), pp. 560–61.

[14] Elspeth Y. O'Riordan, *Britain and the Ruhr Crisis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Patrick O. Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I. America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe 1919–1932* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006), pp. 100–15.

[15] Despite the literature on the association of peace and commerce between democracies deriving from Kant, the relationship between different forms of capitalism and democracy is an under-researched aspect of democratic peace theory. The most powerful intellectual advocate of the need to restore the German economy in the interests of peace was J. M. Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1st edition, 1919, annotated edition, 1971). On the role of the Dawes Plan in stabilising the Weimar Republic by giving organised interests a stake in it through the loans, see Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe. Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 481. Acquiring a stake

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it was a Realist settlement, it was influenced by democratic values. The episode of the Ruhr occupation was indeed a 'near miss', illustrating in the way it started limits on democratic peace theory but in the way it was concluded the influence of democratic norms.

The Locarno pact

How far can the same analysis be applied to the Locarno Pact which followed in October 1925? The mutual security guarantee of the Rhineland frontier meant that the Rhineland states, Germany, France and Belgium, renounced altering the frontier by force, in effect Germany accepted the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and France gave up the aim of detaching the left bank of the Rhine. In addition, Britain and Italy agreed to act as external guarantors contracting to come to the aid of either side in the event of a violation of the pact.

Again, the Realist interpretation is a strong one – each of the powers involved stood to gain from it.[16] For Germany, in addition to security on its western frontier, the pact offered an end to the isolation of the post-war period, averting the danger of a new Anglo-French alliance, and opening the way to membership of the League of Nations in 1926 with a seat on the Council as part of the club of great powers. Germany also avoided giving a specific guarantee of its eastern frontiers in arbitration treaties it concluded at the same time with Poland and Czechoslovakia. It thus left itself free to pursue frontier revision in the east albeit, given its commitments to the League of Nations, by peaceful means. Germany also requested and received from the other powers at Locarno an interpretation of Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant which in effect released it from participating in military sanctions in view of its disarmed status. That, in turn, enabled Germany to renew its 1922 Rapallo neutrality pact with the Soviet Union, which had feared that as, a consequence of Locarno, Germany might be drawn into League sanctions against it. By the Treaty of Berlin in April 1926, both sides undertook to remain neutral in the event of either becoming involved in war with a third party 'despite peaceful behaviour'.[17] One effect of the Treaty of Berlin was to maintain the pressure on Poland for frontier revision since both Germany and the Soviet Union claimed Polish territory. Defending German policy in these terms, the Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann, wrote in July 1925 to the German ambassador to the US: 'Our policy over the security pact offer was undoubtedly right, secures the Rhineland from the consequences of a French policy of persecution, has burst the entente apart and opens new possibilities for the East.'[18]

in the Republic however did not necessarily mean internalising democratic values and after 1929, under the impact of the depression, some of the same organised interests helped to destabilise the Republic in favour of an authoritarian regime; Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Engl. edition, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 371–98.

[16] Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy: German and the West 1925–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

[17] Martin Walsdorff, *Westorientierung und Ostpolitik. Stresemanns Rußlandpolitik in der Locarno Ära* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1971), pp. 167–81.

[18] Jonathan Wright, *Gustav Stresemann. Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 306.

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For France too the pact made sense in terms of national interest. After the failure of the Ruhr occupation, it offered the best security available. By agreeing to Locarno, France helped to restore relations with Britain and the British guarantee of the Rhineland frontier against aggression from either side – though less than an Anglo-French alliance – was nevertheless a significant gain. In addition, France retained its military preponderance and its alliance system in Eastern Europe, despite Polish resentment at what it saw as a weakening of the French commitment.

Britain, for its part, could also be seen as having gained in security. It had assisted in the stabilisation of Western Europe which was important in itself and particularly for an overstretched imperial power. In return, it had guaranteed the Rhineland frontier. That was a serious step, not a mere gesture, though since the guarantee applied equally to both sides it did not entail the military preparations of an alliance.[19] The Pact would further the three principles of European stability outlined by the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, to the Committee of Imperial Defence in July 1925: to make it impossible for Germany to overrun Europe, to induce France to adopt a more friendly and reasonable attitude towards Germany and to prevent German-Soviet understanding against the rest of Europe.[20] At the same time Britain had limited its commitment, refusing to guarantee frontiers in Eastern Europe where British interests were less directly affected and where the German argument for revision, particularly of the Polish frontier, was viewed sympathetically.[21]

The US administration was content to allow Britain to take the lead, given the domestic constraints against any form of political commitment to Europe but it too had an interest in European stability. American diplomats and the Governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Benjamin Strong, played an important supporting role in making it clear to the French and German governments that the continued flow of American credit to Europe depended on the successful conclusion of the Rhineland pact. The policy initiated by the Dawes loan of promoting stability by financial means was now made to serve the specific interests of the security pact.[22]

Italy's role at Locarno offers an interesting perspective, as it was the only non-democratic power involved.[23] Mussolini was antipathetic to the whole process – he disliked international conferences, he disliked any association with the League of Nations and he disliked the fact that the Brenner frontier (between Italy and Austria) was not to receive the same status as the Rhineland. He agreed to Italian participation only at a late stage, partly under pressure from professional diplomats in the Italian Foreign Ministry, partly to please Austen Chamberlain with whom he had established a rapport and partly for prestige. But he had no interest in promoting stability in Europe, rather the reverse. Fascist Italy was already supporting like-minded paramilitary organisations in Germany and similar

[19] Jon Jacobson, 'Locarno, Britain and the Security of Europe', in Gaynor Johnson (ed.), *Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy 1920–1929* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 11–32.
[20] Ibid., p. 16.
[21] Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy*, p. 29; Richard S. Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe. British Foreign Policy 1924–29* (London: Cass, 1997), pp. 125–7.
[22] Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace*, pp. 247–52.
[23] Alan Cassels, 'Locarno: Early Test of Fascist Intentions', in Johnson (ed.), *Locarno Revisited*, pp. 80–94.

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activities were soon mounted in the Balkans. The attempt by the democracies, Britain and France, to recruit Italy for the Locarno détente in anything more than name was doomed to failure for reasons which sit well with democratic peace theory.

The smaller powers involved in Locarno – Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia – had no alternative but to accept the settlement negotiated by the major powers. For Belgium, as for France, the Locarno Pact represented an alternative means of security after the failed Ruhr occupation. Czechoslovakia, like Poland, was a potential loser from the implicit downgrading of its frontiers, compared to the new status conferred on the Rhineland frontier, though in fact German governments during the Weimar Republic showed no interest in revision of the Czech frontier. Poland felt with some justification that it was the real loser by Locarno as Germany made no secret of its desire to revise that frontier. No German Government could have accepted the frontier; the feeling against it in all parties – including the Social Democrats – was too strong. On the other hand, so long as the Weimar Republic was in existence, Germany was committed to purely peaceful methods of revision through its membership of the League of Nations. And, it may be asked, could there be any guarantee of security for Poland – incidentally itself no longer a democracy after economic paralysis had led to the establishment of an authoritarian regime under Marshal Piłsudski in 1926 – if German democracy failed?[24]

What conclusions may we draw about the interests of the various powers involved in the Locarno Pact? As with the resolution of the Ruhr crisis, the Realist interpretation is a strong one. The Pact served the security interests of each of the powers with the possible exception of Poland which had no alternative but to accept the outcome. But, again, the democratic values of the major states (apart from Italy) affected the way their interests were perceived by their leaders: the Pact aimed at a solution to the Rhineland frontier that would be accepted as having democratic legitimacy.[25] In terms of a recent contribution to the democratic peace debate, Locarno as a mutual pact could be regarded – with the exception of Italy – as an early attempt at an inter-democratic security institution.[26]

We will now examine in more detail the values and structural factors involved and the way they interacted both to promote and limit the détente that followed.

[24] Peter Krüger, 'Locarno und die Frage eines europäischen Sicherheitssystems unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Ostmitteleuropas', in Ralph Schattkowsky (ed.), *Locarno und Osteuropa. Fragen eines europäischen Sicherheitssystems in den 20er Jahren* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1994), pp. 9–27.

[25] On the problem of distinguishing norms from interests see Henry S. Farber and Joanne Gowa, 'Polities and Peace', in Brown et al. (eds), *Debating the Democratic Peace*, pp. 241–2. Their argument that interests provide the better explanation is more persuasive for the bipolar system of the Cold War (pp. 261–2) where the interests of democratic states were more clearly aligned together against the Soviet Union than was the case in the more diffuse international environment of the 1920s. In the latter, the divisions ran between status quo and revisionist states (whether democratic or non-democratic) as well as between the Soviet Union and the capitalist states and in addition, the refusal of the US to accept commitments to European security created further uncertainty. In such conditions where different alignments of interest were possible, it is not so easy to discount the role of norms in shaping the way interests were perceived.

[26] Andreas Hasenclever and Brigitte Weiffen, 'International institutions are the key: a new perspective on the democratic peace', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), pp. 563–85. Their example of the way in which NATO has affected Franco-German relations is particularly relevant; ibid. pp. 578–80.

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Shared assumptions

Chamberlain, Stresemann and the French foreign minister, Aristide Briand, were politicians who were used to operating in the dangerous world of power politics from before and during the First World War. They would not willingly compromise the security interests of their states. In that they followed the first rule of Realism. But, in contrast to Mussolini, they shared fundamental assumptions about the values of peace and democracy which made agreement between them possible and helped to sustain the détente, despite periods of tension, until it broke down after 1929.

The most important of these assumptions was a commitment to peace.[27] Briand was deeply affected by having been head of the French government from 1915 to 1917 during the siege of Verdun when over 160,000 French soldiers were killed in a few months.[28] The famous peroration to his speech welcoming Germany as a member of the League of Nations in September 1926 – 'Away with the rifles, machine guns, cannon! Clear the way for conciliation, arbitration, peace' – should be seen against that background.[29] Stresemann despite starting with the resentments of a defeated and humiliated power also became increasingly convinced that a new war 'would mean that the old Europe [. . .] would inevitably tear itself to pieces' and '[t]his destruction would be above all Germany's destruction.'[30] In a speech to Heidelberg university – where nationalist groups were strongly represented among the student body – he explained that 'The preservation of peace and the attempts to achieve it are not weakness, are not timidity, they are the realistic recognition of our own national interests.'[31] Chamberlain, for his part, later dismissed allegations that Briand had been duped by Stresemann in words which reflected the priority each attached to peace: 'There was neither knave nor dupe, but a great German and a great Frenchman, who, from amidst the blood-soaked ruins of the past, sought to raise a new temple of peace.'[32] It is easy to take such sentiments for granted as no more than the conventional courtesies of inter-state relations but in a period which saw them repudiated by Mussolini and Hitler, among others, they were not mere rhetoric.

Another shared value was suspicion of the Soviet Union. Stresemann maintained, as we have seen, the link with Soviet Russia but he gave priority to relations with the Western powers. In drastic language, he warned those German elites who promoted a Soviet alliance against 'the utopia of flirting with Bolshevism' since, he added, Russia would gladly spread world revolution to the Elbe and leave the rest of Germany to the French.[33] He was outraged at a Comintern attempt to assassinate the King of Bulgaria and other leading figures in

[27] In this they conformed to the analysis in John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday. The Obsolescence of Major War* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 1996), pp. 56–62.
[28] Jacques Bariéty, 'Aristide Briand: les raisons d'un oubli', in Antoine Fleury (ed.), *Le Plan Briand d'Union fédérale européenne* (Bern: Lang, 1998), pp. 5–6.
[29] *League of Nations Official Journal*, Special Supplement no. 44: *Records of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly* (Geneva, 1926), pp. 51–52.
[30] From his introduction to an appreciation of the Weimar Republic's first ten years, *Zehn Jahre Deutsche Geschichte 1918–1928* (Berlin: Stollberg, [1928]), p. viii.
[31] Wright, *Stresemann*, p. 417.
[32] Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (4th edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1935), p. 188.
[33] Stresemann to Crown Prince Wilhelm, 7 September 1925; quoted in Wright, *Stresemann*, pp. 326–7.

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April 1925, telling the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee that if the Soviet Union wanted good relations with Germany, it would have to observe the norms customary 'between civilized states'.[34] For Briand and Chamberlain a shared motive for Locarno was the desire to reorient German foreign policy away from the Soviet embrace symbolised by the Rapallo Treaty. Briand had warned Stresemann at Locarno that it was not possible for Germany 'to stand with one foot in the League of Nations and with the other, or at least the tip of the toe, in another camp'.[35] And when Briand was slow to reduce the number of occupation troops in the Rhineland, a concession which had been promised at Locarno, Chamberlain reminded him that they were 'battling with Soviet Russia for the soul of Germany'.[36]

An associated value held in common was belief in the market economy and the promotion of foreign trade. For Germany exports were essential to enable it to repay reparations and that could only be achieved – without damaging the interests of its trading partners – by expansion of the international economy. Germany alone among the major powers consistently supported measures of trade liberalisation at the League of Nations.[37] There were also important bilateral and collective agreements. A comprehensive trade treaty was concluded between France and Germany in August 1927.[38] With the encouragement of their governments, international cartels were also established between industries in a number of important sectors. The most striking was the International Steel Community concluded in July 1926 by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg but others followed for aluminum and in the chemical industry for dyes and nitrogen.[39] Despite the hopes of democratic politicians, including Stresemann and Briand, that these developments would lead to further economic integration which would in turn underpin the détente, they never acquired that momentum for reasons we will examine below. Nevertheless they represented a common aspiration in line with the tradition in democratic peace theory that emphasises economic interdependence.

A shared strategy

Once the Locarno Pact had been concluded, Stresemann, Briand and Chamberlain had a common interest in seeing it succeed. Their careers became linked in a joint enterprise to achieve European security. In terms of one strand of democratic peace theory, their rational calculations as democratic statesmen led them to promote peace and stability. On that argument alternative leaders would have followed similar strategies and that is broadly persuasive. However, it would be a mistake

[34] Ibid., 323.
[35] Ibid., 334.
[36] Stephanie Salzmann, *Great Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union. Rapallo and After, 1922–1934* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. 86.
[37] Matthias Schulz, *Deutschland, der Völkerbund und die Frage der europäischen Wirtschaftsordnung 1925–1933* (Hamburg: Krämer, 1997), pp. 45–173.
[38] Peter Krüger, *Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), pp. 368–72.
[39] Clemens August Wurm, 'Internationale Kartelle und die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1924–1930: Politik, Wirtschaft, Sicherheit', in Stephen A. Schuker (ed.), *Deutschland und Frankreich. Vom Konflikt zur Aussöhnung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), pp. 97–115.

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to discount the role of particular leaders and there is a strong argument for thinking that these three added value to the détente as they worked together over the six years of its development. The quarterly meetings of the League of Nations Council, on which they represented the most significant powers, provided regular opportunities for discussion of common problems. Despite disappointments and periods of coolness between them, there were also instances of support and understanding for the problems of the others. In this way the common values of the practitioners of the democratic peace produced a degree of solidarity across borders strengthening the détente. Equally tensions between them had the opposite effect.

Each of the three understood how to use their appearances at League meetings to enhance their reputations as servants of peace. Briand used the rhetoric of peace to reclaim for France the moral authority of a European mission which was part of the French Republican tradition. Stresemann stressed the importance of what Bismarck had called 'the imponderables of politics', in other words the significance of the Locarno Pact in winning over international opinion.[40] Chamberlain claimed famously that the Pact marked 'the real dividing line between the years of war and the years of peace.'[41]

At Locarno, Briand impressed Stresemann by drawing a parallel between the opposition each faced which Stresemann later described as 'very witty and imaginative'.[42] Briand said he knew that the great majority of Germans wanted peace but that there were also a large number who, though they did not want war, believed that in some mystical way one day Germany's situation would change and that in the meantime there was no need to make any concessions. But, Briand said, he equally faced similar fantasists like Poincaré who believed that he had left France in an immensely strong position, that they should have maintained their hold on the left bank of the Rhine and that in comparison Locarno was a poor bargain.

The strength of the leaders' commitment to the détente was tested the following year when a crisis arose over the terms of Germany's admission to the League. Briand, with Chamberlain's support, pressed for Poland to become a member of the Council of great powers at the same time. That was unacceptable to Germany as it would give Poland a veto over frontier revision. During a week of fraught meetings in March 1926 no compromise seemed possible and both Chamberlain and Briand threatened resignation with Chamberlain declaring that Locarno would be destroyed.[43] The situation was saved by Germany accepting that Poland could become one of the non-permanent members of the Council though, as a result of other difficulties, Germany's admission had to be postponed in any case to the next meeting in September. The crisis illustrated the way in which the reputations of the leaders were already involved with the success of the détente policy.

[40] Jonathan Wright and Julian Wright, 'One mind at Locarno? Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann', in Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright (eds), *Mental Maps of the Era of Two World Wars* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[41] C. A. Macartney, *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 56.
[42] Wright, *Stresemann*, p. 339.
[43] Christoph M. Kimmich, *Germany and the League of Nations* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 81–4.

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In the following years, as well as periods of tension, there were also instances of cooperation. Stresemann for a time hesitated to press the demand for Rhineland evacuation for fear that it would weaken Briand's position. Briand, for his part, did eventually agree under British and German pressure at the Hague Conference to withdraw French troops from the last of the Rhineland zones in June 1930, five years ahead of the date fixed by the Versailles Treaty. Stresemann had made it clear to him in writing that without this concession he would not be able to continue the policy.[44] The remark Briand is reported as making on hearing of Stresemann's death, 'Order a coffin for two. We have two deaths to lament', shows the way in which their careers had become linked in the public mind.[45]

Despite these assets of common perceptions of interests, shared assumptions and shared strategies, the Locarno détente faced a number of critical limits, which we will now examine.

Structural instability

The first limit to the détente was structural – the basic fact that Germany's economic and demographic potential was greater than that of France. French fears for its future security were compounded by doubts about the reliability of the British and Italian guarantees of the Locarno Pact and about the stability of the Weimar Republic. French governments, with Poincaré again as head from 1926 and Briand remaining as Foreign Minister, therefore pursued a dual policy of negotiations to maintain the détente (and satisfy British pressure on them to be accommodating towards Germany) while preserving military superiority, their alliances with Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the occupation of part of the Rhineland until 1930.[46] German governments on the other hand needed to be able to demonstrate that the Pact was a viable instrument for revising the Versailles Treaty. Stresemann hoped that at the least it would lead to early evacuation of the Rhineland and bringing forward the plebiscite due in 1935 to determine the future of the Saar (which had been made subject to League of Nations control until the plebiscite). The gap between French fears and German expectations led to tensions. In January 1928 Stresemann described French demands for security as containing 'an element of hypocrisy' while Briand pointed out that given the strength of nationalist opinion in Germany, France had to be prepared for a change in political circumstances.[47] Each tried to outsmart the other in the negotiations with the US which led to the Kellogg pact to outlaw war, Briand by trying to conclude a bilateral pact, Stresemann by immediately responding to Kellogg's offer of a multilateral pact.[48] Given the structural problems – essentially France's security dilemma without a NATO type guarantee – it is possible that the détente had

[44] Wright, *Stresemann*, pp. 396, 480–2.
[45] François Seydoux, *Beiderseits des Rheins. Erinnerungen eines französischen Diplomaten* (Frankfurt am Main: Societäts Verlag, 1975), p. 38.
[46] On the similarities between the policies pursued by Briand and Poincaré, see John Keiger, 'Poincaré, Briand and Locarno: Continuity in French Diplomacy in the 1920s', in Johnson (ed.), *Locarno Revisited*, pp. 95–107.
[47] Wright, *Stresemann*, p. 412.
[48] Ibid., pp. 415–6.

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already reached the limits of what it could achieve before the depression cut it short.[49]

With the continuing tension over the Rhineland frontier there was no chance that the Locarno Pact would be extended and complemented by an 'Eastern Locarno'. Hopes that it would be possible to achieve modest revision of Poland's frontiers followed by a Locarno type guarantee of those frontiers, possibly to include the Baltic States and the Soviet Union as well in a pan-European security system remained stillborn.[50] In October 1928 the German cabinet, under a Social Democrat Chancellor, approved a four-year rearmament budget to provide equipment and ammunition for an army of sixteen divisions, breaching the Versailles Treaty limit of ten divisions. The rationale was to maintain frontier defence against superior Polish forces, showing that the arbitration treaty signed between Germany and Poland at Locarno was not seen as giving the frontier stability.[51]

The political consequences of the Locarno pact were therefore mixed. In both France and Germany it provided an alternative to the confrontation that had escalated into the Ruhr crisis. But in neither was it able to achieve unquestioning support. Fear in France and resentment in Germany remained a potential threat to the détente limiting its development until it was undermined by the depression.

Limits to economic and financial co-operation

The structural problems which limited political co-operation also worked against economic integration and financial co-operation, preventing them from furthering the détente.[52] Plans in January 1924 for an exchange of French and German industrial shares as a way out of the Ruhr impasse came to nothing.[53] The International Steel Community and similar arrangements for other industries referred to above lacked a supranational authority, unlike the European Coal and Steel Community of 1951. Rather than steps towards a common market, they were cartels to divide the market by negotiating quotas which would protect domestic industries. In the process they allowed the French government, faced by more powerful German competition, to maintain domestic industries of military value.[54] More far-reaching ideas for European political and economic union advanced by Briand in 1929–30 were stillborn, partly because they were intended to achieve Germany's implicit recognition of its eastern frontiers. Stresemann responded positively to the idea of economic union in his last speech to the League of Nations, referring to the internal tariff barriers which had existed in pre-unification

[49] Franz Knipping, *Deutschland, Frankreich und das Ende der Locarno-Ära 1928–1931* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1987).
[50] Rolf Ahmann, 'Sicherheitsprobleme Ostmitteleuropas nach Locarno 1926 bis 1936', in Schattkowsky (ed.), *Locarno und Osteuropa*, pp. 183–200.
[51] Michael Geyer, *Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit. Die Reichswehr in der Krise der Machtpolitik 1924–1936* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1980), pp. 191–217.
[52] For a quantitative study of the beneficial effects by contrast of preferential trading areas in promoting peace between 1950 and 1985, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jon C. Pevehouse, 'Trade Blocs, Trade Flows, and International Conflict', *International Organization*, 54 (2000), pp. 775–808.
[53] Wright, *Stresemann*, p. 265.
[54] Wurm, 'Internationale Kartelle', pp. 105–15.

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Germany and which now seemed laughable. Where he asked rhetorically 'is the European currency, the European postage stamp?'[55] But given the value that still attached to national sovereignty among industrial as well as political elites, such sentiments were unlikely to find a positive response outside the debates of the League Assembly.

Even the limited growth in economic cooperation between France, Germany and their neighbours was sometimes justified by Realist rather than peace building arguments. There was already a perception in some quarters in France that European economic integration was necessary to resist the American challenge. The situation of Germany was more complicated because of German dependence on the flow of American loans and its need for American and British support for revision of the Versailles Treaty.[56] Divisions within the democratic world also helped to block the scheme, discussed between Briand and Stresemann in 1926, for raising the capital value of Germany's reparations debt from American investors to allow early repayment to France in return for evacuation of the Rhineland and return of the Saar. An immediate breakthrough of that kind might have popularised Locarno within Germany in a way which piecemeal concessions over the next three years failed to do. The US, however, was not willing to see funds made available until France had ratified an agreement on war debts. The French government, for its part, did not dare to put ratification to the National Assembly because feeling there ran so high that its debt had already been paid in war dead. The British Treasury was also opposed to a separate Franco-German settlement as threatening the repayment of French debts to Britain and undermining the British policy of postponing a final reparations settlement until it could be linked to allied war debts in general. American administrations naturally did not view with favour European ideas for parallel reductions in both war debts and reparations.[57] Conflicts of interest between the democracies therefore prevented the détente acquiring new impetus from economic or financial cooperation.

Democratisation

Without a solution to the structural problem, uncertainty about German democracy became a critical weakness. Since the distribution of power among the participants did not guarantee compliance with the Pact, it was essential that confidence be maintained in other ways. Had Germany been a consolidated democracy committed to purely peaceful revision of the Versailles Treaty – that might have compensated for the structural imbalance. But the process of democratisation meant that Republican governments had to contend with elites displaced by the revolution and in denial about Germany's defeat in the First World War.[58] The Versailles Treaty gave them ample ammunition. Something like a third of the electorate consistently voted for right-wing nationalist parties even before the Nazis succeeded in capturing and extending that vote during the

[55] Fleury, *Le Plan Briand*; Wright, *Stresemann*, 483–486.
[56] Wurm, 'Internationale Kartelle', pp. 102–3.
[57] Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace*, pp. 378–408.
[58] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*, pp. 117–28.

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depression. The permanent threat to the Locarno policy from the German right made it harder for the French to make concessions. And because of French caution, the Locarno détente failed to deliver the results rapidly enough to popularise it within Germany and help to consolidate Weimar democracy. Democratisation fuelled nationalism which in turn limited the freedom of external powers to make concessions which in turn weakened democratic governments and helped to destabilise the system. The process of democratisation contained dangers in itself which were reinforced by the way they interacted with Germany's external relations. The special problem of democratisation for democratic peace theory is thus confirmed and extended by the Locarno example.

There was also a secondary process at work. As Mansfield and Snyder argue, as well as the problem of displaced elites trying to regain power by exploiting nationalist feelings, new elites may also use nationalism in self-defence and as a means of mobilising new allies.[59] A process of this kind can be seen in the Weimar Republic. Governments used foreign policy as a way of maintaining support from parties which were divided by their domestic agendas but agreed on the priority of revision of the Versailles Treaty. Foreign policy thus acted as a bridge which extended from the Social Democrats (SPD) on the left to the right of centre German People's Party (DVP) led by Stresemann.[60] That provided a majority for a consistent foreign policy even when the SPD was out of government from 1924 to 1928. However, this foreign policy was distinct from that of the right wing nationalists. It appealed to patriotism but it was a policy of peaceful revision of the Treaty. So long as the policy was seen to be successful, it became a means – contrary to the Mansfield and Snyder argument – of stabilising democracy as well as peace and it enjoyed majority support. That synergy, however, weakened as the policy appeared to be reaching the limits of what it could achieve even before the depression took hold. One of the essential partners in Republican government, the Catholic Centre Party, was already critical of what its spokesman called 'the undeniable failures and the undeniable stagnation of German foreign policy' in the Reichstag debates of 1928.[61] Stresemann was able to maintain the course until his death in October 1929 by emphasising the priority of securing agreements on reparations and Rhineland evacuation at the Hague Conference in 1929. Once that goal had been achieved, however, and as the electoral tide moved to the right under the impact of the depression, his policy became increasingly contested and the nationalism of the radical right began to set the agenda in the way in which Mansfield and Snyder suggest.

There is a further important consideration for the connection between democracy and peace. The First World War had ended in German defeat and revolution. Republican governments in the 1920s were committed to peaceful revision, partly from conviction after the enormity of the First World War, and partly because they knew that Germany was in no position to fight another war. However, beyond these two considerations, there was also the danger that another war would again polarise German society, ending in civil war and dictatorship whether of the right or the left. Either way democracy would be destroyed. The

[59] 'Democratization and the Danger of War', p. 303.
[60] Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924 bis 1930* (2nd edition, Berlin and Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Verlag, 1988), p. 250.
[61] Wright, *Stresemann*, p. 435.

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policy of peaceful revision became thus for Stresemann not only a requirement of Germany's external relations, nor only a way to manage coalition government; it was also in his view a condition for the survival of democracy itself. To a student audience in 1926 he argued that even a successful war, which was in any case impossible, would not bring stability: only an era of European peace would allow Germany to heal the wounds that the war had inflicted. He later predicted that the course adopted by the new extreme leader of the German National People's Party from 1928, Alfred Hugenberg, would lead to civil war.[62] The commitment to peace was on this view not simply a necessity imposed on Weimar Germany from outside but also a precondition of its most basic need for stability in the process of democratisation. This represents therefore an important counter-example to the idea that in new democracies leaders may adopt bellicose foreign policies to legitimise the domestic order.[63]

Epilogue

The way the Locarno détente ended is also of interest in assessing how far it corresponded to a democratic peace. The early death of Stresemann in October 1929 removed the politician who had done most in Germany to bring it about, a reminder of the roles of both agency and contingency in historical events. But even Stresemann in full health would have found his freedom of manoeuvre constrained by the growth of radical nationalism. The rise of the Nazi Party from 1930–1932 polarised the electorate between the Socialist-Communist and right-wing nationalist camps with only the Catholic Centre Party retaining a significant position between the two. The minority government of the Centre Party Chancellor, Heinrich Brüning, was still committed to peaceful revision. It adopted deflation as its economic strategy hoping to speed the cancellation of reparations and it also looked for other concessions including recognition of Germany's right to be treated equally in the League of Nations Disarmament Conference. It was not, however, prepared to respond positively to Briand's plan for European Union. Brüning spoke in cabinet of Germany's need for 'sufficient, natural living space' and his government promoted an alternative scheme for an Austro-German customs union.[64] That was an implied threat to Austria's status as an independent state, which had been laid down by the Versailles Treaty. As such it was a breach of the détente, an attempt to bring about a significant change in Europe without prior consultation with France or Britain. In fact, the proposal had to be abandoned as the price of international loans to stave off the banking crisis which engulfed

[62] Ibid., pp. 369, 441, 487–9.

[63] For a quantitative study of the linkage between democratisation and dispute escalation based on the Militarised Interstate Disputes data, see Paul D. Senese, 'Democracy and Maturity: Deciphering Conditional Effects on Levels of Dispute Intensity', *International Studies Quarterly*, 43 (1999), pp. 483–502. Interestingly, he finds that the effect of democracy 'is pacifying (and relatively greater in magnitude) among the population of disputes fought between less mature foes, compared to its aggravating effect among the population of disputes fought between more mature antagonists.' Ibid., p. 500.

[64] Knipping, *Deutschland, Frankreich und das Ende der Locarno-Ära*, pp. 84–9; Andreas Rödder, *Stresemanns Erbe: Julius Curtius und die deutsche Außenpolitik 1929–1931* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996), pp. 113–9, 186–222.

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Austria at the same time and spread to Germany. But it was evidence of a change of direction in German foreign policy towards unilateralism and away from the conventions of the democratic peace that had developed since Locarno.

That did not yet mean war. No one in cabinet and no responsible military leader thought that Germany was in a position to launch a war. However, in 1932 a new rearmament programme was adopted for a 21 division field army by 1938.[65] Its rationale was still defence on the eastern frontier but the possibility of using it for offence under favourable international conditions was not ruled out among military planners. German governments were still aware of their highly constrained options but there had been a subtle change from the policy of détente to a more competitive relationship. The values of the democratic peace were weakened by the perception that peaceful revision was no longer delivering results, by the depression which reinforced the view that Germany could not rely on the international economy but needed its own empire or 'living space' and by the electoral shift to the right with the Nazis and their Nationalist allies taking over 40 per cent of the vote in July 1932. Some 36 per cent continued to vote for the Communists or Social Democrats (though compared to the 1928 elections the Communists gained 4 per cent and the Social Democrats lost 8 per cent), and the Catholic vote remained steady at about 16 per cent. A majority therefore continued to reject the Nazi dominated right but neither democracy nor peace could be safe against 40 per cent of the electorate.[66]

The final act of the détente when Hitler ordered the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in direct violation of the Locarno Pact in March 1936 is also of interest. Hitler's action is a clear example of the violation of international law and the willingness to risk war which as democratic peace theory predicts are more likely to characterise dictatorships than democracies.[67] Mussolini, supposedly with Britain one of the guarantors of the Pact, sided with Germany, again confirming the theory. The reaction of the democracies, France and Belgium directly affected and Britain a guarantor, was weak, again supporting the idea that democracies may be in general war averse – not only towards other democracies.[68]

The specific influences on the democracies' decisions are also of interest for the theory. The failure of the Ruhr occupation in 1923 acted as a warning from recent history of the difficulty of maintaining an occupation of foreign territory. The French had already been developing a way of defending the frontier through the Maginot Line instead of the Rhineland occupation.[69] The British government had also been considering an alternative, namely allowing Germany to remilitarise the Rhineland in return for an agreement to limit German air power. When the crisis broke there was a strong feeling in Britain that public opinion would not support military action – in the words of the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden's taxi driver 'I suppose Jerry can do what he likes in his own back garden, can't he?'[70] Instead of enforcing the Locarno Pact the British Government decided to manage the crisis

[65] Wilhelm Deist, *The Wehrmacht and German Rearmament* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 12–16.
[66] For examples of public opinion as a force for war, see Elman, *Paths to Peace*, pp. 487–8.
[67] Lipson, *Reliable Partners*, p. 4.
[68] There is a detailed account in James Thomas Emmerson, *The Rhineland Crisis 7 March 1936. A Study in Mulilateral Diplomacy* (London: Temple Smith, 1977).
[69] Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in danger. General Maurice Gamelin and the politics of French defence, 1933–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 180–1.
[70] The Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs. Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 346.

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by taking up Hitler's spurious suggestions for alternatives to Locarno, including that Germany might rejoin the League of Nations (which it had left in October 1933 in protest against the failure of the Disarmament Conference to meet its demands).[71] The desire to maintain public confidence that peace would be preserved was stronger than the will to uphold the Pact. The French government was less persuaded of the utility of such an approach but it was a caretaker government awaiting elections; it was divided, unprepared to act alone and after some prevarication acquiesced in the British lead. The Belgian government also favoured a negotiated solution and looked to Britain to provide a lead; subsequently, after the ruling coalition had been unsettled by losses to extreme parties in elections in May, Belgium withdrew from its Locarno commitments to a policy of independence and neutrality.[72] In all the democracies the will to peace remained stronger than suspicion and dislike of the Hitler regime. Even in Germany where Hitler's coup was seen as a triumph that was partly because it was accomplished peacefully. There is good evidence that German public opinion too was divided and fearful at the prospect of war.[73] Responding to this mood at home and abroad, Hitler was careful to present himself as committed to peace. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the democracies turned from Locarno to appeasement, essentially an attempt to maintain the Locarno détente without Locarno, to maintain a democratic peace with a non-democratic regime.

Conclusion

What conclusions does this case study suggest? First any study of causation of democratic peace requires at the simplest level analysis of three elements: those internal to states, those external and their interaction.[74] The Locarno example is particularly interesting because of the mixture of stability and instability in all three elements: internal, external and necessarily therefore their interaction. Had the internal conditions been stable – had the German Republic as well as the French Republic been a consolidated democracy – it is possible that would have compensated for the unstable distribution of power between them.[75] Had the distribution of power been stable, it might have compensated for the instability of German democracy. With neither stable, a complex interaction followed which

[71] Philip Towle, 'Taming or Demonising an Aggressor: The British Debate on the End of Locarno', in Johnson (ed.), *Locarno Revisited*, pp. 178–98.
[72] David Owen Kieft, *Belgium's Return to Neutrality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
[73] Jonathan Wright, *Germany and the Origins of the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 70–2.
[74] As argued by William R. Thompson, 'Democracy and Peace: Putting the Cart before the Horse?', *International Organization*, 50 (1996), pp. 141–74. His example of the influence of external factors, notably the depression, in reversing the process of democratisation in Taisho Japan (ibid. pp. 164–70) offers obvious comparisons with Weimar Germany.
[75] The Third Republic also had its weaknesses including executive instability but the strength of the French Republican tradition gave democracy a safety net (until military defeat in 1940) which was lacking in the Weimar Republic. For comparative studies of the two democracies see Horst Möller and Manfred Kittel (eds), *Demokratie in Deutschland und Frankreich 1918–1933/40* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002) and Thomas Raithel, *Das schwierige Spiel des Parlamentarismus. Deutscher Reichstag und französische Chambre des Députés in den Inflationskrisen der 1920er Jahre* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005).

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ultimately ended in the failure of democracy and peace. However, the interaction also showed that during the 1920s common democratic institutions, values and the calculations of leaders did work in ways democratic peace theory would lead one to expect.

The French and Belgian decision to occupy the Ruhr in 1923 remains a significant problem for the theory. The occupiers were clearly willing to use force. Had Germany been able to offer military resistance, that might have resulted in war or, alternatively, France and Belgium might have been deterred. War would clearly have undermined democratic peace theory. Even deterrence would not have sat comfortably with it. Defenders of the theory would have to fall back on the argument that fear of war and therefore the rational calculations of leaders prevented it but this is a narrow basis on which to justify the theory. On the other hand, the failure of the Ruhr occupation does tend to confirm the theory – the lack of democratic legitimacy of the occupation undermined it and isolated the occupiers from their democratic allies of the first world war.

The learning process which took place after the Ruhr occupation and led to agreement on the Dawes Plan and the Locarno Pact also offers support for the theory. The difficulty here is to disentangle Realist considerations from democratic ones. The democracies defined their national interests in terms of democratic norms. Peace, stability and the needs of the international economy were all seen to require the consent of the major national units involved. To call the Locarno settlement a democratic peace is therefore bordering on tautology – it was a peace constructed by democracies. However, there are two perspectives which offer a degree of control on the theory. The first is Fascist Italy which clearly did not share the same values and whose attitude towards the Locarno process differed as a result from that of the democracies. The second is that there was recognition on all sides of the structural problem caused by Germany's potential to be a stronger power than France. That led to the British guarantee. The attempt to address the structural problem shows in itself the will of the democracies to find a common solution to a problem of power – thus paradoxically confirming the importance of common democratic values.

The Locarno détente was sustained by the shared assumptions of its major democratic leaders, their commitment to peace, their rejection of Soviet Communism and their adherence at least in principle to liberal capitalism and the expansion of international trade. The leaders also developed a degree of mutual solidarity in managing the inevitable problems which remained from the war – above all the gap between the French need for security and the German desire for revision of the Versailles Treaty. That problem was made worse by the incomplete democratisation of the Weimar Republic, keeping French fears of German nationalism alive and preventing the concessions which might have popularised Locarno in Germany and aided the consolidation of democracy. However, the structural problem also had a secondary effect, creating the opportunity for the democratic German parties to unite behind a foreign policy of peaceful revision – despite their divisions on internal politics – until the depression made these divisions unmanageable. As a result of the underlying strains, the Locarno détente remained limited. It did not gain wholehearted acceptance among the German or French electorates and, despite some promising initiatives, there was no sustained progress towards economic integration or financial co-operation (where the

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separate interests of the US and Britain also created obstacles). Nor did it extend to Eastern Europe where the unsolved problem of the Polish frontiers remained a real threat for the future. No elected German government could accept the frontiers and no Polish government was likely to agree to peaceful revision of them.

The end of the détente illustrates in an acute form the problem for democratic peace when peace is no longer the first priority of some 40 per cent of the electorate. The last democratic (though minority) government of the Weimar Republic continued to hope for negotiated solutions but had little room for manoeuvre and started to think in terms of a German sphere of interest rather than European cooperation. Once Hitler was appointed Chancellor and his position, together with his Nationalist allies, was confirmed – even if only by a bare majority and after violence and intimidation of opponents – in the election of March 1933, policy became preparation for war. However, there is another side to the story. The longing for peace that remained dominant in the democracies was also still present among the German electorate, nearly half of whom had rejected the Nazis. Hitler understood the importance of presenting himself as a peacemaker for both external and internal consumption. His propaganda at least until 1938 was carefully constructed to emphasise his commitment to peace, albeit a peace which gave Germany equal rights.[76] In this continuity from the Weimar Republic, even Hitler may be cited in evidence for the importance of the value of peace to democracies. Just as Stresemann understood that peace was necessary for the consolidation of democracy, so Hitler understood that war required first the destruction of democracy and the indoctrination of a new generation of Nazi warriors.

The value of the Locarno détente as a single historical case study is limited by its temporal context and it is also still the subject of divergent interpretations among historians. Its particular interest for democratic peace theory is that it cannot be explained (away) by both the French and German Republics being content with the status quo. Nor were they both consolidated democracies. Those conditions weakened the détente which always remained incomplete. The contrast with the post-Second World War period could hardly be more complete. There the Cold War distribution of power, the American commitment to the West European economy and, in time, West European defence, the growth of the institutions of European integration and the consolidation of West German democracy created all the conditions necessary for the remaining tensions between France and Germany, which were still present in the 1950s, to be overcome. The unstable situation of the 1920s, by contrast, enables one to see different processes at work, both those favourable and those threatening to peace and their interaction. This example suggests that democratic institutions are not by themselves sufficient for peace between democratic states. Competitive elections may produce majorities for peace or for war. However, democratic norms may still act as an important restraint by undermining the legitimacy of victory where it can be maintained only by force and by providing incentives for leaders to find peaceful solutions even in conditions of an unstable distribution of power and, in one case, unstable democracy.

[76] Wolfram Wette, 'Ideology, Propaganda, and Internal Politics as Preconditions of the War Policy of the Third Reich', in Wilhelm Deist, Manfred Messerschmidt, Hans-Erich Volkmann and Wolfram Wette, *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 1, *The Build-up of German Aggression* (Engl. edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 96–118.

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