Why democracies do not engage in wars with one another?

The democratic peace theory, is a peace theory of why democracies do not fight each other. It has first been statistically researched by Dean Babst (1964), and Melvin Small and David Singer (1976) who have found an absence of war between democratic states. Democratic states are not necessarily peaceful with other types of political systems (Bruce-Russet 1995). However, the peaceful relations or the absence of war between democratic states is based on empirical evidence, or as Levy (1988) states, empirical law of international relations, which has been proven by many scholars, whom I refer to some of in this review.

Many scholars have searched historical events of wars between democracies and have found no proof of its existence. There has been an absence of war between liberal states whether adjacent or not for over 200 hundred years (Michael Doyle 1997). In addition, Rudolph Rummel (1997) finds that between 1816 and 2005, 205 wars have occurred between non-democracies, 166 wars between democracies and non-democracies and no wars between democracies.

Now, I come to summarize the most important explanations of why democracies do not engage in war against one another. I will start with the seminal essay "Perpetual Peace" by Immanuel Kant (1795) as it is one of the basis of democratic peace work. Kant states that a world that consists of constitutional republic is one essential way of creating peace. This is because he believed that the majority of people within a republic would never vote to go to war unless it is for self-defense. He also claims that republics will not only not engage in war with each other, but are also more peaceful than any other form of government. However, some scholars would argue that democratic states are no less violent than any other type of government (James Burk 1998).

One possible explanation that has been addressed by several scholars of why democracies do not engage in war against one another is due to profitable exchanges. Michael Doyle (1983) claims that because democratic states respect each other's sovereignty, individuals within those states are free to build ties with one another without states interfering which creates what he calls "a web of mutual advantages" which in turn leads to "cooperative foundation of relations" between those liberal states (p.213).

Some scholars agree that there are restraints on democratic systems that make them more peaceful towards each other. Bruce Russet (1995) outlines four reasons of democratic peace; 1. After World war II, democracies "tended to be relatively few and far between" (Ch.2, P.26) and therefore distance between them prevents war; 2. Alliances create peace such as NATO and the western alliance system (p.27); 3. Wealth makes peace since most democratic states are wealthy and their economic interdependence forces them to not engage in wars; 4. Political stability of democratic states accounts for their low rate of conflict with other democracies (p.29). Also,
Maoz & Russet (1993) emphasize these two constraints using two models; Normative and structural, which I will summarize below.

The normative model looks at the effects of democratic norms of the domestic level on the international level. It suggests that democratic states do not fight each other because they will act with one another based on democratic norms. They hold the norms of equal competition, minority rights and consent to be governed (Bueno de Mesquita 2010) result in … Aggression is perceived as illegitimate to both minority and majority groups within democratic states, therefore this norm becomes codified in law. When disputes occur between two democratic states, their leaders will not fear each other as both are aware that the opposing party will externalize their internal norms in dealing with the dispute, and so they will engage in negotiations and peaceful settlements rather than war.

The structural model has two assumptions. First assumption is that political leaders should mobilize domestic support of their policies when facing international challenges. The second assumption is that mobilization of domestic support can only be accomplished when the situation is perceived as an emergency. These two assumptions elaborate the complexity of the democratic process' and the necessity of mobilizing domestic support, democratic leaders are reluctant to go into wars unless it is a necessity (p.626).

I now turn to the realist view on whether the question of why democracies never engage in war with one another holds true.

Some realists do agree that there is an absence of war between democratic states. However, they claim that the reason behind that is not because democracy is less violent than any other type of government. Other realists question the validity of the statistical evidence for the absence of war between democratic states.

Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995) claim that mature democracies do not engage in wars with one another, however the democratization of states can upraise nationalism and wars. They exemplify Serbia and Croatia, which found themselves fell into war as a result of democratization. They also state that there is statistical evidence that democratizing states are more likely to fight wars than are mature democracies or autocracies. Does this hold true for states that are in attempt to democratize today such as Libya?

Despite that some realists do agree with the positive relationship between democracy and peace, they claim it is only coincidental. Layne(1994) states that historical data shows that democracies have avoided war but whether they did so because of shared democratic norms remains a question. Layne claims that democracies have avoided these wars as a result of calculating their national interest.

Another critic of the democratic peace questions whether the statistics of democracies never fight wars with each other are valid. Spiro (1994) argues that the absence of wars between democracies for the past two centuries is not significant.
because wars among democracies are predicted by random. He states that the chance of any two states to go to war at a defined period is very low. In addition, he claims that because there are few democracies it is reasonable that democratic states have not been engaged in wars with one another.

I included the argument of Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (YEAR), and Layne (YEAR) as it explains certain issues in international politics today. Mansfield and Snyder’s claim that democratization can cause nationalism and wars holds true for the current situation in Libya. In the attempt of democratizing, many civil wars have occurred in Libya after the overthrow of the regime that support the argument of both scholars. In addition, Layne’s claim that the absence of wars between democracies is not a result of externalizing their domestic norms internationally may explain why democratic states such as France has not intervened in Syria as it did in Libya. This brings me to the question of whether democracies result in peace domestically and internationally or whether its promotion of peace at the international level varies if it clashes with national interest?

You could have made a much better last paragraph than this as it seems a bit obtuse.
Reference:


