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ELECTIVE GOVERNMENTS -- A FORCE FOR PEACE

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In 1961 Congress created the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. One of the goals assigned to it was to carry out research toward achieving a "better understanding of how the basic structure of a lasting peace may be established (1)." One approach to this problem is to inquire whether there are certain types of governments which do not make war against each other.

Purely impressionistically the hypothesis was formulated that these would be freely elected governments of independent countries, the borders of which are firmly established. This is based on the assumption that the general public does not want war, if it can choose. However, the possibility of choice requires independence and the existence of an elective government. The tendencies of such governments to work out international differences by means other than war would be most obvious in their dealings with other such governments.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a preliminary test of this hypothesis. This test was made by asking the question. "Have there been any wars fought between independent freely elected governments?" In order to make a systematic test, a search was made for a list of wars and the countries participating in them. One of the best enumerations was found in Quincy Wright's book *A Study of War* (2).

Wright and his associates listed all major wars fought since 1500. They define a major war as one important enough to involve over 50,000 troops or to cause the creation or extinction of states, territorial transfers, or changes in governments.

Using this list, each war was evaluated to determine if any freely elected independent government fought each other. In order to objectively compare governments of various areas for different periods, it was necessary to develop an operational definition of the type of government in which we are interested. The definition used is that a country's government will be considered as freely elected, for the year under consideration, when it has the following four characteristics:

1. Legislation and national finances are controlled by a legislature or parliament whose members are chosen by majority vote from at least two opposing choices, at regular intervals, by the electorate.
2. The administrative control of the government is by an executive chosen by majority vote by a parliament secured in the above manner, or by direct vote of the electorate, from two or more opposing candidates, at regular intervals. If an hereditary ruler, such as a king, can choose the prime minister or president, then the country is not considered to have an elective government unless the monarch's function is primarily ceremonial.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Hugo O. Engelman, John W. Mannering and Paul H. Kusuda for their critical review of an earlier version of the paper.

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3. There is a secret ballot and some freedom of speech and press; otherwise the opposing choices are not legitimate.
4. Since in a country that is not independent the population cannot exercise a relevant choice the country must be independent at the start of the war.

The question here is whether any wars occurred between governments meeting the preceding specifications. Quincy Wright's list of wars extends from 1480 to 1941, when his book was published. However, only the wars from 1789 to 1941 were analyzed. 1789 was selected as a starting point for this study, because it was this year the first elective government in our sense, that of the United State, began operating.

James Bryce, shows the recency of popular elective governments in human history (3).

"A century ago there was in the Old World only one tiny spot in which the working of democracy could be studied. A few of the ancient rural cantons of Switzerland had recovered their freedom after the fall of Napoleon, and were governing themselves as they had done from the earlier Middle Ages, but they were too small and their conditions too peculiar to furnish instruction to larger communities or throw much light on popular governments in general. Nowhere else in Europe did the people rule. Britain enjoyed far wider freedom than any part of the European Continent, but her local as well as central government was still oligarchic. When the American Republic began its national life with the framing and adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1787-89, the only materials which history furnished to its founders were those which the republics of antiquity had provided, so it was to these materials that both those founders and the men of the first French Revolution constantly recurred for examples to be followed or avoided."

From this shaky beginning, popular elected governments have grown greatly in number and size to become a world force. Despite two world wars and many lesser ones there has been a large growth in the number of elective governments, e. g. United States, Great Britain, Norway, West Germany, Finland, India, Canada, Ireland, Netherlands, Israel, Australia, Switzerland.

Quincy Wright and his associates list 116 major wars from 1789 to 1941 (date of publication), with 438 participating countries. An analysis of this list shows that no wars have been fought between independent nations with elective governments. Such nations have fought many wars against autocratic governments, and even some against their own colonies who wanted to become independent, but these nations have not waged war against each other.

Only the major wars can be considered in this paper. It is hoped that the testing of the hypothesis can be extended to the future. We should also find answers to these further, unresolved questions. For example, why have some of these elective governments occasionally fought a colony or area under their control which also had a freely elected government and was trying to become independent? This appears to be a serious weakness with elective governments but cannot be considered here.

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The first war that came close to being a war between independent nations with elective governments was the war of 1812. In this war the United States was independent and had an elective government. Great Britain had an elected parliament but the king still dictated the choice of the prime minister and had considerable power in the operation of the government. It was not until about 1832 that parliament choose the prime minister.

In the Civil War, starting in 1861, the Southern States had an elective government but were not independent. Rather they were fighting to become independent and establish their boundaries. The South African War starting in 1899, between Great Britain and South Africa was another war of this type.

In the nineteenth century the number of independent nations with freely elected governments was limited. Consequently, while there was the possibility of war between such governments the probability of such occurring at any one time was small. However, the fact that during the entire century no major war occurred between such nations lend support to our hypothesis.

Could the fact that there were no major wars between independent elective governments have occurred by chance? World Wars I and II provide an opportunity to make a more rigorous test of this possibility. These wars had more participants than any of the other wars listed by Wright.

In World War I 38 countries participated (Wright, Table 41). Five of these were not independent at the start of the war; India, Hejaz, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. This leaves the 33 independent nations shown in Table 1. Of these ten had elective governments as defined earlier.

Table 1
Independent Nations Which Participated in World War I

Allies and Associated Powers			Central Powers
Elective Governments	Non-Elective Governments		Non-Elective Governments
Australia	China	Montenegro	Austria-Hungary
Belgium	Costa Rica	Nicaragua	Bulgaria
Canada	Cuba	Panama	Germany
Great Britain	Greece	Portugal	Turkey
France	Guatemala	Rumania	
Italy	Haiti	Russia	
Brazil	Honduras	San Marino	
New Zealand	Japan	Serbia	
Union of South Africa	Liberia	Siam	
United States	Luxemburg		

Could the fact, that all of the independent elective governments were on the same side have occurred by chance? One way of statistical testing this relationship is in the following manner. Between the 33 independent nations there were $\frac{33!}{(33-2)! 2!}$ or 528 possible

ways they could have fought on another. There were 72 declarations of war between them. With this many war relationships the probability of war between any two nations was p equals $\frac{72}{528}$ equals .14.

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Between the 10 elective governments there were $\frac{10!}{(10-2)! 2!}$ or

45 different ways they could have fought one another. There were no wars declared between them. The proportion of wars fought to wars possible was p equals 0 equals 0 .

Using the test for the significance of the difference between proportions it was found that the difference between these proportions was statistically significant on the 1 percent level.

Another intriguing thing about World War I is that before Italy entered the war she was allied with the Central Powers. This meant that Italy, with an elective government at that time, was allied, against many other elective governments. However, before she entered the war public sentiment turned so strongly against the alliance that it was broken and eventually Italy entered the war on the side of other elective governments.

Germany and Austria-Hungary prior to World War I had governments with some elective features, however they could not be considered elective governments as specified in this study. Germany had an elective Reichstag but the Emperor, an hereditary ruler, had much authority such as choosing the chancellor. In Austria-Hungary the Emperor had considerable power and used it. Prior to the war he had parliament adjourned, and it remained muzzled for several years thereafter.

World War II provides another opportunity to test whether the lack of wars between independent nations with elective governments could have occurred by chance. The same procedure was followed as in the case of World War I. Fifty-two nations which participated in the war were independent on Sept 1, 1939, the date the invasion of Poland began. See Table 2. Of the 52 nations, 14 had elective governments in our sense. Between the 52 nations there were $\frac{52!}{(52-2)! 2!}$

or 1,326 possible ways they could have fought one another.

Table 2
Nations Which Were Independent on September 1, 1939,
And Which Participated in World War II

Allies		Axis Powers	
Nations With Elective Governments	Nations Without Elective Governments		
Australia	Argentina	Latvia	Bulgaria*
Belgium	Bolivia	Liberia	Finland*
Canada	Brazil	Lithuania	Germany
Chile	China	Luxenburg	Hungary*
Costa Rica	Columbia	Mexico	Italy
Denmark	Cuba	Nicaragua	Japan
France	Dominican Republic	Panama	Rumania
Great Britain	Ecuador	Paraguay	Siam*
Netherlands	El Salvador	Peru	
New Zealand	Estonia	Poland	
Norway	Greece	Russia	
Union of South Africa	Guatemala	Saudi Arabia	
Uruguay	Haiti	Tukey	
United States	Honduras	Venezula	
	Iran	Yugoslavia	

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*These members of the Axis Powers were first occupied by Germany and Japan and then used against the Allies.

Wright's book was published before the end of the war, therefore the source for the data on World War II are his book and the *Statesmen's Yearbooks* (4).

During the second World War there were 103 war relationships between the independent nations. The only war relationships counted were those that occurred before the nations lost their independence. A declaration of war, or an invasion of a country without a declaration of war, were counted as war relationship.

With this many war relationships the probability of war between any two nations was p equals $\frac{103}{1,326}$ equals .078.

Between the 14 elective nations involved there were $\frac{14!}{(14-2)! 2!}$

or 91 different ways they could have fought one another. Since there were no wars declared between them, the proportion of wars fought to that possible was p equals 0 equals 0. Again testing the difference

$\frac{105}{105}$ between these proportions, it was found to be statistically significant on the 1 percent level.

In World War II there was one nation with an elective government, Finland, which fought with the Axis Powers against the other elective governments. This situation provides a very interesting example of the desire for peace between nations with elective governments. Finland frequently expressed a desire not to fight the other nations with elective governments but she had lost her independence prior to December, 1941, when she entered the war.

After Hitler took Norway he insisted on the right to transport troops across Finland to face Russia. This was reluctantly granted. He then disregarded the terms of the transit agreement so that by June 1941 there were two German SS divisions with their entire military equipment moving about North Finland. During the war the Finns were left some independence of action since Hitler wanted their help in fighting Russia. However, an indication of how little this independence amounted to is given by the fact that the Germans were only removed after they had devastated much of Northern Finland in 1945.

No rigorous test of the wars from World War II to 1963 was made. This is another study in itself. However a general review of the main wars since 1941 appears to be consistent with the findings here reported.

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This study suggests that the existence of independent nations with elective governments greatly increases the chances for the maintenance of peace. What is important is the form of government, not national character. Many nations, such as England and France, fought wars against each other before they acquired freely elected governments, but have not done so since. The rapid increase in the number of elective governments since World War II is an encouraging sign. Diplomatic efforts at war prevention might well be directed toward further accelerating this growth.

References

- (1) *An Act To Establish A United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency*, Public Law 87-297, September 27, 1961.
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- (4) Steinberg, S. H. editor, *Statesman's Year-book*, New York, Saint Martin Press.