

**Dale C. Copeland**

**Economic Interdependence and War**

Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2014, 489 pp.

The relationship between economic interdependence and war is one of the titles that IR scholars have long been interested in. What Copeland in this book does is not just a review of this vast literature and theories, but also add a significant contribution into the existing literature both on theoretical and empirical fronts. Theoretically Copeland brings a theory of trade expectation to overcome the problems with liberal and realist views on the dynamic between economic interdependence and war.<sup>1</sup> In the literature, liberals tend to argue that economic interdependence eases the likelihood of war by increasing gains from trade. That is, the more trade interdependence, the less likelihood of war and conflicts. When it comes to realists, this dynamics works with the reversed order. In realist logic, states are more interested in continuation of access to materials and goods when they engage in trade with others. Therefore, in a realist world, higher interdependence increases the likelihood of war, rather than lowering it since interdependence generally means vulnerability and vulnerability in an anarchic international system facilitates as an incentive to initiate war. One of the achievements of Copeland's work is not just to show this contradictory and unsatisfactory nature of realist and liberalist view on the economic interdependence and war, but also he offers a new theory to resolve these problems: namely, theory of trade expectations. Theory of trade expectations is an amalgam of liberal (commercial ties give actors large incentive to avoid war) and realist (the risks of being cut-off anytime push state making war to secure vital goods) insights and based on a wide empirical data.

In this sense, it can be classified as a middle range theory.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the theory of future trade expectation hypotheses, by introducing the expectations of future trade as a new causal variable, that interdependence can foster peace if only expected future trade level is high (as liberals argue) or when expected future trade level is low interdependence leads war rather than peace (as realist foresee). Thus, the theory links "the realms of international political economy to the question of security-driven preventive wars"<sup>3</sup> by bridging the gap between liberal and realist insights. This innovative way of looking at the empirical data advances our understanding of the complex relationship between economic interdependence and likelihood of war.

The book consists of nine chapters yet, considering the relationships among them it can be divided roughly into three parts. In the first part including chapter 1 and 2, the author deals with theoretical and conceptual matters as well as methodological problems and insights. Here, he explains the existing approaches and their drawbacks, and how his new theory of future trade expectations fills the gap in this existing literature. Indeed, he provides one of the best literature reviews on the link between interdependence and war I have seen so far. He also brings insightful methodological discussions in this part. Moreover, in the methodological chapter (the third chapter) he provides one of the best literature reviews on large-N quantitative analysis in the study of interdependence and war. In the second part covering from the chapter 3 to 8, he deals with cases covering around 40 examples (the book chronologically covers great power conflicts between 1790- 1991). The main goal of the case studies is to test the logic of trade expectations theory directly against liberal and realist alternatives. The cases are indeed both interesting and detailed. The last part (chapter 9) is a wrap-up section where Copeland provides a discussion on the implications of the book's main argument. The practical implication, as he argues, can be the relationship between the USA and China. Overall, he predicts that optimistic economic expectations in both China and the US should outweigh the reasons for pessimistic expectation for years to come.<sup>4</sup>

Overall this book provides a systematic understanding of economic interdependence and war. I have two broad critics. First one is a practical (and may be respectful) as a reader: the



book is too hard to read with its single space, small font more than 450 pages. Sometimes discussion is vague and unnecessary with repeating and enduring rivalry of state Y and state X. Second critique is more conceptual. The level of analyses is problematic in Copeland's work. At the face value, it seems working at the systemic level by not giving particular attention to the culture, nature and content of the decision-making level. Yet, time-to-time he argues that leader's future trade expectations are key to understand trade security dilemmas.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, this landmark book makes bold arguments and parallel big achievements. On theoretical front, the book succeeds in presenting that as an amalgam of liberal and realist approaches, future trade expectation theory has a significant deductive and explanatory power.<sup>6</sup> On empirical front, the book is one of the best case studies that go in depth based on the diplomatic-historical evidence among the existing large-N quantitative empirical studies.<sup>7</sup>

**Hakan Mehmetcik**

Research Assistant

Marmara University, Turkey

[hakan.mehmetcik@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:hakan.mehmetcik@marmara.edu.tr)

1. For a detailed overview of the two school of thoughts see: John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (July 1, 1990): 5–56.
2. On Middle Range Theory see: Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1968 enlarged edition., Free Press, 1968.
3. Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014, 2.
4. *Ibid.*, 436–444.
5. *Ibid.*, 13–182–214.
6. *Ibid.*, 421.
7. *Ibid.*, 51.