



Do democracies promote peace in the lights of democratic peace theory?

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Abstract

It is believed that democracy and peace are inextricably linked, that democracy leads to and causes peace, and that peace cannot be achieved in the absence of democracy. It is an obvious but important starting-point to remember that democracy and peace are not timeless but historical social concepts. Indeed, war itself is a historical product as the negation of peace. Democracy is accepted as the only way for the peaceful world according to the Democratic Peace Theory, but to understand the democratic peace theory, it will be better to ask the question, “What is democracy”? Democratic peace theory’s main argument is that democracies do not fight each other, but “what kind democracies”? In this paper some important points of democracy and the democratic peace theory will be pointed out. This paper gives a perspective of the relationship of democracy and peace, and clarifies the question of “does democracy really promote peace”?

Key Words: Democracy, Peace, War.

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Introduction

It is believed that democracy and peace are inextricably linked, that democracy leads to and causes peace, and that peace cannot be achieved without democracy. The obvious but important starting-point is to remember democracy and peace are not timeless. Indeed, war itself is a historical product as the negation of peace. Although some seek to explain war as a product of instinctive aggression, it is organized violence presupposes socially controlled use, and points to the notion of war that originates in definite historical forms. Similarly, there is reason to suppose that war and democracy might be opposite's, though, war has always been compatible, historically, with forms of democratic relationships within one of the organized parties in war. Indeed the "Western way of war" is generally held to have originated in the same time and place as Western democracy as in classical Athens, where citizens were also warriors.

However, democracy with which we are concerned today is, of course, very different from that of Athens. It is taken for granted that democracy involves an open representative system based on elections. This is indeed the dominant model of the Western bloc of states, approximated in a number of other states worldwide, and rapidly becoming (since the end of the Cold War) the norm to which most states pay lip-service, the object of American, as well as, general Western policy throughout the world.

Democracy is accepted as the only way for the peaceful world according to the Democratic Peace Theory, but to understand the Democratic Peace Theory, it will be better to unpack and understand the question, "What is democracy"? The literature on democracy has many approaches to define democracy. Democratic Peace Theory explains the democracies do not fight each other, but the question is here that "what kind democracies?" This paper points out some important pillars of democracy and the Democratic Peace Theory. First, the definition of democracy is clarified in this paper. Second, the democratic peace theory's main argument democratic states do not fight is examined. Thirdly, democracies and democratic states democratization process of non-democratic states is reviewed, and finally it is examined whether or not democracy gets acceptance by non-democratic states. Overall, this paper gives a perspective of the relationship between democracy and peace, and clarifies the question of "Does democracy really promote peace"?

1-What is Democracy?

The basic definition of democracy, in common parlance, has come to mean simple majority rule. Almost a decade ago, the question of “what is democracy?” was seldom asked or debated. The main characteristics of Western Constitutional Systems – liberal constitutions, political parties, periodic elections, the rule of law and the presence of civic institutions free of government control – were assumed to be its essential features. Adopting the main features of democracy was meant as a democratic state. However, the mindset on democracy is changed as democracy is an ongoing process in which individuals and institutions interact in complex ways and with unforeseen and often unforeseeable consequences (Henze, 1998: 42). This ongoing process would have some different layers during the process. On some levels, the states could be at the beginning of the process while some others could reach the top level as Plato’s “Layers of regimes”. Plato argues that democracy (government by people) arises from oligarchy (government by wealthy) and goes on its way to tyranny (government by tyrant). He explains the ongoing process from democracy to tyranny (Ferrari, 2000: 256). According to Plato, freedom in democracy means anarchy in the end. People became vulnerable to aggression from the strong and need a protector. A protector emerges who in time becomes a tyrant, does not hesitate to shed blood and seizes upon the wealth of his subjects.

Societies have many priorities for their needs to be provided immediately even they are ruled under the name of democracy. For instance, Ethiopia’s experience in establishing democracy in the 1990’s was in enlightening for democrats, even though Ethiopia has not reached real democracy as Gardner’s definition. Gardner divides democracy in two branches: formal conceptions of democracy and real democracy. Formal conception of democracy is as it is explained in the books for its definition. Real democracy means dialogue, negotiation and engaging in forms of power-sharing. Real democracy represents a daily struggle that involves active engagement in both public and private spheres. Real democracy requires dialogue, oversight, transparency, and exchange of as many viewpoints as possible (Gardner, 2005: 161).

Democracy concepts derive from two schools of thought: the structural school and the contingency school. Civic culture, socio-economic development, political institutions and ethnic/national integrations are lead democracy for the structural school. On the other hand, the leaders’ hegemony is the main actor on democracy for the contingency school (Yavuz, 2005). Like Yavuz, Schweller offers the elements of democracy as scheduled

elections held periodically with free participation of opposition parties, at least ten percent of the adult population is able to vote for and a parliament that either controls or enjoys parity with the executive branch (Schweller, 1992: 240).

2-Democratic Peace Theory

Main argument of the Democratic Peace Theory is democracies do not fight each other. Immanuel Kant, the most forceful advocate of the democratic peace theory, a German philosopher, argues in his book *The Perpetual Peace* that the moral element helps the framework for peaceful relations between democratic states, which are based on the common principles of cooperation, mutual respect and understanding, nearly two centuries ago (Kant, 1917). More recently, many observers have followed in Kant's footsteps and regarded democratic governance as the "path to peace." Indeed, since the early 1980s, the idea of democracies do not wage war with one another is an empirical law in international relations.

The states balance with other states for their security in international relations, states. The USA tries to transfer liberalism to other states which could counterbalance the USA. America seeks transferring transnational liberalism as an ideology to the other states, such as the European states or European Union, India, Russia or China according to Owen (2001: 120). To some extent, they have different capabilities and powers to counterbalance. Owen points out that transnational liberalism as an ideology and refers to identity. He explains the political groups and identities as general view that everyone has an identity for his/her shared memory. In addition, transnational identities are not centralized, because of their interaction with others as the liberal ideology (Owen, 2001: 128). However, according to primordial nationalist perspective, interests shape identities. The roots of individual's ideology, interest and identity, linked and cannot be separated. The same ideological groups come together and behave for or against the states. Identity covers ideology, or ideology is located under the umbrella of identity.

According to Owen (2001: 135), political liberalism is the key factor to prevent counterbalancing. American politics achieve success in relating to Russia and China. Since the Cold War, Russia did not get any power to counterbalance the USA, and against China, the USA policy is mostly based on economic issues, because China gets its military technology from Russia. Even though China counterbalances against American liberal ideology, China cannot counterbalance against America because of its regional and domestic

weakness for many scholars. Even though China has a power of counterbalancing, needs American help to be a great power in the near future?

On the other hand, according to many literatures, the biggest threat for the USA will be China. Ted Galen Carpenter (2005: 119), vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, criticizes the USA's politics against China especially on the Taiwan issue. He argues that if the USA will not clarify its policies toward China, there could be a war between China and the USA in 2013.

America ought to maintain its primacy for a long as it can by promoting and preserving political liberalism abroad. For this approach, the last threat for the USA is Europe, because the democracy in the Europe is matured. According to Mansfield and Snyder (2002: 323), states undergoing democratizing processes are the most prone to be part of the war.

Hall Gardner (2005: 193), on the other hand, challenges this idea and argues that the conceptions of democracy are different from both America and Europe. He illustrates this difference by saying "clash of democracies", and mentions that America exports liberal democracy, while Europe advocates a conceptual model of democracy. For Gardner, there are different kinds of democracies such as consensual democracy, national democracy, liberal democracy, participatory democracy, and these differences cause problems among democracies.

Kenneth A. Schultz (1999: 234) takes one more step away from Owen's argument of transnational liberalism and argues that democracies in international relations are about the democratic institutions which affect behavior and outcome of international crisis. He focuses on democratic institutions and the institutional constrain argument suggests that democratic leaders generally face higher political costs for waging war than non-democratic leaders. The current administration may not be re-elected in future elections in democracies, if they decide to go to war. On the other hand, informational perspective suggests democratic governments are better able to reveal their real preferences in a crisis.

Schultz focuses on the democratic institutions which affect behavior and that's outcome is international crisis (Schultz, 1999: 240). Democracies have less leeway to engage in bluffing behavior, so when they take action, other states pay more attention. Schultz tested democratic institutions from two perspectives: informational perspective and institutional constraints perspective. The informational perspective is that the targets of the democratic states should be less likely to resist than targets of non-democratic states. From

the institutional constraints perspective, democratic states have harder time convincing their targets that they are serious, because democratic leaders face higher than average political costs for waging war; target states are more likely to resist their threats.

David Lake (1992: 25) stands on the same side as Schultz by saying democratic states are less prone to war than the autocratic states when they have power. Mansfield and Snyder (2002: 300) separate democratic states into two categories: democratic states or the states on the way to democratizing process.

Autocratic states earn rents at the expense of their societies, and they will possess an imperialist bias. They mostly tend to be more expansionist and more war-prone than democratic states. On the other hand, democratic states tend to be more constrained and wage wars of expansion under more restricted conditions than autocratic states do. Moreover, democratic states tend to create fewer economic distortions, possess greater national wealth, and devote greater absolute resources to national security. They also tend to enjoy greater social support for their policies. Democratic states balance threats rather than power and tend to form overwhelming counter coalitions against expansionist autocracies. Thus, democratic states should be more likely to win wars.

Schweller (2002: 242) explains the main argument of the democratic peace theory and says that no wars have been fought between democratic states since 1789. However, according to Lake's analysis, there are two major wars that have been fought by democratic states. Lake reviews thirty wars from 1846 to 1982, and in most cases, one participant in the war was a democratic state. In only in two cases did democratic states fight each other. The first one was the war between United States and Spain in 1898, and the other one was World War II. Finland, as a democratic state, fought against the other democratic states (Lake, 1992: 26). From Lake's point of view, the stable world could be established under the umbrella of the democratic states, but all the non-democratic states should be governed by democracy. Liberalism creates prosperity for democracies in their relations with non-democratic states. Owen's argument of transnational liberalism and Lake's expanding democracy argument have some similarities. However, Owen handles the issue from the viewpoint of counterbalancing states against the USA, while Lake approaches the issue from broader perspective. He does not think about unipolarity; his purpose is mostly creating a stable world that points out the states are going on one way road to democracy (Lake, 1992: 26).

Public opinion has an impact on the decision of war in democratic states. In other words, the public monitors the government in democratic states and they can punish the government in the elections if the government does not answer the people's demands. In addition, public opinion cannot understand the military and political truths most times, because their interests are different. The public want their security and welfare, and it can be impressed upon them when their security is under threat, so they can change their decisions. "Public opinion is only too ready to consider political relations and events in the lights of those of civil law and private persons generally... This shows a complete lack of understanding of political matters." (Schweller, 2002: 248).

Democratic peace theory underemphasizes, and most often neglects, the importance of other domestic factors such as political culture, degree of development, socio-economic and military considerations, the role of interest-groups and other domestic constituencies, and strategic culture in decision-making. In other words, it is easily the case that the "democratic peace theory" lacks sensitivity to context in the decision-making process.

3-Peaceful World for the Democratic Peace Theory

The democratic peace theory explains why democracies do not fight each other in two ways. The first explanation lies in the structural or institutional constraints (Russett, 1993: 155). According to this argument, democracies keep mutual peace because of the constitutional checks and balances that do not give more opportunities to the decision makers and the whole complex structure of democratic civil society. The institutional constraints on a leader's actions signify that the decision-makers are likely to face high political costs for using force (Mesquita and Lalman, 1992: 752). Moreover, democratically elected leaders are unable to act quickly and this cautious foreign policy behavior reduces the likelihood that a conflict will escalate to war. The second explanation of why democracies are considered more peaceful is related to the understanding that democracies share cultural/democratic norms among themselves. According to this argument, democratic political culture encourages peaceful means of internal conflict resolution, which "come to apply across national boundaries toward other democratic states" (Russett, 1993: 155). The decision-makers are in the habit of expecting that their actions could be reciprocated by the other democratic states. The cultural/democratic norms argument is considered as more robust and explanatory than the institutional/structural explanations since the latter is silent on the issue of democratic public's willingness to fight wars against non-democracies, while some

scholars argue that the normative and institutional arguments are not mutually exclusive; they work in "tandem" (Owen, 1994: 92).

In the democracy and peace relationship, the dominance is given to democracy to push the states to peace. However, Thompson (1996: 142) points out that this relationship from a different view. Democracy produces peace by claiming that it is peace that produces democracy. On the other hand, democratic peace theorists do not give explicit claims about the non-democratic states' war and/or peace of the constraints on the authoritarian leaders (Hagan, 1994: 201).

More seriously, however, democratic peace theory cannot adequately account for the tendency towards war in democratizing countries, especially after the end of the Cold War. As it has been demonstrated many times since the late 1980s, democratizing states are most often very volatile and dangerous and thus more inclined to fight wars than are mature democracies or stable autocracies (Mansfield and Snyder, 2002: 308). The rocky transitional period of democratization may make countries more aggressive and war-prone due to not only domestic competition but also utilization of nationalistic feelings by political leadership and mass public support for aggression (Owen, 2001: 122). If the democratic peace theory would want to make their cases more persuasive, then those scholars should be more attentive to what is going on in newly democratizing states and modify, not necessarily change, some of their propositions.

After the Cold War, the world power structure changed from a bipolar world to a unipolar world, the USA as a great power. The decision makers in the USA drew a new policy to America which focused on democratizing non-democratic states to build more peaceful world. The democratization process began with the market economy, because of the strong relation between trading states, democracy and peace. Every individual aspect of this triangle affects the others, and the USA firstly entered the markets in the states. A free market produces the middle class and the middle class pushes the regime changes in the states.

Market economy handles the big pie during the democratization process. America realized this fact in the early 1940s and sought to ensure that the postwar market-place in Europe would be friendly (LaFeber, 2004: 11). The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established as institutions of the market economy. These institution's main aims were to rebuild Europe after World War II. The World Bank is not a bank in the common sense and it is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing

countries around the world (World Bank, 2006). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was also established nearly for the same purpose as the World Bank: “to promote international monetary cooperation, exchange stability, and orderly exchange arrangements; to foster economic growth and high levels of employment; and to provide temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance of payments adjustment” (IMF, 2006).

The World Bank and IMF help developing countries for passing their democratization processes faster, but according to Edward Epstein (2006), in reality these institutions do not help the states for their development; they make the states which got help from them more dependable in economic issues to the great powers especially to the USA. Some Asian states realized this fact and did not get fund from either IMF or the World Bank. They built up their economies better and they are now counterbalancing the USA on economic issues (Epstein, 2006).

Democratizing processes needs to pass through the market economy which means IMF and the World Bank for the states. As Epstein mentions, even though these institutions provide benefits to the great powers, democratizing process take a longer time. What can happen if this process takes a long time? Demanding a peaceful world takes a long time and there could be more wars in the world, because democratizing the states does not eliminate the war possibilities. The democratizing states are seen as the targets for the other states because of their weaknesses during the democratizing process. The states in the initial stages of democratization are especially prone to become involved in wars. Political or military weakness of democratizing states is the main reason for their war involvement.

4-Declining Democracy

Mihajlov (2005: 244) importantly distinguishes America from the other states for its multinational structure as the most important value of freedom for Americans. The United States founded by people valued individual freedom more highly than their country. Huntington argues that America needs to draw a distinction between its ideals such as liberty, democracy and the real values such as identity, history and political culture (Huntington, 2005: 245).

Western democratic states' understanding war are different from the other states. The Europeans, in general, have been reluctant to threaten to use force. By contrast, the USA has tended to take a unilateral military approach to a number of crises rather than let diplomacy take its course. For example, after 9/11, Americans have seen themselves in a “war on

terrorism,” while the Europeans see themselves in a “fight against terrorism.” This indicates significant differences in how to define the “enemy” and which strategy and tactics to utilize (Gardner, 2005: 195).

The non-democratic states in the World understand the difference between promised democracy and real democracy which have problems and distinctions inside. A democratic system depends on a body of bright, motivated individuals wishing to become political representatives and aspiring to govern, but these factors in the democratic systems have begun to decline (Barnett, 2002). Democracy started to lose efficiency that pushed people to either renewed democracy or find other solutions, because the basic argument of the Democratic Peace Theory started to lose its reliability. Democracy needs to be renewed and it can be in two conditions for Hirst (2002). First, the burden placed on representative institutions by complex public service states must be reduced. Second, the role of non-state institutions in promoting the habits of association and participation must be promoted. However, renewing democracy is not easy but in some senses necessary because of the current situation of the states especially in the South American states. In Latin America, people do not prefer democracy. The preference of democracy was 61 percent in 1996, and the ratio declined to 56 percent in 2002 (Lagos, 2003: 170). This research shows that the term of democracy and people’s expectations from democracy are getting to change that needs to re-evaluate and modified democracy.

Conclusion

Democracy is a system that could be discussed in its providing benefits to the people for their welfare and happiness. It has different variations which were developed during its improvement period: social democracy, liberal democracy or radical democracy. So, why not have another democracy to provide a peaceful world to everybody? As it is seen in the example of Latin America, the people are compatible with the regimes which corresponds their needs. The name and/or position does not important, its function has the most importance.

Democracy and peace is more of a historic promise, which is realized through global movements and institutions, than a settled pattern which can be identified with established democratic nation-states and their inter-relations. Democracy has been implicated too often in war, violence and even genocide in last two decades. Overcoming this legacy, rather than complacently affirming the superiority of Western democratic states, is the real challenge.

Democracy has been losing its credibility and trustfulness among non-democratic states and at this point the democratic peace theory also needs to be re-evaluated. The fact that, people in the World either from democratic states or non-democratic states want to live in a peaceful World. The main problems occurs from the understanding of the way going through to build a peaceful world that democratic states claim the only way is ensure democracy to non-democratic states. On the other hand, non-democratic states also wants to establish a peaceful world but they have many concerns whether democracy promotes peace or not with its interpretation.

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