

Democratic peace thesis sample

[Experience](#), [Peace](#)



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Introduction

This paper seeks to show, as Owen (1994) believes, that peaceful regimes based on a liberalist democracy are more likely to secure and maintain a condition of “ democratic peace” than regimes that are neither liberal nor democratic. However, as reported by Kahneman and Renshon (2007), even liberalist decision-makers have to be wary of advice offered by hawkish advisors, because the human mind has a natural bias towards the more aggressive solutions and to be unrealistically optimistic about the consequences of such decisions.

How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace:

Owen (1994) reviews and supports the concept of “ democratic peace” – the idea that wars between democratic nations are unlikely and therefore rare. He quotes former President Clinton as having stated that “ Democracies don’t attack each other,” and that America’s best policy to maintain peace and security is to foster the growth of democracy in other nations. However, Owen concedes that because wars are comparatively rare, it is not surprising

that few wars occur between democratic regimes. He nonetheless defends the idea of democratic peace, notwithstanding that neither its causes nor its genuineness have yet been determined. In Owen's view, " liberal ideas cause liberal democracies to tend away from war with one another," while being the trigger for war with non-liberal regimes. His theory defines a " liberal democracy" as one where liberalism dominates and its citizens can influence war decisions, government officials are freely elected and free speech is a fundamental feature of its society and culture. He also believes that a liberal government engenders good relations with other democratic states.

He notes that democratic peace theories are typically categorized as either " structural" or " normative." Whilst the former attribute the causes as the constraints of the democratic institutions, the normative theory relates to the ideological " norms" of those democracies, such as the belief that warring with one another would be " unjust or imprudent." However, according to Owen, neither theory has been conclusively proven. In fact, he reports that his studies have indicated that a democratic regime could in certain circumstances be almost as likely to promote war as to refrain from it. He realizes that democratic peace is a genuine phenomenon, but needs explaining better. He also avers that liberal states are more unlikely to want to wage a war with other states perceived as liberal. Owen then cites and reviews four of twelve specific cases he has studied in order to illustrate his views (though not specifically to test their validity).

Concluding his article, Owen reiterated his thesis of democratic peace, even though no infallible proof of it has yet been found or offered. However, he accepts that " power politics" affects foreign policy, and that if for example a

liberally-oriented regime fails to bring prosperity, the idea of a war is more likely to overcome the basic liberalism of the state. Also, he notes that if liberalism appears to threaten fundamental beliefs (e. g. in the case of Islam) that peace could be threatened. In other words, liberalism is yet to be proven to be the long term answer.

Why Hawks Win

Kahneman and Renshon (2007), attempt to explain why the hawks – those who favor the use of force and are less inclined to negotiate compromise solutions to disputes – more often seem to have success in influencing their leaders than the doves – those who are reluctant to seek military solutions and generally favour solutions reached through political means. They suggest that psychology indicates that those who make policies are naturally disposed towards believing the arguments propounded by the hawks – that the tendency is a fundamental part of the human mind. These same tendencies can be seen in other ways; for example eight out of ten people their driving skills. In relation to politics, that same mental bias is likely to encourage leaders to take an unrealistically positive view of the outcome of a possible war, which could ultimately be disastrous. The authors suggest that “ Hawkish advisors are not necessarily wrong, but they are likely to be more persuasive than they deserve to be.” They note that in a confrontational situation, whilst someone is likely to attribute apparent hostility on the part of the representatives of the other side as a natural feature of their character, they will justify their own hostile response as due to being “ pushed into a corner” and otherwise not being fundamentally hostile. An example of how this can affect international relations is given by

Kahneman and Renshon as the Korean War in the mid twentieth century. The Chinese intervention was in response to their perception of being threatened by the U. S. advance, whereas the U. S. regime had been convinced that the Chinese would see no threat whatsoever in the American actions.

Conclusions

Owen's theories about democratic peace are convincing and from his own studies he is satisfied that democratic peace is likely to decrease the risk of wars, though he concedes that " power politics" can affect the situation. The article by Kahneman and Renshon confirms that due to the natural human bias to favour more aggressive solutions, coupled with an equal bias towards unrealistic optimism, our leaders can be unduly influenced by hawkish advisors, which can overcome the fundamental liberalist ideology of the regime. If therefore the desirable democratic peace is to be maintained, those decision-makers have to weigh the advice of the hawks carefully, in order to give the viewpoint of the doves their rightful consideration.

Works Cited:

Kahneman, D., & Renshon, J. " Why Hawks Win." Foreign Policy, No. 158 (Jan. - Feb., 2007), pp. 34-38. Published by: Washingtonpost. Newsweek Interactive, LLC. 1 May 2013.

Owen, J., M. " How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." (1994). International Security, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 87-125. Published by: The MIT Press. 1 May 2013.