

Free the liberal states and the democratic peace theory a critical review essay s...

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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

In most discussions in International Affairs, it is common for analysts to blame the cause of war on “ bad” and “ aggressive” states. These are typically, nations that are either totalitarian in outlook or ruled by a dictator who declares war without much sensitivity to the implications of the war on the broader group of stakeholders. Therefore, the central theme of preventing wars in the world is to create a family of nations that are democratic and this is seen by many as the only way of preventing all out wars and promoting peace in these countries. This is to create a set of liberal states that do not go to war with one another, but work to in an atmosphere of peace and democracy to promote the best interest of the citizens.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the idea of liberal states and the democratic peace theory in resolving conflicts and promoting law and order in the international community. The paper will critically evaluate the features of liberal states and how they work to promote peace and resolve conflicts in order to enhance growth and prosperity in society.

The Democratic Peace Theory

The central theme of this theory is that a liberal state does not naturally go to war so easily. This is because liberal states are ran by consensual decisions and consensual choices. Therefore, each member of the society plays a proactive role in shaping the way and manner decisions are taken and choices are made for the citizens and people. Rather, the citizens make a series of rational choices that form the crux and the basis for policy formulation and policy implementation. Therefore, decisions are made by the

identification of clear goals, calculation of costs and the choice of the best option with the best results. This implies that instead of the old model whereby leaders made choices of going to war with foreign nations, liberal states can only go to war after the citizens have evaluated the facts and implications before making the choice. This is described by Kant as the democratic-pacific union.

Therefore, in Immanuel Kant's view of perpetual peace, democratic states are more likely to be hesitant in embarking on the expensive enterprise of war. This is because they will always remember the miseries and suffering of war which comes with the choice to fight a war, rather than utilise peaceful means to resolve conflicts and disagreements with other states.

Institutional Thesis

This argument posits that due to the fact that power is spread to different authorities in democracies, there is a general situation where proper checks and balances are in place and this means that no single individual can override any of the authorities. Mention can be made of people like King Louis XIV, Josef Stalin and Saddam Hussein who had unlimited and unfettered powers. These leaders carried out their leadership roles and positions with so much impunity that they were able to do whatever they deemed fit and declare war and enlist soldiers against their consent. This is because the institutions existed to serve the interest of these leaders and not the real interest of the people.

In a democratic system, a liberal state on the other hand has institutions that evenly control power and authority throughout the country. This provides

checks and balances that limits the authority of the sovereign leader. Hence, the institutions with sufficiently high power can stand up against the demands of a leader and limit the demands in relation to entering wars and forcing people to fight in those wars. Therefore, war can only be fought if the authorities get sufficient public support from all institutions and stakeholders in the society. Failure to get the support of the public leads to audience costs which are related to the implication of members of the society who do not support a given war their country is being made to fight within.

Political-Cultural Thesis

Although liberal states seem to have the democratic structures that prevent the misuse and abuse of power in waging war, there is still the chance that a liberal state can enter a senseless war. This is because people like Wilson Woodrow argued that a country like Germany was a civilized democracy and a liberal democracy. However, the checks and balances were overridden and Germany entered a war that was not very logical in the early 20th Century which caused President Woodrow to change his mind about Germany being a liberal state. Most Americans are also of the view that America and its liberal tradition was overruled by President George W. Bush who entered a war that most Americans did not support.

Hence, the political cultural thesis posits that political and cultural norms that promote peaceful resolution of conflicts is the main reason why democracies are more hesitant in waging war and starting armed conflicts. This is because in a democracy, there is the need to preserve a strong diplomatic system that utilises alternative approaches to dealing with

international issues and matters. This ensures that there is perpetual peace and citizens of the country are more likely to resolve their disagreements with negotiations rather than the use of aggressive methods. This implies that there will always be peaceful, rather than violent means of dealing with conflicts and disagreements.

The implication is that state structures are made to become more functional and competent in a liberal nation so that its government can use these structures to deal with international pressures. The aggregation of state structures imply that the international community will be ordered in such a way and manner that external pressures and elements of the international community will be dealt with through the forces of demand and supply and a laissez faire system will guarantee that issues will be handled and nations will not have an urgent need to form war alliances that will lead to destruction.

This new system of state structure is in contrast with the 19th Century systems when power in European nations were concentrated on a few governmental authorities – mainly the central government. The central governments were complemented by a group of individual elites and oligarchs who had nothing but their interests to guide. And as long as these interest groups in the aristocracy were met, the central government was safe and shielded from international pressure. This gave room for these central governments to seek to form external alliances that could protect them in international commerce and in security and defence. The masses were mainly non-privileged persons who were enslaved by a form of nationalism that required them to sacrifice and toil for the aristocracy in power to enjoy

all the benefits. This kind of situation laid the foundation for the various forms of Detente and the arms race that led to the First World War. Failure to really correct this situation caused discontent amongst the nations after the Great War (as it was then known) and this culminated in the Second World War. However, after the state structure system was introduced and a rapid democratisation of the nations of the world came in place, the need to form security pacts that overtly sought wars was reduced and more nations concentrated more on their citizens' interests, rather than the interests of the ruling elite.

National Interest & Realism

In spite of these theories, it can be noted that there is still the national interest of nations, no matter how liberal it might be. This is because most nations seek influence and power, particularly in international political affairs. Hence, there is a view embedded in realism that identifies that nations and states are likely to pursue their interests and desires abroad in order to achieve their national policies and desires. This might require that liberal democratic nations utilize some form of violence and some form of armed intervention in order to gain the power and authority they need. Therefore, the democratic peace theory and the liberal democracy theory does not necessarily guarantee that a democratic and liberal nation will never go to war again. Rather, there are some international interests and desires that might cause an artificial situation and a desire to be put in place to attack foreign interests and use force and war in order to achieve some ends that might be considered important and vital at a given point in time.

This is because seeking a foreign policy end and the achievement of the best interests of the citizens of a country is the main end that governments are to achieve within the context of international interaction. This gives credence to the idea of realism which implies that a nation will have to pursue its interests overseas and seek to survive.

Hence, it can be said that the democratic peace theory and liberalism cannot exist in its ideal forms when the realistic desires and fundamental aims of a nation is at risk. In other words, when a country is faced with a major situation that requires that it acts in order to achieve some of the fundamental goals of the government, there is the need for the state to do what is necessary, irrespective of the consequences. Therefore, in the case where the government of a nation is at risk of not achieving its fundamental obligation, it might have to take part in a foreign military intervention and this could mean the utilization of war as a necessary means of protecting national interest. A textbook example of this case was when the United States led a coalition to invade Afghanistan in 2003 because it was apparent that US lives and the lives of other people will always be in danger if nothing is done to eliminate radical militant Islamists from Afghanistan and institute democracy.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, the liberal states and democratic peace theory is based on three main assumptions. First of all, democratic states do not go to war, because they get to analyze and critique the costs through rational methods. Secondly, democratic states do not start wars because all members of the

state play a role in deciding whether to participate in a given war or not.

Therefore, the people are less likely to vote for war, as those who will enlist and shoot and die will not really want to fight, but use alternative means like diplomacy. Finally, a democratic country will not normally go to war with a democratic country. Therefore, this liberal ideal posits that all nations should participate in the creation of democratic and liberal states and if this is achieved, nations will not have to go to war.

However, this position is considered to be idealistic when the realism school of international relation thought is brought to the fore. This is because realism indicates that nations are ran by governments and a government will have to be proactive and do what is necessary at any given point in time. And in this situation, a state will have to go to war, if it is the only option.

Bibliography

Brouwer, M., 2012. Organizations, Individualism and Economic Theory.

London: Routledge.

D'Anieri, P., 2011. International Politics: Power and Purpose in Global Affairs.

Mason, OH: Cengage.

Ikenberry, G. J., 2011. Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism after America. *Foreign Affairs Journal*, 90(1), pp. 56-79.

Jackson, R. H., Jackson, R. & Sørensen, G., 2012. Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jones, B. J., Jones, P. & Dark, K., 2014. Introduction to International Relations. 3rd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Posen, B. R. & Ross, A. L., 2012. Competing Vision for US Grand Strategy.

International Security, 21(3), pp. 5-53.

Shimko, K., 2014. International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies and Readings. 4th ed. Mason, OH: Cengage.

Suleiman, E. N., 2012. Dismantling Democratic States. Princeton: Princeton University Press.