

# Example of liberal peace (proposal) essay

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There seems to be a consensus among scientist in regards to liberal democracies and the peace they seem to bring to the world. Many would say that this liberal peace is just a transitory state of things, and the perpetual peace is just an idealist fantasy. Others would hold that there have been liberal countries that go to war with each other, or that have a warlike attitude towards illiberal countries, casting doubt about their peacefulness. International Relations Professor Michael Doyle finds that the problem resides on how liberalism is conceived in the first place. This work will first find a definition of liberalism. It will secondly review the three kinds of liberalism, the Machiavellian, the Kantian and the Schumpeterian conceptions, to see if they offer plausible explicative models for today's international environment. Lastly, it will discuss the most common realist arguments against liberal peace formulated by realists and Doyle's counterarguments. The aim of this work is to discover if the current relative peace found in today's world is owed to liberalism or if political realism is still the dominant force in international relations.

## **Liberalism Defined**

Liberalism is firstly a doctrine that comes from a tradition that seeks to limit the government action through the use of institutional instruments. Liberals tend to defend the rights of the individuals by and against any kind of government, which include freedom, property and access to markets. Liberal assumes that people's best interest is self-preservation, so the main goal of a political system is to foster economic freedom as a precondition for peace. Liberal democracies are, of course, those states guided by liberal principles and institutions and where people have a significant leverage over policy,

especially war decisions. The mentioned elements are, of course, not present at all times in all liberal societies, but at least they serve as a frame of reference to see if a country at war is really liberal or not.

Liberal thought can also be found in international relations. There have been three different classic philosophical approaches to international liberalism that have dominated political science during the last two centuries. These conceptions of liberalism among nations have each tried to explain if it, as a doctrine, is itself capable of bringing the global peace it claims to pursue.

## **Machiavellian Imperialism**

### Schumpeter's Liberal Pacifism

As summed up by Doyle, Schumpeter's view is that imperialism recedes as capitalism becomes a major political force. People are rationalized and democratized by capitalism, and imperialism, which is a mere atavism, a vestige of old imperial monarchies, tends to disappear. This argument sounds believable since economic integration has apparently eliminated the incentives for conflict among the European Union, the ASEAN Community, and the Pacific Alliance countries in recent times. Democracy and freedom have improved in each of their members, and their members seem to be less prone to resolve disputes through violence, so it does not seem likely that they will go to war with each other any time soon.

## **Kant and the Perpetual Peace**

The argument followed by Kant is that the perpetual liberal international peace will come once three definitive articles are accepted by all states. The first one is the necessity of the constitution of a Republic in order to have

peace . This requires the existence of features that are now taken for granted in modern democratic states, such as the respect of private property, the separation of powers and the rule of law . The acceptance of the second definitive article requires the constitution of a federation of states to guarantee peace . And the third definite article requires the establishment of a cosmopolitan law that forces states to treat foreigners with respect and let them trade without discrimination . Most of the new supranational institutions that promote economic integration require that member states accept principles that are not different to what Kant proposes. In continental America, there have been two kinds of economic federations. Mercosur was founded under liberal intentions but the federative efforts stagnated as the governments of its members became more illiberal, advancing aggressive agendas and threatening other countries ruled by more liberal governments. On the other hand, the Pacific Alliance, an organization formed by four Latin American countries, is following a more pragmatic economic integration model. Its success has drawn the attention of other economically developed nations and could strengthen the relations with their Asian counterparts, making it very unlikely that a conflict among member states arises. Realists, on the other hand, might hold that peace, or war, do not depend on institutions or governments or even the fact that societies share liberal ideals. The actual equilibrium of the world would depend on the system itself and the actions and desires of states . The structural or systemic nature of the international political system depends on what states need as they are the only political units and act primarily to ensure their own survival . These assumptions are reinforced by the fact that all states engage in wars with

other states at some point, so it is only logical that the internal political regimes are overridden by the urgencies imposed by the international environment . This Hobbesian state of affairs described by realists, impose a cruel reality on states that might only be at peace through competent diplomacy, but are always at the brink of war for resources . But this view does not differentiate between monarchic, polyarchic and parliamentary governments as each greatly affect the quantity of resources available for a country thus modifying the incentives for war .

Realists also try to explain peace in terms of dominant forces. For example, peace is imposed by three forms of dominance: Empire, hegemony and equilibrium. According to this view, world peace today can only be explained by any of the three interstate peace impositions. However, imperialism is not compatible with liberalism, so it does not account for the peace found among independent liberal states, especially in today´s globalized world. Hegemony cannot explain the inaction of Britain when its interests were threatened during the nineteenth century, or when the United States lost control over sources of oil in South America during the last decade, even while having sufficient firepower to prevent all challenges to their power . Equilibrium assumptions have the same shortcomings as hegemony ones and, while they try to explain why superpowers do not attack each other, they do not offer explanation for non-superpower countries at peace.

Finally, realists try to explain the liberal peace affirming that liberal countries have fewer conflicts of interests with each other. However, they do not offer any explanation to the fact that illiberal states do clash against each other, raising the question of why don´t they have fewer conflict of interests even

when they share illiberal positions.

Doyle makes an effective job at countering the realist arguments, but it seems he could have addressed some other obvious weaknesses in their premises. For instance, he could have questioned the reification of the State made by realists when they assume states are self-regarding and have motivations, overlooking the fact that governments are made of people who might or might not agree with the rest of the society. One other debatable assumption made by realists is that states are the primary units in the international system, but that would contradict the fact that transnational entities are now international actors without being considered States. Doyle could also have written more about how liberal societies constrain their government from attacking states they perceive as liberal, while maybe putting pressure to make war with illiberal governments. The roles played by the dominant ideology and the democratic structures in a society should be included in the analysis made by realists. Nonetheless, Doyle's defense of liberalism helped see how the perpetual peace proposed by Kant serves as a condition for the capitalism to flourish and gradually abolish imperialism, as predicted by Schumpeter.

## **Bibliography**

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