The democratic peace theory: Validity in relation to the European Union and 'Peaceful' cooperation between United States and China

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According to the democratic peace theory, democratic states are less likely to go to war with other democratic states. Consequently, the ultimate goal of the theory is to create a world of democracies, that is, a world without war. However, from the realist perspective in some cases democracies go to war with other democracies to influence their power. This paper will critically analyze the validity of democratic peace theory in its assumption that democracies rarely fight each other, by providing the example of the establishment of the European Union, in which democracies are co-operating with each other to achieve their common good. The paper is divided into three parts; the first one will provide an explanation of the Peace Democratic theory and its main assumptions. The second one will evaluate to what extent these assumptions are practical ones through the application of the case studies. Then a counter-argument for one of its assumption will be included questioning the core claim of the democratic peace theory from the commercial peace theory perspective.

Key words: Democracy, peace theory, war, co-operation.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of international relations, democracy widely asserts its moral and political authority. Legitimacy of democracy and its moral authority are usually defended because of the democratic inherent virtues, which include respect of human rights and freedoms, self-government, accountability, the rule of law and transparency. The democratic peace theory, which is rooted in Immanuel Kant's writings, addressed the nature of democratic regimes in the international context. The democratic peace theory, main assumption stated that democratic countries are peaceful ones that rarely and less likely to wage wars against each other (Baylis and Smith, 2001). Through this assumption, they challenged the realist assumption, which argue that democratic peace depends on other factors rather than the regime type. According to the democratic peace adherents, more democratic countries...
in the world politics, means a more peaceful world (Patapan, 2012). On the other hand, the democratic peace theory argued that war against non-democratic countries is a necessity to promote democracy, consequently spreading peace in the international arena. This paper will critically analyze the validity of democratic peace theory in its assumption that democracies rarely fight each other, by providing the example of the establishment of the European Union, in which democracies are co-operating with each other to achieve their common good. However, democracies do not fight all non-democratic states but only the weak ones and they do not engage in any war without being sure from winning it. Peace can also be achieved between democratic and nondemocratic states, however the great differences among these states. In this case peace does not depend on sharing the same democratic values and practices; it depends on the trade and the relations among these states in a manner that benefit both. Depending on the commercial peace theory, this will be proved by the American-Chinese relationship. Although China has never been a democratic country it maintained commercial and trade relationships with the democratic United States. The export and import movements among both countries include different goods and services, that vary from; raw materials, sophisticated technology, electrical machinery, vehicles, furniture, and toys. It is argued that both countries do not need to repeat the history of conflict between major powers.

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EXPLAINING THE DEMOCRATIC PEACE THEORY

The democratic peace theory is rooted in the writings of Immanuel Kant. It began to receive its contemporary articulation in the early 1980s by the writings of Michael Doyle (Grayson, 2003). According to the adherents of the democratic peace theory, democratic states succeeded in maintaining peace and security among each other, furthermore they are less likely to engage in wars with each other. On the other hand, democracies are apt to wage and launch wars against non-democracies. According to the Kantian paradigm, liberal republicanism must be universal and they should be spread in order to achieve peace among states. Therefore, war against non-democratic countries is a necessity, because they are regarded as oppressing tools towards their own people and they threaten freedom in liberal countries as well (Pugh, 2005).

The assumption that democracies rarely fight each other has different explanations. For instance there are structural restraints imposed on the policy makers of any democratic country, preventing them from engaging in wars with each other (Grayson, 2003). This explanation stated that democratic countries enjoy shared norms which are considered key elements in refraining the escalation of wars among democracies. Based on Kant explanation, democratic states are distinguished from autocratic and authoritarian regimes by certain criteria; democratic governments are based on the rule of law governed in representative manner through the separation of powers. Democratic states share respect for the human rights (Pugh, 2005); they should also obtain the consent of their people before declaring any war (Sutch and Elias, 2007). These criteria are necessary and sufficient to prevent democracies from engaging in wars with each other.

There are further explanations introduced to justify this assumption. As stated by Grayson (2003), democratic countries consider themselves as satisfied powers, they unlikely use force. Other explanation emphasize that democratic countries shared the same perception among each other as trustworthy states. Based on the normative explanation, democratic countries tend to resolve their disputes through peaceful ways,(for instances by interacting with each other, they regarded themselves to be trustworthy within their relations with other democracies (Grayson, 2003). Democratic states trust each other to behave in a rational and reasonable way (Pugh, 2005).

The European Union

The World War II had brought massive destruction to the European region, tens of millions dead, the economy was deteriorated and cities were completely destroyed. European leaders such as Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman decided to set up, and impose a new system based on political, economic and social aspects to promote peace and security in the region (Russett, 2010). Believing that the breakdown of democracy played an essential role in destroying peace, they considered their initial task establishing stable democratic institutions. The defeat of the authoritarian regimes after World War II aided the democratic European countries in implementing their aims, also the institutional changes which were applied in western Germany, following democratic principles played an essential role in the formation of European Community (Russett, 2010). In 1952, the steal and coal community was established, combining the coal and steel industries of its members creating a single market among those democratic states; France, Belgium, Italy Luxembourg and Netherlands and western Germany (Pinder, 2001).

The harsh conditions faced by Eastern Germany
people as a result of the dictatorship rule there ended by the unification of both Germanys in 1990; following that, Germany agreed upon the French commitment of observing democratic and federal principles in order to be integrated in the European community (Pinder, 2001).

By applying and observing the democratic and the federal principles followed by the other member states, Germany became integrated in the European community in 1992, allowing it to develop peaceful and constructive relations with the other members. Through this integration France and Germany put an end to the escalating wars, which lasted between them for several decades. The adaptation of the shared democratic principles by Germany contributed in spreading peace and security in the European region during that time (Pinder, 2001).

Based on the democratic peace theory, those countries that initiated the European community adopted certain collective and shared norms that were effective and sufficient enough to bring peace and security to the region. They shared freedom of movement, uncorrupt governments, single market and strong respect for human rights (Slobodchikoff, 2010). Following this period, those countries began to share and spread these norms among other European countries, they succeeded in making Eastern European countries, which were following the Soviet domination, transform their policies towards pluralist democracies and change their economy from the centralized communist one into the market economy. By 1997, the first wave of integration included Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus. The second wave in 2000 included Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Malta (Pinder, 2001). The European community and the steal and coal community were regarded the starting points of the European integration, which ended by the establishment of the European union based on political, economic and social cooperation between the European countries. It is now composed of 28 member states enjoying special form of cooperation; "they share customs union, single market, common trade policy, including common security and defense policy. "The democratic principles agreed upon helped a lot in spreading peace and security in the European continent, it is argued that by such cooperation among democracies in the political and economic fields decreases the possibility of war eruption in Europe (Archick, 2014).

Us-China relations

On the other hand, the democratic peace theory argued that wars against nondemocratic countries are justified ones as they are imposing threat towards their citizens by oppressing them and to the freedoms of democratic states. Non democratic states are believed to be not trustworthy, and irrational actors. Thus the adherents of the democratic peace theory argue that launching wars against these states would promote and spread democratic values among them, leading to the establishment of peace and sustaining it (Grayson, 2003). However, this assumption believed to be a vague and not a precise one. Democratic countries do not engage in wars with any non-democratic countries, and when they engage in wars with non-democracies they have to be certain that if such war is conducted they will win, otherwise they will not risk by taking such step (Paugh, 2005).

The democratic and non-democratic countries may achieve peace among each other by trade and commercial relations, as argued by the commercial peace theory. "According to Montesquieu and his doux-commerce thesis specified in his writing of the spirit of laws, commerce leads to more gentle manners and thereby achieve more peace" (Patapan, 2012). His theory argued that commerce and trade rather than democracy lead to peaceful international relations, he stated that commerce may facilitate peace among democratic and non-democratic countries (Patapan, 2012). This criticism to the democratic peace theory can be proved by the American-Chinese relationships in trade and commerce, although China has never been a democratic country, it enjoys trade and commercial relationships with the democratic US, rather than engaging in wars with each other because of the different norms and values characterizing each country. Dong (2010), argued that such relations dated back to the 1971, when President Nixon stated that the unresolved animosity between both countries, determines the US relation with 750 million talented and energetic people, he announced his intentions to have relations with the Chinese republic. In this case, not dealing and having relation with China is regarded by the US as a dangerous matter, this danger had nothing to do with the non-democratic principles shared in China as argued by the democratic peace theory. This relation began to widen, in 1983, the US-China joint commission on commerce and trade was established, with a main purpose of addressing trade concerning issues and promoting the commercial opportunities between both countries (Beijing talks advances, US-China trade relationships, 2013). China proved to be on the track of being the second largest economy in the world following the US. In 2005, it replaced Mexico as the second US trade partner (Dong, 2010). The American-Chinese relationships became a profound one, that in 2009, China was regarded the third largest buyer of the US goods and services, meanwhile the US became the second largest China's export market (the US-China business council, as cited in Dong, 2010). This trade and commercial relations include exchanging different goods and services that vary from; raw materials, sophisticated technology, electrical machinery, vehicles, clean energy, green technologies, power generation equipment(U.S.-ChinaCommercial Relations,
In conclusion, the democratic peace theory main assumptions are that democratic countries rarely fight each other because of the shared democratic norms agreed upon them; according to the theory adherents' democracy played an essential role in spreading peace among these countries. And this was proved by establishing the European Community and integrating Germany after absorbing the democratic principles in 1992, ending a long war period which lasted for decades between France and Germany. On the other hand, non-democratic countries are regarded to impose threat in the internal and external affairs. They are irrational actors, thus waging wars against them is considered as necessity, as wars will promote democracy among these countries leading consequently to the spread of peace and security. However, as argued by the commercial peace theory, peace can be achieved through trade and commercial relations, it even may occur between democratic and non-democratic countries, commercial and trade relationships between China and US can be regarded as an example to prove this. The democratic peace theory, focused mainly on the relation between democracy and sustaining peace, regarded non-democracies as irrational actors, and stated that wars are the only way to promote democracy consequently spreading peace in these countries. The theory did not put much emphasize on the commercial and trade relationships among democracies and non-democracies, which can spread peace among these countries as well.

REFERENCES


