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### Democratic Peace

Democratic peace theory is the supposition that democratic nations are inherently more peaceful than their counterparts. While there are many subsets of within the democratic peace theory, the overall idea is that democracies would only go to war for self-defense; this implies that democratic nations are not aggressors but instead a form of world police. The theory is also based off the idea that because the citizens, rather than an individual leader decides the course of the nation, it would be extremely difficult to have useless or greedy wars. The theory of democratic peace hinges on two aspects: The definition of Democracy and the definition of War. Democracy is currently defined by Merriam-Webster as “a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections”. War defined by Merriam-Webster is “a state of usually open and declared armed hostile conflict between states or nations” admittedly though, war is extremely hard to define due to the nature of it. War does not need to be declared to be a war, it simply needs to have high mortality rates and extreme levels of violence. Because of these two deciding factors, the possibility of Democratic peace being successful is slim; human nature and power politics prevents any nation to remain at peace for long amounts of time.

The theory was first developed by Immanuel Kant in 1795, who observed that because war would need to be agreed upon by the majority of the nation's population, would be nearly impossible for there to be war without good cause. He wrote within his essay *Perpetual Peace* “If...consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise. For this would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war, such as doing the fighting themselves, supplying the costs of war from their own resources, painfully making good the ensuing devastation...” (Kant). In other words, citizens of a democracy would be far more hesitant to vote for war to be declared because they themselves would have the consequences; the citizens must be willing to sacrifice their friends and family in order to declare war. However, it is arguable that because of the difference in warfare between the centuries, the theory is outdated and idealistic. During the revolutionary war, citizens saw the consequences of war and also had not known the future of warfare; but in more advanced warfare, where pilotless drones and battle bots exist, can one be certain that the citizens of any democracy are aware of the consequences of war?

There are three categories of peace within the democratic peace theory: monadic, dyadic and systemic. Monadic hypothesizes that democracies are more peaceful and unlikely to go to war with any country, democratic or not. Dyadic peace feels that democratic nations are less likely to go to war with other democracies, but still likely to fight with non-democracies. Systemic peace theorizes that the international community will become more peaceful as more nations adopt democratic governments. All three of these categories have one thing in common: The assumption that democratic nations are less likely to go to war than other countries. The idea behind this is that because democratic nations tend to be more developed, conflicts like civil

wars and coups are less likely to happen; with these in addition to a citizenry who are assumed to shy away from war.

Normative argument theorizes that democracies inherently trust each other over others because they share societal norms. While this argument seems to hold true, it can also be an incredibly dangerous assumption to hold when approaching foreign policy, particularly if the other countries do not hold the same amount of trust. This argument is contingent on the idea that democracies will expect other democracies to use non-violent approaches to resolving conflict. In addition, as Dr. Jack Levy states in his paper *Domestic Politics and War* “Although a number of plausible explanations for the absence of war between democracies have been proposed, none has been rigorously and systematically tested” (Levy 662). In other words, the sample size for this theory is too small, and there due to this no one is truly able to ascertain why democracies have supposedly less war than other countries. Furthermore, it can be argued that the societal norms within the current democratic nations have imperialistic origins, spurring these countries into colonizing smaller, weaker countries in the name of democracy. This theory also relies on homogenization of the world's democracies, particularly in a world that is so extremely diverse. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the differences in the worlds societies often causes conflict, Dr. Levy notes “one common view is that national differences in religion, language and other characteristics contribute to war” (Levy 657) In other words, rather than similarities in democratic systems allowing for understanding between nations, it is the differences in the fundamental parts of their societies that facilitate confrontation between governments and citizens.

Institutional logic is the idea where democratic leaders are believed to respond to the general public and will only go to war when they know they can win. This logic falls through

when thoughts of gerrymandering and voter suppression are brought into the picture; after all, how can a country truly hold their leaders accountable when a good portion cannot even make it to the polls? In addition, this assumes that the citizenry has a good grasp on the consequences of war and all that it entails; including the sacrifices they would be making themselves either through supplies or soldiers. In addition, the government would not be able to provide the public with the information needed in order to make an informed decision, lest all national security secrets are given away, thereby endangering the country itself. Jack Levy quotes “Many who accept the basic Kantian argument concede that, once aroused, democracies adopt a crusading spirit and often fight particularly destructive wars” (Levy 659). In other words, Democratic countries are just as likely to be aggressive when provoked; in a perfect world, perhaps this would be considered noble, however this is an imperfect world and the effects of reactionary actions can destroy countries or even entire regions. For example, Americas willingness to go to war after the September 11 attacks allowed for America to essentially occupy Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries located within the Middle East. This created not only extreme poverty and damage in that region, but also anti-American sentiment and power vacuums that spawn new terror cells every year.

The interdependence argument relies on the idea of systemic peace; wherein because the world is filled with more democratic nations, they are more likely to depend on each other for support rather than fight for resources and the like. While this may seem to be holding true for now, it can be argued that because world governing organizations alongside an influx of nations adopting democracy happened only after World War I that the sample pool is small and limited. An extended study happening over centuries would be needed to ascertain whether democratic countries are less likely to go to war with each other. Moreover, this argument assumes that the

economic cooperation between these democratic countries would be far more beneficial than economic dominance by one country. By forgoing the idea of power politics, perhaps there could be a mutual understanding developed between countries, however that is extremely unlikely.

Democratic peace is a concept that is only perfect in theory; For it to work, many factors would have to be adjusted including education, morality and ethics. Not only would the countries participating have a reliable democratic government, but also have a properly informed citizenry that trusts the representatives to do the right thing. From there, the representatives would need to represent the citizens sentiments perfectly and be willing to share sensitive information regarding the country's foreign policy with the general population so that they would be able to decide upon war and hold their representatives accountable. It's not a difficult conclusion to make that democratic peace is not a reachable goal, human error and greed alongside the need for secretive foreign policy would prevent the system from running. In other words, because no human is perfect, no democracy is perfect; this results in an imperfect system that allows for countries more willing to deceive to prey upon the countries that are too trusting.

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