Democratization and Peaceful Relations

https://www.e-ir.info/2010/06/25/democratization-and-peaceful-relations/

JONATHAN WEITZMANN, JUN 25 2010

"Which democratization mechanisms and processes do not facilitate the construction of peaceful domestic and international relations?"

The proposition that democratic states do not fight interstate wars against each other is one of the most influential ideas in international politics in recent years[1]. Moreover democratization has undoubtedly been a major global phenomenon particularly from the final quarter of the twentieth century onwards. As identified by Huntington (1991), since 1974 eighty-five authoritarian regimes have ended. Of these, only thirty states have survived as fairly stable democracies[2]. Therefore although many states may have witnessed a shift away from dictatorial rule towards a form of governance offering a more liberal and democratic stance, this has not always concluded with the construction of peaceful domestic and international relations. The aim of this essay is to explain why this is occurring through analysing which democratization mechanisms and processes have not facilitated the overall construction of peace, arguably a key aim in the establishment of any liberal democracy. Firstly an important problem of democracy will be identified, namely the attempt to establish a true definition. However there examples of where democratization has flourished and these will be briefly addressed. Nonetheless in a world which is experiencing increased globalisation, multiculturalism and levels of communications technology, the so called democratic transition has not been beneficial to the structure of all countries going through the democratization process. The reasons for this will be highlighted showing where key mechanisms and processes of democratization have caused conflict. Post-communist Europe, South America and sub-Saharan Africa will be considered. Ultimately it is usually the time-frame as well as the influence of political, social economic and environmental characteristics of a country that helps to clarify where and which are the mechanisms and process of democratization that can cause conflict internally and cross borders rather than the overall development of peace.

A dichotomous attempt to define democratization was provided by Lipson in 1959, sub classifying the term into both the creation of *stable* and *unstable* democracies[3]. This already provides a precondition that the democratization process will not necessarily provide peace and stability. If one however addresses Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy, *"a government by the people, for the people and with the people [4]"* it could be assumed that peaceful domestic and international relations is the only conclusion. Yet for many democratic regimes, particularly "new democracies" a lack of representation is what makes the construction of peace more difficult. Therefore no actual watertight definition of democracy truly exists and moreover democratization and peace have often been grouped as a means to an end. This is evident with the most often cited source of the idea that democracy is a necessity for peace, namely Immanuel Kant's essay and concept of *"Perpetual Peace[5]"* (1795). Nonetheless Kant advocates *"Democracies become consolidated when people learn that democracy is a solution to the problem of tyranny but not necessarily to anything else[6].'* He highlights the process of democratization as not a guarantor of peace between states domestically and internationally as other factors need to be considered. These may be the economic and political structure of a state or an overall level of modernisation before process of democratization. Only when states have civil constitutions establishing republics which respected private property and a legal equality among citizens would true perpetual peace happen. Kant thus provides a rejection of direct democracy. However it can be argued Switzerland and the U.S. today are perhaps the greatest examples of a liberal direct democracy highlighted with their use of referendums limiting the powers of pressure groups[7]. Thus the question of the essay can itself be criticised as some states will be more vulnerable to direct democratic rule than others with the infrastructure able to sustain a representative government structure that would be more likely to facilitate the construction of peaceful

Democratization and Peaceful Relations

Written by Jonathan Weitzmann

relations.

Democratization therefore is a system that works well in particular cultures, and not all cultures are equally capable of building harmonious democratic societies[8]. It was sub-Saharan Africa where the introduction of pure democracy, a system whereby adult citizens could vote, resulted in violence and thus prevented the construction of peaceful relations particularly domestically. If one takes the example of Sudan, it is evident that the culture and political structure does not complement a democratic transition. Sudan remains Africa's longest running, and arguably most bloody civil war[9]. Contests for both power and resources have overshadowed attempts to provide a stable democratic government. It's lack of infrastructure, education and healthcare has meant the struggle for political and economic power has brought violence and civil war. Ghana is another example of a threat of a dictatorship arising due to national instability after going through a democratic transition. The process of democratization in Africa has thus been branded *'one-man, one-vote, one-time[10]'*. Although independent elections take place, winning parties commonly pass legislation outlawing the existence of opposition parties leaving rulers with a monopoly of power[11]. This form of illiberal direct democracy clearly challenges the widely held notion that the process of democratization causes peaceful relations.

There is also evidence that democratization processes and mechanisms within Africa can construct peace. Although nearly ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been under the same rule for over twenty years, some countries have achieved incremental democratic progress without violence. In 2008 Angola held its first election in sixteen years, demonstrating voters' desire to put a history of civil war behind them and strive for peace[12]. Subsequently Liberia's first post-conflict elections in 2005 and Sierra Leone's first elections in the absence of peacekeeping troops in 2007 both were hailed as free and fair and peaceful. Even in Ghana the 2008 presidential election affirmed the country's position as one of the continent's most successful democracies as the opposition party candidate won the presidency and his opponent gracefully conceded defeat[13]. Nonetheless, the problem still exists for many countries in Africa that attempts for democratic transition are affected by political and economic instability causing civil warfare and flawed elections. Huntington describes this as *"democracy without turnover and competition without alteration[14]."* This has recently been seen with Nigeria and Kenya in 2007 with elections resulting in the deaths of over 1,500 people. This was followed in 2008 with Zimbabwe's suppression of civil liberties causing high levels of political violence[15]. Thus not all countries become mature democracies overnight. They usually go through a hard transition, where politics mixes with authoritarian elite politics in a volatile way, not always facilitating peace.[16]

Clearly a relationship between democratisation mechanisms and economic development exists and can influence the construction of peace. This has empirically been established beyond reasonable doubt by Jackman (1973) and Bollen (1979) and has been confirmed more recently by Burkhart & Lewis-Beck (1994)[17]. A regime becomes a democracy in so far as it maintains equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens at large with respect to governmental activities and personnel, as well as protection of citizens from arbitrary action by governmental agents[18]. Yet a concept such as poverty, commonly found in areas of Latin America has meant that the democratic transition is sometimes undermined by corruption. Economic exclusion, injustices of the judicial systems and continued ethnic and racial issues have been characteristics of the democratization process. Koonings and Kruijt have argued that violence **is not just conventional conflict between dictatorial governments or armed opposition groups. Rather the "new violence" has many different faces including inter-state and non–state related**[19]**.** Therefore although proud for democratic transiton, countries such as Argentina and Venezuela are currently undergoing turmoil that threatens the survival of the overall democratization process. Unstable governments and in particular weak political parties remain vulnerable to subversion, attack, or even conquest by bandits, rebels, guerrilla forces, and outside governments[20]. This provides further evidence that mechanisms of democracy in these reasons might not conclude with peaceful relations.

Since 1990, nearly one hundred countries across four continents have been considered part of the transitional process towards democratization. Fewer than twenty have achieved, or are in the process of achieving the characterisation of a stable democracy[21]. Huntington defines a wave of democratization as "a*group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period [22]*". Waves have been both slow (1828-1926) and faster (post World War II 1943-1964). Importantly however, Huntington portrays both of these waves or

Democratization and Peaceful Relations

Written by Jonathan Weitzmann

processes of democratization as ending with a "reverse wave" of democratic breakdown[23] (1922-42 and 1961-1975) whereby some newly established democracies had become unstable. The failure of the construction of peace, "the first reverse wave" was evident with the outbreak of World War II. Moreover the second reverse wave occurred during the peak of the Cold War. Clearly democratization mechanisms and processes may have the intention of facilitating peaceful relations; however clearly this has particularly internationally not occurred. Still it can be argued that to this day, no two established Liberal democracies have ever gone to war with each other, thus the overall attraction of the democratic transition process is evident. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has commented that *"a culture of democracy is fundamentally a culture of peace. [24]"* Huntington has complemented this advocating the *"Domino effect[25]"* whereby one country establishes a democracy, closely followed by many states in the surrounding area. The causes of democratization can stem from various factors, namely a lack of legitimacy in authoritarian regimes, the need for economic growth, the influence of religious establishments and pressure from the European Union, the U.S.A. and Russia post-communism however the construction of peaceful relations is never guaranteed. According to Mansfield and Snyder, states that make the biggest leap, from total autocracy to extensive mass democracy like contemporary Russia are about twice as likely to fight wars in the decade after democratization as are states that remain autocracies. Furthermore two pairs of states – Serbia and Croatia, and Armenia and Azerbaijan are all examples of where war has occurred while experimenting with varying degrees of electoral democracy[26]. This suggests that countries even within post- communist Europe will not necessarily construct peace as a result of the process of democratization.

In conclusion, modern representative democracies have a number of advantages. They induce the moderation of governments over time; they provide some sort of political responsibility to the people, and they may facilitate the integration of a functioning capitalist economy. The transition to democracy has also consisted of negotiation between outgoing authoritarian and incoming democratic elites. It has been a stable political and economic infrastructure for many western countries that has made the democratization method successful and continues to be an aim for those countries that are currently non-democratic. For weaker democracies however, it is much harder to contain the confrontation provided by radical opposition groups, particularly when characterised by a poorer internal infrastructure. As we live in an anarchic world, international consensus is rare and the impact of international pressure is limited. Ultimately however when the target is weak, the pressure exerted will be most effective. It is therefore the democratic mechanisms that weaker democracies follow that that primarily pose a threat of domestic instability. These democratic processes will be where peaceful domestic and international relations are least common. However as seen with Huntington's reverse waves, it is not just the democratic processes and mechanisms in the most political and economically instable countries where peaceful relations domestically and particularly internationally will not be consequence.

Bibliography

Books:

Neil McNaughton *"Success in AS Politics for Edexcel"* (Oxon, Hodder Arnold, 2006)

Chris Brown, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Rengger *"International Relations in Political Thought"* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Thandika Mkandawire *"Disempowering New Democracies and the Persistence of Poverty"* (UNRISD, 2006)

David Melvill *"Restoring peace and democracy in Sudan: limited choices for African leadership"* (South Africa, Institue for Global Dialogue, 2002)

Democratization and Peaceful Relations

Written by Jonathan Weitzmann

Yi Feng *"Democracy, Political Stability and Economic Growth"* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Larry Diamond *"Is the Third Wave of Democratization over?"* (Kellogg, March 1997)

Websites:

James Lee Ray *"Does Democracy Cause Peace"* (1998) http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ray.htm (Last accessed 02/03/2010)

Mukui Waruiru *"The Failure of Democracy in Africa"* (Australia League of Rights, 2008) http://www.alor.org/NewTimes%20Survey/The%20Failure%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Africa.htm (Last accessed 04/03/2010)

Albert Trithart *"The State of Democracy in Africa"* (2010) http://www.ifes.org/features.html?title=The%20State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Africa (Last accessed 06/03/2010)

Esther Skelley *"Democratization and U.S. National Security"* pg. 18 http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/0/6/7/pages100671/p100671-2.php (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

Mariano Aguirre *"Failed states or weak democracies? The state in Latin America"* (2006) http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-protest/state_violence_3187.jsp (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

Charles Tilly *"Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization"* (4 February 1999) http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/tic12/ (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder *"Democratization and War"* (1995) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/50974/edward-mansfield-and-jack-snyder/democratization-and-war (Last accessed 08/03/2010)

Online Journals:

Barbara Geddes *"What do we know about democratization after 20 years?"* (Volume 2, 1999) pg. 115 http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115 (Last accessed 02/03/2010)

S.C. Stokes *"Political Parties and Democracy"* (Volume 2, 1999) pg. 243 http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243 (Last accessed 03/03/2010)

Thomas Carothers *"The End of the Transition Paradigm"* in the Journal of Democracy (Volume 13.1, 2002) p.g. 5 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.1carothers.html (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

[1] James Lee Ray *"Does Democracy Cause Peace"* (1998) http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ray.htm (Last accessed 02/03/2010)

[2] Barbara Geddes *"What do we know about democratization after 20 years?"* (Volume 2, 1999) pg. 115 http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115 (Last accessed 02/03/2010)

[3] S.C. Stokes *"Political Parties and Democracy"* (Volume 2, 1999) pg. 243 http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243 (Last accessed

Democratization and Peaceful Relations
Written by Jonathan Weitzmann

03/03/2010)

[4] Neil McNaughton *"Success in AS Politics for Edexcel"* (Oxon, Hodder Arnold, 2006) pg. 3

[5] Chris Brown, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Rengger *"International Relations in Political Thought"* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002) pg. 432

[6] Thandika Mkandawire *"Disempowering New Democracies and the Persistence of Poverty"* (UNRISD, 2006) pg. 17

[7] Op. Cit McNaughton pg. 11

[8] Mukui Waruiru *"The Failure of Democracy in Africa"* (Australia League of Rights, 2008) http://www.alor.org/NewTimes%20Survey/The%20Failure%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Africa.htm (Last accessed 04/03/2010)

[9] David Melvill *"Restoring peace and democracy in Sudan: limited choices for African leadership"* (South Africa, Institue for Global Dialogue, 2002) pg. 1

[10] Op. Cit Mukui Waruiru

[11] ibid.

[12] Albert Trithart *"The State of Democracy in Africa"* (2010) http://www.ifes.org/features.html?title=The%20State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Africa (Last accessed 06/03/2010)

[13] ibid

[14] Yi Feng *"Democracy, Political Stability and Economic Growth"* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) pg. 391

[15] Op cit. Albert Trithart

[16] Esther Skelley *"Democratization and U.S. National Security"* pg. 18 http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/0/6/7/pages100671/p100671-2.php (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

[17] Op cit. Barbara Geddes pg. 117

[18] ibid pg. 118

[19] Mariano Aguirre *"Failed states or weak democracies? The state in Latin America"* (2006) http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-protest/state_violence_3187.jsp (Last accessed

Democratization and Peaceful Relations
Written by Jonathan Weitzmann

07/03/2010)

[20] Charles Tilly *"Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization"* (4 February 1999) http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/tic12/ (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

[21] Thomas Carothers *"The End of the Transition Paradigm" in the Journal of Democracy* (Volume 13.1, 2002) p.g. 5 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.1carothers.html (Last accessed 07/03/2010)

[22] Larry Diamond *"Is the Third Wave of Democratization over?"* (Kellogg, March 1997) pg. 2

[23] ibid. pg. 3

[24] ibid. pg. 3

[25] Dr. Volpi, Lecture, University of St. Andrews, 09/03/2010

[26] Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder *"Democratization and War"* (1995) http://www.foreignaff airs.com/articles/50974/edward-mansfield-and-jack-snyder/democratization-and-war (Last accessed 08/03/2010)

—

Written by: Jonathan Weitzmann
Written for: Professor Alison Watson
Written at: University of St Andrews
Date Written: 2010