# Democracy and Peace: Mutually Reinforcing Concepts

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### ABSTRACT

Democracy and peace are mutually dependent indivisible concepts. In order to advance peace in society, its underlying democratic institutions need to be strengthened. This entails to build just societies in which resources are equally shared which will reduce conflicts in society. Democratic states are peaceful internally as well as in their relations with other states. Culture of democracy through which human rights are protected is required to maintain internal and international peace. Democratic institutional growth has been broadly considered a key factor in successful Peace-building process. Peaceful international environments according to some scholars permit democracy to emerge and conflict ridden environment obstruct democracy to function. So democracy and peace are interdependently linked.

**Keywords:** International peace, Positive peace, negative peace, ethnic conflicts, two track polities, substantive democratic environment, conflict ridden areas

The presence of short-lived governments is taken as evidence of poor performance in democracies and in other systems as well. Political order means the absence of turmoil and violence and the maintenance of the basic forms of the democratic regime. G. Bingham opines that almost all regimes and certainly the democratic ones seek to limit violence and disorder. Widespread violence is generally accepted as a sign of failure of the democratic process (Bingham, 1982).

Democracies have a very special relationship to political conflict. Most other types of regimes either forbid any expressions of serious disagreement or allow them only through very powerful leaders. Legitimate efforts to influence policy by those who are outside the ruling circle are limited to petitions and suggestions (*ibid*).

The norms of peaceful co-existence among democracies can be traced to Immanuel Kant who enunciated liberal peace in his book Perpetual Peace in 1795. Peaceful ways of resolving conflicts domestically are seen as morally superior to violent behaviour and this view has been transferred to international relations between democracies. He envisioned a world peace rooted in democratic processes through the implementation of three definitive articles. First, he says democratic constitutional governments would usher in moral autonomy of individuals' representative governments and separation of powers with an appropriate balance between individual freedom and social order. It will establish internally peaceful sovereign polities (Michael Doyle, 1983).

The second argument envisages a pacific union of sovereign polities desirous of maintaining and perpetuating the peace. Perhaps they could enter into non-aggression pacts to strengthen peace among them. The pacific union will gradually expand to cover the entire group of democratic states. The third article calls for a common law among states in order to ensure a mutually advantageous policy

of honouring the rights of the foreigners. It implies rights and duties which must be accepted if people are to learn to tolerate each other's company and to exist peacefully. Kant argues that perpetual peace will be guaranteed by the ever widening acceptance of these three articles of peace.

A culture of peace is intimately linked with a culture of human rights and democracy. Peace cannot be preserved if the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups are violated and where discrimination and exclusion generate conflict. Therefore, the protection of human rights and the promotion of a culture of democracy which imply the formation of well informed, democratically minded and responsible citizens, become important elements in the construction of internal and international peace (Symonides, 1998).

Initiation of peace becomes necessary in conflict ridden situations to create a sustainable peace environment. The term sustainable peace refers to a situation characterised by the absence of physical violence; the elimination of unacceptable political, economic and cultural forms of discrimination; a high-level of internal and external legitimacy and support and a propensity to enhance the constructive transformation of conflicts (Luc Reycheler, 2001).

The most important pre-condition for establishing a sustainable peace is the presence of an effective communication, consultation and negotiation system at different levels and between the major stakeholders. Further, the establishment of a series of peace enhancing structures are necessary for sustainable peace. First of these structures is the establishment of a consolidated democracy second, is an effective justice system, third is a social, free market system and fourth structure is the education, information and communication system (*ibid*).

An important distinction should be made between negative and positive peace. Negative peace simply denotes the absence of war. An alternative view to this realist or real politik perspective is one that emphasizes the importance of positive peace. Positive peace is more than the mere absence of war or even absence of inter-state violence. It refers to a social condition in which exploitation is minimized or eliminated. There is neither overt violence nor the more subtle phenomena of underlying structural violence (Webel, 2002).

Negative peace is thus a more conservative goal as it seeks to keep things as they are (if the war is not taking place), where as positive peace is more active and bolder as. It implies the creation of something that does not currently exist. Supporters of positive peace uniformly agree that a repressive society, everi if it is not at war should be considered 'at peace' that tolerates outbreaks of domestic violence on a widespread level, despite an absence of violent conflict with other nations, is really not at peace with itself.

Positive peace is not a static state but a dynamically conceived aim of international and national communities. The indispensable values on which a positive peace can be built are - justice, human rights, democracy, development, non-violence and a peaceful resolution of conflicts (*Ibid*).

The former Secretary General of United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali rightly said, 'a culture of democracy is a culture of peace'. The mere existence of political processes and institutions is not enough to sustain their strength and vitality. Norms of democratic culture are necessary for their successful working. The strength and longevity of democratic: institutions depend crucially on the civic culture (Larry, 1990).

Building a robust civil society is therefore postulated as a pre-condition for democratization and democratic consolidation. In fact the correlation between 'civil society' and democracy may be spurious as both the phenomena are being shaped by deeper social processes related to modernization and individualism (Ivelin, 2005).

Atul Kohli is of the opinion that introduction of democracy to a developing country exacerbates political conflicts over the short to medium term. Extrapolating from western experience, they expect democracy to be a solution to existing rather than a source of new power conflicts. In the west, democracy evolved over a long time. Political competition and suffrage expanded slowly within the framework of centralized authority structures at the apex and growing pressures from below. So, in this sense democracy in the west was indeed a solution to growing power conflicts in society. (Kohli) By contrast, democracy to most developing countries comes as 'imported' ideas. He says, as these ideas are translated into democratic

institutions of follower democracies which provide new incentives for political actors to organize and mobilize, the results over the short to medium terms are often disquieting. So, expansionary political pressures are inherent to the design of follower democracies and will need to be accommodated.

This suggests that for strengthening developing country democracies, institutions that genuinely devolve political and economic power will remain a pre-requisite. A central political tendency in follower democracies will be towards the emergence of two track polities. A democratic track will emerge in the sphere of society and polity especially in the electoral politics and a not so democratic track in the state sphere, especially in the areas of economic policy making.

The political society of many follower democracies is thus, increasingly characterized by 'too much democracy' i.e., by a variety of political, class and ethnic conflicts.

By contrast, the state in these settings increasingly insulates itself from social demands and conflicts and thus exhibits 'not enough democracy'. It will be necessary to bridge the gap between 'too much' and 'not enough' democracy before these follower democracies become institutionalized with effective political systems. Creation of new institutions would be required that systematically devolve political and economic power to bridge this gap.

Peace is intimately linked with democracy. Peace cannot be preserved in society if fundamental requirements of democracy are not fulfilled. To promote culture of peace in society, substantive democratic environment should be provided. On the other hand, for democracy to work in a society, culture of peace is required.

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*Ibid*, p. 13. Powell corroborates that 'democracy from this perspective is a gamble that discontent can be channeled through the legitimate electoral channels. An outbreak of serious collective violence in a democratic society is manifest evidence that the regime is not performing well'.

*Ibid*.

*Ibid*. Atul Kohli says, western political models have spread to the non-west and British colonialism has left behind the legacy of democracy in several colonies. Rapid introduction of democracy has a disquieting impact on established social and cultural patterns. The spread of democratic politics undermines the authority of traditional elites. As a reaction, some groups attempt to regroup again thus it gives rise to a variety of reactionary movements'. In sum, as imported political models and indigenous cultural conditions interact and adapt to each other, political turbulence is ought to be expected.

*Ibid*. Many cultural and spiritual traditions have identified political and social goals that are closer to positive peace than negative peace. The ancient Greek concept of eireinei denotes harmony and justice as well as peace. Similarly, the Arabic salaam and the Hebrew shalom connote not only the absence of violence but also the presence of well being, wholeness and harmony within oneself and among all nations and peoples. The Sanskrit word shanty refers to not only peace but also to spiritual tranquility, just as Chinese noun Peng denotes harmony and the achievement of unity from diversity. In Russian the word mir means peace, a village community and the entire world.

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