

Fukuyama's argument is not simply a celebration of the fact that liberal capitalism has survived the threat posed by Marxism. It also **implies that neo-realism has overlooked 'the foremost macropolitical trend in contemporary world politics: the expansion of the liberal zone of peace'** (Linklater 1993: 29). Challenging the view that anarchy conditions international behaviour is Doyle's argument that there is a growing core of pacific states which have learned to resolve their differences without resorting to violence. The likely expansion of this pacific realm is said to be the most significant feature of the post-Communist landscape. If this claim can be upheld it will constitute a significant comeback for an international theory widely thought to have been seriously challenged by Carr in his critique of liberal utopianism in the 1940s. It will also pose a serious challenge to a discipline which until recently has been dominated by assumptions that war is an endemic feature of international life (Doyle 1986: 1151–69).

War, democracy and free trade

The foundations of contemporary **liberal internationalism** were laid in the **eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by liberals proposing preconditions for a peaceful world order**. In broad summary they concluded that the prospects for the elimination of war lay with a preference for democracy over aristocracy and **free trade over autarky**. In this section we will examine these arguments in turn, and the extent to which they inform contemporary liberal thought.

Prospects for peace

For **liberals, peace is the normal state of affairs: in Kant's words, peace can be perpetual**. The **laws of nature dictated harmony and cooperation between peoples**. **War is therefore both unnatural and irrational, an artificial contrivance and not a product of some peculiarity of human nature**. Liberals have a belief in progress and the perfectibility of the human condition. Through their faith in the power of human reason and the capacity of human beings to realize their inner potential, they remain confident that the stain of war can be removed from human experience (Gardner 1990: 23–39; Hoffmann 1995: 159–77; Zacher and Matthew 1995: 107–50).

A common thread, from **Rousseau, Kant and Cobden, to Schumpeter and Doyle**, is that wars were created by militaristic and undemocratic governments for their own vested interests. **Wars were engineered by a 'warrior class' bent on extending their power and wealth through**

territorial conquest. According to Paine in *The Rights of Man*, the ‘war system’ was contrived to preserve the power and the employment of princes, statesmen, soldiers, diplomats and armaments manufacturers, and to bind their tyranny ever more firmly upon the necks of the people’ (Howard 1978: 31). **Wars provide governments with excuses to raise taxes, expand their bureaucratic apparatus and increase their control over their citizens.** The **people, on the other hand, were peace-loving by nature,** and plunged into conflict only by the whims of their unrepresentative rulers.

War was a cancer on the body politic. But it was an ailment that human beings, themselves, had the capacity to cure. The treatment which liberals began prescribing in the eighteenth century had not changed: the **‘disease’ of war could be successfully treated with the twin medicines of democracy and free trade.** Democratic processes and institutions would break the power of the ruling elites and curb their propensity for violence. Free trade and commerce would overcome the artificial barriers between individuals and unite them everywhere into one community.

For liberals such as Schumpeter, war was the product of the aggressive instincts of unrepresentative elites. The warlike disposition of these rulers drove the reluctant masses into violent conflicts which, while profitable for the arms industries and the military aristocrats, were disastrous for those who did the fighting. For Kant, the establishment of republican forms of government in which rulers were accountable and individual rights were respected would lead to peaceful international relations because the ultimate consent for war would rest with the citizens of the state (Kant 1970: 100). **For both Kant and Schumpeter, war was the outcome of minority rule, though Kant was no champion of democratic government** (MacMillan 1995). Liberal states, founded on individual rights such as equality before the law, free speech and civil liberty, respect for private property and representative government, would not have the same appetite for conflict and war. Peace was fundamentally a question of establishing legitimate domestic orders throughout the world. ‘When the citizens who bear the burdens of war elect their governments, wars become impossible’ (Doyle 1986: 1151).

The dual themes of domestic legitimacy and the extent to which liberal-democratic states exercise restraint and peaceful intentions in their foreign policy have been taken up more recently by Doyle, Russett and others. In a restatement of Kant’s argument that a ‘pacific federation’ (*foedus pacificum*) can be built by expanding the number of states with republican constitutions, Doyle claims that liberal democracies are unique in their ability and willingness to establish peaceful relations among themselves. This pacification of **foreign relations between liberal states is said to be a direct product of their shared legitimate political orders based on**

democratic principles and institutions. The reciprocal recognition of these common principles – a commitment to the rule of law, individual rights and equality before the law, *and* representative government based on popular consent – means that liberal democracies evince little interest in conflict with each other and have no grounds on which to contest each other's legitimacy: they have constructed a 'separate peace' (Doyle 1986: 1161; Fukuyama 1992: xx). This does not mean that they are less inclined to make war with non-democratic states, and Doyle is correct to point out that democracies maintain a healthy appetite for conflicts with authoritarian states, as recent conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia attest to. But it does suggest that the best prospect for bringing an end to war between states lies with the spread of liberal-democratic governments across the globe. The expansion of the zone of peace from the core to the periphery is also the basis of Fukuyama's optimism about the post-Communist era (Doyle 1986, 1995, 1997; Russett 1993).

There are both structural and normative aspects to what has been termed 'democratic peace theory'. Some liberals emphasize the institutional constraints on liberal-democratic states, such as public opinion, the rule of law and representative government. Others stress the normative preference for compromise and conflict resolution which can be found in liberal democracies. A combination of both explanations strengthens the argument that liberal-democratic states do not resolve their differences violently, although realist critics point to definitional problems with the idea of liberal democracy and the question of covert action, and argue that at best democratic peace theory identifies a correlation in international politics rather than an 'iron law' or theory (Maoz and Russett 1993; Owen 1994).

The argument is also extended by Rawls, who claims that liberal societies are also 'less likely to engage in war with nonliberal outlaw states, except on grounds of legitimate self-defence (or in the defence of their legitimate allies), or intervention in severe cases to protect human rights' (Rawls 1999: 49). Recent US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq pose significant challenges to the claim that only self-defence and humanitarianism incline liberal-democratic states to war.

A related argument by Mueller (1989) claims that we are already witnessing the obsolescence of war between the major powers. Reviving the liberal faith in the capacity of people to improve the moral and material conditions of their lives, Mueller argues that, just as duelling and slavery were eventually seen as morally unacceptable, war is increasingly viewed in the developed world as repulsive, immoral and uncivilized. That violence is more widely seen as an anachronistic form of social intercourse is not due to any change in human nature or the structure of the international system. According to Mueller, the obsolescence of major war in

the late twentieth century was the product of moral learning, a shift in ethical consciousness away from coercive forms of social behaviour. Because war brings more costs than gains and is no longer seen as a romantic or noble pursuit, it has become 'rationally unthinkable' (Mueller 1989).

The long peace between states of the industrialized world is a cause of profound optimism for liberals such as Fukuyama and Mueller, who are confident that we have already entered a period in which war as an instrument of international diplomacy is becoming obsolete. But if war has been an important factor in nation-building, as Giddens, Mann and Tilly have argued, the fact that states are learning to curb their propensity for violence will also have important consequences for forms of political community which are likely to emerge in the industrial centres of the world. The end of war between the great powers may have the effect of weakening the rigidity of their political boundaries and inspiring a wave of sub-national revolts, although the new wave of anti-Western terror may complicate matters in this regard by encouraging states to solidify their boundaries and make greater demands on the loyalty of citizens. **If war has been a binding as well as destructive force in international relations, the problem of maintaining cohesive communities will be a major challenge for metropolitan centres.**

Far from sharing the post-Cold War optimism of liberals, realists such as Waltz and Mearsheimer argue that the collapse of bipolarity in the early 1990s was a cause for grave concern. Mutual nuclear deterrence maintained a stabilizing balance of power in the world, whereas unipolarity would not last, eventually leading to volatility and war. **As Waltz argues, 'in international politics, unbalanced power constitutes a danger even when it is American power that is out of balance'** (Waltz 1991a: 670). Accordingly, the expansion of a zone of peace is no antidote to the calculations of raw power in an anarchical world.

Recent conflicts in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf – all involving major industrial powers – are a reminder that the post-Cold War period remains volatile and suggest that war may not yet have lost its efficacy in international diplomacy. None of these constitutes conflicts between democratic states but they are no less important to the maintenance of world order. These and other struggles in so-called 'failed states' such as Afghanistan, Somalia and possibly Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, highlight the fact that the fragmentation of nation-states and civil wars arising from secessionist movements have not been given the same attention by liberals as more conventional inter-state wars.

They also remind us of the limitations of democratic peace theory, which provides few guidelines for how liberal states should conduct themselves with non-liberal states. Rawls, on the other hand, is concerned with the extent to which liberal and non-liberal peoples can be equal participants

in a 'Society of Peoples'. He argues that principles and norms of international law and practice – the 'Law of Peoples' – can be developed and shared by both liberal and non-liberal or decent hierarchical societies, without an expectation that liberal democracy is the terminus for all. The guidelines and principal basis for establishing harmonious relations between liberal and non-liberal peoples under a common Law of Peoples, takes liberal international theory in a more sophisticated direction because it explicitly acknowledges the need for utopian thought to be realistic (Rawls 1999: 11–23).

As the number of East Asian and Islamic societies which reject the normative superiority of liberal democracy grows, doubt is cast on the belief that the non-European world is seeking to imitate the Western route to political modernization. This has also been graphically illustrated in the current wave of anti-Western Islamist terror. Linklater suggests that it is not so much the spread of liberal democracy *per se* which has universal appeal, 'but the idea of limited power which is present within, but not entirely synonymous with, liberal democracy' (Linklater 1993: 33–6; Rawls 1999). The notion of limited power and respect for the rule of law contained within the idea of 'constitutionalism' may be one means of solving the exclusionary character of the liberal zone of peace. It is a less ambitious project and potentially more sensitive to the cultural and political differences among states in the current international system. It may avoid the danger of the system bifurcating into a privileged inner circle and a disadvantaged and disaffected outer circle (Linklater 1993: 33). The greatest barrier to the expansion of the zone of peace from the core is the perception within the periphery that this constitutes little more than the domination of one culture by another.

The spirit of commerce

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberals felt that the spirits of war and commerce were mutually incompatible. Many wars were fought by states to achieve their mercantilist goals. According to Carr, 'the aim of mercantilism ... was not to promote the welfare of the community and its members, but to augment the power of the state, of which the sovereign was the embodiment ... wealth was the source of power, or more specifically of fitness for war'. Until the Napoleonic wars, 'wealth, conceived in its simplest form as bullion, was brought in by exports; and since, in the static conception of society prevailing at this period, export markets were a fixed quantity not susceptible of increase as a whole, the only way for a nation to expand its markets and therefore its wealth was to capture them from some other nation, if necessary by waging a trade war' (Carr 1945: 5–6).