

Essay 1

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Section 6

Thursday

9:00 am

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Is liberalism the best way to explain why some regions of the world outside of Europe frequently experience wars while others enjoy a relative peace?

Please address this question by choosing a region outside of Europe and discussing how liberalism can explain the presence or absence of a "zone of peace." Your essay should also consider how realists and constructivists might address this question as well as a comparison between your chosen region and Europe since the end of the Cold War.

Yes, in my opinion I argue that liberalism is the best way to explain why some regions of the world outside of Europe frequently experience wars while others enjoy relative peace because liberalism propounds an optimistic view of international relations. Unlike the state centric realism that focuses on survival and gain of power or the abstract idealism based on developed social constructs through interaction between states, liberalism offers the opportunity for study collaboration and cooperation and gives peace a chance. Throughout

the essay I would compare and contrast South Asia with Europe to buttress my argument while also describing the three theories of international relations that are realism, liberalism and constructivism. Finally, I will conclude that liberalism is the superior ideology to explain the presence of peace throughout Europe and the lack of it in South Asia specific rebuttals against realism and constructivism.

Liberalism argues that international cooperation is facilitated through international institutions and they provide an overarching structure, a set of rules that promotes peace in the world (Michael Doyle 1997). States are no longer free to pursue their agendas unabated and must seek dialog and diplomacy, even with adversaries. It explains that peace dovetails with the spread of democracy and lays the base for 'Democratic peace theory' which posits that both electoral and republican forms of democracy are hesitant to engage in armed conflict with other identified democracies. Based on this premise many international relations(IR) theorists have concluded that post World War II and subsequently post Cold War, as the spread of democracy grew in Europe, it converted from a zone of conflict to an area of peace. The fall of the USSR catapulted a new era of IR, particularly for Europe. The Flagbearer of communism was defeated and democracy emerged as the dominant form of political ideology. Eastern European states were free from being satellite states of the USSR and charted a path of their own, embracing democracy. The breakup of the USSR led to an eastern expansion of the political map of liberal Europe, the fall of the iron curtain that is the metaphorical divisions between the liberal western Europe and the communist Eastern Europe cutting across Germany, helped democracy make inroads towards the east. The Eastern states desired economic development like the west and started actively participating in organizations like the IMF and World Bank, created under the Bretton Woods agreement as a post war recovery plan for Europe. As the economies of European states integrated with

each other, organizations such as the European Union expanded, facilitating free movement of goods and people. The novel concept of Schengen area-an area without internal border control and a single European currency- Euro, blurred the borders between states and created an interconnected continent that started thriving through cooperation and collaboration, promoting rule of law even for states and human rights.

Comparing Europe to South Asia, or colloquially the Indian subcontinent is a splendid case study to examine how lack of liberalism or rather paucity of it has yielded one of the most disconnected and militarized regions in the world. Similar to Europe, South Asia also has a myriad of ethnicities, religious and linguistic diversities and a history of kingdom states vying for power. Unfortunately for South Asia that post 1947, the nation states created after the withdrawal of British, particularly India and Pakistan and subsequently Bangladesh, were never able to resolve the inherent mistrust that stemmed out of religio-cultural differences. The 4 major wars of 1947,1965,1971 and 1999 between India and Pakistan provide ample proof that lack of interconnectedness and flawed democratic structures have facilitated wars through greatly reducing the cost of war. Limited trade between the two nations of barely 523 million (India Exports to Pakistan) and a military administrative form of government devoid of true democratic representation causes little to no accountability to those in charge thus making them risk averse in taking decisions for war. Along the same lines the discussion can be expanded to include China and the Indo-China war of 1962 which happened due to the lack of representative government in China and the geographic separation between both nations manifesting as disconnected economies. Within the one party system of China and the civil-military regiment in Pakistan, there is no space for advocacy of human rights or the voice of the public to caution against any aggression. Also considering the smaller neighbours of India, their polity is rife with oligarchy, kleptocracy and non-state actors. From

the entire family of RAJApakshas in Sri Lanka to the Taliban chieftains ruling Afghanistan, representative democracy is absent in South Asia preventing connectivity and integration akin to Europe and thus diminishing peace. With such neighbours of India ,democracy dies a slow death and those in power are not accountable to the public thereby putting India in the spot and the region hostage to aggression.

Having established this there can be a counter argument that other theories like realism and constructivism are a better fit to explain peace in Europe and the lack of it in the region of my discussion that is South Asia. From a realist point of view as discussed by (Kenneth Waltz), anarchy compels states to ensure survival through power balance. A post Cold War world US emerged as the sole dominant power and with Europe still recovering from both the World Wars and figuring its new identity after the USSR breakup, US hegemony started dictating world affairs. A natural consequence of this was that states across Europe conglomerated into a single powerful block called the European Union. As a single economic and geo-political entity through a realistic lens Europe wanted to balance the heft of the US while also deterring any possible future economic warfare by Russia. On the security front, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, through the military prowess of the USA, secured most of Europe from future Russian threats. Collectively Europe emerged as a strong economic block with heft to counter the likes of Russia, China and USA and get a better seat at the negotiating table. With survival and economic well being of European states ensured, this provided no incentive for individual countries to have a revisionist agenda thus culminating in peace across the continent.

Contrary to above , in South Asia realism can describe the absence of peace. All the major states in South Asia have a deep mistrust that guides their action today. Pakistan created out of the fear of Muslim suppression in erstwhile British India, still as a state policy tries to secure its existence against the much larger and resourceful India. The 4 wars of 1947,1965,1971 and 1999 were all to secure Kashmir and through that the source of river Indus thus securing economic security and a military advantage through the Himalayan heights of Kashmir. India in her defence seeks to control entire Kashmir to break the geographic link between China and Pakistan its two adversaries to prevent them from colluding together militarily. Aside from China using Pakistan as a proxy, it too is a challenge. With total disregard for international law and respect of sovereign integrity, it continues to use intimidation and 'salami slicing' tactics to conquer territories of its neighbors slowly and steadily. Such realities have compelled an arms race in the region, prompting the three nations to be nuclear capable and having covert military interoperability with other nations. The Indian cooperation with the USA worries China and Pakistan who in turn cooperate amongst themselves to continuously keep the region amidst a nuclear flashpoint and according to many thinkers in a state of mini Cold war.

While I have talked both about liberalism and realism, constructivism as explained by the reading(Alexander Wendt) too can be used to explain the peace that is prevalent across Europe. Having faced both the world wars and being the theatre of power conflict during the Cold war, the zeitgeist of the time was brewing with anti-war sentiment. It became difficult for leaders of states to convince the public, particularly in the liberal democracies to support any war. The horrors of war still had a toll on Europe, the idea of value of human life and rights gained prominence instead of the need to go for wars. Post dissolution of the USSR the new states that emerged started creating their own identity through interaction with other

states. They developed a sense of self that was different from other states and from the former USSR and to protect this distinct identity the post Cold war European states chose the path of peace and coexistence rather than a revisionist approach.

Through constructivism the power dynamics between nations in South Asia can also be explained. Birthed from Two nation theory that is a separate nation for the Muslims of Indian subcontinent and a separate nation for rest predominantly Hindus, Both India and Pakistan assumed these new identities and further developed them through interaction with each other. Pakistan views India as antithetical to itself and its existence because the secular liberal polity of India threatens the basic tenets on which Pakistan was founded that is a nation state where the state religion is Islam and is a safe haven for Muslims, but the relatively greater opulence and prosperity of Indian Muslims particularly in Indian Kashmir weakens the case of existence of Pakistan so through proxy wars, non-state actors and covert insurgency funding Pakistan keeps the issue of Kashmir alive thereby keeping bilateral relations and the region hostage to war. This same concept of identity reverberates all across South Asia among small nation states like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka who feel threatened by the existence of India, culturally as being the Jupiter of the region having common heritage with everyone. This dilution of exclusivity in identity translates to unrest in the region and bilateral relations. Continuing the same discussion towards China, it is delusional by the middle kingdom designation that China believes it is the center of civilization and ideas and all the countries on the periphery of China are its sphere of influence and indebted to it. This identity seeds conflicts as China approaches international relations through a preconceived identity of superiority causing issues.

Having delved into the realist and constructivist explanation of relative peace in Europe as compared to outside, these theories fall short to adequately provide a convincing argument that the liberal school of thought provides. As mentioned in the works (Immanuel Kant; Michael Doyle; Francis Fukuyamaz) the liberal world order is the genesis of peace and the liberal democracy is the culmination of human political evolution (Fukuyama). Realism and constructivism both in a nutshell focus on the motives and ideas of states respectively but completely ignore the interaction among states and the overarching rules of the institutions that they are bound by. Peace is not achieved through the action of a single state alone, it requires the collective effort of all. Liberalism is able to explain the interaction between states and the reason for any cooperation between them by also considering the possibility of them grouping together and forming organisations which constructivism is unable to explain, it also does not look at states in a silo like realism does, only motivated to secure power and survival but tries to delve deeper to explain the reasons for the state behaviour as to why and how it is behaving a particular way.

In the comparison between Europe and South Asia and the prevalence of peace In Europe, both realism and constructivism do not capture the reality of the presence of democracies across Europe and the lack of it in South Asia. Liberalism allows us to study the polity of both these regions on a spectrum and deduce with confidence that prevalence of peace is exigent on the spread of democratic values and ideas.Importance of EU and NATO as organizations facilitating cooperation amongst states is ignored by realism and constructivism but liberalism proudly acknowledges the importance.Similarly through liberalism we are able to map and explain the fluctuations in India -Pakistan relations commensurate to the oscillating civil and military leadership in Pakistan. It also is able to map out the relations

between India and China and how they both use forums like BRICS and SCO to iron out issues such as the recent 2020 border clashes and the plan towards eventual de-escalation.

In conclusion, liberalism provides us with the most extensive framework to understand how states behave and what rules compel them to seek out cooperation. It is the best theory that adequately describes through the regional comparison between South Asian and Europe that why some regions have peace and while others are embroiled in conflicts.

Works Cited List

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- Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley 1979)
- Alex Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” *International Organization* (Spring 1992)
- Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* (Summer 1989)