

Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations

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ABSTRACT:

In the anarchic international system, governments have a significant challenge while trying to fulfil their promises. According to a long-held belief, this is especially true for democracies because leaders find it challenging to uphold agreements over time due to shifting popular preferences. However, a number of crucial components in the institutions and principles that have distinguished the liberal democratic governments need to strengthen their capacity to uphold international obligations. In fact, a study of the longevity of international military alliances reveals that those between democratic governments have stood the test of time better than either alliances between non-democracies or alliances between democracies and non-democracies.

KEYWORDS:

Democratic, Foreign, Governments, International, Liberal.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thucydides' accusation that the Athenian oligarchs were responsible for the fluctuating and unstable democratic governance has a long and illustrious history. Machiavelli, who disagrees with this viewpoint, credits "all writers" and "all historians" with holding it. The last 10 years have seen a major, though still shaky, global trend toward democratization, which has reignited interest in the effects of democratic governance on state conduct abroad. The majority of that attention has been concentrated on the connection between war and democracy. Here, I return to the fundamental issue put out by Thucydides and Machiavelli, which concerns the capacity of democratic governments to enter into agreements in their foreign relations. I contend that there are theoretical and empirical reasons to disagree with the conventional understanding of "the inconstant commons." The international system's most important feature is the capacity of governments to fulfill their promises. Commitments between two governments range from formal defense treaties to informal pledges between diplomats. The capacity for commitment is crucial to the process of international institutionalization, according to liberal institutionalists. However, promises are not required to show solely cooperative conduct. The capacity for commitment is essential to international contacts, even for realists. It is obvious that the effectiveness of deterrent threats and the operation of alliance politics depend on players' capacity to fulfill their pledges [1], [2].

The prevailing view in the study of international relations has been that the anarchic nature of the international system determines one's capacity for making commitments or lack thereof. Given the significance of commitment and the long-standing worry about the instability of popular rule, it would seem worthwhile to look into the possibility that liberal and democratic domestic political and economic structures may have different effects on states' capacity to uphold their international commitments. In political systems that need public consideration and approval for significant foreign activities, the issue of communicating and maintaining commitment might seem insurmountable. However, a limited concentration on the concept of the inconstant commons could lead one to believe that there is less complexity in the interaction between international obligations and domestic politics. In this essay, I provide a workable definition of liberal democracy and infer from it a number of consequences for the capacity of governments to enter into agreements with other nations. Contrary to the widely held belief that democratic inconstancy exists, I argue that liberal democratic nations have both moral and structural traits that may greatly strengthen their foreign commitments. Then, as a preliminary empirical signal for the unique characteristics of democratic commitments in the international system, I turn to a discussion of democratic alliance behavior. I specifically provide compelling empirical data to demonstrate that coalitions between liberal democratic nations have shown to be more resilient than coalitions between nondemocratic states or coalitions between democratic and nondemocratic states [3], [4].

Both democracy and commitment are complicated concepts. Both topics have been the subject of several works. I provide working definitions for the analysis's sake, which, although not being comprehensive philosophical pronouncements, might be the starting point for a debate of these occurrences in the context of international relations. When a state inspires others' subjective conviction that it will follow through with a certain course of action, it makes a commitment to that course of action. It's possible to make small commitments that include acting in one's own best interests. The agreements that require the state to take certain steps against the grain of its apparent international player self-interest are the most intriguing ones. As a result, the United States' commitment challenge when using nuclear deterrence to defend Europe from a Soviet attack was how to persuade both the Europeans and the Soviets that American leaders would be willing to sacrifice New York in the event of a war in order to save Berlin or Paris. I'll focus on alliance commitments in particular in this piece. At their root, alliances are a response to the issue of nontrivial commitment. Beyond some modest attempts to coordinate military policies and procedures, the two would not need to formally codify their commitment on paper if the limited self-interest of one alliance member would be helped by supporting the other. By establishing a formal alliance, governments want to demonstrate to one another and to other states that they are really committed to some degree of mutual protection [5], [6].

Even more difficult to define is democracy. In this essay, I emphasize the idea of "liberal democracy." Scholars continue to argue the connection between these two notions, but my thesis takes an analytical approach from both ideas. A vision of the state that has legal restrictions on its activities is known as liberalism. A democracy is a system of governance where the majority holds the reins of power. To maintain power in a democracy, a government must be able to win the support of the majority. Liberalism will also demand that minorities have the right to speak their minds and that those who are vying for power have the freedom to use their rights in an effort to create alternative majorities. There may be conflict between the demands that power be restricted and that it belongs to the majority. But in the contemporary world, liberalism and democracy have developed a close, though imperfect, relationship. In fact, some academics contend that liberalism naturally extends to contemporary democracy in its institutional or legal meaning [7], [8].

Therefore, for the sake of this argument, liberal democracies are nations that are constrained in their conduct of foreign affairs by institutions of popular will and legal restraint that are established by their constitutions. Domestically, the sustainability of liberal democracy and the capacity of governments to keep their word are inextricably linked. The capacity of the majority to persuade minority that it will not change institutions when its narrow self-interests could be better served by giving up the idea of limited government ultimately determines whether liberal democracy will continue to exist. Therefore, a key issue in liberal democratic theory is how the majority agrees to accept restraints on its authority. Similar to this, academics have long argued the effects of majority rule and limited government on responsibilities to the outside world. It is worthwhile to briefly summarize some of these viewpoints about the capacity of liberal democratic governments to make commitments in their foreign relations before going on to the analytical part of this research.

II. DISCUSSION

Three viewpoints on the responsibilities of democracy

The three classic positions on whether democratic governments may enter into international agreements can be categorized. The first viewpoint results from the structural realist dictum that a state's underlying structure will have no bearing on how it behaves outside. According to this perspective, the needs of the allocation of power in the anarchic international system will determine a state's capacity to commit. Therefore, it is unlikely that different behaviors would consistently result from changes in home regimes. International politics, in the words of Kenneth Waltz, "consists of like units duplicating one another's activities." Because of the anarchy of the system, promises will be difficult for all nations to maintain, and democratic or authoritarian governments will have the same incentives to keep or violate agreements. Regime type has been largely ignored in the research on the nature of obligations in international relations to date. A second viewpoint that sees democratic nations as obviously less able to make serious promises has been taken by those who have addressed internal dynamics and the influence of regime type. According to Machiavelli, there is a long history of pessimism about the effectiveness of internal democracy for foreign relations in general and specifically questioning the capacity of democratic governments to enter into agreements with other countries. According to this perspective, democratic foreign policy is subject to the whims and emotions of the populace. The oft-quoted statement by Alexis de Tocqueville that "democratic governments do appear decidedly inferior to others" is supported by his assertion that democratic governments "tend to obey their feelings rather than their calculations and to abandon a long-matured plan in order to satisfy a momentary passion." The British Prime Minister of the nineteenth century, Lord Salisbury, cites the democratic publics' demand for frequent leadership changes as a significant impediment

to any individual leader committing the state to a course of action: "If for no other reason, Britain could not make military alliances on the continental pattern [9], [10]."

According to the third viewpoint, democracies are also capable of making long-term commitments. Some proponents of this viewpoint argue favorably for democratic qualities that will strengthen international obligations, while others blame democratic commitments' strength on their inability to shift direction quickly. Machiavelli exemplifies the more pessimistic viewpoint that democratic legitimacy will be increased even after objective interests have altered by the burdensome apparatus of democratic foreign diplomacy. Immanuel Kant is a prime example of the optimistic viewpoint, believing that links of commerce and common standards would bind governments with "republican" systems of governance. The democratic standards of nonviolent problem solving will be applicable both inside and across democratic nations under Kant's regime of "asocial sociability." I will present my case here in support of the third viewpoint: democratic governments should be better able to take on credible obligations abroad if they have unique institutions and preferences.

The theoretical underpinnings of democracy's uniqueness

In three chapters, I present the case for a special democratic capacity to enter into long-term international agreements. I start by examining a number of claims on the fundamental stability of democratic foreign policy. Then, I contend that democratic governments have unique and specific values and foreign policy choices that may support enduring international commitments. Finally, I propose that certain traits of the internal institutions of democratic governments are crucial in raising the legitimacy of pledges made on the international stage.

Foreign Policy Stability in Liberal Democratic States

The main defense of those who doubt democratic nations' capacity to uphold their end of international agreements is on the supposed unpredictability of democratic policy decisions. Therefore, I shall start making the case for steadfast democratic commitments with those justifications. Here, I provide a quick evaluation of the stability of foreign policy in terms of public preferences, democratic leadership, and foreign policy institutions. In each instance, I start by examining the conventional theory of democratic instability before moving on to a convincing defense of the consistency of democratic nations' commitments to international obligations.

i. The Stability of Public Preferences

"An overtly interventionist and 'responsible' United States hides a covertly isolationist longing,... an overtly tolerant America is at the same time barely stifling intolerance reactions,... an idealistic America is muttering soto voce cynicisms,... a surface optimism in America conceals a dread of the future.' The public opinion research that highlights the fragility of political concepts in the general public has strengthened this perception even more. We could anticipate democratic foreign policies to be quite unpredictable if democratic publics are fickle and if democratic foreign policies are very responsive to public preferences. Although the idea of changeability is powerful, we shouldn't embrace it too quickly. The most important recent research in this field has suggested that democratic governments' internal preference orderings are really extremely stable. It is wise to have in mind Waltz's caution when evaluating the stability of democratic policy that it is crucial to take nondemocratic states' capabilities into account when measuring democratic states' prowess in the field of foreign policy. It may be true that democratic governments alternate between isolationism and interventionism, but this does not indicate that other nations, just because they are ruled by a single dictator, have stable preferences. In order to disprove the notion that the public are gullible, which he attributes to Titus Livy and "all other historians," Machiavelli uses a comparison argument:

Therefore, I contend that any group of persons one chooses, including rulers, may be held accountable for the failure for which authors assign responsibility to the general populace. Therefore, neither the character of the people nor the nature of kings is more abhorrent because when there is nothing to stop them from doing improperly, everyone acts improperly and to the same degree. Numerous other dictators and princes, as well as Roman emperors, are more instances of this. In them, we see a level of inconsistent and variable behavior that is never observed in the general population.

The democratic nations weren't sure how to interpret their responsibilities to the Czechoslovak Republic. However, they did eventually carry out their treaty duties with Poland in very specific ways. Germans and Soviets were experimenting with sharp changes in their attitudes toward one another at the same time. Of course, the Nazi-Soviet alliance ultimately turned out to be useless. The democratic governments, on the other hand, maintained the fundamental contours of their obligations to one another despite very high internal and international costs.

Despite the pessimistic predictions of many observers, foreign policy matters do seem to have had a significant impact on American political politics. The extremes of anarchy or paralysis that the detractors of democratic foreign policy had anticipated have not resulted from this position. The public's collective policy opinions have generally been steady and closely linked to the demands of outside circumstances. Democracies seem to be able to sustain stable equilibrium policies when we approach the problem of policy stability from an empirical perspective.

ii. The Stability of Democratic Leadership

Limitations on the term of government officials have been a key component of the restrictions on government authority in contemporary liberal democracies. When considering how democracy and commitment are related, frequent leadership turnover is a key component. According to research by Henry Bienen and Nicholas Van de Walle, leaders of democratic governments do have shorter terms than those of non-democratic ones. People who want to make agreements with democracies must be prepared for the risk that a new leader won't be as willing to keep their word. Every four years, a significant leadership transition might occur in the US. The government may be overthrown at any moment under parliamentary systems. A new administration may endanger the many little understandings that regulate ties between nations, but certain types of agreements will undoubtedly endure throughout regimes. However, the fact that leadership changes more often need not be a bad thing for commitment. A comparison viewpoint is crucial once again. Changes in Democratic leadership occur often and are regularized.

The permanence of pledges may be enhanced by democratic regimes' capacity for seamless leadership changes. In fact, Riker contends that quick elite movement itself may stabilize policy. Nondemocratic governments may see fewer leadership changes than democratic ones, but such changes may be more often followed by changes in attitudes and policies. When compared to the transitions from the Shah of Iran to Ayatollah Khomeini, Mao Tse-tung to Deng Xiaoping, Joseph Stalin to Nikita Khrushchev, or Leonid Brezhnev to Mikhail Gorbachev, the shift from Presidents Carter to Reagan is insignificant. Finally, it's crucial to keep in mind that liberal democracy's legal foundation provides present leaders the authority to bind future leaders. Instead of resting with identifiable people or being limitless, political power in liberal democracies rests abstractly with the office and is constrained by legal norms. Therefore, the domestic legal system obligates future leaders to uphold the treaty promises made by their forebears.

iii. The Stability of Democratic Institutions

Liberal democracies tend to have very short and uncertain political lives for individual presidents, but internal political structures are far more durable. Liberal democracy necessitates, as I have argued above, that majorities be capable of committing to durable institutional frameworks that codify minority rights and restraints on majority authority. Democratic states should find it simpler to make pledges if they have institutional stability notwithstanding frequent and regularized leadership changes. For instance, stable civil service bureaucracies that oversee international affairs contribute to some degree of policy consistency.

The Distinctive Preferences of Liberal Democracies

We also need to consider the kind of values democratic governments bring to bear when considering international obligations generally in order to react to the classic criticism of democratic foreign policymaking. Analysts of the liberal democratic republics often concentrate on their political cultures. According to this line of reasoning, democratic publics have certain ideals and values that are unique. Numerous claims were made by Tocqueville on the particular preferences that would develop in democratic political culture. He believed that these choices were generally opposed to long-term international engagement and successful foreign policy commitments. Democratic states are usually accused of being isolationist. Democratic governments will pay less attention to their international duties as they become more inward, which might make them less dependable. However, this reasoning is not infallible. There are at least two other relationships that might exist between isolationism and obligations to other countries. First, in line with Machiavelli's contention, an isolationist turn may cause governments to give less consideration to the necessity to renounce a commitment once it starts to adversely affect their interests. Second, an isolationist state may want to limit its promises to those that actually affect its most important national interests and are so more likely to be kept.

i. The Role of Law in Liberal Democracy

In addition, Tocqueville contends that a democratic political culture must uphold the rule of law. Liberal democracy's internal practices need a fundamental adherence to legal obligations. Recently, some have asserted that preferences for exterior policies also reflect these internal standards. While the role of law in democratic foreign affairs is still debated, there does seem to be a link between international and domestic legal duties. For instance, in the Anglo-American legal tradition, international law has long been openly integrated into domestic law and has now expanded to the majority of other major liberal democracies. Legitimacy and a state's reputation for dependability do seem to have at least substantial rhetorical appeal in interstate interactions under democratic politics. If democratic people believe that legal standards have some kind of universal validity, regardless of where their respect for the law comes from (practice, ideology, or some other more primal tendency), then this will heighten their awareness of the binding character of international agreements.

ii. Democratic Interdependence

Tocqueville points to the impacts of "interdependence" as a third source of different preferences in liberal democratic governments. Liberal economic systems that encourage increasing commerce and other forms of interaction among their populations will inevitably develop interdependence. This reasoning closely resembles Kant's claim about the tranquil union of democratic governments, which is founded on the unrestricted movement of people and products. As a possible explanation for the lack of conflict between democratic states, Tocqueville proposes interdependence: "As the spread of equality, taking place in several countries simultaneously, simultaneously draws the inhabitants into trade and industry, not only do their tastes come to be alike, but their interests become so mixed and entangled that no nation can inflict on others ills which will not fall back on its own head." In the end, everyone will come to see war as a catastrophe that is virtually as bad for the conqueror as it is for the conquered. An assault by a third party on an ally might cause the interdependent ally nearly as much harm as the attacked state. Therefore, when confronted with an external danger, interdependence may strengthen the legitimacy of agreements between nations.

The Institutional Resources for Democratic Commitments

Liberal democracy increases the likelihood that interacting interest groups will be able to persuade society as a whole to take their concerns into account. In addition to reflecting the specific preferences of liberal nations, the participation of interest groups with stakes in international obligations also highlights the importance of their internal institutions in fortifying ties.

i. The Multiple Levels of Democratic Domestic Politics

Robert Putnam's new claim that two-level games are a reasonable analog for many facets of international politics is reminiscent of the idea of liberal democracy as a system of majoritarian and legal restraints on governmental activity. According to his theory, state leaders must engage in negotiations on a global scale before returning home to persuade people to make promises on a local one. The state will struggle to make the credible promises it would otherwise select if foreign policy is contingent on popular acceptance and if public preferences are either different from leader choices or are continuously or drastically changing. Putnam draws an intriguing contrast between voluntary and involuntary withdrawal from cooperative programs in this respect. Democratic leaders can enter into international agreements in good faith but then find themselves unable to carry them out due to democratic restrictions on their power at home, as was the case with Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations or Jimmy Carter and the Second Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Treaty. However, this does not adequately account for the influence of domestic restrictions. In *The Popular Philosophy*, Walter Lippmann expressed concern that the inability of democratic regimes to garner popular support for reform would cause them to get mired in unfavorable policies. This is also the rationale for Machiavelli's claim that democracies are less inclined to breach treaties than autocracies, even when they have compelling reasons to do so. According to this reasoning, the same elements that make it challenging for democratic governments to engage into agreements also make it difficult for them to exit from them.

The capacity of democratic leaders to make decisions that support the interests of a sizable domestic constituency will be improved significantly by domestic politics. Without a formal alliance, the United States may nevertheless effectively commit to Israel because it has a sizable domestic audience that will watch over and uphold that promise. German environmental activists as well as the other parties will be keenly watching Germany's rather hesitant capitulation to the 1994 round of the Basel treaty barring all exports of hazardous waste. Therefore, when the interests of foreign nations are shared by substantial domestic organizations,

interdependence and a strong voice for domestic actors have the potential to greatly boost the capacity of democratic governments to commit.

ii. The Transparency of Democratic Domestic Politics

Given how transparent democratic political systems are, the many levels of policymaking have a special relevance. The liberal concepts of limited government and political competition would be worthless without the freedom to observe what the government is doing as well as the right to voice and organize alternative political viewpoints. However, it is exceedingly challenging to treat external actors differently while granting internal actors transparency. The main publications that provide daily investigative services on the decision-making processes of the democratic state are available for subscription to any embassy. The connections between the obligations made to them and the home audience may be seen by outsiders. Deviating from a democratic leader's public commitment to a certain course of action might have both local and foreign ramifications. The Iraqis should have recognized that President Bush's promise to evacuate Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait would have an impact on both the upcoming election and the global situation. Recent research at the nexus of economics and political science has shown the connection between social structure and nations' capacity to fulfill their domestic audiences. Douglas North and Barry Weingast's interpretation of the Glorious Revolution as a process of rewriting a constitution to increase the capacity of the state to make commitments and Francis Velde and Thomas Sargent's interpretation of the French Revolution are two particularly intriguing examples of this literature. The writers of these works contend that democratic institutions may strengthen the state's capacity to bind itself to many domestic players. Democratic governments will be able to depend on home audiences to support their international credibility in the international arena if they are able to openly connect external pledges with internal commitments.

Thomas Schelling makes the case that political costs are crucial for boosting the legitimacy of international obligations. He focuses on the political expenses that are incurred within the framework of the global order. However, if they can be effectively viewed from the outside, equal advantages may be obtained by paying same expenditures at home. James Fearon's research on the function of audience costs in cross-cultural interactions explicitly illustrates the relationship between outward commitments and internal political costs. Democratic leaders will have greater credibility when they send signals abroad that also have domestic repercussions than if they send identical signals with little or no domestic repercussions. While all nations incur certain internal costs as a result of their foreign policy decisions, democratic states may differ in the scope of domestic accountability. If a leader breaks an international pledge, statements and actions may have created domestic expectations that may cost the audience or result in electoral retribution. For all governments, it is at best difficult to make genuine international obligations. I have suggested that democratic governments should be quite successful in entering into international agreements, in contrast to the conventional perception of unreliability. The next step is to turn to some empirical studies that aim to evaluate democratic regimes' general capacity for making and keeping promises.

III. CONCLUSION

The majority rule system is legally constrained in liberal democracies. Because of these constraints on their power at any given time, such as the requirement that the President of the United States submit treaties to the Senate for ratification, and the potential for public preferences to change, decision-makers' ability to commit the state in terms of foreign policy is constrained. The most prevalent defense of the link between democratic states and commitment in the international system builds on these traits and emphasizes the impermanent nature of commons and the belief that democratic government will be especially unsuited to long-term commitments. This conventional approach would not capture the complexity of the link between polity type and commitment capacity. There is a theoretical foundation for policy stability under liberal democratic regimes, as Riker has argued, and this has been confirmed in several studies of the stability of foreign policy. Theoretically, liberal democracies should also be better able to form strong international obligations as a result of the establishment of connections between internal and exterior commitments as well as the emergence of shared preferences via interdependence.

To determine the overall impact of the elements that support and undermine democratic principles, it will ultimately be necessary to separate these factors and empirically evaluate each one's relative relevance. I've provided a start on that empirical endeavor here with a thorough examination of the longevity of democratic partnerships. The alliance behavior of democratic governments has particular features, which is consistent with Doyle and Kant's hypotheses. Democracies often form alliances with other democracies, as Siverson and Emmons have shown. Here, I've shown that these alliances often persist longer than those between non

democracies or those between democracies and no democracies. When seen against the backdrop of the continuously evolving international environment, democratic alliances do seem notably resilient. Before we will wish to support a substantial form of the "pacific union" of democratic governments, more effort will be needed. We may be more forceful in saying that democratic nations have not shown a lack of capacity to make long-term commitments, in contrast to the negative views of people like Tocqueville or Salisbury.

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