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Democratic Peace in South Asia?

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INTRODUCTION

The problems and prospects of democratic peace have attracted both scholars of international relations and policy makers in recent years. The main argument is that the promotion of democracy will lower the probability of war because democracies have not yet gone to war against each other. The promotion of democratic governance therefore became one of the cornerstones of the foreign policies in both the U.S. and the member countries of the European Union (EU) in the 1990s.

South Asia can surely be regarded as a region where the benefits of democratic peace would be more than desirable. South Asia's image as a region of chronic instability was only to be seconded by U.S. President Clinton's remarks in March 2000 that the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir is the 'most dangerous place in the world'. The events following September 11 and the growing tensions between India and Pakistan after the attacks of Islamic militants on the Indian parliament in December 2001 have again increased the probability of a nuclear war in this part of the world.

But the overall picture of the region is more complex. Besides the well-known conventional and nuclear security risks, South Asia is also among the poorest and least developed regions in the world according to international social and economic indicators. Despite these developments there are remarkable traditions of democratic rule at the same time. During most of the 1990s, South Asia was the biggest democratic region after the transition from authoritarian rule in Pakistan (1988), Nepal (1990) and Bangladesh (1990). Moreover, South Asia is the only region where western political institutions go hand in hand with a variety of non-western civilisations and where religion plays an active role in current politics. The only forms of Hindu and Islamic democracies are to be found in Nepal and Bangladesh, and Buddhism received a foremost place in the Sri Lanka constitution.

In contrast to other Asian regions there is a strong commitment by South Asian countries to follow the development model that is included in the democratic peace debate. There is a great consensus for democracy and economic liberalisation. The

constitutions of South Asian countries promote individual rights in contrast to community rights that created the debate on “Asian values” in parts of East and Southeast Asia some years ago.

The ambivalent picture of conflict, poverty, and democracy offers an interesting test case for the theoretical assumptions of the democratic peace debate. In how far have periods of democratic governance on the domestic level as well as on the bilateral level brought about greater periods of peace as suggested by the theoretical debate? Will widespread democratisation and economic interdependence improve the prospects for peace and stability in the region? In order to address the problems and prospects of the democratic peace argument in South Asia, I will first give a short overview about the theoretical argument. In the second part, I will look at the domestic situation, the bilateral relations at the regional level and the role of economic interdependence and international institutions. Finally, I will draw conclusions about the applicability of the democratic peace argument for South Asia.

THE THEORETICAL DEBATE

Few other theoretical debates have created so much public attention than the discussion about democratic peace. In a discipline like international relations that is characterized by various disputes the debate seems to have an exceptional place because it is regarded as „the closest thing we have to an empirical law in the study of international relations.“¹ The argument that democracies do not go to war with each other is a powerful challenge for basic assumptions of the realist school of international relations. Here the external behaviour of states is either explained by the anarchic structure of the international system and the self-help behaviour of states or by their quest for power and their capabilities.

The starting point of the democratic peace debate is Immanuel Kant’s small volume „Zum ewigen Frieden“ (Perpetual Peace).² Already in 1795 he laid down two conditions for the peaceful coexistence of states: First, all states should become republics. Secondly, they should form a “peace union” (Friedensbund).³ This international institution, to use a contemporary term, should promote the peaceful coexistence and should prevent wars.

Kant’s arguments have established a sophisticated debate that can be differentiated into a monadic and a dyadic level. The monadic level focuses on the internal structure of the state and can be differentiated in two arguments. The first argument emphasizes the norms of the democratic state. In contrast to autocratic regimes, political decisions are reached by compromise and consensus. The second

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¹ Levy, Jack. 1989. ‘Domestic Politics and War’, in Rotberg, Robert I./Rabb, Theodore K. [eds.]. *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*. New York, p. 88.

² Kant, Immanuel. 1991. *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*. Stuttgart.

³ Kant (1991), p. 18.

argument emphasizes the institutional structure of democratic states. Political decision making in democracies is very complex and influenced by many interests groups. This guarantees that any decision for war has to pass various *checks and balances*.⁴ Moreover, democratic rulers are more accountable towards their citizens who have to pay the price for any warlike intervention by their governments. Because democratic governments can be replaced by elections their willingness to engage in war is only very limited. Kant has already mentioned the hardships of war among which the citizens have to decide themselves.⁵

In the dyadic view the interaction between democracies comes to the fore. The starting point is that democracies are not more peaceful than non-democratic regimes, but that they have not fought wars against each other up to now. The reasons for this cannot be found in their internal structure but in their bilateral relationship. Risse-Kappen has pointed to the importance of interaction and communication. According to him, democracies share a “presumption of innocence” among each other and feel less threatened by other democracies. If domestic conflicts are solved by peaceful means, then decision makers tend to apply these norms in their relations with other democracies. Moreover, public opinion plays a much bigger role in the decision making on foreign policy.⁶ A similar argument looks not so much at the perception but at the shared values in order to explain democratic peace. The argument is that the recognition of freedom rights in a democracy is also awarded by citizens of other democracies. This creates a respect for political independence of these states and an abandonment of any form of violent intervention in their internal affairs.⁷

The most sophisticated approach includes a triadic argument and was developed by Russett/Oneal. They demonstrated that democracy, economic interdependence and the membership in international institutions explain the peaceful coexistence of democracies in the international system.⁸ Their focus is not so much on the well-known vicious circles of anarchy that come from the realist tradition. Instead of this, they promote a virtuous circle that consists of democracy, interdependence and international institutions in order to secure peace in the international system.

⁴ See Teusch, Ulrich, Kahl, Martin. 2001. ‘Ein Theorem mit Verfallsdatum? Der „Demokratische Frieden“ im Kontext der Globalisierung’, in *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, 8. Jg. (2001) Heft 2, pp. 291-292.

⁵ See Kant (1991), pp. 12-13.

⁶ See Risse-Kappen, Thomas. 2001. ‘Demokratischer Frieden? Unfriedliche Demokratien? Überlegungen zu einem theoretischen Puzzle’, in Krell, Gert/Müller, Harald. [eds.]. *Frieden und Konflikt in den internationalen Beziehungen*. Frankfurt am Main, pp 175-178.

⁷ See Teusch/Kahl (2001), p. 293.

⁸ Oneal, John, R./Russett Bruce. 1999. ‘The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefit of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992’, in *World Politics*, Vol. 52 (October 1999), No. 1, pp. 1-37; Oneal, John, R./Russett Bruce, Triangulating Peace. 2001. *Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. New York/London.

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA

The theoretical debate opens up a number of interesting questions for South Asia⁹. In contrast to the general debate with the focus on quantitative research, I will apply a more qualitative approach. This also implies a number of empirical problems because survey data is hardly available on a comparative level for all South Asian countries. I will look at the different arguments and assumptions of the theoretical debate of the different approaches (monadic, dyadic, and triadic) and ask for their relevance for South Asia. The three approaches correspond to a domestic level (monadic approach), and a regional level (dyadic approach). The triadic approach takes into account effects of foreign direct investment (FDI) and the role of international organisations. These effects will be summarized under the international level.

The main focus will be on India-Pakistan relations but the other countries will also be taken into consideration when deemed necessary. The period to be explored is rather narrow. India and Pakistan have only limited periods where both countries enjoyed democratic rule. The first was 1972 to 1977, the second from 1988 to 1999. India and Bangladesh shared relations between democratically elected governments between 1972 to 1975 and from 1991 until now. In Nepal the first democratic phase started with the Delhi settlement in 1951. The first parliamentary elections took place in February 1959 and ended with the dissolution of parliament by the King in December 1960. The second phase started after the democratic transition in 1990 and came to an end when the king sacked the government and postponed the elections in October 2002. The longest democratic dyad in South Asia are the relations between India and Sri Lanka. Here it was only the 18 month period of emergency between 1975 to 1977 in India that interrupted the democratic relationship between both countries for a short time. Although some of the periods seem to be rather short, this point can hardly be used against the democratic peace. The main argument is that ‘democracies do not go to war with each other’, no matter how old they are.

THE DOMESTIC LEVEL: DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, SHARED NORMS, AND FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING

South Asia is an interesting laboratory. In no other region the interplay between western political institutions and religious traditions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism has developed a similar variance of democracies with different cultural backgrounds from the West. The definition of democracy mostly follows minimalist criteria as formulated by Diamond, Linz and Lipset. Democracy is as a political system that meets at least three conditions: first, there is competition among organized groups and individuals over government power on a regular basis and without the use of force; second, it allows for political participation through

⁹ The following observations will be limited to the developments in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

regular free elections that should not exclude defined social groups; and third, it offers a certain level of civil and political rights that ensures competition and participation.¹⁰

The state of democracy in South Asia is difficult to evaluate. Looking at the electoral records of South Asian countries we can at least conclude, that the foremost function of democracy, the exchange of power by electoral means is achieved. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have an impressive electoral record under their democratic governments. In contrast to popular views, incumbent governments are not approved but are mostly voted out of power in elections. But the picture gets marred if democracy is regarded as a set of institutions for peaceful conflict mediation. All democratic governments in South Asia have to cope with violent conflicts that threaten the integrity of their statehood showing the failure of democratic institutions to deal with these challenges.¹¹ Unfortunately, democratic governance is also not positively correlated with the rule of law or positive human development. Despite the empirical problems involved there is ample evidence by the reports from the media, as well as national and international human rights organisations that the assurance of constitutional rights is hardly met in most countries. Figures from Freedom House illustrate this ambivalence in democratic performance. It is especially noteworthy that figures for civil liberties that include constitutional rights are worse than the respective country figures for political rights. Even if all countries enjoyed an institutional democratic setup, Kant would hardly be satisfied with the way in which they work.

Table 1: Gross National Product (GNP) per capita, Human Development Index, Political Rights and Civil Liberties in South Asian Countries

| Country | GDP per capita (PPP US\$, 1999) | HDI- Rank (2001) | Freedom Rating (1999/2000) | Political Rights | Civil Liberties |
|------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Bangladesh | 1.483 | 132 | Partly free | 3 | 4 |
| India | 2.248 | 115 | Free | 2 | 3 |
| Nepal | 1.237 | 129 | Partly free | 3 | 4 |
| Pakistan | 1.834 | 127 | Not free | 7 | 5 |
| Sri Lanka | 3.279 | 81 | Partly free | 3 | 4 |

Sources:

http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2001/en/indicator/indicator.cfm?File=cty_f_BGD.html (5.8.02).

Freedom House Survey Team, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm> (5.8.02).

¹⁰ Diamond, L./Linz, J.J./Lipset, S.M. 1990. 'Introduction: Comparing Experiences with Democracy', in Diamond, L./Linz, J.J./Lipset, S.M. [eds.]. *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*. Boulder, pp. 6-7.

¹¹ There is a wide literature dealing with the challenges of minority conflicts in the respective countries, see among many others De Silva, K.M. [ed.]. 2000. *Conflict and Violence in South Asia. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka*. Kandy.

One of the main arguments is that citizens in a democracy value their basic rights and freedom and are willing to share these norms with citizens from other democracies. These shared norms on a societal as well as on a leadership level are regarded as a strong protection against war.¹² Whether this kind of public democratic culture does have roots in South Asia is an interesting research question. At least the conclusion seems valid, that it is hardly applied to neighbouring countries. Even if democratic norms are shared, widespread popular mistrust against neighbouring countries is still the dominant feature. The persistence of negative images and stereotypes is most obvious in Indo-Pakistan relations. The endeavours of the BJP-government in India to give a Hindu religious complexion to the educational system in accordance with the Hindutva-ideology is only one piece of this puzzle.¹³ The debate about text books and the type of collective images they promote is another aspect of this development.

The relations with India are an important part of the bilateral relations and the domestic debate not only in Pakistan but also in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. But India's negative image in the neighbouring countries due to the various bilateral conflicts persisted even after their democratic transition. The far reaching changes that India undertook in her regional policy with the Gujral doctrine in the mid-1990s, did not seem to have altered the perception of India as a regional hegemon.¹⁴ The remarks of Bangladesh home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury in March 2002 about India's still expansionist designs can be regarded as representative for the perception of many intellectuals and political decision-makers in the neighbouring countries.¹⁵

Despite the deplorable state of democracy in South Asia, what are its repercussions on foreign policy? It is one argument in the debate, that the transparent political process of democracies prevents leaders from going to war with each other. South Asian countries are, like many western countries, characterized by the fact that, first, there is a great consensus on foreign policy. Secondly, South Asia also equals most developed countries in the fact that foreign policy issues do not have a high priority on the electoral agenda. Kashmir may be the most pressing bilateral problem for India and Pakistan but given the socio-economic situation it is hardly astonishing that the Kashmir issue figures not very high on the voter's agenda. The relative unimportance of foreign policy issues for

¹² For the importance of shared culture of political behaviour on the leadership level, see Weart, Spencer R. 1998. *Never at War: Why Democracies will not fight one another*. New Haven.

¹³ Patil, Reshma. 2002. 'State sets new standards in politically correct education', in *Express India*, 15 May 2002; for one examples of prejudices among the armed forces see Schoettli, Urs. 2002. 'Armageddon in Südasien. 'Die nukleare Versuchung im Bruderkrieg', in *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 4 June 2002.

¹⁴ This doctrine formulated by prime minister I.K. Gujral in 1997 emphasised the principle of non-reciprocity in India's relations with her neighbours, see Gujral, Inder K. 1997. 'Our Neighbours and Our World', in *Frontline*, 4. – 17. April 1997, pp. 10-16.

¹⁵ See Habib, Haroon. 2002. 'India expansionist: Bangladesh', in *The Hindu*, 12 March 2002.

elections was elaborated for India, but there is some evidence that this holds true for the other countries as well.¹⁶

Various studies especially from the U.S. have highlighted the impact of institutional and organisational structures on foreign policy decision making. The famous dictum “where you stand depend on where you sit” from Allison’s study on American foreign policy decision during the Cuban crisis revealed the constraints involved.¹⁷ In contrast to this, there is a lot of evidence that foreign policy decision making in South Asian countries in crisis situations, like war, is limited to small circles, be they hand-picked ministers, advisors or members of kitchen cabinets. Nehru’s dominance of India’s foreign policy is as well known as the kitchen cabinet decisions of his daughter. The role of Parliament in foreign policy matters was reduced, so that democratic checks and balances did not work.¹⁸ The political decision for the nuclear tests in May 1998 by the newly elected BJP-government was also limited to a very small group of persons within the government. In Sri Lanka the UNP-government held secret negotiations to bargain the Indo-Sri Lanka treaty of 1987 that was followed by a massive employment of Indian troops on the island. In Pakistan the military has the last word in security and foreign policy matters thereby curtailing the sovereignty of elected governments. One of the rare examples of an effective democratic control of foreign policy issues is Nepal where the founding fathers of the 1991 constitution included a paragraph that parliament has to give its consent to treaties that relate among other things to foreign affairs or boundaries questions of the with a two third majority. This reflects the past bitter experience of Nepalese governments in their dealings with India.¹⁹

Higher democratic participation in foreign policy matters can be expected when the process of economic liberalisation will continue as the Indian case illustrates. In contrast to the period of mixed economy, liberalisation will make it necessary for the different interest groups like companies and trade unions from the agricultural, industrial, and service sector to aggregate their political interests and articulate their demands towards the government. The growing world market integration will also increase the importance of other ministries in foreign policy decision making. The finance, commerce or trade ministries will emphasize their different interests compared to the national security issues. Liberalisation has also increased the foreign engagement of the chief ministers of Indian states in their search for foreign investment. The slow pace of SAARC can also be explained, besides Indo-Pakistani rivalries, by the institutional framework in which it is embedded. Regional co-operation is mainly dealt with in the ministries of foreign affairs were perceptions of national security normally dominate political decision making. Widening the SAARC process to respective ministries, like finance, labour,

¹⁶ See Ghosh, Partha S. 1994. ‘Foreign Policy and Electoral Politics in India. Inconsequential Connection’, in *Asian Survey* 34 (September 1994) 9, pp. 807-817.

¹⁷ See Allison, Graham/Zelikow, Philip, Essence of Decision. 1999. *Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, New York.

¹⁸ For the role of the Parliament in Indo-China relations see Jetly, Nancy. 1979. *India China Relations, 1947-1977. A Study of Parliament’s Role in the Making of Foreign Policy*. New Delhi.

¹⁹ See Art. 126, 2 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 (1990).

transport, would probably also give the SAARC process a much greater importance domestic importance.

That greater participation as an indicator of democracy can have an impact on foreign policy is illustrated by the increasing importance of NGO. The debate about the Narmada project has demonstrated the growing impact of NGOs on government policies in India. Such examples underline the liberal argument about the rising importance of non-state actors in foreign policy decisions. But when it comes to security concerns, the decision making still seems to be limited to a small group of people.

*THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
DEMOCRATIC RELATIONS, COVERT ACTIONS, AND THE
KARGIL WAR*

Regional relations in South Asia are still dominated by India's security concerns on the one hand and the apprehensions of her smaller neighbours against it on the other hand. The long democratic tradition of India's political system and her political elites did not seem to have an impact on her foreign policy towards the smaller neighbours. The promotion of democracy could be used when it deemed necessary but could also be neglected when security concerns were touched.

India's intervention in Nepal in the early 1950s and in Bangladesh in 1971 can be used to demonstrate a certain interest of Indian governments to promote democracy in neighbouring countries. But the argument cannot be taken too far. India's security interest against China in Nepal and her interest to defeat Jinnah's two nation theory with the separation of East Pakistan can be regarded as equally strong motivations for India's intervention. That security concerns dominate democratic principles became most obvious in the case of Sri Lanka. The training and support of Tamil militant groups in the 1980s in their fight against a democratically elected government in Colombo can only be understood in the light of Indira Gandhi's security doctrine and her hegemonic ambitions in South Asia. This kind of covert action of democracies against each other is not a new phenomenon. The U.S. intervention in Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973 and against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in the 1980s can be cited as other examples. Some authors see these covert action as an affirmation of the democratic peace argument as "covert action [...] would usually be perceived as illegitimate by citizens of the intervening power."²⁰ But the discovery of India's covert actions against Sri Lanka did not rise similar protests like in the U.S.

That democracy hardly made a difference in bilateral relations became most obvious in Indo-Pakistan relations during the 1990s when both countries were ruled by democratic governments. Despite free and fair elections and changes of governments their relations turned even worse. The Kashmir conflict saw a new escalation of violence during the 1990s, with the numbers of victims going up steadily. The nuclear factor was already a threat before the tests of 1998 like the

²⁰ Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 62.

crisis of 1990 illustrated.²¹ The nuclear tests of 1998 demonstrated the will of both democratic governments in India and Pakistan to pursue the military logic to achieve their foreign policy goals.

The Kargil war of summer 1999 deserves special attention.²² The Kargil episode seemed to be one of the rare instances when two democracies have fought a war with each other. 'War' normally includes military activities with more than 1.000 deaths in a battle. In summer 1999 India and Pakistan could be regarded as democratic countries. The elections in India brought the BJP-coalition to power in spring 1998, and the February elections of 1997 in Pakistan saw the return of Nawaz Sharif to the government. It is not astonishing, that Indian and Pakistan media reports differed in the number of casualties. Pakistani sources claimed that up to 1.700 Indians have been killed, whereas the Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes admitted that the Indian army lost 519 men. General Malik who led the Indian operation in Kargil said that around 1.350 men had been killed, two thirds of them from Pakistan.²³ Pakistan's Information Minister Mushahid Hussain did not hesitate to call the Kargil episode "a de facto fourth Indo-Pak war".²⁴ Some authors still question that Kargil was an interstate war because the incursion was undertaken mainly by Islamic guerrillas.²⁵ In contrast to this, Indian army officials have identified various parts of the Pakistani armed forces like the Northern Light Infantry, Special Services Group and Chitral Scouts who participated in the fighting.²⁶ Think Tanks like RAND have confirmed the involvement of regular military forces in the fighting and conflict researchers have classified Kargil as a 'war'.²⁷ This shatters the democratic peace argument and it remains open to argument whether this episode will be the exception that may confirm the rule. At the same time Kargil also contested the assertion that nuclear powers do not go to war with each other.²⁸

²¹ See Hoodbhoy, Pervez. 1996. 'Nuclear Issues: Myths and Realities', in Krepon, Michael/Sevak, Amit [eds.]. *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building, and Reconciliation in South Asia*. New Delhi, pp. 53-76.

²² For a more detailed account of the Kargil war see Executive Summary of the Kargil Committee Report, at <http://alfa.nic.in/rs/25indi1.htm#top>.

²³ For various figures see India suffered 1,700 dead in Kashmir: COAS, in: *Dawn*, 25. August 1999; Kargil cost India 20 billion rupees, in *Dawn*, 9 December 1999; 'Das Kriegsende in Kaschmir und die Folgen. Wachsendes Misstrauen gegen die Regierung in Pakistan', in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 21. July 1999.

²⁴ See Baruah, Amit. 1999. 'Pak. propaganda reveals its failures', in *The Hindu*, 27. July 1999.

²⁵ See Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 48.

²⁶ For the identification of the Pakistani troops see the remarks of General Malik that headed the Indian troops in Kargil in 'Das Kriegsende in Kaschmir und die Folgen. Wachsendes Misstrauen gegen die Regierung in Pakistan', in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 21 July 1999.

²⁷ See Wallensteen, Peter, Sollenberg, Margareta. 2001. 'Armed Conflict, 1989-2000', in *Journal of Peace Research*, 38 (2001) 5, p. 639. Tellis, Ashley J., Fair, Christine C., Medby Jamison J. 2001. *Limited Conflict under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis*. Washington, p. ix.

²⁸ See Hagerty, Devin T. 1998. *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia*. Cambridge.

The contradictions of the Kargil episode point to various problems in the assumptions of the democratic peace argument. Knowing about the role of the military in Pakistan political decision-making, especially in security and foreign policy matters, it is quite obvious that Kargil was intended to thwart the Lahore process of the political leadership that was initiated in February 1999. Therefore it would be easy to qualify Pakistan simply as a non-democratic state. This would save the democratic peace argument but would be a delicate blow to the process of democratic transformation in the country.²⁹

The limits of the democratic peace become clearer when looking at democratic dyads like India and Sri Lanka. Of course, both countries did not go to war with each other and bilateral relations were good for most of the time since independence. The Indian intervention of 1987 took place after a formal accord and the official invitation of the Sri Lankan government. Nevertheless, Indo-Sri Lankan relations illustrate at least two shortcomings of the democratic peace debate. First, democratic peace seem to offer an alternative model that followed liberal-institutionalist lines rather than neo-realist assumptions of power and national self-interest. Unfortunately, the democratic traditions could not overrule neo-realist security interests permanently. On the other hand, this does not mean, that neo-realist assumptions have always shaped bilateral relations. But it seems that democracy alone will not prevent democratic states to pursue a hegemonic policy against other democracies. Secondly, democratic peace protagonists put their emphasis on classical interstate war. Unfortunately, most violent conflicts are inner-state conflicts since the end of the Cold War. Whether democracies are more immune against civil wars is a different research question.³⁰

The experiences of most South Asian countries demonstrate, that democratic institutions *per se* are not sufficient to prevent violent conflicts.³¹ South Asia offers various examples for democratic governments supporting militant movements in neighbouring democratic countries. Again, India and Pakistan could be cited as case studies. There are various claims that both countries supported militant movement in the other countries and again, democracies did not seem to make a decisive difference. The Indian training for Tamil militants is again a good case if this kind of modern, indirect warfare that can also occur between democracies. Although it is difficult to evaluate it empirically, there is some evidence that more than 1.000 people were killed in the fighting between the Sri Lankan army and Indian trained Tamil militant troops even before the Indian intervention in 1987.

²⁹ The minutes of Bruce Riedel in the talks between President Clinton and Nawaz Sharif on 4 July 1999 in Washington seem to underline that military actions were undertaken without consent from the civilian government, see Riedel, Bruce, *American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House*, Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI), Policy Paper Series 2002, Philadelphia, at <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/casi/reports/RiedelPaper051302.htm>.

³⁰ See Synder, Jack. 2000. *From Voting to Violence. Democratisation and Nationalist Conflict*. New York-London.

³¹ See Wagner, Christian. 1999. 'Democracy and State in South Asia: Between Fragmentation and Consolidation?' In *Asian Survey*, Vol. 39 (November/December 1999) 6, pp. 908-925.

*THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:
ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS*

The democratic transitions in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan between 1988 and 1991 and the economic liberalisation in India after 1991 brought an unprecedented correspondence of political systems and economic policies in South Asia. Until the military coup in Pakistan in October 1999, all states had democratic regimes and they are still pursuing a policy of economic liberalisation and world market integration. Compared to its population, the share of South Asia in world trade is still marginal. Being the second largest country and the eleventh largest national economy in the world, India's share in the world market is less than one percent. The proportional figures for other countries may be better because they have a longer tradition liberal economic policies. But even countries like Sri Lanka or Pakistan are far away from the export/trade figures of Southeast Asian countries. The attractiveness of South Asia for foreign investment is still limited. The chronic instability of the region has prevented a large influx of foreign direct investment. India is by far the most attractive market for foreign investors, and received considerable FDI compared to the pre-1991 period. But in the international comparison on FDI, India is only on rank 16 together with a country like Peru. The hesitation of international investors can be traced back to regional and/or domestic political problems, like Indo-Pakistan relations, political turmoil in Bangladesh or the civil war in Sri Lanka.

Economic interdependence on the regional level is even worse. Economic interdependence is highest among developed countries most of them being democracies. Comparative studies from economists have shown the limits of regional cooperation between developing countries.³² So it is not astonishing that regional groupings like SAARC are not able to reach similar intra-regional trade figures like the EU. Intra-regional trade in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is therefore only about 3 to 4 percent despite new agreements like SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) to extend regional trade links. The missing complementarities between the national economies are a major structural constraint that prevents the improvement of economic relations. The lack of infrastructure is another variable of the political problems in the region that have averted better economic development up to now. India and Pakistan as the two largest economies only have one border station and Pakistan is still hesitant to grant India the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) Status according to WTO rules.

In regard to the role of international organizations, democratic peace research has shown that shared membership in international organizations (= intergovernmental organizations, IGO) reduces the risk of interstate wars.³³ According to Russett/Oneal IGO fulfil several functions like coercing norm

³² See Langhammer, Rolf J./Hiemenz, Ulrich. 1990. *Regional Integration Among Developing Countries*. Tübingen.

³³ See Russett/Oneal (2001), pp. 157-196.

breakers, mediating among conflicting parties, reducing uncertainty by providing information, establish expectations for gains and congruence of interests and socialisation and shaping norms. Their indicator is the number of shared organizations to which a pair of states do belong. Although India and Pakistan, as the most war-prone dyad in South Asia, are members of various IGO, “they shared membership in just thirteen IGOs, as compared with an average of thirty one for contiguous states.”³⁴ That the benefits of shared membership do not work in South Asia is illustrated by the examples of UN and SAARC. Both countries belong to the UN this has not helped to bring about a resolution to the Kashmir conflict. Despite various UN resolutions, India is insisting on a bilateral approach following the Simla treaty of 1972 with Pakistan. On the regional level, the SAARC Charter has excluded all contentious issues from the agenda. Nevertheless, the organization turned into the only forum for confidence-building measures of the region in recent years.

This is not to say that there would not be benefits from regional cooperation. Various studies have demonstrated that there are enough areas of cooperation in which all the countries involved could reach considerable gains for their national development.³⁵ A look at international social and economic statistics reveals immediately the necessity for all countries in the region for closer cooperation in order to overcome their domestic problems.

CONCLUSIONS: THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC PEACE IN SOUTH ASIA

The starting point was in how far the debate about democratic peace can help to understand the situation in South Asia. The region offers a mixed picture. On the one hand it contains countries with strong democratic traditions and a non-western cultural background. On the other hand, it is regarded as region of chronic instability and as the most dangerous place in the world. But even conflict-prone countries like India and Pakistan have witnessed periods of common democratic governance, so that the region can be regarded as an interesting test case for the theoretical debate.

The democratic experiences of the region certainly underline the main argument of the debate: “Pairs of democracies are much more peaceful than either pairs of autocracies or mixed democratic-autocratic pairs.”³⁶ This would also hold true for South Asian. The Kargil war is up to now the only exception that seems to confirm the rule. But other major findings of the debate have their limits when applied to the region. Statements like “democracies should have fewer civil wars than non-democratic states”³⁷ and “on the average, democracies, as individual

³⁴ See Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 194.

³⁵ See for instance Waqif, Arif A. 1989. *Identifying Areas of Economic Co-Operation in South Asia*. New Delhi.

³⁶ Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 115.

³⁷ Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 70.

states, are more peaceful than autocracies”³⁸ are faced with a number of empirical problems in South Asia.

On the national level, the achievements of democratic governments in South Asia are at least ambivalent. On the positive side, there is a more or less regular change of governments by democratic elections. On the negative side, the weaknesses of the state in securing constitutional rights for the majority of its citizens is obvious from many sources. The capabilities of democratic institutions to act as conflict mediation mechanisms is still underdeveloped. Even the sharing of democratic norms does not seem to have an impact on a better understanding. Persisting threat perceptions and negative images are widespread among the population, intellectuals and political decision-makers. The assumption of checks and balances in foreign policy decision making by democratic groups does also not to be valid.

On the regional level of interstate relations, it is obvious that democratic peace and the liberal-institutional assumptions that go along with it will not replace neo-realist policies of power and self-interest. Even a democratic hegemon like India is no guarantee that democracy will automatically flourish in the neighbouring countries. Apart from the Kargil episode, one of the most serious drawbacks to the democratic peace theorem, the support of militant groups by democratic governments in both India and Pakistan illustrates that democracies can find other ways apart from classical interstate warfare to go at war with each other.

On the international level, shared membership in international organization is still too unimportant to become a factor to be reckoned with both at the level of the UN as well as on the regional level with SAARC. Given the situation at the domestic level, it is quite obvious that intra-regional trade is low. The non-existing complementarities of Third World economies pose structural constraint for developing countries to increase their trade.

The assumptions of the democratic peace debate replicate to a great extent the development model of the OSCE countries where Kantian principles have achieved remarkable successes. Their model of development became more and more attractive after the end of the Cold War. Democracy, economic liberalisation, and integration into the world market are also the main goals for South Asian countries.³⁹ It remains an open question whether the different forms of democracies, their different state structures and their divergent security perceptions will bring about the same kind of benefits like in the West and whether they will be able to replace war as a continuation of politics with more peaceful means of conflict mediation.

³⁸ Russett/Oneal (2001), p. 116.

³⁹ Even the military rulers in Pakistan have always underlined their willingness to return to democracy.

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