Democratic Morality: Kohlberg's Moral Reasoning and the Democratic Peace

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Abstract

Development theory emphasizes moral process and argues that individuals progress through a series of moral stages. This article offers a framework for using Kohlberg’s moral development theory to understand the international phenomenon of peace between democratic nations. It takes this individualistic theory and expands it into the international dimension, arguing that societies also embody moral norms. Understanding societal norms offers an explanation of why leaders of liberal regimes may not easily choose to declare war on other morally progressive regimes and provides an understanding of the normative explanation of the democratic peace. Such an understanding of the moral development of individuals and societies informs the teaching, research, and practice of foreign policy and public administration.

The belief that democracy and peace are inextricably linked enjoys a considerable intellectual history. Rooted in the writings of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1795), the belief that republican states would develop a “perpetual peace” with other republican states carries a powerful attraction. Indeed, this belief is reflected in the Wilsonian-idealist school of thought early in the twentieth century, and it has grown to be the focus of American foreign policy. President Reagan called for “a global campaign for democratic development,” believing that this “crusade for freedom” would strengthen the prospects for a world at peace (cited in Doyle 1983). President Clinton stated that “ultimately the best strategy to ensure our security and build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracies elsewhere. Democracies don’t attack each other” (cited in Elman 1997, 498). Democratic enlargement has replaced communist containment as the cornerstone of American foreign policy. This policy is based on the premise that democracies are more pacific than non-democracies.
This article offers a framework for understanding the democratic peace phenomenon. Furthermore, this framework is an important tool for public officials because it allows greater understanding of how morally difficult policy choices are made. Specifically, Kohlberg's structural-developmental model of moral reasoning offers an understanding of how national leaders and public policymakers may approach ethically difficult decisions such as whether or not to engage in war. In turn, this supports the normative strain of the democratic peace argument.

Leaders, and thus the decisions reached by governments, may be categorized as operating within various gradations of "moral development." Furthermore, decisionmakers may be able to recognize that other decisionmakers operate at either the same or lower levels of moral judgment (see Table 1 below). Therefore, regimes headed by decisionmakers with a high level of moral reasoning are less likely to engage in war than states with leaders that operate at lower levels of moral judgment (a monadic argument).

The second part of this probabilistic argument is that when both states are headed by regimes with a high level of moral reasoning, the likelihood of war occurring is even less likely (a dyadic argument).

The corollary to these two propositions is that higher levels of moral development and reasoning are most likely to occur in societies that cultivate corresponding norms and values. Because these societies embody the values associated with higher levels of moral awareness, their mode of governance is more likely to be democratic, or liberal. Note that democratic forms of governance are not automatically liberal, and liberal regimes are not necessarily democratic (Owen 1994, 1997; Zakaria 1997; Ben-Eliezer 1993). The important issue is the normative structure underlying a society and its particular mode of governance, as these norms determine the likelihood of higher "moral reasoning," which in turn impacts the decisionmaking process. Public values and opinions often impinge on foreign policy choices (e.g., Risse-Kappen 1991; Fearon 1994). Thus the moral foundation of a society is expected to have some influence on the difficult decision to engage in war. To clarify this distinction, it is worthwhile to review the status of the current debate surrounding the democratic peace proposition, before reconciling it with the different body of literature that surrounds Kohlberg's work.

What Is the "Democratic Peace"?

Simply put, "the democratic peace" (Russett 1993) is the modern equivalent of Kant's "perpetual peace." It is the idea that democratic nations are more peace loving than other states, and almost never wage war on other democratic states.¹ Widely referred to as the "democratic peace theory," the democratic peace argument is not a singular "theory," but rather a thesis that has developed into a full-blown research program (see, e.g., Lake 1992; Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett 1993; Dixon 1994; Ray 1995). As such, it contains several variants, each with relevant theories and propositions.²
Discussion of Theoretical Variants

In the broadest sense, the democratic peace is the general belief that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies. This proposition is known as the “monadic” variant of the democratic peace proposition because of the perception that democracies are more peaceful in general, regardless of the type of government involved as the other party in a dispute. Thus one would expect democracy to be a calming force amid the anarchy and conflict in the international system, regardless of the type of governing regime with which it interacts.

In contrast, the “dyadic” vein of the democratic peace proposition argues that the likelihood of war is reduced only if both states involved in an interaction are democratic. So, democracies behave much the same as a “normal” state in general interactions with other nations in the international environment, but reserve and maintain a separate “zone of peace” (Singer and Wildavsky 1993) with other democracies. Only within the exclusive club of democratic states does the dyadic proposition predict a decrease in the likelihood of war.

Efforts to offer causal explanations of the democratic peace, whether monadic or dyadic, are often lumped into two main groupings (e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993). The first grouping of causes makes a structural argument. This argument suggests that complex political structures involved in getting a democratic country mobilized for war inhibit the likelihood of war occurring because they inherently create a delay between decision and action. This delay, as well as the process itself, provides an opportunity for “cooler heads to prevail,” and for methods of mediation short of full-scale war to be employed. Essentially, violent conflict between two democracies becomes infeasible due to political structures (e.g., congressional approval, opposition debate, bureaucratic inertia), which make conflict resolution by means other than war more feasible and efficient.

The second grouping of causes centers on some type of normative explanation. Here the suggestion is that democracies do not fight one another because norms of compromise and cooperation, respect for human rights, and principles of justice are established in liberal societies. In turn, these established norms help prevent conflict from escalating into violence and war. War is avoided because decisionmakers expect the leaders of other democracies to be following the same norms of peaceful conflict resolution (Gowa 1995). Because of shared values, leaders expect to be able to resolve conflict by the mutually accepted “rules of the game” of mutual accommodation that dominate domestic democratic politics (Russett 1993).

While the arguments may be separated into these two schools, some scholars have suggested that normative explanations are more robust than structural causes (Maoz and Russett 1993). However, there are several reasons not to discard the structural explanation outright. First, the two arguments are not mutually exclusive. It is to be expected that democratic structures and norms have a reciprocal and interactive effect. Norms beget structure, and structure promotes the socialization of norms, and both are necessary components for peace (Owen 1994, 1995).
1997). Second, normative arguments do not explain why democracies often engage in militarized disputes with other democracies short of war. Institutional arguments offer insight into why such militarized conflicts occur, but not escalate (Ray 1995). So, it is wise to keep both explanations in mind when examining the phenomena of democracy and war.

Types of Democracy: Liberal and Illiberal

As with any debate, definitions matter. The debate surrounding the democratic peace is no different. Scholars continue to refine terminology in an effort to determine underlying causality, or alternately in an effort to disprove causal connectivity. On the most basic level, there are the questions of precisely what constitutes a “war,” whether “civil” wars should be considered, and what characteristics should determine a truly democratic state (Doyle 1983; Owen 1994, 1997; Zakaria 1997). Some scholars argue that there is an insufficient causal story, and an insufficient sample population from which to draw conclusions (Layne 1996). Others expand on the small-sample claim to argue that any findings of a separate peace for democracy are insignificant in a statistical sense (Spiro 1996). Other criticisms include the argument that the perception of other states may vary over time, though the mode of governance remains constant (Oren 1996) and the claim that norms are little more than self-interest (Farber and Gowa 1996).

One of the more dynamic debates that has grown up around the democratic peace argument relates to the growing literature on democratization. Specifically, we are now witnessing a growing recognition that democracy does not necessarily mean “liberal” democracy. Owen (1997) prefers to use the term “liberal state” rather than “democracy” for precisely this point, defining a liberal state as one with institutional checks and balances on war decisions and democracies as states where majority rules. Zakaria (1997) argues that for most of Western history, democracy has meant liberal democracy. As such, the weft of democracy is made up of two distinct strands: institutional democracy and constitutional liberalism. He argues that constitutional liberalism is the part of democracy that contains concern for the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property, and is a product of the Western liberal tradition. In contrast, many countries in democratic transition are settling into a form of government with democratic institutions, but one that does not necessarily embrace the values of constitutional liberalism. There appears to be a new breed of “illiberal democracy.” As a result, policymakers need to pay more attention to the underlying values that go along with promoting democratic institutions abroad.

In response, Plattner (1998) argues that Zakaria overstates the disjunction between the two strands of democracy. In fact, because of the intrinsic linkage between electoral democracy and liberal order, Plattner argues that today’s illiberal democracies are most likely to be the receptive audience for tomorrow’s constitutional liberalism. Others (Shattuck and Atwood 1998) also view illiberal democracy as a natural step on the road to full liberal democracy, and that we should take the long view in considering this “new breed” of democracy.

Regardless, the phenomenon of illiberal democracy and the debate surrounding it prove insightful. Why? The components of “constitutional liberalism” correspond with characteristics of Lawrence Kohlberg’s higher levels of moral reasoning. So, it
is a tacit argument that one may expect very different behavior among types of democratic regimes, depending on the underlying norms or values associated with those regimes. In short, nonliberal democracies should behave differently than liberal democracies if the normative argument is to be given credence.

Kohlberg and Stages of Moral Development

As a modern field of inquiry, moral development first gained attention within developmental psychology and is still largely a concern of that field, though it also gained credence with educators as they attempted to implement some findings with school and prison curricula (e.g., Feldman 1980; Sullivan 1980). In addition, moral development has long been a concern of political philosophers and has attracted the attention of political scientists working in the fields of political socialization (Nelson 1980) and political leadership (Candee 1980). Before his death, Kohlberg had tried to expand his theory into legal and political environments (Kohlberg 1980), and had been working with Habermas in an effort to merge cognitive moral development with social/political progress. Thus it is not a large step to extend the concern with moral development to the arena of international politics.

Structural-Development Theory and Stages of Moral Development

Much like the body of work surrounding the “democratic peace” or “perpetual peace,” the structural-development outlook also grows from the philosophical seeds of Immanuel Kant. Kant viewed a person as a self-organizing being, meaning that a person develops largely by his or her own actions. This argument posits that human beings have certain innate capabilities that influence the kinds of interactive experiences that they have. These experiences also have a reciprocal effect on people and their future development. Essentially, each individual “structures” his or her development, while at the same time being shaped by previously acquired structures.

Kohlberg (1963) defines moral reasoning as judgments about right and wrong. His studies of moral reasoning are based on the use of moral dilemmas, or hypothetical situations in which people must make difficult decisions. He then defines a subject’s “level” of moral reasoning from the reasoning used to defend his or her position when faced with a dilemma. Kohlberg feels this is more important than the actual choice made, as the choices people make in such situations are not always clearly “right.” One can make the “right” choice, but for the wrong reasons. Kohlberg notes that the development of moral reasoning seems related to age (as would be expected). However, he also notes that all subjects do not reach the highest levels of moral reasoning. This suggests that development is not automatic, but subject to environment and socialization.

Three levels and six basic types of moral judgments are distinguished, which correspond to developmental stages. From Kohlberg (1980, 58–59; 1971, 164–165) these are summarized as follows.

Using this framework of sociomoral development, the short step of applying it to a political context is easy to take. The language, issues, and outcomes all echo topics that are relevant in the overtly political arena and then writ large in the international system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Orientation</th>
<th>Reference Frame</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outside Group</td>
<td>Physical consequence of actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Group</td>
<td>Human relations are like a marketplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Group</td>
<td>Authority and fixed rules of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Majority or &quot;natural&quot; behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postconventional</td>
<td>Constitutional/democratic agreement, social unity</td>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;Right&quot; Behavior</th>
<th>Self-Percpeption</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid punishment, defer to power</td>
<td>Preconventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of own needs</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That which pleases helps others</td>
<td>Postconventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty, maintenance of social order</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In terms of individual rights, free agreement</td>
<td>Postconventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of conscience, ethical principles</td>
<td>Postconventional</td>
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Moral Development and Sociopolitical Systems: From the Individual to the Society

One of the main strengths of utilizing a moral development approach to analyze the democratic peace proposal is that it requires giving attention to individual decision-makers. Too often, scholars ascribe a great deal of explanatory power to the influence of the “system” or fall victim to the “state-as-actor” fallacy. The global system provides a structure within which action is taken. The state, while a useful analytical construct, is not an actor in and of itself. It is a composite of discrete actions made by individuals. People provide the basis for any political system, and any “actor” is ultimately comprised of human beings making decisions based on their own experiences and personal biases. Therefore, it is past time that closer attention is given to how these decisions are made and what psychological forces go into an individual’s decisions. Ethical reasoning is an individual phenomenon, which then is replicated in decisionmaking at the state level. Certainly societal values impact moral development, but only individuals take “action.” This is why one can merge a methodology of individual behavior with a concern for international outcomes.

This approach certainly focuses on the “moral dimension” of ideology. Accordingly, Kohlberg (1980, 55; emphasis added) asserts that ideology

refers to a very general pattern or structure of belief that defines evaluation and choice.

One part of an ideology is its pattern of assumptions about factual matters, about the nature of man, society, and the cosmos. Of even more significance are the assumed moral principles, which, together with assumptions about facts, determine choice for that ideology.

Ideology is part of the societal structure, containing interrelated assumptions about facts, including a set of general moral principles. In the context of ideology, Kohlberg is a liberal (in the traditional sense of the word). From a structural perspective, he argues that liberalism has been the dominant ideology of the West for the past two centuries and will continue to be the dominant ideology for the next century as well (1980). As an ideology, liberalism is seen as a doctrine of social reform and constitutional change. Central to this view are “moral principles of justice, where justice is defined in terms of individual rights, all of which revolve around liberty” (1980, 56). These are the same themes and concerns that are central to the illiberal/liberal democracy debate and are also central aspects to the questioning of liberalism as being culturally bound. What the democratic peace proponents argue on an international level, Kohlberg argues on an individual level.

Values and Justice

Central to the attempt to apply Kohlberg’s model across nations is the problem of the relativity of values. Are there universal values? Using psychological research that shows culturally universal stages of moral development, Kohlberg argues that there are universal moral principles. In contrast to rules or commandments—which may vary culturally—a moral principle is not a prescription for behavior but a guide for choosing among behaviors (e.g., act only as you would be willing that everyone should act in the same situation). Kohlberg (building on Kant) argues that such a “categorical imperative” “is free from culturally defined content; it both transcends
and subsumes particular social laws and hence has universal applicability" (1980, 57). Justice—the “primary regard for the value and equality of all human beings and for reciprocity in human relations” (57)—is precisely such a universal standard.

Kohlberg recognizes that justice is a sociological as well as psychological concept. Further, it promotes individual as well as cultural progression through stages of development. Justice is a resolution to a conflict that appears fair to the parties involved. Why should this lead to progression? Because

when a society has arrived at a relatively just solution to a conflict, that solution tends to be maintained, whereas a situation of injustice is always a situation in disequilibrium, particularly in a society whose sociopolitical institutions have a constitutional democratic (Stage 5) or “open” basic structure so that authority and force do not maintain arbitrary, unjust solutions. (1980, 63)

Once a better way is found, it tends to be kept. Furthermore, once one society becomes aware of another’s more just method of resolving conflict, pressure will build to move toward that method of conflict resolution, that higher level of justice. This view reflects a core belief of Kohlberg’s: both individuals and societies progressively advance in moral development through reciprocal effects of one on the other.

Linking Morals and Governance
What does this have to say for methods of governance and political systems? Inherently, government is responsible for the allocation of justice and is the resolution of the social contract dilemma. Using Kohlberg’s levels of individual moral development, one can classify a society as operating at certain moral stages. However, this argument is not to say that all (or even most) of the members of the society are at that stage. For example, the American system is a Stage 5 social system, founded on the premises of constitutional liberalism. Kohlberg observes that while the American social system is at Stage 5, the majority of the population and many of our leaders operate at a conventional “law and order” Stage 4 in their moral reasoning. Indeed, most individuals never go beyond Stage 4 in their reasoning, and many never progress beyond Stage 2 or 3.

Of course, the American system was not designed to require most of its population to act in accordance with the liberal principles on which it was founded. In fact, the American system was designed (and the Federalist Papers written!) largely in recognition that most people would not behave according to this higher level of morality. Instead, it was designed to produce Stage 5 legal and political decisions via a constitutional democratic process that took into account the abuses of power to which the Stage 2 egoistic human nature was predisposed. Just because a society’s governmental structures are set up in accordance with one level of moral development, this ordering does not guarantee that the society itself operates at that level of moral thinking. As evidenced by the United States, most individuals operate according to the tenets of higher moral thinking only because it is institutionalized and therefore appeals to their “law and order” mentality. For example, Stewart
and Sprinthall (1991, 1993, 1994) have found that public managers make ethical decisions in terms of agency rules and avoid individual discretion. Thus individuals who behave according to lower levels of moral thinking could produce higher moral outcomes, assuming proper institutions or rules are in place.

If this is the case for American politics, what does it have to say for other countries, their political structures, and their political leaders? Obviously not all nations are set up with the same liberal idealism inherent in the American system. However, with the spread of democracy, one should expect to see the gradual expansion of liberal ideals as democratic institutions take root. Keep in mind, it took over two hundred years for American society to evolve to its present point. It is unlikely that newly emergent democratic nations should be immediately expected to “behave” as Stage 5 sociopolitical systems when the citizenry has no imbued social tradition of concern for civil rights. Instead, behavior at Stage 4 (law and order), with observable instances of leaders acting out of a Stage 2 (rational egoist) or Stage 3 (good boy/girl) mentality may well be the best that can be expected. Even establishing the “rule of law” is a common hurdle faced by newly democratic regimes (e.g., Russia, Colombia, Nigeria).

In countries with no democratic institutions, a different range of moral thinking should be present. In autocratic or dictatorial regimes, the level of moral thinking is likely to be at Stage 2. Accordingly, the behavior of other actors in the international system may be designed to “educate” these leaders to respect human rights and individual civil liberties; other leaders try to elevate the level of international moral discourse. Not surprisingly, if this type of change is not forthcoming, the choice is to resort to bargaining and exchange (the language of Stage 2), with the threat of force as an eventual option.

Morality and Foreign Policy Decisions
Recognizing differences in levels of morality in a leader’s operational code of ethics could provide interesting and fruitful implications for foreign policy. For countries other than those with autocratic or dictatorial regimes, results would likely be different. Nations with a nominal respect for individual rights or other liberal values—while not necessarily democratic—are more likely to be familiar with and open to the “language” of a higher level of moral discourse. This relationship is more likely to be the case with states that have some semblance of a democratic tradition or democratic institutions. Therefore, behavior between these nations (and their leaders) would be based on a shared sense of justice and would be less likely to result in conflict. South Africa and the international antiapartheid movement serve as a good example of how this behavior might occur. Certainly, there were democratic institutions and limited suffrage. However, international and domestic pressures hastened the resolution of an internal conflict toward a more just solution—one more in line with acceptable international moral norms.

This situation not only mirrors the American model of civil rights progression but serves as a good example of Kohlberg’s argument for cultural progression through stages of justice. Additionally, the “third wave of democratization” (Huntington 1992) provides anecdotal evidence that once a nation has experienced democratic governance (a “more just” solution to conflict), even if such a democratic regime is replaced by a nondemocratic one, that nation is more likely to reestablish democ-
racy than states that have never experienced democracy. The people of such countries have experienced a better, more just, way of governing and are likely to remain in a state of disequilibrium until a more just resolution (i.e., democratic governance) is achieved once again.

Should one expect that the leaders of liberal democratic states that share an understanding of advanced levels of moral thought are less likely to engage in open conflict? Yes. The proposal that leaders of liberal constitutional democracies are not likely to engage in war with other Stage 5 liberal constitutional democracies seems viable. This reasoning is not to say that all democracies operate at this level. In fact, the leaders of many institutional democracies (illiberal democracies) may have yet to fully embrace the moral reasoning associated with advanced stages of moral development. This issue is largely definitional. Institutional democracies may not be as reserved in their use of force against other states as established constitutional democracies. One would expect that the type of democracy matters when discussing the democratic peace, precisely because the norms that underlie liberalism take time to develop and replicate throughout a society. Thus it is only common sense that the trend toward greater justice, civil rights, and racial equality (the trend toward true liberalism) is a much slower shift—perhaps generational—than the relatively rapid shift to an institutional democratic form of governance.

**The Democratic Peace Discourse: Emphasis on Norms?**

What are the findings of the democratic peace debate and how can we relate them to this conception of moral development? This explanation clearly falls on the neoliberal side of the neorealist/neoliberal debate in international relations, and it offers only a normative explanation of the democratic peace proposition. However, it goes one step further in attempting to outline the mechanisms actually driving a normative explanation. There appears to be a need for such an approach. Bruce Russett (1993) argues that the normative explanation is more robust than the institutional model, and even critic Christopher Layne (1996) suggests that the normative strain is the central causal chain to the democratic peace argument. Owen (1997) feels that liberal ideas and institutions operate together to promote peace. However, Elman (1997) observes that domestic politics do indeed matter, but not necessarily in ways that support the democratic peace claim. How can an understanding of moral development help us address these issues?

First, it is plain that it matters who controls the state. Individual leaders make a difference, and their moral outlook should come into play when they make decisions. Research supports the position that individually held moral norms impact foreign policy decisionmaking (McElroy 1992; see also Nichols and Loescher 1989). Furthermore, the overall moral tenor of a ruling coalition must be given consideration, as variation within regime type is to be expected. Second, this approach supports the observation that normative and cultural factors unrelated to political ideologies may play a role. When attention is paid to levels of moral development, less emphasis is placed on the overtly political aspects of ideology (institutional democracy) and more emphasis is placed on the normative aspects of justice, humanity, and commonality. Third, emphasis needs to be given to
different aspects of democracy, such as the nature of political parties or the role of public opinion. This emphasizes the important role pacifistic parties may play in the process, and the identification of public opinion as another pathway by which moral norms influence foreign policy.

The potential for leaders to follow lower levels of moral reasoning may contribute to the institutional argument for the democratic peace in regards to civil-military relations. The power to wage war is not concentrated in the hands of one individual precisely because democracies are trying to operate at a higher level of morality and have built in safeguards to prevent abuses of power. Arguably, there is a normative explanation underlying the structural/institutional argument for the democratic peace. Indeed, Owen (1994, 1997) appears to offer support for this contention in his rejection of the dichotomy between normative and institutional democratic peace explanations, and his suggestion that a synthesis of the two is necessary in order to gain a more complete understanding of the democratic peace phenomenon.

These observations lead to the additional belief that democratic peace theorists need to recognize that there is variation among types of democratic states. There is a need to ascertain why certain democracies behave differently than others. Using a framework of moral reasoning provides insight into why this may be the case. Elman also notes that "normative consenses against the use of force—can also account for nondemocracies and mixed regimes" (p. 494). Like democracies, these states can build a normative foundation for peace. Thus regime type is not necessarily important but the underlying norms are. Indeed, it seems even more necessary to understand how norms, morality, and a concept of justice emerge within a society. Kohlberg's model is a good point of departure.

Conclusion: Two Ghosts of Kant

A shared source of criticism between these two bodies of literature is the concern with cultural specificity and possible lack of universality. These criticisms take the form of the liberal/illiberal debate within the literature on the democratic peace while also laying claim that Kohlberg's concepts are intrinsically tied to Western liberalism and not subject to a wide application beyond the liberal Western sphere. But Kohlberg is plain about his ties to the hegemonic nature of the Lockean liberal order and overtly constructs his concepts based on it with the firm view that it will continue to dominate the international arena for the next century (1980, 56). It seems prudent to be aware of other cultural views and possible differences in perception of justice, but it seems more prudent to expect that these values will gradually "progress" along the lines as outlined by Kohlberg. Similarly, one can expect nondemocratic states to continue a shift toward democratic governance and institutional democracies to become increasingly more liberal.

Where does this leave us in terms of "progressing the debate" in regard to the democratic peace proposition? Does it appear that Kohlberg's framework can provide help in understanding the complex interactions that go into making foreign policy decisions? This conceptualization does appear to provide a beneficial pro-
gression and can be a useful tool. First, this approach emphasizes the need to “confront the unassailable fact that it is leaders who make the final decisions about war and peace” (Hermann and Kegley 1995, 529). This step is important in attempting to reconcile foreign policy choice and international outcome with a combination of psychological and normative decisionmaking factors. Second, this framework shifts the emphasis from regime type to the more important aspects of the democratic peace—the underlying liberal norms and sense of social justice. These values are at the heart of the desire to spread democracy, and the emphasis on regime type only serves to misdirect policymakers from what is truly relevant to bettering the international environment. Third, Kohlberg’s levels of moral reasoning provide ample room for variation. This construct is true not just of the democratic/non-democratic distinction, but it allows for a perception of a spectrum among democratic regimes. Furthermore, it necessarily requires the recognition that people, and individual leaders, may behave in a manner other than what their regime type would predict.

While a considerable amount of additional work needs to be done before this model is even remotely refined, its potential promise outweighs the potential criticism. In addressing the issue of Kohlberg’s model in relation to public officials, White (1999) suggests several possibilities for using moral development theory in public administration. Moral development models have considerable potential as a pedagogical tool and could be used to meet the need for improved ethics education. Similarly, research needs to be pursued to “identify strategies that can raise the moral judgement levels of those involved in the political process” (p. 130), domestically and on an international level.

This approach has implications for the design of public organizations, and the ability (or inability) of bureaucrats to make moral decisions in conflict with bureaucratic procedures. How does governmental structure impact ethical behavior? There is certainly a need for research to be carried out examining how best to identify individual leaders’ operational morality, and this tactic has the potential to be easily wed with ongoing text-analysis research in the field of political psychology. It is important to correlate the level of moral development with actual ethical decisions and behaviors, especially if this procedure can be done in periods leading up to international conflict. Hopefully, measures of moral development can help us more accurately predict individual behavior, as well as identify the actual causal mechanisms that lie behind international phenomena such as the democratic peace.

NOTES
1. For a good summary framing the debate, see the Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller edited reader Debating the Democratic Peace (1996). For an examination of various permutations of the debate accompanied by a critical case-study discussion see the Elman edited volume Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer? (1997).
2. Additionally, one reason the notion of a democratic peace has sparked so much interest in the field of international relations is due to the place it holds in the context of a larger theoretical debate. In particular it is seen as seriously undermining the structural realist/neorealism viewpoint that has been widely supported in the field. For a treatment of the democratic peace’s position within this debate, see Elman (1997). These larger paradigmatic issues are not addressed here.
3. Zakaria notes that there is naturally a "spectrum of illiberal democracy, ranging from modest offenders like Argentina to near-tyrannies like Kazakhstan and Belarus, with countries like Romania and Bangladesh in between" (1997: 23). Iran also comes to mind, as a country that is institutionally democratic, but by no means liberal. For those with a quantitative bent, Freedom House offers an annual survey, Freedom in the World, which has separate rankings for political liberties and civil liberties. These measures correspond roughly with what we are calling democracy and constitutional liberalism. Other efforts at distinguishing among "types" of democracy include Schmitter and Karl (1991) and Pinkney (1993).

4. Kohlberg cites John Rawls's Theory of Justice, who argues that his principles of liberty and equality are not just principles of Western liberalism, but would be chosen by rational men [sic] in any society, acting under a "veil of ignorance," as they worked toward development of a social contract that would maximize their values.

5. Indeed during the Watergate scandal, Kohlberg analyzed the testimony of some of the defendants and found consistent stage 3 and 4 rationalizations. He concluded, "Watergate is a reminder that the Stage 5 social contract still awaits for the majority to evolve." (Kohlberg 1980, 67 cited in White 1999, 128).

6. It appears that there is little quantitative research on the impact that previous democratic rule has on re-democratization. This is an area that could benefit from additional research.

7. If the leaders of institutional democracies had reached a higher level of moral awareness on an individual level, then we would expect to see a tendency toward increased liberalism. The other option is that they may be operating at a higher level, but politically constrained by their society to operate at a lower one. There is no reason to expect international behavior would not similarly be constrained. In either case, it is safe treating such a leader as operating a lower level of moral reasoning.

8. Even though individuals may change their moral outlook in a very short period of time, it is not expected that an entire society would be likely to do so.

9. An interesting (and well-documented) potential case study on the role morality plays in foreign policy is the decision making surrounding the EXCOMM during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Here, a surprise attack on Cuba was rejected 11 to 6 because it was inconsistent with "American values".

10. Other criticisms of Kohlberg are outlined in Rosen (1980). White (1999) also nicely summarizes the critical dialogue surrounding Kohlberg's work, and reviews some more recent methodological work supporting Kohlberg's propositions.

REFERENCES


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