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Andrew Moravcsik

## Federalism and Peace: A Structural Liberal Perspective

In a rich and provocative article, Professor Ernst-Otto Czempiel advances two hypotheses, both of which he traces back to Immanuel Kant.<sup>1</sup> The first concerns the domestic preconditions for the »democratic peace«. Extending Kant in an intriguing way, he argues that the preconditions include domestic support for peace, societal control over the government, representation unbiased toward special interests and equal burden-sharing in policy implementation. Using the US in Vietnam as a case study – not, of course, a case of two democracies, but nonetheless interesting – he argues that these conditions may not obtain perfectly among real liberal democracies, permitting residual wars. In other, more social scientific words, democracy is best thought of as a dimensional, not dichotomous variable. Czempiel's first argument is convincing and links his work to similar contemporary trends in the development of Liberal theories of war, international relations theory, and imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

It is, however, Czempiel's second, more speculative claim that concerns me here. Czempiel maintains, also ostensibly on Kantian grounds, that in order to eliminate residual security dilemmas that might still arise among republics, strong international organizations are required. Czempiel's (1996: 96) claim is bold: in explaining peace and war, appropriate international institutions are, it is argued, »no less important« (»nicht weniger wichtig«) than domestic democratization and interdependence. International relations theorists must therefore take seriously Kant's proposals for a *foedus pacificum*, an international federation. It was, Czempiel (1996: 96) asserts, the construction of international organizations like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), as much as democratization and interdependence, that assured postwar peace among Western nations.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, this peace will not be entirely secure until the federalization of the Western world is complete. Czempiel (1996: 96f) appears to understand this goal as the construction of a federation in the modern

1 Czempiel (1996): »Kants Theorem«. I am grateful to the Robert Schuman Center of the European University Institute in Fiesole for logistical support.

2 For similar arguments, see Russett (1993), Moravcsik (1992) and Snyder (1991).

3 This position appears to be widely accepted in German international relations theory. Czempiel (1996: 96) cites Dieter and Eva Senghaas (1992) on the »OECD-Frieden«. Another example is Reinhardt Rummel's work. On what he calls the »second law of international relations«, namely that countries embarked on a »union-building process« reach a point where they will not go to war, see Rummel (1996: 207f).

sense: for example, the completion of economic and monetary integration in Europe and a movement beyond minimalist organizations like the OECD through the imposition of significant limitations on national sovereignty through majority voting and direct democratic legitimation. Those who celebrate the »democratic peace« and the »end of history« are premature; until such a »Kantian federation« is erected, Czempiel asserts, peace among democracies remains precarious.

Below I advance three criticisms of this second proposition, which challenge, respectively, its intellectual pedigree, paradigmatic coherence, and theoretical and empirical plausibility. My fundamental position is that Czempiel's first »Structural Liberal« proposition is both quite different and more fundamental than his second »Institutionalist« proposition, and that the former explains much of the variation he attributes to the latter. Claims about the pacific effects of international institutions on democracies are at best unsupported and at worse incorrect.

### 1. *Intellectual History: Did Kant Favor Strong International Institutions?*

It is by no means obvious that Kant (1795) actually believed in anything more than minimalist international organization. He is explicitly critical of world government, which he feared could only be a dictatorship that suppressed the distinctiveness of religious, linguistic and national conceptions of political right. He considers the leading international lawyers of his day – Grotius, Pufendorf and Vattel – to be »sorry comforters« and seeks to distinguish his »federation of free states« from any conception of an »international state«. Kant's argument is based not just on the importance of maintaining the distinctiveness of national traditions, but on the principle that »laws progressively lose their impact as the government increases its range«. Hence international government would become »a soulless despotism, after crushing the germs of goodness« and would »finally lapse into anarchy« (Kant 1795: 100-105, 113). This belief has a dynamic corollary as well: Kant believed that world history is propelled forward by the dynamics of decentralized competition among ideas and nations; this might be threatened by strong centralized world government (Kant 1970). Similarly cautious arguments were advanced by John Stuart Mill, who opposed permanent international organizations, and Woodrow Wilson, whose conception of the League involved moral, not legal constraints on national governments – as well as most other leading thinkers in the Liberal tradition.<sup>4</sup>

Czempiel (1996: 96), of course, is referring to federation, not world government, but his argument has nothing of the self-limiting quality characteristic of Kant's reasoning. It is by no means obvious that international organizations in Kant's theory are more than minimalist agreements; hence it is unclear whether, when applied to the late twentieth century, Kantian theory implies support for further steps toward federalism on the margin. It is interesting to note in this regard that each of the three

4 For a more detailed argument, see Moravcsik (1992).

preliminary articles of Kant's scheme for perpetual peace that Czempiel (1996: 96) cites – namely the prohibitions against secret treaties, standing armies, and debt-financed warfare – could be implemented through loosely coordinated unilateral action. Kant also makes absolutely clear that the federation in the Second Definitive Article springs naturally out of the moral imperatives of republican governance, but is not in any sense a strong federation, without either altruism, since each state retains a primary interest in its own rights and independence, or federalism in the modern sense, which would violate each nation's unique relationship between ruler and people and subject each to a higher authority. In particular Kant takes care to point out that such external constraints could not have legal force, since for Kant law had to be enforceable. Such a federation, Kant says, »would not aim to acquire any power like that of a state, but merely to preserve and secure the *freedom* of each state in itself« (Kant 1795: 104, emphasis in original). In short, Kant's federation is a general treaty, not an international regime.

Thus, from Kant's perspective, there was no clear advantage and considerable danger in strong international regimes with majority voting, centralized administration and other vertically hierarchical elements.<sup>5</sup> Kant's positive proposals offer little support for the suggestion that world peace would be more secure if institutions like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) became more powerful, in the classic sense, or even more democratic. Indeed, from a Kantian position, there is some reason to believe, at least in the abstract, that such developments could be politically harmful and philosophically contradictory.

### 2. *International Relations Theory: Are Institutional and Preference-Based Theories Compatible?*

There is an important theoretical tension between Czempiel's two hypotheses. While it is true, as a point of intellectual history, that many Liberal thinkers, including Kant, considered the two arguments as belonging to the same political programme, it remains less clear that they share the same social scientific foundations. We should be careful not to mistake coherence as intellectual history for coherence as social science. The precise relationship between the two hypotheses are important because, while Czempiel (1996: 96, 98) presents them as having equal weight, I maintain that this is not the case. There are compelling reasons to treat the democratic peace hypothesis – a hypothesis drawn from the Structural Liberal paradigm –

5 Indeed, absent strong *domestic* commitment and enforcement mechanisms in liberal democracies, it is difficult to see why such commitments would ever be credible – a point I return to below in the concluding discussion of Structural Liberal analyses of »horizontal« order. One might argue that the prohibition against standing armies would need to be monitored, but nothing is as credible as open *domestic* governance.



as *analytically more fundamental than hypotheses drawn from the Institutional paradigm about the uncertainty-reducing qualities of international institutions.*

The Structural Liberal paradigm – of which Kantian propositions about the relationship between domestic regime type and state policy constitute one theoretical strand – focuses on state-society relations and their implications for world politics (cf. Moravcsik 1992). It rests on three assumptions:

- (1) Individuals and groups in domestic and transnational civil society constitute the most fundamental actors in international politics.
- (2) All political institutions, such as nation-states, represent the interests of some (not necessarily complete) subset of the society they govern.
- (3) State behavior and, therefore, levels of international conflict and cooperation reflect the nature and configuration of state purposes and preferences.<sup>6</sup>

From these three assumptions can be derived three theoretical strands for explaining international conflict and cooperation, each stressing a different element of domestic and transnational state-society relations. One strand focuses on the nature of socioeconomic interdependence (commercial liberalism), one on the representation and misrepresentation of domestic interests (representative liberalism), and one on the compatibility and incompatibility of national values (ideational liberalism).

The explicit formulation of a Structural Liberal paradigm illuminates what might otherwise appear paradoxical, given the nature of current debates in international relations, namely the striking theoretical *similarity* between Realist and Institutionalist theories of international relations. Though Realism and Institutionalism have been viewed since the Realist-Idealist debate of the 1930s as polar opposites, in fact these theories share a wide range of common assumptions, particularly when compared with Structural Liberalism. Functionalist regime theory (e.g. that of Robert Keohane 1984) and most other forms of Institutionalism (e.g. the work of Stephen Krasner 1983, Duncan Snidal 1986, etc.) share with Realism (cf. Waltz 1979) the assumptions that unitary, rational states with stable preferences are the major actors in international politics; that international outcomes tend to be suboptimal due to certain types of strategic interaction; and that the major determinant of variation in state behavior is variation in the structure of the international political system. Waltzian Neo-Realism and Keohanian regime theory are even more closely connected, since both stress the importance of uncertainty and information, though Waltz derives international informational conditions from power and Keohane from transactions and institutions.<sup>7</sup>

6 In keeping with economic language, I mean to distinguish preferences from strategies; hence, a preference is a state interest that is not influenced (at least in the short term) by the particular international strategic interaction one is analyzing. State interests that are malleable in the face of changing external incentives within the game are more properly thought of as strategies, strategic choices or policies.

7 Keohane (1984: 19); Waltz (1979). For an extended variant of this argument, see Moravcsik (1992).

To be sure, Realism and Institutionalism have important differences of emphasis: Institutionalists focus on positive-sum games and stress primarily the importance of information as comprising the structure of the international system, while Realists focus primarily on constant-sum games and stress the importance of resources (capabilities) as comprising the structure of the international system (cf. Grieco 1988). Yet both theories share the critical assumption that underlying state preferences (as opposed to strategies) are so constrained by the structure of the international system that they can be taken as fixed. Both can be and often are combined in a single game theoretical or negotiation analysis framework (e.g. Powell 1994; Sebenius 1991).

Given the striking analytical *similarities* between Realism and regime theory, and the equally striking *differences* between Structural Liberalism and Institutionalism, in particular the stress placed by the former on state-society relations and variation in preferences, it is misleading to employ the term »neo-Liberal Institutionalism« to describe transaction-cost theories of regimes. More accurate is the original term employed by Keohane (1986): »modified structural Realism«. In short, both Realism and Institutionalism focus on the supply of international cooperation, while Structural Liberalism focuses on the demand. For Realists and Institutionalists alike, means matter most; for Structural Liberals, ends matter most.

This discussion of the divergent paradigmatic origins of preference-based and institutional explanations of state behavior suggests that of Czempiel's (1996: 97) two hypotheses, *the democratic peace hypothesis is the more fundamental*. The reason is straightforward. It is impossible to specify models of strategic interaction, whether Realist models of bargaining or Institutionalist models of collective action, without clear, prior assumptions about preferences.<sup>8</sup> In any complete explanation of international conflict and cooperation where state preferences vary, variance in preferences must first be assessed and explained before an assessment of strategic interaction is conducted. This was implicitly accepted by Kant, Wilson and others, who specified that only republics could be members of federations and collective security organizations. Note, finally, the implication – which goes well beyond the specific issue of the democratic peace – that *all* Structural Liberal hypotheses are analytically prior to Realist and Institutionalist hypotheses. This decisively reverses the widely accepted, yet internally contradictory Waltzian recommendation to test »structural« theories first and employ »reductionist« theories to explain the residual variation.<sup>9</sup> As a result, it is questionable to treat the two as equally important. If, as we are about to see is the case, Structural Liberal hypotheses explain the same phenomenon, they should be given priority.

8 On the classic debate giving rise to this conclusion, including Dahl's contribution, see Bell et al. (1969). For an application to international relations stressing the importance of the underlying game, see Zürn (1994).

9 For a more extensive argument, see Moravcsik (1992).

### 3. *Theoretical Coherence and Empirical Verification: Do International Institutions Promote Peace and Cooperation?*

Whatever the relation of Czempiel's second hypothesis to Kant's intentions and existing paradigms in international relations theory, it stands or falls on its theoretical coherence and empirical validity. The central question is whether underlying Structural Liberal factors – democracy, interdependence and convergent values – are sufficiently important that international institutionalization has no further effect.

The claim that international institutions promote peace remains *prima facie* highly speculative, since this section of Czempiel's (1996) paper – in contrast to the discussion of the Vietnam example – contains no empirical evidence. The force of the argument is further undermined by his concession that democracy, interdependence and common values have developed sufficiently in Western Europe that even were the EU to stagnate, peace would not be threatened. Hence we appear to be talking about the possibility of wars among North American democracies, Japan, and the emerging democracies of East Asia, South America and Eastern Europe, among whom there is no evidence of severe conflict.<sup>10</sup>

There are three deeper theoretical or empirical reasons to doubt this hypothesis. First, it seems theoretically plausible that many international institutions are causally epiphenomenal. The Institutionalist argument for the importance of institutions rests on the assumption that the transaction costs of creating international institutions are high; hence they persist even when interests change. If, however, transaction costs are low and institutions can therefore be created and changed at will, then we should expect the supply of international institutions to meet the demand. In this latter case, institutions are causal mechanisms but not fundamental causes; they themselves do not contribute to cooperation beyond the level predicted by underlying structural factors. There is some empirical evidence from case studies suggesting that this more narrowly functionalist view is correct.<sup>11</sup>

Second, it is not evident theoretically from Czempiel's elaboration through what causal mechanism international organizations contribute to solving informational problems. To be sure, the logic of the security dilemma, as the work of Kenneth Waltz (1979), Robert Jervis (1978), James Fearon (1995) and others make clear, is one of incomplete information. Governments must prepare for the worst because they are unsure of the opponents' intentions and capabilities. Institutions may help solve this problem, Institutionalist theory suggests, because they provide reliable information about national preferences and power (Keohane 1984). But democracies are already relatively transparent and have a good track record of pacifism (cf. Cowhey 1990). Moreover, they can unilaterally enter into relatively credible commitments (Martin 1992). There is thus little theoretical reason to believe that further transparency is necessary. Studies of cooperation in armaments production suggests

that democratic governments accurately assess one another's domestic circumstances, even without explicit institutional mechanisms for doing so (cf. Moravcsik 1993). In short, regimes are not necessarily required to bolster the informational content of interaction among democracies.

Third, there is little empirical evidence, either historical or cross-sectional, to support a strong link between international institutions and peace. Quantitative studies of the determinants of war do not find strong support for the independent role of institutions, when properly controlled for Structural Liberal factors. In postwar Europe, the focus of Czempiel's (1996) analysis, a historical test is difficult to conduct, since all EU member-states are democratic, but there are suggestive hints. We find no evidence of higher geopolitical conflict between EU members and present and former non-members (e.g. EFTA countries and members of the OECD, an organization of which Czempiel is skeptical), nor between NATO members and neutrals. The historical record reveals little more than some threats by Macmillan in the early 1960s to remove British troops from German soil in order to press for entry into the EC – and these were probably a bluff (cf. Moravcsik 1995, 1996: Ch. 2). Postwar Switzerland, Sweden and Spain do not seem more warlike, despite their relative lack of integration into Western international institutions. The US and Canada demonstrate more conflictual behavior, despite the lack – until recently – of formal regional integration.

Nor is there much evidence that European integration has had a pacifying influence. The major outstanding geopolitical issues – Saar, German economic and military policy autonomy, NATO, the democratization of Germany and Italy, reparations, occupation policy, denazification, nuclear weapons – were resolved *before*, not after, the signing of the Rome Treaty. And does any historian seriously assert that without the European Coal and Steel Community – which we now know to have been a relatively ineffective organization – France and Germany would have gone to war?<sup>12</sup>

In all of these cases, the reverse causality seems more plausible: having banished war through democratization and value change, European countries could integrate economically. The apparent correlation between institutional membership and peace is spurious; underlying Structural Liberal factors explain both outcomes. To be sure, the *belief* that European integration and the development of the Franco-German relationship would have such a pacifying effect remains a central political fact of postwar European international history – it may be a key source of legitimation for European integration – but that is not the focus of our current discussion. In short, while it remains »theoretically possible«, as Czempiel (1996: 94) argues, that the security dilemma still persists among democracies, there is little evidence of it.

10 Czempiel's Vietnamese counter-example is not sufficient reason to challenge this, since it involves a democracy and a non-democracy.

11 For an argument along these lines, see Haggard/Moravcsik (1993).

12 On the ineffectiveness of the ECSC, see Gillingham (1991), Milward (1992: Ch. 2).

## 4. Conclusion

If the analysis above is correct, then considerations of intellectual history, paradigmatic analysis, and empirical theory testing all cast doubt on the hypothesis that international institutionalization has a major positive impact on peace among democratic governments. The most important reason for this finding is that Czempiel's first (Structural Liberal) hypothesis undermines his second (Institutionalist) hypothesis. Structural Liberalism is more fundamental paradigmatically, more plausible theoretically, and more strongly supported empirically.

Before closing, it is important to note that commitment to Structural Liberalism does not imply that international institutions are unimportant as causal mechanisms, nor that they have no impact on world politics. There are important ways to move forward with a Structural Liberal theory of international regimes. From a Structural Liberal perspective, the glue holding together international »federation« and assuring law-governed behavior is not the structure of international institutions *per se*, but the convergence of similar domestic structures of lawful behavior. The essence of international organization is not vertical but horizontal. It is the mutual recognition among the actions of similarly placed domestic officials, judges, politicians and publics in liberal democratic societies that assures peace and cooperation. Thus, for example, legal integration in the European Community and European Convention on Human Rights systems occurs not through imposition from above, but through the cooption, persuasion and transgovernmental convergence of domestic judges, legislators and publics.<sup>13</sup> This is not only a plausible interpretation of contemporary international law and institutions, but it is an intriguing interpretation of Kant's own intent, one that makes sense of his hostility toward world government, his explicit precondition that all members be republics and, most subtly, his belief that world history is propelled forward by the dynamics of decentralized competition among ideas and nations.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, insofar as international institutions help promote democracy, interdependence and appropriate ideas, they help promote peace and cooperation – even if they do not constitute their primary cause.

Yet an Institutional argument that posits a unbounded correlation between international institutionalization and peace – Czempiel's second Institutional Kantian – lacks theoretical and empirical support. For the moment, only the ambiguous authority of Kant himself stands behind it. And »what is enlightenment«, a Kantian Liberal might well ask, if it does not permit theoretical progress and historical experience to supplant the word of traditional authorities?

13 On the horizontal view, see Burley/Mattli (1993); Burley (1992); Moravcsik (1995).

14 It may also be that in relations between democracies and non-democracies, where governments cannot count on the pacifying effects of democratization and the development of links and values in civil society to banish the use of force, institutions or interdependence become more important. Empirical studies suggest, however, that interdependence has a pacifying effect only among democracies.

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## Verständigung über die Verständigung

Anmerkungen und Ergänzungen zur Debatte über Rationalität und Kommunikation in den Internationalen Beziehungen

### 1. Einleitung

Entgegen der zwischenzeitlich in die Runde geschleuderten Bezeichnung »Schlammschlacht« (Schneider 1996: 1) zeichnet sich die bisherige Debatte zum Verhältnis von Rationalität und Kommunikation in den Internationalen Beziehungen durch eine bemerkenswerte Verbindung von Engagement und Diskursfähigkeit der Beteiligten aus.<sup>1</sup> So wurde die Ausgangsthese Harald Müllers, der utilitaristische Rational-Choice-Ansatz sei nicht in der Lage, verständigungsorientiertes kommunikatives Handeln zu verarbeiten (Müller 1994: 15-25), nicht nur mit einer Studie konzeptueller Inkonsistenzen des Habermasschen Ansatzes gekontert (Keck 1995: 31-43), sondern auch mit Verweisen auf die analytischen Grenzen herkömmlichen Rational-Choice-Denkens und einer Aufstellung neuerer Entwicklungen des Rational-Choice-Ansatzes aufgenommen.<sup>2</sup> Umgekehrt läßt Müller (1995: 372, 388) in seiner Erwiderung trotz des Verweises auf die Gefahr eines »Rational-Choice-Imperialismus« erkennen, daß der Rational-Choice-Ansatz über einen größeren analytischen Spielraum verfügt, als seitens seiner Kritiker ursprünglich angenommen wurde.

Trotz dieses Bemühens der Beteiligten um rezeptionsgenaue Verständigung, das durch den gemeinsamen Bezug auf die Problematik der internationalen Koopera-

1 Für Kritik und Hinweise danke ich Christoph Weller, Thomas Plümper, Sebastian Oberthür und Uwe Schirnank.

2 So verweist Gerald Schneider (1994: 363f) auf die Fragwürdigkeit der Bayeschen Regel und vier Problemkreise, die das Selbstverständnis der Theorie erschüttern, anomisches Verhalten von Individuen gegenüber Verhaltenserwartungen nach der Erwartungsnutzen-Theorie, die mit dem Konzept der *bounded rationality* thematisierte Hyperrationalität von Rational-Choice-Modellen, das Fehlen psychologischer Grundlagen und das Fehlen bzw. das geringe Niveau empirischer Forschung. Otto Keck (1995: 6) hebt hervor, daß mit dem Rational-Choice-Ansatz keineswegs alle Phänomene erklärt werden sollen und der Ansatz auch Handlungen außerhalb der physischen Welt zum Gegenstand haben und nicht auf Verhalten nach einem egoistischen Wertsystem reduziert werden kann (Keck 1995: 8, 10f). Plümpers Text (1995) schließlich stellt ein Plädoyer für eine Politikmodellierung auf der Grundlage des *bounded-rationality*-Konzepts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung neuerer Ansätze der »Psychological Economics« dar.