

УДК 327

THIRTY YEARS OF “PEACE”: RECONSIDERING THE KANTIAN TRADITION IN FOREIGN RELATIONS

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The article considers the researcher's ideas evolving the reconsideration of neo-Kantian approaches to theorizing in foreign relations regarding the effects of globalization upon the international peace in particular. The array of concepts circulating around Thomas L. Friedman 'Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention' is being scrutinized with concern to both its limits and its continuing relevance to trade interdependent potential to serve as a lever upon the belligerence of national governments and violence expansion. A tentative hypothesis is set forward within the context of studying correlations between the spread of wealth, political emancipation and frequency of international conflict.

Keywords: conflict prevention, Kantian tradition, world trade, interdependence, globalization, capitalist peace theory, democratic peace theory, etatism.

ТРИДЦАТЬ ЛЕТ «МИРА»: К ПЕРЕСМОТРУ КАНТИАНСКОЙ ТРАДИЦИИ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЯХ

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Публикация посвящена исследовательским идеям в рамках пересмотра неокантианских подходов к теоретизированию в теории международных отношений, прежде всего применительно к изучению эффектов глобализации на международный мир. В работе рассматривается массив концепций в центре которых находится представление Томаса Л. Фридмана о теории предотвращения конфликтов «Делла», ее границах и современной применимости в качестве описания механизмов снижения воинственности национальных правительств и ограничения распространения насилия. В статье высказывается гипотеза о возможном значении корреляций между

распространением богатства, а также политической эмансипации в предыдущее тридцатилетие и частотности конфликтов в этот исторический период.

Ключевые слова: предотвращение конфликтов, кантианская традиция, международная торговля, взаимозависимость, капиталистическая теория мира, демократическая теория мира, этатизм.

Despite of the fact, that by 2010s the humankind has apparently reached a *historically unseen* level of mutual integration regarding, particularly, world trade and access to information, and especially the amazing speed of its distribution – many byproducts of this continuing explosion remain contradictory. Within the last 30 years, starting with Mikhail Gorbachev rise to power in the Soviet Union and introduction of *Perestroika*-driven policies, the world economy was becoming increasingly globalized – but the *price to be paid* for this new set of inspiring features has yet to be determined.

The above descriptive statements *per se*, sometimes amounting to a triviality nowadays – do not, however, communicate any overwhelmingly persuasive evidence that, to many, a ‘divided’ and ‘cyberpunk’ world of 2016 has become *a safer and more peaceful place* than the bipolar world of the Cold War in 1986. What, therefore, apart from the heated political debate – belies then this impression of widespread progress and development across the board with humans flocked together into frameworks of their traditional organizations (such as states) and non-traditional organizations (such as horizontal clandestine networks) have somehow produced a *more peaceful* international environment?

In 2005 Thomas L. Friedman has authored a book titled ‘The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century’ where he portrayed the world as ‘level playing field in terms of commerce, where all competitors have an equal opportunity’ and claimed that the world economy was moving into so-called ‘*Globalization 3.0*’ stage. According to Friedman [2] and to, respectively, his interviewees (say, in India), the 3.0 stage is characterized by *convergence* of personal computer with fiber-optic micro cable with the rise of work flow software, what differentiates this period from

the previous phases, such as Globalization 1.0 (in which *countries and governments* served as main protagonists) and the Globalization 2.0 (in which *multinational companies* led the way in driving global integration).

Such are the fundamental perceptions of Friedman's contribution to the *capitalist peace theory*, which he has otherwise called the *Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention*.

However, the logic and findings of Friedman's landmark work in 2005 obviously stand upon a *Kantian tradition* of thought in political philosophy. In his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*, Immanuel Kant argued, among other things, that "the spirit of commerce... sooner or later takes hold of every nation, and is incompatible with war." [8]. In the early twentieth century Norman Angell reasoned that 'trade interdependence in modern economies makes war unprofitable' [1]. Later, Joseph Schumpeter offered the observation that *with the advancement of capitalism* people form "an unwarlike disposition" [13]. Finally, the said Thomas L. Friedman has claimed in his earlier classical free-trader bestseller '*The Lexus and the Olive Tree*', that 'no two nations with a McDonald's franchise had ever gone to war with one another' [3]. This became known as the Golden Arches theory. Later, Friedman upgraded that theory into the abovementioned "Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention", where he stipulates that '...No two countries that are both part of a major global supply chain, like Dell's, will ever fight a war against each other as long as they are both part of the same global supply chain' [2].

Yet, looking back from 2016 one immediately realizes, that there exist, at least three fresh objections to the capitalist peace theory generated by *historical experience* of the last decade and one *observation of a more general nature*. These objections, essentially, derive from Georgian events of 2008 and the 'geopolitical earthquake' of 2014 in Eastern Europe (interestingly enough, though, there has never been a McDonald's restaurant in Syria, hence it is not part of *that particular counterargument* to the Dell theory of Conflict Prevention).

But even shortly after the Friedman's publication of 1999 the NATO has bombed Belgrade and the bombardment was followed by local McDonald's

demolition by the angry crowd. Nonetheless, the above has been rather a *feeble counterexample* to Friedman's argument, due to the later *warning* he offered in the 2005 book: 'Dell Theory should not be interpreted as a guarantee that nations who are deeply involved in global supply chains will not go to war with each other. It rather means that the governments of these nations and their citizens will have very heavy economic costs to consider as they contemplate the possibility of war. These costs include the long-term loss of the country's profitable participation in the global supply chain' [2]. Definitely, the US and the late Yugoslavia could not be evaluated as a double case of a *trade interdependence system* of this sort.

Other criticisms were drawn out of the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama and the Kargil War over Kashmir, but in these, as in some of the following examples one is frustratingly limited by narrow and broad definitions of war, having in mind old and new instances of so-called 'proxy' or 'hybrid' warfare [11].

Still, the Dell theory holds in a number of cases of how conflict prevention occurred between India and Pakistan in their 2001-2002 nuclear standoff, where India was at risk of losing its global partners. The relationship between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan was also cited as an example of this theory – they both have *strong supply relations* with each other and a war between the two seems very unlikely today.

Nevertheless, since 2005, there have been three more conflicts cited as counterexamples.

First, it's the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, following hostilities ongoing since 1973, with South Lebanon occupied until May 2000, while McDonald's franchises were established in Israel and Lebanon in 1993 and 1998, respectively. However, the Lebanese Armed Forces were *not a party to the fighting*, the Israel Defense Forces action being taken instead against the paramilitary group Hezbollah.

Second, it's the 2008 South Ossetia war between Russia and Georgia. Both countries had McDonald's at the time (restaurants began in the two countries in 1990 and 1999, respectively).

Third, it's the 2014 Crimean crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Both countries had McDonald's at the time. One should pay attention in this case to high probability of Friedman's theory still being relevant in this case as long as the 'hot' phase of the conflict *has seemed to be inhibited* by economic considerations.

The previously mentioned general observation, including the above objection, examples and counterexamples naturally stems from a *query of limits to the capitalist peace theory* – and our 'guess' at this stage will be that its limits could coincide with geographical borders of the 'first' or *developed world*. It is also important to refer to *capital openness theory* studies by Eric Gartzke, in 2000s, which argued that nations with a high level of capital openness are able to avoid conflict with each other and maintain a lasting peace [6]. One luxurious advantage of this theory is that it has been formalized, what has seemed to ensure its internal consistency. But the most recent study failed to control for the variables of economic norms theory and the size of government explanation [7]. Nevertheless, one might point to the fourth definition of capitalism in a relatively recent work by Patrick J. McDonald, the idea of which is that smaller governments are more dependent than larger or socialist governments on raising taxes for fighting wars [9]. What brings one back to *right-wing Libertarian classic text* by Ayn Rand, in which she grimly adduces that if humans want to oppose war, it is 'statism' (French *étatisme*) that they must oppose [12], because as long as the collective entity, such as nation, is valued higher than the individual, wars between nations and within nations are to stay *inadvertent*.

Although these accounts do not somehow fundamentally undermine the widespread belief that economic growth, trade interdependence, business and political freedoms produce positive impact upon international peace, it is difficult to shred off the impression that any corollary to be drawn on that issue to date is at best *unclear and inconclusive*.

The same search for limits to the Dell theory of conflict prevention might apply to the long-standing concept, that 'democracies don't go to war with each other' which can be regarded as *twinned* with the capitalist peace theory. For instance, Michael Doyle's pioneering work 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs' in

Philosophy and Public Affairs [5, p. 205, 207-208], initially applied this international relations paradigm to what he called ‘Liberal states’ which are identified as entities “with some form of representative democracy, a market economy based on private property rights, and constitutional protections of civil and political rights’. This theory has been alternately referred to as the ‘Liberal peace theory’ [4] by Clemens Jr. and Walter in *Complexity Theory as a Tool for Understanding and Coping with Ethnic Conflict and Development Issues in Post-Soviet Eurasia* – although its explanatory value in the context of 2010s could have been somewhat diminished.

But how about *illiberal democracies* (coined by Fareed Zakaria) – not even mentioning modern *mafia states* (referred to by Balint Magyar – among others), which are *hard to directly identify* as authoritarian, being appraised, at best, as non-democracies? We will not go into depth with that twin-theory issue in this study, although it is of primary importance to underline the ‘*Liberal*’ adjective within the description of states evading conflict according to the array of democratic peace theories altogether.

Both the capitalist peace hypothesis and the Kantian-based democratic peace tradition of thought should, to our mind, acquire *proper academic formalization* in order to establish whether expansion of market capitalism, competitive political systems and liberal values *have actually contributed (or not) to the international peace* since the end of the Cold War. Creating such a formal theory will require long-term access to ‘big data’, collected by prominent research think-tanks – Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace and Freedom House, to name a few, and also to the databases of the international trade and finance institutions, those being the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF.

The above path just might provide ground to distinguish a certain cluster of correlations – with all reservations and restrictions of this comparative method observed – between expansions of the global free trade regime, waves of democratization and frequency of international conflict in 1986-2016. The hypothesis, or rather a set of *tentative claims* we put forward is triple.

First, while the ‘Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention’, regarded as a modern stage of the capitalist peace theory, continues to hold with concern *to developed nations and emerging markets*, the frequency of international conflict can grow on the changing and sometimes *obscure border between modernized and traditional societies* and/or within modernizing nations themselves with outside intervention. This frontier might be a new one and to some noticeable extent *different* from notorious ‘geopolitical’ borders of the XIX century and ‘areas of influence’ of the pre-1986 bipolar world. The economic progress and social development can generate conflict by themselves [10], albeit its forms might dissolve and fuse into what is being observed in 2010s as instances of hybrid warfare.

Second, there is a sound possibility of a *formal theory* to be developed within the Neo-Kantian tradition of thought in this respect, if the above assumed modification is taken into account. Nonetheless, the instrumental definitions of war, peace and stability for this purpose have to be carefully specified.

Finally, it is somewhat questionable, whether inside the above framework of dissemination of market capitalism, competitive political systems and liberal values one can generalize on a scale, implying that the ‘world of nations’ is a homogenous, indiscrete research object. That, to our mind remains to be a point for a very tough discussion between scholarly approaches developed by respected traditions of theorizing in political science.

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