

# EXPANDING THE ZONE OF PEACE?

Democratization and  
International Security

ALEXANDER V. KOZHEMIKIN



## EXPANDING THE ZONE OF PEACE?

*Also by Alexander V. Kozhemiakin*

**THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION** (*co-editor  
with Roger E. Kanet*)

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**To my mother and father**

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# Introduction

One of the most dramatic events of the late twentieth century has been a massive wave of democratization that has encompassed regions as diverse as Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and most recently Africa.<sup>1</sup> In less than two decades more than three dozen bureaucratic-authoritarian, communist, apartheid, and military regimes have collapsed under the immense societal pressure for democratic rights and freedoms.

Will the democratic transition bring these nations into the Kantian 'pacific union' of liberal republics? In fact, such a scenario appears to be supported by the 'democratic peace' argument, according to which democracies never (or rarely) fight each other.<sup>2</sup> 'On the basis of past experience,' notes Samuel Huntington, 'the spread of democracy in the world means the expansion of a zone of peace.'<sup>3</sup> Or will this process of democratization, at first and possibly for a very long period of time, throw the reforming societies into the zone of violent conflict? After all, an authoritarian system may keep in check political, socio-economic, or cultural forces that, if unleashed in a process of democratic reforms, could lead to civil strife as well as international violence. Thus, for example, according to Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, in the former USSR, 'democratization may well simply permit the expression of anti-Western sentiments of Russian nationalism in addition to anti-Russian sentiments of non-Russian peoples in the Soviet Union, in which case democratization might inflame international relations in ways inconsistent with Kant's vision'.<sup>4</sup>

The quest for answers to these critical questions has been the driving force behind this book whose primary purpose is to examine the impact of the process of democratization on international security. The study of the international effects of democratic transition is especially urgent now that the 'democratic peace' thesis, with its simple message, alleged historical validity, and strong emotional appeal, has been mechanically

converted by a number of democratic nations into a major post-Cold War foreign policy guideline, according to which the process of democratization needs to be promoted, not only because of its intrinsic value but also because it creates a foundation on which a more peaceful and secure world can be built. President Clinton, for example, declared in his 1994 State of the Union address that 'the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere'.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, other democratic leaders have wasted no time to find a policy application for the Kantian proposition. For instance, former Israeli Prime Minister Peres suggested that Israel should 'encourage' democratization among its neighbours in order to strengthen the process of peace settlement in the Middle East.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the original 'democratic peace' argument is confined primarily to the interactions between consolidated liberal democracies and largely ignores the international behaviour of democratizing nations. And yet, paraphrasing a well-established proposition which holds that, while socio-economic modernity breeds political stability, modernization results in political decay,<sup>7</sup> it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that, while democracy promotes peace (with other democracies), *democratization* may often lead to an increase in international conflicts. Moreover, those rare studies that briefly examine the aggregate conflict-involvement of anocratic regimes (not fully democratic, but not authoritarian either) report troubling findings: actual conflicts occur more often, relative to the expected frequency, between anocracies and authoritarian regimes, and between pairs of anocracies.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the most recent research suggests that incipient or partial democratization can be an occasion for the rise of belligerent nationalism and war.<sup>9</sup> This is not to claim that the promotion of democracy is necessarily detrimental to international security. Nevertheless, an objective assessment of the international effects of democratization as a *process* (in contrast to democracy as an *outcome*) is required before making and implementing any policy prescriptions.

Briefly summarized, this work challenges the assumption that international peace is invariably strengthened by the process of democratization. It is argued instead that during problematic democratization, when basic democratic institutions and procedures are implemented and function more or less effectively in an unconsolidated form, yet elite and societal preferences remain illiberal or become radicalized during the turbulent process of transition, international security is seriously threatened. Under these conditions, the emerging democratic attributes, most importantly free elections and executive accountability, serve as a 'transmission belt' for hawkish domestic preferences, thus allowing them to shape foreign policy of the transitional regime, making it more assertive, if not aggressive.

In other words, it is not the deformation of nascent democratic institutions and procedures, as recently suggested by Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder,<sup>10</sup> but rather a *discrepancy* between democratic political attributes and radicalized domestic preferences that augments the belligerence of democratizing states. The successful process of democratic consolidation, by definition, minimizes this discrepancy. Indeed, democratic consolidation reinforces and is reinforced by the spread of liberal norms and socio-economic stabilization that serve to moderate elite and societal preferences. If, however, democratic transition is problematic, the discrepancy persists – rendering the transitional government vulnerable to virulent domestic pressures and, as a result, inhibiting the capacity of a chief executive to maintain international cooperation.

The chapters that follow develop theoretically and assess empirically this argument. Chapter 1 discusses the growing literature on 'democratic peace' and addresses the crucial distinction between democracy as an outcome and democratization as a process. Chapter 2 hypothesizes about the effects of democratization on foreign policy decision-making in a transitional regime. The internal validity of the hypotheses (i.e. the postulated causal mechanism) is evaluated in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 traces the impact of democratization on the evolution of Russian foreign policy. Chapter 4

continues the analysis by considering, from a comparative perspective, the main trends in foreign policy of three currently democratizing nations: Serbia, Hungary, and Ukraine. Chapter 5 then examines the external validity of the proposed argument (i.e. its generalizability) by estimating changes in military conflict-initiation propensity of several dozen historical and contemporary cases of successful and problematic democratization. Finally, in Chapter 6 the conclusions are drawn and policy suggestions are presented.