

## **PRIF's Research Programme**

### **Antinomies of Democratic Peace**

Under the terms of its constitution, the PRIF undertakes to investigate the causes of violent conflicts and the factors that determine peace, and also to disseminate the idea of peace. In carrying out its brief, it examines international, social, economic, political, and cultural conflicts. As well as formulating strategies for dealing with these, it focuses on individual policy-areas and proposes scientifically researched options for action that will promote peace-processes and help counter the recourse to violence in dealing with conflicts. The PRIF's work reflects the advances made in relevant academic disciplines. Its research programme, extending over several years, is geared in direction and structure to a key issue in the academic debate. The programme's aim is theory-building in the peace-studies field. The PRIF takes its research-findings into the academic debate and makes them available to politicians and the public.

### **Research Practice – Practical Research**

The work of the PRIF is intended to help strengthen the capacity for peace and power of action of political and social institutions, social groups, and individuals. This necessitates close contact and interchange between research and practical politics. There is more to this than testing the practicability of scientifically elaborated options for action: the permanent dialogue and ongoing observation provide valuable empirical material for up-to-date investigations of a kind indispensable both in providing advice to policy-makers and in fulfilling the theoretical tasks of peace research. Systematizing and optimizing this link between research and practice, through a process of critical self-observation, is an integral part of the research programme. It does, however, also imply that PRIF researchers have to have a higher degree of specialization and training in the relevant fields of research and practical action than is either necessary or possible within the framework of general university research and teaching.

Today, peace and conflict research cannot be conducted as if it were the preserve of a single discipline; it needs input from a variety of academic fields. Although political-science issues have pride of place, it is essential, in terms of both the theory and the practice of peace, that the fruits of theoretical and methodological approaches in other disciplines be taken into account. This includes accepting a situation of pluralistic competition between different theoretical and methodological approaches. In order to put interdisciplinarity on a solid footing, PRIF attempts, where possible, to mirror the differing standpoints in the composition of its staff. Interdisciplinary work is another feature for which an extra-mural institute offers particularly favourable conditions.

The planning, organization, and conduct of the research is geared to the institute's two-fold academic objective of contributing to both basic and applied research. The practical dimension is reflected in the PRIF's policy-oriented research. It determines the areas on which the research-groups' observation of politics is focused, because treatment of these areas requires detailed expertise that can only be acquired over a

lengthy period of time and in continuous contact with practical politics. The institute's theoretical terms of reference, meanwhile, provide the parameters for the fixed-term project-work in the research groups; they also shape the cross-group co-operation in the work-groups. Research projects are designed as part of the research programme laid down for the institute as a whole and are intended to help elucidate the questions raised in the programme from the groups' various perspectives.

## **The Research Programme**

With the adoption of the research programme 'Antinomies of Democratic Peace', the work of the institute's different research-groups is focused on a single common theme. That democratically constituted states never, or hardly ever, wage war against one another is one of the few undisputed empirical findings of the various scientific disciplines concerned with issues of peace and war. The collection, evaluation, and interpretation of data on this theme has led to a lively discussion over the last fifteen years, and to the development of various permutations of a theory of 'democratic peace'. The aim of the PRIF research programme is to enable the institute to make a unique, all-round contribution to this debate.

Up to now, the debate about the relationship between democracy and peace has concentrated far too much on trying either to 'confirm' or 'disprove' the theory through empirical tests. Fundamental problems and contradictions have rarely been given much attention in this process. But 'democracy' and 'peace' have two sides to them: on the one hand, they represent a normative goal that lies beyond the realms of argument; on the other, they stand for practical options that can and should be the subject of vigorous debate. The two aspects condition one another, albeit in an unexplained way. To bring some clarity into this confused state of affairs is the guiding principle of the PRIF research programme.

The tension described here manifests itself in the antinomies inherent in democratic peace. For example, whereas democratically constituted states largely forgo the threat or use of force when dealing with one other, this is not at all the case in their dealings with states that have different systems of rule. The conduct of democracies in respect of the use of force and arms shows striking variations depending on who is on the receiving end, and it would seem that the other side of the coin of 'democratic peace' is 'democratic non-peaceableness' *vis-à-vis* non-democratic states.

Another striking phenomenon is the Janus-like quality of democratization: without democratization, democracy is inconceivable, and to this extent it serves peace; but for all sorts of reasons, processes of democratization have either been accompanied by violence or have triggered it, thus repeatedly jeopardizing democracy's chances of development.

Finally, the link between democracy and peace also needs to be looked at in the context of the theories used to explain social and political change in the modern age. In line with Enlightenment tradition, the PRIF research programme is founded on the notion that universal peace is both feasible and rational. Seen as a process of constant *rapprochement* (Kant) or of diminishing violence and increasing justice (Czempiel), peace appears as deliberately directed transformation, the content of which changes progressively with history itself. The process of international organization and regime-formation that began in the last third of the nineteenth century and now embraces virtually every domain that is of public interest enhances this perception. But this view only takes account of one dimension of change.

Contrasting with it, we have the nationalism and chauvinism of the final years of the nineteenth century, and the world wars, fascism, and genocide of the twentieth, all of which have distorted the above transformation out of all recognition and have repeatedly cut the ground from under the feet of the idea of progress. At the same time, the very occurrence of these disasters has constantly given renewed impetus to the idea of a world order without war. This contradictoriness inherent in change raises the fundamental question as to whether what we are dealing with are constant but limited interruptions to the civilizatory process, or whether the overall assumption of deliberately directed change has to be rejected.

This is graphically illustrated in the relationship between democracy and nationalism, which are closely linked to one another in their potential for mobilization and destruction – not just topically (for example, in the democratization processes in some of the transforming countries of Europe) but genealogically. Given the large number of empirical examples here, the question of why, in practice, the idea of (either democratic or nationalist) self-determination serves the cause of both emancipation and exclusion, reconciliation and destruction, is a central one for peace research.

The same applies to the relationship between democracy and the market economy. Both have established themselves as the most efficient forms of organized human activity at the present time – democracy as a means of organizing power, the market economy as a means of generating well-being. Despite this, the relationship between them is anything but uncontradictory: whereas democracy has to guarantee formal equality, the market economy generates material inequality and thus threatens the very bases of democracy. In the context of globalization, this points to the conditions which 'mature' democracies need in order to maintain stability in phases of economic upheaval. Massive pressure to adjust may overtax even established democratic systems' capacity for absorption and thus jeopardize the stability of those very political formations on which the stability of democratic peace depends.

These contradictions in the relationship between democracy and peace are reflected in two ways in the PRIF research programme. First, we question a view of history that assumes democracy and peace march forward together in a process of natural, inevitable, and irreversible evolution. The contradictions, contingent factors, risks, and instabilities in this process need to be clarified, as do the risks to stability that exist even for the established democracies and their relationships to one another. Secondly, we work on the assumption that the historical process is an open one, and is tied to purposive action (praxis) that is always susceptible to disruption and error. This runs counter to those notions that assume democratization and peace-building are merely 'midwives' to an inevitable historical process. From this to the idea that the use of any and every means is justified to bring history to fulfilment is but a short step. But our job is to anticipate developments by clarifying the counter-intuitive implications of the apparatus of peace, and to formulate strategies that will help get round these kinds of dilemmas.

The above remarks indicate the general area of scientific interest within which the PRIF research groups will carry out their examination of the relationship between democracy and peace. In concrete terms, this initially translates into the four complexes of issues set out below, from which the groups then work out the terms of reference for their research.

## **Open Questions in the Theory of Democratic Peace**

Despite a great deal of work in this area, the question of whether democracies generally display less inclination to go to war than non-democracies, or whether the preference for peaceful conflict-resolution only manifests itself in relation to other democracies (the prevailing opinion at present) is still a disputed one. Whether democracies and non-democracies can be treated as distinct categories, or whether aversion to war increases in line with the degree of democratization, also continues to be a moot point. The underlying reason for this lack of clarity is that the research that has so far been carried out into the factors and processes linking the specific relationship between society and political system to the sort of external behaviour characteristic of democracies has not so far produced any clear findings. Possible causal variables here include: the utilitarian calculations of the citizenry; an institutional structure that tends to inhibit war; and normative attitudes. Whether these operate independently of one another or only synergetically is also unclear.

There are a whole series of factors here that have undergone little or no systematic examination. Scant exposure has, for example, been given to the question of whether democratic states have specific features that enhance their proneness to resort to force when dealing with non-democracies ('democratic non-peaceableness') – a question rendered more acute by recent developments, namely in relation to so-called 'rogue states'. Democracies are, after all, open to influence from economic and social interest-groups, and to the kinds of constraints that arise when influential forces demand – in dealings with repressive dictatorships, for example – that politics should also be guided by normative, purportedly consensus-based objectives. No thought has been given either, to historical and cultural differences, to asymmetries of power, or to positions of domination and dependence. Finally, scholarly consideration needs to be given to the important question of whether the behaviour of democracies is consistent over time: even a cursory diachronic or synchronic glance at different democracies reveals striking variations in proclivity to war, arms growth, and openness to co-operation and integration.

### **The Magic Triangle:**

#### **Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organization**

In his classic formulation of the theory of 'democratic peace', Immanuel Kant cited two further pillars of an international peace order besides that of a democratic constitution: economic-cum-social linkage between states, and the juridification of their relations, up to and including a form of international organization that would serve peaceful conflict-resolution (Kant's 'global civil constitution').

To what extent the readiness of democracies to link up with one another and have their relations put on a legal footing is a permanent phenomenon, what this readiness depends on in individual cases, and whether either of these two factors do in fact make any kind of specific contribution to peace continue, to this day, to be moot points. Again, in Kant's account it remained unclear whether the 'causes of peace' operated independently of one another or only in the context of co-operation between democratically constituted states. This question too has remained unresolved, although research into international regimes indicates that more long-term institutionalized co-operation between democratic and non-democratic states is at least possible. If these factors do indeed operate independently from one another, then peace is conceivable even in a world that is likely to remain politically heterogeneous for quite some time. On the other hand, if the factors conducive to

peace only take effect between democratic states, the 'region of peace' will necessarily remain confined to these states. The differing consequences that follow from this as far as scientifically based recommendations on foreign affairs are concerned, are clear.

### **The Risks of Democratization**

Empirical research on the transition from non-democratic to democratically constituted systems has shown that such transitions are characterized by particular risks in regard to violence. These risks relate both to the internal constitution of societies and to their conduct *vis-à-vis* the exterior – and thus also on their proclivity to warfare.

The explanations on offer encompass both socio-structural factors (severe fragmentation, institutional weaknesses, militant mobilization-strategies, interests of political and social élites in maintaining power and creating diversions) and external conditions that either promote or hinder the process of democratization. Which particular constellations influence the level of violence has not been adequately explained. In particular, the way in which structural conditions, élite strategies, and external context act in combination is urgently in need of further elucidation. This also applies on practical political grounds: according to the theory of democratic peace, the growing number of democracies should, in principle, result in a reduction in the risk of war in international relations, and in a lowering of the level of violence within states. But if transition brings special risks of violence with it, it is crucial, when support is given to processes of democratization, that we know what factors contribute to these risks, what means we can use to lessen their effect, and how we can speed up the consolidation of democracy.

### **Dilemmas Arising in the Democratization of International Relations**

The notion that applying democratic principles to international relations is conducive to peace is based on the assumption that introducing elements of governance into inter-state relations, rather than relying on power-based factors, may increase acceptance of decisions and thus diminish the readiness to push through one's own interests by force.

No satisfactory basis has ever been offered for any of the models so far proposed for this approach. Schemes that put the emphasis on 'international society' call for equal participation by all states but are then confronted with the counter-argument that numerically equal representation for greatly differing populations conflicts with the democratic idea. On the other hand, anyone proposing representation proportional to population is faced with the difficulty that some of the most densely populated states are undemocratically constituted, so that they can represent their citizens in a way that is in accord with international law but not democratically legitimated. Proposals deriving from the concept of 'civil society' would like non-governmental organizations to be viewed, as it were, as substitute representatives of society, but they have to contend with the fact that these groups lack democratic legitimation. Finally, we have to ask whether the hoped-for peace-effect of a democratization of international relations can be achieved through participatory procedures alone, or whether binding decisions at the international level do not presuppose a much stronger normative integration within international/and or world society.

The significance of these problems as regards the capacity of democracies to sustain peace is heightened by the creeping de-democratization resulting from the shifting of decision-making to supra-national bodies that are neither democratically legitimated nor democratically controlled. And the massive pressure to harmonize exerted by these bodies in its turn harbours a huge potential for conflict.