

**ERICH WEEDE:
BALANCE OF POWER,
GLOBALIZATION AND THE
CAPITALIST PEACE
LIBERAL VERLAG GMBH 2005**

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The book “Balance of Power, Globalization and the Capitalist Peace” has been published by the Liberal Institute of the Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation as part of a series on ‘Ideas on Liberty’. The author, Erich Weede, is a retired professor of sociology of the University Bonn, Germany. Over the years, he has been doing research in war and violence, cross-national studies of economic growth and income inequality and in historical pattern of Asian and Western development in the last millennium. In the current publication, according to his own words, he is connecting his interest in war with the more recent interest in capitalism and economic development in a globalized world. In the introduction to his work he describes his approach towards the subject as nomothetic and deductive meaning that he is going to test certain general propositions such as the relationship between balance of power and war-proneness (chapter one), between globalization, free trade and division of labour (chapter two) and others.

The study again, is heavily based on general assumptions such as “democracy promotes peace” “democratic states don’t wage war against each other” and “growth and prosperity promotes democracy’. In order to prove such general assumptions Weede is showing how the quantitative (statistical) method of analysis is not really in a position to show any causal relationship between the two indicators. In how many cases worldwide such a co-relationship can be established, where does it not work? Though he points towards the incapability of such

empirical research to prove the point he does not add qualitative factors to his inquiry which would examine the social, political, cultural and/or even geographical conditions in the researched cases which is a definite draw-back of this method.

In chapter two Weede discusses the problem of “balance of power and war-proneness”. The basic assumption is the Western attitude that peace has to be imposed by an effective superior authority or “peace by strength”. This implies that the security of the superior contender has to be paid by the insecurity of the inferior contenders. Though he doesn’t cite this example that seems to be exactly what is going on in the West. With the US as the superior power everybody else has to be content with an inferior status which may even compromise its political decision making capability and sovereignty (p.20). If this unipolarity or hegemony occurs in the condition of international anarchy, Weede further explains. “even wars of aggression may be perceived by their initiators as ultimately defensive for being preventive or preemptive” (p.18) – a scenario which exactly covers the US aggression against Afghanistan if not the one against Iraq. Anarchy or security dilemmas (such as terrorism) Weede sees to be overcome by unipolarity and hegemony. Quantitative research of the West supports the assumption that preponderance pacifies while parity is dangerous (p.21). The hegemon is capable of constraining others. This short explanation of Western understanding of ‘peace and security and how it can be attained should be made a compulsory reading for politicians, military, political scientists and may be even business students in order to better understand the dynamics of not only contemporary world politics but also the background for what is going on in Pakistan and in our Western neighbourhood.

Chapter three is dedicated to the relationship between globalization, free trade and the division of labour. It draws attention to the central role of economy in the international power equation especially under the condition of fast globalization. While Weede locates the beginning of globalization in the late 19th century it should be critically remarked that according to our understanding the process of globalization had started much earlier. The East India Company founded in 1600 and other

mercantilist companies were the first to connect the markets of India and other colonies with that of the colonial motherland and thus starting the process of globalization. Of course, only in the 20th c. this process gained such speed and strength that it became an observable factor in international economy and politics. Weede's assessment that globalization (in the shape of liberal capitalism B.R.) gained speed after the failure of socialism is probably right it should be added here that the poverty and deprivation which socialism created is no match for the one which was and is created on a daily basis by globalized capitalism. But this is not the way Weede sees it. For him globalization is a process which is mutually profitable for everybody and those who do not yet profit must be suffering from a legacy of collectivism and planning. That is surely a very short-sighted and euro-centric assessment. Another of his arguments is that globalization has done away with tariffs and other hurdles in international free trade. But this statement is contrary to the findings of the G20 and other international gatherings who in order to fight the current economic crisis tried to promote free trade and open markets but had to realize a growing tendency of protectionism especially in the leading western economies. The sermon he is giving on pp.32-34 on the benefits of free trade seems to be lost on his own as well as on many other western governments. His statement that the purpose of free trade is to make all countries better off and not to preserve any existing hierarchy of power is vividly contradicted by the G-20 experiences, by US politics towards China and many other instances.

Chapter four is titled "The capitalist peace between states" and the main argument of our author here is that the economic benefits of globalization are topped only by its international security benefits. (p.41) capitalist peace theory states that capitalism, free trade and economic freedom promote peace. Weede is discussing this theory while using the examples of WW I and II. While he discards WW I because the needed amount of globalization was not yet reached he insists that WW II and the cold war era after that are very much strengthening the peace creating power of capitalism and globalization. He quotes the examples of wars such as the Iran-Iraq war to prove that wars were fought mainly not between democracies. Again, he fails to mention

the wars of the US in Korea and Vietnam and he also fails to recognize the indirect role of the US and Western powers in the Iran-Iraq war and the war in Afghanistan. Recent wars like the 'war on terror' and the whole problem of terrorism and its roots are not mentioned in the book at all which seems to point towards the fact that this is an old text which had been written before 2000 and are not up-to-date. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why FNS decided to publish it in 2005 and even re-publish it in 2007.

The author's belief in the peace-creating power of capitalism is repeated in chapters 6 "Why we need capitalist peace and why we can afford it and chapter 7 "What must be done to promote capitalist peace". It would be interesting to know if the author today is upholding this belief of his and how he would explain the intensity of war and aggression of the US since WW II and in the light of war is called "War against terror". In his conclusions Weede reiterates that free trade and democratization are the roads towards growth and general prosperity which at the same time reduce the risk of military conflict greatly. Capitalist peace as it is called in this text is the way suggested by the author towards peace and prosperity; therefore it has to be promoted in the poor countries. But capitalism has been unable to defeat poverty even in the home countries and has created underdevelopment and poverty in many third world countries. The north-south conflict and the missing free trade as a general policy in Western democracies is certainly a reason for that. But in addition, capitalism as the only available way of economic and social development may not be acceptable to many including Islamic countries as well as to South American states where poverty is rampant. The vision of capitalism as the only option is, therefore, not encouraging for many including Pakistan. In the absence of a viable alternative though more has to be done to study and understand the working and consequence of capitalism so as to be able to create a better solution.