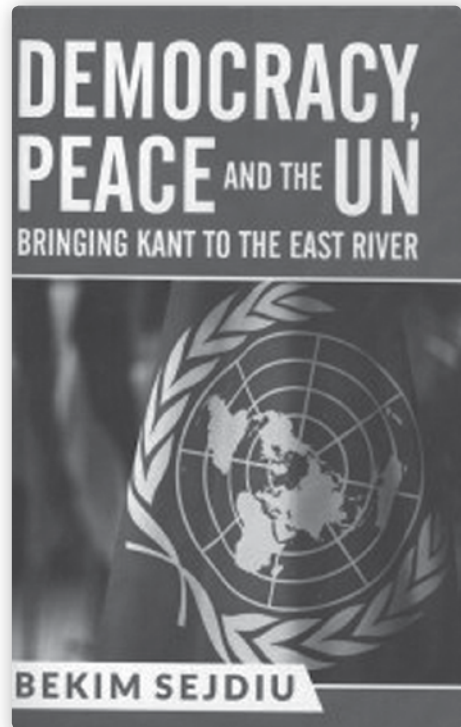


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Bekim Sejdiu
DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND THE UN:
BRINGING KANT TO THE EAST RIVER

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In his monography, Bekim Sejdiu, a judge of the Constitutional Court of Republic of Kosovo and a lecturer of international law at the University of Pristina, explores the historical, legal and political background of the UN's potential to support democratization in current, post-Cold War international setting. As both, a theoretician and a practitioner, Sejdiu is interested in the applicability of the ideas introduced by the democratic peace theory, a pioneering work of Immanuel Kant. His approach towards the potential linkage between Kant's underpinnings and the UN role in supporting democracy is gradual. In six chapters, he first introduces us to the reaction of the UN to the end of the Cold War and the transformations that followed. Then he acquaints us with the comprehensiveness of the term democracy and through two case studies, of Kosovo and Somalia, displays that the UN proved to be both, successful and unsuccessful in supporting democracy. He also presents us the possible "spillover effect" of democracy in areas of human rights, economic development



and good governance and finally, he connects the democratic peace theory and the functioning of the UN by differentiating between the UN's role in promoting and defending democracy.

The author clearly understands the importance of providing the reader

with the relevant historical developments and processes before diving into the core of the issue. This is why the first chapter presents us the “significance of the end of the Cold War for the UN and the ways in which it tried to adapt to the new context” (p.11). The events that lead to and followed the milestone year of 1989 changed the overall structure of the international arena and consequently the UN, however, not that much in the role of the most important platform for the multilateral diplomacy, but more importantly as a separate and independent actor in the international relations. More concretely, this meant the rise of numerous initiatives for the reform of the UN in terms of redefining its role in the areas of international security and peacekeeping, but also democratization. Transition from bipolarity to unipolarity with multipolar tendencies, with the United States, its ideas, values and interests, leading the way, also affected the UN. As Sejdiu points out by quoting the significant UN documents and Secretary-Generals from the post-Cold War era, the mindset of the UN has not only been infiltrated with liberal ideas such as human rights, economic development, good governance and democracy, but it also anticipated that these idea(s) are fundamentally intertwined and co-dependent.

In the second chapter, the author continues with the historical approach and delves into the UN’s role in supporting democracy. The UN did not take upon the role of sup-

porting democracy only after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but its efforts date back to the decolonization era. However, democracy, “a hidden love of the UN”, Sejdiu emphasizes, has as a term very elastic boundaries and therefore when we talk about it, it is important to distinguish between concepts such as liberal vs. illiberal democracy, constitutional democracy, global democracy and also Western vs non-Western democracy. Nevertheless, the author reminds us that we cannot generalize and talk about the UN’s support for certain kind of democracy, nor is this something the UN ought to clarify. The UN, he says, does not support a particular model of democracy, but a “democracy that every country chooses to embrace” (p.70). While the legal framework for the UN support of democracy is still in its infancy and differs immensely whether the UN is invited to support state’s democratization or not, the practical, political reality shows that if the key members are not opposed to it, there is no legal obstacle for it - be it through supporting electoral processes or strengthening democratic institutions and mechanisms.

In the third chapter, Sejdiu uses the cases of Kosovo and Somalia to display the long-term and complex nature of democratization process. The UN, as he stresses, “cannot be a substitute for social cohesion, a vibrant middle class, industrialization, sufficient education of masses, and other socio-cultural ingredients of democracy”, however, for those exact reasons it is easier to measure and as-

sess its support for democracy when it is or was a part of peacekeeping operation (p. 93). While the UNMIK, the civil component of the Security Council Resolution 1244, was successful in transforming Kosovo from war-torn country to functioning as a transitional democracy comparable to its neighboring countries, full-blown democracy has not been achieved. Nevertheless, because of the socio-political conditions the UN was able to trigger the democratization process in Kosovo and ensure it is launched successfully. However, the simulative conditions were not the case in Somalia after the eruption of the civil war. UNOSOM efforts, which were, as Sejdiu points out, lacking clear and consistent vision and strategy resulted in a still very fragile state and while its security situation improved, Somalia still cannot be described as democratic.

In the next, fourth chapter, Sejdiu weighs in on the advantages and benefits of the UN support for democracy by contributing to the major debates about the correlation between democracy and human rights, economic development and good governance. While “the organic relation between democracy and human rights has been widely recognized”, the reasoning is far from being obvious. Are human rights a precondition for democracy or is it the other way around is just one of the fundamental questions author addresses (p.115). Even more uncertain is the relation between democracy and economic development, however,

Sejdiu argues that the UN and its agencies increasingly function on the basis of an assumption that democracy and development reinforce each other. Lastly, the connection between democracy and effective and quality governance is related to the emancipatory potential of democracy for the individual. While the effect democracy has on governance may not be necessary positive in developing countries, elements such as transparency, accountability, all-inclusiveness, and participation can only be present where democratic government is in place.

In the fifth chapter author gets us acquainted with the theoretical reasoning, criticism and the empirical testing of the democratic peace theory. The fundamental objective of the UN, as Sejdiu highlights, is to spread and preserve peace which, as democratic peace theory suggests, is intrinsically connected to democracy. This is most commonly illustrated with the fact that democracies are hesitant to engage in armed conflict with other democracies. Similar to the criticism of the UN functioning, the democratic peace theory criticism questions its unbiasedness, arguing it has very directly inspired western foreign policy-making, most notably the US foreign policy during the Woodrow Wilson era. The author also points out that the democratic peace theory does not correspond to the new security threats which are usually coming from non-state actors, however, in the same breath, he also rightfully acknowledges that

“Kant would reject empiricism, as a way for seeking the answer on the relation between democracy and non-traditional threats” (p.155).

In the last, sixth chapter Sejdiu attempts to outline a strategy for an implementation of the previously developed ideas and finalize his evaluation of the UN's potential in supporting democracy. The author approaches transforming his theoretical findings in concrete policy solution by firstly, clearly stating which mistakes and traps should the UN avoid and secondly, advising what the UN should actually do. In essence, he suggests a “twofold approach in its endeavor to support democracy”, a distinction between defending and promoting democracy (p.169). Defending democracy approach is reserved for countries where process of democratization has been established but is still at an early stage of development, while the promoting democracy approach talks about expansion of the territory where democracy is the model of governance. With this twofold approach, Sejdiu believes, the UN would gain a strategy for global support of democracy which

would consider the diverse nature of democracies around the globe. Even though, as the author admits, the UN is “handicapped” by not having an independent decision-making capacity, history has shown us that the UN can still engage in supporting democracy and such strategy can assist the UN and its member states to continue with its integration process.

Formation of strategic solutions and policy suggestions on the basis of abstract theory is always a difficult pursuit, however, I believe that dr. Bekim Sejdiu has achieved exactly that – he produced a set of strategic policy approaches for the UN to pursue its role of the global democracy supporter which take into the account the historical background, political reality and pragmatic cost-benefit analysis of the issue. Because of all of that, I truly believe it is fair to say that Kant has arrived to the East River embankment and now, if I allow myself a bit of naïve optimism, it is on the heads of states to read this monographic study thoroughly and consider implementation of its practical applications.