



## *The Case for Democracy:*

# Does Democracy Bring International and Domestic Peace and Security?

### Scientific Evidence Shows:

- **Democracies do not fight wars with each other.** Fewer democracies in the world will lead to more wars. After India turned into an electoral autocracy, the statistical odds of a militarized dispute with Pakistan are now 3 times higher than 10 years ago.
- **Democracies are also much less prone to civil war and domestic volatility compared to autocracies.**
- **But transitions are risky:** The odds of civil war in a regime transitioning from autocracy to semi-democracy is nine times higher compared to before the change.
- **Gender equality is good for peace:** The annual risk of civil conflict drops from roughly 30% in the least gender equal country to around 5% in countries where women are fully empowered.

### Democracy is Beneficial for Human Security, International and Domestic Peace

A large body of scientific evidence demonstrates that human security, as well as international and domestic peace are strongly and positively related to democracy. **The democratic peace axiom – that democracies do not fight wars against each other, and that the spread of democracy reduces armed disputes and wars – is soundly confirmed** by a wealth of rigorous studies (e.g., Altman et al., 2020; Hegre et al., 2020; Hegre, 2014; Hegre, 2008). A recent study using the V-Dem democracy indices shows that there is no case of a war in any pair of states whose democratic level was above 0.61 on the V-Dem electoral democracy index (Altman et al., 2020).

Being part of a region with high levels of democracy also matters. Two states located in a region with low levels of democracy are 70% more likely to have a fatal armed conflict than a pair of states placed in a region with high levels (Altman et al., 2020). Consequently, **the current wave of autocratization should be expected to lead to a world with more international conflicts, with devastating consequences for human security.**

Hegre et al. (2020) demonstrate that vertical (free and fair multiparty elections), horizontal (institutional constraints on the executive), and diagonal (civil society) accountability mechanisms all contribute to lowering the risk of interstate war. For example, this means that after India turned into an electoral autocracy (Alizada et al., 2021), the statistical odds of a militarized dispute with at least one death between India and Pakistan is now 3 times higher than 10 years ago.

A series of scientific studies demonstrate that **democracies are also less prone to civil war and domestic volatility compared to autocracies**, especially long-term, institutionalized democracies. The key is that democracies are better at absorbing and channeling discontent through

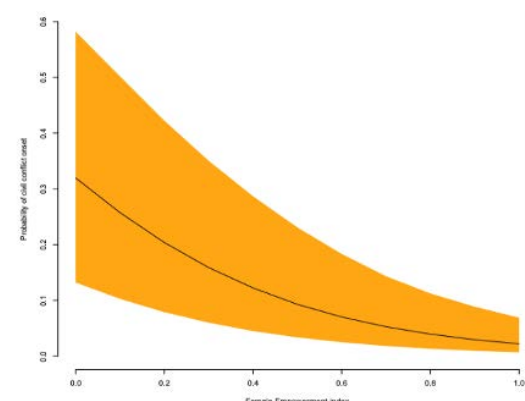
legal institutional means and accountability mechanisms that in turn lower the risk of domestic conflict (Fjelde et al., 2021; Hegre et al., 2001; Hegre, 2014).

Yet, it is vital to recognize that semi-democracies and countries with recent transitions tend to be more volatile with a higher risk of civil and international conflict. Such a regime is around four times more likely to experience domestic unrest compared to a well-established democracy. In addition, the risk of civil war in a regime transitioning from an autocracy to a semi-democracy is nine times higher compared to before the transition (Hegre et al., 2001). That is why long-term strategies toward stabilizing and improving the quality of newly established democracies are critical.

### Democracies Enable Female Empowerment that Leads to Civil Peace

Science can now confirm a robust connection between women's political empowerment and peace. Recent research drawing on V-Dem data over a 200-year period shows that the annual risk of civil conflict drops from roughly 30% in the least gender equal country to around 5% in countries where women are fully empowered (Dahlum & Wig, 2020).

**FIG 1. ANNUAL RISK OF CIVIL CONFLICT REDUCES SUBSTANTIALLY AS FEMALE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT INCREASES (DAHLUM & WIG, 2020).**



In other words, **maximally patriarchal countries are on average five times more likely to experience conflict compared to gender-inclusive societies.**

Since gender equality norms and policies are more common in democracies, this further highlights the importance of democracy for domestic peace.

Studies also show that expanding female suffrage reduces the likelihood of engaging in interstate war. Democratic countries lacking women's suffrage are 192% more likely to initiate disputes than democracies in which women are granted voting rights. (Barnhart et. al., 2020). Political empowerment of women and egalitarian gender attitudes are key to more peaceful societies guaranteeing human security.

## Transitional Justice Rooted in Transparency and Democracy Enables Lasting Peace and Stability

In newly established democracies, transitional justice mechanisms can enhance internal, long-term stability that is necessary for economic growth, human development, and lasting peaceful societies. Moving away from punitive to more transparent and democratic forms of dealing with the past – such as truth commissions – improves the likelihood of continued democratic progress, stability, and civil peace (Bates et al., 2020).

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*The Case for Democracy week 22-25 March 2021 set out to gather evidence on what democracies deliver with a focus on: economic development, human development, domestic and international security, and combating climate change. With increasing levels of autocratization around the world, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute in collaboration with the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission initiated this joint project. The objective is to build a strong case for policy makers and other development actors to continue their engagement for promotion and protection of democracy. The 'Case for Democracy' week was partly funded by the European Union and was organized by Nazifa Alizada, Dr. Vanessa Boese, Prof. Staffan Lindberg, Martin Lundstedt, Natalia Natsika, and Shreeya Pillai.*

## ABOUT V-DEM INSTITUTE

V-Dem is a unique approach to conceptualization and measurement of democracy. The headquarters – the V-Dem Institute – is based at the University of Gothenburg with 23 staff, and a project team across the world with 5 Principal Investigators, 19 Project Managers, 33 Regional Managers, 134 Country Coordinators, Research Assistants, and 3,500+ Country Experts. V-Dem is one of the world's largest data collection projects on democracy.



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