REGULAR ARTICLE

Towards Description of Universals of Culture as an Aggression Control System

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Abstract

Studies of universals of culture identify hundreds of human behaviours, features, and patterns of interactions, which can be found in any culture. The present article aims to identify and describe a small number of key universals, which are only necessary for a culture to emerge but for its progressive development as well. The theory of culture as an aggression control system is put forth identifying three such universals. First, to enhance cooperation, all cultures require impulse control of their members. The most important impulse to control is aggression. Second, all cultures have social structures to exercise such impulse control. Third, effective control of ingroup aggression is an important resource for development of a cultural group, providing some cultural groups advantage over others. While the path towards reduction of physical ingroup aggression seems clear, certain challenges remain, such as balancing different aspects of security, control of non-physical aggression, and intergroup aggression.

Keywords Aggression · Culture · Impulse Control · Inter-Group Relations · Social Structure

Introduction

Culture is a universal feature of human existence (Brown, 1991). While there are hundreds of definitions of culture (Jahoda, 2012; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), the key idea they have in common is that culture is a 'set' of processes involved in perceiving and doing things in particular ways by a particular group of people which is

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passed through generations of that group. We can call it a 'set' only figuratively for this set is very dynamic – fluid, evolving, and contextual. Different groups differ in their ways, hence myriad of cultural differences. Those differences are so numerous and vast that some (e.g. Jahoda 2012) even question whether attempts to define culture make sense.

Despite all that diversity, few would disagree that all peoples develop cultures. This presupposes existence of some sort of universals, which allow us to identify a wide variety of repeated perception and behaviour patterns as 'cultures' rather than anything else. By 'pattern' here I mean a model of perceptions and behaviours shared by a group, which becomes recognizable to an observer or a participant due to its' distinctiveness and consistency. Culture encompasses intergenerational transmission of a wide range of knowledge and have hundreds of features, behaviours and patterns of interactions (Brown, 1991).

In the present paper I am not attempting to produce an exhaustive definition what culture is or to enumerate all possible functions it may have. I am also not trying to produce an extensive list of cultural universals, as it has been done by other authors (see Brown 1991). Here I set out to put forth a theory that a key aspect of any culture is that it serves, among other things, as a system of aggression control. I will seek to identify in functional terms those universals related to aggression control, i.e. not only what they are, but also what functions do they serve. It is my belief that identification and understanding of such universals may become a source of insights concerning ways forward in significant challenges facing increasingly globalised humanity today.

Universal No. 1. To Enhance Cooperation, all Cultures Require Impulse Control and Ability to Delay Gratification from Their Members

We are born with so little impulse control, that best known studies even do not attempt to measure it until the age of three (Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970; Moffitt et al., 2011). The *modus operandi* of 'I want it here and now' does not help us to get along with other people, hence all cultures require us to give up some part of our comfort in order to enable coexistence, increase cooperation efficiency, and keep conflicts manageable. Indeed, this represents a very important function of culture – *to establish ways of limiting and delaying gratification of individual's needs in the manner necessary for formation and sustainable existence of a group, which in turn promotes sustainable long-term satisfaction of those needs*.

Various content theories of human motivation (e.g. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's (1969) ERG, etc.) assume existence of universal human needs. While those theories differ in what universal needs they define, all of them contain two broad themes – physical survival and social relationships. A need may be defined as dependence on a certain condition of existence. It has two components – a universal component of deficiency experience (i.e. hunger) and culture-dependent component of the mechanism, which is used for satisfaction of such deficiency.

Physical survival needs relate to conditions of physical existence, including oxygen, water, food, certain temperature range, etc. While people universally experience hunger, what counts as food, what are usual and acceptable ways of procuring food

and ways of consuming food depend on particular culture. So does our clothing, housing and other ways of making sure that our bodies stay within acceptable temperature range.

Individual human being is poorly endowed to meet physical survival needs in natural environment. Satisfaction of those needs is highly dependent on being a member of a group (Barkow et al., 1992). Thus, a second block of needs – social needs – may be defined as dependence on conditions of existence of social relationships. Legkauskas (2005) defined three such basic social needs – need for attention, need for respect, and need for care. Need for attention is dependence on activity of others directed towards oneself. All humans need attention of other humans, but the acceptable ways of both demanding and showing attention differ from one culture to another. Need for respect is dependence on positive evaluation received from other people. While we all need respect, it is the culture which defines what is worthy of positive evaluation and how respect should be shown. The same is true with the regard for the need for care, which may be defined as dependence on active efforts of other people to preserve and promote one's well-being.

Once formed, a group performs two vital functions – coordination of member's resources with the aim to ensure survival of the group and its members and reduction of uncertainty through social reality-testing (Greenberg et al., 1995; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Turner & Oakes, 1986). A social group represents a necessary vehicle for satisfaction of human needs, but efficient cooperation and coordination within the group vitally depends on its ability to make its members to control their impulses and delay gratification of their needs. This purpose is served by culture.

Regardless of their habitats, all humans face certain universal set of survival-relevant situations, which we are biologically equipped to recognize and deal with as individuals. If attacked, we fight or flee. However, our immediate responses to such situations, while helpful to us individually, may threaten existence of our groups. Thus, groups develop cultures to make us control our impulses and delay gratification in order to achieve satisfactory outcomes to the largest number of group members, instead immediate individual gratification of needs.

Apart from physical and social needs, another common denominator for people is that when needs are frustrated severely enough, individuals resort to aggression as a means for achieving gratification of those needs (Berkowitz, 1989). While we are born screaming, physical violence is the next method of social influence we learn as soon as we become able to coordinate our bodies in a purposeful action towards the other (Tremblay, 2015). A level of social sophistication (or cultivation) of a person may be described in terms of how far away that person has moved from these first two methods of social influence and how much of a stress it would take to reduce the person to verbal abuse and – further – to physical violence. Hence the common denominators for all cultures in relation aggression control are the following: (a) they all define ways of cooperation among their members (b) they all define acceptable ways for satisfaction of universal physical and social needs so that conflicts of excessive magnitude among individual members of the group are avoided, and (c) insofar conflicts cannot be avoided completely, all cultures have both implicit and explicit rules for control of aggression among their members.

Here *aggression* is understood as *any purposeful action intended to inflict some kind of damage on another person*. Depending on the kind of damage intended, aggression may be *physical*, aimed at causing physical pain, *psychological*, aimed at causing mental discomfort, *social*, aimed at degrading social status of the other, and *material*, with the purpose of inflicting damage on assets of another person. A key tool for control of in-group aggression is social structure.

Universal No. 2. All Cultures Have Social Structures to Exercise Impulse Control

Culture starts with a social structure, establishing key roles in a group and principles of interaction among those roles (Parsons, 1937). Individuals (whether bees, ants, wolves or humans) form groups to make physical survival possible or easier. While many forms of life just cluster in colonies where the food is and where conditions of existence (air, temperature, light, water, pressure, etc.) are favourable, those species which are able to form cooperating and coordinated collectives gain competitive advantage and tend to push out those without such advantage.

Thus, all social animals have social structures to provide for efficient cooperation (Silk & Fisher, 2017). Bees and ants have social structures, but their social behaviour is fully innate – they don't get to choose their positions (roles) in the social structure, their ways of performing those roles or whether or not they would like to put some effort towards changing their roles.

When brain and mind develop enough to imagine more than one course of action, individuals start choosing how to go best about satisfaction of their needs. Wolves, lions, etc. social mammals also don't choose to form a pack, yet their positions (roles) in that pack depends on their strength. They also may leave the pack and are able to survive on their own.

Smart and social species are able to adapt to more diverse environmental condition and hence spread into wider areas. As our ancestors kept spreading further and further, they had to adapt to increasingly different environmental conditions, ultimately necessitating large differences in ways people adapt to those conditions. That became an important source of cultural differences.

Social structure enables efficient in-group cooperation resulting in better access to more resources, yet such resources are rarely plentiful enough to make internal competition for them unnecessary. Thus, control of internal competition becomes another key function of a social structure.

For early hunter-gatherer tribes, resources were so difficult to come by that utmost cooperation was required. Any prolonged internal conflict might had been fatal for the whole group; Therefore, control was decentralised and consensus-based, while in-group aggression was ostracized. Societies were egalitarian, social structures were relatively flat (Boehm, 2001; Reuden, 2020).

Indeed, not only humans, but apes and a number of other social species require impulse control and ability to delay gratification and use social structures to enhance cooperation and control ingroup aggression thus forming cultures in the sense the term is used in the present paper (de Waal & Tyack 2003; Pasquaretta et al., 2014; Smith & Price, 1973). However, among humans cultures have grown much more elaborate and sophisticated in terms of both cooperation and aggression control due

not only to large group sizes and vastness of areas inhabited by those groups but also thanks to the key factor – complexity of activities, which made those large group sizes possible. It all started with agriculture.

Ultimately nomad tribes found that in some areas food and water were easier to come by than in others and that growing of food was superior to just searching for it. As tribesmen turned away from gathering and hunting food in favour of producing food, surpluses of produce emerged. While by definition not indispensable to anyone, surplus food was desired by everyone and thus gave rise to sustained ingroup competition.

Fertile river valleys came to be seen as best habitats to be held onto and protected from invasion of other groups. Agriculture lead to population growth and the groups in control of both agricultural know-how and fertile land gained advantage over those without such resources. Such resource-rich areas become a target of sustained intergroup competition (Gowdy & Krall, 2016; Turchin et al., 2013). As intergroup competition became a regular part of life, individual attributes which provided competitive advantage in such competition gained importance. Along with physical strength and fighting skills, aggression was one of such attributes (Dyble et al., 2015). Capability to defend the group and its land from invaders (or to seize land of neighbours) provided strong and aggressive individuals with social status, i.e. better access to all resources available to the group and within it (Knauft, 1991).

Both conflicts with other groups and aggression-based competition within the group necessitated emergence of power hierarchies within the social structure. Flat social structures turned into hierarchical ones. If egalitarian social structures were meant to ensure cooperation and minimize competition, hierarchical structures actually promoted some competition and aggression (Knauft, 1991; Reuden, 2020), but only to the degree sufficient for natural selection of the most capable warriors and leaders. Those leaders then used hierarchical structures to control ingroup aggression, so it would not boil over into self-destruction of the group (Glowacki & von Reuden, 2015).

Whether social structures are flat or hierarchical, they need rules of interaction to operate. Such rules necessarily include the principles enabling cooperation between members. Initially rules were tacit, and members of the group learned them by means of observational learning (Bandura, 1977). However, as groups mastered agriculture and grew bigger, they outgrew face-to-face size where everybody personally knew everybody. The need to control in-group aggression and to defend the fertile lands from out-group invasion lead to the formation of the ultimate hierarchical social structure – the state (Blanton & Fargher, 2008; Carneiro 1970).

As river valley settlements grew to become towns too big for everyone to know everyone else, tacit rules of interaction (e.g. politeness) ceased to be adequate as their effectiveness was based on personal familiarity among community members and direct monitoring of each other's behaviour. In the absence of personal familiarity, it became difficult to ascertain whether the parties to the interaction know the rules and are willing to abide by them. Growing population numbers meant not only loss of personal familiarity among community members, but also increased individual variability of attributes as well as increased in-group competition for resources. This necessitated not only emergence of hierarchical social structures, but also formali-

sation of tacit rules into explicit laws as well as development of the social systems (institutions) for enforcement of those laws.

Formalisation of rules and development of enforcement capabilities were necessary not only to control in-group competition for resources, but also to control human tendency to maximise personal use of resources while minimising individual input towards procuring and defending those resources (Groves & Ledyard, 1977). Also, only power hierarchy-based state was able to effectively mobilise, control and direct its members for defence of the land against out-group invaders. Thus, regardless of culture, provision of both internal and external security represents the defining function of the state (Deutsch, 1986).

Universal No. 3. Effective Control of Ingroup Aggression is an Important Resource for Development of a Cultural Group

Aggression functions as a tool providing access to limited resources in case of competition. In the longer run, aggression allows gaining and maintaining control over less aggressive and weaker members of the group, restricting their access to resources in one's favour or even exploiting those weaker members as a resource for personal advancement.

However, ingroup aggression takes up significant time, effort and other resources on both individual and group levels. While allowing aggressive individuals to prosper in the short run, the resources used up in ingroup aggression almost always can be described as wasted as their use does not lead to creation of anything valuable to the group. Among other, more measurable resources of time and material assets, aggression invariably destroys intangible, yet vital psychological group-level resources of ingroup trust, loyalty, and motivation, replacing them with fear (De Dreu et al., 1998). While effective tool for short-term psychological control, in the longer-term reliance on fear for ingroup control becomes a severe disadvantage, as it erodes trust, reduces loyalty, and motivates individuals to leave the group.

When a group develops structured and effective ways for handling conflicts, it wastes less time and resources on in-fighting, making its social structures of cooperation more sustainable. The earliest known laws (e.g. the Code of Ur-Nammu, c. 2100 – 2050 BC) mostly listed sanctions for various forms of aggression. While most provisions pertained to physical violence and material aggression, there were some articles pertaining to psychological and social aggression. As a result of collective learning (Baker, 2011; Christian, 2005), legal restrictions on aggressive behaviour have been growing in both scope and detail. Such restrictions to aggressive behaviours provided a group with an advantage over other cultural groups, who were more tolerant of uninhibited violence as an instrument of solving disagreement among their members (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Hierarchical social structure first seeks to limit aggressive challenges directed up the social status ladder as well as those related to disputes arising in horizontal distribution of resources. Initially, those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (e.g. slaves) enjoy next to no rights and protections under laws. As civilisation develops, it progressively provides increasing legal protections against aggression to its weaker

members (Welzel, 2014), ultimately not only declaring everyone equal before the law, but progressively outlawing non-institutional physical violence as well.

While equality before the law was declared at various places even before the Christ was born, it is difficult to credibly approximate everyone's equality before the law unless there is a working democracy (Teorell, 2010). Inevitably, unchecked power is abused resulting in increasing exploitation of the weak, which in turn leads to social breakdown and some form of external intervention aimed to take advantage of that breakdown. History abounds with examples, including the latest ones – downfalls of autocratic regimes in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere.

The power of democracy against authoritarianism lies in commitment of its citizens to the state. This commitment is based on social identity, feeling of most citizens that the state is both „us" and „mine" (Davis & Marin, 2009). To create that feeling in it's citizens, the state must necessarily perform its defining function – provide security for it's citizens from both the external threats and existence-threatening levels of internal competition. Protection from external threats is guaranteed by building a powerful military and forging strong alliances. Protection from existence-threatening levels of internal competition is achieved by building democratic institutions based on the rule of law, equality before the law, division of power, checks and balances, and the civil rights aimed at giving voice to everyone, so that existence-threatening levels of competition would be detected and dealt with before they destabilize the society to the point when fellow citizens start killing each other.

However, if division of power and the checks and balances system becomes corrupted to the point where some group of people gains excessive power, such group inevitably starts abusing that power. At first individuals belonging to such privileged group become able to personally evade the law and thus effectively destroy equality before the law. This provides a further unfair competitive advantage allowing for takeover of legislative powers, which are then used to disarm checks and balances and further concentrate power. Such concentration ultimately results in the end of the rule of law. Suppression of civil rights follows and so the authoritarian regime replaces the democratic one (Bermeo, 2016; Ginsburg & Huq, 2018).

At some point of such takeover critical mass of citizens stop feeling that their state institutions are working for them and for their benefit. This breads distrust towards institutions (Tudoroiu, 2015), which then may turn into resentment and even resistance, which can take a wide variety of forms, including tax evasion, refusing public education, refusing to immunize children, refusing to obey certain laws, or even refusing to fight for one's country. Such confrontation between state institutions and citizens is a holy grail to any outside force seeking to overthrow a current regime or even to occupy a country. Developments which took place in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution of 2004–2005 may serve as an illustration of this scenario.

Feeling threatened by unfair and unchecked competition (or – to be more precise – exploitation) citizens become increasingly receptive to anyone promising to restore capacity of the state to perform its key function – provide security, including both security from external threats (Laustsen & Petersen, 2017) and internal security from unfair competition challenging the rule of law (Norris, 2017). That's the basic psychological reason making citizens vote in a democratic elections for candidates, who

effectively promise a dictatorship, from Putin in Russia to Duterte in Philippines, Bolsonaro in Brasil, and Trump in the USA.

In this context, ever rising inequality indexes in democratic countries around the world point to a grave challenge not only to democracy as a form governance, but to social structures of those societies as well. Starting from the Reagan-Thatcher era, more and more people in the Western democracies see accessibility of high-quality education reduced (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016), job security deteriorate (Kalleberg, 2011), household debt grow (Coletta et al., 2019), and their net worth drop (Wolff, 2016). Finally, wage growth has stalled and even reversed in real terms (Blanchflower et al., 2017), while the wealth gap has grown to unprecedented levels. As these growing numbers of people feel threatened by unfair competition, their commitment and loyalty to the state is diminishing, which not only results in social disturbances of various sorts but may start posing existential challenges to the democratic form of governance.

To summarize, cultural development very much evolves around control of aggression in its variety of forms. Hierarchical social structure is developed to ensure efficient control of ingroup aggression while at the same time providing for effective mobilisation against any external threat. As hierarchical social structure is inherently prone to abuse of power, democratic political system evolved to control such potential abuses by means of the rule of law as well as checks and balances in the political system. Further cultural development entails legal protections against aggression trickling down the hierarchical system from nobility to the poor, from the dominant ethnic group to all ethnic groups, ultimately extending to the weakest members of the society, such as children.

The Challenges We Face

Challenge No.1. Balancing Different Aspects of Security

Provision of security, as the main function of the state, has two aspects. First, it's protection from threats to life, health, and property. This is the basic minimum the state shall provide in order to exist. However, the second aspect of security is freedom. If the state ensures freedom for its' citizens in a form of civil rights and liberties, this enables citizens to unleash their human creativity towards finding best ways to thrive both economically and socially. Conversely, significant restriction of civil rights and liberties, particularly those related to economic activity, results not only in abuse of political power by the ruling elite, but in economic degradation as well, which ultimately may lead to disintegration of the state. Dictatorships may boast thriving economy on in short-to-medium term; however, recent research suggests that the longer a dictator is in power, the worse-off his country's economy is (Jong-A-Pin & Mireau, 2022). Providing reasonable economic safety for citizens and supporting a large security apparatus represents a steep economic task for any dictatorship. This task is managed easier by those dictatorships, which draw significant income from natural resources (e.g. Venesuela, Russia, some African and Arab states) or survive on support from abroad (e.g. North Korea).

China represents an interesting case with the regard to these two aspects of security provided by the state. The Chinese state is very good at providing protection from threats. With the regard to liberties, China seems to be trying a novel path: while it severely restricts political liberties, it does provide significant economic freedom. This economic freedom leads to robust economic growth and there seems to be a bet that economic prosperity will render political freedom unnecessary for most of the citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic produced a rare case of conflict between the two aspects of security. Aiming to protect their citizens from threats to their lives and health posed by the novel coronavirus, numerous states around the world imposed significant restrictions on freedoms, often including severe lockdowns. The lockdowns restricted freedoms, which often resulted in devastating economic effects. This resulted in significant social unrest in a number of countries where governments used lockdowns to control spread of the coronavirus. Governments were forced to take unprecedented measures to counter the economic effects of the pandemic. These were mostly successful – economic growth quickly recovered and social unrest calmed down.

Interestingly, except for China, dictatorships were far less willing to impose severe lockdowns and stay-at-home orders than democracies did. This may be because dictatorships tend to be less economically stable than democracies and thus, they might have been more cautious that the economic effects of lockdowns might destroy fragile economic safety and push their population over the brink of patience.

Challenge No.2. Controlling Non-Physical Aggression

As we eliminate physical violence as the tool of choice in ingroup competition, the way forward in cultural development of a society becomes less clear. Psychological, social, and material aggression have the same purpose – they work as tools to be used for gaining competitive advantage by inflicting damage (albeit non-physical) on competitors. They also have the same basic effect – whatever the form of it, aggression tends to be returned.

Building roads, schools, and hospitals in developing world represents a short-term developmental aid, which is bound to be degraded quickly, if no developmental shift is taking place in the wider culture. That shift shall be in form of institutional and legislative reform seeking to outlaw aggression, establish an actual rule of law and effective institutions to enforce it. Corruption is the single most significant form of non-physical aggression, which represents an existential threat to any development efforts (Svensson, 2005; Treisman, 2000) and hence should be the prime target in cultural development, including not only actual laws and law enforcement practices, but also social customs, traditions, and attitudes.

The right to free speech is a fundamental right necessary for any democracy to function (Redish, 1982). Its purpose lies in necessity for each and every member of the society to be able to voice his needs and discontent so that malfunctionings of the social system could be identified and dealt with. However, in the 21st century we face a challenge of drawing the line between the free speech necessary to voice legitimate needs and discontents and aggressive speech, containing no direct calls to violence, but still aimed solely at inflicting psychological and social damage to other

individuals and groups. We have an ongoing discussion of whether the right to free speech also includes "the right to insult" (Clooney & Webb, 2017). The discussion is significantly complicated by both interindividual and intercultural differences in perception, whereby statements perfectly acceptable to one person or cultural group may be perceived as extremely insulting by another.

Another significant form of non-physical aggression is propaganda. The purpose of propaganda is to increase cohesion of own group and spread anxiety and fear among outgroup members by stimulating feelings of inferiority. In the age of global social networking platforms, propaganda took on a novel form of troll farms, working round a clock to identify divisive issues in target societies, polarize the opposing positions by posting extreme and insulting comments, and galvanize the resulting groups into real action, preferably – involving confrontation with public institutions (Aceves, 2019). In the absence of hierarchical social structure capable of controlling such aggression, the apparent democracy of social networking platforms drifts towards anarchy, in which tensions between social groups rise, feeling of security diminishes, and preferences for leaders promising to bring the order back strengthen.

Challenge No.3. Controlling Intergroup Aggression

There are two main types of intergroup aggression – aggression among various groups within the same country and aggression between different countries. Both types of aggression were present as soon as first countries emerged thousands of years ago.

The nation-state is a relatively new invention of the last two hundred years or so (Hobsbawm, 1992). For thousands of years states were societies constituted by a wide variety of ethnic, racial, and religious groups using various arrangements to make coexistence of different groups sustainable. While examples of domination, exploitation, eviction, and even genocidal extermination of various kinds of minorities may be found throughout the human history, such aggressive behaviour ultimately contributed to the decline of countries and long-standing empires (Kennedy, 1989).

The modern concept of multiculturalism based on celebration of multiple cultural identities and their differences does not seem to be the promising alternative it used to appear (Chin, 2017). Emphasising intergroup differences within the same geographical area is making different groups perceive each other as alien groups leading to intergroup discrimination and – ultimately – increased aggression (Hewstone & Greenland, 2000). The search for meaningful superordinate 'us' (e.g. 'us' seeking to slow climate change, to stop the novel coronavirus) is necessary for people to live together. In the absence of superordinate 'us' groups will drift towards aggressive competition, where the dominant group will ultimately try to subdue or eliminate weaker groups.

Moghaddam (2009, 2012) suggested omniculturalism, or focus on human universals, as a way forward in reducing intergroup competition and conflict. He puts an emphasis on omnicultural education, which he believes will foster perception of inclusive 'us' instead of exclusive 'us' versus 'them'. However, history abounds with examples of relatively stable and prosperous societies in which different religious

and ethnic groups lived together in peace for hundreds of years. These societies may provide us with some clues concerning other components of sustainable coexistence.

Indeed, all those societies, while containing a multitude of groups, may be described as having developed their distinctive cultures including all three universals suggested in the present article. First, all of them developed ways of cooperation to achieve sufficient satisfaction of needs of all ethnic and religious groups constituting respective societies. People lived in those societies not because they were conquered or otherwise subdued, but because they saw living there as beneficial and advantageous in relation to alternatives perceived as available. Second, social structures of those societies were strong enough to effectively perform the key function of the state – provision of security. Third, those states developed legislative and law enforcement mechanisms sufficient to control any intergroup or interindividual aggression and to prevent excessive in-fighting within the state by various religious and ethnic groups.

While progressive restriction of in-group aggression creates a competitive advantage, it does not make a group 'better' compared to more internally aggressive groups. Though cultures differ in how much in-group aggression they permit, they all accept aggression as a necessary tool for promoting their interests in relation to other (competing) groups. We just expect that in democracy checks and balances restrict ability of statesmen to wage personal vanity or greed-based wars, which are so tempting to dictators.

As a result of devastating world wars of the 20th century, the international community started to tackle the issue of global aggression control, that is prevention of wars. These efforts resulted in creation of the United Nations in 1945 and the European Coal and Steel Community (predecessor of the modern European Union) in 1951. Both organisations were established with the same purpose – to prevent wars between their members. In terms of achieving this purpose, the European project fared considerably better than the United Nations – there were no wars within the actual borders of the European project (under various names) since 1945, while various UN members around the world were engaged in numerous wars during the same period.

The reason for this difference seems to be in the foundations on which the two communities are based. While both aim to maintain peace and prevent wars, membership of the United Nations is based on a formal commitment to follow the *rules*. On the other hand, membership of the European Union is based not only on a formal commitment to follow the rules, but also on shared *values*. Shared values are demonstrated by meeting so-called 'Copenhagen criteria' for membership, which includes a stable democracy, rule of law, functioning market economy and acceptance of all existing EU legislation. These shared values do include not only cooperation but also very particular and elaborate mechanisms for control of inter-group aggression both within countries (e.g., protection of minority rights) and between countries (e.g., the EU dispute settlement mechanism).

Indeed, the European experience provides an integrative example of the universals of culture as an aggression control system: (1) The European Union does require control of interpersonal and intergroup aggression by means of both informal cultural values and formal legislation; (2) The European Union developed formal social structures to exercise control of aggression; (3) Successful control of aggression contrib-

uted significantly to development of European countries. In 2020 European countries took up as many as 30 of the 40 top spots in the United Nations Human Development Index.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The author declares no conflict of interest.

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