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Might Makes Right or Right Makes Might? Two Systemic Democratic Peace Tales

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Abstract: In a path-breaking article, Wade Huntley (1996) reinterpreted Immanuel Kant's pacific union as a systemic phenomenon. Huntley's argument spawned a new wave of inquiry into the evolutionary expansion of the democratic peace, with several empirical studies finding a positive relationship between global democracy and systemic peace (e.g. Crescenzi and Enterline 1999; Gleditsch and Hegre 1997; Kadera, Crescenzi, and Shannon 2003; Mitchell, Gates, and Hegre 1999). Yet, there are many possible theoretical explanations of this aggregate relationship. In this paper, we compare two broad theoretical tales of the systemic democratic peace. The first approach, "might makes right", emphasizes the importance of authority for creating liberal peace, especially the role played by a democratic hegemon and liberal major powers. The second approach, "right makes might", traces the evolution of the systemic democratic peace to shifts in morality and liberal norms, drawing from work by Rawls (1999) and Wendt (1999). We compare and contrast these two broad theoretical tales, and argue that both "might" and "right" are important to the dynamic spread of the democratic peace. We then consider possible tensions between "might" and "right" based arguments highlighted by the recent Iraq War. We argue that it is grossly over-simplistic to equate the theoretical arguments being put forward by systemic democratic peace theory with the policy prescriptions put forward by the current US administration. As an alternative to both the assertion of a general right to coercive intervention by liberal states and blanket opposition to democracy as a universal project, we present the case for a middle ground, advocating the prudent use of material levers of power by liberal states to promote democracy overseas.

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INTRODUCTION

In a path-breaking article, Wade Huntley (1996) reinterpreted Immanuel Kant's pacific union as a systemic phenomenon. Rather than reflecting a 'second image' argument about the internal properties of liberal republics, Huntley contends that Kant offered a 'top down' model of progress in world politics driven by competition and socialization in an anarchic environment. "Conflict among states itself supplies the 'deepest' cause of progress toward an international rule of law...justify(ing) both the emergence of republican governments and the greater peace necessary to their survival and improvement" (Huntley, 1996:61; see also Mitchell, Gates, and Hegre, 1999). Over time, the generative consequences of these third image forces facilitate the dynamic expansion of the pacific union. In this way, Huntley argued, Kant was able to bridge the gap between the ambitious demands of his moral and political philosophy and the lawless state of the Westphalian order that confronted him in the late eighteenth century. Over time, and even in a world populated by devils rather than angels, this systemic logic would ensure that anarchy would be tamed and replaced by an ever expanding zone of peaceful international relations reflecting liberal principles of right.

There are, however, some interesting tensions in Kant's systemic reasoning that are worth exploring. Contrary to many liberal internationalists, Kant clearly had a shrewd appreciation of the logic of power politics, and was daring enough to make the argument that this very logic could be a powerful instrument of progress within the system of states. Indeed, what makes Kant's thought on international relations so different from that of other liberals is precisely the way in which Kant accommodates the inexorable tendency of men to 'scratch and claw' with his account of moral and historical development in world politics (Waltz, 1962). In other words, Kant wants to have his realist cake and eat it too. Nevertheless we must take seriously the idea that Kant also wanted to see moral agency and choice as an important factor driving the expansion of the democratic pacific union. Otherwise Kant's writings on international relations would lose their ultimate moral purpose and significance.

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has become more amenable to Kant's argument that liberal states will be extremely efficient generators of power within the international system. Even as recently as twenty years ago, the Cold War was still at its height and the systemic environment was dominated by the bipolar superpower conflict. Liberal democracies were seen as fragile international actors that faced robust, decisive, and powerful authoritarian rivals. Today, the world is dominated overwhelmingly by liberal democratic states. The main threats to the security of these democracies are asymmetric in nature and stem from small, weak authoritarian states and/or diffuse transnational terrorist networks or 'non-traditional' threats related to globalization, such as environmental degradation. Without wishing to belittle the severe moral and security challenges posed by these actors (the risk of nuclear weapons use perhaps being greater today than during the Cold War), the asymmetrical character of these security challenges reflects the success and vitality of liberal democracy on a world wide scale, rather than its failure. There exists today a range of material arguments related to the ability of democracies to generate wealth (Bueno de Mesquita et al, 2005), their war fighting and winning capabilities (Reiter and Stam, 2002), and their institutional decision making capacity (Schultz, 2001; Lipson, 2003), that help corroborate Kant's argument that the logic of competitive power politics drives consolidation of the liberal pacific union. Kant's argument that "might makes right" seems a lot more palatable today than it did when he wrote in the late eighteenth century.

But what about the other standpoint to the systemic tale, namely Kant's normative argument that right makes might? How do liberal principles of right and the political choices

made by states help facilitate the dynamic expansion of the pacific union? Recent rationalist models in the democratic peace literature dismiss the possibility that norms are a causal driving force behind the democratic peace, emphasizing instead institutional and/or material factors (Fearon, 1994; Bueno de Mesquita, et al, 1999, 2005; Schultz, 2001; Reiter and Stam, 2002). An alternative view is that both normative and material-institutional factors interact and reinforce one another (Kadera, Crescenzi, and Shannon, 2003; Mitchell, Kadera, and Crescenzi, 2007). The dynamic and inclusive nature of the pacific union ultimately derives from the distinctive way in which it combines both normative appeal and material incentives to co-opt, attract and maintain members. Normative appeal oils the wheels of the process of democratic consolidation, and at the margins greatly magnifies its 'sticky' nature. Authoritarian regimes lack the distinctive ability of liberalism to combine both hard and soft power resources and for this reason lack dynamism and flexibility in the long run.

The Iraq War in 2003 and the associated course of the American led military occupation of the country raised a whole series of profoundly important theoretical and policy dilemmas about the relationship between might makes right and right makes might in systemic democratic peace arguments. Behind the Iraq War lay the divisive issue of the mechanisms used by the democratic community to promote its expansion abroad. While the Bush administration favored the right of democratic states to employ military interventions for pre-emptive purposes against outlaw states, many of American's traditional Cold War allies in Europe favored diplomacy, persuasion and adherence to non-coercive forms of intervention (Kagan, 2004). What has emerged from these debates is a polarization of views on the issues at stake. Supporters of the Iraq War have increasingly committed themselves to the necessity and desirability of American policy under the Bush administration, whilst opponents have come to view the intervention in Iraq as symptomatic of the imperialistic nature of international liberalism. Proponents of this latter view have argued that the Bush administration's position follows logically from the moral superiority of liberal democracies and their inherent tendency to launch imperialistic crusades against non-liberal elements in international society. This criticism has been made against democratic peace arguments generally, but the systemic democratic peace literature has recently been singled out for particular criticism in this regard (Steele, 2007). The argument runs counter to the claim that non-liberal states can gradually be socialized to the norms of the democratic community. It also (incorrectly) provides a carte blanche justification for liberal states to disregard the norm of non-intervention in international society and to use their newfound power to export democracy through coercive measures.

The aim of this paper is to address the grossly simplistic equation being drawn between theoretical arguments put forward by proponents of the systemic democratic peace and the policy prescriptions associated with the neo-conservative elite currently in power in Washington. While the former present sophisticated and nuanced claims worthy of serious and sustained intellectual attention, the latter derive imprudent and unwise prescriptions from erroneous first principles. Moreover, by accepting at face value the Bush administration's abuse of liberal rhetoric to support its policies, the critics of the systemic democratic peace obscure the real and profound issues at stake in the debate over democracy promotion overseas. What is missing from the terms of the present debate is acknowledgment of the existence of a sensible and prudent middle ground between the rejection of liberal norms and values in international relations and their promotion through strong reliance on coercive diplomacy. Polarizing the debate in this way has led to an unproductive and misleading set of debates that glosses over the profound complexity of the issues surrounding the promotion of liberal values in a non-liberal world.

Moreover, it has major opportunity costs in as much as it is largely blind to the real opportunities that exist in the post-Cold War world to promote the expansion of the democratic community internationally. The crucially important matter at hand is to address how best to capitalize on those historical opportunities through policies likely to yield fruitful and long lasting results, not either a blanket rejection of democracy as a universal project or a blanket application of a right of pre-emptive intervention against rogue states.

Our argument focuses on theoretical debates surrounding the systemic democratic peace and its policy implications. Another recent line of criticism has been empirical in nature, arguing that insufficient evidence exists to support the systemic democratic peace hypothesis (Gartzke and Weisiger, 2006; Mousseau, 2007). On this occasion, we will not make an attempt to engage these empirical debates systematically. We emphasize, however, that this is not because we think these empirical debates are unimportant. On the contrary, we view these empirical debates as central to a series of clusters of debate unfolding cumulatively and progressively from the established, largely dyadic, democratic peace research program. This type of debate is the hallmark of scientific progress as measured in terms of Lakatosian criteria for theory evaluation (Harrison, 2006). Nevertheless, for the time being we assume that the jury is still out on debates about empirical evidence for and against the systemic democratic peace. This allows us to focus instead on the important theoretical and policy related questions that remain about the dynamics of the democratic pacific union and how these might be best exploited to favor democracy promotion overseas. Given the attention to these issues in the media and amongst the policy community in the wake of the 2003 Iraq War, and given the widespread misconceptions that appear to exist in the academic community about the theoretical reasoning underpinning systemic arguments for the democratic peace, there is an urgent and immediate need to clarify the scope and nature of these theoretical arguments. This is our sole aim on the present occasion, leaving empirical issues for future debate and discussion.

The paper proceeds by comparing two broad theoretical tales of the systemic democratic peace, both of which are consistent with Kant's arguments about perpetual peace. The first approach, "might makes right", emphasizes the importance of authority for creating liberal peace, especially the role played by a democratic hegemon and liberal major powers. The second approach, "right makes might", traces the evolution of the systemic democratic peace to shifts in morality and liberal norms at both the individual and systemic level, drawing from recent theoretical work by Rawls and Wendt. After presenting and contrasting these two broad theoretical tales below, a third section defends systemic democratic peace arguments against those who have suggested that such arguments can be used to justify liberal imperialism against outlaw states. We conclude the paper with some thoughts for future development of systemic democratic peace theory and the policy prescriptions which follow from them.

MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

The creation and maintenance of order is an old theme in the study of International Relations. Not surprisingly, order has been conceptualized in many different ways. Kant argues that order exists only in perpetual peace, which arises through individuals pursuing their categorical imperative to end warfare. The lack of warfare as a condition for order is also prevalent in theories of hegemonic stability (Gilpin, 1981), power transitions (Organski and Kugler, 1980), long cycles (Modelski, 1987; Thompson, 1988), and nuclear deterrence (Waltz, 1979). The English school conceptualizes order more broadly, as "A pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society (Bull,

1977:8)”, namely freedom from violence, sanctity of contracts, and stability of property rights. In this broader view, freedom from violence is only one component of an orderly society.

Regardless of how one defines order, it is important to consider how order is achieved in world politics. Compliant, orderly state behavior could be achieved through three general mechanisms of social control: coercion, self-interest, or legitimacy (Hurd, 1999; Wendt, 1999). “Consider three generic reasons why an actor might obey a rule: (1) because the actor fears the punishment of rule enforcers, (2) because the actor sees the rule as in its own self-interest, and (3) because the actor feels the rule is legitimate and ought to be obeyed....which I call, coercion, self-interest, and legitimacy (Hurd, 1999:379).”

Materialist IR theories stress coercion and authority as a source of order, building upon Hobbes’ view of the Leviathan as the best solution to the problems posed by anarchy. Realists and Neorealists assert that asymmetric power, either between major and minor powers (Bull, 1977; Waltz, 1979), or between the hegemonic state and all other states (Gilpin, 1981), allows for effective coercion of subordinate actors in an anarchic system. In describing a stable international order, for example, hegemonic stability theory stresses both the material power of the hegemon and the perceived legitimacy of the hegemon’s rule (or prestige). With respect to material power, Gilpin (1981:9) argues that “social arrangements tend to reflect the relative powers of the actors involved” and that a declining hegemon and rising challenger create conditions ripe for a hegemonic war. In other words, an international status quo remains stable only when it is backed up by the material power of an unchallenged hegemon. However, material strength is not sufficient for a hegemon to achieve the “right to rule”; it must also provide “certain public goods, such as a beneficial economic order or international security” (Gilpin 1981:34) and its legitimacy may be “supported by ideological, religious, or other values common to a set of states” (Gilpin 1981:34).¹ This dual emphasis on power and ideas was insightful, although Gilpin did not explicitly consider how the hegemon’s regime type and domestic institutions might influence the type of status quo established in the aftermath of war.

Ikenberry’s insightful theory of constitutional orders revises traditional materialist theories by capturing the importance of the hegemon’s material strength, but also recognizing that states’ domestic political institutions influence their strategies after victory in great wars. Ikenberry (2001:24) argues that victors of major wars are faced with three broad choices: domination, abandonment, or order creation. Furthermore, the strategies they employ produce one of three general types of orders in world politics: balance of power, hegemonic, and constitutional. Constitutional orders are characterized by “shared agreement...over the principles and rules of order (30)”, “rules and institutions...that set binding and authoritative limits on the exercise of power (31)”, and rules that are not easily altered (31). Like hegemonic stability, power transition, and long cycle theory, Ikenberry asserts that post-war orders will be more stable the greater the power asymmetry between the leading victorious state and all other major powers. In this situation, weaker states have reasons to fear abandonment, and are willing to make greater concessions to the hegemon. Likewise, the hegemon seeks to lock in its long-term advantage by establishing a constitutional order. The hegemonic state limits its power by opening itself up (or making itself more transparent), tying itself down (binding itself to

¹ Keohane (1984:44-45) also describes the legitimacy of hegemonic orders, arguing that “hegemony rests on the subjective awareness by elites in secondary states that they are benefiting, as well as on the willingness of the hegemon itself to sacrifice tangible short-term benefits for inevitable long-term gains”, a view also expressed by Ikenberry (2001).

institutions & security pacts), and making itself predictable and accessible (e.g. sharing decision-making power) (Ikenberry, 2001:62).

More importantly, Ikenberry (2001) argues that power alone cannot explain when constitutional orders emerge; we must also examine the liberal character of the victors' regime type to fully grasp the process of post-war order creation. He argues that three characteristics allow democracies to more readily create constitutional orders: 1) transparency, which reduces surprises and generates more reliable information, 2) a decentralized policy process, which creates policy viscosity and multiple opportunities for enforcement, and 3) an open and decentralized system, which provides multiple access points and voice opportunities, as well as transnational linkages (Ikenberry, 2001:76). He concludes that the constitutional order that successfully emerged in 1945 can be attributed both to US power advantages relative to other states and the democratic character of the US regime. Ikenberry's theory fits easily into our "might makes right" theme. His argument suggests that a systemic democratic peace can only be established when powerful democracies are in a position to establish favorable Kantian orders. Thus the current systemic democratic peace could not have emerged without its material backing.²

The intersection of material strength and democratic institutions is also captured in Kadera, Crescenzi, and Shannon's (2003) dynamic model of the democratic community strength. They argue that the strength of the democratic community is a function of 1) how many democracies exist in the system relative to autocracies, 2) the intensity of states' commitment to democracy, and 3) states' material power. They create an aggregate measure of the systemic democratic community's strength by multiplying each state's Polity democracy score (0-10) times its COW CINC score (0-1), and then summing these values across all states in the world. The authors create a dynamic model to explore the theoretical consequences of changes in the strength of the democratic community. They demonstrate theoretically and empirically that fledgling democracies are more likely to survive when the democratic community is strong. What is interesting about this democratic community concept (and measure) is that it allows for systemic states to be multiply realizable. For example, a strong democratic community could exist with one powerful democratic state and several smaller ones. It could also be strong if the world was comprised of several democratic middle powers. Thus the model allows for either concentrated authority or diffuse authority to produce similar systemic outcomes. Theoretically, it would be possible to extend the model to trace the dynamics of the two evolutionary processes we describe; one built mostly upon the authority of a single state, the other a slow and steady growth in the number and strength of many democracies. States' capabilities can capture "might", while the intensity of democratic institutions captures "right".

Several ideational theories also stress the role of material strength for the promotion of systemic democratic norms. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), for example, describe the importance of key actors adopting norms in the norm cascading process. Mitchell (2002) integrates Kant's arguments about perpetual peace with Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) norm life-cycle model, and demonstrates that powerful democratic states played an important role in the creation and spreading of democratic international norms. For example, Great Britain and the United States served as entrepreneurs in the use of third party conflict management techniques and helped propagate these norms in various international institutions. Their leadership produced a norm cascade, significantly increasing the likelihood that all states, even

² Rasler and Thompson (2005) make a similar argument about the importance of democratic hegemonic powers and the trading networks that they establish after major wars for the emergence of a global democratic peace.

non-democracies, would solicit third party assistance to manage their interstate conflicts. While the overall increasing proportion of democratic states facilitated this norm cascade, powerful democratic actors were essential for getting the process started. This is another example of how “might makes right”, where the material power of leading democratic states puts them in a position to externalize their internal norms and rules to the international arena more effectively.

Material power can also facilitate the creation of international organizations and regimes, especially in the aftermath of hegemonic wars when a new status quo is being established. Collective action problems are endemic in anarchy because rational egoistic states will not always act to achieve their common interests. Thus public goods, such as a free trading regime³, are unlikely to be provided in the absence of a powerful entrepreneur that is able and willing to pay the costs of regime creation and enforcement (Olson, 1965; Kindleberger, 1973; 1981).⁴ The hegemon’s “control over raw materials, control over sources of capital, control over markets, and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods” (Keohane, 1984:33) gives it a distinct advantage for creating a liberal economic order and establishing international institutions to support that order (Kindleberger, 1973; Gilpin, 1987). Much of the literature on hegemonic leadership emphasizes the *economic* benefits that accrue from the creation of a liberal economic order, including a stable monetary system, protection of property rights, open markets for goods, and access to oil at stable prices (e.g. Gilpin, 1987; Keohane, 1984; Lake, 1993). Furthermore, states may continue to reap these economic benefits even if the hegemon declines (Keohane, 1984). In short, the economic literature on hegemony emphasizes the economic material strength of the hegemon and concludes that powerful liberal states play an important role in the creation and maintenance of liberal economic orders. Unlike neorealist arguments that stress the coercive capacity of major powers for sustaining order, economic variants of hegemonic stability theory focus instead on economic self-interest as a mechanism for social control. While states have incentives to defect from international agreements individually, hegemonic leadership and regimes improve the likelihood of interstate cooperation.

Beyond these economic arguments, more recent work examines states’ *political* motivations & benefits for creating international institutions. Democratic states are more likely to create and join international organizations⁵ (Russett, Oneal, and Davis, 1998; Russett and Oneal, 2001; Ikenberry, 2001; Shannon, 2005), and institutions created by democracies are more likely to exhibit democratic decision-making procedures and norms (Risse-Kappen, 1995). Why democracies are open to IGOs more than their autocratic counterparts follows from Kant’s logic of the federation of free states. “Kant expected that democracies, sharing common principles of

³ Gowa (1989:307) reviews various critiques of hegemonic stability theory, including 1) whether hegemonic states adopt optimum tariffs rather than free trade (e.g. Conybeare, 1984), 2) whether small groups are close substitutes for Olson’s privileged groups, and 3) whether open markets create excludable rather than public goods.

⁴ A variety of other mechanisms for overcoming collective action problems are not discussed here in detail, including small group size, selective incentives, number of repetitions, and communication (e.g. Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1998). On the necessity of a single leader, Keohane (1984:38) argues that hegemony is neither necessary nor sufficient for cooperation to emerge, especially if we view interstate interactions among leading states as an oligopolistic market, which mimics the small group size described by Olson (1965). Other critiques of the single leader solution to interstate collective action problems are also discussed by McKeown (1983), Lake (1983, 1984), Snidal (1985) and Stein (1984).

⁵ The theory of functionalism also predicts that states with greater mass political participation, namely democracies, to belong to a higher number of IGOs (Jacobson, Reisinger, and Matthers, 1986), although the logic is based more on economic than political incentives. Jacobson et al (1986) find party competition to be a significant predictor of total number of IGO memberships, and the fifteen states with the highest number of IGO membership are all democracies (p. 149).

law and political morality, would form “federations” (international organizations) with each other” (Russett, Oneal, and Davis, 1998:458-9). Many principles espoused in IGO charters are similar to those found in democratic political systems, especially the call for binding or non-binding peaceful dispute settlement (Shannon, 2005). Thus democracies, being amenable to peaceful dispute settlement domestically (bilaterally or with third party assistance), should find IGO membership more attractive because these institutions espouse democracies’ internal behavioral norms (Mitchell, 2002). Democracies may also view IGO membership as a tool for promoting Western democratic institutions and norms (Schimmelfennig, 2003; Shannon, 2005). IGO membership produces diffuse democratic benefits, as autocracies belonging to regional IGOs are more likely to experience democratization than non-members (Pevehouse, 2002). Beyond democratization, IGO memberships also promote trade between members (Russett and Oneal, 2001), while increased trade promotes peace. In short, democratic states have many reasons to create and join IGOs, and as Ikenberry (2001) demonstrates, powerful democratic victors play an important role in establishing new institutions to lock in a Kantian, constitutional order.

While the Kantian culture is multiply realizable (Wendt, 1999), the question becomes whether the culture could emerge in the absence of authority and/or whether power is necessary for the maintenance of the systemic democratic community. There are clearly competing views on this question. Hurd (1999:389) argues that most social structures arise in environments of coercion and then evolve into orders maintained through self-interest or legitimacy. Harrison (2004) concludes that if Kantian cultures are multiply realizable, then power politics may be essential for the stability and maintenance of the culture. In contrast, Huntley (1996) asserts that authority is not necessary for the creation of a Kantian systemic peace.

Kant follows Hobbes in seeing the state of nature among states as quite different (and less severe) than that among people. Kant..hold(s) that a rule of law can grow among sovereign states without centralized authority. By establishing a legitimate rule of law, the “free federation” is “self-enforcing”—in the same manner (but to a greater degree) as is any republican constitution (Huntley, 1996:60).

Yet, Huntley’s discussion of the post-Cold War era highlights the importance of the great powers and nuclear weapons, which casts some doubt on his theoretical dismissal of the importance of authority in the evolution of the systemic democratic peace.

In summary, the “might makes right” view of systemic democratic peace stresses the necessity of strong material capabilities for democratic states to create and sustain liberal orders. Powerful democracies are able to reshape post-war orders, spread their norms of behavior, and create influential institutions. Without material strength and success in warfare, evolution towards the Kantian peace would not be guaranteed. However, Kant’s philosophy allows for the possibility that perpetual peace could arise without coercion. We turn now to an exploration of this more normative argument of the systemic democratic peace.

RIGHT MAKES MIGHT

The normative stand to the democratic peace literature has received very significant attention and development by both Wendt (1999) and Rawls (1999). We look at the contribution of both of these authors to the Kantian argument that ‘right makes might’ in terms of the process of democratic consolidation underpinning the expansion of the liberal pacific union. Our view is that Wendt and Rawls’ model are deeply complementary, and there is much to be gained by

linking them together. Wendt's top down system model of cultural change provides a platform on which to extend Rawls' normative account of the pacific union. Rawls' bottom up account of the pacific union provides content and greater precision to Wendt's account of a 'Kantian culture'.

Rawls' 'bottom up' model of cultural change and normative diffusion

Whilst it has yet to make a major impact on the IR literature, John Rawls has recently provided what is probably the single most important statement of democratic peace theory since Kant's political writings. Rawls pays a great deal of attention to the process of moral learning and cultural change underpinning the dynamic expansion of the liberal pacific union. Rawls sees this process as being driven by a growing normative consensus within the society of states around the moral values associated with liberal principles of right. If we are to understand the "right makes might" dimension of the democratic peace argument, then we first need to know what 'right' means in the context of liberal internationalism. For this purpose, Rawls provides a very useful reference point in the recent literature, since he offers the most systematic and precise available statement of the content of 'liberal norms' in international society. Rawls makes an attempt to pin down what liberal principles of right say about how liberal states should treat non-liberal states. As Macmillan (2004) has recently noted, while Rawls shows that the peace proneness of liberal states is more extensive than the logic implied by the dyadic democratic (and separate) peace claim, it is by no means the case that liberalism is universally peace prone. Indeed, liberal norms are perfectly capable of justifying the use of force in accordance with liberal principles of a just war under certain circumstances.

Orthodox democratic peace theory associated with Doyle's original formulation associates liberal norms with an attitude of intolerance towards non-liberal regimes (Doyle, 1983). Liberal democratic regimes respect the sovereignty of other liberal democratic states because they recognize the essential legitimacy of their foundational moral and cultural values. In their dealing with other liberal democratic states, they will therefore externalize domestic norms of conflict resolution and reconcile differences through diplomacy, negotiation and compromise (Dixon, 1993, 1994; Raymond, 1993; Mitchell, 2002). By contrast, these very same principles lead liberal states to be intolerant and aggressive towards non-liberal states because they are literally 'beyond the pale'. Non-liberal states lack the respect accorded to liberal regimes because they are essentially illegitimate international actors. According to Doyle, this cultural antagonism overlays geopolitical rivalry and can lead to both isolationism and imperialism with respect to non-liberal states.

Rawls builds upon Doyle's approach and in so doing provides an interesting extension of liberal international relations theory. Rawls argues that Doyle's binary division of the world into zones of peace and zones of conflict is too simplistic. He proposes instead a five-fold taxonomy of states. While still a relatively simple and parsimonious typological classification, Rawls introduces several new categories of states, which give a very different feel to his account of the democratic peace. The first of Rawls' five categories of states are liberal peoples, a relatively straightforward category, which is very similar to Doyle's definition of what constitutes a liberal state. Rawls' second category is 'decent peoples', which represents an intermediary category that is not allowed for within orthodox democratic peace accounts. Decent peoples are authoritarian states that nevertheless allow for a reasonable degree of domestic freedom and pluralism. Rawls gives the hypothetical example of the state of 'Kazanistan', a state comprised of non-liberal Muslim people that is not aggressive against other peoples, honors and respects

human rights, and whose domestic structures contain a consultation hierarchy that gives some voice to a plurality of religious and political interests despite being non-secular. Rawls stresses that this category of decent hierarchical societies is ideal typical, and no actually existing states fully match these criteria in the real world. Nevertheless, his inclusion of this category in his typology clearly indicates that Rawls believes a significant proportion of states accord to this ideal type for it to have moral and historical significance. Taken together, Rawls refers to liberal and decent peoples as well-ordered societies. Well-ordered societies are capable of co-existing peacefully under the law of the peoples. Well-ordered societies may not form part of the pacific union, but they are regarded by liberal states as potential contractors into it. Liberal states tolerate decent hierarchical societies on the grounds that they recognize that the process of becoming a liberal state is a long and complex one, and for this reason some illiberal states are worthy of respect in accordance with liberal criteria.

Rawls' other three categories of states are outlaw states, burdened societies, and benevolent absolutisms. Outlaw states are non-liberal states that do not respect the law of the peoples and are either aggressive regimes externally and/or systemically violate human rights internally. They presumably do not have a decent consultation hierarchy that allows for significant domestic freedom and pluralism. Burdened societies are characterized by unfavorable historical, economic, and social circumstances and cannot achieve a well-ordered regime for these reasons. Benevolent absolutisms are a final and rather residual category within Rawls' framework. Such a regime respects and honors human rights and is not aggressive externally, but it is not a well ordered society since it does not give its members a meaningful role in the making of political decisions. Benevolent absolutisms have a right to self-defense since they are capable of respecting the law of the peoples, and therefore should be tolerated by well-ordered societies.

By contrast, well-ordered societies must establish relations with outlaw states and burdened societies on the basis of a *modus vivendi*. That is to say, the use of force is perfectly legitimate in accordance with liberal principles of right with these kinds of states. Note that Rawls does *not* make the claim that *modus vivendi* necessarily implies a right to coercive intervention and/or a policy of regime change towards either outlaw states or burdened societies. A *modus vivendi* simply means that it is legitimate for well ordered societies to calculate their interests on a rational basis in their dealings with these kinds of states, subject to liberal principles for conducting a just war if one is waged. Policy instruments such as deterrence, containment, balance of power policies, economic sanctions, military intervention or geopolitical alliances with outlaw states may be justified by liberal states if they help ensure their own survival and prosperity. As long as liberal states continue to thrive and prosper, this will provide a long-term basis for historical progress towards the Kantian conception of perpetual peace.

In interpreting and applying Rawls' ideal typical typology to the real world of international relations, much depends on how broad the category of 'decent peoples' is treated in practice. Rawls seems to be grappling with a central and ultimately irresolvable paradox faced by liberalism, namely the extent to which to tolerate those who do not accept liberal principles and norms. Rawls simply assumes that the world will be comprised of a significant proportion of all five of the categories of states he discusses; he does not discuss any real world examples of states that might straddle the boundary lines. Rawls' intermediately category of 'decent hierarchical societies' takes into account the fact that liberal states can, and routinely do accept and respect the sovereignty of large numbers of non-liberal states. This need not necessarily reflect a monadic democratic peace argument, but instead the simple fact that liberal states are perfectly capable of tolerating non-liberal states.

Some commentaries (Beitz, 2000) interpret Rawls as having quite stringent criteria for a state to meet before it can be considered worthy of toleration by the democratic community. However, an alternative reading would be broad and inclusive. On such an account, typically non-liberal states allow for reasonable domestic pluralism, and for this reason should be tolerated by the non-liberal world. In practice, therefore, it seems that what Rawls is saying is that liberalism as a political ideology has enough flexibility to accommodate a pluralistic structure of international society, and if it does so, this provides a stable and quite powerful basis over the long term for the consolidation of the peaceful democratic community. On this account, the principle of non-intervention remains a crucially important feature of international society. Nevertheless, Rawls also clearly accepts that there will be significant numbers of states in international society that remain legitimate objects of interventionism, notwithstanding the considerable pragmatic limitations that might act as a break on such behavior by well-ordered peoples.

Overall, Rawls provides an overtly reductionist ‘bottom up’ account of cultural change, emphasizing moral learning and normative diffusion in the international system. Rawls’ account goes significantly beyond Doyle’s separate peace formulation, and introduces a more nuanced and sophisticated typology that captures the way in which liberal peace proneness may extend significantly into the non-liberal world. As a result, Rawls’ version of the pacific union is more sticky and inclusive at the margins than orthodox democratic peace formations, and for this reason places greater emphasis on the expansion and consolidation of what Rawls terms the “psychological process of moral learning” that takes place at the domestic level within states. This approach places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of human agency and choice in driving the process of democratic consolidation. States must voluntarily choose to join the democratic community over time. Rawls’ framework has been accused of being state-centric and locked within a Westphalian straightjacket. Yet his argument is not incompatible with the spread of transnational networks of interdependence, and he would surely claim that the state system provides a political framework that allows transnational interdependence to develop and mature, thereby further fueling the process of domestic reform within states. Transnational civil society networks may be illiberal in nature, but these groups do not present a viable long term alternative to liberal ideology as the foundation principles for political community in the longer term and so cultural selection logics will select against them.

There are, of course, severe problems with Rawls’ account of normative diffusion in international society. In particular, Rawls is fundamentally unclear about where the boundary line should be in terms of the toleration of non-liberal states, and on the best means of dealing with states that should not be tolerated. However, critics who are not prepared to abandon liberal principles above and beyond the domestic level should not judge Rawls too harshly on this issue, since the ambiguity of Rawls’ thought simply reflects the structural difficulties of extending liberal principles of right to a culturally pluralist international society.

Wendt’s ‘top down’ model of cultural change and normative diffusion

Wendt is a second major theorist to recently extend the normative-cultural account of the expansion of the democratic pacific union. His account differs from Rawls in that it is essentially a ‘top down’ or systemic account of the overall content of international anarchy rather than a reductionist ‘bottom up’ account emphasizing internal processes of reform within states. Nevertheless, Wendt and Rawls’ accounts of cultural development and moral learning within international society contain considerable overlaps and might benefit from being systemically

harnessed to one another. The major overlap between the two approaches is that both Wendt and Rawls focus on the essentially normative processes through which states become socialized to the democratic pacific union. However before these mutual complementarities between Wendt and Rawls' account of normative diffusion in international society can be discussed, it is first necessary to outline the theoretical framework developed by Wendt.

Wendt's initial formulation was restricted to a general ontological claim about the international system (Wendt, 1992). Wendt argued that realist assumptions model a world in which states have been pre-socialized to behave in certain ways. Over time, however, states may alter their conceptions of themselves and their interests. Wendt views state interaction as being constituted by shared ideas. It is therefore the cultural rather than the material context that is critical to motivating state behaviour. Moreover, rather than states being 'black boxes' whose interests and identities are assumed to be exogenous, constructivists argue that states do not have any 'interests' prior to their socialization to certain identities. State socialization is, therefore, the central mechanism through which cultural norms are transmitted within the international system.

A major problem with Wendt's formulation of constructivist theory is that it is under-specified. It fails to identify which cultural norms matter and under what conditions. Empirical research, therefore, tended to accumulate insights on an *ad hoc* basis (Katzenstein *et al*, 1996). To challenge realism's general claims, Wendt's ontological arguments need to be supplemented with a middle range theory of how patterns of socialization in the international system vary historically (Checkel, 1998).

Wendt responded to this criticism by developing a middle range theory in his seminal work, the *Social Theory of International Politics* (Wendt, 1999). Wendt identifies three 'cultures of anarchy': Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian. Each culture can be characterized by a particular set of role identities and behavioral practices. In a Hobbesian culture, the dominant role conception is enmity. States do not recognize each other's legitimacy and are prepared to use unconstrained violence against one another. This generates endemic and unlimited warfare, a high death rate for states, unstable balances prone to decay, and an absence of units able to maintain a neutral alignment within the system. A Lockean culture is associated with rivalry. States accept that disputes may be resolved through war, though they recognize each other's sovereignty and right to survive. Rivalry generates limited warfare that stops short of eliminating units, a low death rate for states, stable and enduring balances of power, and the emergence of neutrality as a recognized status. A Kantian culture is dominated by the role conception of friendship. Friendship implies that disputes will be settled without war or the threat of war, and that states will fight as a team if any one state is threatened (Wendt, 1999: 259-301).

Wendt also considers the degrees to which these cultural norms may be internalized. Internalization to the first degree reflects compliance through the threat or use of force. Second-degree internalization implies motivation through the instrumental calculation of self-interest. States calculate that adopting cultural norms will help them achieve their objectives. Wendt therefore adopts Alderson's procedure by defining socialization in terms of an *outcome* (identity construction) rather than the *process* through which states internalize norms (Alderson, 2001; for the latter approach see Johnston, 2001). Third degree internalization occurs when states accept that norms are legitimate and therefore want to follow them. For example, in a third degree Lockean culture, the existence of sovereign independent states is taken for granted by the members of international society. Wendt also introduces a distinction between cultures at the micro and macro level. At the micro-level, individual units will internalize cultural norms to

varying degrees. However, collectively, states will constitute a macro-level culture that is system-wide and ‘supervenies’ over the micro-level. Thus the cultural structure of the international system is ‘multiply realisable’ because any given culture of anarchy may be constituted by states that have internalized different cultural norms to different degrees. For example, a Kantian culture at the macro-level may be partly realised by a subset of states that have internalized this culture to the first or second degree (Wendt, 1999: 251-307).

Finally, Wendt examines structural change. Wendt views the cultural structure of the international system as reflecting a collective identity held by states. He identifies four ‘master variables’ capable of driving collective identity formation: interdependence, common fate, homogeneity and self-restraint. The first three are efficient causes of collective identity formation because they encourage pro-social behavior. Dense networks of interdependence affect the identities of actors beyond just their strategic bargaining. Common fate from a third party external threat may have the same effect. Homogeneity may contribute to collective identity formation by reducing the number and severity of conflicts arising from differences of corporate type, and fostering collective grouping. Finally, self-restraint is an important permissive cause of collective identity formation. It is not an efficient cause because it says nothing about the willingness to help others. However, of the four master variables, it is the most important. If collective identity formation is to proceed, actors must overcome the residual fear of being engulfed by others with whom they identify. None of the four variables is sufficient to bring about structural change. All four may be present in a given case, and the more that are present, the more likely it will be that collective identification will emerge. However, all that is necessary for it to occur is that one efficient cause is combined with self-restraint (Wendt, 1999: 343-363).

Nevertheless, Wendt also concedes that even this account of structural change remains incomplete. This is because transformation also requires “not just that identities change, but that their frequency and distribution cross a threshold at which the logic of the structure tips over into a new logic” (Wendt, 1999: 365). However, the role played by tipping points in the process of structural change has not received extended discussion by Wendt. To supplement Wendt's account, it is possible to draw on broader research within the constructivist literature. Finnemore and Sikkink have proposed an account of the norm life cycle in which the influence of norms may be understood in terms of a three-stage process: norm emergence; norm acceptance, and norm internalization (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). The characteristic mechanism of the norm emergence stage is norm entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs attempt to convince a critical mass of states to embrace new norms. In the second stage, norms ‘cascade’ through the population through pressures to conform, or the desire to enhance legitimacy. The final stage of the cycle is norm internalization, during which norms acquire a taken for granted quality. Finnemore and Sikkink point out that not all norms reach the second stage. Only after a critical mass of states accepts a norm (which they identify as 1/3 of all states) does it reach a ‘tipping point’ that sets in motion a cascade. Finnemore and Sikkink apply their life cycle to various humanitarian regimes. Yet a more pertinent application of their framework might be to the cultural structure of the international system. Indeed, in responding to criticisms of his book, Wendt has explicitly emphasized the idea that a ‘critical mass’ of states who internalize the norms of a Kantian culture could provide the missing link in his account of structural change (Wendt, 2000: 174). This underscores the significance of Finnemore and Sikkink’s norm life cycle model in refining Wendt's account of structural change within the international system.

Like Rawls, Wendt focuses on the normative process of cultural change central to the dynamic expansion of the democratic pacific union. Indeed, one way of viewing Wendt's contribution is to use Wendtian constructivism to provide an account of the cultural interaction that underpins the pacific union (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Kahl, 1998). However, such an approach may be criticized for adopting an 'add constructivism and stir' formula. It uses constructivism to supplement the orthodox democratic peace proposition, rather than modify and extend the core democratic peace claim. The promise of constructivism, however, is that it provides a fundamental challenge to realism as a general account of international anarchy. Thus the major difference in emphasis between Wendt and Rawls is one of levels of analysis. Wendt develops a systemic analysis of normative diffusion, which examines the conditions under which the process of norm bandwagoning underpinning the expansion of the democratic pacific union can gather historical momentum and take on a life of their own.

The full implications of Wendt's adoption of a systemic as opposed to a reductionist perspective become apparent in his notion of 'reflexivity'. Wendt argues that under historical conditions associated with a switch in the dominant cultural structure of the international system, the international system can achieve 'reflexivity'. Wendt defines this as a capacity for critical self-reflection and cultural change on the part of units within it. Once the international system has achieved reflexivity, a positive feedback loop has been locked into place within the international system. The dominance of the system by a stable liberal core encourages states at the margins of cultural change to adopt shifts in their identity. In turn, this feeds back into the properties of the system by strengthening the dominance of the liberal core. Once this virtuous cycle is operating, then states might become aware of this and this knowledge may itself become a major factor driving further cultural change within the international system. The degree of snowballing generated by this feedback cycle depends very much on states' decisions about whether or not to engage in cultural change, and thus under conditions of reflexivity, there is increased scope for state agency and choice to affect the speed of democratic consolidation. Nevertheless the possibility of the system achieving reflexivity becomes a major factor facilitating cultural change, and highlights the distinctively systemic nature of the analysis of normative diffusion in international society adopted by Wendt's account of state socialization and international norm dynamics.

However, despite the major difference between them in terms of levels of analysis, both Rawls and Wendt provide theoretical accounts of normative diffusion in international society that might complement one another. The link is provided by the concept of *socialization*. Both Wendt and Rawls share a contractarian focus on the means through which states voluntarily choose to join the democratic community. Both Rawls and Wendt of course recognize that this choice may often be informed by the material advantages associated with membership of the pacific union. They therefore accommodate the possibility that 'might can make right' and their conception of 'socialization' therefore encompasses both coercion and self-interest in Hurd's terms. Yet Rawls and Wendt also see socialization as also reflecting voluntary choice, agency, and moral learning by states. For both, the expansion of the democratic community is ultimately a normative and cultural process with moral significance in terms of the development of international society. Indeed, as well as reading Rawl's *Law of Peoples* as a contribution to the normative strand of the democratic peace literature, it is equally possible to view Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* as a major work in the social contract tradition in political theory. On this analysis, Wendt's book can be understood as an attempt to reconcile and synthesize the accounts of the 'state of nature' provided by Hobbes, Locke and Kant, seeing

these conditions in terms of an evolutionary and developmental cultural progression, rather than as essentialised, static and fixed ‘objective’ conditions as Hobbes and Locke treated them.

In summary, recent developments in the normative strand of democratic peace theory have been extremely important and should not be overlooked by those making rationalist contributions. Rawls’ five-fold typology of states is more nuanced than the binary opposition between liberal and non-liberal societies upon which orthodox democratic peace theory is premised. His category of ‘decent hierarchical societies’ should be interpreted broadly so as to include a high proportion of non-liberal states. Understanding the democratic pacific union in these terms makes it more sticky and inclusive at the margins than Doyle and others have suggested it might be. It allows greater scope for non-liberal states to freely choose to join the liberal pacific union on a peaceful basis. Wendt’s contribution is to offer a theoretical framework that both meshes well with the account of normative diffusion in international society provided by Rawls, and a means for extending this account of normative diffusion to the systemic level of analysis. Wendt argues that the norms of behavior associated with a Kantian culture will begin to produce socialization effects once the system is overwhelmingly dominated by a critical mass of democratic states. By providing an account of the conditions under which the democratic peace becomes a systemic phenomenon, Wendt has made a valuable contribution to understanding the international dimensions of democratization. Both Rawls and Wendt provide theoretical frameworks that are compatible with the argument that material and institutional arguments only take us so far in understanding the international norms dynamics associated with the liberal pacific union. Equally important is the essential legitimacy of liberal principles of right, and the processes of moral learning and normative change development underpinning the adoption of liberal democratic practices by non-liberal states.

DEMOCRATIC MIGHT DOES NOT MEAN IMPERIALISM

The systemic model of the democratic peace that we have set out is able to accommodate both the logic that might makes right and the logic of right makes might. At least over the historical long term, material and normative forces dynamically reinforce one another and contribute to the consolidation of the pacific union in a symbiotic fashion. Yet the Iraq War in 2003 and the troubled subsequent course of the American led military occupation have raised a series of questions about the risk of ‘democratic socialization’ turning into ‘democratic imperialism’. This section seeks to correct some common misconceptions of the scope and nature of systemic democratic peace arguments. The claim and empirical evidence that war can cause democracy is profoundly important as a source of historical progress within systemic analyses of the democratic peace (Mitchell, Gates, and Hegre, 1999). However, it certainly should not be seen as providing an intellectual justification for a doctrine of pre-emptive intervention. On the contrary, the norm of non-intervention remains the critical basis for facilitating the dynamic expansion of the pacific union. Moreover, critics of systemic democratic peace arguments risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Many cases around the world have shown the enormous political and economic benefits that can be brought from achieving stable democratic transition, and today many other societies are within reach of similar kinds of transformations. Forgoing the opportunity to use the very real material and normative incentives they have available to them to assist these societies would be an abrogation of democracies’ international responsibilities. Sensible and prudent use of available material and normative levers to foster stable democratic transitions is what is required, not either a blanket rejection or assertion of democracy as a universalistic project.

Two broad positions have tended to dominate the terms of the current debate about democratic imperialism. One associated with the neoconservative movement in the United States has defended a right of pre-emptive intervention and coercive democracy promotion overseas by the democratic community. This position is very well known, having been widely publicized by the media as the stated justification for the Iraq War by the Bush administration. The other position asserts that international liberalism is intrinsically imperialist in virtue of the moral distinction it draws between liberal and non-liberal states in international society. This claim has been stated with greatest clarity in a recent contribution to debates by Beate Jahn, who interprets the Iraq War as symptomatic of a broader failing intrinsic to liberal thinking about international relations. She argues that “while the revival of the concept of ‘imperialism’ appears to be a reaction to recent political challenges it has always been at the core of liberal thought on intentional relations ... (because at its heart one finds a security dilemma between liberal and non-liberal states as well as an abrogation of a particularist law under a universal guise” (Jahn, 2005, p.177). Understood in this way, the very notion of a ‘democratic community’ simply resurrects under a different name the nineteenth century notion of a ‘standard of civilization’ that was widely used at the time as a pretext to justify European imperialism in the colonial world.

The systemic variant of democratic peace theory has come under particular scrutiny from proponents of this latter argument, since the notion that non-liberal states may be socialized to the democratic community is frequently interpreted as providing a *carte blanche* justification for strongly coercive policies being pursued against perceived outlaw states. This criticism has been a major focus of a recent article by Steele which argues that the Bush administration’s public justification for the Iraq War resonates powerfully with the logic of systemic democratic peace claims to the extent that “the two appear to be inexorably linked” (Steele, 2007, p. 26). His argument is that the use of coercive intervention by the Bush administration in the case of Iraq followed directly from the logic of systemic democratic peace thinking. This is because proponents of a systemic democratic peace “actually propose war as a legitimate tool, part of a ‘selection mechanism’ that pushes the system of states towards perpetual peace with no apparent qualifications regarding how wars might alienate other democracies” (Steele, 2007, p. 38).

The arguments put forward by those who have equated international liberalism with imperialism reflect a whole series of related misconceptions which are important to address. This is especially so for proponents of systemic democratic peace theory, who have come under particular scrutiny. The first and most important misconception to address is Steele’s claim that systemic arguments about the democratic peace may be used to justify the use of war as an instrument of democracy promotion. In making the war-causes-democracy argument, proponents of the systemic democratic peace have sought to demonstrate is that *even given realist assumptions about the nature of international anarchy*, a democratic pacific union would both emerge and eventually spread to a point at which the international system is capable of reaching a critical tipping threshold. This is because, as Kant shrewdly recognized, domestic liberalization is a major long term source of international power for states in the international system. Moreover, after the critical tipping threshold has been reached, there are a powerful range of material incentives that might further foster the spread of democracy within the international system. Firstly, democracies will be capable of defending themselves if challenged by non-liberal rivals. Secondly, non-liberal states will have a range of powerful economic incentives to adopt the norms of interaction associated with behavior within the peaceful liberal core. Given that liberal states are frequently accused of ignoring or at least under-estimating the importance of power politics in intentional relations, these arguments take on great significance.

They allow liberals to show that there are actually very good power political reasons for the democratic pacific union both to come into existence and also to subsequently survive and spread once it has become established.

It should be noted that there is a major gulf between making this kind of general claim about the ability of liberal states to survive and prosper in the international system and the much more expansive claim that say that liberal states should use their power in order to promote democracy overseas. More specifically, it is crucial to emphasize that the norm of non-intervention retains a centrally important role within systemic accounts of the democratic peace. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of Rawls, the barrier for liberal toleration of non-liberal societies should be set quite high, so that liberal states will continue to co-exist with a plurality of different types of states for the foreseeable future. This provides the most stable long term platform for non-liberal states to gradually ‘contract into’ the norms of the democratic community on a voluntary basis. Of course, liberal states will continue to face severe moral and security challenges that at times will make a policy of intervention in specific cases necessary, justified and/or politically prudent. Otherwise one is pushed towards the rather implausible position that intervention is never justified by liberal states and/or the equally implausible assumption that liberal states simply do not face severe security and/or moral challenges arising from non-liberal states. Recent interventions in both Kosovo in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2002 would seem to present very good recent ‘real world’ examples of the category of cases in which intervention is an acceptable tool of policy by liberal democracies, although there of course remain *jus in bello* concerns about how these campaigns have been implemented.

Some of these cases may indeed create opportunities for stable democratic transitions to take place. It is not unreasonable, for example, to argue that Serbia now faces a reasonable prospect of becoming a stable liberal democracy over the next 25 years or so as a result of the pull of the ‘good neighborhood’ that it finds itself situated within (Keohane, 2001; Gleditsch, 2002). Other cases may not face the prospect of achieving stable and mature democracy for the foreseeable future, but nevertheless intervention remains justified because of the overwhelming challenges these states pose to the reasonable security concerns of liberal democracies. The Afghanistan case probably fits this type of category given the scale and immediacy of the security changes posed after 9/11. On other occasions democratic states may unwisely pursue democracy promotion in a region where they do not face an overwhelming security challenge and/or in a country where there is also little prospect of democratic transition. The case of the Iraq War in 2003 would probably seem to fall into this category. However, exceptions to the overall norm of non-intervention must be judged on a case by case basis and in relation to moral significance, security concerns and, importantly also, political prudence. Certainly to lump all cases together by either asserting a blanket right of liberal intervention or a general prohibition of intervention by liberal states would gloss over the profound complexity of the moral and security environment in which liberal democracies today operate.

Moreover, it *must* be recognized by those who equate systemic democratic peace claims with liberal imperialism that there are major opportunity costs for liberal democracies to simply forgo the pursuit of democracy promotion by using the material levers of power available to them to facilitate democratic transition. Notwithstanding the immense challenges faced by the democratic community in tackling a whole series of global issues, in larger historical perspective there has never been an international system more amenable to overseas democracy promotion than the one which has come into being since the end of the Cold War. Today, dozens of countries around the world lie either close to or in the process of a meaningful democratic

transition. States such as Hungary, Estonia, Mexico, Turkey and South Africa come very close to being real world approximations of Rawls' 'decent hierarchal societies' that are operating in a wide grey area between being mature democracies and being stable authoritarian regimes. Given the experience of countries such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal since the 1970's, it is not at all implausible that these countries could reap the enormous economic and political benefits to be gained from becoming constitutionally secure democratic states. Furthermore, the global democratic community has within its power the ability to use the extensive material resources it has to foster these challenges. Again, the experience of Spain, Greece, and Portugal since the 1970's is instructive to consider. Without the extensive external support given to these states from the EEC and NATO member states during their democratic transitions, civil war and what become known in the 1990's as 'balkanization' would have been a much more likely route for these countries to follow. For the democratic community to abrogate these opportunities would seem to be nothing short of a serious failure to live up to both their moral responsibilities and their long term political interests.

In short, the debate between those who assert a blanket right of liberal interventionism and those who are vigorously opposed to it has generated more heat than light. What is required is sensible and prudent use of material levers of power by liberal states to foster stable democratic transition, a position that constitutes a coherent and viable middle ground between these two extremes. Moreover, the heat of the debate between the neoconservatives and their opponents obscures the central insights of advocates of a systemic democratic peace. If democracies use the immense material resources at their disposal wisely, then they have within their capabilities the ability to help many societies around the world achieve real and lasting improvements to their political and economic position which would have enormous and enduring benefits for their citizens. Proponents of a systemic democratic peace are quite right to argue that might can indeed make right, and need not be associated with the imperial abuse of liberal states' power. To reject this possibility would be to throw the liberal baby out with the neo-conservative bathwater.

CONCLUSION

Wade Huntley's initially controversial re-interpretation of Kant as a systemic theorist is now gradually slipping into the 'mainstream' of democratic peace studies. His argument that the logic of a competitive international environment might provide the engine for the process of democratic consolidation has spawned a broad range of theoretical and empirical research into the systemic processes underpinning the consolidation of the liberal pacific union. However, there is a potential tension in this literature that is also present in Kant's thought. This tension is between systemic explanations emphasizing the role of power politics is fueling democratic consolidation, and those emphasizing moral choice and the power of persuasion exerted by liberal principles of right. This paper has made an attempt to map out the two systemic democratic peace 'stories' as a basis for exploring the complex relationship that exists between these mechanisms driving democratic expansion.

Overall, three conclusions may be drawn from our analysis. Firstly, systemic democratic peace arguments are not blind to the operation and practice of power politics. In fact, democratic peace theory can draw on a range of literature that persuasively demonstrate both theoretically and empirically that power politics can play an extremely important role in fueling the process of democratic consolidation. The process of democratic expansion may be driven by the authority of particularly powerful democratic states, or by the steady growth of the number and strength of

many democracies. Thus it can occur in a broad range of historical circumstances. The material power of democratic states puts them in a strong position to act as norm entrepreneurs within international society, and to externalize their norms of behavior in their dealings with other states. This can exert a powerful 'pull' on non-liberal states, enticing them into networks of interdependence and international organizations dominated by liberal democratic states and institutionalized procedures. Prior to the end of the Cold War, democracies faced powerful and decisive actors that could rival their international strength and influence. Today, it is abundantly clear that liberal democracies are anything but weak actors on the international stage, and if anything the democratic community has the opposite problem of needing to sometimes voluntarily restrain the exercise of its overwhelming material dominance within the international system. The logic of power politics and combination of coercive capability and material self-interest are extremely effective mechanisms available to the democratic community to promote the expansion and consolidation of liberal democratic norms and institutions internationally.

Secondly, norms and morality also matter. The logic of power politics can drive the process of democratic consolidation, but at the margins of cultural change, this process can be greatly stimulated by states recognizing voluntarily the essential legitimacy of the principles of behavior associated with the democratic pacific union. Both Rawls and Wendt have developed the normative-cultural strand of the democratic peace argument, and in so doing have challenged the binary opposition between the liberal and the non-liberal world associated with orthodox democratic peace theory. Rawls' inclusion of the intermediate category of decent hierarchical societies in his typology of states allows a significant proportion of non-liberal states to be viewed as potential contractors rather than non-contractors to the pacific union. This offers a basis for liberal toleration of non-liberal states, and also allows for those non-liberal states to freely choose to join (or at least adopt the dominant practices of) the liberal pacific union. Wendt's approach is essentially compatible with Rawls' account of normative diffusion in international society, and furthermore provides a basis for its extension to the system level. Under certain historical conditions associated with the emergence of a liberal critical mass, states have greater latitude to freely choose to join the democratic pacific union. The process of norm-bandwagoning associated with the pacific union may gather historical momentum, and itself become a major factor encouraging states to join the democratic community.

Finally, we acknowledge that there is a potential tension between might and right based arguments which have been acutely highlighted by debates associated with the fallout of the 2003 Iraq War. This has led to particular scrutiny of the systemic democratic peace literature because it has fostered a suspicion that 'democratic socialization' may too easily turn into 'democratic imperialism'. However, it is very important not to simplistically equate the theoretical arguments put forward by proponents of a systemic democratic peace with the policy prescriptions about democracy promotion overseas favored by the current elite in Washington. As an alternative to *both* the assertion of a general right to coercive intervention by liberal states and blanket opposition to democracy as a universal project, we have presented the case for the prudent use of material levers of power by liberal states to promote democracy overseas. This offers a sensible middle ground that both acknowledges the complexity of the moral and security environment in which liberal democracies today operate and recognizes the major costs involved in forgoing uses of coercive force to foster stable democratic transitions around the world. Kant's systemic vision of the process through which the liberal pacific union would expand remains within our reach, but to realize it requires democratic states to exercise their power with shrewd moral judgment combined with political foresight and wisdom.

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