How far is it from Königsberg to Kandahar? Democratic peace and democratic violence in International Relations

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Abstract. Over the last two decades, there has been a 'democratic turn' in peace and conflict research, that is, the peculiar impact of democratic politics on a wide range of security issues has attracted more and more attention. Many of these studies are inspired by Immanuel Kant's famous essay on 'Perpetual Peace'. In this article, we present a critical discussion of the 'democratic distinctiveness programme' that emerged from the Democratic Peace debate and soon spread to cover a wider range of foreign policy issues. The bulk of this research has to date been based on an overly optimistic reading of a 'Kantian peace'. In particular, the manifold forms of violence that democracies have exerted, have been treated either as a challenge to the Democratic Peace proposition or as an undemocratic contaminant and pre-democratic relict. In contrast, we argue that forms of 'democratic violence' should no longer be kept at arm's length from the democratic distinctiveness programme but instead should be elevated to a main field of study. While we acknowledge the benefits of this expanding research programme, we also address a number of normative pitfalls implied in this scholarship such as lending legitimacy to highly questionable foreign policy practices by Western democracies. We conclude with suggestions for a more self-reflexive and 'critical' research agenda of a 'democratically turned' peace and conflict studies, inspired by the Frankfurt school tradition.

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1. The 'democratic turn' in peace and conflict research

Although the notion that democracy is a force for good has a long and eminent tradition, peace and conflict research has hardly pursued this line of thinking until Michael Doyle's famous piece on 'Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs'.[1] Doyle's article triggered the debate on the 'Democratic Peace' that attracted attention by a wider International Relations (IR) audience interested in the liberalist challenge to structural, neo-realist theorising. Whereas the significance of this debate hardly needs another endorsement, the consequences of the subsequent 'democratic turn' in peace and conflict studies require further examination.

In this article, we argue that a 'democratic distinctiveness programme'[2] has emerged that has made democratic politics the centre of gravity for research in peace and conflict studies. While embracing both rationalist and constructivist approaches using both quantitative and post-positivist methods, the unifying theme has been the peculiar impact of democratic politics on a wide range of security issues. This article maps this striking but not yet fully acknowledged development of a democratic turn in recent peace and conflict research and, most importantly, discusses its merits and normative pitfalls.

We begin with a brief summary of the (well-known) Democratic Peace debate (section 2). We then show that in the wake of this debate, research on the pacifying effects of trade and international institutions has identified democracy as an important context condition thereby establishing democracy as the centre of gravity in liberal theorising about conflict (section 3). The democratic turn has further gained momentum by research on various forms of violence exerted by democracies. Previously often attributed to remaining pockets of un- or pre-democratic institutions and culture, democratic violence has been increasingly understood as an intrinsic flipside of democratic peace-proneness. Reflecting an accentuated democratic interventionism after the end of the Cold War, studies on a 'liberal' or a 'democratic' war have been growing in number. Scrutinising the militant face of democracies also illuminates the sources of their peace-proneness since there are fundamental ambivalences within liberal-democratic norms that come to bear differently in relation with liberal-democratic fellows and with non-democratic 'others' (section 4).

The concluding section addresses three normative pitfalls with serious political consequences: the 'uncritical' use of the term 'democracy', the danger of lending

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[1] Michael Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12:3 (1983), pp. 205–35; 12:4 (1983), pp. 323–53.
[2] This phrase has been coined by John Owen, 'Democratic Peace Research: Whence and Whither?', *International Politics*, 41:4 (2004), p. 605.

legitimacy to democratisation by war and of introducing an unsettling dichotomy between democracies and non-democracies into international political discourses in order to confer questionable privileges to the club of democracies. Against this backdrop, we plead for a more self-critical study of democratic security politics and strategies, which is sensitive to ambivalences, tensions and paradoxes of democratic principles, norms and practices (section 5).

2. The core of democratic distinctiveness: the 'Democratic Peace' debate

The starting point of the 'democratic distinctiveness programme' is the famous finding that democracies have rarely if ever waged war against each other. This finding introduced democracy as a cause of peace even though it only applied to the limited realm of relations between established democracies. Although democracy is an inherently contested concept, the datasets provided by POLITY and, to a lesser extent, Freedom House soon became the standard currency in quantitative analyses, not the least because they were unsuspicious of manipulation in favour of the Democratic Peace. As a consequence, 'democracy' in the context of the Democratic Peace became to be defined in terms of institutional constraints and political rights.

The early stages of this debate focused on the statistical significance of the empirical findings and the control of possibly confounding explanatory variables. Methodological disputes about the appropriateness of statistical techniques have resurfaced ever since but have not again amounted to a serious challenge of the core findings.[3] Rather, the Democratic Peace seems to have become a popular illustration for methodological disputes and has benefited from the resulting methodological refinements.

The issue of 'omitted variable bias' goes to the very heart of the inter-paradigm debate and has been heavily contested. Indeed, proponents of competing schools of thought have made great efforts to demonstrate that their theoretical tool kit better accounts for the absence of war between democracies. Since neo-realism was at least then the most prominent theoretical alternative to the liberal theories of the Democratic Peace, its proponents were particularly eager to demonstrate that the absence of war among democracies is better attributed to international power politics than to regime type.[4] Democratic Peace scholars have taken up the challenge and incorporated power ratios, alliances and levels of trade as standard controls of any statistical analysis. The confirmation of core hypotheses in a number of more sophisticated statistical analyses added to the 'success story' of the Democratic Peace.[5]

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[3] Errol A. Henderson, *Democracy and War. The End of an Illusion* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 3.
[4] Cf. Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, 'Polities and Peace', *International Security*, 20:2 (1995), pp. 123–46.
[5] Cf. Stuart Bremer, 'Dangerous Dyads. Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816–1965', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 36:2 (1992), pp. 309–41; also Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, 'Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986', *American Political Science Review*, 87:3 (1993), pp. 624–38.

Even though the bulk of studies has established evidence for the impact of democracy on the level of violent conflict between states, the search for a consistent theoretical account is far from completed. 'We are left [. . .] with a powerful empirical finding without an equally compelling theoretical justification for it.'[6] Due to the simultaneous debate on the limits of rational choice theories and the merits of sociological approaches in IR, distinct rationalist and constructivist explanations have been developed,[7] pitting democratic institutions against democratic norms, although they mutually reinforce each other.

Democratic institutions have been regarded as rendering government policy responsive and accountable to a citizenry who is pictured as eager to preserve their lives and property and thus to abhor war. In a more formal vocabulary, it has been argued that democracies are characterised by large 'selectorates' (the proportion of society selecting the leadership). Because political leaders' staying in power thus depends on a broad winning coalition, they are better off providing public goods (such as peace and economic growth) instead of private goods.[8] In a similar vein, Dan Reiter and Allan Stam have argued that democratic leaders are not only constrained by voters' *ex post* evaluation of their policies ('electoral punishment model') but that they are 'constantly monitoring and campaigning for public support, even when there is no election immediately impending' ('contemporary consent model').[9] As a consequence, democratic leaders 'virtually never initiate war that is unpopular at the time'.[10] An early wave of institutionalist theorising also argued that 'institutional constraints – a structure of division of powers, checks and balances – would make it difficult for democratic leaders to move their countries into war'.[11] More recently, scholars have de-emphasised the constraining effects of domestic institutions and have instead highlighted that elections, open political competition and free media improve a government's ability to send credible signals of its resolve.[12]

An alternative, 'constructivist' account has emphasised democratic norms and culture instead of democratic institutions.[13] From this perspective, democratic decision-makers will prefer negotiation over the use of force in international politics because they try to follow the same peaceful norms of conflict resolution they have internalised within their domestic political processes.[14] However, this pacifist preference only translates into peaceful relations with other democracies.

[6] Henderson, *Democracy and War*, p. 5.
[7] For an overview see, Harald Müller and Jonas Wolff, Democratic Peace. Many Data, Little Explanation', in Anna Geis, Lothar Brock and Harald Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars. Looking at the Dark Side of Democratic Peace* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 41–73.
[8] For an outline of the 'selectorate theory', see, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James Morrow, Randolph Siverson and Alastair Smith, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).
[9] Dan Reiter and Allan Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 198.
[10] Ibid., p. 200.
[11] Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 38.
[12] Kenneth Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 23–115.
[13] Cf., among others, Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs'; Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*; John Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', *International Security*, 19:2 (1994), pp. 87–125; Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1:4 (1995), pp. 489–515.
[14] See for a recent critique of this 'extension hypothesis' Gil Friedman, 'Identifying the Place of Democratic Norms in Democratic Peace', *International Studies Review*, 10:3 (2008), pp. 548–70.

The significance of the Democratic Peace for International Relations not only derives from an arguably successful defence against a wide range of criticisms and its subsequent celebration as an example of progress in IR research[15] but also from changes in Western democracies' post-Cold War security strategies to which it contributed. Referring to central ideas of the Democratic Peace, the Clinton administration adopted the concept of 'democratic enlargement' as a foreign policy strategy apt to foster international peace (as well as to serve US national interests). The subsequent George W. Bush administrations elevated 'democracy' to function as linchpin of their National Security Strategies. However, the use of the Democratic Peace as a legitimating strategy for the Iraq war caused embarrassment in the Democratic Peace community[16] and triggered a debate on scholarly responsibility.[17]

3. From the 'Democratic Peace' to a 'Kantian Peace'

The 'success' of the Democratic Peace research programme in International Relations inspired two closely interwoven developments in peace and conflict research. First, 'Kantian protests'[18] notwithstanding, Immanuel Kant was widely celebrated as the intellectual godfather of the Democratic Peace, and 'Perpetual Peace' became a source of inspiration and authority. As a consequence, research on the pacifying effects of trade and international institutions gained new momentum as these venerable research traditions became subsumed under a 'Kantian peace'.[19] Second, students of peace and conflict added more and more items to the list of what distinguishes democracies from other regimes in international (security) politics. These two developments were closely related because the renaissance of commercial peace- and institutional peace-studies soon made a 'democratic turn', that is, democracy was identified as a favourable context condition. We will address these two developments in turn.

3.1 Commercial peace

The commercial peace thesis has a long and well-known tradition[20] but did not figure prominently until the 1990s when it gained momentum in the wake of the

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[15] Cf. Fred Chernoff, 'The Study of Democratic Peace and Progress in International Relations', *International Studies Review*, 6:1 (2004), pp. 49–77; also James Lee Ray, 'A Lakatosian View of the Democratic Peace Research Program', in Colin Elman and Miriam Elman (eds), *Progress in International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 205–43.

[16] See Bruce Russett, 'Bushwhacking the Democratic Peace', *International Studies Perspectives*, 6:4 (2005), pp. 395–408.

[17] Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theory as a Hermeneutical Mechanism. The Democratic-Peace Thesis and the Politics of Democratization', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:4 (2006), pp. 565–98; Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil. Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[18] John MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest Against the Peculiar Discourse of Inter-Liberal State Peace', *Millennium*, 24:3 (1995), pp. 549–62.

[19] Bruce Russett, 'A Neo-Kantian Perspective: Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations in Building Security Communities', in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 368–94.

[20] The works of Adam Smith, Richard Cobden, Norman Angell and Joseph Schumpeter may be regarded as milestones in that tradition.

Democratic Peace debate. Although Kant's 'Perpetual Peace' mentioned the 'spirit of commerce' only in a supplement, the commercial peace thesis was quickly incorporated as one of three legs in a 'Kantian triangle'. Most proponents of the commercial peace have drawn on expected utility-models and developed an 'economic deterrence argument'[21] according to which the anticipation of a disruption in trade deters political leaders from escalating conflicts. From a constructivist perspective 'economic exchange becomes a medium for communicating perspectives, interests, and desires on a broad range of matters not the subject of economic exchange, and [. . .] these communications form an important channel for conflict management'.[22]

Although several studies found support for the thesis that economically significant trade between states reduces the risk of armed conflict between them, a large number of scholars reported lasting doubts since the findings remained vulnerable to changes in concepts, data measurement or time periods studied.[23] As a consequence, scholars called for the identification of context conditions for the commercial peace.[24]

Among the context conditions suggested are the level of economic development, the institutionalisation of trade relations and – most significant in the context of this article – the regime type of the states engaged in trade. Christopher Gelpi and Joseph Grieco in particular have argued that democracies 'react to greater trade integration with a reduced propensity to initiate militarised disputes with their partners'.[25] Drawing on the standard economic argument about the effects of trade and on selectorate theory, Gelpi and Grieco argue that democratic institutions entail incentives for leaders to provide public goods including growth by fostering trade. Moreover, once a state has established high levels of trade with another country, democratic leaders can be expected to be vulnerable to possible interruptions of trade flows because missed growth opportunities may damage their prospects of being re-elected.

The commercial peace can also be expected to be particularly strong among democracies because democracies tend to trade disproportionately among themselves. Harry Bliss and Bruce Russett listed several reasons for especially high levels of trade among democracies: First of all, leaders in democracies 'need be less concerned that a democratic trading partner will use gains from trade to endanger their security than when their country trades with a nondemocracy'; furthermore, companies will 'prefer to trade with those in states with whom relations are reliably peaceful' and where the rule of law precludes expropriations. Finally, shared norms 'help reduce trade interference from embargoes and

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[21] Jack Levy, 'War and Peace', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 356.

[22] Bruce Russett, 'A Neo-Kantian Perspective', p. 374; Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: Norton, 1997), chap. 8.

[23] For an overview see Edward Mansfield and Brian Pollins, 'Interdependence and Conflict: An Introduction', in Edward Mansfield and Brian Pollins (eds), *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 21.

[24] Gerald Schneider, Katherine Barbieri and Nils Petter Gleditsch (eds), *Globalization and Armed Conflict* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

[25] Christopher Gelpi and Joseph Grieco, 'Economic Interdependence, the Democratic State, and the Liberal Peace', in Edward Mansfield and Brian Pollins (eds), *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 44–59.

boycotts.'[26] Further empirical studies found that democracies indeed have a higher probability to conclude preferential trade agreements.

Taken together, the incorporation of the commercial peace into a 'Kantian peace programme' has given a new impetus to the debate about economic interdependence and peace. Moreover, inconclusive empirical results have led to a search for context conditions which in turn has brought commercial peace research closer to the democratic distinctiveness programme. It is interesting to note that the revitalised commercial peace debate has, at least so far, hardly been taken up by policy circles. Although peace may seem an attractive selling point for further trade liberalisation in a public climate of widespread scepticism, economic considerations have clearly dominated public discourse. In contrast to the institutional peace debate (see next section), the democratic turn in commercial peace studies has also no discernible legitimating function for current policies, even though it could be used to justify a turn from global to regional, inter-democratic trade regimes. Notwithstanding the merits of commercial peace research, its misleading equalisation with Kant's third definitive article has discouraged a more comprehensive exploration of Kant's cosmopolitan law in peace and conflict studies.[27]

3.2 Institutional peace

While there have always been countless studies on the contribution of a *particular* international institution to the management of a *particular* conflict, early large-n studies could not find any significant effect of membership in international institutions on the level of conflict between states.[28] This corresponded to a reading of Kant according to which his 'federation of free states' is rather a result of than a cause for peace.[29] However, in the aftermath of the Democratic Peace debate a new wave of studies on the 'institutional peace' emerged.

Again, a broad range of causal mechanisms has been put forward to explain the pacifying effect of international institutions: they may reduce uncertainty by conveying information, they may act as mediators in a conflict or, as in collective security institutions, even coerce norm-breakers.[30] From a constructivist perspective, institutions may contribute to peace by creating trust, by generating narratives of mutual identification and by socialising states into norms of peaceful conflict resolution.[31]

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[26] Harry Bliss and Bruce Russett, 'Democratic Trading Partners: The Liberal Connection', *Journal of Politics*, 60 (1998), pp. 1126–47, quotes from pp. 1128–9.
[27] Antonio Franceschet, 'Popular Sovereignty or Cosmopolitan Democracy? Liberalism, Kant and International Reform', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:2 (2000), pp. 283, 295.
[28] David Singer and Michael Wallace, 'Intergovernmental Organization and the Preservation of Peace, 1816–1964', *International Organization*, 24:3 (1970), pp. 520–47.
[29] Andrew Moravcsik, 'Federalism and Peace: A Structural Liberal Perspective', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, 3:1 (1996), pp. 123–32.
[30] Bruce Russett, John Oneal and David Davis, 'The Third Leg of the Kantian Tripod for Peace: International Organizations and Militarized Disputes, 1950–1985', *International Organization*, 52:3 (1998), pp. 441–67; also Yoram Haftel, 'Designing for Peace: Regional Integration Arrangements, Institutional Variation, and Militarized Interstate Conflict', *International Organization*, 61:1 (2007), pp. 217–37.
[31] David Bearce and Sawa Omori, 'How Do Commercial Institutions Promote Peace?', *Journal of Peace Research*, 42:6 (2005), pp. 659–78.

In spite of a much later take-off than the commercial peace-debate, the courses of the two debates have shown striking similarities: Whereas several studies found evidence in support of an institutional peace, others failed to do so suggesting that the institutional peace thesis is vulnerable to changes in specification and measurement. The subsequent search for context conditions again led to a 'democratic turn', that is, the regime type of the member states was identified as an important qualification of the institutional peace thesis.

Democracies have been considered to have both particular inclinations and capacities to establish and maintain international institutions.[32] To a large extent, explanations for these particular features of democracies' foreign policies have drawn on causal mechanisms familiar from explanations for the Democratic Peace and the commercial peace. For example, the selectorate theory holds that democracies tend to establish and maintain international institutions for the same reasons that they tend to avoid costly wars or promote trade: because democratic leaders face incentives to provide public goods, they will establish and maintain international institutions which help to do so. From a constructivist point of view, in contrast, democracies tend to cooperate among themselves for the same reason they maintain peaceful relations and high levels of trade: a common set of values fosters trust and overcomes otherwise prominent relative gains concerns, etc.

Democracies are not only considered to be especially *interested in* international cooperation; they are also regarded to be particularly *capable* to establish and maintain international institutions. Again, the causal mechanisms that make democracies 'reliable partners'[33] are familiar from the Democratic Peace. Most importantly, the checks and balances, transparency and openness characteristic of decision-making in democracies also contribute to their capability to establish and maintain international institutions. Because entering into an international commitment requires the consent of parliaments, courts, interest groups, etc., defection becomes less likely once such consent has been achieved.[34] Moreover, free media and a vital civil society make the detection of defection likely which in turn helps to mitigate problems of monitoring characteristic of collective action problems. From a constructivist perspective, one may add that democracies' esteem for the rule of law extends to the honouring of international (legal) commitments.[35]

In another analogy to commercial peace-research, scholars of the institutional peace have argued that democracies cooperate disproportionately among themselves and that 'interdemocratic institutions' (that is, international institutions composed of democracies) are particularly effective in reaping the pacifying effects of cooperation.[36] A number of empirical findings have supported the notion of a 'democratic turn' in the institutional peace-debate. Democracies have, on average,

[32] Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 173.

[33] Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partner. How democracies have made a separate peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[34] Lisa Martin, *Democratic Commitments: Legislatures and International Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[35] Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, 'Democratic states and commitment in international relations', *International Organization*, 50:1 (1996), pp. 109–39.

[36] Andreas Hasenclever and Britta Weiffen, 'International Institutions are the Key: a new Perspective on the Democratic Peace', *Review of International Studies*, 32:4 (2006), pp. 563–85.

more memberships in intergovernmental organisations (IGOs)[37] and are less likely to violate alliance commitments.[38] Most importantly, in a study covering the period between 1885 and 2000, Jon Pevehouse and Bruce Russett have provided empirical evidence that IGOs have the more pacifying effects the more democratic their member states are.[39]

Notwithstanding mounting empirical evidence, we consider the democratic turn in the institutional peace problematic in two, interrelated respects. First, in a similar vein as John MacMillan had already in 1995 voiced a perceptive 'Kantian protest', here once again such a protest against an allegedly Kantian reading of interdemocratic institutions seems warranted. Doyle, Russett and many others understand Kant's 'federation of free countries' as a plea for inter-democratic cooperation as a nucleus of an expanding security community.[40] However, there is considerable evidence drawn from Kant's comprehensive writings that he imagined his federation of 'free' states as comprising independent, *sovereign* states, but not necessarily exclusively *liberal democratic* states.[41]

Since 'Perpetual Peace' is an obvious source of authority reaching out beyond the scholarly community, this dispute is related to the second problem of the democratic turn, namely the assignment of legitimacy to inter-democratic institutions such as NATO and the EU. Such a democratic turn has potentially dramatic consequences as it weakens security institutions with mixed membership such as the UN or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that were designed to foster peaceful cooperation among all member states, whether democracies or not. At the same time, institutions exclusively composed of democracies appear not only particularly capable but also legitimised to act on behalf of an otherwise 'ineffective' international community. Just as the Democratic Peace lent dubious legitimacy to interventionist security doctrines, the democratic turn in institutional peace analysis may attribute legitimacy to military interventions that, like the Kosovo campaign in 1999, lack a clear basis in international law but enjoy the support of Western democracies and of the international institutions they have formed.

4. Democratic distinctiveness and the use of force

The democratic turn in the commercial and institutional peace literatures has been an important step towards a democratic distinctiveness programme because it

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[37] Cheryl Shanks, Harold Jacobson and Jeffrey Kaplan, 'Inertia and Change in the Constellation of International Governmental Organizations, 1981–1992', *International Organization*, 50:4 (1996), pp. 593–627; and Jon Pevehouse, Timothy Nordstrom and Kevin Warnke, 'The COW-2 International Organizations Dataset Version 2.0', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 21:2 (2004), pp. 101–19.

[38] Brett Ashley Leeds, 'Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties', *International Organization*, 57:4 (2003), pp. 801–27.

[39] Jon Pevehouse and Bruce Russett, 'Democratic International Governmental Organizations Promote Peace', *International Organization*, 60:4 (2006), pp. 969–1000.

[40] See Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs', pp. 226–7; Pevehouse and Russett, 'Democratic International Governmental Organizations Promote Peace'.

[41] A textual analysis of Kant's pertinent writings is beyond the scope of this article but see the plausible argumentation proposed by MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest', pp. 553–60; Beate Jahn, 'Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs', *International Organization*, 59:1 (2005), p. 191; Oliver Eberl *Demokratie und Frieden. Kants Friedensschrift in den Kontroversen der Gegenwart* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), pp. 200–4.

established democracy as the centre of gravity within liberal or Kantian theorising. The result was a 'virtuous circle' in which 'all good things go together', that is, democracy, trade and international institutions not only contribute to peace by itself but furthermore reinforce each other.[42] This overall rosy picture of democracy in international relations has been challenged by the incorporation of democratic violence into a democratic distinctiveness programme. Given liberalism's progressivist philosophy of history,[43] the significance of this step can hardly be underestimated.

Of course, proponents of the Democratic Peace have never denied democracies' use of force but they have often treated it as a pre-democratic relic or un-democratic contaminant. Only more recently has democracies' use of force been analysed in its inherently liberal-democratic context, thereby decoupling the democratic distinctiveness programme from the notion of human progress towards future pacification by further democratisation (section 4.1). In contrast to the Democratic Peace debate where rationalist works still make up the majority of studies, recent investigations on the militant face of democracies tend to social-constructivist approaches, focusing on liberal norms and political culture, that is, the ideational underpinnings of violence. These works indicate that liberal norms are inherently ambivalent as they can lend legitimacy to peaceful as well as militant political actions (section 4.2). The viability of the democratic turn in conflict studies is further demonstrated by the integration of research on military effectiveness, casualty aversion and armament policies. Thus, the democratic distinctiveness programme has further spilled over from the investigation of how the use of force is justified into the examination of a distinctly democratic way of war, that is, how democratic militaries differ from authoritarian ones in the theatres of war (4.3). Previously studied in military academies more than in political science departments, the investigation of democracies at war has benefited from as well as contributed to the democratic distinctiveness programme. The following sections aim at demonstrating that various fields of research have been pulled into the remit of a democratic distinctiveness programme. Although we refer to a multitude of empirical studies to buttress this claim, we are less interested in the empirical validity of individual findings. What we want to highlight instead is that democratic politics has become the centre of gravity in recent studies on a wide range of security issues.

4.1 Democracies' use of force: challenge to or flipside of democratic peace?

Proponents of the so-called monadic Democratic Peace theory who argue that democracies are more peaceful in general never claimed that democracies do not fight wars; they only claim that democracies fight wars less frequently than other regimes. With some notable exceptions such as Michael Doyle, John MacMillan, John Owen, and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (with various co-authors), however,

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[42] Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*.
[43] Nicholas Rengger, 'On Democratic War Theory', in Anna Geis, Lothar Brock and Harald Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars. Looking at the Dark Side of Democratic Peace* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 133.

proponents of the Democratic Peace hardly analysed the violence emanating from (liberal) democratic states in terms of its (liberal) democratic distinctiveness. If 'democratic violence' surfaced at all, it was often presented as a challenge to the Democratic Peace proposition or traced back to democratic deficits of the polity or to pre-democratic ideological remnants in the political culture.

For example, in his study on US covert actions against elected governments during the Cold War period, David Forsythe argued that these actions at first glance seem inconsistent with the liberal analyses of inter-democratic relations. At closer look, however, covert actions appear to be possible only because 'the decisions are not taken in the open, subject to the full range of checks and balances and popular participation'.[44] Likewise, Ernst-Otto Czempiel[45] argued that wars by democracies such as the one fought by the US in Vietnam point to a lack of democratic control even in otherwise mature democracies. In a similar vein, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, who demonstrated the enhanced risks of nationalist violence and war-proneness of democratising regimes during their transition phase,[46] do not question the democratic peace between mature, consolidated democracies. Notwithstanding vast differences in theoretical approaches and methods, these studies regard consolidated democracies as inherently peace-prone and attribute their aggression to pockets of un- or pre-democratic institutions and culture.

The use of force by democracies figured more prominently in the more wide-spread dyadic variants of Democratic Peace research. The statement 'democracies rarely if ever fight one another but are as war-prone as other regime-types' clearly captures the democratic 'Janus face', that is, their capabilities and inclination for acting as peaceful as well as militant forces in world politics.[47] However, since the Democratic Peace research originated in the refutation of central Realist assumptions about international politics, the 'positive' puzzle of peaceful relations between consolidated democracies remained the primary focus of research for long.[48]

Academic and political attention for 'democratic' or 'liberal' wars then grew considerably in the light of an increased 'liberal interventionism' after the end of the Cold War.[49] The so-called War on Terror, proclaimed by the US administration after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and joined by some other Western allies, further highlighted 'the fact that certain liberal democracies are highly war-prone, and their "enemies" are represented as being existential threats

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[44] David Forsythe, 'Democracy, War and Covert Action', *Journal of Peace Research*, 29:4 (1992), pp. 385–95.

[45] Ernst-Otto Czempiel, 'Kants Theorem. Oder: Warum sind die Demokratien (noch immer) nicht friedlich?', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, 3:1 (1996), pp. 79–101.

[46] Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight. Why Emerging Democracies go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

[47] Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?'.

[48] Cf. Gunther Hellmann and Benjamin Herborth, 'Fishing in the mild West: democratic peace and militarised interstate disputes in the transatlantic community', *Review of International Studies*, 34:3 (2008), p. 505.

[49] See, among others, Anna Geis, Lothar Brock and Harald Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars. Looking at the Dark Side of Democratic Peace* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Lawrence Freedman, 'The age of liberal wars', in David Armstrong, Theo Farell and Bice Maiguashca (eds), *Force and Legitimacy in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 93–107; Nils Petter Gleditsch, Lene Christiansen and Håvard Hegre, *Democratic Jihad? Military Intervention and Democracy* (Washington: World Bank Policy Research Paper WP 4242, 2007).

to the Western way of life'.[50] Partly backed by a revived UN Security Council, partly self-empowered, the West legitimated multi-party Western military actions as so-called humanitarian interventions or as international law enforcement missions. They were fought in the name of restoring peace, of punishing lawbreakers and eliminating the foes of humanity, and of protecting human rights and promoting democracy. Democratic interventionism could thus be read as the violent manifestation of a liberal world ordering and governance project, attempting – but often failing – to export Western forms of rule, statehood and democracy.[51]

Against this backdrop, parts of recent research on the use of force by Western liberal democracies investigate into inherently democratic or liberal contexts that fostered these instances of violence. To be sure, such studies do not present fully comprehensive explanations of single wars and interventions, but they point out specific democratic or liberal ingredients of these military actions. Conceiving of a 'democratic war' as the flipside of a 'democratic peace' rests on the assumption that the very same features that are deemed responsible for peace among democracies contribute to their hostility towards non-democracies.[52] Examining such inherent ambivalences of liberal-democratic institutions, norms and values hence implies taking up a suggestion that Michael Doyle had made earlier on the nature of the 'separate peace' but that had found rather little systematic consideration at that time: '[. . .] the very constitutional restraint, international respect for individual rights and shared commercial interests that establish grounds for peace among Liberal states establish grounds for additional conflict irrespective of actual threats to national security in relations between Liberal and non-Liberal societies'.[53]

4.2 The ambivalence of liberal norms

The phenomenon of liberal interventionism has (re)directed attention to the fact that liberal norms do not only promote peace, as classical Democratic Peace Theory maintains, but that they can also legitimise the use of force. This fundamental ambivalence of liberal norms appears in various conditions, as this section will outline. Although liberal justifications have certainly been employed before,[54] it was the end of the Cold War and the anticipation of an impending liberal world order that paved the way for an enhanced significance of liberal justifications for using force.[55] Similar to social-constructivist strands of Democratic Peace, which focus on the (peace promoting) role of norms, the construction of collective identities, the beneficial effects of learning processes and the creation

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[50] Tim Dunne, 'Liberalism, International Terrorism, and Democratic Wars', *International Relations*, 23:1 (2009), p. 107.

[51] Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and New Wars. The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001) and David Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul and Beyond. Human Rights and International Intervention* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

[52] For an elaboration on this concept of democratic peace as the flipside of democratic wars see Geis, Brock, Müller, *Democratic Wars*.

[53] Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, p. 284.

[54] See, for example, the analysis by Mark Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) on US interventions in the 20th century, which demonstrates how political elites justified such missions by references to security concerns as well as liberal values.

[55] Cf. Freedman, 'Age of Liberal Wars' and Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul and Beyond*.

of trust between democracies,[56] a social-constructivist variant has emerged that investigates the flipside of normative liberalism, of liberal identity formation and the mistrust against non-democratic regimes.

In a social-constructivist perspective norms structure political decisions, they enable and restrain appropriate policy options available in a given society. In this vein, it highly matters which public justifications political decision-makers use in order to legitimise their decision to engage in a military intervention, and which justifications are accepted by their democratic public as legitimate. 'Norms are causal insofar as they regulate behaviour. Reasons are causes to the extent that they provide motivation and energy for action.'[57] The normative structure of a society is embodied in its political culture, underpinned by the legal framework of the polity. In order to establish which norms have constitutive or regulative effects on behaviour, a combination of methods is required, for example discourse analysis, process tracing and counterfactuals.[58]

With regard to democracies' use of force, this leads social-constructivist scholars to analyse the liberal (or non-liberal) norms that are referred to in decision-making bodies as well as the general public. While this certainly does not account for all the factors that motivate a warring democracy's behaviour, this focus can illuminate an important enabling (or restraining) structure which circumscribes the range of political decisions of democratic actors. In addition, such analyses can trace how democratic actors deliberately attempt to change the normative structure by modifying or challenging dominant interpretations of norms, or by violating norms. The norms under investigation in decisions on war and peace include domestic and international legal norms, norms constituting a national identity or a collective identity beyond the state, and norms emerging from 'lessons learnt' from one's own history or from joint state practices.

Works in political theory and philosophy on the nature of liberal norms have in general debated what has been found recently confirmed in empirical studies on democracies' use of force: the norms which constitute the political culture of liberal-democratic polities are fundamentally ambivalent and contested.[59] The normative underpinning of Western military actions has thus lent new impulses to a much older debate on the varieties of liberalism, that is, on strands of liberal thought which can be divided into more self-restrained and more interventionist approaches to international politics.[60] This debate takes issue with the civilising

[56] See, for example, Risse-Kappen 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?'; and Colin H. Kahl, 'Constructing a Separate Peace: Constructivism, Collective Liberal Identity, and Democratic Peace', *Security Studies*, 8:2–3 (1998), pp. 94–144.

[57] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 82. We cannot deal with the problem of causal claims in IR research here, see for this Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[58] Amir Lupovici, 'Constructivist methods: a plea and manifesto for pluralism', *Review of International Studies*, 35:1 (2009), pp. 195–218.

[59] Anna Geis, Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig (eds), *The Janus Face of Liberal Democracies. Militant 'Forces for Good'* (unpublished manuscript, 2010); Harald Müller, 'The Antinomy of Democratic Peace', *International Politics*, 41:4, pp. 494–520; cf. John MacMillan, 'Liberalism and the democratic peace', *Review of International Studies*, 30:2 (2004), pp. 179–200 and Antje Wiener, *The Invisible Constitution of Politics. Contested Norms and International Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 37–58.

[60] Georg Sørensen, 'Liberalism of Restraint and Liberalism of Imposition: Liberal Values and World Order in the New Millennium', *International Relations*, 20:3 (2006), pp. 251–72. A new wave of Kant readings is an indicator of this revived debate. These interpretations of Kant differ considerably in

effects of liberal norms and values which the Democratic Peace research postulates, and sets forth the contradictions and tensions between several norms, which can foster the use of force.[61]

Liberal democratic institutions and political cultures build on assets of different strands of liberal thought, as has often been demonstrated at the example of the US political culture, which contains normative structures that foster interventionist, missionary driving forces as well as a self-restrained, 'isolationist' approach to the outside world, restricting itself to regard the own country as a shining example but not attempting to convert others.[62] This pluralisation of political culture is no distinct feature of the US as several Western political cultures exhibit pluralist normative structures rooted in different traditions of liberal thought and in differing conclusions about 'lessons learnt' from the past. Since cultures provide and circumscribe the universe of acceptable justifications for the use of force in a society, much depends on the interpretations of the ruling political coalitions. As empirical studies on past and on contemporary interventions have shown, left-liberal, liberal, conservative or socialist parties can cite quite different 'legacies' of the own culture; they do refer to quite different norms rendering the use of force appropriate or inappropriate for their own country.[63] Hence it is crucial for the conception of a democratic war as a flipside of democratic peace to scrutinise the ambivalent norms of a political culture and the (controversial) references to these norms by elites in order to establish whether the cultural structuration follows predominantly 'pacifist' or 'militant' lines.[64]

Politico-cultural norms can also be read in terms of dominant self-images and images of an 'other' in a liberal society, the fiction of a 'nation's' unity and a distinct identity has to be permanently constructed and reproduced. This basic idea of social-constructivist research on the making of collective identities had been transferred to Democratic Peace by Thomas Risse-Kappen in a seminal article in 1995.[65] As critical studies on collective identity formation show,[66] the flipside of the construction of identities is the demarcation of an 'other', who in extreme cases can be perceived as an abhorrent foe. With regard to the war-proneness of a democracy, enquiring into such constructions of self and other can establish whether there are resonant enemy images apt to mobilise citizens in favour of a

the question whether he was a staunch advocate of non-intervention or whether he developed liberal justifications for forcible interventions into non-democratic regimes. See, for example, Harald Müller, 'Kants Schurkenstaat: Der "ungerechte Feind" und die Selbstermächtigung zum Kriege', in Anna Geis (ed.), *Den Krieg überdenken* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006), pp. 229–50, and Michael Desch, 'America's Liberal Illiberalism', *International Security*, 32:3 (2007/8), pp. 7–43 for readings of Kant's 'unjust enemy' as fathering liberal interventions; and see MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest' and Eberl, *Demokratie und Frieden* for readings of a Kantian self-restraint and a prudent evolutionary approach to non-democracies.

[61] Lothar Brock, 'The Use of Force by Democracies in the Post-Cold War Era', in Michael Bothe, Mary Ellen O'Connell and Natalino Ronzitti (eds), *Redefining Sovereignty. The Use of Force after the End of the Cold War* (Ardsley: Transnational Publishers, 2005), pp. 21–52.

[62] Desch, 'America's Liberal Illiberalism'.

[63] John MacMillan, 'Liberalism and the democratic peace'; Geis, Müller, Schörnig (eds), *The Janus Face of Liberal Democracies*.

[64] Müller, 'Antinomy of Democratic Peace'.

[65] Risse-Kappen 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?'; see also Kahl, 'Constructing a Separate Peace'.

[66] See, for example, David Campbell, *Writing Security. US Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) and Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The "East" in European Identity Formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

war and to enhance the perceived legitimacy of a military action. Social-constructivist case studies on a democratic war can at that junction connect with analyses of 'othering' and identity politics abound in critical security studies.[67]

Liberal thought has dealt with its 'others' from the very beginning; a recent rediscovery of Kant's figure of the 'unjust enemy' exposes these seeds of illiberalism and of self-empowerment to interventionism contained within liberalism itself.[68] For such interpretations of Kant the logical distance from Königsberg to Kandahar is not too far since democratic peace between civilised lawful regimes and democratic war against evil terrorists in Afghanistan root in the same liberal thinking. To be sure, Kant's *hostis iniustus* as foe of humankind is one extreme representation of a liberal's 'other', but the tendency to denigrate non-liberal 'others' has been a notorious trait of liberal imperialism throughout history. In the past as well as in the present, liberalism has often been criticised for an inherent imperialism,[69] which manifests itself not only in a sense of superiority towards other cultures and regimes but also in the violent 'civilianisation' of others in the name of democracy, freedom and progress. The recent Iraq war, which the US and Great Britain have also justified with the aim of regime change, underlines that such liberal ordering claims are no remains of the past. From this particular liberal perspective, 'rogue states' impede the progress of civilianisation, they pose a threat to other state's physical and normative security and must be forced to change their regime.[70]

In conclusion, understanding what liberal states are not only fighting *for* but also *against* is an important tenet of social-constructivist research on democratic peace and war. Liberal norms can serve both to stabilise a peaceful community of fellow liberals and to identify potential targets of liberal militancy. But as data on pre-war discourses in Western democracies since 1990 have shown, there is no 'pure' liberal war, but always a democracy-specific mixture of normative liberalism and more traditional national interests in public justifications.[71] Lawrence Freedman conceives of a 'liberal war' as a war 'conducted in pursuit of a humanitarian agenda. [. . .] The ideal type for a liberal war is that it is altruistic in inspiration and execution. [. . .] It is liberating and empowering while involving as few casualties as possible.'[72] In a similar vein, John Vasquez defines liberal wars as 'wars that are based on moral claims to do what is right rather than claims about the national interest. These wars include wars for democracy or humanitarian wars arising out of armed humanitarian interventions'. Vasquez regards the Kosovo war 'the quintessential liberal war of our time'[73] But also with regard to the Kosovo

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[67] See references in fn. 66; on the combination of social-constructivist and 'critical' studies see Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations*, 4:3 (1998), pp. 259–94.

[68] See Müller, 'Kants Schurkenstaat' and Desch, 'America's Illiberalism'; whereas Desch contends that Kant's liberalism indiscriminately regards all non-Republican states as dangerous threats (ibid., p. 13), Müller (ibid., pp. 242–5) stresses that it is a matter of differentiated practical judgement by liberal actors which kind of non-Republican state is perceived as an 'unjust enemy', hence as potential object for forcible intervention.

[69] Jahn, 'Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies'.

[70] Müller, 'Kants Schurkenstaat'.

[71] Geis, Müller, Schörnig (eds), *The Janus Face of Liberal Democracies*.

[72] Freedman, 'Age of Liberal Wars', p. 98.

[73] John Vasquez, 'Ethics, Foreign Policy, and Liberal Wars', *International Studies Perspective*, 6:3 (2005), pp. 307–11.

war, which represents the last prominent 'humanitarian intervention' in the 1990s phase of a moralising liberal interventionism, we find clear references to self-interested motives in the intervening NATO states, such as preventing a further regional destabilisation or the further influx of refugees from the Balkans.[74]

4.3 A democratic way of war?

The extension of the democratic distinctiveness programme into the realm of democracies and war did not stop at investigating distinctly liberal justifications for the use of armed force. Rather, the peculiarities of democracies *at war* became a further object of extensive study and debate. Research in this domain could build on established bodies of literature that had been written without any interest in possible differences between democracies and autocracies. This is particularly evident with regard to the issue of military victory.

This classical topic of military academies has been brought into the remit of the democratic distinctiveness programme by Dan Reiter and Allan Stam in particular. In contrast to Realist orthodoxy, Reiter and Stam do not trace military effectiveness back to the usual 'hard' factors such as economic power or number of troops and material, nor to the joint fighting power of alliances, but to two distinct democratic mechanisms, 'the skeleton and spirit of democracy'.[75] They maintain that a 'selection effect' has helped democracies to win more than three-quarters of their wars since 1815: Since democratic leaders are dependent upon the majority consent of their citizens and since political decisions are deliberated in the public, governments will only decide to wage a war if the prospects to win are well established. Furthermore, Reiter and Stam ascribe superior abilities, training and motivation to soldiers in democracies the roots of which lie in a special liberal-democratic political culture which puts a premium upon individual initiative and performance. This cultural appreciation for the individual and his/her capacities ensures the selection of a competent and able military leadership and motivates the individual soldiers to effective fighting.

Reiter's and Stam's book triggered a debate on the solidity of the data and the plausibility of the explanations of such a 'democratic triumphalism'.[76] Although the main thesis has thus remained controversial, it is again democratic distinctiveness that has been placed at the centre of a debate that used to be a home ground for military historians and scholars highly sceptical of the public's interference into military politics. 'Democracies at War' also casts a dark shadow on normative explanations of the Democratic Peace. Reiter and Stam demonstrate in empirical cases that majorities of citizens have opted in favour of war – even in the absence of imminent danger – and governments followed them in that. However, public support typically lasted only a short time and quickly dropped once casualties mount.[77]

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[74] Geis, Müller, Schörnig (eds), *The Janus Face of Liberal Democracies.*
[75] Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, p. 9.
[76] Michael C. Desch, 'Democracy and Victory: Why Regime Type Hardly Matters', *International Security* 27 (2002), pp. 5–47, and recently Michael C. Desch, *Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic Triumphalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
[77] Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, pp. 164–92.

Research on the effect of casualties on government popularity and policy goes back to John Mueller's studies on the wars in Korea and Vietnam.[78] Democratic Peace scholarship elevated casualty aversion to a central building bloc in its argument that accountability makes governments unlikely to engage in risky military missions. If citizens are reluctant to consent to wars, shying away from its material and humanitarian costs, then governments, interested in their re-election, can be expected to avoid putting their troops at risk. As with military effectiveness and victories, the alleged democratic distinctiveness in avoiding casualties has remained subject to caveats, qualifications and controversy. On the one hand, Stephen Watts and Martin Shaw have discussed to what extent democracies' casualty aversion even extends to troops and civilians of the opponent. Whereas Watts presents empirical evidence that democratic publics follow a clear norm hierarchy of casualties with own civilians and soldiers on top of the opponent's ones, Shaw focuses on the legitimacy problems arising from prioritising the protection of own forces over local civilians in recent wars fought by democracies.[79] Remarkably, even scholars who find democracies not to differ from authoritarian states in deliberately targeting civilians, still make a considerable effort to highlight differences in motivation.[80] On the other hand, Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver and Jason Reifler argued that the public's sensitivity to casualties has been overestimated. Instead, they argue that democratic publics are prepared to accept losses if they are confident about the *success* of the military operation.[81] In the context of this article, the empirical accuracy of such claims is of far less importance than the fact that research on casualties, public opinion and government policy has become an integral part of the democratic distinctiveness programme.

Because the procurement of technologically advanced weapons systems can increase the protection of armed forces and minimise casualties, research on armament and defence spending was another natural candidate for a 'democratic turn'. Enhancing military effectiveness can delude the public into thinking that 'bloodless' wars and swift victories are possible and that expected benefits will outbalance the costs.[82] The latest 'revolution in military affairs', which has been propelled by the US in particular and which utilises the advancements in information and computer technologies for the armed forces, has been debated in this context. Extensive reconnaissance, an improved integration of different weapons systems and a higher speed and precision of weapons are the main

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[78] John E Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley 1973). For a recent overview see Hugh Smith, 'What Costs Will Democracies Bear? A Review of Popular Theories of Casualty Aversion', *Armed Forces & Society*, 31:4, (2005), pp. 487–512.

[79] Stephen Watts, 'Air war and restraint: the role of public opinion and democracy', in Matthew Evangelista, Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig (eds), *Democracy and Security* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 54–5; Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

[80] Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). Downes finds two main reasons why governments decide to target civilians, one is desperation to reduce one's own military casualties or avert defeat, the other is the ambition to annex enemy territory. According to this study, democracies historically stand out for targeting civilians out of desperation.

[81] Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[82] Niklas Schörnig, 'Die Vision des wohlfeilen Krieges', in Anna Geis, Harald Müller and Wolfgang Wagner (eds), *Schattenseiten des Demokratischen Friedens* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2007), pp. 93–122.

characteristics of this contemporary 'revolution' in arms technology; the reduction of costs and risks is its central motive.[83]

The issue of a distinctly restrained warfare by democracies has gained new salience since the 1990s when liberal states increasingly claimed to fight for humanitarian purposes.[84] The task of Western interventionist forces to protect the local civilians from violations of human rights and to establish democracy and the rule of law implies high moral obligations which the interveners have to fulfil. Otherwise they will lose credibility and will be regarded as imperial occupational powers. Since Western democracies have increasingly linked their use of force to 'benign' purposes (see section 4.2) and established liberal protectorates, they have to win the 'hearts and minds' of the population on the ground.[85] Taking humanitarian claims seriously would therefore require the West to deploy much more ground troops and to put their own troops in harm's way instead of jeopardising the civilians they seek to protect.[86] In other words: transferring the risk from one's own troops to civilian populations repudiates the humanitarian purposes of the mission. At that junction, normative justifications for 'liberal wars' clash with the cost-benefit calculations of rational democratic publics and leaders.

In conclusion, the recent surge of research on democratic violence is a welcome amendment to the Democratic Peace literature as it highlights the more troubling sides of democratic politics for international security that are closely intertwined with the bright sides of inter-democratic peace and cooperation. Although specific findings remain contested and subject to further study and refinement, the extension of the democratic distinctiveness programme to various aspects of democratic violence promises to sketch a much more comprehensive and accurate picture of democratic politics' impact on international security.

Conclusion: The pitfalls of an expanding democratic distinctiveness programme

As the previous sections have shown, the Democratic Peace debate has given rise to a democratic turn in conflict studies that has highlighted the peculiar impact of democratic politics on (international) security. The theoretical tool kit developed to account for the (near) absence of war among democracies has not only been used to examine the impact of democracy on trade, institutionalised cooperation and

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[83] Cf. Bjørn Møller, *The Revolution in Military Affairs: Myth or Reality?* (Copenhagen: COPRI Working Papers No. 15 (2002).

[84] Pertinent here is in the UK the recent 'Liberal Way of War Programme' at the University of Reading, see: {http://www.rdg.ac.uk/spirs/Leverhulme/spirs-leverhulme_home.aspx}. In Germany, comprehensive investigations into Western modes of warfare and armament policies have been conducted by the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) within the framework of its research programme on 'Antinomies of Democratic Peace'.

[85] Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite. Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Penguin, 2003).

[86] See the discussion in William Smith and Robert Fine, 'Cosmopolitanism and military intervention', in Richard Devetak and Christopher Hughes (eds), *The Globalization of Political Violence* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 58, and Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006, second edition), pp. 119–49.

violence but also to study civil wars,[87] arms control policies,[88] defence spending,[89] decolonisation,[90] terrorism[91] and internal security cooperation.[92] In addition, civil-military relations and intelligence cooperation have been suggested as objects of future research.[93] To be sure, research on the economic, power-related or cultural causes of conflict has certainly not been *replaced* by the democratic distinctiveness agenda but for almost any puzzle in peace and conflict research, the distinct impact of democratic politics has become an obvious point of departure.

The democratic turn in conflict studies has the merit of fostering collaboration across previously unconnected areas of research. In the concluding sections of this article, however, we focus on three normative pitfalls that the democratic turn has brought about. Two of these pitfalls have already been discussed but remain important caveats for future research: The 'uncritical' use of the term 'democracy' has been criticised from the early days of the Democratic Peace debate; the danger of lending legitimacy to democratisation by war has received a lot of attention in the aftermath of the Iraq war of 2003. In contrast, the moral and institutional privileging and self-empowerment of liberal democracies has been neglected so far.

First, most Democratic Peace-related research relies on the widely used democracy indices by POLITY and Freedom House, and does not reflect any further that the 'content' of democracy is controversial, and that 'democracy' remains a contested concept. In quantitative studies, standardisations and agreements on core definitions are indispensable in order to generate a high number of reliable and comparable data. Given the predominance of quantitative research, deviations from the commonly used 'standard' procedural democracy concept[94] are still rather rare and usually explored in qualitative works on Democratic Peace. Ernst-Otto Czempiel, for example, has proposed radical democratic readings of Kant's idea of a republic.[95] Such readings scathe the lacking democraticness of real existing democracies and postulate much more transparency and citizens' participation in foreign policy.[96] Czempiel had rightly pointed out that Democratic Peace

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[87] Matthew Krain and Marissa E. Myers, 'Democracy and Civil War: A Note on the Democratic Peace Proposition', *International Interactions*, 23:1 (1997), pp. 109–18; Håvard Hegre, Scott Gates, Nils Petter Gleditsch and Tanja Ellingsen, 'Towards a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Democratization, and Civil War 1816–1992', *American Political Science Review*, 95:1 (2001), pp. 33–48.

[88] Harald Müller and Una Becker, 'Technology, nuclear arms control, and democracy', in Matthew Evangelista, Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig (eds), *Democracy and Security* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 102–19.

[89] Benjamin Goldsmith, 'Defense Efforts and Institutional Theories of Democratic Peace and Victory: Why Try Harder', *Security Studies*, 16:2 (2007), pp. 189–222.

[90] Benjamin Goldsmith and Baogang He, 'Letting Go Without a Fight: Decolonization, Democracy and War, 1900–94', *Journal of Peace Research*, 45:5 (2008), pp. 587–611.

[91] Max Abrahms, 'Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists', *Security Studies*, 16:2 (2007), pp. 223–53.

[92] Wolfgang Wagner, 'Building an Internal Security Community: The Democratic Peace and the Politics of Extradition in Western Europe', *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:6 (2003), pp. 695–712.

[93] Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 58.

[94] In critique, Nicholas Rengger, *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 116.

[95] Czempiel, 'Kants Theorem'.

[96] There are some Democratic Peace studies that have opened up the 'black box' of democracy and distinguish different institutional types of democracies or parliamentary oversight powers, see for example, Miriam Fendius Elman, 'Unpacking Democracy: Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Theories of Democratic Peace', *Security Studies*, 9:4 (2000), pp. 91–126, and Sandra Dieterich, Hartwig Hummel and Stefan Marschall, '"Kriegsspielverderber?" Europäische Parlamente und der

research did not incorporate insights from democratic theory and did not problematise the practices of real existing 'democracies'. This caveat has been voiced before but has to date not been adequately heeded. In addition, most research is not interested in current debates on the gradual erosion of democratic conditions and principles through processes of globalisation and the internationalisation of politics. Since democratic distinctiveness seems to be contingent upon stable domestic conditions, research would benefit from considering the debates in democratic theory and empirical studies on the crisis of democracy.[97]

From this follows that scholars engaged in democracy-centred research need to reflect the historical context of their statements and decouple their work from a progressivist philosophy of history. Democratic Peace research must acknowledge that democracy is a contingent historical fact, necessarily conditioned by its past and potentially fragile in its future. From this perspective it is crucial that 'reflexive' works on the democratic peace are pursued further.[98]

Second, the finding that democracies do not fight each other has had a noticeable influence on the readjustment of foreign policy strategies of Western democracies. After the end of the Cold War, consecutive US administrations have made the promotion of democracy a key strategy of their foreign policy. In a simplified appropriation of Democratic Peace scholarship, Western politicians depict (liberal) democracies as warrantors of global peace, stability and wealth, that is, Democratic Peace theory has become democratic practice, with explicit references to scholarly writings by politicians.[99] As far as democracies promote the spread of their regime type by peaceful means, one might not want to object too heavily against this foreign policy strategy, but things look quite different if the 'democratic peace' is used as legitimating cover for democratisation by war.[100]

Proponents of forcible democratisation of key countries could be found in the Clinton and in particular the Bush administration, and it is well known that the Iraq war has partly been *justified* with the aim of regime change and of triggering a democratic 'domino effect' in the Middle East. While the underlying motives for the Iraq war were quite diverse, legitimating this war *also* by reference to the (putatively) beneficial effects of a democratic regime change was more than mere rhetoric. It was the attempt by a very powerful actor to alter the normative structure which circumscribes the range of legitimate reasons for waging war. It has added to the notion of a 'democratic war' (as described above, section 4) a further twist: that a democratic government considers itself entitled to invade another country in order to force it to democratise. The disaster of the Iraq war has in the

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Irak-Krieg 2003', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*, 15:1 (2009), pp. 5–37. Such approaches, however, remain within the established lines of institutionalist readings of democracy. In contrast, we are hinting here at 'radical' critiques of existing democracies. For a comprehensive treatment of radical democratic readings of Kant see Eberl, *Demokratie und Frieden*.

[97] See, for example, Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

[98] Christopher Hobson, 'Beyond the End of History: The Need for a "Radical Historicisation" of Democracy in International Relations', *Millennium*, 37:3 (2009), pp. 631–57, and Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theorization, Harm, and the Democratic Imperative: Lessons from the Politicization of the Democratic-Peace Thesis', *International Studies Review*, 10:4 (2008), pp. 680–92.

[99] For such references see, among others, Ish-Shalom, 'Theory as a Hermeneutical Mechanism' and Smith, *Pact with the Devil*.

[100] See Brent Steele, 'Liberal-Idealism: A Constructivist Critique', *International Studies Review*, 9 (2007), pp. 23–52.

meantime probably defused such political ambitions, but the idea of a 'democratic intervention' as such has not been completely discredited.[101]

It is important to note that calls for forcible democratisation have found little support in the Democratic Peace research community. However, Dan Reiter and Allan Stam are a notable exception. They concluded their book on democracies at war[102] with some considerations on US foreign policy in the 21st century, in particular the desirability of peaceful and forcible democracy promotion. Underlining that the spread of democracy is desirable because it 'advances the human condition by protecting freedom and directly serves the American national interest by helping sustain a peaceful, more prosperous world',[103] they did not hesitate to declare: '[. . .] complete pessimism is unwarranted; military force can promote social stability and the advance of democracy. We urge policy-makers to be willing to use force for this end if the conditions for success, especially a society that enjoys the proper institutional, cultural, and economic conditions, seem to be present'.[104] To be sure, the bulk of Democratic Peace scholars has been rather critical of forcible democratisation, and notably Bruce Russett complained that Democratic Peace research has been wrongfully exploited and perverted by politicians.[105]

Whatever the explicit position on forcible democratisation Democratic Peace scholars take, Democratic Peace research has nevertheless contributed to pave the intellectual ground for democratic 'triumphalism'.[106] Though scholarship has produced a wide array of complex studies, debating context conditions, modifications and flaws of Democratic Peace (research), interested political actors only take up the 'good news', simplify and instrumentalise these for political purposes. In search for an adequate response to such instrumentalisation, it is an important step that public reflexion upon scholarly responsibility in this field has recently been growing.[107]

Third, as indicated above (section 3.2), the democratic turn in institutional peace research in particular lends legitimacy to a worldview that divides the population of states along the binary lines of democracies and non-democracies and ascribes higher morality and credibility as well as institutional privileges to the group of democracies. Such considerations have not only been proposed by liberal international legal scholars but are an important topic in political philosophy as well.[108] For example, Allen Buchanan and Robert Keohane have justified the privileging of democracies in international law on the following grounds: they find democracies to meet their 'standard for comparative moral reliability' and believe that 'when democracies violate cosmopolitan principles, they are more likely to be criticised by their citizens for doing so, and will be more likely to rectify their

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[101] Cf. Sonja Grimm and Wolfgang Merkel (eds), *War and Democratization: Legality, Legitimacy and Effectiveness*, Special Issue of *Democratization* 15:3 (2008).
[102] Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*.
[103] Ibid., p. 203.
[104] Ibid., p. 204.
[105] Bruce Russett, 'Bushwhacking the Democratic Peace', p. 396.
[106] For a fierce critique see Smith, *Pact with the Devil*.
[107] Ish-Shalom, 'Theorization, Harm, and the Democratic Imperative'.
[108] See, for example, John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). See for a critical summary Gerry Simpson, 'Two Liberalisms', *European Journal of International Law*, 12:3 (2001), pp. 537–71.

behaviour in response.'[109] While such deliberations on the higher or lower legitimacy of regimes are certainly not out of bounds, the political consequences in international politics are apt to damage the very interests of democracies since they intensify conflicts between democracies and non-democracies on the allocation or denial of entitlements. The propagation of a liberal international law in recent years which allots more (interventionist) rights to democracies and the institutional reform proposals for a 'Concert of Democracies' as a new counter-part to an 'ineffective' UN Security Council are more than troubling developments, reinforcing the classification into first – and second-class regimes.[110]

The large bipartisan 'Princeton Project on National Security' pleads for such a 'Concert of Democracies' as the 'institutional embodiment and ratification of the "democratic peace"'.[111] In the same vein, Robert Kagan explicitly votes for such a 'Concert of Democracies' as a complement to the UN: 'If successful, it could help bestow legitimacy on actions that democratic nations deem necessary but autocratic nations refuse to countenance – as NATO conferred legitimacy on the intervention in Kosovo. In a world increasingly divided along democratic and autocratic lines, the world's democrats will have to stick together.'[112] Remarkably enough, the very same people who pretend to regret that the world is increasingly divided along the regime type line, contribute actively to constructing such a division and even reinforcing it. And once again, such ideas have travelled from academia into politics. For example, the Republican presidential candidate John McCain voiced the idea of a 'League of Democracies' in the last US presidential election campaign.[113]

So, where do these caveats leave us, if we do not want to discard a democratic distinctiveness research altogether? There is no easy way out of probing a democratic exceptionalism and at the same time having to avoid reinforcing a political dichotomy of regime types in world politics. We plead for introducing more self-criticism and self-reflexion into research and for refraining from constructing overly complacent images of 'our' own policies *vis-à-vis* other states. Special capacities of democracies to foster peace need to be contrasted with their equally tremendous capacities to use force. As has been shown above, democratic peace and democratic war are closer linked than is obvious at first glance; both pertain to the liberal legacy and in this sense render the way from Kant's Königsberg 'perpetual peace' to today's NATO-led 'War on Terror' in Kandahar a rather short one.

Not only with regard to the core of the democratic distinctiveness programme, decisions of war and peace, but also to all other security issue areas, we therefore

[109] Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The Preventive Use of Force: A Cosmopolitan Institutional Proposal', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 18:1 (2004), p. 19.

[110] See, for example, Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'A Duty to Prevent', *Foreign Affairs*, 83:1 (2004), pp. 136–50, and Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, 'Democracies of the World, Unite', *The American Interest* (January/February 2007). For a critique of a liberal international law see Christian Reus-Smit, 'Liberal hierarchy and the license to use force', in David Armstrong, Theo Farrell and Bice Maiguashca (eds), *Force and Legitimacy in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 71–92.

[111] G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law. US National Security in the 21. Century*, Final Paper of the Princeton Project on National Security (2006), p. 25.

[112] Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Knopf, 2008), p. 98.

[113] See the comprehensive account by Ian Clark, 'Democracy in International Society: Promotion or Exclusion' *Millennium*, 37:3 (2009), pp. 563–81.

suggest investigating the ambivalences, contradictions, paradoxes as well as the historical contextualisation of democratic principles, norms and institutions.[114] The theoretical framework which we deem most capable of underpinning such a 'reflexive' turn is provided by several strands of the critical theory tradition. To be sure, critical theory encompasses a diverse field of approaches such as, for example, Marxist, feminist, discursive or recognition-based writings,[115] which highlight quite different aspect of society, democracy and politics. But all of them provide theoretical tools to probe ambivalences, paradoxes and contingencies of democratic politics and problematise the insoluble nexus between knowledge production and power, thereby promoting reflexivity of scholarship. Such a theoretical framework can be transferred to democracy-centred security studies and in the long run contribute to developing a *critical theory of democratic peace*.[116]

This, of course, is not to say that critical theory should replace any of the other existing approaches in Democratic Peace, Kantian peace or democratic war studies, or that it is methodologically possible to connect with each and any of the other approaches. The body of literature that makes up the democratic turn in peace and conflict studies stretches across a pluralist and diverse field of topics, methods and theoretical approaches. A critical theory of democratic peace would not reach out to positivist, large n-studies, but it could add to a more balanced picture of democracies' record in security-related issues and caution against overly optimistic concepts of civilianising global politics. Pleading for the inclusion of critical theory does not suggest a specific normative position on the ambivalence of liberal norms or on policy recommendations but calls on the individual researcher to make his or her normative assumptions explicit and reflect the consequences of this research for policy issues. The bulk of (positivist) Democratic Peace research often contains implicit normative assumptions while claiming to remain 'neutral' about normative considerations.[117] This renders research especially vulnerable to political instrumentalisation.

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[114] Cf. the research programme on 'Antinomies of Democratic Peace' of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF); Müller, 'Antinomy of Democratic Peace'.

[115] See, for example, Craig Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) and Richard Devetak, 'Critical Theory', in Scott Burchill et al. (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, third edition), pp. 137–60.

[116] For some preliminary reflections on the inclusion of critical theory into the study of Democratic Peace see Anna Geis, 'Spotting the "Enemy"? Democracies and the Challenge of the "Other"', in Anna Geis, Lothar Brock and Harald Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 142–69; Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig, '"Security Studies" Cinderella?', in Matthew Evangelista, Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig (eds), *Democracy and Security* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 189. For an instructive elaboration on that topic see Christopher Hobson, 'Towards a Critical Theory of Democratic Peace', forthcoming in *Review of International Studies*.

[117] Steele, 'Liberal-Idealism', and Hobson, 'Towards a Critical Theory of Democratic Peace'. See for this issue within a wider framework of 'positive' liberal theories Christian Reus Smit, 'The Strange Death of Liberal International Theory', in *European Journal of International Law*, 12:3 (2001), pp. 573–93.