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### **Dyadic Democratic Peace Strikes Back**

Reconstructing the Social Constructivist Approach After the Monadic Renaissance

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#### Abstract:

*In recent years, a formerly rather isolated strand of democratic peace theory has experienced an impressive renaissance: the monadic idea of a general, albeit only relative, peacefulness of democracy. This is, firstly, due to new statistical support indicating that democracies are slightly, but significantly less involved in war than others, and that they initiate wars less frequently than non-democratic states. Secondly, even the most sophisticated dyadic explanations suffer from serious flaws. However, the (re-)turn to monadic explanations is neither necessary nor convincing. After all, the “dual finding” – that democracies though not fighting each other are in war with non-democracies in many cases and initiate such wars from time to time – remains valid. And the main weakness characterising existing dyadic approaches can be attributed precisely to an unsolved tension between monadic premises and dyadic reasoning. We propose a genuine dyadic perspective that regards democratic features as fundamentally ambivalent and particularly contingent on the question of whether the interacting unit is another democracy or not. In relations with non-democracies, the normative imperative on war and peace deriving from liberal thought appears to be bifurcated between a “militant” and a “pacifist” view. Thus, the inter-democratic peace, the reality of “democratic wars” and the vast differences in external conduct dividing the community of democratic states can be explained.*

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

More than thirty years after the rediscovery of the theory of democratic peace in Germany (Czempiel 1972) and more than twenty years after its revival in the United States (Doyle 1983a; 1983b), democratic peace still looks like an empirical finding without a convincing theoretical explanation. Majority opinion has it that democracies are more peaceful *towards each other* than any other type of state dyad, but that democracies are as warlike as anybody else *in general*; this dual finding is called “the separate peace”. An increasing number of voices also claim that democracies show some propensity to behave more peacefully in general than other polities: They are slightly less involved in war, initiate wars and militarised disputes less frequently than non-democratic states, and tend more frequently to seek negotiated resolutions (Benoit 1994; Ray 2000; Russett and Oneal 2001; Huth and Allee 2002; MacMillan 2003; Hasenclever 2003). While this claim is still disputed, the claimants themselves would concede that the statistical prove of these monadic findings is weaker than the one relating to inter-democratic peace. Democracies are fighting wars against non-democracies, and initiate such wars and other militarised conflicts with them from time to time.

There is no poverty of attempts to theorise and to explain. But most of the effort over the last ten years was focussed on hypothesis-testing within one of the established explanatory approaches. A coherent theory, in contrast, is lacking. Statistical tests do not look into *causal mechanisms*. They establish correlations that can plausibly be interpreted as causation. But they do not follow the cause-effect chain that leads from the independent variable (democracy) to the dependent variable (external (non)violent behaviour).<sup>2</sup> Such detailed causal propositions are pursued in theoretical essays (e.g. Owen 1997; Doyle 1997) and in case studies (e.g. Owen 1997; MacMillan 1998).

This article is located in the tradition of critiquing current theoretical explanations (Müller 2002a; MacMillan 2003; Rosato 2003). We start by discussing the problems of a probabilistic theory, the class to which most attempts at explaining democratic peace belong. We then propose a typology of existing explanatory approaches, distinguishing between monadic/preference based, monadic/institutionalist, dyadic/preference based and dyadic/institutionalist explanations. Monadic/preference based explanations are found either to be indeterminate given modern military technology (the utilitarian arguments about the risks and costs of war) or to lack sufficient power to explain empirical findings (the normative arguments about democratic values).

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<sup>2</sup> On the notion of causality used here cf. Dessler 1991.

Monadic/institutionalist arguments implicitly rely on assumptions about preferences and fall thus victim to the same sort of criticism. Dyadic/preference based arguments – notably the constructivist version – have difficulties to explain why, on the basis of the assumed preferences, democracies should not behave much more peacefully towards non-democracies than they actually do; and dyadic/institutionalist arguments – prominently the rationalist commitment/audience cost and the deterrence based explanations – face problems with both coherence and compatibility with the data.

Following this critique, we develop an explanatory approach which avoids the problems of internal incoherence, accounts for the main empirical findings, and contains also a reasoning why these findings do point not to a deterministic, but a probabilistic type of causation; this deals in one stroke with the – mostly neglected – fact that democracies behave not alike, but show a wide variance in their readiness to use force. This approach – which is dyadic/preference based and draws on social constructivist arguments – combines the notion of a specific democratic structuration of war/peace decisions with an exploration of the antinomies of liberal theory (Müller 2002a and 2004b). Our main argument is that democratic features are fundamentally ambivalent and particularly contingent on the question of whether the interacting unit is another democracy or not. Generally, the normative imperative on war and peace deriving from liberal thought appears to be bifurcated between a “militant” and a “pacifist” view. While the former deems it justified to use force to bring liberation, law and rights to suppressed fellow human being, the latter rejects the taking of innocent life as violating the natural, inalienable rights of humans. This fundamental ambiguity of liberal norms only dissolves in democratic dyads.

## **2. Probabilistic versus Deterministic Explanations**

Findings on democratic peace are generally probabilistic. This is not without problems. First, the probabilistic character of these theories is not at all derived theoretically, but inductively: The hypotheses are given in a deterministic form, because the considerations on causation formulate a (supposed) fixed cause/effect relationship. The empirical statistics, however, confirm the hypotheses only in a probabilistic way. Amazingly enough, this does not lead to a thorough reconsideration of the causal paths in order to identify the circumstances that prevent the deterministic assumption from its full realisation. Researchers are happy to report the statistics, without reformulating their hypotheses accordingly.<sup>3</sup> But the single case is never probabilistic.

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<sup>3</sup> A prominent example in case is the research conducted by Bruce Russett and colleagues. In the light of changing statistical results basically the same hypotheses are employed to explain, on the one hand, a separate inter-democratic peace with democracies generally being as warlike as non-democracies (cf. Maoz and Russett 1993) or, on the other

Countries do not initiate a 75% military dispute, and they do not go to war with 81%. They either initiate or go, or they don't. If we find probabilistic answers to deterministic questions, two questions must be answered:

- How it can democracies decide for *and* against military dispute initiation or war participation, what intrinsic capabilities or attributes enable them to chose one or the other option, though with different relative frequency?
- What are the conditions under which one or the other is chosen?

Second, probabilistic formulations lacking theorising have a propensity at self-immunisation. Counterexamples can be disposed of with the argument of “anecdotal evidence”. This, however, is unconvincing. If the theory has any validity (and is of any interest) it should stand the scrutiny of “salient cases” as well as recent evidence. Salient cases, in our understanding, are those major events involving the use of military force that have a decisive impact on the course of history. They concern the big powers that have a strong influence on international politics. If we produce theories that claim explanatory power for the trivial and are void on the big issues we should not be surprised that people with common sense show little interest in our products.

Anyway, what has been said above applies with full power: It would be necessary to explain, case by case, such “anecdotal” failures in order to regain confidence that the respective probabilistic theory has anything to contribute to our understanding of the relation of democracy and war. For these reasons, the fact that a theory is formulated as inductively probabilistic is not good enough to refute counter-arguments built on cases, if these cases are sufficiently weighty and salient. As far as statistical results are employed to reconstruct the incentives of actors, deviant salient cases are even more disruptive for probabilistic theories. If we want to explain, e.g., the behaviour of political (or, for that matter, democratic) leaders since 1815 it is simply not viable to base their supposedly rational calculations as if they were informed about sophisticated statistical analyses conducted at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Exactly this happens when the high probability that democracies win their wars motivates their potential adversaries to refrain from entering hostilities.<sup>4</sup> The fallacy is twofold; first, the methodology of these studies excludes path-dependency and treats every single data point as equivalent, that is as independent from chronologically earlier events. This methodology, though, prohibits using the lessons from past events as reasons for action in present

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hand, a general peacefulness of democracy reaching beyond the separate peace (Russett and Oneal 2001; compare on this critique Henderson 2002, 14). This “flexibility” to rather arbitrarily adapt explanatory hypotheses to diverse statistical results appears quite characteristic for recent research on the democratic peace.

decisions, as this would mean to renounce the assumption of equivalent data points. Second, simple logic interferes: the later insights cannot have well motivated decisions taken before these insights were available.<sup>5</sup> The causal model apparently tested in these studies is methodologically flawed and logically untenable.

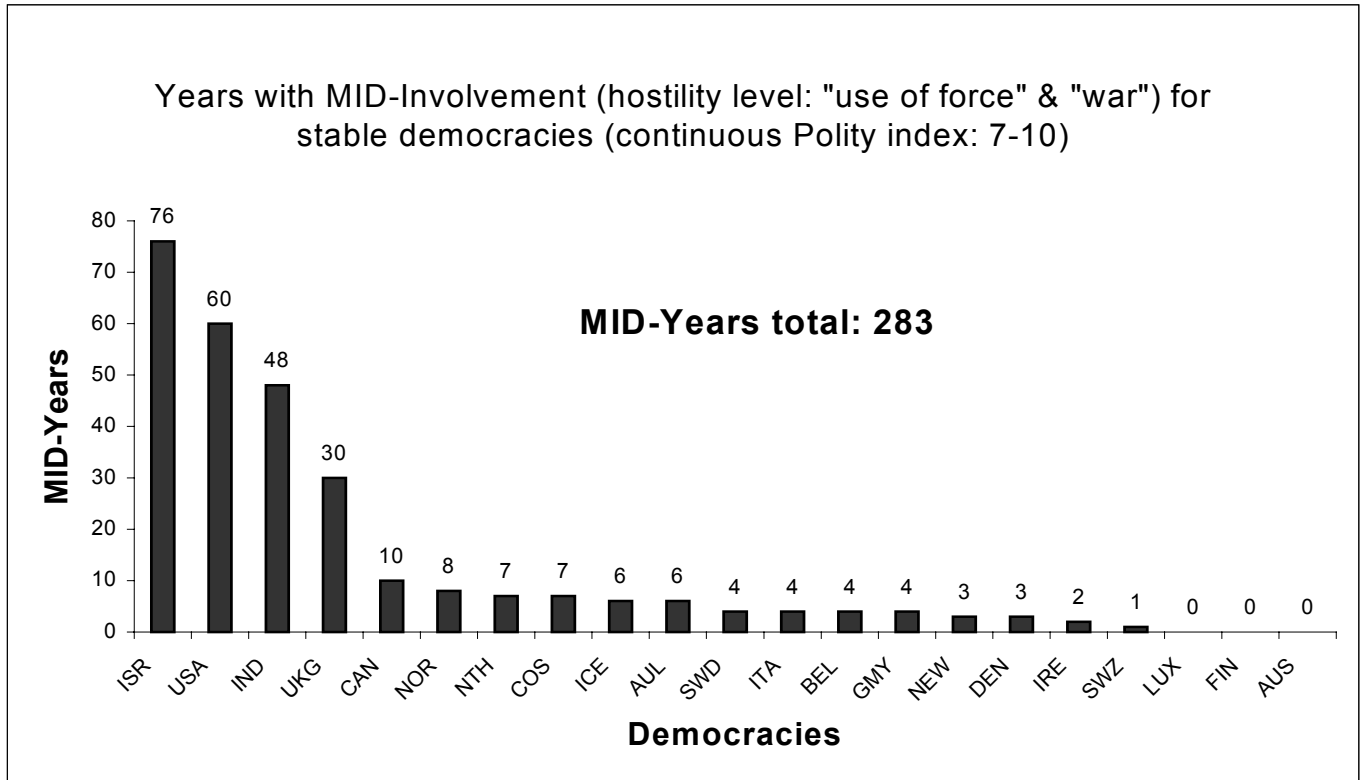
It is far more convincing to suppose that political leaders' calculations are decisively shaped by the knowledge about salient cases available to them in their time. Studies on psychology and learning in international politics have indeed pointed to the important role of salient experiences for shaping the perception of options and the shaping of decisions (Jervis 1976; Breslauer and Tetlock 1991). For this reason, even for today's world it seems inappropriate to assume that a political leader would rely entirely on probabilistic results if most of those salient cases that have determined the history of the respective country belong to the broad range of exceptions that prove the rule.

Thirdly, and most importantly from our perspective, probabilistic approaches conceal the vast variance in the behaviour of democracies towards peace, war and militarised disputes (Table 1). The statement "democracies are peaceful to each other and bellicose in general" is an aggregate statement on the behaviour of democratic states. This apparent average is an academic artefact and hides the fact that some democracies are almost continuously involved in military action which they frequently initiate, while others are apparently at eternal peace. A third group is somewhere in between (Chojnacki 2003). Rather than explanations for an assumed average behaviour of democracies, we to account for these differences among democratic states (Müller 2004b).

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding this example, if empiricists' jury is still out on the relationship between democracy and victory (see only Desch 2002) no future statistical study (no matter how clear-cut its results) can ever help to understand previously taken political peace/war decisions as influenced by democracies' better fighting statistics.

<sup>5</sup> A revealing example is Chiozza and Goemans 2003. The authors offer the "first [sic!] empirical test" (ibid., 444) of the reciprocal relationship between the probability of losing office and international conflict. Contrary to the familiar diversionary war argument they find "that as the risk of crisis increases, a leader's probability of losing office also increases" (ibid., 461). This new empirical insight is then employed to help understand democratic leaders' behaviour between 1919 and 1992.

**Table 1: Militarised Interstate Disputes Involving Stable Democracies 1950-2001**

In this article, then, we endeavour to find a theoretical explanation for three empirical phenomena: (a) that democracies don't fight each other but make war against other parties, (b) that democracies on average might be slightly, but not strongly, less warlike than other states, (c) that there is a vast variance among democracies concerning the involvement in wars and militarised disputes.

### 3. Competing Explanations: Typology and Critique of Democratic Peace Theories

A typology of attempts at theorising the "democratic peace" can be construed along two different axes. The first one distinguishes between the two levels of analysis, unit and interaction. Unit explanations have been labelled "monadic" in the literature. They use the general form "the attribute a compels actor d to perform behaviour p", that is: certain characteristics cause peaceful behaviour of democracies towards all other actors in the international system. Dyadic explanations have the general form "the attribute a compels actor d to perform behaviour d, provided the target t shares the attribute a". Here, the external behaviour of democracies is not intrinsically determined. Democracies possess peacefulness as well as the use of force in their policy repertoire. Which of these options is realised depends on the type of interaction partner the democracy meets.

Both monadic and dyadic causal claims concerning the path between democracy and a specific attitude towards the external application of military force emphasise characteristics at the *unit level* as the *necessary* condition of this behaviour. But only for monadic approaches are these necessary conditions *sufficient* as well. For dyadic accounts, they work only if the antecedent condition of a democratic partner is met. This more complex argumentation, as we shall see, proves treacherous for some of these explanations. For it is not always easy to give a coherent argument why the necessary conditions resting in democratic characteristics are not sufficient, that is, do not result in peaceful behaviour *erga omnes* rather than towards democracies only.

The second axis informs about the central attribute that causes the behaviour. Here we can distinguish between those explanations that focus on specific *preferences* by democratic polities (that is, supposed majority preferences) and those that focus on the specific features of democratic *institutions*. Subcategories of the preferences that are made responsible for democratic peacefulness are a) preferences built on utilitarian considerations (the avoidance of the risks and costs of war) and b) normative considerations (the appreciation of human rights, human dignity, and/or non-violent conflict solution).

In explanations derived from preferences, democratic institutions are a necessary condition for peacefulness, but they play only a role as transmission belt for these preferences and have no causal force in their own right. In purely institutionalist explanations, in contrast, preferences do not distinguish actors in democracies from those in non-democracies. But the institutional features (elections, transparency, open debate) enable democracies to convey information about commitment and/or reliability as to prevent them from challenging other states, to dissuade others from challenging democracies, to force democracies into backing down or to induce their challengers to give in. The occurrence of war and militarised disputes is thus reduced generally (in monadic accounts), or if these institutional features are shared (in dyadic accounts).

When combining both axes, we end up with a table of four boxes (see Table 2). To be sure, there are rather few explanatory accounts for the democratic peace phenomena that perfectly fit these categories. Dyadically arguing approaches all too often rely on (if implicit) monadic premises as monadic explanations regularly refer to interactionist arguments. Officially institutionalist theories at times appear to be based on substantial assumptions regarding specific preferences. In particular, theoretical approaches (especially, the traditional “cultural” and “structural” explanations) have been employed to account at the same time for both, an assumed general peace-proneness of democracies and the “separate peace” that takes war-like democracies for granted. Yet, we regard it

as crucial to differentiate clearly. Hence, in what follows we will arrange the different arguments put forward according to our typology to see if explanations can be constructed that are both internally coherent and empirically consistent. .

**Table 2: A Typology of Causation Hypotheses in Democratic Peace Theory**

	Preference-orientated	Institutions-orientated
Monadic	Kant Czempiel Rummel (MacMillan)	Schultz (Huth and Allee in parts)
Dyadic	Risse-Kappen Kahl Owen Doyle	Lipson (Huth and Allee in parts) Bueno de Mesquita et al. Gelpi and Griesdorf

The *monadic/preference based explanation* (3.1.) rests on the Kantian proposition that citizens will have “great hesitation” when they decide on war; it has been elaborated in the work of Ernst-Otto Czempiel. Additional (and, in parts, alternative) arguments put forward by R.J. Rummel and John MacMillan will be included. Finally, there are those elements of the so-called “cultural” (or normative) explanation that – although often presented as dyadic – are in fact monadic (cf. Rousseau et al. 1996, 514). The *dyadic/preference based explanation* (3.2.) is essentially provided by social constructivist approaches (Risse-Kappen, Kahl, Owen). It is rooted in the normative explanation proposed by Michael Doyle. By emphasising the complex and time-consuming nature of the democratic process, the so-called “structural” explanations constitute the basis for an institutionalist approach. Whereas this traditional notion, however, fails to clearly separate democratic from non-democratic features (which can be slow and cumbersome as well, Peceny and Butler 2004), it is audience cost theory that solves this problem. One strand of audience cost based theorising (e.g., Schultz 2001) provides the framework for a *monadic/institutionalist explanation* of the democratic peace (3.3.). Yet another strand has to be regarded as dyadic (e.g., Lipson 2003). Much primarily empirical-oriented rationalist work under the audience cost heading (e.g., Huth and Allee 2002) supplies arguments to both, monadic and dyadic, approaches. With respect to the *dyadic/institutionalist explanation* (3.4.), however, a second rationalist approach has to be distinguished from audience cost-based explanations. Whereas Lipson deduces the separate peace from democracies’ unique “contracting advantages” (3.4.1.), Bueno de Mesquita et al. emphasise democracies’ unique capability for deterrence (3.4.2.).



### 3.1. The Monadic/Preference Based Explanation

#### 3.1.1. The utilitarian argument

The monadic/preference based explanation traces the peace-proneness of democracies back to the individual citizen.<sup>6</sup> It starts from the utilitarian argument, as proposed in Immanuel Kant's work on the "Perpetual Peace" (Kant 1795/2003). The rational citizen in liberal capitalist societies is generally peace prone because war endangers not only his life (as combatant or civilian victim), but is economically expensive as well. If the political system allows for the translation of this preference into foreign policy (like democracy does), the respective state will refrain from violent behaviour (Czempiel 1996, 80) or, at least, will prove "*least prone* to international violence and war" (Rummel 1983, 28). The causal chain, thus, leads from the rational calculus of the average citizen to a (relative) peaceful democracy provided that, firstly, war entails more costs than gains and, secondly, public majorities translate into political decisions.

This first premise, however, is not self-evident: The assumption that a rationalist calculus will regularly be war-averse cannot be justified *a priori*. Hence the relative and probabilistic version seems much more appropriate.<sup>7</sup> From a utilitarian perspective, all types of political regime will lead wars that are worthwhile. Yet, whereas non-democratic regimes rely on smaller support groups (cf. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999), democracy constitutes the necessity for conducting *general* cost-benefit-calculations to convince a majority of the population that net utility will be positive. Thus, non-democratic regimes will wage wars with a negative total cost-value ratio as long as the (smaller) winning coalition profits. Correspondingly, a democratic regime will be less war-prone than a non-democratic regime.<sup>8</sup>

Even this qualified utilitarian approach, however, fails to account for a central empirical phenomenon: "that democracies differentiate between kinds of governments in their use of force"

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<sup>6</sup> The general ideas can be found in Czempiel 1972; 1981; 1986; and Rummel 1979; 1983. The following reconstruction refers particularly to Czempiel's 1996 article "Kants Theorem" (Czempiel 1996); for a publication in English see Czempiel 1995. All translations of German quotations are the authors' own; unless otherwise stated, emphases in quotations are in the original.

<sup>7</sup> This probabilistic claim seems, by the way, to be more in line with Kant's reasoning as well. Kant made it perfectly clear that the citizens would only "have great hesitation" in taking upon themselves all the costs of war. Compare the comment of Hajo Schmidt to Czempiel's article (Schmidt 1996, 106). Rummel even adds a second qualification to democracy's peacefulness: the possibility that "an emotional and patriotically aroused people can itself be a force for war" (Rummel 1983, 28). This, however, does not cancel the basic principle as "Even then the public cannot be trusted to pay the price of foreign violence for long and may turn on those responsible even in the midst of war." (Ibid.)

<sup>8</sup> This *ceteris paribus* clause, however, implies that today's really existing democracies can prove even more war-prone than their non-democratic counterparts. Western democracies today march at the top of the "Revolution in Military Affairs", the United States in particular (Müller and Schörmig 2002; Minkwitz 2003). The effects of this "Revolution" is to shorten war and to reduce casualties to a historically unprecedented low. The conditions under which citizens might opt for, rather than against, war are thus currently met. Precisely for today's democracies dominating international

(Kegley and Hermann 2002, 17), employing it against non-democracies while refusing to go to war against much weaker democracies (Doyle 1997, 282; Risse-Kappen 1995, 497). There is no logical possibility to account for democratic wars and interventions (cf. Pickering 2002) within the monadic/utilitarian explanation. Rummel attempts to solve this problem by blaming non-democracies for distorting democracies' peace-prone preferences: "Libertarian states *are* involved in warfare, military intervention, and other kinds of international violence. This is usually reactive violence, a response to perceived aggression from nonlibertarian states or movements." (Rummel 1979, 292) This explanation clashes with the use of force by democracies against small states (Czempiel 1996, 82; Doyle 1986, 1157) and during "imperial" or "colonial" wars (Rosato 2003, 588-9). Czempiel identifies the democratic deficits of democracies as the reason for their persisting use of force. This, however, leads to further contradictions. It remains unclear why these quasi-democratic wars should be directed only against non-democracies.<sup>9</sup> The most robust empirical finding, the separate inter-democratic peace, remains unexplained if liberal states are just "collectivised monarchies" (Czempiel 1996, 86). According to Czempiel, democracies are only complete, and thus peaceful, if there is an adequately informed middle-class society, no distortion emerges from special interest groups, and the burdens stemming from political decisions are equally distributed (ibid., 89-90); the Kantian theorem is suspended once the congruence between decision-making and exposure to war is weakened (ibid., 92-93). These are daunting conditions; it is hard to see how they could be perfectly met in a real-life democracy, as focussed, well-organised interests enjoy a distinct advantage over widespread, but diffuse interests (Downs 1956), and the right to associate among bearers of alike interests is an indispensable element of democracy.

### 3.1.2. The cultural argument

There exists an alternative to the utilitarian version of the monadic/preference based explanation, the "cultural" or normative explanation (cf. Maoz and Russett 1993; Oneal and Russett 2001, 53 ff.). Democracies (democratically socialised citizens and leaders) are used to and prefer to solve their conflicts in peaceful and consensus-oriented ways. In democratic societies prevails a "*democratic norm of bounded competition*" (Dixon and Senese 2002, 548) with an emphasis on

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society, rational cost-benefit-calculations alone lead to war more easily than ever and, supposedly, more easily than for non-democracies.

<sup>9</sup> Czempiel tries to meet this problem by employing another – yet independently operating – Kantian factor (Czempiel 1996, 98): the "pacific union". As democracies tend to co-operate, to organise themselves, and to enlarge (peacefully!) the zone of democracies they abolish the security dilemma between them (ibid., 95). In contrast, democracies' interdependence and co-operation vis-à-vis small non-democracies is relatively marginal (ibid., 79). Hence, the combination of low national democraticness and little international connectedness allows for the democratic wars against non-democracies. However, interdependence and co-operation obviously are not exclusively connected with democratic features (even if democracies are thought to be especially likely to co-operate), and the assumption that wars are fought primarily between remote and independent states is unconvincing (Czempiel himself mentions the example of the US use of force against Panama).

mediation, negotiation, and compromise. The normative assumption maintains that states externalise those “liberal norms of non-violent and compromise-oriented resolution of conflict” (Risse-Kappen 1995, 501).

Democratic norms apply to *all* citizens – even criminals shall be treated in accordance with the rule of law. Therefore, the normative explanation shall account for democracies’ foreign conduct *in general*. In this sense, John MacMillan has argued against the separate peace theorists that the effectiveness of liberal norms, and hence liberal states’ peace-proneness, is not confined to inter-democratic relations.<sup>10</sup> MacMillan’s monadic framework opens two possible roads to democracies’ use of force. Firstly, by distinguishing between *liberalism* and the *liberal state*, the latter’s inherent pluralism enables “other political perspectives” to succeed in the competition “for influence upon foreign policy” (MacMillan 1996, 295). Secondly, there are “circumstances in which liberalism may commission rather than constrain the use of force, such as in halting mass violations of human rights” (MacMillan 2003, 241; cf. MacMillan 2004).

The first account can explain a general (if probabilistic and relative) peacefulness of democracies. If liberalism has a general war-constraining effect, dependent on the relative domestic strength of liberal norms and/or groups, war remains possible (if non-liberals are elected) but will be less frequent in democratic than in non-democratic states. Yet, two important problems emerge. On the one hand, if liberal norms are embraced only by liberal groups while non-liberals can achieve majorities, the normative approach encounters the same problem as the utilitarian: that democracies go to war *only against non-democracies* remains unexplained. Constructivists argue that it is the liberal public that prevents illiberal leaders from fighting other democracies, waking up from their usual indifference toward foreign affairs when the spectre of war is rising, and abhorring the idea of slaughtering the citizens of fellow liberal democracies (Owen 1994, 100-1). But it remains unclear why the same aversion should not be effective if the prospective victims are the hapless inhabitants of a dictatorship, or why the threat of war should be less effective in eliminating the public’s foreign policy apathy if the potential enemy is not a democracy. Secondly, if liberal norms are understood in a basic liberal-democratic sense (as MacMillan does as well, see MacMillan 2004, 180) it should be assumed, at least for mature liberal democracies, that most “other political perspectives” relevant in domestic politics share those essential basics (cf. Doyle 1983a, 207) – whether they may be

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<sup>10</sup> See MacMillan (1996; 2003; 2004). MacMillan explicitly discusses liberal, and not democratic, norms. For our purposes, this distinction is not significant as we use democracy in the specific liberal-democratic sense that dominates not only the debate on the democratic peace (cf. Doyle 1983a, 205 ff.).

called conservatives, socialists, social-democrats or greens.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, if conservative parties embrace the constitution of their democracy and are ready to defend it, they accept and promote the very liberal values on which the normative argument for democratic peace is built. MacMillan's use of the term "liberalism" consistently changes between the theoretical meaning – that is, liberal theory which all mainstream parties in a democracy share – and the political meaning – that is, liberalism in the sense of party politics. For the theorising about democratic peace, however, only the theoretical level is relevant, and the political one is only confusing the issues.

This said, the burden to explain the use of force as employed by mature liberal democracies lies entirely on MacMillan's second account. If or certain reasons for war were compatible with liberalism and if this compatibility was, *inter alia*, dependent on the non-democratic nature of the state to be attacked, then the problem would be solved. But then, we stand outside the monadic realm. If liberal norms generally can "commission" as well as "constrain" the use of force, they are fundamentally ambivalent and no clear-cut causal mechanism can be constructed that connects liberalism (or, for our matter, democracy) and peace on the unit level. MacMillan's example for a possible reason for liberal war ("mass violations of human rights") points to the fact that the dissolution of this ambivalence is dependent on the state to be attacked and, thus, on the specific dyad.<sup>12</sup> The attempt to solve the logical inconsistencies and empirical incompatibilities of the monadic/preference based explanation, thus, points directly to the dyadic level of analysis.

### 3.2. The Dyadic/Preference Based Explanation

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<sup>11</sup> For it cannot be understood why a fundamentally liberal electorate would not vote those that persistently contradict their basic values out of office promptly, and why the selection process of democratic politics over time would not eliminate these "illiberal" political forces from political competition. Otherwise it should be questioned if a "liberal state" that is ruled by "non-liberal groups" that clearly violate the most basic "liberal norms" against the minority opposition of some remaining "liberal groups" can be called a "liberal state". The literature on democratic consolidation, at least, has emphasised the importance for stable democracy that all relevant political actors share the same basic "rules of the game" – and the rules guiding the use of force should clearly belong to those basics.

<sup>12</sup> MacMillan (2003, 239) mentions "a whole series of moral and practical dilemmas" that non-liberal regimes present to liberals. While these dilemmas certainly do "not of itself sanction the use of force" (ibid.), they at least pave the way to a liberal legitimisation of war. MacMillan's reference to John Rawls' "just war" (MacMillan 1996, 288) further exemplifies his implicit argument in favour of a dyadic approach because a "just war" can by definition be directed against non-democracies only. Thus, while he convincingly points "to a sense of normative restraint extending beyond the 'democratic peace' and which is constitutive in nature" (ibid., 288), this restraint can operate in pretty diverse ways: in joint democratic dyads as compared to mixed dyads, and in different democracies regarding interactions with different non-democracies. Correspondingly, MacMillan explicitly rejects the notion of a general liberal peace-proneness: "...[L]iberalism is not generally or universally peace-prone and may legitimate and in certain circumstances even commission the use of force by states." (MacMillan 2004, 180) Nevertheless, he defends a monadic perspective by rather arbitrarily hypothesising that "Liberals will have a higher threshold for the use of force than other actors on the mainstream spectrum", a proposition from which precisely all those instances are exempted that may falsify the hypothesis: "(with the possible exception of those instances when liberal norms may commission the use of force such as collective security operation or responses to mass human rights violations)" (ibid., 187).

The only comprehensive dyadic/preference based explanations to date are built on of social constructivism. Thomas Risse-Kappen (1994a/b, 1995) argued that democracies transfer their internal model of conflict solution – peaceful compromise and negotiations – to international politics. Watching other democracies, they infer the same preference on the other side by comparing practice and structure. As Risse-Kappen (1995, 503-4) puts it, “the validity claims of peacefulness are substantiated by one’s own domestic structure”. Colin Kahl (1999) and also John Owen (1997) argue along similar lines, but instead of emphasising the procedural characteristics of democracy, they focus on the substantive liberal ideas: The priority to the individual, the equal endowment of all individuals with reason, that is, the claim of universal equality among men. Yet, the basic mechanism works as described by Risse-Kappen (1995, 503 ff.): The mutual perception as democracies paves the way for (and is then itself reinforced by) co-operative interaction across a broad range of fields; co-operation is facilitated since democracies, having no fear of aggression from each other, suspend the precautions that international anarchy imposes otherwise on co-operative endeavours between states. Over time, democracies develop security communities, dense networks of co-operation and integration where mutual trust reigns and the security dilemma is perpetually absent (cf. Doyle 1983a, 230; Cederman 2001).

The same cannot happen with non-democracies. Since those are perceived as not being peaceful at home, peaceful intention is not validated, and they must be suspected to be potentially aggressive. Autocracies deny their subjects their natural rights, and reason cannot work through their institutions which makes them “unreasonable, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous” (Owen 1997, 124; cf. Kahl 1999, 109-113). As Kahl and Risse-Kappen apply social identity theory: in-group/out-group dynamics exacerbate this distinction between different types of states; while positive identities are shaped, confirmed and reinforced in a benign cycle among democracies, negative identities between democracies and non-democracies develop in a vicious cycle (Kahl 1999, 127; cf. Risse-Kappen 1995, 506-7).<sup>13</sup> The security dilemma is in full swing in mixed dyads, impeding co-operation through the concern with cheating and relative gains. This dilemma situation opens the door for wars between democracies and non-democracies despite defensive intentions.

However, to account for the war-proneness of democracies entirely by the security dilemma is unconvincing. The security dilemma is a structural dynamic that can be mitigated by a variety of instruments and need not end in war at all. Democracies’ preference for externalising their non-violent mode of conflict management – as the social constructivist explanation emphasises – must

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<sup>13</sup> Or, as Michael Doyle put it: “In short, fellow liberals benefit from a presumption of amity; nonliberal suffer from a presumption of enmity; each, however, may also be self-confirming.” (Doyle 1986, 1161)

apply to their relations with non-democracies as well. That this is not easy given the many uncertainties in anarchy is true. But difficult is not impossible.<sup>14</sup> The security dilemma argument is thus theoretically insufficient to explain why democracies should initiate war against autocracies.<sup>15</sup> Correspondingly, the evidence seems to support this criticism. Military interventions and wars fought by democracies in the last two decades have rarely if ever been driven by the dilemma (Czempiel 1996, 82).<sup>16</sup> The British Falkland war, or the US interventions in Grenada or Panama lacked any regard to security in the realist security dilemma sense. The Gulf War in 1991 restored an occupied country and represented wider geo-economic interests. The interventions in Somalia, Haiti (where fighting was avoided by good luck), Bosnia, and Kosovo were initiated for “humanitarian” reasons. Afghanistan was a case of self-defence in a new understanding recognized by the Security Council. The Iraq war 2003 was allegedly fought for preventing the development of weapons of mass destruction by a rogue government – a possible security-dilemma case. However, the plan developed by UNMOVIC to answer the open questions on these weapons in spring 2003 would have required only a few months of additional work (Blix 2004). Moreover, revelations about last-minute offers by Iraq imply that the government in Washington had the opportunity to deal with this aspect of the matter by means short of war (Risen 2003).<sup>17</sup> And generally, the security dilemma is a rather infrequent cause of international war (Reiter 1995, see 3.3.).

Owen and Kahl avoid this problem by pointing to the ambivalence of the liberal heritage<sup>18</sup>: the possibility that indignation about the suppression of humans elsewhere, the denial of basic human rights and the imposition of an alien will on reason-endowed subjects might motivate the use of force to change the regime in the non-democratic target country. From the same value orientation that explains inter-liberal peacefulness, they argue, derives a drive to force liberal democracy on

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<sup>14</sup> Risse-Kappen himself points to the difficulties to establish workable arms control during the Cold War; it was difficult, but it succeeded time and again, and helped in the end to overcome the security dilemma for good even before the Soviet Union would become a democracy by Western standards (Risse-Kappen 1988).

<sup>15</sup> This assumption is unconvincing on theoretical as well as empirical grounds. On the one hand, “Democratic norms are compatible with a strategy of reciprocity in bargaining, and such a strategy does not encourage exploitation; it allows states to prepare adequately to defend their interests and to respond with force if attacked.” (Rousseau et al. 1996, 515; compare Huth 1996, 63-4). On the other hand, “the evidence that liberals utilize force pre-emptively [...] remains thin.” (MacMillan 1996, 290; compare Rousseau et al. 1996, 527) “If democratic leaders do not believe they are exploitable, the rationale for becoming more coercive and intransigent when facing an autocratic opponent breaks down.” (Ibid., 515)

<sup>16</sup> Then, however, the solution of the security dilemma between democracies can hardly serve as the central mechanism establishing the inter-democratic peace: If several “democratic wars” against non-democracies are evidently not caused by the security dilemma, its absence cannot be enough to prevent wars in democratic dyads, either.

<sup>17</sup> Generally, the security dilemma alone, while an important condition of international conduct, has seldom sufficed to drive countries into war. Even for World War I that is often quoted as the prime example for such an unwanted escalation, alternative interpretations point to cultural factors or political objectives that drove countries towards war quite apart from the security dilemma (Snyder 1991; van Evera 1984).

<sup>18</sup> As Michael Doyle did already in his first article that opened the American democratic peace debate (Doyle 1983a, 206; cf. Doyle 1986, 1160). Doyle’s argument will be taken up in our own reconstruction of a social constructivist explanation (see 4.).

non-democratic systems (Owen 1997, 117; Kahl 1999, 112; cf. Peceny 1997, 417).<sup>19</sup> Hence, their explanation of democratic war fighting against non-democracies is not related solely to the security dilemma, but to the defence and imposition of democratic values as well. Their straight conclusion, however, that this ambivalence will lead to such behaviour is a non sequitur. As the security dilemma must not be dealt with by force but can be tackled by non-violent means, the *desire* to improve the situation of fellow humans elsewhere does imply nothing about the *instruments* for achieving that objective. Democratic preferences for non-violent conflict solution (Risse-Kappen) or for protecting and saving the lives of the possible victims of war (Owen and Kahl) should stand in the way of using force for this purpose.

The central problem with the social constructivist approach is an unsolved tension between the (implicit) monadic premises and their dyadic transformation. At the unit-level democracies are generally assumed to be prone to peace, but when interacting with non-democracies they are forced, or at least induced, to adopt non-democratic measures. The threat posed by non-democracies not addicted to democratic modes of peaceful conflict resolution, as stated by the security dilemma argument, could theoretically solve this tension.<sup>20</sup> However, as demonstrated above, it obviously clashes with the reality of “democratic wars”. Admitting this, Owen and Kahl point to the inherent ambivalence of liberal ideas. By doing so, they replace the problem of empirical incompatibility with one of logical incoherence: If their monadic premises hold – democracies are seen to be “by definition [...] pacific and trustworthy” (Owen 1994, 89), and liberals “see coercion and violence as unnecessary for, and corrosive to, political order” (Kahl 1999, 111) – there is much reason for peaceful democracy promotion around the world, but the use of force should be ruled out as a legitimate means of democratic foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> This said, it comes as no surprise that the argument of non-democratic threat reappears through the back-door in both Owen’s and Kahl’s approaches.<sup>22</sup> A third solution to the problem – suggested by Risse-Kappen – would be to remove the (implicit) monadic premises by characterising both autocracies’ aggressiveness and democracies’ peacefulness “not [...] as a quasi-objective finding, but as a *perception* by democratic systems”

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<sup>19</sup> Owen qualifies this hypothesis of a “democratic war motivation” with “sometimes” (Owen 1997, 122), and defines the situations in which the “sometimes” does not apply, that is, in which democracies would not go to a missionary war against non-democracies in purely rationalist terms: “Usually, they estimate that the costs of liberalizing another state are too high, often because the illiberal state is too powerful.” (Ibid., 124-125).

<sup>20</sup> This theme of generally peaceful democracies somewhat forced to adopt non-democratic means by threatening non-democracies prevails in much of the so-called dyadic democratic peace literature (cf. Maoz and Russett 1993, 625; Russett 1993, 33; Russett and Oneal 2001, 99, 115; Doyle 1986, 1162)

<sup>21</sup> Owen explicitly states that liberalism’s “means are liberty and toleration”, “forgoing coercion and violence” (Owen 1994, 94).

<sup>22</sup> “Illiberal states [...] are viewed *prima facie* as unreasonable, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous.” (Owen 1994, 96) Kahl describes the democratic relations with non-democracies as characterised by uncertainty, anxiety,

(Risse-Kappen 1995, 503). If, however, the ascription of amity and enmity and thus the “rule learned through the process of interaction” (ibid., 503) lacked any justification with regard to the unit attributes differentiating democratic and non-democratic states, then the inter-democratic peace would be the mere result of a random walk.

Another problem for the constructivist explanation is the fact that democracies are *not* alike. If democracies behave vastly differently towards war and peace, this should have an impact on the mutual perception of democracies. To remember, social constructivists propose that democracies perceive each other as devoted to either non-violent conflict solution, and thus peaceful (Risse-Kappen) or to liberal values at large, and thus peaceful (Owen, Kahl). But these are hypotheses developed by democracies on the basis of “domestic validation”, as Risse-Kappen put it. The observation of other democracies behaving quite militantly in situations where the observing democracies prefer peaceful means to the use of force defies the expectation that all democracies prefer peace to war (see Rosato 2003, 590), unless there is complete cognitive closure as to what happens in the international system. In fact, there were constellations during the Cold War when democracies viewed the US as far from peaceful.<sup>23</sup> A public opinion poll from November 2003 revealed, Europeans hold that Israel – a fellow democracy – is the biggest threat to world peace, with the US following second together with North Korea and Iran (Eurobarometer 2003).

Hence, the social constructivist explanation of democratic peace displays not only serious difficulties in explaining democratic war involvement. The latter also gives reason to inter-democratic patterns of perception that undermine the explanation of the separate peace itself. When one democracy recognises the internal structure of another democracy and the values of its citizens as “alike”, this does not translate automatically, that is, independent of the external behaviour of the observed democracy, in the presumption of peacefulness of other democracies. Ido Oren has shown how the perception of “deviant behaviour” of Imperial Germany was capable to change US perceptions of that country from liberal to autocratic (Oren 1995). The basic idea of the constructivist approach, that monadic causal mechanisms lead to dyadic results via perceptual differentiation, does not hold.

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misunderstandings, and misperceptions, resulting in a state of affairs where “liberal states are likely to fear and distrust illiberal ones, aggravating the security dilemma” (Kahl 1999, 130)

<sup>23</sup> E.g., the US was seen by citizens in many Western countries as responsible for the war in Vietnam and thus as an aggressive power (Müller and Risse-Kappen 1987). India was one of the staunchest critics of US foreign policy for decades which New Delhi found too offensive, militaristic and, at times threatening (cf. Perkovich 1999, Chapter 7). New Zealand, another democracy allied to the US, risked a sharp political conflict with Washington over the issue of



### 3.3. The Monadic/Institutionalist Explanation

Institutionalist explanations argue within the framework of rational choice theory. They start from the assumption of the rationalist theory of war: States would not fight wars in an environment of complete information and undistorted communication; uncertainty over the truth content of publicly available information, however, makes it difficult for them to give unambiguous signals both for the seriousness of challenge and resistance – that is, how vital the issue really is for the signalling state –, and for the sincerity of a publicised willingness to keep peace. Escalation of war may occur because peaceful assertions are not believed or forceful statements are misread as bluff (Fearon 1995). In this environment, states which can signal clearly their intentions have a better opportunity to settle their conflicts peacefully; if they signal that vital interests are at stake, the challenger will surrender the challenge, or the resister will cease resistance. If they signal their willingness to compromise, this will be interpreted as a genuine preference for peaceful relations (cf. Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001, 636; Huth and Allee 2002, Chapter 4).

The two most salient institutional attributes of democracy affecting external behaviour are the desire of politicians to be elected – for governments to stay in power, for oppositions to remove governments – (cf. Ray 2003, 235,) and the availability of information due to the institution of free speech and open political debate. This information is largely private in non-democracies; in democracies it is public. This enhances the capability of the system for unambiguous signalling, and it creates audience costs (Fearon 1994) vis-à-vis the democratic electorate, as the performance of politicians is measured against the standard of their own public promises and commitments.

Public statements, therefore, have a greater probability to be believed if they are made by democratic than by non-democratic leaders. Moreover, recipients of signals from a democracy have an even better opportunity to tell bluff from genuine commitment by watching the utterances of the opposition. If the opposition supports the government in a challenge or in resistance, the likelihood of bluff is small. If the opposition rejects the governmental position, the democracy is split and the chances for its adversary to prevail in the conflict are good. As a consequence, democratic governments that enjoy the support of their opposition in a conflict are likely to prevail without war, as the enemy, reading the signals, gives in short of hostilities. Democratic governments lacking support by the opposition are likely to give in themselves before shots are exchanged. As a result, democracies end up being more peaceful than non-democracies (Schultz 2001, Chapters 2, 3).

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the deployment of nuclear-armed ships in her territorial waters, leading to the virtual end of the ANZUS alliance (Huntley 1996b).

This approach is coherent but unconvincing. The signal contained in the support for, or resistance to, war by the opposition is much less clear than suggested. In a rationalist calculus the overriding objective of the opposition is to get rid of the government. If, under this perspective, victory in war counts more for the electorate than a diplomatic victory, the opposition should always support the government in a crisis. If the prospect for winning an ensuing war is very good, the gain for the government would be less if the adversary surrenders to the united front before hostilities are opened, and the loss for the opposition would be less. If the country is likely to lose a war following a challenge/resistance, the opposition has the incentive to take a position that emboldens the adversary by simultaneously closing the road to retreat for one's own government. In either case, it is wise for opposition parties to keep open the door for a quick change of position if events take an unforeseen route; the argument that the previous position was based on false information supplied by the treacherous government is always open: think of British Tories or US Democrats in the aftermath of the Iraqi war. Seen in this light, the signals an adversary receives from the public support or resistance by the opposition to governmental policy are all but unambiguous: The opposition has strong incentives to bluff its way into power.

Mixed signals of democracies are depicted in rational approaches as signs of a lack of determination, and thereby as an invitation to challenge or to attack (Prins 2003). This is a non sequitur. Mixed signals create grey areas of uncertainty for the adversary. The sender of these signals might be wavering, or behind the lack of clarity an iron will to prevail might still linger. If history is taken as giving clues for how to interpret signals, the many examples of misreading should probably insert considerable caution into governments against interpreting mixed signals as indicating whimpishness (Jervis 1976, Lebow 1981). A risk-averse adversary would be reluctant to mount a challenge or an attack in this situation. If uncertainty is responded to by offensive steps, this betrays a risk-prone preference order on part of the adversary that contradicts the presumptions of the "rationalist theory of war".

As for audience costs, there is a more fundamental objection that lies, unfortunately, completely outside of the rationalist paradigm. Audience costs can unfold their causal effectiveness only if the sender and the receiver of the information have a common standard for what counts as "cost". This is far from self-evident. As studies on negotiations across cultural boundaries have shown, negotiators face major obstacles to draw on a shared system of reference for evaluating speech acts on which they can build agreement (Cohen 1997; 2000). If signalling cannot even rely on diplomatic rules and routines, as seasoned negotiators can do to their common advantage, reading

signals correctly becomes even more difficult (for the full argument, see Müller 2004a). In history, non-democracies have had major problems in understanding signals sent by democracies; democracies, in turn, have had difficulties to make their intentions clear. Germany did not believe that Britain would enter either the first or the second World War. North Korea did not expect the United States to fight for the integrity of South Korea. The US signalled unanimous resolve by both political camps in the Vietnam Conflict (Gulf of Tonkin Resolution) and lost anyway. It signalled resolve in Iraq twice, and in Kosovo, but was resisted. The West gave signals of wavering throughout the Bosnian war but stood tall in the endgame. Additionally, some main contemporary enemies of the West, Saddam Hussein, Milosevic, and Osama Bin Laden all uniformly believed that western democracies could not take casualties and therefore would not see their commitment through (Bengio 1992; Bin Laden 1996; Vollmer 1999), while in cases like Lebanon 1983 or Somalia 1993 (two salient events for the assessment of the West by Islamist radicals), democracies apparently fulfilled this expectation. Reading democracies correctly, it appears, is much more problematic in practice than the rationalist blueprint of audience costs would have it.<sup>24</sup>

At the most fundamental level, the very basis of the institutionalist approach to democratic peace is seriously flawed: the rationalist explanation of war. Empirical research on the causes of war puts into serious question the claim that wars result largely from insufficient information about mutual preferences. The security dilemma has rarely been the cause of war (Reiter 1995) which indicates that the problem of private information is not decisive. Wars have most frequently resulted from enduring rivalries with fixed, opposite preferences for contradictory policies by either side (Vasquez 1996; 2000a; 2000b), which a rationalist model can only capture by renouncing the doctrine of equal preferences (Huth and Allee 2002, Chapter 4).<sup>25</sup> And wars have been frequently caused by aggressive actors pursuing expansionist and “predatory” policies (Schweller 1994; 1996). Seen in this light, the axiom that all actors harbour preferences of risk-aversion might be theoretically consistent with the rationalist paradigm, but they fail to match the real world of war-making. Eventually, rationalists must admit: “If there is a real democratic peace, the theory I have presented contributes to but probably does not provide a full explanation. Such an explanation

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<sup>24</sup> Apart from the problem of common standards for deciphering signals, the sheer noise of the open democratic debate may add to this difficulty (Rosato 2003, 598). It is precisely the transparency of the democratic political deliberations that produces so much information, much of it contradictory, that recipients might be overwhelmed and pushed to read it all too selectively, with the acute risk of succumbing to selection bias.

<sup>25</sup> Compare Huth (1996, 176): “On the one hand, democratic norms favor compromise and flexibility in diplomacy, but democratic accountability to popular and elite opinion may also convince leaders that compromise is not a politically supportable position in a dispute in which the international adversary is portrayed as an aggressive opponent.” Huth and Allee (2002, Chapter 8) admit that the implications of audience costs and democratic accountability are undetermined as, in their case of territorial disputes, democratic leaders often avoid accommodation in negotiations precisely because they are constrained by the expectation of domestic opposition to territorial concessions.

would almost certainly have to include some argument about the nature of preferences [...].“ (Schultz 2001, 236; see also the quotes from Lipson in the next section): Unfortunately, not even the part erroneously believed to be explained by rationalist institutionalism does its explanatory job without silent rescue to preferences.

### **3.4. Dyadic-Institutionalist Explanations**

Dyadic-institutionalist explanations maintain that the relative peacefulness of democracies rest in their institutional setting, but that the pacification effect is only triggered when the partner is another democracy. These explanations come in two versions. The first focuses on attributes like transparency and audience costs to establish that democracies are more reliable in entering binding contracts (3.4.1.). The second starts from the assumption that democratic leaders face a higher risk to be removed from office when they loose in conflict (3.4.2.).

#### **3.4.1. Contracting advantages**

The contractualist approach (Lipson 2003) claims not to rely on speculations about different sets of preferences between democracies and non-democracies. As the monadic approach, it relies on the rationalist theory of war. Claiming agnosticism as to preferences, the focus is then on democratic institutions. They provide the essential asset, democracy's singular capability to enter reliable contracts which stabilise their mutual relationship: The security dilemma is eliminated by a sustainable agreed solution to whatever differences of interest have been existing in a given democratic dyad. Lasting contracts, in addition, help realise positive mutual gains, enhancing the commitment on both sides for continued co-operation and friendly relations.

The capability to enter reliable, lasting contracts, in turn, hinges on four institutional attributes of democracies (Lipson 2003, 4-7, 11-15):

- Transparency gives partners insights into the “inner fabric” of democratic deliberations and creates trust in the sincerity of democratic leaders' public statements.
- Audience costs are relevant: commitments made by leaders to their electorates concerning external promises – e.g. their support for treaties they have negotiated – means that they cannot retract easily without suffering a loss of reputation among voters.
- Constitutional procedures – notably ratification – bind not only leaders, but also parliaments and opposition to a given international legal instrument.
- Finally, continuity in democratic institutions means that successor government remain bound by obligations undertaken by their predecessors.

These four attributes which are not available to the same degree, and not at all in combination, in non-democracies make up for democracies' unique capacity to be reliable partners.

At closer look, doubts arise as to the claimed causality that links these institutional attributes to the stated effects. Transparency can only transport to the outside what is in the inside. It serves the pacifying purpose only if and when the preferences that are being made transparent are peaceful and not warlike. Continuity in institutions is only a guarantor of continuity of policy if the political parties compete for the dominant position at the *centre* of the political spectrum. Where polities are vastly *polarised*, governmental changes can lead to fundamental policy shifts; this might include the breach of or withdrawal from treaties. The Bush Administration's renouncing of the ABM Treaty, as one example, demonstrated the effect of polarised polities. One could make the case that autocracies with very stable forms of bureaucratic rule are better candidates for the attribute of reliability by continuity (cf. Peceny and Butler 2004; Senese 1999).

The basic scepticism as to the utility of the audience cost concept in inter-cultural relations, as elaborated in the last chapter, applies to Lipson's argument as well. Moreover, audience costs can be neutralised if the democracy in question is of the charismatic type, that is, if the leader commands a high degree of personal attachment by the electorate, based on his perceived extraordinary personal qualities, as De Gaulle's Presidency in France; he could withdraw from NATO's military organisation (remember: the Alliance's headquarters were then located in Paris!) and even gain in public opinion. Also, democratic leaders can legitimately point to the "rebus sic stantibus" principle, arguing that the circumstances under which their country entered a certain contract have profoundly changed. This serves as a valid argument that the good reasons and the legal obligation to stay within the boundary of undertakings in this contract do no longer apply. Audience costs would be nil in either case. And constitutional mechanisms, while powerful, remain a reliable guarantor of existing undertakings only as long as the preferences that had led to them remain stable as well. Changed preferences exert powerful pressures on leaving a treaty or asking for a re-negotiation, as, again, the case of the ABM treaty shows.<sup>26</sup>

All four attributes are thus much less certain mechanisms of reliable contracting than the theory implies. In fact, they function in the proposed direction only on the basis of existing and stable

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<sup>26</sup> Correspondingly, Michael Desch (2002, 31) emphasises that "the evidence supports only the more modest conclusion that democracies are no worse than other types of regimes in making 'lasting commitments'".

preferences for peace and co-operation. In Lipson's work itself, there is revealing language pointing to this fact (emphases added):

*"Risk aversion, if it really does drive democratic decisions, is important because it opens a wider range of mutually profitable bargains short of war."* (Lipson 2003, 161)

*"Constitutional procedures, plus fairly stable voter preferences, help lock in promises from one president or prime minister to the next."* (Ibid., 170)

*"They can make major tenable long-term commitments and effectively signal that they do not pose security threats."* (Ibid., 174)

*"State preferences might change, unravelling old bargains and making new ones difficult. All rationalist theories, including mine, make the simplifying assumption that underlying state preferences are constant."* (Ibid., 178)

*"The contracting explanation applies only to constitutional democracies, not to all states that elect leaders. Illiberal democracies, lacking a variety of constitutional protections, may threaten peace in two basic ways: Opaque procedures and expansionist goals that leave little room for agreement."* (Ibid., 179)

Peaceful *preferences*, not institutions, are at the roots of this theory's causal assumptions. They all hinge on the validity of the "rationalist theory of war". As shown above, this theory does not fit empirical findings on the causes of war. The "rationalist theory of war" thus got it wrong on its assumption of uniform preferences across states which that theory implies; if, however, state preferences vary in reality, then these varying preferences must be included into the theoretical setting when theories of democratic peace are construed; if preferences vary, institutions transport very different impulses towards war and peace into decision-making, depending of the preferences sets of those impacting on the institutions. The contractual theory on democratic peace suffers not only from a certain indeterminacy of its assumed causal mechanism, it is also flawed in its basic assumptions about the causes of war. And therefore, it cannot account for the vast variance in the use of force by democracies towards non-democracies.

### 3.4.2. Risks of democratic leaders

Following Bueno de Mesquita and colleagues' rationalist-institutionalist explanation, both parts of the "separate peace" can be understood as results of a rational choice game reflecting decision-making at two levels (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; 2003, Chapter 6; cf. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992). One difference in institutional features between democracies and autocracies explains the separate democratic peace: Because they need majority support of the active electorate to stay in power, political leaders in democracies need to generate and maintain larger winning coalitions than autocrats. While autocratic leaders can – even when faced with a military defeat – compensate their relatively small constituencies with side payments, the political survival of democratic leaders hinges critically on successful policy. Audience costs in democracies – notably those with stable institutions – add to this effect (Prins 2003; Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001; Huth and Allee 2002, Chapter 4). Commitment or reciprocity to a challenge are hard to revoke without a loss at the ballot. For this reason, challenges and reciprocity by democracies serve as very strong signals

to their opponents. It follows that democratic leaders will initiate war or mount a challenge only when victory or prevailing seems almost certain (Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001, 642; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, 801). But, once engaged in war “democratic leaders try harder [...] than do autocrats”, because defeat is generally associated with subsequent deposition (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, 799). Thus, democrats will invest an “extra effort” in war, making democracies both reluctant aggressors and unattractive targets.

The solution of a respective game assuming two countries in dispute is clear-cut: Democratic leaders generally “prefer to negotiate when they do not anticipate military success”. While “autocrats do not try as hard in war” and, thus, “make attractive targets for democracies”, the conditions for a war between democracies are hard to imagine (ibid., 799): Both democracies need to be almost sure to succeed though both know that the other side will invest all available resources in waging war. In all possible confrontations between two democracies the inferior state will give in before the dispute can escalate into war. The separate democratic peace results as unintended consequence of a single causal mechanism: deterrence. One institutional feature of democracy (the need for larger winning coalitions in domestic politics) shapes the international game situation in a way that escalation to war becomes highly improbable in democratic dyads.

This institutionalist explanation is of persuasive internal consistence, and it is – at the surface – compatible with the data as it can explain why democracies do not confront each other in war, but war between them and autocracies may break out. It has to be noted, however, that some basic propositions of the model are in quite sharp contrast to the real world: empirical findings do just not support the theory, once we think through its many implications.

First, the central message that for democratic leaders the costs of a lost war generally exceed those borne by autocratic leaders is not sustainable. Democratic leaders lose office more often.<sup>27</sup> Dictators, on the other hand, may manage to stay in power, but *when and if* they fall, they fall beyond the retirement-plus-pension state of ousted democratic leaders, their fall may be as deep as the graveyard (cf. Rosato 2003, 594; Desch 2002, 23). Bueno de Mesquita et al. assume a preference scale that is standardised between political leaders of all systems regardless of type. That on this scale a .75 probability of being removed from office should rank lower than a .35 probability to be removed from office *plus* a .29 probability to lose life, freedom or property does not exactly

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<sup>27</sup> However, even this most basic assumption remains statistically contentious: E.g., Chiozza and Goemans (2003, 459) generally find that “defeat does not affect the overall probability of losing office”.

correspond to the common sense notion of a preference order within a rationalist framework;<sup>28</sup> the pre-occupation with political survival (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), should not remove awareness of the fact that most people would value physical survival higher. On the other hand, victory in war does not guarantee at all a grateful electorate at the next ballot, as Winston Churchill had to learn after May 8, 1945, and George H. W. Bush in 1991. The dyadic-institutionalist assumption about the democracy/autocracy difference in this regard is simply wrong.

Consequently, the assumption that democratic governments will generally invest maximal resources to win an ongoing war, while autocratic governments do not, appears equally wrong. Indeed, if we look at the extraordinary effort the US made in World War II as a standard – close to 50% of the GNP went into the war effort – no subsequent war ever came even close to that ceiling. In the Korea War – which ended in a draw – the defence budget never hit the 10% line. In Vietnam, the level was about two thirds of that in Korea, even though the US lost that war. In the Gulf War of 2003, the US went with about 3% of their GNP and a much lower number of troops than the military leadership would have preferred; as a consequence, the risks were high, and in the aftermath of the apparent military victory, it proved impossible to stabilise the situation quickly enough to achieve the avowed political objectives for which the war was fought in the first place (On budgetary data, cf. International Institute for Strategic Studies, annually). It appears, thus, that full mobilisation to ensure victory is exactly not what the most active democracy on the world stage has done since 1945.<sup>29</sup>

Third, powerful democracies in general do not resort to threats towards weaker democracies even if quite vital interests are concerned. Statistical analyses generally confirm this claim.<sup>30</sup> Case studies of disputes between democracies point to the fact that it is quite often the more powerful state backing down to avoid escalation. The “cod war” between the United Kingdom and small Iceland – which does not even dispose of a navy, but has only a tiny coast guard – is a case in point (Hasenclever 2002, 86). In democratic dyads, the distribution of power has far less explanatory power for the outcome of the conflict than in other dyads, notably in the early stages of a conflict

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<sup>28</sup> These probabilities are taken from Rosato (2003, 594); according to his statistical analysis, the consequences of losing a war are 75% removal and 0% punishment for the democratic losers in contrast to 35% removal and 29% punishment for the autocratic ones.

<sup>29</sup> Correspondingly, Michael Desch (2002) has demonstrated that both empirical and theoretical support for the assumption regarding a positive relation between democracy and victory rest on rather shaky ground.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., a statistical assessment of democracies’ behaviour in international crises between 1918 and 1994 has demonstrated that in crises between democratic states “the effect of relative capabilities evaporates” (Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001, 644). Correspondingly, the strong positive influence of mutual democracy on international settlement procedures that Dixon and Senese’s analysis of some 1.700 MIDs between 1816 and 1992 has revealed was not disturbed by any “preponderance exception”, as Bueno de Mesquita et al. would expect it (Dixon and Senese 2002, 561).



when democracies settle most of their conflicts peacefully (Huth and Allee 2002, Chapter 7, 8, 9). Power distribution is much more important in the stage of military escalation when democracies meet almost exclusively non-democracies (Huth and Allee 2002, Chapter 9).<sup>31</sup> This is implausible in the light of dyadic-institutional theorising.

Fourth, if Bueno de Mesquita's argument was valid, we should find traces of the risk calculus in the deliberations of governments, and in public debate, of those democracies that were involved in a militarised dispute with another democracy – the “near misses” – or that were parties to the small number of wars which are counted by some as possible exceptions to the “democratic peace” statistics. However, no such deliberations are described in the studies dealing with these cases.<sup>32</sup> Deliberations relate rather to the justification of one's position and its vitality, to the general balance of forces and the risks involved, or to the morality of going to war with a fellow democracy. The ascription of enhanced military risk to the democratic system of the potential enemy is conspicuously absent (Elman 1997; Owen 1994; Layne 1994; Hellmann and Herboth 2001).<sup>33</sup>

Fifth, on second thought, a carefully and coherently deduced dyadic institutionalist approach does not even fit the data. For if autocrats risk less in war, they should be more probable both to challenge and to reciprocate. Democratic leaders are very reluctant to challenge and reciprocate unless they are certain of victory and signal their preferences clearly. It is not plausible, however, why autocrats should be so much deterred from both challenging and reciprocating towards a democracy if the risks are seen as considerably lower, as proponents of this approach (unexplainably) assume (Pickering 2002, 298, 318); democratic advantages in signalling resolve and autocratic audacity should neutralise each other in terms of statistical frequency of mixed dyad conflicts. Formally speaking, if

$$pw(Dy) = p(c,r) S1 \times p(c,r) S2$$

(whereby  $pw(Dy)$  is the probability of armed conflict in a dyad,  $c,r$  are challenge and reciprocity and  $S1$  and  $S2$  are the two state members of a dyad), and if further

$$p(c,r) D < p(c,r) A$$

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<sup>31</sup> “The key to avoiding war in democratic dyads is the initial decision of democratic challenger states to direct disputes down a pathway of peaceful diplomacy and reliance on repeated talks. These domestic influences are so powerful at earlier stages in a dispute that democratic leaders rarely find themselves having to manage military crises with democratic adversaries.” (Huth and Allee 2002, 273-5)

<sup>32</sup> This observation matches Desch's rejection of those two claims that give reason to the assumption that democracies should care especially about the military risk posed by other democracies. Desch finds that democracies neither appear to better select those wars they can win nor fight better once at war: “Both [arguments] rest on faulty logic and have only modest empirical support.” (Desch 2002, 42)

<sup>33</sup> As noted above (see 3.4.1.), in the cases of Saddam Hussein, Milosevic, and Osama Bin Laden no particular fear of democracy's determination to fight and win is detectable – quite on the contrary.

(whereby D is a democracy and A an autocracy), then it follows that  $pw(D/D) < pw(D/A) < pw(A/A)$ .<sup>34</sup>

In other words we would expect a) autocracies to be considerably more warlike than democracies, and b) frequency of armed conflict to rise as we move from democratic dyads to mixed dyads to autocratic dyads. In fact we find some, but relatively little difference between the general warlikeness of democracies and autocracies, and we find mixed dyads either equally or even more warlike than autocratic dyads (cf. Russett and Oneal 2001, 114-5). The apparent fitting the data of this version of dyadic institutionalist theory is a result of a flawed deduction, not of a correct theory.

Thus, the institutionalist model cannot account for explaining the democratic peace. Neither the idea of domestic deterrence, e.g. that democratic leaders face especially high costs in case of military defeat, nor the concept of international deterrence, e.g. that democracies are mutually peaceful because they are especially unattractive targets, can be sustained. For a hypothesis that can be cogently derived from the assumptions we find no supporting data. The corrected core hypothesis derived from the basic assumption is contradicted by the data. Considering these serious objections, the dyadic-institutionalist explanation appears sufficiently compromised to search for alternative dyadic approaches.

#### **4. An Alternative Explanatory Model: Dyadic, Constructivist, Structurationist**

Our own approach must cope with three empirical findings. First, we must account for the “separate peace”. Second, we must give an explanation why democracies in the statistical average might be slightly, but not much, less bellicose than non-democracies. Third, we must explain the huge variance among democratic states. We propose a genuine dyadic perspective that regards the supposed monadic causal mechanisms of democratic peacefulness as fundamentally ambivalent. This ambiguity only dissolves reliably in joint democratic dyads. Hence the separate democratic peace can be accounted for without relying on monadic assumptions which then clash with the apparent democratic willingness to at times wage war on non-democracies.

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<sup>34</sup> This argument is further strengthened if we take into consideration another consequence of the dyadic-institutionalist assumptions: Any state should be more likely to target or to reciprocate an autocratic one as compared to a democratic regime (because the former does not invest as much in war as the latter). Hence,  $p(c, r \text{ if } S2=A) S1 > p(c, r \text{ if } S2=D) S1$ . As this holds true for each single part of the dyad (regardless of its regime type), it again follows that  $pw(D/D) < pw(D/A) < pw(A/A)$ .

We thus go “beyond the separate peace” (MacMillan 2003). Democratic features, and liberal norms in particular, shape democracies’ interactions not only with their fellow democracies but in mixed dyads as well (cf. MacMillan 1996). However, these latter interactions vary – in accordance with the respective time/space specific solution to the ambiguity of democratic norms. The theoretical challenge is to account for both: uniformity (the general avoidance of inter-democratic war) *and* diversity (the complex sample of war/peace incidences in mixed dyads).

#### 4.1. Explaining the “Separate Peace”: A Dyadic-Structurationist Framework

Our approach does not rely on monadic causal mechanisms. To be sure, every dyadic explanation is built upon assumptions about the interacting units. But whereas monadic explanations assume democratic features to be inherently linked to peaceful behaviour (Geis 2001, 286), a genuine dyadic theory has to argue that the causal mechanisms leading from the independent variable “democracy” to the decision between war and peace (the dependent variable) are contingent on “the other”, i.e. whether the interacting unit is another democracy or not. Democratic peacefulness, then, is an emergent attribute of the interaction.

This dyadic approach is structurationist in the sense that we use Anthony Giddens’ concept of structure to free the constructivist explanation of the democratic peace from its monadic premises.<sup>35</sup> As Giddens’ theory states for social structures in general, we argue that democracy’s unit attributes – as specific sets of rules and resources – do not determine, but constrain *and* enable agency (i.e., foreign policy). Hence, the features of democracy – as embodied in the structural and normative explanations of the democratic peace (Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett and Oneal 2001) – and the outcome (“no war”) are not directly connected through clear-cut causal mechanisms. Instead, these are assumed to operate only by *structuring* democracies’ war/peace decisions. E.g., democratic governments are indeed *constrained* from waging war as they have to meet a set of “legitimising requirements”; but the fact that there are wars that can be presented as legitimate *enables* the recourse to external violence. It is only in inter-democratic relations that war is reliably excluded from the range of legitimate modes of behaviour.

That both utilitarian and institutional mechanisms operate only in *structuring* democratic war/peace deliberations without *determining* their results should be obvious. Kant’s primarily utilitarian argument that the citizens will “have great hesitation” in taking upon themselves all the costs of war

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Giddens 1984. For an adaptation of Giddens’ theory for the study of international relations see Wendt 1987 and Dessler 1991.

(Kant 1795/2003, First Definitive Article), implies that war in democracies is constrained (by its costs) as well as enabled (if gains greater than costs can be made plausible). The institutional dimension can point to none but structuring effects: Democratic institutions constrain the discretionary power of a war prone executive, but there is no reason (neither theoretically nor empirically) to think that procedural constraints by themselves should “normally” impede democratic wars unless the institutional argument is complemented by assumptions about the preferences held by the population and its representatives. The burden of “causing” democratic peacefulness is thus left to the normative argument.

However, liberal-democratic norms prove to be fundamentally indecisive as well. The heritage of liberal thinking on the use of force is fundamentally ambiguous (cf. Müller 2004b). On the one hand, there is the moral aversion of the children of enlightenment against killing their own fellow humans in other countries, people who bear the same natural rights, and are equally endowed with reason. For Kant himself, human rights could only be realised in a state of law if and when the law was imposed on the citizens by the citizens themselves – the self-rule system of democracy. Kant admitted that in a non-democracy, where some rule of law existed, the seeds were sown for future evolution, and no violent attempt to overthrow that political system would be justified (Kant 1798/2003). It is the same trust in the evolution of behaviour based on self-interest that leads him to believe that states (not only democracies) will found the Pacific Federation, and that this federation will grow until it comprises every state in the world. In Kant’s argument, the path leads from self-interest to the creation of institutions; these institutions help humans to discover the basic moral reasoning on which these institutions are founded and to arrive, finally, at the voluntary implementation of these moral laws. In the end, moral laws are not imposed anymore by the necessity of suffering and self-interest, but accepted by free will, based on the insights of reason (Kant 1784/2003; Kant 1795/2003). In this perspective, Kant is arguing for an absolute prohibition of war (Kant 1798/2003, Conclusion).

In a complete absence of law, however, the imposition of a legal rules from the outside would be advisable and justified; otherwise, the starting point for the desired moral evolution could never be reached. In the same vein, Kant claims that against the “unjust enemy”, states have all rights, including the use of force. The “unjust enemy” is one whose principles are incompatible with reasoned universal law (Kant 1798/2003, §60); the term shows striking similarity to the “rogue state” concept (Klare 1995; Litwak 1994). If a state falls still in the category of “authoritarian, but law-ruled” or is seen already as “unjust enemy” is largely a matter of interpretation.

The impulse to abstain from killing other people because of their inalienable right to life and happiness can thus be turned into the impulse to save other people because their lives and happiness are endangered and their rights trampled over by autocrats who obey no law and respect no human rights.<sup>36</sup> The normative imperative on war and peace deriving from liberal thought is thus not deterministic, but bifurcated (cf. Huntley 1996a; Buchan 2002; Müller 2004b; see also Jaberg 2002, Chapter 6).

Michael Doyle has noted, in passing, that democracy (or liberalism) does not exclude war as an option in foreign policy. “Liberal wars are only fought for popular, liberal purposes.” (Doyle 1983a, 230) Here, both dimensions of the structuring effect are apparent. In democracies, war needs to be legitimised by purposes compatible with democratic norms (and they need to be legitimised through the established democratic procedures). Thus, the range of possible democratic wars is constrained. On the other hand, if a democratic state (or government) succeeds in making plausible the liberal purpose of the military undertaking, war is not only possible, but can be further driven by its own moral impetus (cf. Peceny 2000, 2; MacMillan 2004, 187). In this sense, and a decade before the 1990s trend in “humanitarian interventions”, Doyle has argued that “liberalism does appear to exacerbate intervention against weak nonliberals and hostility against powerful nonliberal societies” (Doyle 1983b, 337).<sup>37</sup> But Democratic peace theory has not identified the roots of the liberal inclination to condone the use of force in the *core political theory* of liberalism. As a consequence, this inclination so far remains undertheorised.

The bifurcation can also be derived from the *externalisation* of liberal norms. The democratic peace proposition rests on the idea that democracy provides a framework for the peaceful settlement of conflicts which it tends to externalise if possible (see Maoz and Russett 1993, 625; Risse-Kappen 1994b, 179). But no democratic system generally rules out the use of force in its internal affairs. The democratic state still possesses the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Using force is sanctioned within the realm of the legitimate, and prohibited and condemned beyond the borders of this realm. The assumed preference of citizens in a democracy for living in a peaceful society, and

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<sup>36</sup> E.g., the “liberal cultural norms of tolerance for self-determination” (Peceny 1997, 416) can generally justify both war (to enforce the right of self-determination) and peace (respecting the right of self-determination). This indeterminacy dissolves when seen from the dyadic perspective: While the recourse to the norm of self-determination helps justify war against non-democracies, a war against another democracy is clearly violating this norm (cf. Doyle 1986, 1162).

<sup>37</sup> Compare Peceny (2000) on the Clinton administration policy toward Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia. Doyle clearly rejects the view that the peaceful behaviour reflects something like the “nature” of democracy, while the “dark side” of the separate democratic peace is merely a reaction to the features of non-democracies: “Both tendencies are fundamentally rooted in the operation of liberalism within and across borders.” (Doyle 1983b, 343; cf. Doyle 1997) Correspondingly, MacMillan (2004: 187, 200) notes liberalism’s “dual disposition towards the use of force marked by both ‘restraint’ and ‘reform’” and, thus, “the contingency of liberalism’s influence upon foreign policy”.

the channelling by democratic institutions of this preference into political decisions constitutes an argument “only” for establishing certain rules *structuring* the use of this legitimate violence (constitutional state, rule of law, police law and procedural regulations).

The same holds true for the normative argument, the moral aversion of the democratic citizen against violence which is being realised by the political system. This does not result in the absolute exclusion of internal violence from the realm of legitimate political behaviour, but in the establishment of certain normative requirements for the use of “democratic violence”.<sup>38</sup> Violence can be regarded as justified if individuals trespass excessively the range of socially accepted behaviour. These normative requirements are neither clear-cut nor globally uniform, but are generally not restricted to situations of pure self-defence. E.g., the use of violence to stop a head of the household from violating members of its family is – if it can be presented as *ultima ratio* – compatible with liberal-democratic norms and would stand a challenge in court. However, democratic violence is not unlimited, but subject to the rule of proportionality. In this regard, the democratic state relies on two complementary dimensions of legitimisation (Przeworski 1991; Habermas 1992; Scharpf 1998) which are *structuring*, inter alia, the use of its monopoly on force: The decision to resort to force requires its procedural accordance with institutional requirements (legality) *and* its substantial justification with reference to democratic values (legitimacy).

Therefore the puzzle is not an internally totally non-violent democratic state showing a “schizophrenic” behaviour in international affairs, complying with its “nature” when interacting with other democracies while quite often violating it when confronted with non-democracies.<sup>39</sup> Rather, the use of force – in internal as well as international affairs – is structured (constrained *and* enabled) in specific democratic ways: In democracies a specific set of (procedural and substantial, utilitarian and normative) requirements operates to legitimise violence/war.

The interaction of procedural and substantial “legitimising requirements” means that democratic governments cannot successfully establish a case for a war against another democracy. It is simply

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<sup>38</sup> In spite of this, almost all normative, constructivist or ideational democratic peace explanations relate democracy or liberalism to a general peaceful behaviour (see above, 3.1., 3.2.). As if any liberal would deny the necessity of, at least, a night-watch state capable of and disposed to use violence.

<sup>39</sup> To explain this apparently “schizophrenic” behaviour, constructivists like Risse-Kappen, Kahl and Owen have to refer to a (perceived) threat posed by non-democracies, which leads democracies to adopt the “non-democratic” behaviour of non-peaceful action. This unconvincing resort to the security dilemma argument (see above, 3.2.) to reconcile monadic premises with the “dark side” of warring democracies can be avoided by rejecting the oversimplifying liberal image that democracy was a system of *none but* peaceful conflict-resolution. The dyadic-structurationist approach argues, e.g. following Gramsci, that even when force steps back behind democratic procedures of consensus-building, the “active consent” of hegemony still remains “protected by the armour of coercion”.

not possible to picture a fellow democracy credibly as “unjust enemy”. The specific “limit of escalation” (Risse-Kappen 1994b, 166) or “barrier to violence” (Rummel 1983, 28) in democratic dyads is constituted by the limited range of legitimate aims of war (Maoz and Russett 1993, 266). It does not consist of democratic norms, interests and/or institutions that lead *generally* or *normally* to peaceful behaviour, but to a specific democratic “enclosure” of war excluding its use against other democracies while enabling and under certain circumstances even driving wars against non-democracies.

Having argued that democratic governments need to legitimise war with regard to basic liberal goals, we do not imply that individuals, interest groups or entire governments in democracies might not hold other motivations to propagate military action abroad.<sup>40</sup> However, we abstain from investigating the implications of such (non-liberal) motivations for two reasons:

- We want to demonstrate that both the “separate peace” on democratic peace and extra-democratic war-likeness of democracies and the variance among democracies concerning their involvement in militarised disputes and war can be coherently explained by analysing the content of liberalism without seeking rescue to other sources of violence.
- “War entrepreneurs” may hold other motivations to propagate violent behaviour. But if recourse to liberalism is required in order to persuade the polity to decide for military action, then it is these liberal norms that are the *public motivations* of the polity and thus decisive for the democracy to use force, in contrast to the *private motivations* of the war entrepreneurs. Since our primary interest is in the political reasons pushing democratic polities towards violence, not the reasons that motivate individuals or groups to initiate the war discourse, the focus on liberalism is necessary.

“Democratic wars” can only be directed against “illegitimate regimes” (or “outlaw states”, as John Rawls 1999, puts it) in order to be justified as ultimately in the interest of the country to be attacked.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the external use of force by democracies will be either guided by legal rules (e.g.

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<sup>40</sup> To be sure, “democratic wars” have not at all to be fought mainly for Doyle’s liberal purposes; but a democratic government can only succeed in achieving the (procedurally) necessary political support for a (howsoever motivated) war if it makes (normatively) plausible its compatibility with some basic liberal goals, e.g. self-determination.. Hence the phenomenon that the presumption of utilitarian motivations (“war on oil”) is usually part of the critique of democratic wars whereas the government has to deny egoistic motivations emphasising normative justifications (human rights, liberalisation, democratisation, international law). John Rawls makes this requirement of democratic wars perfectly clear when he argues that – from his liberal perspective – “No state has a right to war in the pursuit of its *rational*, as opposed to its *reasonable*, interests.” (Rawls 1999, 91). Indeed, whether rational, reasonable or neither rational nor reasonable interests may dominate the agenda of a war-prone government, the democratic frame requires the presentation of the reasons of war as liberally justifiable.

<sup>41</sup> The recent war against Afghanistan is a case in point. Although after 9/11 the legitimacy of the US-led attacks as acts of self-defence was nearly undisputed nationally as well as internationally (as instance of procedural legitimacy on

international law) or directed against actors that can be presented as violating such common rules with a view to maintain, create anew, or re-establish, the rule of law and peace at the national and/or international level.<sup>42</sup> As the decision which regimes are to be considered “illegitimate” is difficult, and as at the international level there is no authoritative arbiter, democratic states remain with an remarkable discretionary margin – depending on the specific institutions, norms and processes at the domestic level as well as on its position in international society.

The discussed structuring of democratic war can account for the puzzle of the separate democratic peace and is completely compatible with the much less uniform democratic behaviour vis-à-vis non-democracies. Attacking a state that is perceived as a democracy is ruled out because no legitimate reasons can be claimed for such an endeavour (Owen 1994), whereas in relation with non-democracies both (substantial and procedural) “legitimising requirements” have only a structuring effect on the possibilities and limits of “democratic wars” (cf. Peceny 1995).<sup>43</sup> From this structurationist perspective, the interactionist argument (see 3.2.) can lay down its monadic premises: Democracies perceive and learn the rule, not of some general democratic peacefulness, but of the particular preclusion of inter-democratic war.<sup>44</sup>

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international level served Article 51 UN Charter as acknowledged by UN Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373), the claim that the war had to be seen as directed only against the cruel Taliban regime and as – at least by the way – aimed at freeing the Afghan people (and especially the oppressed women) played an astonishing role in justifying the attack. In this sense, Mark Peceny – in his case study on the Spanish-American War – concludes that the American perception of Spain “as being outside the moral realm of the pacific union” and of the war “as a crusade to liberate Cuban ‘freedom fighters’ from Spanish tyranny” was “crucial for the legitimization of a war fought to enhance the power and wealth of the United States” (Peceny 1997, 415).

<sup>42</sup> Another, at least historically relevant, possibility is exemplified by the colonial or imperial war directed against people who are not perceived as endowed with equal rights (cf. MacMillan 2004, 194 ff.; Doyle 1986). This again is not necessarily pointing to a distorted externalisation of liberal-democratic norms as the long history of domestic discrimination of certain societal groups (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, slaves, the poor and illiterate, immigrants, children) in really existing democracies exemplifies.

<sup>43</sup> This said, the fact that a state is governed democratically is certainly important for its behaviour vis-à-vis non-democracies. At this point of generalisation, however, the structurationist approach does only state that democratic regimes have to fulfil the double-sided legitimising requirements – it says nothing about the space- and time-specific shape of these requirements, nor helps it assess the diverse motivations and dynamics sending incentives to overcome these obstacles to war.

<sup>44</sup> Although this democratic peace indeed is a “perceptual peace” rather than a “perpetual peace” (Henderson 2002, 6), it is “an enduring social fact” of international relations (Peceny 1997, 329, quoting Alexander Wendt). Yet, the democratic peace is neither the mechanical result of some general democratic features nor an a-historical valid law (Barkawi and Laffey 1999, 406). Since findings on the external behaviour of democracies point to evolution rather than to path-independent eternal truths (cf. Cederman 2001; Senese 1999), sensitivity to possible change over time appears to be in order. As the example of US policy during the Cold War demonstrates, it is absolutely possible that the democracy/ non-democracy division becomes over-determined by temporarily stronger perceptual divisions (cf. Barkawi and Laffey 1999, 422): If communism is per definition associated with autocracy, governments that appear to be (come) communist can – whether they may or may not be democratically elected – become “legitimate” targets of aggressive containment policy. At the present time, the same could happen to a howsoever democratic regime that is perceived to support Islamist terrorism. Additionally, the perception that a majoritarian democracy oppresses an ethnic minority could lead to the loss of the “presumption of democraticness” on the part of another democracy (especially if



#### 4.2. “Beyond the Separate Peace”: A Differentiating View on Democracies

On the basis of the bifurcation of liberal thinking on peace and war, we can construct two ideal type orientations of democracies in order to account for the vast variation in their behaviour towards non-democracies:

- The “militant” one adopts the policy of violent regime change to bring liberation, law and rights to suppressed fellow human being;
- The “pacifist” one rejects the use of force other than for self-defence because war/intervention always means taking innocent life and thereby violating, irreversibly, the natural, inalienable rights of humans, and because states with even rudimentary systems of law contain the possibility of peaceful evolution.<sup>45</sup>

Policies embraced by the first type would confront non-democracies harshly, deny the existence of common interests and refuse to work in common international organisations or to establish shared rules of international law; self-binding by submitting to constraining rules is seen both as illegitimate and dangerous in the face of non-democratic “unjust enemies” (Brock 2002). In contrast, the second type would seek to create common legal ground and to work through international organisations in order to entangle the non-democracies into an intricate cobweb of relationships, softening them up, thereby helping their evolution into a democratic state and into the rule of law. President Ronald Reagan’s approach to the Soviet Union, the “evil empire”, - the end of arms control, the (intended, but not realised) scrapping of the Conference on Security and Co-operation, the effort to strangle the Soviet economy, and the arms race driven by the Strategic Defence Initiative (Czempiel 1989) - came very close to the ideal type of a “militant” democratic policy, the military option excluded only by the nuclear stalemate. German Ostpolitik during the same period pursued a strategy of “change through rapprochement”, supported all arms control approaches, struggled to maintain the CSCE, worked to expand economic relations with the East, and was not particularly eager to invest more in defence than immediate national security would require (Genscher 1995); it was therefore a good example of the “pacifist” type of external democratic policy. Needless to say that the alternatives came to the fore even more succinctly during the Iraqi crisis of 2002/2003 (cf. Larres 2002; Müller 2004c).

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the former state’s minority is the latter’s majority); indeed, empirical studies have found that the existence of “ethnic co-nationals” as minority groups increases the probability of escalation (cf. Huth and Allee 2002; Huth 1996).

<sup>45</sup> As far as there can be assumed to be no ideal type pacifist democracy in the sense that the militant-liberal position is completely and for ever absent in national discourse, democratic war/peace deliberations and decisions can only be understood from a dyadic perspective.

The bifurcation between “militant” and “pacifist” democracies defines the poles of two ideal types on a continuum of diverse mixtures of both types. Since either version is the legitimate child of liberal ideology, we must assume that either has its followers in all democracies. Pluralism and open debate will cause them to exist side by side. Democracies at the centre of this ideological continuum may waver among the contradictory orientations from situation to situation. The more we wander outwards to the two poles, the more fixed and long-lasting orientations we find.<sup>46</sup>

We can thus think of more transient and more permanent orientations of democracies towards one or the other ideal type of normative liberal orientations towards non-democracies. In the more transient cases, domestic coalitions holding either ideology prevail in the respective polities for a while, but are sooner or later removed from power by the electorate. The coalition change, in most cases, will result from domestic rather than foreign policy concerns; the reorientation towards a more pacifist or more militant attitude in foreign policy, then, is a random product of domestic political discourse, but effective on foreign policy behaviour nevertheless.

In the more permanent cases, one of the orientations has sunk deeper into the political culture of a country and has thus shaped the identity of the democracy more in-depth; the opposite orientation may continue to exist, but only in small circles at the margins of political discourse. Such a “structural” pacifist or militant orientation is then more stable than in the case of shifting ideological coalitions, because all relevant political forces in the country hold the same ideology, and a change in the governing coalition thus has no fundamental impact on external policy behaviour; Austria or Finland, for example, may represent the “pacifist pole” on this continuum. Beyond strictly peacekeeping mission, these countries have not participated in military operations for some decades. Germany’s identity as a “civilian power” might approach, but not completely fit, such a more permanent “pacifist” orientation (Katzenstein 1997; Berger 1998; Duffield 1999; Harnisch and Maull 2001). Its military engagements in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan point to the possibility for changes even in appearing “structural” orientations. It shows the inevitable militant-liberal content even in an avowedly pacifist culture. Afghanistan was seen as a case of self-

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<sup>46</sup> The differentiation between militant and pacifist democracies bears some resemblance to Kegley and Hermann’s distinction between “crusader” and “pragmatist” types of democratic leaders (cf. Kegley and Hermann 2002, 25). However, we see no reason to confine this differentiation to leaders only, while populations remain to be seen as homogenous and/or passive. Furthermore, Kegley and Hermann’s distinguishing criteria (more or less ideological impetus) misses the point that categorically war-averse pacifism is as much an ideological (or, fundamentalist) position as radically war-prone militant liberalism. The proposition “The more ideologically driven democratic leader is more likely to support and promote democratization [read: if by force, HM/JW].” (Ibid., 25) is only true if the ideology driving the leader is based on the militant interpretation of liberalism and not the pacifist one. In our typology the pragmatists are probably to be found in the middle of the continuum adopting more militant or more pacifist positions in a case-by-case manner.

defence; Bosnia and Kosovo were interpreted in (contested) historical analogy to “Auschwitz”, the German-induced genocide that, according to the civil culture established in post-war Germany, is to be never repeated again. However, in contrast to the United States or the United Kingdom, Kosovo, as a military intervention without a UN mandate, was strictly defined as an exception and not as precedence for future military action (Mauil 2001).

In the end, however, not only the democratic side of the mixed dyad has to be differentiated.<sup>47</sup> In this sense as well, a dichotomising view would clearly oversimplify. Even a largely pacifist democracy may be willing to intervene militarily in violently escalating situations of complete state failure or in cases of genocide demanding humanitarian “help in need” (Nothilfe).<sup>48</sup> Hence democratic wars that can be presented as humanitarian interventions in a failed state or as “help in need” interventions, e.g. against genocide, can be expected to gain support among broad parts of rather pacifist orientations as well. In contrast, democratic wars that aim at securing international order or at enforcing international law (world order wars) should be largely rejected even among moderately pacifist orientations. Finally, a regime change war as Iraq 2003 was presented by parts of the US administration should find support only among hard-core militant orientations.<sup>49</sup>

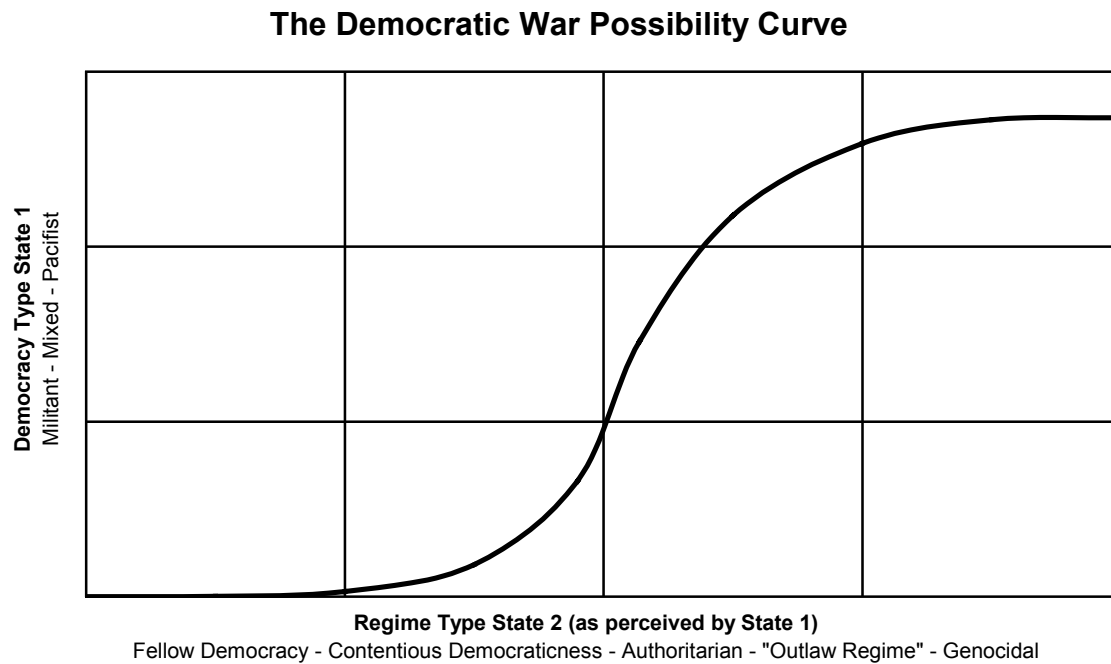
Figure 1 illustrates our theoretical argument. The y-axis shows the political culture of the democracies from extremely militant to extremely pacifist. The x-axis lines up potential dyad-partners for democracies from fully democratic to genocidal-totalitarian. The curve depicts the point at which the democracies would use force vis-à-vis their dyad partners. This curve first lies at zero point (for states clearly perceived as democracies), starts slowly as only the most militant democracies would consider force to remedy smaller violations of democratic values abroad, assumes a stronger gradient as human rights abuse and other breaches of international legal rules would force a steadily higher share of democracies to join the militants in stopping the rule-breaker by force, and peters out finally as it reaches the realm of those radically pacifist democracies that reject all application of force other than self-defence.

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that we would expect a similar differentiation based on political culture reigning in non-democracies, e.g. between “predatory” revisionist/missionary autocracies and satisfied/self-contained autocracies, producing a similar variation of external behaviour.

<sup>48</sup> There were few if any pacifists categorically rejecting the intervention in Somalia, while the genocide-proposition and the legitimisation as “help in need” was pivotal for enforcing and sustaining the decision to join the Kosovo war in largely pacifist Germany.

<sup>49</sup> The most recent war on Iraq indeed is a case in point. Not even in the US, a militant liberal position that sees the liberal purpose “democratising Iraq” as justification enough for war would have been able to gain majoritarian support. Hence the complex combination of aims (self-defence against Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and/or against Saddam Hussein as an ally of Al Quaida; help in need for the Iraqi population as oppressed by a brutal dictatorship).

**Figure 1: The Democratic War Possibility Curve**

#### 4.3. Compatibility with the Data on Democracies' Foreign Conduct

How would this differentiated dyadic approach account for the data on democratic peace? We would assume pacifist democracies not to enter militarised disputes or wars with any other country except if they are attacked. We would expect militant democracies to behave peacefully towards other fellow democracies, whether they are pacifist or militant, since the motivation to liberate suppressed souls would not come up, and any attempt by war entrepreneurs to persuade the democratic polity would fail (other than in the case of misperception, cf. Owen 1994; Kahl 1999). They would, however, be prepared to initiate military conflict with non-democracies, notably those which are particularly repressive (or dangerous) if and when they would see the opportunity of regime (or, at least, significant policy) change on the attacked side at acceptable cost.

Depending on the distribution of democracies in the militant/pacifist continuum, we might see democracies, in the statistical average, as bellicose as non-democracies, a bit more bellicose or a bit less so.<sup>50</sup> We would not expect democracies to show a completely peaceful behaviour in their

<sup>50</sup> Seen from this perspective, the ongoing empirical debate about whether the aggregate population of democracies since 1815 may be statistically slightly more or somewhat less war-prone as compared to non-democracies becomes entirely meaningless. As Rosato puts it: "Liberal democratic norms narrowly circumscribe the range of situations in which democracies can justify the use of force. [...] This does not mean that they will go to war less often than other kinds of states; it only means that there are fewer [and other, HM/JW] reasons available to them for waging war." (Rosato 2003, 588)

statistical average. At this theoretical level, more precise predictions are not possible; this does not mean, however, that the theory is falsification-immune. Hypotheses about the inclination of democracies *in a given period* could be made with more precision – and thus falsified – if a thorough analysis of the prevailing political discourses and the orientation of ruling coalitions establishes the distribution of more militant and more pacifist democracies in a given universe of democracies. And there are two clear-cut cases which would falsify our approach: the inception of inter-democratic war, and the launching of war against a non-democracy by a democratic government without legitimising it publicly with reference to its liberal purpose.

Generally our dyadic constructivist approach is compatible with the basic empirical data: the “separate peace” on the one hand (4.1) and the reality and diversity of democratic war engagement on the other (4.2). We have demonstrated that and why “democracies differentiate between kinds of governments in their use of force” and specified the “different rules [that] apply in democracies’ interactions with others like themselves than in their interactions with nondemocracies” (Kegley and Hermann 2002, 17-8).

Based on this argument of “different rules” operating in inter-democratic relations the democratic propensity to form durable alliances and organisations (cf. Reed 1997; Lipson 2003; Ray 2003: 221) becomes understandable. It is the inter-democratically shared feature of a selective preclusion of war against one another which democracies mutually perceive and which paves the way for the historical process of learning the rule of the separate democratic peace (see 4.1.) and which hence enables inter-democratic co-operation and organisation (cf. Risse-Kappen 1995).

By this way, the reconstructed dyadic explanation can also account for a secondary complex of democratic peace research: that democratic dyads are less likely to become involved in serious militarised disputes and display a greater propensity to peaceful conflict resolution (cf. Ray 2003, 221). However, the empirical research on democratic escalation and negotiation practices up to now remains indecisive on whether democracies infrequently enter militarised escalation processes but then escalate no less than non-democracies do (cf. Reed 2000; Huth and Allee 2002), or whether they are especially prone to switch from escalation to negotiation (cf. Dixon and Senese 2002; Kegley and Hermann 2002, 18). Generally confirmed is only the barrier of escalation in joint democratic dyads “that tends to stifle their evolution short of war” (Dixon and Senese 2002, 567; cf. Kegley and Hermann 2002, 18; Huth and Allee 2002, 273-5). This resembles the barrier of inter-democratic escalation processes as predicted by the dyadic-structurationist approach (see 4.1.). Yet, whereas Huth and Allee (2002, 228-9) conclude that “democratic dyads avoid war with each other

over disputed territory [...] because they are more likely to settle disputes through mutual concessions in negotiated agreements”, the dyadic constructivist approach would argue that it could as well be the other way round. Democratic dyads are more likely to settle disputes through mutual concessions in negotiated agreements because they tend to avoid war. The mentioned barrier to escalation operates: Each government knows it can hardly establish a case for inter-democratic war domestically (and internationally) and that the other side is equally constrained, while this mutual perception allows for the interactionist effect that paves the way for co-operative conflict resolution. By this way, and in contrast to an audience cost-based or a monadic/normative explanation, the dyadic-structurationist approach is able to explain both phenomena of inter-democratic escalation processes: the reluctance of democratic pairs of states to enter into militarised conflict in the first place as well as the particular propensity to switch from escalation to negotiation when drawing nearer towards war.<sup>51</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Democratic peace theory has developed, over the last three decades, a diverse range of explanations to account for the (if still contested) data which empirical research on the peaceful and violent behaviour of democracies has produced. In this article, we have developed, first, a typology to clearly identify different theoretical approaches. Second, we demonstrated that, at a closer look, all four types of explanations reveal weaknesses in terms of theoretical coherence and their ability to account for the data. Third, we offered a structurationist reconstruction of the social constructivist approach that seems able to avoid these flaws.

On the one hand, this dyadic approach clarifies the rationale behind the general peacefulness of democratic dyads. We have argued that democracy constitutes the need for a double-legitimisation of political decisions which results in a specific structuring of democratic foreign behaviour. Whereas democracies do by no means generally rule out the official use of violence (neither domestically nor internationally), wars against other democracies are excluded from the spectrum of possible democratic behaviour as they do not allow for the simultaneous normative and procedural legitimisation. Thus, the “schizophrenic” behaviour of democracies as stated by the “separate

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<sup>51</sup> As inter-democratic conflicts of interest certainly exist and as the inception of escalation processes is not always avoided, the phenomenon of a “barrier of escalation” – indicating a particular capability of democratic dyads for switching from escalatory to de-escalatory strategies (and, thus, quite the opposite of credible signalling) – is another serious blow to the audience costs/signalling argument. Similarly, Dixon and Senese’s monadically based normative explanation of the “barrier” in inter-democratic escalation processes (that emphasises democracies’ experience with mediation, negotiation, and compromise at the domestic level) remains silent on why democracies should wait to employ their negotiation skills until war draws near and why they should not use them in mixed dyads as well.

peace” is constituted by the openness of the democratic process whose ambiguities for war-/ no war-decisions only dissolve in democratic dyads. Empirically further research will have to detail the different “legitimising requirements” on domestic and international level and their consequences for concrete war-/ no war-decisions.

On the other hand, by acknowledging that there are two fundamentally different liberal interpretations regarding the appropriate behaviour towards non-democracies we can account for the pronounced differences in democracies’ external conduct. Depending on the relative strength of these liberal positions, i.e. their political culture, real world democracies find themselves on a spectrum ranging from “pacifist” to “militant”. Further empirical research should analyse those domestic discourses regarding war-/ no war-decisions (cf. Müller 2002b) to clarify the respective ratios of mixture, their determinants and consequences.

Very clearly, the democratic peace research program is as vital as ever. To close the act may please those who think of theory in terms of fashion. For those who think of theory as, well, theory, there is still much to do.

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