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The Systemic Dimension: Marxism and the invisible limits of the Democratic Peace.

John MacMillan
Brunel University, UK
John.macmillan@brunel.ac.uk

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Inquiry into the systemic dimensions of the Democratic Peace brings with it the possibility of uncovering a wider logic or set of determinants, or hitherto unrecognised features or characteristics of the phenomenon, therein challenging existing assumptions or claims. In Democratic Peace theory the engagement with realism, neorealism and, more recently, Kantian notions of the international system (Doyle, 1983a,b; Russett, 1993; Mearsheimer, 1990; Waltz, 1993; Layne, 1994; Huntley, 1996, Harrison, 2002) has ensured that the influence of the (anarchic) international *political* system has been thoroughly discussed. Mirroring the wider debate between liberals and realists, liberals have argued that systemic pressures for conflict and limits to cooperation can be overcome through the development of democracy, interdependence, international organisation and regimes.

However, it is remarkable that the research agenda has largely neglected to examine the significance of the international *economic* system for the development of a democratic peace. In contrast to the international political system which liberals tend to regard as an external realm to be brought under the sway of law and institutional regulation, capitalism and the capitalist nature of the international economic system is regarded as integral to liberalism and the liberal or democratic international order. A critical analysis of the influence of capitalism upon the existence, limits and prospects for a democratic reveals, however that this is a major omission, for it presents possibly the most serious challenge to the core empirical and policy claims of Democratic Peace theorists. Namely, it forces scholars to reopen the question of 'exceptions' to the claim that democracies tend not to go to war against each other and casts doubt on the notion that the spread of democracy, as capitalist democracy, provides a viable approach to the development of a truly international peace.

The omission of capitalism from critical scrutiny in the Democratic Peace literature is also revealing of the paradigmatic narrowness of research into this important subject. Specifically, the Democratic Peace has been analysed principally in its own terms. That is to say, through a mode of idealist, liberal analysis that has taken conventional liberal analytical and political categories such as 'democracy', 'the nation-state', 'war' and the notion that international relations comprises relations between discrete political units for granted. The effect of applying conventional liberal political and analytical categories of analysis to a liberal subject of analysis has been to severely narrow the scope for critique.

It is for this reason that this essay steps outside of the liberal paradigm to draw upon Marxism as a way of creating greater critical distance and utilising a different set of analytical categories in the hope of prizing open the subject in ways that conventional analyses have hitherto been unable to do.

This is not, however, to turn one's back on scholarship to date for ultimately insights from both liberal and Marxist approaches are required if one is seeking to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Democratic Peace. But Marxism does draw out aspects that have hitherto been overlooked and which are vital if one is to seriously engage with the legacy and possibilities of democracy in foreign affairs. In particular, historical materialism's invitation to consider the relationship between the social base (or structure) rooted in the mode of production and the superstructure (including regime type, law, philosophy) has been sorely lacking in Democratic Peace analysis and provides a healthy counter-balance to the idealistic nature of existing accounts that have focused on the power of ideas and institutions to the exclusion of materialist factors, particularly in the realms of class and production.

But at the same time, to mention even a handful of examples from a vast literature clearly shows that the sorts of insights generated by Democratic Peace and related scholarship will be important for any attempt to provide a full or general account of the subject. Doyle's (1983) work, for example, demonstrated the value of a philosophical-historical approach to the subject and, through his use of Kant, that it is intrinsically bound to normative questions such as the categorical imperatives of treating persons as ends in themselves and to behave in ways that can be universalised. In seeking to develop the theoretical understanding of the subject Russett (1993) and Maoz and Russett (1993) sought to differentiate the institutional from the normative mechanisms of Democratic Peace which is a distinction that continues to mark the literature. Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* (1999) developed the rational choice argument as to why political leaders in a democracy are more likely to commit a higher proportion of national resources to a conflict than leaders in an autocracy. Schultz (2001), drawing upon arguments that war is an inefficient method of dispute resolution that often breaks out because of imperfect information about the seriousness of the parties' intentions, highlighted the role the presence of a 'loyal opposition' in a democracy plays in signalling more accurate information about a state's intent and commitment to fight. Reiter and Stam (2002) focused on the role of public opinion in shaping government propensity to use force and explain the tendency of democracies to win the wars they fight in terms of the character of their societal structure. MacMillan (2004) emphasised the role of liberal norms and drew out differences *between* liberals to show that left-liberals (and their respective political parties) tended to have higher thresholds for the use of force than did to the Right, albeit with the exception of certain *casus belli* such as egregious human rights abuses that were of a distinctly liberal political character.

Besides studies that have emerged from a direct engagement with the Democratic Peace debate are numerous other inquiries concerned with the propensity of democracies to use force. Examples include analyses of the influence of the electoral cycle on the incidence of force (Gaubatz, 1999); the 'rally round the flag effect' that examines the extent and

duration of the tendency for the citizenry to ‘automatically’ support the use of force by the President or political leader (Oneal & Bryan, 1995); public opinion (Jentleson, 1992; Oneal, Lian & Joyner, 1996; Jentleson, 1998; Mueller, 1973; Sobel, 2001; the effect of casualties in curtailing support for the use of force (Dixon, 2000; Eichenberg, 2005; Mueller, 2005).

A distinction is drawn in the discussion below between the ‘Democratic Peace’ and ‘democratic peace’. The ‘Democratic Peace’ is taken at that body of knowledge claims comprising the mainstream research agenda (most famously represented by Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett) into this subject, which is constructed in terms of certain specific conceptualisations and shared understandings of key variables, most obviously ‘democracy’ and ‘peace’ but also of ‘war’ and the ‘state’ and the nature of the international realm. By contrast, ‘democratic peace’ deliberately leaves these variables more open-ended, or to put it differently these ‘problems’ unresolved, and as the subject of ongoing critical inquiry. This significance of this distinction will become more apparent as the discussion develops.

The discussion does not offer a Marxist *theory* of the Democratic Peace, but rather draws on Marxist (or Marxist inspired) insights and modes of analysis to establish a specific systemic context for the critique of the Democratic Peace whilst at the same time remaining open to the possibility of other types of democratic peace. This is intended, in part, to enable a fuller understanding of the subject in terms of its character, extent and limitations. The initial conceptual discussion of Marxism and the liberal (capitalist) state is designed to bring into view those aspects of the political that are hidden – or invisible – in conventional accounts and to enable the subsequent shift in appreciation of what forms of violence should properly be regarded – because of their *political* character and role – as a) exceptions to the Democratic Peace and b) indicators of the difficulty of universalising the Democratic Peace.

Marxism, capitalism and the Democratic Peace

Marxism is a famously diverse school of thought centrally concerned with the mode of production, class, the critique of capitalism and capitalist accumulation, and a political commitment to the development of socialism. In contrast to political liberalism’s relative disinterest in the material bases of its own existence, Marxism’s materialist epistemology foregrounds the mode of production – for our purposes capitalism – as a major systemic determinant of the character and behaviour of states. Indeed, it is this primacy accorded to the mode of production as analytically prior to and generative of state form that challenges the notion of the state as an autonomous and unified entity and subverts the notion that international relations can be understood as comprising relations between discrete autonomous political entities. Rather, national states and societies have for centuries been shaped by their relationship to a larger inter-societal system such that their societal and institutional development and form (including regime type) has been significantly shaped by this relationship.

The discussion begins by showing the structural dependence of the contemporary democratic or liberal state upon capitalism and how this shapes political priorities.

Turning then to what is often regarded as the second pillar of the Democratic Peace, the discussion contrasts liberal and Marxist accounts of the effects of trade and commerce. This leads into a discussion of democracy as both a ‘problem’ and an ‘opportunity’ for states in the global South and then turns to consider the ‘invisible’ exceptions to the Democratic Peace.

The liberal (capitalist) state

Democratic Peace theory’s liberal mode of analysis is belied by its treatment of ‘politics’ within the state as the sum of the operation of liberal/democratic institutions and norms. By contrast, Marxists recognise that politics – or the political – within the capitalist state extends beyond the so-called ‘public realm’ of institutional politics to the ‘private realm’ of economic organisation, and that structurally these realms stand in a relation of co-dependency. Indeed, the circumscribed nature of democracy in the capitalist state is evident historically in the move to bestow equal rights on a newly emerging citizenry at the same (literal and metaphorical) moment as the locus of power shifted beyond the ‘public’ to the so-called ‘private’ sphere of capitalist production.

The intertwined and mutually dependent nature of the capital-state relationship is clearly apparent in Offe’s (see Jessop, 1990: 40) identification of four main structural features of the capitalist state. First is the exclusion of the state from the organization of capitalist production and the allocation of private capital and hence its ability to affect accumulation only indirectly. Second, this separation of the state from capitalist production means that its survival and performance depend on revenues that originate outside of its immediate control. Third, and importantly, ‘since capitalism is neither self-regulating nor self-sufficient, the state has a mandate to create and sustain those conditions necessary to accumulation’, the process whereby profits are reinvested in order to expand the stock of capital. This may be thought of as part in terms of Lippit (2005) has called the ‘social structure of accumulation’ (SSA) referring to the institutions and practices that provide the necessary security and guarantees for capitalist activity to take place. To quote Lippit, ‘such institutions may range from a labour market that functions in such a way that assures investors that they will be able to hire (at reasonable cost) employees with the requisite skills to a legal system capable of enforcing contracts and a system of international trade relations that assures access to raw materials, intermediate goods, and export markets’ (2005: 23). A specific example of an international SSA is the Bretton-Woods system but the concept can be extended to refer to practices of geopolitics such as gunboat diplomacy or the sponsorship of client states that serve to reproduce the wider capitalist order.

Fourth, ‘faced with this precarious combination of exclusion and dependence, the state can function on behalf of capital only if it can equate the needs of capital with the national interest and secure popular support for measures that maintain the conditions for accumulation while respecting its private character’ (Jessop, 1990: 40). This point is indicative of the complexity of the modern advanced capitalist democratic state and highlights its co-dependency upon the citizenry *as well as* capital. This complexity is manifest institutionally in that not all agents or departments of the state will necessarily share the same set of interests, particularly with regard to international capital.

Moreover, there may be specific transnational formations or alliances of institutions and interest groups that serve or resist the interests of capital. For Marxists (and left/radical liberals) this conflict of interests has pushed states towards false ideological solutions such as imperialism, nationalism and ‘jingoism’ as way of dealing with the residual class conflict or ‘social question’. For the purposes of Democratic Peace theory, this political intertwining of capital and citizenry in the modern advanced capitalist state reinforces the importance of integrating materialist and institutional/normative factors in efforts to understand the larger subject.

A Marxist perspective, then, stresses how the ultimate dependence of the state on the continued profitability of capitalism sets certain terms within which the institutions and norms of politics are obliged to operate. This dependence both impels and constrains liberal/democratic states, not least in the requirement to act in the interests of the capitalist class and to seek to harness the wider population to such a project. By extension, this also requires the state to have a direct interest in the reproduction and development of an international political order favourable to the interests of capital. Such structural analysis fundamentally dislodges the primacy conventional Democratic Peace theory accords to democratic institutions and norms as the sole determinants of policy. That politics within the liberal/democratic state operates prior and parallel to the workings of the formal democratic institutions *and that this is a structural requirement* places great importance on the question of the implications of capitalism for democracy and for peace. Further, situating the state in a wider set of transnational and intersocietal relationships undermines the assumption that the subject can be analysed in terms of relations between discrete political entities. These points raise troubling questions for the empirical robustness of the Democratic Peace, as will be shown below. First, however, the discussion turns to draw out the structural dimension of the second pillar of Democratic Peace theory: commerce and interdependence.

Capitalism and Commerce

The notion that commerce and interdependence foster peace through rendering war between trading partners irrational has been a mainstay of liberal thought and can be found in the writings and statements of theorists and politicians alike (see, for example, Adam Smith, William Gladstone, Norman Angell, Cordell Hull, and John Maynard Keynes). Besides generating peace, however, liberals have also claimed that commerce and trade act as progressive agencies of civilisation and modernisation through extending practices of contract, law and administration. These themes are apparent in the influential discourses of modernisation theory in the 1960s and that of ‘good governance’ since the end of the Cold War.

A number of scholars working within the Democratic Peace debate have sought to evaluate empirically the notion that there is a positive relationship between democracy and peace, and any such claims must be taken especially seriously in the context of the enormous political changes on the European continent since 1945. Doyle (1983b: 326) argued that the existence of market relations removes issue of trade and commerce from the political realm in relations between liberal states but that in relations between liberal and non-liberal states the general condition of mistrust limits this mechanism. Bruce

Russett and John Oneal (2001) identified a positive correlation between trade and peace although the question remains disputed (see Chan, 1997: 76)

At the cutting edge of the liberal account, however, is the success of the western European states (under American hegemony) in establishing a solid regional peace in the post-1945 period. Closely related to this is the development of an American backed democratisation of the defeated Powers, (West) Germany and Japan, and the development of an international economic order that enabled them to develop and prosper through commercial rather than military means (Milward, 1984; Deutsch, 1957; Rosecrance, 1986). It is Europe, however, wherein which West Germany's rehabilitation took place within the regional institutional framework of the European Union (or rather its predecessors) that the transformation in the *quality* of relations is greatest. The combination of economic cooperation and political-legal institutional reform ran alongside efforts to develop greater societal and cultural inter-connectedness and the development of a common civic space, leading to the development of a 'positive peace' among the member states of the European Union. Notably, since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union the European Union has played an important part in addressing the threat of nationalism in central, eastern and to a more limited extent south-eastern Europe through extending institutional and economic cooperation up to and including full membership of the EU itself.

Beyond Europe, participation in the post-1945 liberal economic order benefited initially Japan and in its wake the East Asian 'tiger' economies and more recently China. Indeed, liberals and institutionalists argue that the level of financial and trade interdependence between China and the United States provides the best hope that the likely shift in the regional balance of power between these two states will pass without recourse to major war. (Int Security debate; Scott, 2007).

These are important insights, particularly when viewed against Realist claims about the difficulty of cooperation and peace under anarchy. But, for many Marxists they are a highly selective account of the relations between the advanced capitalist states and neglect the legacy of imperialism and dependency that characterises the vertical structure of the international capitalist system and the distortional and dislocating effects of international capitalism on the social and political development of pre-capitalist societies. Even the 'jewel' of liberal achievement, the post-1945 west-European peace, was the product of a period of exceptional political will among the victors produced by the confluence of several major factors. These were the imperative of avoiding a repeat of the disastrous peace of 1918 and subsequent economic collapse of the 1930s and the need to contain the power and ideational appeal of the communism whilst at the same time benefiting from the compliance of the defeated Powers and the hegemonic leadership and resources of the United States. It was, then, ultimately the imperative of physical and societal survival that made a relatively benign peace possible among the capitalist Powers after 1945. There is, however, no such security imperative in relations between the strong and the weak.

Indeed, the cases of successful development that underwrite the liberal ‘myth’ of the free market were in fact the product of strong and effective state action to limit the free-play of market forces. During the nineteenth century even those later industrialising states such as the United States, Germany and Japan found it necessary to utilise the strength of the state to protect their industries and markets from the competitive advantage of Great Britain (see List, 1841). Similarly, those East Asian states that successfully developed in the post-1945 period did so under the auspices of a strong state structure that was able to support and/or protect national industries and negotiate the terms of engagement with transnational market forces (Hurrell & Woods, 1995). That China, which had maintained a high level of insulation from the global financial capital market was relatively unharmed by the 1997 East Asian Crash, unlike those states in the region that had liberalised their financial systems, further illustrates the need for strong and effective state structures to counter-act the structural power and volatility of market forces. And this is the point, many states outside of the advanced capitalist core do not enjoy sufficiently strong and effective state structures to establish and maintain a favourable ‘social structure of accumulation’ in engaging global market forces and the institutions of transnational capital. Further, many that have the potential to employ such structures ‘choose’ not to use them, as discussed below.

In relations with many of these weaker (generally post-colonial) states liberals have generated reformist discourses such as the Brandt Commission reports of the late 1970s/early 1980s (see Falk, 1995 for a critical review of the commission format). However, it is telling that it has been structural crises such as those of oil or debt rather than liberal reform projects that have determined the economic fate of these states, even before the general turn away from Keynesian towards neo-liberal economics which actively sought the further dismantling of the ability of post-colonial states to resist transnational capital and market forces. Such a context provides little reason to think that the current Millennium development goals will succeed; indeed they may be better regarded as an attempt to prevent the poorest and most troubled states from crashing out of the global capitalist system altogether.

At the conceptual level, Marxism is particularly strong on identifying the link between capitalism and regime type. In particular, historical materialism posits a direct connection between on the one hand a state’s place in the vertical structure or hierarchy of the international capitalist system and the ensuing degree of penetration by foreign capital and, on the other, the social-political character and development of the state, including the matter of its regime type. Here again, this time at the international level, Marxism pushes liberalism to consider the limits of institutional-normative purview through forcing an engagement with the materialist determinants of regime type.

Theorists from the ‘dependency’ school such as Andre Gunder Frank and the ‘world-systems’ school such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, and Christopher Chase-Dunn have sought to draw out these connections between regime type and the international economic system. For these writers, participation in the capitalist system reproduces and exacerbates the divisions between the rich and the poor and correspondingly limits the possibility of democracy in the south in particular. For

Gunder Frank, there can be ‘little real and meaningful democratic government... in any part of the ‘Third World’ South as long as their economic possibilities are limited and their policy options are controlled by their participation in the *whole* world economy, which is run from the North’ (Frank, 1993: 35, 52-55).

Immanuel Wallerstein pioneered the idea of a ‘world-system’, originating in Europe in the sixteenth century and subsequently expanding across the globe. The system is characterised by three main regions: core, periphery and semi-periphery. The developed, advanced capitalist core imports raw materials and exports manufactures and is marked by democratic governments, high wages and welfare services. The periphery exports raw materials and imports manufactures and is marked by non-democratic governments with below subsistence wages and no welfare services. Between these there exists a semi-periphery that is both exploited and exploiter and which serves to counteract any upward pressure on wages in the core. It is both exploiter and exploited and provides a measure of political stability to the system as a whole through ensuring that the core is not faced with the unified opposition of all the others, therein preventing a polarized world system. The specific economic and political character of the semi-periphery varies over time but whilst states therein may well develop beyond authoritarian forms of government they are unlikely to develop as western-style democracies.

For Samir Amin, that ‘Third World countries have almost never seen their political systems develop in the genuinely democratic manner (on the lines of the developed capitalist countries of the West, since 1945 at least)’ is itself a function of the incompatibility of democracy ‘with the demands of capitalist expansion’ (1993: 61). The polarisation of societies – ‘with socially intolerable consequences for the peoples of the peripheries and semi-peripheries’ (1993: 61) embeds a residual and structural instability in these societies that, in turn, fosters patterns of repressive and distorted political development that will continue until these societies delink from the international capitalist system.

One such form of repressive and distorted government has been the right-wing dictatorship with a social base in the traditional land-owning elites in conjunction with the military, foreign capital and the local comprador beneficiaries. The international dimension to the social base of the regime and the character of the state illustrates the point above about the inadequacy of assuming international relations to be the sum of relations between discrete political entities. Challenges to authoritarian rule may take a number of forms, but one common model is that of the ‘populist’ response that addresses some aspects of the social problems that beset peripheral societies but which tend to be governed by a charismatic leader that maintains a ‘top-down’ approach to political power such that the masses that support the regime are ‘not permitted to organise as an autonomous force in respect to the authorities’ (1993: 68). However, such regimes may well pursue policies of industrialisation, nationalisation of sectors dominated by foreign capital, land reform, and reforms in the areas of health, education and social rights. The weaknesses of these regimes lie in their leadership structure and their susceptibility to foreign destabilization and intervention as they challenge the economic and political interests of the core.

For Amin, the ‘middle ground’ between right-wing dictatorships and populist regimes is a form of ‘petty democracy’ in which regimes recognise the principle of multi-party elections and grant a measure of free speech but which fall short of addressing fundamental social problems or challenging relations of dependence. These regimes are unlikely to resolve the contradictions of democracy under capitalism for their responsiveness to the core’s agenda – as manifest for example in the neo-liberal policies of the “Washington consensus” – prevents pursuit of a social reformist agenda and exacerbates inequality and social problems, thereby maintaining the country in a state of residual instability and crisis. Beyond these forms of government states elsewhere in the periphery may be marked by the brutal ‘kleptocracies’ of the Fourth World or a religious fundamentalist challenge, often after authoritarian regimes have repressed or extinguished secular channels of dissent.

The vital point, then, is that national societies have for centuries been affected by their place in a larger transnational, inter-societal system and that this has directly shaped the mode of government and regime type of states, particularly in the periphery. But there is also a further normative and political point about how a state’s position in the international economic system affects the *type* of democracy that may be most appropriate or suitable and in particular whether the ‘bourgeois model’ is the most satisfactory. Hence, for Amin, ‘to stop at Western democratic forms without taking into consideration the social transformations demanded by the anti-capitalist revolt of the periphery means holding on to a caricature of bourgeois democracy and thus ensuring alienation from the people and extreme vulnerability. For our democracy to take root it must, from the start, take a position that goes beyond capitalism’. He is far from sanguine about such a prospect, however, for as the discussion turns to consider exceptions to the Democratic Peace, ‘this is the prospect that imperialism cannot accept’ (1993: 71).

Marxism, ‘invisible’ exceptions and the boundaries of the Democratic Peace

For world-system theorists, then, it is the political division of the core and periphery (marked by persistent structural tensions and contradictions) that forms the central axis of global politics rather than the democratic/non-democratic division fore-grounded in Democratic Peace theory. Indeed, the vertical, hierarchical division of core-periphery is presented as prior to and to a significant extent determinative of the horizontal, ideological division between democracies and non-democracies. Moreover, and importantly, it is this vertical axis that sets the structural context for analysing the vital but complex interplay between capitalism, modes of violence and political form or superstructure (i.e. regime type). More specifically, the way in which the protection of certain capitalist interests or the wider capitalist order (or social structure of accumulation) requires and deploys various modes of governance, repression and structural and direct violence directly affects the form of government in the target state and limiting the prospects for its democratic development.

That these tensions may on occasion entail the direct use of force between democracies is the most stark mode of exception to the Democratic Peace but such cases are but the ‘tip

of an iceberg' in the sense that they are part of a wider class of activity in which practices of the core reproduce both the underdevelopment of states in the periphery *and* their inability to resolve tensions between democratization and participation in the global capitalist system. Accordingly, that this central tension remains unresolved effectively forecloses cases of exception to the Democratic Peace that would arise from expression of the persistent and residual conflicts of interests between core and periphery – because these same pressures prevent periphery states becoming democratic and registering on the Democratic Peace antennae. To put this differently, the structurally determined conflict of interests between North and South will only exceptionally be manifest in terms of war between two democracies as the imperialist nature of the North-South relationship generally prevents or limits the development of democracy in the South as argued above by Amin. This, then, is testimony to the limits of the Democratic Peace and strongly suggests that the global capitalist system presents a major obstacle to the universalisation of the Democratic Peace.

Before discussing specific modes of violence as exceptions to the Democratic Peace it is necessary to justify the move away from the sole focus upon 'inter-state war'. The significance of the Democratic Peace lies in the notion that democratic political communities are able to co-exist peacefully and that, by inference, a world of democracies would be a world at peace. The absence of war is an empirical indicator of this claim and should not be regarded as synonymous with the condition of inter-democratic state peace itself. It need not, however, be the only indicator, and it is here that Marxism's ontological focus upon the extra-institutional/normative arms of the state and that the transnationality of class relations opens the door to the possibility of transnational/intersocietal modes of violence. It is in this sense that Marxism brings hitherto 'invisible' or apparently irrelevant phenomena into the field of vision. Their import lies in their character as instances and patterns of political violence, albeit ones that required a different set analytical categories and empirical indicators than those conventionally used in order to be recognised.

Two particularly pointed modes of violence that from a Marxist perspective should properly be considered exceptions to the Democratic Peace, because of their *political character*, are forcible covert operations and support for authoritarian governments against democratic states or democratic forces within the state. These are discussed further below but they are not the only mode of conceivable exception. Civil wars, for example, where the indigenous peasant or working classes are pitted against elites that are part of a comprador class allied with transnational capital become candidates once the transnational and inter-societal character of global politics is borne in mind. Likewise, instances of war or forcible intervention by a core democracy into a periphery state where the latter had been pushed from democracy or democratization towards greater authoritarianism due to external pressure from the core. Also, there remains the big question of whether peace will endure within the core in the forthcoming years, which for world-system theorists certainly remains one that is open (Bornschiefer & Chase-Dunn, 1999).

The study of the incidence and character of exceptions to the Democratic Peace has an importance beyond the specifics of each case for it also reveals something of the general nature and limits of the phenomenon itself. In this case the argument is pointing strongly to the subordination of the Democratic Peace to the imperative of maintaining the international capitalist system. The Democratic Peace appears increasingly as primarily a peace between the advanced capitalist states and the contradictions between capitalism and democracy present powerful obstacles towards it forming the bases of a truly international, let alone perpetual peace.

Covert operations

The question of whether forcible covert actions by strong against weak democracies can be counted as exceptions to the Democratic Peace thesis, and if so how significant these might be, was raised early in the research agenda but merits reconsideration in the light of Marxist insights. Of particular significance are six cases discussed by Forsythe (1992) and Russett (1993) in which the United States covertly used or threatened violence against elected governments: Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Indonesia (1957), Brazil (from 1961), Chile (1973), and Nicaragua (from 1984). The first of two points of contestation was whether the weaker democracy was sufficiently democratic to count as an exception to the Democratic Peace (Forsythe, 1992; Russett, 1993: 120-25). The second – and more problematic – is whether the covert nature of these operations leads them to be regarded principally as exceptions or vindications of the core thesis, and it is this point that will be discussed here as the interpretation relates directly to the mode of analysis employed.

Russett (1993: 123) attaches considerable significance to the covert, deniable character of these activities as indicative of the difficulties that administrations would have faced in gaining public support for them through regular institutional channels. Hence ‘in a very important sense, the U.S. democratic political system worked to limit intervention.... Normative/cultural and structural/institutional restraints were strong enough to forestall open military action, but not strong enough to prevent a secret operation or to stop it belatedly’ (1995: 124). However from a Marxist perspective, the privileging of ‘regular’ institutional forms over the covert or the exceptional is deceptive in the same way as the focus on the public at the expense of ‘private’ realm. Rather than an institutional loophole or imperfection, covert operations and the specific state agencies that execute them are an institutional requirement arising from the contradictions between the public discourse of democracy and the material-strategic nature of the modern capitalist state.

This contradiction between democracy and capitalism is a key factor in leading the liberal/democratic *capitalist* state to maintain extra-institutional apparatus to ensure the satisfaction of class interests when required. In this sense, parallel executive agencies are a structural requirement of the modern democratic state so that the state can achieve its objectives – and maintain the conditions of its own existence – in those circumstances when democratically elected legislatures either would not support such actions or else would be seriously divided. That these form part of a specific ‘social structure of (capitalist) accumulation’ and serve a structural requirement of the democratic state is the basis for the inclusion, not exclusion, as exceptions to the Democratic Peace. The are

clear indications of the priority the democratic capitalist hegemon attached to the maintenance of the capitalist system, in the context of a wider military contest between communism and capitalism, over and above democratic norms of toleration and non-intervention. Forcible covert interventions expose the structural tensions between core and periphery and that, ultimately, whether the target state was or wasn't democratic was seemingly of little importance. Marxism's contribution, then, is to re-situate forcible covert interventions in a theoretical context and conceptual framework that reveals their structural and political function and that foregrounds the interplay between capitalism, modes of violence and regime type.

Support for authoritarian regimes

That democracies have a long historical record of supporting authoritarian regimes in the Third World or the periphery is well-established (Schmitz, 1999; Chomsky, 1993, 82-83). That these practices are not usually thought of as constituting exceptions to the Democratic Peace is, however, due to the over-rigid focus upon one specific indicator of violence (inter-state war) rather than the root proposition of whether (capitalist) democracies as a mode of socio-political organisation can form the basis of a peaceful world order. Indeed, there is an intrinsic bias to the focus upon inter-state war – defined, for example, as 'large-scale institutionally organized lethal violence' incurring over a thousand battle-deaths (Russett, 1993: 12) – as this is a category of violence that has its historical roots in European Great Power relations and hence assumes the existence of the state as a common mode of political organisation. In relations between core and periphery (historically the colonial and subject realms) other modes of governance, control and violence were and continue to be more typical and if one is serious about the prospects for a properly international democratic peace these too should be taken into account.

From a Marxist perspective the practice of supporting right-wing authoritarian regimes is itself evidence of the impossibility of a capitalist peace, but the specific point of engagement with the Democratic Peace research claims is that democracies have frequently sponsored and maintained right-wing authoritarian regimes that have suppressed democratic opposition and violated human rights. Whilst many of these cases were during the Cold War Schmitz has shown that U.S. support for right-wing dictators emerged as a response to fears for order and stability following the First World War, and in particular was a Republican counter-move to Woodrow Wilson's emphasis on self-determination. Yet even Wilson shifted his concern from that of autocratic governments to the containment of Bolshevism, which was a priority shared by subsequent Democrat as well as Republican administrations. Hence following World War One and the rise of nationalist and communist movement, 'this emphasis on order came to permeate policy-making in Washington, and the United States found strong-arm rule, the maintenance of stability, anticommunism, and protection of investments sufficient reasons to support nondemocratic rulers' (Schmitz, 1999: 6).

At the heart of the tensions between core and periphery were the popular and democratic aspirations of people in the periphery and the attachment to property rights by governments in the core. For mainstream liberal governments these tensions have often

been expressed through the search – generally to be disappointed – for ‘our kind of liberal’ in the developing world who would be politically and economically safe whilst pursuing a limited degree of social reform. However, the polarisation of societies in the periphery has often meant that the kind of support base necessary for such a figure to succeed has been limited and any ensuing cooperation with more radical nationalist or socialist forces has been regarded with suspicion in the core. Hence even figures such as Arbenz (Guatemala, overthrown in 1953), Bosch (Dominican Republic, overthrown in 1963), and Goulart (Brazil, overthrown in 1964) that were the closest one is able to find to reformist liberals in Latin American were regarded with suspicion due to their pursuit of an independent or non-aligned foreign policy and limited land reform and nationalisations and refusal to vigorously suppress the Left. Following their overthrow, these leaders were replaced by US supported right-wing dictatorships.

That the character and complexion of political movements within the state is directly related to one’s position in the international economic hierarchy presents a problem for liberal expectations that patterns of political and democratic development will emulate those in the advanced capitalist states. That it may take different forms severs the notion that there is a latent or embryonic community of ‘democracies-in-waiting’ and presents a particular challenge for liberal doctrines of toleration. That a political community’s relationship to the hierarchy of global capital will profoundly shape its notion of what democracy requires in terms of political priorities and what aspects of socio-economic and political life might be subject to public democratic governance in terms of the extent of democracy across the social realm stands to expose marked and deep differences of interest between the core and the periphery. When perceived as such, the practice of support for right-wing authoritarian regimes over local forces of self-determination and democratisation is a form of residual, preventive warfare designed to protect the interests of capital – and advanced capitalist states – against the demands of populations in the underdeveloped regions for greater economic equity by denying those populations political power.

Social structures of accumulation in historical context

Forcible covert intervention and support for right-wing authoritarian regimes represent particular social structures of accumulation that enable capital to protect both specific economic and financial interests and a global political order that is responsive to the interests of capital in general. However, it is important to remember that these practices are not themselves the problem but historically specific *responses* to the problem – which is the tension between the ‘democratic’ or emancipatory aspirations of peoples in the developing world and the interests of capital in maintaining its rate of profit and an environment favourable to this end. Specific social structures of accumulation (SSA) will vary over time and space; they don’t last forever but crumble due to internal contradictions and a changing social environment. For Lippit, ‘when and if a new SSA is constructed, it emerges partly in response to the drive of capital to re-establish favourable conditions for accumulation, and partly by indirection – as a by-product of favourable ‘external’ conditions interacting with the wide variety of social conflicts taking place at any given time. Class conflict plays a major role in this regard, but that is only one of numerous conflicts that play a role’ (2005: 43).

Returning to the multi-faceted nature of the modern advanced capitalist state, an important if by no means wholly autonomous factor in the wider social environment is the institutional/normative context, and in particular the strength and substance of democracy in this regard. Democratic norms, in this context, refer to what is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for a democracy and to the rights held by others by virtue of their political character. Whilst this is not the place to give a detailed account of the interplay between such normative considerations and material factors, such an account would form part of the narrative required to explain changes in the social structure of accumulation over time. Such an account would explore the interplay of normative and materialist factors in the evolution of responses to the residual tension between international capital, self-determination and democracy in the South or periphery. Such responses have included practices of gunboat diplomacy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dollar-diplomacy and interventionism of the 1920s, superseded by the 'Good Neighbor' policy of the late 1920s and early 1930s which proclaimed non-interventions whilst supporting or tolerating right-wing authoritarian regimes locally, through to the period of forcible covert interventions and active support for repressive right-wing regimes during the Cold War period. All of these approaches have been marked by tensions and contradictions, however, and it is notable that they have been controversial, particularly on the left.

The way in which this tension will be managed in the post-Cold War period is not yet clear. However, a particular challenge will be to manage a period in which, on the one hand, there are indications of the re-emergence of left-leaning democracies in the South (particularly Latin America) and attempts to fuse democracy and Islam in the Middle East whilst on the contemporary rhetoric on democracy encourages the normative prohibition of intervention against a democracy. The reactionary response to this situation may well be to narrow the definition of democracy to those most closely resembling Western market-friendly secular democracies. Besides being highly ethnocentric, such a response may well be self-defeating in that it fails to engage with the most moderate sectors of the non-Western world. A more progressive response would be to recognise and engage with the increasing plurality of democratic forms and to enter into a serious dialogue upon the terms of a global democratic political community. Indeed, it is only through such measures that the real potential of democracy for the international community can ever really be known.

Conclusion

The discussion above has sought to show how Marxist insights into the nature of democracy and international order and the relationship between capitalism, modes of violence and regime type seriously challenges the central claims of the Democratic Peace and its political implications. It has identified exceptions to the Democratic Peace and identified their relationship to wider social and political forces through situating them in a wider theoretical context. That these exceptions constitute a fault-line in relations between the core and periphery effectively demarcates an analytical and political boundary of the Democratic Peace. The discussion has also raised questions regarding the conditions of possibility for a democratic peace. The contradiction between

capitalism and democracy at the international level casts undermines the assumption that capitalist democracy can be universalised, thereby rendering unattainable the Democratic Peace ideal. Falk's potent comment that '[liberalism] formulates an attractive ethical framework, yet exempts from criticism the very social and economic forces that obstruct the values at stake' is apposite (1995: 570).

In order to reach such a point, however, it was necessary to step outside of the predominant liberal paradigm of analysis. A Marxist perspective was vital, for as capitalism is effectively invisible in liberal accounts of the democratic state and democratic politics, so it has been invisible in liberal accounts of the Democratic Peace. The foregrounding of capitalism and, in particular, the vertical, hierarchical structure of the international economic system has provided the structural reference point that gives the particular subjective character to key concepts that are often thought of in singular, universal terms: the 'state' and 'society', 'democracy', and 'war' being uppermost here. That is to say, rather than viewing these in fixed terms, particularly in terms set by hegemonic actors and discourses, it is important to be open to differences that arise from their specific relation to the vertical structure of the international capitalist system.

The implications of this perspectival shift reflect the political debate and push the analyst in one of two directions. The first would be a reactionary move to seek recourse to a formalistic account of the Democratic Peace that seeks to maintain its impregnability as a social-scientific construct through a strict insistence on tightly – effectively narrowly – defined representations of the subject. This would maintain an emphasis on certain tightly, indeed restrictively, defined variables. Hence 'democracy' will be defined so as to include support for capitalism and in varying degrees the free-market, 'war' as the sole form of relevant political violence, discussed within a framework that is 'inter-state' rather than 'global' as it assumes the subject matter can be addressed through the assumption of discrete national, sovereign entities. Whilst this would most likely maintain the empirical standing of the Democratic Peace it is to police the letter rather than explore the spirit of the relationship between democracy and peace. It is unlikely to push the research agenda in a progressive direction given the likely challenges to the Democratic Peace in the twenty-first century from conservative of all ilks.

The second is to focus on the core claim that there is a positive relationship between democracy and peace but that democracy is itself a developing project and that the most appropriate forms of democracy may vary according to context; to maintain the importance of a critical disposition that is responsive to the transnational and intersocietal constitution of global politics and that is wary of ahistorical and ethnocentric attempts to 'fix' or privilege key indicators of phenomena as the sole indicators, as noted above. The deeper liberal suspicion capitalism is itself, however, nothing new, for since the beginning of the twentieth century liberalism itself has been divided on the question of the relationship between capitalism and peace (MacMillan, 1998). Indeed, Marxism and liberalism both share an emancipatory interest in the development of the human race and a willingness to subordinate narrowly conceived political interests to this wider normative quest. Besides a real working commitment to peace, a necessary feature of this position, however, will most likely be considerably greater toleration by democracies

in the core of different models of democratic development in the periphery, even when these directly challenge the core's economic interest and cultural identity.

In terms of the research agenda, it is worth pondering again the remarkable fact that after twenty-five years of Democratic Peace scholarship a factor as fundamental as that of 'capitalism' has not been seriously discussed. The above essay is an initial effort to correct this omission and to highlight how little we still know about the empirical determinants and limits of this important topic. Indeed, through the use of a Marxist standpoint, it raises serious questions about whether the Democratic is principally an ideological rather than a genuine peace project: a project that claims universal relevance but is in practice limited to advanced capitalist states. Accordingly, the research agenda might at this stage better serve the causes of democracy and peace by engaging in a period of sustained critical inquiry and reflection rather than further empirical confirmation.

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