

**Democratic Peace Theory as Practice:
(Re)Reading the Significance of Liberal
Representations of War and Peace**

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One of the major difficulties in the critical study of International Relations is that what at first glance may be considered a seemingly unrelated event, may in fact have profound implications for the meanings, relations, and representational practices of the discipline and the phenomena that it seeks to understand. Over the past few years, long-standing evidence has come back into the spotlight that the American Constitution was in part influenced by the Iroquois Confederacy's *Great Law of Peace*.¹ This has sparked a lively and often nasty debate between on the one hand, those who find the idea to be compelling and on the other, self-proclaimed conservatives like Rush Limbaugh and former Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, who have on the basis of little counter evidence, found the idea to be completely without merit.² Moreover, these conservative pundits argue that the ability of the idea of the Iroquois influencing the US Constitution to gain any legitimacy is symbolic of a general decline, initiated by the emergence of 'political correctness', in American society at large.³

Those in academia who have presented compelling evidence of the interactions between the Iroquois Confederacy and the founders of the American Constitution which plausibly points to the impact of the former on the latter, have been pilloried by their colleagues. While there seems to be no dispute within academia that the Iroquois political system embodied (and continues to embody) many characteristics that we might associate with liberal democracy (e.g., political representation, gender equality, individual freedoms), charges are still made that claims about the influence of the Iroquois on the American political system are unscholarly, without rigour, dogmatic, lacking in 'objectivity', and a practice of 'myth-making'.⁴ The key question here is what does this have to do with international relations?

The answer in part, is given that liberal democracy and the liberal democratic political system are firmly entrenched in the American national psyche, any suggestion that they are not wholly an 'American' (or at least 'Western') product is tantamount to a full scale attack on US national identity and the ontological presuppositions that form its foundations. This is particularly acute when Native Americans are involved, for they have traditionally been seen as the uncivilized and savage 'other' on the North American continent. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that far from being just window-dressing to (geo)strategic interests as argued by realists, or the ultimate guarantor of peace as argued by democratic peace adherents, the American (and Western) conception of liberal democracy creates the binaries necessary for the war-making practices of the United States and other like minded allies such as Canada.

In order to substantiate this controversial claim, I will begin by deconstructing the democratic peace. Liberal democracy should be seen not just as a fundamental principle influencing the nature of state government and domestic rule, but as a subjective tool to differentiate 'friend' from 'foe' and 'opportunity' from 'threat'. The notion of liberal democracy is an integral part of what Roxanne Lynn Doty has referred to as the 'representational practices' of the American (or Western) state.⁵

Viewing liberal democracy as an international relations practice within a representational framework clearly illuminates three significant points with regards to the theory and practice of the democratic peace that will be addressed in this paper. First, is through a representational deconstruction,

the ontological nature of war and of peace become apparent. Second, because war and peace can be just as much about ontology as strategy, war and peace may take place not only on the battlefield or in diplomatic chambers but also in classrooms and media outlets (beyond the dissemination of propaganda) through the production and reproduction of binaries and classification schemes. In other words, devastating wars are often fought equally with words as with weapons; conversely, peace can be achieved through discursive understanding as well as the laying down of arms. Therefore, Limbaugh and Bork are not simply uninformed pundits, but are also combatants in an ontological battleground. Finally, a representational view of the democratic peace helps to illustrate how democratic peace theory and practice can and perhaps even must be silent about other versions of democracy like the Iroquois Confederacy.

Deconstructing the Democratic Peace⁶

The idea that democracies do not fight each other can be traced back to the writings of Immanuel Kant over two hundred years ago in *The Perpetual Peace*; however, it was not until the early 1980s and the writings of Michael Doyle that the idea received its first contemporary articulation.⁷ According to Doyle and other adherents of the democratic peace, liberal democratic states have been able to maintain peaceful relations amongst themselves, but are prone to wage war against non-liberal/democratic regimes. Contrary to the gloomy predictions of realism, democratic peace adherents argue that liberal democratic states have been able to transcend the imperatives of power politics and an international system of anarchy in their relations with other liberal democratic states, and have not even attacked other liberal democratic states when it may have been to their advantage. Most though are willing to concede that liberal democratic states will attack non-liberal democratic states (which they do not view as legitimate actors) in attempts to spread liberal democratic values.

Because democratic peace adherents are firmly rooted in the positivist tradition of international relations scholarship, providing empirical proof of the democratic peace has become a cottage industry in many prominent American universities and research centres. Vast databases have been constructed of historical dyadic relationships between states of the world as well as detailed breakdowns of incidents of inter-state war. The conclusions reached are best signified in the work of Bruce Russett who has argued that alleged wars between democracies (most of which took place in the 19th century) do not meet 'rigorous' criteria for a democracy and/or for war.⁸ These criteria of course are those subjectively chosen by Russett. He defines a democracy as a system of government with a voting franchise for a substantial fraction of citizens.⁹ War is defined by Russett as an interstate activity with one thousand battle fatalities.¹⁰ Furthermore, Russett's data claims to show that since the end of World War II, democratic dyads have not only been able to avoid war, but are less likely to threaten to use force in the settlement of their disputes.¹¹

Although providing empirical evidence of the democratic peace proved to be a challenge in mainstream discussions of international relations, it pales in comparison to the efforts dedicated to

explaining the democratic peace. As the idea of the democratic peace has become widely accepted in the American/Western academic and (more importantly) policy-making circles, explanations of the democratic peace have multiplied. These explanations can be broadly broken down into four main categories including those that emphasize the structural constraints imposed on policy-makers in liberal democratic regimes, those that argue shared norms between liberal democracies are the key, those that assert that democracies are ‘satisfied powers’ unlikely to use force, and those that emphasize that perceptions among liberal democracies are such that they represent each other as trustworthy. Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive and some of the most plausible explanations of the democratic peace (like the one provided by John Owen) are able to combine elements of these categories into expertly layered multi-dimensional stories of why democracies do not fight each other.¹²

What is perhaps most interesting about democratic peace theory is not how its adherents have attempted to explain the phenomenon, but its resonance with the general public and policy-makers. Moreover, this pop-culture popularity has occurred despite the general perception within the wider academic community that at best, it represents wishful thinking. More importantly, the nuances of democratic peace theory have been lost as it has become enmeshed within popular political discourse in the West. Thus, democratic peace theory has been transformed into a set of assertions that are constantly repeated by commentators and policy-makers at the first signs of conflict in the international arena:

1. democracies are inherently peaceful unless unjustly attacked (or threatened) by authoritarian regimes,
2. uses of force by democracies are justified because they are directed against real threats launched by rogue actors intent on undermining the ‘democratic way of life’,
3. democracies by definition cannot go to war with one another (as a result of assertion 1),
4. the best way to ensure global stability and peace is to promote the spread of democracy.

The power of these four assertions is augmented by the fact that they are very easy to comprehend and thus disseminate to the population at large; they muster support and help to provide a basis of legitimacy for actions (including the large-scale use of violence) that may have otherwise generated internal apathy if not opposition. In particular, the spread of democracy has been touted by Western governments as the panacea to all global ills and has therefore been (mis)used as a rationale for the use of force in several instances including NATO’s bombing of Serbia, the Coalition war against the Taliban, and the invasion of Iraq. The irony that one ‘brand’ of democracy is being promoted in the Post-Cold War world through the use of force rather than open discussion seems to be lost on many Western observers.

Given the prevalence of the democratic peace thesis and its rhetorical impact both in the policy-making community and popular Western political discourse, a critical international relations scholar is faced with Robert Cox’s key theoretical questions: to paraphrase, ‘for whom and for what purpose has

democratic peace theory been constructed’?¹³ From a slightly different angle, Ido Oren and Jude Hays have argued “regularities of foreign policy can only be found where the analyst searches for them, and US political scientists tend to devote a disproportionate share of their resources and energy to searches around the categories of democracy and/or liberalism”.¹⁴ Thus far, too few international scholars have been able or willing to ask why? By deconstructing the democratic peace as a representational practice, possible answers will be found.

Democratic Peace Theory as a Representational Practice

Before undertaking a representational deconstruction of democratic peace theory, it is important to distinguish this technique from the standard theoretical deconstruction common to critical international relations scholarship. Where the standard theoretical deconstruction seeks to elucidate the assumptions, presuppositions, and norms that have influenced the foundations of a particular theory, a representational deconstruction of the sort attempted in this paper seeks to reveal how a theory has both moulded and become enmeshed within ideas of self-identification and an ontological outlook which helps to define identity. A standard theoretical deconstruction of the democratic peace would reveal just how much the theory has in common with realism including positivist epistemology, states as the primary actors, the assumption of anarchy, and the use of sovereignty as the predominant organizing principle of the international system. Although a fascinating line of inquiry in its own right, I believe that a standard theoretical deconstruction cannot answer ‘the who and for what purpose’ question as effectively as a deconstruction of the representational practices of democratic peace theory.

According to Doty, the hegemonic dimension of global politics is inextricably linked to representational practices, as hegemonic practices, are those which seek to create a fixedness of meaning (in identity) that ultimately is impossible.¹⁵ What then are the hegemonic representational practices of democratic peace theory? Doty has divided practices of representation into seven crucial elements which help to produce and reproduce difference: nodal points, naturalization, classification, surveillance, negation, positioning, and the logic of difference. These will each be explored below in relation to democratic peace theory and its two constitutive concepts, ‘democracy’ and ‘war’.¹⁶

As a representational practice, democratic peace theory needs nodal points around which to fix meaning and establish positions to make predication possible.¹⁷ In other words, nodal points help to affirm the identity of the ‘self’ in relation to the ‘other’, while negating the identity of the ‘other’ in relation to the ‘self’.¹⁸ Two nodal points are of significance for democratic peace theory. First is the conception of democracy that is common to democratic peace theory discussions. It emphasizes procedural rather than substantive characteristics including elections and constitutions. When substantive characteristics are discussed, the focus is on the negative freedoms of early liberal thought and first generation human rights (e.g., freedom of religion, freedom from arbitrary authority, freedom of opportunity). Most importantly, the conception of democracy being used as a nodal point is inherently an American conception. It does not reflect how democracy is practiced in other states, and these

differences in practice tend to be ignored in the literature unless the practice is considered 'illiberal'.¹⁹ Thus, when Harvey Starr asks 'how does one separate doves (unlikely to use force) and non-doves' in foreign relations, he responds by arguing that there is no reliable method other than dividing states on the basis of whether they are a liberal democracy (i.e., American/Western) or not (i.e., non-American/non-Western).²⁰

The second nodal point around which the democratic peace is anchored is a conception of war. In democratic peace theory, war is strictly an inter-state exercise.²¹ Intra-state warfare does not appear on the democratic peace theory radar screen.²² Therefore, the use of force against domestic populations (e.g., the American 'War on Drugs') or collective groups not recognized as state actors (e.g., the Canadian Armed Forces versus Mohawk warriors at Oka, Quebec) are not problematic to the mainstream idea of a democratic peace. In addition, democratic peace theory conceptions only recognize formal declarations of war. As Tarek Barkawi and Mark Laffey argue:

US covert action to overthrow Third World elected governments shows that force is often used by democracies against the extension of democracy. It is not seen as invalidating the democratic peace because the US did not use its national military forces openly, but instead relied on clients, mercenaries, and covert operatives. In this way, sovereign juridical conceptions obscure the actual constitution of force, through imperial advice and support, and its use in projects of informal empire.²³

Moreover, because war is typically defined in the democratic peace theory literature by the dictates of the Correlates of War (CoW) database (which requires 1000 battle deaths), many possible instances of war (and definite uses of force) such as the US invasion of Grenada can be easily ignored. It is also important to note that democratic peace theory perceives war as the physical use of force for the acquisition/maintenance of a strategic possession.²⁴ Therefore attacks against ideology, religion, identity, and culture that have typically been directed against minority and indigenous actors are not acknowledged.

Naturalization is a powerful aspect of the representational aspects of democratic peace theory by making certain presuppositions beyond the realm of legitimate inquiry. In other words, democratic peace theory has created background knowledge that is taken as true which entails an implicit theorization of how the world works and the characteristics of all its inhabitants.²⁵ First, liberal democracies are naturalized so that they can be objectively differentiated from non-liberal/democracies.²⁶ Second, the fact that there is a relationship between the type of domestic political system and state character is naturalized. More to the point though, the framework of this relationship shapes our thinking to naturally view liberal democracies as predisposed towards peaceful interactions with each other and inherently trustworthy within their relationships with other liberal democratic states. Therefore, liberal democracies (read Western states) are peaceful towards all states except those who are 'objectively' determined to be non-liberal/democratic regimes.²⁷ The use of force against these types of states is justified because non-liberal/democratic states are aggressive towards all states and completely untrustworthy. Therefore, these

states are not legitimate global actors. Third, and perhaps most disturbingly, democratic peace theory naturalizes peace as an aberration in international relations that must be explained rather than seeing ‘zones of peace’ as natural entities and war as the deviant circumstance. The irony here is that even the democratic tradition within mainstream international relations has a Hobbesian impulse which trumps its Lockean counterpart.

According to Doty, techniques of classification serve to reinforce that which has been naturalized by placing things into categories in which they ‘naturally’ belong, often through the construction of stereotypes which facilitate quick and easy differentiation/assimilation.²⁸ Therefore, the creation of classification categories which distinguish between liberal democracy and non-liberal democracy as well as war and peace by their ‘natural’ characteristics are not merely tools designed to make the analysis of complex phenomena easier, but also serve deeper ontological purposes. It is of little wonder, as Doty contends, that these classifications are often hierarchical in nature with liberal democratic states at the top of scale and other states in descending order depending on how many liberal democratic characteristics they are perceived to exhibit.²⁹ Thus states that emphasize the political and civil rights of liberal thought rank higher than those who emphasize equally important social and economic rights.

As a part of representational practices, surveillance operates to make subjects known and visible objects of disciplinary power.³⁰ From a Foucaultian perspective, procedures of observation and examination enable states to be ‘known’ as democratic or non-democratic, placed within the appropriate classificatory scheme, and acted upon in a prudent manner.³¹ Therefore, other states are monitored by pro-democratic peace academic and policy-making circles to gauge their levels of liberal democracy.³² Furthermore, intensive case studies in democratic peace theory research enable ‘historical’ surveillance of the liberal democratic nature of other states.³³

Negation is another fundamental aspect of representational practices. In the case of democratic peace theory, negation focuses on erasing the histories of non-Western regions that create ‘spaces’ that are later filled by the West through processes of facilitating ‘democratization’. Thus, the democratization crusade is viewed as a mission of “deliverance and salvation rather than conquest and exploitation”.³⁴ Barkawi and Laffey wisely remind their readers that:

...it is forgotten that democracy became one of the major organizing principles of core states during the creation of a global system of empires, forged and maintained by colonial wars. Imperial power was pitted against local communities and peoples defending or seeking forms of rule often more democratic than those imposed on them.³⁵

It is these silences that help to maintain Western national identities as ‘democratic, civilized, and enlightened’, while at the same time, reaffirming the corresponding ontology of a naturally hierarchical international system based on these ‘objectively’ definable qualities.

According to Doty, all of the above representational practices help to position states relative to one another; for the democratic peace theory discourse, it is concepts like liberal democracy, non-liberal/democratic, dove-like, and war-mongering, that are used to position states *vis-à-vis* each other.³⁶ The democratic peace discourse and its rhetorical strategies which engage in the processes of positioning are built upon the foundations of a “logic of difference which attempts to fix the positions of social agents as stable, positive differences based upon foundational essences”.³⁷ As a result, the subjective and ontological nature of positioning to the casual observer remains obscured because the logic of difference in democratic peace theory asserts that states objectively define themselves through their essences that can only be known to the expert. From a Foucaultian perspective, the ‘invisibility’ of this exercise of power is not surprising for:

...power is implicated in the very possibility of meaning. The naturalness of the world and the categories through which we know it and its subjects are manifestations of power. Neither subjects, nor subjectivity, nor structural social relations exist before the workings of power.³⁸

In this respect, the democratic peace theory discourse differs very little from other historical discourses (especially those centred around ‘civilization’) that have sought to separate an ‘us’ from a ‘them’.

Given the representation practices embodied within the democratic peace theory discourse, it is best to view the interactions that it fosters as ‘imperial encounters’. According to Doty, ‘the term imperial encounters is meant to convey the idea of asymmetrical encounters in which one entity has been able to construct ‘realities’ that were taken seriously and acted upon and the other entity has been denied equal degrees of kinds of agency’.³⁹ The ‘reality’ of democratic peace theory has been defined by Western representational practices outlined above. These representations have shaped the production of knowledge and identities as well as making particular courses of action appear possible/impossible/inevitable.⁴⁰ Furthermore, to borrow a term from David Campbell, democratic peace theory has constructed a new ‘geography of evil’ that (re)produces national identity while dictating what courses of action are apt (i.e., conversion/force) when confronting the supposedly non-liberal/democratic ‘other’.⁴¹ To reiterate this point in a slightly different fashion, “the context of the democratic peace, then, includes not only the advent of a zone of peace among core states, but also international relations of domination and subordination in the periphery...”⁴²

As a result of this analysis, the answers to the questions of ‘for whom and for what purpose’ is democratic peace theory designed are now evident but not surprising. Democratic peace theory and its associated discourse is for the people of the US/West. Its purpose is to fix the American/Western national identity as civilized, peacefully inclined, and democratic with the non-West by definition being considered uncivilized, war-mongering, and authoritarian. Democratic peace theory also aids in the justification of the American/Western world-view which perceives both democracy and war in a particular fashion. In turn, these conceptions of democracy and war help to hide much of the sordid past and present of the international relations of western liberal democratic states. They help to justify the

unjustifiable and to legitimate the illegitimate. Of utmost importance is the ontological basis of these international relations practices sanctioned by democratic peace theory and its associated discourse within the popular political realm. This is the focus of the following section which examines the existence of one of the empirical silences within democratic peace theory research and the consequences of ignoring these important events.

Democratic Peace Theory and the Ontology of War and Peace

In *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*, Michael Shapiro tries to examine “the ways that enmity-related global geographies and ethnoscapings emerge as collectivities, and how they try to achieve, stabilize, and reproduce their unity and coherence”.⁴³ Historically, the practice of war has emerged as one of the most enduring methods to attempt to fix national identities and ontological foundations. Victory in war confirms all the positive subjective views of the ‘self’ while at the same time providing ‘proof’ of the subjectively perceived inferior nature of the ‘other’. Conversely, defeat not only leads to (geo)strategic losses, but also to a reappraisal of the national identity and deep questioning of the foundations that helped define national identity. The American defeat in the Vietnam War provides an excellent example of these identity/foundation casualties. Therefore, Shapiro argues that war is not just (geo)strategic, but is also about the confrontation between competing ontologies.

As mentioned earlier, democratic peace theory and its surrounding discourse views war as an activity waged by state actors in pursuit of (geo)strategic spoils (e.g., territory, resources, wealth), as well as an activity arising over disputes of ‘ownership’ of spoils and/or perceived violations of sovereignty. As John Vasquez has argued, “the situation that states in the modern global system are most likely to deal with by the use of force and violence is one in which their territory is threatened....territorial disputes provide the willingness to go to war”.⁴⁴ Democratic peace theorists believe that liberal democracies can peacefully manage these kinds of disputes amongst themselves; however, in circumstances of dispute between a liberal democracy and a non-liberal/democracy, war is seen as almost inevitable. Conventionally, this has been attributed to the inherently aggressive nature of the ‘authoritarian’ state, which prevents liberal democracies from trusting these states to adhere to peacefully negotiated settlements.

Yet, when democratic peace theory is viewed as a representational practice, war becomes inevitable between disputing liberal democratic states and non-liberal/democratic states not because of the aggressive nature of authoritarian regimes but because these situations are viewed as an opportunity for liberal democratic states to engage in a ‘civilizing’ mission and reaffirm their national identity and ontology by demonstrating their superiority in battle. This imperative becomes especially clear if we abandon the traditional view of war contained within democratic peace theory and look at democratic non-state/liberal democratic state disputes and the underlying ontological contestations that fuelled them.⁴⁵ Barkawi and Laffey have argued that currently “force is used in the service of defending and expanding economic and to a lesser extent political liberalism (in the guise of democracy) beyond the

liberal capitalist core”.⁴⁶ From a historical perspective, the dispute between the Iroquois Six Nations and the Canadian government over the Grand River territory during the first decades of the twentieth century, provides an excellent example of the ontological impetus behind international relations practices and how warfare can also be directed towards the annihilation of culture.

The Plight of the Grand River Iroquois Nation

According to Ronald Wright, the Canadian government has been waging a hidden war against the Iroquois since 1867.⁴⁷ One of the most important battlegrounds has been over the sovereign control of the Grand River territory which is located on the Grand River, just south east of Brantford in Ontario. The Canadian government has long considered Grand River to be a ‘reservation’ while the Grand River Iroquois consider the territory to be an independent nation-state.⁴⁸

Grand River was among one of the four regions along Lake Ontario given to the Iroquois by the British in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War.⁴⁹ Historians note that not only did the Grand River territory serve as a symbol of British gratitude to the Iroquois for their support, but it also played a strategic role as a buffer state between the United States and British North America.⁵⁰ Although often a source of dispute with Britain over its size and political status, Grand River emerged in the eyes of the Iroquois as a sovereign political state run in the tradition of the *Great Law of Peace*.⁵¹

Slowly, due to land agreements with private farmers that became interpreted as legal annexations, the Grand River state began to shrink.⁵² What started out as a 1200 sq mile territorial state was reduced to 90 sq miles in less than one hundred years.⁵³ With the threat of American invasion greatly reduced by the late nineteenth century, government officials realized that Canada no longer needed any ‘Indian’ (sic) buffer states. Anxious to exercise complete control over Iroquois territory, the Canadian government embarked upon a ‘civilizational’ process that amounted to replacing democratic indigenous self-governments with ‘elected’ band councillors who were puppets of the Indian Affairs Department. Iroquois territories tried to resist against the Canadian government; however, most efforts proved to be futile. For example, in 1899, Akwesasne was overrun by the RCMP leaving one dead. Seven chiefs were imprisoned and a puppet council was established. By contrast, Grand River was able to resist and remained independent. During World War I, Grand River even provided troops (not under Canadian control) to its old ally England.⁵⁴

Well aware of its precarious position after World War I, Grand River expressed its desire to become a British protectorate. The Grand River Council argued that such a move did not threaten Canadian interests and would only serve to reinforce sovereign control over the Grand River territory. But in order to receive protectorate status, the Grand River state would have to clarify their political status with the Canadian government. In 1920, the Canadian Supreme Court refused to hear the Iroquois case. When the Grand River council took its grievances to the British Colonial Office, Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, said that it was a Canadian matter. As a result, Grand River entered negotiations with the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1922, despite on-going talks, Grand River was

raided. Shots were fired by police and further discussions were cancelled. Moreover, an Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment was placed within yards of the Grand River Council House.⁵⁵

By 1923, it was clear to the Grand River Council that the newly formed League of Nations was the only remaining venue in which to have its sovereignty formally recognized. The council had a very strong case including written treaties and wampum belts but needed a League member to act as a sponsor. The Netherlands, Persia, Ireland, Estonia, and Panama all expressed an interest but Britain, on behalf of Canada, threatened dire repercussions to anyone who would dare sponsor the Grand River claim. Needless to say, the appeal was never heard.⁵⁶

In 1924, armed police once again invaded Grand River. This time, the Six Nations parliament was dissolved. Moreover, police seized treaty documents and sacred wampum belts by raiding wampum keepers homes. Important evidence for the Grand River claim was thus rendered inaccessible. After storming and taking control of the Council Long House, Indian Affairs appointed a new council; however, to this day, this puppet-council has not been recognized by the majority of Grand River residents. Instead, Iroquois sachems have sat as a government exiled in their own country.⁵⁷

The illegal annexation of Grand River is a result of a multi-faceted war waged by the Canadian government on the Iroquois. It is often thought that the forced dissolution of native self-governments was a part of grander strategy to eliminate the Iroquois and other Native Canadians through processes of assimilation in order to preclude future land claims actions; however, closer examination also reveals an ontological imperative devoid of any (geo)strategic imperative.⁵⁸ Therefore, the Grand River situation should also be seen as an assault on Iroquois culture through the delegitimation of the Grand Peace and the seizing of wampum belts. To return to the early discussion of democratic peace theory, Grand River represents one example of the efforts that liberal democracies will go to in order to remove a system of governance (and the accompanying ontology) that is in any way different. Furthermore, Grand River demonstrates that this is even the case when a state exhibits similar (though not identical) democratic principles.

Some historians claim that Duncan Campbell Scott, head of the Indian Affairs Department from 1913-1932, viewed himself as “Canada’s Kipling” and strongly believed natives were in fact ‘lesser breeds without the law’.⁵⁹ Shapiro argues that such views at the time were “less an observation than an ontological affirmation” of the superiority of European peoples over Native Americans.⁶⁰ Moreover, he argues that “the erasure of indigenous peoples, in fact and in representation, has been part of the self-recognition by which state societies have territorialized and stabilized their identities”.⁶¹ Therefore, the policy of assimilating the Iroquois was far more than a strategy to reap (geo)strategic gain.

If we take Shapiro’s argument to its logical conclusions, it becomes clear that wars do not necessarily have to be fought with weapons; words are also powerful means of destruction. The verbal attacks of Limbaugh, Bork, and others of the same ilk seek to delegitimize and render the Iroquois (and other Native Americans and Native Canadians) invisible through a discourse with its own

representational practices much like the writings of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶² Denial of the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy serves to fortify the national identity and ontology of the United States (and other Western states) by reaffirming the ‘uniquely’ American/Western contribution to modern liberal democracy. The intensity of the denials is not surprising, for as Campbell has argued, representational practices become more overt during periods of crisis.⁶³ Therefore, as a theory and as a practice, the notion of a democratic peace is able to fix the American national identity at a time when increases in levels of non-Western immigration to the United States and the rise of multiculturalism contribute to an identity crisis that is subjectively perceived by American conservatives like Limbaugh and Bork who fear that the line between the domestic and the foreign is blurring. Therefore, the old saying about ‘sticks and stones’ does not necessarily hold true in international relations. The construction of discourse and the representational practices that sustain it can be a powerful weapon in the waging of war by legitimizing the ‘self’ and delegitimizing the ‘other’. Alternate cultures and their corresponding ontologies can be wounded or even killed.

The Great Law of Peace

Given that I have argued that war serves an ontological as well as strategic purpose in international relations, the converse should also hold true. In other words, there must also be an ontological component to peace. For example, *The Great Law of Peace* (the constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy codified in wampum belts and an oral tradition) was as much about the affirmation of a knowledge system and way of life as it was about ‘institutionalizing’ cooperation among the people of the Six Nations. Accordingly, David Bedford and Tom Workman have argued that

although the *Great Law* is a text about international relations, it is also a document about living well and how the relations between nations form an integral part of living well. Its seemingly oddities and peculiarities are therewith absorbed into a complete notion of what it means to live properly.⁶⁴

Currently, one can see the research and references to supposed ‘zones of peace’ attributed to liberal democracy in much the same light. Zones of peace help to reinforce the notion that liberal democracy is good and just.⁶⁵ Furthermore, little research is undertaken to determine if other forms of political organization might also enjoy ‘zones of peace’. Thus, zones of peace are naturalized as only being possible among liberal democratic states not by ‘fact’ but by the propagation of silence in conformity to the hegemonic Western ontology. Therefore, Oren and Hayes present a compelling argument when they state that

the virtual law of the democratic peace is not so special. If we were to classify states by categories borrowed from non-Western cultural or socio-economic settings, we might discover cross-national variations in conflict propensity that are no less substantial than those uncovered by studies of democratic foreign policy.⁶⁶

Even when non-Western state systems are examined such as in the work of Neta Crawford on the Iroquois Confederacy, it is only to transpose current democratic peace theory understandings in order to demonstrate their universality.⁶⁷ For example, Crawford constructs the Iroquois Confederacy as a ‘security regime’ in order to offer new lessons for current security regime theory. The conclusion reached in the article that “the Iroquois League experience suggests that peace among nations may be best secured over the long term if both democracy and the institution of a league/security regime are present” demonstrates a fundamental violence of current international relations theory.⁶⁸ ‘Our IR’ becomes ‘their IR’ in situations where it can reaffirm current ontological presuppositions. Perhaps a far more beneficial practice for the current study of international relations would be to map instances where ‘our IR’ demonstrates a close likeness to ‘their IR’ while at the same time respecting the important differences between them.⁶⁹

Although the ontological nature of war and peace and the discursive method of waging war are important insights into current international relations practices, we cannot forget one of the most important aspects of the Iroquois struggle in Grand River. It is important to note how the history of Grand River has been effectively silenced in past and current international relations discourses. For example, I find it fascinating that Serbian actions in Kosovo generated a huge international debate, interest, and action, while a similar situation (i.e., Grand River) remains unknown to most within Canada, let alone the rest of the world. Thus, according to Shapiro, the Iroquois, like other groups considered by mainstream international relations to be non-state nations, “have not had a place in the history and cartography of warfare”.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the discourse on war, like that of political economy, has reinforced the geopolitical state centric map. As a result, Shapiro asserts that “within the historical cartography of war, indigenous struggles still do not appear”.⁷¹

Conclusion

It is of little wonder that Grand River is a forgotten site of struggle except in the Native American/Canadian communities. First, it undermines the credibility of democratic peace theory by illustrating that at best the democratic peace is selective in its operation through representational practices that presuppose what political forms are ‘democratic’ and what assumptions can be made about them. Not only does democratic peace theory limit the types of states that can be considered democratic, but more importantly, it limits democratic characteristics those political entities it recognizes as states. At worst, Grand River clearly demonstrates that liberal democracies can be aggressive even towards other democracies.⁷²

Second, to give Grand River (and other similar historical circumstances) a voice in the study and practice of international relations would severely undercut our perceptions of liberal democracies as civilized, predisposed towards peace in inter-democratic relations, and naturally reasonable, thereby presenting clear challenges to conventional thinking. Therefore, one of the roles of the critical international relations scholar should be to expose these injustices and the representational practices that

make them possible; it is quite likely that there are many ‘Grand Rivers’ and each should be given a voice. As Doty has argued, it is only by revealing “the contingent and unstable nature of the systems of difference” and exposing the “foundational essences as arbitrary constructions made possible by the power/knowledge nexus” that these kinds of practices can be overcome.⁷³ By simply being prepared to actively listen to the ‘other’, to engage in processes that will foster intersubjectivity, progressive transformation both inside and outside the ‘self’ can be achieved.

Endnotes

¹See Donald A Grinde Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Centre, 1991); and Bruce E. Johanson, "Debating the Origins of Democracy: Overview of an Annotated Bibliography," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (1996), pp. 155-172.

²Bruce E. Johanson, "Notes from the "Culture Wars": More Annotations on the Debate Regarding the Iroquois and the Origins of Democracy," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (1999), pp. 166-167.

³*Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁴For examples of the kinds of attacks that have been launched by the American historical orthodoxy see Phillip A. Levy, "Exemplars of Taking Liberties: The Iroquois Influence Thesis and the Problem of Evidence," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1996), pp. 588-604; Samuel B. Payne Jr., "The Iroquois League, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1996), pp. 605-620; Robert L. Berner, "Iroquois Influence: A Response to Bruce E. Johansen's "Notes from the 'Culture Wars'",," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24, no. 2 (2000), pp. 111-116; and Robert L. Berner, "A Reply to Bruce E. Johansen's "Data or Dogma?'," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no. 1 (2001), pp. 113-116. For the responses of Grinde Jr. and Johansen see Donald A. Grinde Jr. and Bruce Johansen, "Sauce for the Goose: Demand and Definitions for "Proof" Regarding the Iroquois and Democracy," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1996), pp. 621-636; Bruce E. Johansen, "Data or Dogma? A Reply to Robert L. Berner," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24, no. 2 (2000), pp.117-119 and Bruce E. Johansen and Donald A. Grinde Jr., "Robert L. Berner's "Howlers": A Reply," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no. 1 (2001), pp. 117-120.

⁵Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁶The best volume showing the 'diversity' of American work in support of democratic peace theory is Michael Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steve Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). Of course, there are also numerous articles that remain sceptical of (or even hostile to) the democratic peace thesis including Raymond Cohen, "Pacific Unions: A Reappraisal of the Theory that 'Democracies do not go to War with Each Other'," *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (1994), pp. 207-227; Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Common Interests or Common Politics? Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace," *Journal of Politics* 59, no. 2 (1997), pp. 393-417; Cecelia Lynch, "Kant, the Republican Peace, and Moral Guidance in International Law," *Ethics in International Affairs* 8, (1994), pp. 39-58; John Macmillan, "A Kantian Protest Against the Peculiar Discourse of Inter-liberal State Peace," *Millennium* 24, no. 3 (1995), pp. 549-562; and Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000), pp. 5-41.

⁷Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," in Sean Lynn-Jones Michael Brown, and Steven Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace*, (Cambridge: MIT, 1996), pp. 3-57.

⁸Bruce Russett, "The Fact of Democratic Peace," in Sean Lynn-Jones Michael Brown, and Steven Mille., eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 58-81.

⁹*Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹Realists have countered these conclusions by asserting that due to the historically limited number of democratic dyads, that the results are statistically insignificant. See for example, David Shapiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace," in Sean Lynn-Jones Michael Brown, and Steven Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 202-233.

¹²John Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," in Sean Lynn-Jones Michael Brown, Steven Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 116-156.

¹³Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Robert E. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 204; and Miyume Tanji and Steve Lawson, "'Democratic Peace' and 'Asian Democracy': A Universalist-Particularist Tension," *Alternatives* 22 (1997), p. 137.

¹⁴Ido Oren and Jude Hays, "Democracies May Rarely Fight One Another, but Developed Socialist States Rarely Fight at All," *Alternatives* 22 (1997), p. 493.

¹⁵Doty, p. 8.

¹⁶I may be taken to task here for focusing on the term 'war' rather than 'peace' and thereby not sticking to the terms of the discourse that I am analyzing. My response is that despite making use of the term 'peace' democratic peace theory literature is primarily concerned with the occurrence of war. In the literature, it is definitions of war, instances of war, and 'near-misses' that are the focal points of analysis and debate. Explicit definitions or analyses of what it means to live in conditions of peace are rarely articulated and where they are articulated (see footnote 64 of this text), there is much left to be desired.

¹⁷Doty, p.10.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹Tanji and Lawson, p. 138.

²⁰Harvey Starr, "Democracy and War: Choice, Learning, and Security Communities", *Journal of Peace Research* 29 no. 2 (1992), p. 210.

²¹Oren and Hays in their study of the socialist peace include intra-state warfare in their statistical calculations.

²²By definition, this excludes non-state actors in the formation of democratic dyads.

²³Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, "The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force, and Globalization," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 4 (1999), p. 414.

²⁴In fact, most democratic peace theory case studies involve disputes over territory or spheres of influence.

²⁵Doty, p. 10.

²⁶From a geopolitical standpoint, it seems to be more than a coincidence that the majority of states to be given the prestigious status of liberal democracy are economically developed Western powers linked together within various hegemonic economic and military alliances.

²⁷It is interesting how this presupposition differs from strains in the Western philosophical tradition (beginning with Plato and Aristotle through to Machiavelli and Hobbes to Tocqueville and beyond) regarding the nature of

democracies. This traditional view of them being inherently aggressive because of the tendency for such political systems to revert to ‘mob rule’ is far different than the prevailing view of democracies today.

²⁸Doty, p. 10.

²⁹Ibid., 10.

³⁰Ibid., 11.

³¹Ibid., 11.

³²Providing further evidence of liberal democratic hegemony, non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Democracy Watch (unintentionally) contribute to this monitoring. For this Kafkaesque observation, I am in debt to David Mutimer.

³³It is important to note that all case studies involving the United States place the United States as a liberal democracy no matter the historical juncture. It is always the ‘other’ that undergoes changes from non-democratic to democratic and vice-versa.

³⁴Doty, p. 11.

³⁵Barkawi and Laffey, p. 411.

³⁶Doty, p. 11.

³⁷Ibid., 11.

³⁸Ibid., 166.

³⁹Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰Ibid., 5.

⁴¹David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 210.

⁴²Barkawi and Laffey, p. 407.

⁴³Michael Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. ix.

⁴⁴John Vasquez, “Why do Neighbours Fight? Proximity, Interaction, or Territoriality,” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 3 (1995), p. 281.

⁴⁵ I am not trying to say here that the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy should not be considered a state (or states). Rather, I want to illustrate that according to contemporary IR and the orthodoxy within the field of North American history, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy are denied the status of having been states and the privileges that go with this designation. To a large degree, this is a reflection of the perpetuation of a dominant understanding of what a ‘state’ is, based on the Western historical experience and continuing ethnocentrism in both disciplines. See Grinde Jr. and Johansen (1996), note 27, p. 631.

⁴⁶Barkawi and Laffey, p. 421.

⁴⁷Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Indian Eyes* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 314.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 314-315.

⁴⁹The other territories were Quinte, Kahnawake, and Akwesasne. For a brief discussion of the land transfer, see Brian Maracle. *Back on the Rez: Finding the Way Home* (Viking, 1996), p. 21.

⁵⁰Wright, p. 314 and p. 316. Britain failed to stand up for its allies with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Thus, in 1784, land was transferred to 'His majesty's faithful allies... the said Mohawk nation, and such other of the six nations as wish to settle in that quarter to take possession of and...enjoy forever' (quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 314).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 314 and Maracle, p. 21. Wright has made the argument that the Crown itself called the Iroquois allies and not dependents, implying their sovereign status. See Wright, p. 314; and Francis Jennings, *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p. 77.

⁵²For a discussion of the possible motivations behind allowing white settlers into the region see *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵³Maracle, p. 21 and Wright, p. 314. Land leases made by the Iroquois to European farmers were later deemed to be irrevocable cessions by the colonial government.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 320.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 321-322.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 322-324.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 324-325. In 1959, the Iroquois tried to take back the council building but were repelled by club-toting Mounties. For other accounts of these events see Dean R. Snow. *The Iroquois* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 218; Laurence M. Hauptman. *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival: World War II to Red Power* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 207-208; and Maracle, p. 24.

⁵⁸Wright, p. 319.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 321.

⁶⁰Shapiro, p. 26.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 31.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 26. These representational practices use a particularly Western notion of 'civilization' to argue that Native Americans/Canadians were disorderly savages unable to provide any influence over the design of the US Constitution.

⁶³Campbell divides the practice of (inter)national relations into two categories. The first is foreign policy which is 'a particular set of representational practices which provides the resources from which are drawn the modes of interpretation employed to handle new instances of ambiguity or contingency'. In this respect, foreign policy can be thought of as a particular 'world-view'. The second element Campbell identifies is Foreign Policy in the more

traditional sense of making policy, 'which serves to reproduce the constitution of identity made possible by foreign policy and to contain challenges to the identity which results'. See Campbell, p. 76.

⁶⁴David Bedford and Thom Workman, "The Great Law of Peace: Alternative Inter-Nation(al) Practices and the Iroquois Confederacy", *Alternatives* 22 (1997), p. 88.

⁶⁵Not surprisingly, a zone of peace has been defined as "a discrete geographical region in which a group of states have maintained peaceful relations among themselves for a period of thirty years, though *civil wars and domestic unrest and violence might still occur within their borders, as well as international conflicts and crises among them* [italics added]". Quoted from Arie Kacowicz, "Explaining Zones of Peace: Democracies as Satisfied Powers?," *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 3 (1995), p. 266.

⁶⁶Oren and Hayes, p. 494. Using mainstream American quantitative methodology as a rhetorical strategy, Oren and Hayes are able to show that advanced socialist states are by far the most peaceful, whereas third world states inclined towards socialism were the least peaceful. Capitalist (i.e., liberal democratic) states, underdeveloped and developed were respectively the second and third least peaceful groups.

⁶⁷Neta Crawford, "A Security Regime Among Democracies: Cooperation Among Iroquois Nations," *International Organization* 48, no. 3 (1994), pp. 345-385.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 384.

⁶⁹ From my reading of her work, Elisabeth Tooker has objected to the claims of Grinde Jr. and Johansen on strangely similar lines to this. She has argued that the Confederacy and the US Constitution are distinctive and unique systems of government that are totally unrelated and to believe otherwise is a great disservice to the Iroquois. Tooker makes the point that in attempts to right the traditional view of 'Indians' (sic) as deficient according to Western values, some scholars have gone too far by asserting that not only did 'Indians' (sic) have Western ideals, but that they may have given some of them to 'us' (p. 329). While advocating an increased awareness of cultural specificity is laudable, Tooker conflates the specificity of culture with the belief that culture is incapable of being transmitted to others on its own terms, and that different cultures cannot share ideals. In essence, by taking this stand, Tooker removes the very possibility of inter-subjective dialogues between members of different cultural groups. See Elisabeth Tooker, "The United States and the Iroquois League," *Ethnohistory* 35, no. 4 (1988): 305-336.

⁷⁰Shapiro, p. 29.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 29.

⁷²In all of the democratic peace literature, Canada has been considered a liberal democracy since Confederation (1867).

⁷³Doty, p. 11.