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Political Violence and Democracy: Do Societal  
Identity Threats Matter?  
The Security and Politics of Identity

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**ABSTRACT**

The Democratic Peace (DP) proposition, which claims that democratic states do not fight each other, begins its inter-state assertions with an intra-state supposition: liberal democracies are free from political violence because liberal democratic principles of accommodation remove the reasons for political violence. This intra-state supposition matters to DP's inter-state claim because the justification for democratization loses traction if political conflict is seen to persist within democracies. It is on this exact point which DP's supposition faces empirical challenges. High profile examples such as the IRA in Northern Ireland and ETA in Spain confront DP's domestic assumption. The British and Spanish cases, furthermore, highlight the powerful linkages between identity and (in)security within consolidated democracies. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to shed some light on this important area where DP does not tread by examining the domestic intersection of these three factors: democracy, security, and identity. The questions pursued revolve around the relationships between identity and political violence within a liberal democratic structure. To conduct its investigation, the paper begins with the DP debate then reviews conceptions of security before moving on to explore the ways in which identity underpins security and liberal democracy. The paper's conclusions, while warning against an unproblematic acceptance of the DP supposition generally, focus on the centrality of identity. More specifically, the 'construction' of identity plays the key role vis-à-vis the prospect for political violence within liberal democratic structures. As the presence of democratic regimes continues to expand, the achievement of peace *within* democracies is an increasingly noteworthy issue to global politics.

### *Overview and The Democratic Peace*

For good reason Freedom House (1999) touts the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as the 'Democratic Century'. More people now live in democracies than any other political system (Polity Project IV). Furthermore, the trend of democratization continues its considerable momentum with non-Western states such as Iraq, Liberia and even a possible sovereign Palestine earmarked for democratic style regimes. The foreign policy plank of democratization itself is underpinned by beliefs central to the Democratic Peace (DP) which are encapsulated by these words from U.S. President Clinton (New York Times 1994: 17): "democracies don't attack each other" and therefore "the best strategy to insure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere". DP's significant impact on political studies is indicated by the fact that it has been described in terms of "the conventional wisdom" of the 1990's (Maoz 1997: 162). However, while DP's *raison d'être* and thus its justification for the strategy of democratization is inter-state peace and security, its logic relies on a 'domestic analogy' whereby the same rationale that drives the inter-state peace ensures that consolidated<sup>1</sup> liberal democracies lack violent political conflict internally. As Bruce Russett (1993b: 31, emphasis added), arguably the chief DP proponent, observes: "the culture, perceptions, and practices *that permit compromise and the peaceful resolution of conflicts without the threat of violence within countries* comes to apply across national boundaries toward other democratic countries". Yet the political violence in Northern Ireland and Spain serve to challenge this domestic analogy claim. The British and Spanish cases also serve to highlight the central role played by identity since the stated grievances in these conflicts are primarily about maltreatment along religious, linguistic, and cultural lines. Therefore, it is at the crossroads of these three variables – liberal democracy, security and identity – that this article maintains its analysis.

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<sup>1</sup>The aim of this study is to examine the 'ideal' liberal democratic structure as best as practicable. Therefore I distinguish established, relatively stable democracies from those undergoing transition to a democratic style regime in order to quarantine the many troublesome issues that plague systems in a state of flux – thereby distorting the

The questions pursued within the paper relate to this domestic blind spot of DP. The exploration is primarily conceptual rather than an attempt to evaluate theorizations empirically. The overarching question asked is about how liberal democracy affects political violence. Yet in a more specific sense, the investigation relates to the relationships between identity and political violence in a liberal democratic structure. To conduct its investigation, the paper is divided into three main sections addressing respectively DP, security and identity. The section on DP introduces the overall investigation by looking at the debate and importance surrounding DP as well as its linkages to both security and identity. In the next section, conceptions of security are reviewed with an eye to how they relate to democracy and identity. The final section interrogates the notion of identity along with its linkages to security and liberal democracy. In the concluding part, insights about this intersection of liberal democracy, security and identity are put forth. It is at this crossroads of security, democracy and identity that the paper's conclusions offer an original contribution. With democracy's seemingly indomitable global growth, it has become more relevant than ever to understand security within its borders. I turn now to the conception of the Democratic Peace since it is the entry point for this investigation.

### *Democratic Peace and Liberal Democracy*

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characteristics of the governmental system in a stable context. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995) make a related point: states' undergoing shifts to democratic regimes behave differently, in that they are significantly more prone to war, than those having consolidated into democracy.

As indicated the above introduction, there should be little doubt that DP's international relevance is substantial. In the broader sense, democracy is a salient force in world politics due to its prevalence as a governing system<sup>2</sup>. Democracy is on the rise; monarchs and authoritarian systems are on the wane<sup>3</sup>. This advance of democracy – or the foreign policy plank of democratization<sup>4</sup> in the more narrow sense – is underpinned by the central DP claim that liberal democracy promises security because democratic states do not fight each other (Doyle 1983; Maoz and Russett 1993)<sup>5</sup>. DP holds clearly consequential inter-state ramifications. Yet DP's conceptual and empirical scope does not encompass intra-state analysis. Rather its intra-state supposition that democracies lack political violence, through the notion of 'domestic analogy', is said to mirror the logic of its inter-state focus. Hence the brief description of DP's inter-state security logic that follows is necessary to understand why DP maintains that liberal democratic systems cause both domestic and inter-state peace.

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<sup>2</sup>More and more of humanity find themselves living within 'democratic' regimes. Since 1991 the majority of the world's population is now under what are classified as democratic regimes (Polity IV Project 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Statistically, there were 25 states (or only 12.4% of the world's population) practicing clearly restricted forms of democracy in 1900, whereas by 2000 there were 120 (or 62.5% of the world's population) noted as democratic (Freedom House 1999). To mention a few contemporary examples of the global impact of this trend, democratic political systems are planned for Iraq, Liberia, and a possible new Palestinian state at the time of this writing. Moreover, democratization is conflated with two even broader trends comprising the neoliberalization and globalization (Tickell and Peck 2003).

<sup>4</sup>The dedication by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, in particular, to the expansion of liberal democracy evident within the Versailles Treaty following World War One (Krasner and Froats 1998: 240-1) arguably sparked the modern move to democratize.

<sup>5</sup> Referring to U.S. democratisation foreign policy efforts, Anthony Lake (1993:3) cites the "strategy of enlargement"; its goal is to establish an international community of "market democracies".

In short, DP's main claim is that democratic states do not engage in war with other democracies – even though they do go to war with non-democratic states. At the heart of this claim are two discrete yet inter-related causal explanations. First, democratic norms and culture lead to peace; and second, democratic institutions or structure effect peace (Maoz and Russett 1993). The first strand relies on a democratic ethos which is based on “peaceful competition, persuasion and compromise” (Maoz and Russett 1993: 625). The structural or institutional strand of DP causal logic emphasizes the potential for electoral retribution to discourage decision makers from waging war should the costs of war outweigh the benefits (Doyle 1983). Taken together, the perception<sup>6</sup> of these ideal liberal democratic features – practices of equality, accommodation and accountability – are not only meant to achieve peace between democratic states but also peace *within* democracies<sup>7</sup>.

According to DP, the structure (defined broadly throughout the paper as practices and the underpinning ideals) of a liberal democratic political system is said to manage conflict similarly to the logic described below by Conrad Brunk (2000: 30)<sup>8</sup>:

What a good political system does is to find effective rules and mechanisms for deciding what laws and policies to follow, without actually ending the diversity of opinion and disagreement about these things...Democracy...is a system of conflict management. It resolves questions by a set of rule-governed mechanisms like voting (majority rule), establishing rules to protect the minority (or minorities), and so on.

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<sup>6</sup> John Owen (1994: 125) introduces the notion that perception matters (an inter-subjective idea to be pursued later in the paper) in that only when the opposing polities *perceive* each other as possessing these democratic norms and institutions do the two causal strands of DP bring about pacific relations between democracies.

<sup>7</sup> Refer again to the comments of Bruce Russett (1993b: 31), about the domestic analogy of DP.

<sup>8</sup> See also statements by others like Brian Barry (2001: 122): "The defining feature of liberalism is, I maintain, the principles of equal freedom that underwrite basic liberal institutions: civic equality, freedom of speech and religion, non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and so on...I suggest simply that liberal principles are the fairest way of adjudicating the disputes that inevitably arise as a result of conflicting interests and incompatible beliefs about the social conditions of the good life."

Democracy, according to this logic, mitigates conflict by protecting diversity. The need for political violence is thus removed. The protection of diversity, moreover, is set to remain a key issue across global politics: as John Rawls (1971) maintains through his term the ‘reasonable fact of pluralism’, the human condition is marked by an ongoing and unending diversity of opinion regarding ‘the good life’. One would in deed struggle in vain to find any time in history when humanity held a universal viewpoint about how to live together. With this in mind, each citizen – and thus by extension collective of citizens<sup>9</sup> – has a guaranteed capacity or freedom to pursue unique interests within a liberal democratic structure (Barry 2001: 122). Liberal democratic individual freedoms include “civic rights such as freedom of religion” (Doyle 1983:5). As I explore in more depth at several points below, these protections necessarily encompass the protection of *identity* – when taking the view propounded by Alexander Wendt (1992) among others that identity informs interests. The pursuit, for example, of the religious freedoms of practice and association are the realization of both interests and identities simultaneously. Interests and identities, in this way, are mutually reinforcing and incapable of being pursued separately.

In this way it becomes possible to maintain that liberal democracy has a special relationship with identity. Arguably the hallmark of liberal democratic structures pertains to the above promise of protection for equal rights that permit a diversity of interests and thus identity. The liberal democratic celebration of diversity contrasts the central aims of other systems. As examples, Marxist/communist systems strive for *economic* homogeneity; theocratic systems encourage *religious* similarity; and totalitarian/fascist systems emphasize the subservience of the individual to the *nation*. More accurately though, it is the

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<sup>9</sup> While in classical liberal thought there is no moral ontology for the “idea of collective rights” (Kymlicka 1989: 140), another view argues there is space for a ‘collective’ value when seen as being derived from a contribution to the individual value (Kymlicka 1989: 140; Barry 2001: 123; Ivison 2002: 6). Therefore, I conflate individual with group in all respects throughout this paper.

'liberal' component of a liberal democracy which contributes the intra-state protections rather than the democratic variable.

Democracies hold the potential to behave illiberally (Lynn-Jones 1996: xxxii). Without a liberal element democracies are able to descend into a condition whereby a majority can tyrannize the minorities<sup>10</sup>. And while the use of the term 'democracy' is explicit in the DP discussion, the term 'liberal' is generally implicit when not mentioned, but it is equally important nonetheless. The two discrete concepts are frequently conflated due to their developmental and conceptual symbiosis. For instance, Michael Doyle (1983: 4) highlights how the democratic principles of individual freedom stand as a defining feature of liberalism. John Owen (1994: 118) writes: "I define a liberal democracy as a state that instantiates liberal ideas, one where liberalism is the dominant ideology". Consequently, I now delve into the concept of 'liberal' in order to elucidate further how liberal democracy links domestically to security and identity.

The 'liberal' in liberal democracy is defined by equal freedom as manifested in ways like freedom of speech and religion as well as equal opportunity (Barry 2001: 122). No different to the notion of a conflict management system put forward by Brunk above, liberalism aims to address the terms and conditions whereby people can "live together peacefully in political association" (Ivison 2002:16). Therefore, illiberal practices of democracies serve to undermine the essence of DP's causal logic since the ethos of compromise and the institutions protecting freedoms associated with diverse identities are no longer present. Peaceful competition can no longer be guaranteed in an illiberal democratic system. Conceptually, the door is opened for political violence.

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<sup>10</sup> This relates to the concept of the 'tyranny of the majority' whereby leaders who are fairly elected nonetheless have the capacity to legislate in ways that disadvantage those outside their majority constituents. Subjugation and maltreatment of minorities results.

A separate but related point addresses the timelessness and universality of liberally grounded democratic systems. Specifically, do liberal principles, as argued by Brian Barry (2001:122, emphasis added) provide “*the fairest way* of adjudicating the disputes that inevitably arise as a result of conflicting interests and incompatible beliefs about the social conditions of the good life”? If so, liberal democratic structures are essentially the zenith of political system evolution – capable of accommodating humanity universally and timelessly, with every society able to enjoy an equal protection of its collective identity and interests. After all, liberalism offers everyone identical political and legal rights and thus one status of citizenship (Barry 2001: 7). No *special* conditions, rights or concessions should be granted to particular groups above others (Barry 2001).

There is however an opposing view which challenges this claim. A perspective broadly known as ‘multiculturalism’ stresses that liberalism is inescapably culturally derived and therefore not neutral. Liberalism is the invention of a particular cultural perspective and therefore cannot accommodate in the same or equal ways cultures that derive from non-liberal democratic identity origins (Parekh 2000) because it is insensitive to their nuances (Iverson 2002: 16). Special rights may be necessary to ensure the *outcome* of equality prevails (Kymlicka 1989; Parekh 2000). The relevant consequence that the multiculturalist viewpoint<sup>11</sup> brings to this paper is the belief that the liberal democratic structure may pose a nuanced yet fundamental threat to the identity of non-liberal democratic group identities. It forces them to live together in ways contradictory to their preferred manner and identity. I expand on this idea in the section on identity.

These contrasting views comprise a debate broadly referred to as the ‘Multiculturalism/Liberalism’ debate. As indicated, the core of the debate is about how liberalism is meant to manage diversity of interest and identity, which

in turn adds further evidence to support the assertion that liberal democracy and identity hold a special relationship.

Overall, the examination of DP and liberal democracy in this section serves to highlight three observations. First, DP logic links the protection of identity to security within liberal democracies by maintaining that political violence does not occur because the structure accommodates diverse interests and thus identities. Second, as this causal logic relies on liberal principles, democracies that behave illiberally cannot expect the same pacific result. Third, insights from the multiculturalism/liberalism debate reveal that liberal democracy is perhaps not a universal framework by which non-liberal democratic societal identities prefer to live – and thus a liberal democratic structure can be seen to threaten rather than protect the identity of such groups.

### *Competing Security Conceptions*

The discussion to this point has skimmed over the concept of security, preferring instead to concentrate on the entry point for the overarching investigation; namely, DP logic and the characteristics of liberal democracy. The DP conception of security fits within mainstream notions: it views states and state militaries as the narrow purview of security discourse and analysis. This conception of security has a long tradition going back further than the Fifth Century B.C. Greek philosopher Thucydides in both realism and liberalism. Although the energy of DP and liberalism more generally, compared to realism, is directed toward *evolving* away from violent conflict, the referent object of security remains the state and the consequential source of threat continues to come from state militaries. Overall, however, the mainstream conception denies a broader inclusion of referents and threat sources necessary to investigate the DP blind spot of intra-state violence with the prospect of threat sources beyond state

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the work of Will Kymlicka, Bhiku Parekh, and Duncan Ivison.

military versus state military. Thus, an alternate conception of security is required. This rather brief section is dedicated to establishing this alternate conception.

Searching further a field than the mainstream notion underpinning DP, I borrow from an increasingly popular view<sup>12</sup> which maintains that ‘security’ can mean different things to different people at different times<sup>13</sup>. This non-mainstream approach identifies the mainstream as ‘problem-solving’ theory in that it takes a set of existing assumptions as given and then proceeds to solve a (security) problem (Cox 1981), rather than acknowledging that political science research, and thus theory formulation, inescapably involves subjective rather than objective choices for both its framework and assumptions (Huysmans 2002: 42; Onuf 1970: 332). To the non-mainstream approach, there is a nexus between power and knowledge (Smith 2000: 74). “Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose.” (Cox 1981: 128) Security is not objective, but created or constructed through language inter-subjectively (Buzan et al. 1998: 57; Campbell 1992), facilitated by power broadly defined as derived from institutional, structural and material sources (McDonald 2004: 5). A profitable way thus to understand the security discourse is to recognize that theories about security - not dissimilar to other theories - tell a particular story.<sup>14</sup> Each story emphasizes certain aspects while de-emphasizing or ignoring others altogether.

Empirical evidence from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century supports the idea that if security is ultimately about the survival and well-being of humans – which is ostensibly the core purpose for mainstream notions – then the potential for an intra-state locus of security is quite valid. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century threats of armed force to

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<sup>12</sup> Particularly in the past 25 years, an increasing number of scholars have made compelling arguments highlighting mainstream problematique. See the numerous publications of Michael Shapiro, Steve Smith, Christian Reus-Smit, Robert Cox, Immanuel Wallerstein and Johan Galtung as just a few examples.

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Edward Locke and Matt McDonald for this particular way of phrasing the inter-subjective notion of security.

<sup>14</sup> My use of a ‘story’ metaphor, in relation to investigating the security debate, owes much to the work of Steve Smith (2000: 74) and also Roland Bleiker (2000: 9)

individuals came much more from the military and policing forces of the inhabitants' own state – at a rate of more than five to one (Bassiouni cited in Madigan 1998) – than those of other states like suggested by the mainstream view. The large portion of these internal deaths were due to the domestic 'security' practices of tyrannical regimes, while another substantial percentage refers to organized intra-state political violence between groups and/or the state forces.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the vast number of violent armed conflicts since World War II has occurred at the *intra-state*, instead of the mainstream's inter-state, level (Holsti 1991; Reilly 2000).<sup>16</sup> Chechnya, Bosnia and Somalia are a few of the abundant examples of intra-state political violence. Human individuals often experience insecurity in ways that have little to do with state militaries or military issues (Ullman 1983; Waever 1995: 47).

Barry Buzan is foremost among those thinkers to put forth a conception of security which considers referent objects and threat sources outside of the mainstream boundaries<sup>17</sup>. Buzan puts forth five sectors – namely the political, the military, the economic, the environmental, and the societal – from which to analyze security. Therefore, the importance of the move to borrow from alternate conceptions of security is this: the referent object of security can relate to a sub-state society and the threat source can stem from other than the material might and presence of a state military.

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<sup>15</sup> According to a study completed by Bassiouni cited in the Madigan (1998) article, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century there were some 203 million "man-made" fatalities. Only 33 million (less than one in five) were due to traditional, inter-state military clashes, whereas the vast majority were, instead, caused by state actors – tyrannical regimes in particular – on their own populace.

<sup>16</sup> Holsti's (1991: 273-278) review of total violent conflicts from 1945 to 1989 concluded that of the 58 conflicts that fit their definition of battle deaths > than 1,000, they found that 22 were traditional interstate with the remaining majority being intra-state. Reilly's (2000: 162) analysis of conflict found that of the 110 major conflicts that occurred between 1989 and 1999, only seven were traditional inter-state while the other 103 took place within existing states.

<sup>17</sup> Buzan's moves to broaden the security debate have been described as "a watershed" in the evolution of security studies (Booth 1991: 317) and "path breaking" in its effect (Knudsen 2001: 358).

This alternative understanding of security is encapsulated by a conceptualization called ‘securitization’<sup>18</sup>. Developed by a group of scholars dubbed ‘The Copenhagen School’, securitization tells how security threats escalate in a constructed social world by capturing the way in which processes of social interaction form as well as alter interests, and in doing so actually create or construct security. Securitization thus contrasts the mainstream’s notion of security escalation (i.e. the security dilemma) which is founded on the rational choice ‘logic of consequentialism’ whereby actors’ interests and preferences are mainly fixed during processes of interaction (March and Olsen 1998: 948-951). I dedicate appreciable attention to the logic of securitization now since later it forms the foundation for the investigation of political violence within liberal democratic structures.

As with mainstream depictions, securitization’s security is about threats to the existence of referent objects (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-24). However, securitization differs in fundamental ways to the mainstream’s version of threat escalation and in doing so it accommodates a broadened inter-subjective lens of security (to be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section) which enables the paper’s principal investigation of DP’s intra-state claim. At the same time securitization shares some conservative elements such as the retention of existing power structures (Williams 2004: 227) and the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ oppositional mentality (Bilgin et al. cited in Williams 2004: 227). Due to word length considerations, I limit the below elaboration to two crucial contentions.

First, securitization privileges language as central to security analysis. By simply saying “security”, actors (called ‘securitizing actors’) invoke the right to use whatever means necessary to stop a threatening development (Waever 1995: 55). Speech “injects” security into issues (Buzan et al. 1998: 204), which therefore have

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<sup>18</sup> This conception is most comprehensively articulated in Buzan et al., (1998) *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, yet its bases are also found in other articles and books, primarily by Ole Waever, but also from other scholars

no 'objective' core claim to the security label. Whether or not the issue holds a material potential to extinct a referent object is immaterial because interpretation is what matters to this conception of security. Consequently, so-called 'illusory' threats can become security agenda issues because securitization logic denies that 'real' (i.e. objective) threats exist (Buzan et al. 1998: 39-42). President George Bush Sr.'s rather sudden claim in 1989 that drugs constituted "the gravest domestic threat facing" the nation and thus drugs must be fought with extra-ordinary measures (Campbell 1992: 172) illustrates this notion. The inter-subjective grounding for this conception of language is a 'speech act', which means the "act of speaking in a form that gets someone else to act", and where its success depends upon the addressee's response (Onuf 1970: 327-328). The specific form of speech act used to securitize an issue "construct(s) a plot that includes an existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out" (Buzan et al. 1998: 33).

The litmus test for security is the successful mobilization of an audience – in the name of the issue(s) being portrayed by securitizing actors as 'security' threats (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). Simply put, without a mobilization *outside* of normal political procedures the issue cannot be considered a 'security' issue (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-24). This approach avoids the enduring problematic inherent in security dilemma logic of how to determine whether an actor's intentions are benign or malign (Hollis and Smith 1990: 172). The locus of security analysis rather is "who can 'do' security in the name of what?" (Buzan et al. 1998: 45). Language, rather than the military build up of the security dilemma's logic, is the force driving security threat escalations. Invoking the term security, hence, can be seen as a "powerful political tool" when it comes to the behavior of both governments and populations (Buzan 1991: 370) and sub-state groups for that matter.

Yet, what distinguishes a security related speech act that successfully mobilizes from one that fails? In short, the exercise of power relies broadly on legitimization (Bourdieu cited in Swartz 1997: 6). Therefore, a second contention of securitization pertains to those factors which may be seen to *facilitate* (but do not determine) the mobilization outcome so essential to threat escalation. 'Facilitating conditions' comprise the following: a) the speech act outlines emergency measures purportedly capable of overcoming the threat; b) the securitizing actor must have social capital (legitimacy) in the eyes of the audience; c) "features of the alleged threats" can be referenced (Buzan et al. 1998: 32-33). The last point encompasses the idea that material components effect limits upon human agency to construct a particular reality (Onuf 1970) and is developed further in one of the subsequent sections.

To these I add a fourth condition which serves to ground the others: d) the cognitive bias of the audience<sup>19</sup> coincides with a securitizing attempt. This condition relies on the proposition that humans generally accept arguments which confirm their pre-formed beliefs about ‘reality’ while tending to reject those arguments which contradict existing beliefs. This matters fundamentally to discussions about securitization attempts because the exact same material and ideational phenomena (e.g. an argument’s logic, the securitizing actor, and external references) can then be interpreted with dramatically different meaning depending on the audience’s pre-conceived views of ‘reality’<sup>20</sup>. In other words, the construction of meaning and identity is influenced by inherited notions of what is or is not perceived as reasonable (Tarrow 1998: 200-203). Humans do not start the contemplation of a securitizing attempt from a cognitively neutral position, and therefore, this fourth facilitating condition undergirds the other conditions since they are unavoidably interpreted through a pre-formed cognitive filter. Moreover, this fourth condition helps to explain why, for example, the Bush administration’s securitizing move to invade Iraq resonated widely among the conservative elements of the American public and not among the more liberal audiences – despite the fact both groups lived in the same overall state structure<sup>21</sup>.

Securitization attempts, overall, are constrained by socially constructed limits (Buzan et al. 1998: 39). Facilitating conditions contribute directly to these limits in a constraining or enabling sense. The study of how socially constructed limits

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<sup>19</sup> I draw directly here from the notion of ‘habitus’ put forth by Pierre Bourdieu (cited in Swartz 1997: 95-116) where habitus is broadly about “a set of deeply internalized master dispositions that generate action” and perceptions, related to a “cultural unconscious” that corresponds to “earlier socialization” (Bourdieu cited in Swartz 1997: 101-103). In short, each group may be said to contain a different potential predisposition which, in turn, greatly influences its perceptions and thus helps to explain why the same securitizing attempt resonates to such different degrees across different audiences.

<sup>20</sup> Sidney Tarrow (1998: 200-206) uses notions with some elements in common to Bourdieu when he talks about these preexisting frameworks. Two which apply here broadly are the concepts of “culturally familiar repertoires” and “cultural frames”.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, a poll done by Program on International Policy Attitudes in 2003 on the Iraq War and misperceptions of facts about the war where Republican voters were – across the board – more likely to have misperceptions about the rhetoric coming from the Bush Administration concerning the war.

affect securitization is thus a key component of security studies (Buzan et al 1998: 39). After all, in order to successfully break the political rules a securitizing move must be legitimized (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). In summary, the “way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations...” Buzan et al. (1998: 25). This view of security as constructed through primarily language based upon power relations contrasts fundamentally the mainstream belief that security is determined prior to and in spite of the influences of social interaction – and where language is only a periphery factor used to simply either to describe or conceal the objective existence of security.

### *Identity: Security and Liberal Democracy*

Having created the space for a conception of security which relates to intra-state referents and principal threats other than state militaries, the discussion to follow continues this trajectory with a focus on identity. In this section I look at the relationships between identity and security, identity in general, and the linkages between identity and liberal democracy. What are the qualities of identity and how might these qualities relate to conflict? Furthermore, what relationships does identity hold with liberal democratic systems?

However, I preface the examination with a basic observation intended to stress the importance and centrality of identity in political science investigations generally: identity underscores how humans organize and therefore understand the world. Hence, identity is an inescapable dimension of being (Campbell 1992: 9). As William Connolly (1995: 165) so summarily puts it: “Boundaries abound”. Without identity boundaries demarcating concepts we are left with what William James (cited in Huntington 1993: 186) called “a bloomin’ buzzin’ confusion”. The direct relevance of this observation to this investigation begins to come into full view when considering that identity boundaries allow us to distinguish humans

from animals, culture from nature, and between genders, races, classes, and nations (Connolly 1995: 165). I now discuss four consequences of this.

Firstly, the use of identity to distinguish one thing from another is the foundation for insecurity and conflict. Security and identity are ineluctably related; after all, something has to be identified in order to security it (G.M. Dillon cited in Campbell 1992: 199). This becomes vital because it allows for the demarcation of 'us' versus 'other', 'domestic' from 'foreign' (Campbell 1992:9) without which an 'enemy' could not be identified. In conflict, basic questions are asked like: "What side are you on?" or "What are you?" (Huntington 1993: 27). Through identity we not only more clearly know 'us' when we are able to compare ourselves to 'other'; we do not even have an 'us' until we have established an 'other' (Ignatieff 1994).

Secondly, this identity demarcation enables the mobilization of audiences to carry out conflict. Consistent with an 'instrumentalist' view<sup>22</sup>, identity serves as an essential tool by which to mobilize, direct and sustain conflict. Moreover, for the purposes of effective mobilization, the simpler the identity demarcations are the better. Simple dichotomous 'us' versus 'them' statements, which ignore the multi-dimensional nature of identity and fail to acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of our lives nevertheless prove more effective (Said 2001: 3). No matter what the particular boundaries are identified as, identity's role in mobilization proves indispensable to the pursuit of political goals.

Thirdly, and as a corollary to the last point, because identity forms the basis for interests (Wendt 1992), the pursuit of political goals (i.e. interests) is unavoidably the pursuit of identity. In other words, superpower identities inform superpower interests, small power identities inform small power interests and so forth. Canada, for example, is better able to project an identity of 'good international

citizen' when the interests it pursues adhere to that particular identity. Otherwise put, the seemingly ubiquitous struggles over interests which culminate in conflict are inescapably struggles about identity.

Fourthly, because identity provides humans with a sense of belonging (Ignatieff 1994), it provides the emotional underpinnings for issues of security. As social creatures, humans find solace and comfort in sameness (Thakur 2003: 2). Identity, to those within the 'school of culture', offers a "sense of secure belonging and a set of scripts that give meaning to individual lives." (Gutmann 2002: 543) Actors which depict issues in terms of threat and survival in order to mobilize masses for political goals rely upon these emotional foundations. These emotional foundations are not to be conflated with the primordialist ideal of identity that it is, in and of itself, the *cause* of conflict<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Lake and Rothchild (1998) for further explanation of this notion.

<sup>23</sup> See Lake and Rothchild (1998: 5) for a brief explanation of the primordialist position.

The above discussion about the relationships between identity and (in)security is underpinned by a certain conception of identity. I turn now briefly to qualities of identity, generally, which serve as prerequisites for an argument relating the intra-state DP security investigation. Overall, identity can be known as 'supple' – not fixed – along the following three lines. First, identity is *multi-dimensional* (Smith 1991: 4) since humans can be described accurately by multiple identities at once. Symbols – such as language (Gow 2002), food (Allen 2002: 186-214), territory (Mayall 1995), and values<sup>24</sup> – help humans to grasp these identity dimensions. This aspect allows leaders to pick and choose which identity dimension suits their political goals best. At the same time, it reinforces the ineluctable link between the pursuit of interests (e.g. religious and ethnic practices) and identity. Second, identity is *relational*. "There is no identity without difference." (Connolly 1995: xx) Otherwise expressed: "Difference is constituted in relation to identity" (Campbell 1992: 9). The dichotomies of 'us' versus 'them' for the purpose of mobilization rely on this feature. Third, identity is *dynamic*. Owing largely to its multi-dimensional and relational features, identity has the capacity if not the tendency to change. Some labels, like those pertaining to ideological or political stances for example, may be changed almost instantly (Huntington 1993:27). Because identity can be viewed as lived, performed and thus reinforced daily through the practices and customs of society (Gow 2002: 2-3; Campbell 1992), it holds the potential for constant flux. Consider the cultural identity changes imposed on indigenous Americans or Australians by European settlers.

A crucial conclusion of identity's suppleness is that, like security, delineations of identity are ultimately constructed inter-subjectively (Reus-Smit 2001). In other words, boundaries for a particular identity are built through an emphasis on only

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, an election email sent by George W. Bush to voters which emphasizes 'value' symbols like liberty, freedom, and religious conviction vis-à-vis a particular notion of the American identity. (The Real "Heart and Soul" of America>Date sent: Fri, 30 Jul 2004 00:10:47 -0400 )

a subset of the many identity labels that arguably apply. Moreover, context matters integrally to this construction (Garb 1998: 186), and therefore ideational, structural and material forces impact not only a construction's shape but also its resonance. Identity is not fixed or immutably pre-given by God or nature (Campbell 1992: 9). Identity is not about a simple search and discover, rather it is ultimately a matter of choice and decision (Ra 1996: 2-3) which in turn allows for Benedict Anderson's (1991) widely-known idea of 'imagined communities'. Identity constructions are political by their very natures and thus the deconstruction of identity reveals the politics behind the construction (Butler 1989:148). For instance, the identity of 'Asia' is said to have started as 'non-Europe', invented and defined by Europeans for European uses (Ra 1996: 3).

Fortunately, identity constructions are not necessarily conflictual or oppositional inherently. As William Connolly (1995: 165) argues, identity contains the potential for rather than the inevitability of conflict. On the one hand, the assertions made above indicate that identity difference may be used to demonize the 'other' to promote violent conflict (Campbell 1992: 189) as illustrated by this statement from George W. Bush: 'terrorists groups' would use WMD "without a hint of conscience." (Bumiller 2002). Societies thus are *taught* by political leaders to either fear outsiders or blame ills that befall them on others (Thakur 2003: 2). On the other hand, constructions of identity difference can avoid the demonization ploy and instead weave a notion of acceptance. The direction for an accepting construction of identity is encapsulated well within a conceptualization termed the 'ethics of difference'. To this ideal acceptance and toleration are the ways by which difference is engaged (Bleiker 2001: 121). Support for Connolly's above assertion is found in study data generated on quantitative analysis for all civil wars occurring since 1965 that indicates ethnic heterogeneity of political unit/state had no bearing on incidence of civil war (Collier and Hoeffler 1998). Hence, identities can be *constructed* to encourage conflict, or conversely, to promote peaceful co-existence.

This contention matters because the language which constructs identity becomes a key to security analysis. It places the focus on how identity is being constructed by a given actor(s) within the various political arguments that unavoidably construct a given identity. Does a particular identity construction encourage conflictual or accommodating behavior by its members towards others? Methodologically we must investigate which interests are at stake and who the actors are that are pursuing each of these particular interests (McSweeney 1996: 90-1) and thus identities.

The idea of securitization captures those constructions which encourage conflictual trajectories for behavior since it articulates how language is used to mobilize audiences by 'injecting' security. A further development which aids the DP intra-democratic investigation occurs by combining securitization's escalatory logic with another Copenhagen School concept, the Societal Identity Security lens. Societal Identity Security places group identity overtly and primarily as the referent object of security (Buzan et al. 1998). This amalgam introduces a conceptualization whereby actors use language principally to construct the need to escalate security measures in order to protect group identity.

At this point, it becomes useful to outline briefly the Copenhagen School's idea of Societal Identity Security. As mentioned in the security conceptions section, of Buzan's five security sectors I am most interested in the societal sector logic due to its connections with identity. The choice of a sector with an identity emphasis is justifiable for this particular investigation because of liberal democracy's special linkages to identity protection discussed earlier. Societal Identity Security logic implies that threats to the societal identity referent may be seen to come from other societal identities first and foremost, rather than immediate threats to the physical survival of humans either from state militaries or other threat sources such as poverty. Different to the more popular idea of 'identity politics'

where identity serves primarily to distinguish 'us' from 'other' (Stavenhagen 1990: 119) for purposes of mobilizing audiences<sup>25</sup>, *identity is itself the referent object of security*. The term 'identity entrepreneurs' is introduced at this juncture to denote securitizing actors who use identity (primarily) as both the referent object and the threat source of security<sup>26</sup>. Threats to societal identity can be seen along a spectrum of intentional and programmatic to unintentional (Buzan et al. 1998: 121).

The concept of 'cultural genocide' defined broadly as the forced assimilation of sub-state groups (Ryan 1995: 9) fits within the Societal Identity Security spectrum at the intentional and programmatic end. The Basque society in contemporary Spain serves as an ideal example of deliberate and systematic identity threat waged, initially at least, by the Franco regime. Two closely-related processes cited by Ole Waever (1995: 43) encapsulate the Basque experience: firstly, *suppressing* the expression of identity through such measures as forbidding the use of language, names, and dress of a society; and secondly, interfering with an identity's ability to *reproduce* itself by, for example, closing the institutions and/or practices that allow identity reproduction. On the other hand, more subtle (and perhaps less intentional) forms of identity threat can be seen in the processes Buzan et al. (1998: 121) term 'vertical' and/or 'horizontal competition' whereby the identity of a society is overtaken by other identities in an absorption manner. The Quebecoise ethnicity in Canada appears to fit this conceptual category in that the enunciated concerns relate to the loss of Francophone identity due to English identity pressures. Many intra-state conflicts between states and sub-state groups stem from contestations where identity occupies the prime referent of threat (Buzan et al. 1998: 132) – regardless of which of these specific category forms the threat assumes.

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<sup>25</sup> This notion is used widely in the ethnic, nationalism conflict literature which took centre stage in the 1990's in particular.

Societal identity threat logic refers to situations where identity is *emphasized* as the referent. However, the construction of societal identity itself has wider ramifications than Buzan's societal security sector. Like Wendt's (1992) position that identity underpins interests, I maintain that societal identity constructions comprise recommended action across all interest categories (e.g. economic, ideological and so forth). The vision, for example, of the American identity put forth by President George W. Bush contains either explicit or implicit behavioral recommendations on a vast array of interests. These interests are incapable of being divorced from one another without altering overall identity. The constructions tell a society how to live together. Societal identity constructions underscore Buzan's other four sectors vis-à-vis conflict and the pursuit of human interests in two relevant ways described below.

First, societal identity constructions are themselves a source of threat – directly as well as indirectly. Indirectly, identity construction contains the possibility for identity threat since the adoption and practice of one identity necessarily precludes the fulfillment of another by the same audience. A member of the Basque society, for instance, cannot simultaneously be a member of the (non-Basque) Castilian society with its contrasting societal identity construction. The multi-dimensionality of identity does not allow for mutually exclusive identities such as 'father' and 'non-father'. Directly, within identity constructions are found that identity's stance toward the existence and identity of 'others'. Stances toward the 'other' can be viewed along a continuum of intention ranging from 'accepting' to 'eliminating'. In other words, does a particular construction, the guidelines of how to live, encourage acceptance of others or incite a treatment of domination toward all those who are purportedly different? Is a society's existence, in the words of President George W. Bush, a clear cut battle of those

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<sup>26</sup> 'Identity entrepreneurs' are notably more identity laden than those actors using identity rather singularly to mobilize masses for political interests less about identity security and more about power, territory or economic interests as in

who are 'good' fighting against those who are 'evil'? Or is it more about the need to negotiate with and understand those holding differing views? Because the construction of societal identity (and security for that matter) is dynamic by its nature, constructions can and do vary according to time, space and securitizing actor. This means constructions should be understood and analyzed in context rather than the temptation to generalize across occurrences.

Michael Barnett (1999) provides a compelling case study analysis on these aspects. He illustrates how group identity constructions necessarily contain security prescriptions toward the 'other'. Barnett recounts how two Israeli leaders put forth contrary notions of identity for the Israeli people: one construction advocates the continued subjugation of and oppositional relationship to the Palestinian people whereas the other urges a tolerant treatment of 'them'. The suppleness of identity permits actors to construct societal identities that contain different approaches to treatment of the 'other'. At the same time, the case study demonstrates how the struggle to realize a particular identity construction by following its recommended behavior entails the need to secure one identity at the expense of the other. Identity constructions have these two capacities: namely, to threaten by their mere existence, but also to direct how to treat other identities.

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much of the 'identity politics' literature.

A second and corollary point is that societal identity constructions relate directly to the type of political system governing that society. Political systems can be thought of as extensions or manifestations of societal identity, in that the systems are essentially 'structures' defined earlier broadly as ideals and practices. Ideals and practices of a structure stem from identity constructions exhorting or reinforcing certain ways of living together. Structures both constrain and enable the agency of (internal) actors (Reus-Smit 2001: 218)<sup>27</sup>; structures thus affect the capacity of an actor to securitize an issue like group identity. Liberal democracy, hence, is a political structure which forms and evidences a significant part of a certain societal identity construction; it contains the ideals and practices which tell those members of its society how to live together. Therefore, a political system can be seen as a source of threat to societal identity similar to the 'direct' manner mentioned above in which a societal identity construction articulates the way by which to treat the 'other'.

How do these assertions about societal identity constructions assist the investigation? Overall, societal identity constructions become the core of security analysis since the different articulations contain the ideals and practices by which to treat 'others'. Methodologically, by evaluating what each set of actors puts forward for its specific societal identity construction, like Barnett (1999) does and McSweeney (1996) advise, the interests of the group are known as part and parcel of its identity. The same applies to how the constructions that underpin a political system treat others, in addition to the *interpretation* of that system by actors. A political system itself can serve as a *nuanced* form of societal identity threat to persons whose societal identity constructions are at odds with the system's underlying practices and ideals. A political system may then be used as an 'external feature' by societal leaders attempting to evidence sources of societal identity insecurity. It is here that the link to liberal democracy comes full circle

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<sup>27</sup> I refer here specifically to the 'structurationist' strand of constructivism which maintains that agents and structures are mutually constituted (Reus-Smit 2001: 218).

because the ideal liberal democratic structures – the principles of equality and the practices of compromise – according to DP’s causal logic, promise to restrain the construction of predatory identities by protecting the pursuit of unique identity. Identity in a liberal democratic structure, it is said, cannot be used to escalate political violence due to the conflict management design of the political system.

Hence, in the ways described above, identity plays integral roles vis-à-vis the prospect of political violence in liberal democracy. Not only can identity be placed as the referent object and threat source of security, it serves as the means by which threat escalation is organized. Moreover, (security) ethics of how to treat others are inescapably a part of group identity construction. Societal identity becomes the principal referent object and threat source of security when the constructions are more clearly about a mutual exclusivity of identity rather than an acceptance and co-existence of identity difference. It is important, however, to reiterate that the ‘presence’ of these societal identity construction threats is not objective; forces of threat do not matter to security analysis until securitization attempts commence and mobilization is ultimately garnered around the issue of societal identity security.

### *Conclusions*

I began the paper by pointing to DP’s assumption that democracies are able to avoid political violence due to liberal democratic norms and practices, and by maintaining that the prospect of political violence within democracies is a significant issue regarding efforts for global peace because of the growing pervasiveness of democratic regimes. The investigation next engaged the security debate in order to come away with a conception of security that applies outside the traditional state referent and state military threat source notion and therefore to the intra-state arena. It was at this juncture that I introduced the inherent influences and roles played by identity – with particular regard to a liberal

democratic structure and its special relationship to identity. I return to the paper's original questions. How does liberal democracy affect political violence? And more specifically, what are the relationships between identity and political violence in a liberal democratic structure? The below conclusions offer insights on an area which the DP supposition dangerously misrecognizes as incapable of political violence.

In its *ideal* form, the liberal democratic structure paradoxically both constrains and enables attempts to escalate threats to societal identity. On the one hand, liberal democracy constrains violent escalation in that its practices and ethos are relatively accommodating of identity expression on many levels, unlike totalitarian systems such as Stalinist Russia or present-day theocratic Iran for instance. At its core liberal democracy promises to protect the pursuit of diverse interests and thus, as I have maintained, identity. Citizens are free to select their own identity. Hence, attempts by 'identity entrepreneurs' to argue that a liberal democratic system is intolerant towards identity fulfillment resonate less well among the target audience. In other words, it becomes implausible to cast liberal democratic practices as an 'external feature' (i.e. evidence) of identity repression.

On the other hand, liberal democracy enables escalatory moves. The accommodating freedoms afforded by liberal democratic ideals and practices – speech in particular but also freedoms of expression and association more generally – facilitate efforts to disseminate constructions which securitize issues. These same freedoms are not afforded in totalitarian systems. Consequently, identity entrepreneurs have an enhanced opportunity to reach and mobilize a wide audience with constructions that contain violent courses of action purporting to protect societal identity interests. To a view of security that suggests threat is not objective rather perceived, the capability to spread the perception of threat means mobilization is possible – regardless of a threat's 'real' existence.

While the above conclusions refer directly to the exemplary principles of a liberal democratic structure, the messiness of the social world brings less than ideal actualities. Structures influence rather than determine agency. Therefore the question becomes: under what *conditions* does a liberal democracy fail to constrain the recourse to political violence as promised above? Otherwise put: under what conditions might security arguments about threats to societal identity resonate widely?

The more obvious 'conditions' relate to illiberal practices.<sup>28</sup> Take Israel's consistent discrimination against Arab Israelis in terms of political, property, and citizenship rights (Benvenisti 1995) or the equally broad prejudicial treatment of Black Americans leading to civil rights movements in the 1960's. In such cases the societal identity constructions underpinning the practice of the political system are materially and ideationally hostile towards certain societal identities; the system serves as a source of identity threat. This is in stark contrast to the promise of liberal democracy serving to embrace identity diversity. Consequently, where conditions of illiberal practices can be evidenced as 'external features' of societal identity repression, attempts to securitize identity threats are more likely to be successful. Politically violent courses of action for the repressed, as in Northern Ireland and Spain, resonate more widely.

However, less obvious conditions exist as well. Of particular note here is whether or not a society's identity construction is based in the Western liberal democratic mold. This relates to the earlier assertion that political systems' can serve as nuanced sources of societal identity threat to those groups whose societal constructions differ. Eastern cultural identities, for instance, emphasize a quest for harmony and consensus, whereas Western cultural notions focus on 'rights'

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<sup>28</sup> A number of scholars take up the theme of conflict which relates to the "illiberal" behavior of democracies. See John Owen 1994 and Sean Lynn-Jones 1996 for examples.

(Bilveer 2000: 622), individualism and egoism. Consequently, for those societies which derive their identity from non-liberal democratic (Western) traditions, the liberal democratic structure may itself be perceived more readily as a threat to group identity. Under this latter condition, leaders from non-Western like societies – to include many indigenous societies as well – may argue more convincingly that a threat to the reproduction of their societal identity exists.<sup>29</sup> The rhetoric of Osama bin Laden serves as an example here when he argues for political violence against the Western, primarily liberal democratic influences because they threaten his particular construction of an Islamic identity.

Taken together, these conclusions add insight as well as caution to the DP's main implication that world peace is furthered rather automatically with the growth of democracy. Societal identity constructions matter significantly to the capacity to escalate violence in a democracy. Each circumstance must be examined in its own context – within the framework of these broader assertions – in order to gain a more accurate understanding of how liberal democracy affects political violence and identity. A better understanding about the relationships between liberal democracy, political violence and identity is increasingly vital in a world where democratic structures seem poised to dominate the way in which humans live together.

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<sup>29</sup> As indicated earlier, this point comes through in the multicultural debate (see Parekh 2000, Kymlicka 1989) but also in other discussions, see for example, Richard Shapcott 2002, 'Cosmopolitan Conversations: Justice Dialogue and the Cosmopolitan Project', *Global Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3, page 224.

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