Figurational Sociology and the Democratic Peace - Holy Allies and Liberal Threats

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Volume 1, Issue 2, July 2012

Permalink: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0001.208 [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0001.208]

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ABSTRACT: *Eliasian inspired approaches can add to international relations theory by pushing beyond the confines of interactionism, which still dominates the discipline. Figurational thinking not only offers an inspiring ontological alternative to 'classical' approaches, but provides for novel insights on the basis of empirical research. This article, in a first step, critically engages the ontological presuppositions of interactionist theories, and the democratic peace literature more specifically. In a second step, it draws on an empirical study to make the confines of this literature, and the pitfalls of the resulting policy recommendations, visible. To do so, the article analyzes a historical event in which the assumptions that liberal democracies are geared towards peace* qua *regime type came to be reversed. Following the Congress of Troppau in 1820 a stark opposition between liberal-constitutional and Christian-monarchical regime types led to the assessment that liberal states and those in the process of liberalization, are threatening* qua *regime type. This emergence of 'liberal threats' was inseparably tied to the formation of a group of states (Holy Allies) which began to base their conception of international legitimacy on Christian-monarchical principles. This reversal of contemporary intuitions underlines the importance of being able to account for such findings at a conceptual level. Interactionist perspectives are less fit to do so, because they erase the processual-relational character of social arrangements. In terms of foreign policy, interactionist approaches make it exceedingly difficult to recognize benevolent signals sent by allegedly inherently threatening states. At the same time, interactionist perspectives also lead to a curtailment of policy options open to decision-makers. This article subsequently argues that an interactionist approach to the democratic peace with its highly restricted scientific ontology unwarrantedly limits the ability to purposefully act in the world.*

Introduction

Figurational approaches are gradually finding their way into the discipline of International Relations (IR) since Eliasian inspired perspectives share a number of concerns with classical IR theory, while opening up new avenues of inquiry. [1] [#N1] Despite the broad collaborative potential between figurational perspectives and IR, I would like to make a critical conceptual contribution to one of the most prominent strands of thinking in IR, namely the democratic peace (DP) literature (f.e. Doyle 1983a, 1983b; Kant 2003). Discussing the DP can highlight how figurational thinking moves beyond the confines of interactionist-substantialism, so far restricting the DP literature, by making the constitutive interconnectedness of actors visible.

This article begins with the simple observation that the DP literature assigns democratic institutions a central role in explaining war and peace at the international level. While the explanations for why democratic states seldom fight each other vary considerably (see Kley 1999; Levy 2002), there is broad agreement that democracies *qua* their intrinsic qualities are to be credited for their ability to facilitate peace. This has led to the presumption that international relations are *ceteris paribus* better off with more, rather than less, mature democracies (for a critical stance see Daase 2006; Mansfield and Snyder 1995). While this article does not challenge the empirical findings discussed in the DP literature, or the methodology which has been heatedly debated (see Bogaards 2010; Layne 1994; Spiro 1994), it does contest the view that international actors should be studied as if they were isolated entities (in analogy to *homo clausus,* see Elias 1978) and then related towards other actors in a secondary movement. This article consequently engages the DP literature at the level of social theory, and argues that theorizing states as things and their attributes prior to the relations in which statehood arises (interactionist-substantialism) has led to a reluctance to acknowledge that democratic norms and values may not only facilitate peace but also provide the conditions of possibility for regime based conflict. [2] [#N2] Studying the DP in terms of intrinsic qualities forecloses an analysis of how ascriptions of regime type meanings emerge in a constitutively relational process. In Eliasian terms, the approach taken by DP theorists is problematic because it eclipses the figurational embededness of actors and therefore the 'co-authorship of democratic regimes' in the construction of *ipso facto* threatening states. The hyperstatization of complex processual-relations (see Bauman 1989: 43) in the DP literature is not an exclusively conceptual or academic matter, given that central notions of the DP have made their way into actual foreign policy. It is important to underscore that the entity/attribute logic of this line of reasoning makes it exceedingly difficult, for states considered to be *ipso facto* threatening, to signal benevolence, and that policy options are thereby unduly curtailed. In the final analysis, the policy recommendations of the DP are the outflow of a very specific and highly restrictive social ontology, not of ontological certainties.

To de-naturalize the notion that democratic regimes need to be understood in terms of entity attributes, and to underscore the constitutive interrelatedness of social entities, I will study a historical event in which liberal-democratic states 'came to be' *ipso facto* threatening and a menace to the international order *qua* regime type. This counter-intuitive finding is arrived at through a brief introduction to the treaty of the Holy Alliance (1815) and the analysis of the Congress of Troppau (1820). [3] [#N3] Most importantly, the empirical investigation not only shows how liberal states came to be regarded as a threat to order and peace, but also how this was inseparably linked with a rift that emerged between the great powers along a monarchical versus liberal dividing line. This double-movement should caution contemporary approaches to the DP against conceptualizing attributes as unit level phenomenon.

Before introducing the historical narrative, this article will briefly discuss the interactionist ontological assumptions underlying the DP debate, and explicate what the 'charge of interactionism' entails. In order to flesh out this critique, I will draw on the distinction between interactionism and transactionism (Dewey and Bentley 1949). Subsequently, the article will outline the main concepts which inform the figurational argument at hand, although it will not be possible to outline the approach in any detail (see Elias 1978; Mennell 1992; Van Krieken 2007). Rather, this article makes an empirically informed argument to illustrate the added value of figurational thinking in comparison to interactionist, or variable based approaches. In concluding, I will reflect on the implications of the empirical study for the DP literature in regard to the concerns spelled out above.

I. The democratic peace from a figurational perspective

Proponents of the DP argue that the finding of democracies rarely fighting each other is 'as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations' (Levy 1988: 662). The hopes associated with this line of thinking are that the eventual predominance of mature democracies will have a pacifying effect which overrides the imperatives of anarchy (Russett 1993). Kant had mainly focused on the structural conditions which would lead self-interested citizens to steer the state clear of adventurous war, the ability of republican states to enter into a league of peaceful nations, and arguably the pacifying effects of trade (see Kant 2003;

Czempiel 1996; Morgan and Campbell 1991). Contemporary theorists have added a number of factors not envisioned by Kant, including the role of the press, the ability to signal credibly, the transparency of democratic regimes (f.e. Schultz 1998), the incentives of re-election, the enhanced war-fighting ability of democracies, or the similarity of culture, to name just a few of the most prominent amendments (also see Levy 2002; Mintz and Geva 1993). These claims, quite regardless of their specific underlying *explanans*, anchor international peace in the nature of democratic regime types and not in other factors such as wealth, economic growth, contiguity, common alliance bonds or political stability (see Maoz and Russett 1992; also Doyle 1997; Ray 1995; Russett and Oneal 2001; Russett and Starr 2000). [4] [#N4]

If we focus on two of the dominant modes of theorizing, namely the 'democratic culture and norms model' and the 'institutional constraints model' (Levy 2002: 359; Schultz 1999; Siverson 1995), we find that they offer unique explanations in terms of causal mechanisms. At the same time, both traditions base the peacefulness of democracies on regime attributes which subsequently play themselves out at the international level. Both monadic and dyadic approaches articulate a logic that moves from the level of attributes to the level of interaction (for a revival of monadic theorizing see Benoit 1996; Bremer 1992; Ray 2000; Russett & Oneal 2001; Russett & Starr 2000). Rather than explicating the above mentioned variants of the DP in detail, it is important to establish that these approaches share an interactionist starting point. Theories of DP begin thinking about IR in terms of regime types and the way regime attributes take effect at the international level. Relations are often taken into consideration, but only in a second step, thereby forfeiting insights into the constitutive interdependencies which are formative of actors in the first place. [5] [#N5]

This critique also holds true for the constructivist approaches to the DP (see Risse-Kappen 1995). Given that constructivists have articulated a 'we-they' relationship at the heart of the phenomenon of DP, it is important to briefly mention that constructivists have not gone far enough in theorizing the constitutive relationality of social entities. In short, the constructivist argument largely takes for granted that non-democracies can be identified as an 'other' with decisively diverging standards of conduct, possibly leading to exaggerated violence (Risse-Kappen 1995; also Schimmelfennig 2009). The notion that processes of identifying 'the other' should not be separated from processes of self-formation remains underdeveloped on account of interactionist starting-points. Contemporary constructivist approaches to the DP consequently seem untroubled by the finding that actors are not given prior to, or independent of, their figurational embeddedness. [6] [#N6]

In order to flesh out the charge of interactionism made above, I will draw on the distinction between interactionism and transactionism suggested by Arthur Bentley and John Dewey (Dewey and Bentley 1949). But rather than outlining transactionism in detail, I will quickly move on to a discussion of figurational thinking as one possible transactionist, or processual-relational, approach.

Inter-actionist perspectives, which start conceptualization with isolated things and their attributes and only in a secondary logical operation proceed to interaction, are ideal-typically represented by Newtonian physics and variable based approaches in the social sciences. They are inseparably tied to a substantialist metaphysics, which 'takes as its point of departure the notion that [...] substances [...] constitute the fundamental units of all inquiry' (Emirbayer 1997: 282). After conceptualized fixed entities with variable attributes, interactionist approaches add interaction. 'All of the relevant action [therefore] takes place *among*' (Emirbayer 1997: 286) fixed entities. [7] [#N7] The outcomes of *inter*-action are then measured as attributes of (again) fixed entities. This creates space in which to theorize the *relationship between* entities, but not their constitutive relatedness, because the theoretical presumptions force inquires to attribute qualities to substances individually. Such a view has proven to be helpful in understanding physical phenomenon at and above the atomic level, but has proven to be especially problematic for studying social phenomena. In order to avoid the insurmountable difficulties of interactionist-substantialism, transactionist or processual-relational approaches do not start with theorizing separate *things* (agency and structure) at all. [8] [#N8] The figurational or processual sociology formulated by Norbert Elias has broken new ground, not in solving the agency-structure problem, but in showing that it is a contingent starting-point of theorizing.

Rather than separating agents and structures in order to theorize their relations, Elias provides us with an alternative processual-relational approach in which the central concept of figurations theorizes actors in terms of their constitutive interdependencies, as *homines aperti*. [9] [#N9] Figurations replace reified agents and structures with a picture in which dynamic and shifting relations are central to understanding persons *in* society (see Elias 1978: 130). Social reality is consequently conceptualized as being inhabited by interdependently connected individuals. Persons, and in terms of IR, social entities, exist in terms of pluralities. The singular, which is often indicative of a metaphysics of the present (Derrida 1983), loses its privileged position (see Elias 1978: 125). Importantly, the relations that bind individuals together in a ‘continuum of changes’, are ‘as real as the “individuals” themselves’ (Mennell 1992: 256). Conceptually, analysts of figurations ‘grasp the processual link between actors and society in a way that renders ‘“the individual” and “society” “two different but inseparable levels of the human world”’ (Bauman 1989: 39). As networks of relational ties amongst individual actors, figurations ‘exist in and through the activity of their participants’ (van Krieken 2007: 58). It is only within (and across) figurations that social actors are constituted (see Jackson and Nexon 1999: 304), and that meanings become salient. [10] [#N10] The notion that ‘every human individual is fundamentally a social being’ (Elias 1978: 124) is then reflected in the shifting uses of personal pronouns, which depict how persons are related towards each other (see Elias 1978: 123). Tracing changes in the use of personal pronouns can therefore make shifts in the boundaries of communities graspable (see Bessant 2008: 293). The critical aspect, from a figurational perspective, is the need to conceptualize international actors in terms of *homines aperti*, thereby providing new inroads for IR theorists focusing on intersubjectivity, processes and agency. In short, this implies that qualities ascribed to states only become meaningful within a figurational model (of personal pronouns).

As argued above, the DP literature starts with the notion of states in terms of *homo clausus*, rather than taking the constitutive interdependence of (state) actors into account. It thereby neglects the processual-relational character of figurations and processes of meaning-making therein. Interactionist approaches consequently do not allow us to see that entity attributes and intrinsic qualities are (partly contingent) temporal outcomes of processes which are characterized by the articulation of specific (group) values and norms (on ‘blind spots’ see Luhmann and Fuchs 1989). Quite to the contrary, interactionist approaches continually demand that ‘what something is’ is unambiguously fixed. [11] [#N11] The figurational approach adopted here, underscores that social entity attributes only become meaningful in terms of relations of difference which emerge in processes of meaning-making. As it stands, these processes are constitutive not only of the other, but also of the self. Consequently, this article will study processes leading to the emergence of social entities and how these processes are (partly) constitutive of the actors within these developing figurations.

II. The Holy Allies and the liberal threat

In the following part of the discussion, I will analyze a historical episode in which liberal states came to be situated at the fringes of international society, and were briefly thought of as *ipso facto* threatening the order of Europe. At the same time, it was possible to observe the emergence of a new configuration within the Concert of Europe, namely the Holy Allies (comprising Austria, Prussia and Russia), which excluded Great

Britain and France on the basis of regime-type legitimacy. This double-movement, in which 'liberalism' became a salient political category informing the legitimacy debate, highlights the basic relatedness of social actors. A figurational approach thereby adds to the study of IR by providing the conditions of possibility for theorizing 'interdependence-in-antagonism' (Kilminster 1998: 136) in the international realm. The study also underscores that the policy recommendations articulated on the basis of an interactionist logic exaggerate potentials for conflict by impeding ways in which benevolence might be signalled credibly by allegedly *ipso facto* threats and by restricting policy options.

III. The Concert of Europe following the Napoleonic Wars

After the defeat of Napoleon, the five great powers of Europe (Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia) began to regularly consult on matters of overarching concern (see Palmer 1986: 58). In an unprecedented fashion the great powers attempted to cooperatively deal with territorial matters and questions of legitimacy. This unity among the great powers is noteworthy considering the repeated breakdowns of the anti-Napoleonic coalitions (see Bartlett 1996: 5-9; Schroeder 1996). Given the initial difficulties in establishing a restorative order, it is well documented that allied unity needed to be established at Vienna and the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (see Palmer 1986: 58; also Albrecht-Carrié 1968; Kissinger 1954; Lowe 1993; Schmalz 1940). Most importantly, the high degree of mutual cooperation was possible despite the fact that France had incorporated strong liberal elements in its form of government through the Charter of 1814 (see Helm 2009; Sellin 2001), and the British constitutional monarchy clearly differed from continental arrangements. There were in effect no major quarrels over the constitutional and liberal elements in France and Britain respectively. Quite to the contrary, Austria (Metternich) closely cooperated with Britain (Castlereagh), especially against Russian (Alexander I, Capo d'Istria) attempts to more closely regulate and 'legalize' the great power concert. In short, following the Napoleonic Wars, neither Britain nor France were considered to be problematic because of their 'constitutional structure', and France was formally accepted as a member of the Concert in 1818. The starting position of the narrative was therefore characterized by close cooperation among the five great powers, whose differences in regime-type were not considered to be decisive, or indicative of intrinsic qualities or dispositions.

While liberal elements in great power constitutions were not problematized directly, it was possible to observe a developing restorative movement on the continent (especially in the German states and Austria). This general development was in part a reaction to the Napoleonic Wars, and in part a strategic way of preserving the monarchical underpinnings of ethnically diverse states like Austria. The restorative moment became to be symbolized by the treaty of the Holy Alliance (26 September 1815) and crystallized in the Carlsbad degrees (see Kissinger 1954; Lyons 2006).

IV. The liberalism versus order dichotomy of the treaty of the Holy Alliance

The treaty of the Holy Alliance became a hallmark of conservatism and restoration by drawing a stark dichotomy between legitimate Christian and monarchical underpinnings of domestic and international order on the one hand and liberal instability on the other. Additionally, the treaty itself became an argumentative resource in the emergence of the Holy Allies, and consequently their liberal 'counterparts'. The treaty can be understood as a declaration of mutual benevolence based on shared Christian values which should inform the actions of all European monarchs. [12] [#N12]

More specifically, it called for the precepts of justice, charity and peace to be the underlying principles of domestic affairs as well as international relations (Preamble of the treaty, see Naef 1928). Although these principles signaled a declaration of purpose and group identity, they at the same time de-legitimized liberal thinking and the ideas formulated in the French Revolution. These, so the treaty maintained, had been experienced as being opposed to order, peace and legitimate rule. [13] [#N13] In a nutshell, the treaty contrasted legitimate Christian in-group values with the problematic nature of liberalism/constitutionalism. [14] [#N14] In articulating principles of solidarity, Christian charity, peace, justice, benevolent paternalism and brotherly conduct among rulers, the treaty not only articulated these common group values, but also provided the grounds upon which to identify those that were not proper members of the proposed unity. This case of linking and differentiation (Hansen 2006) highlights that the articulated dichotomization is the temporal outcome of political processes, and not the articulation of ontological necessities - even more so, as the stark dichotomy found in the treaty was not originally envisioned by the primary author Alexander, but was introduced by changes made by Metternich (see Naef 1928). The drafting of the treaty highlights the contingent character of the monarchical versus liberal dichotomy.

Clearly the treaty of the Holy Alliance did not make the emergence of *ipso facto* liberal threats, nor the Holy Allies as a distinct group, necessary. Alexander's draft and Metternich's changes might have remained entirely inconsequential and politically sterile, had not the revolution in Naples led to diplomatic unrests which were dealt with at the Congress of Troppau. As the order in Italy was important for the Vienna territorial settlement, the revolution in Naples fueled fears that an unraveling of the Italian order would cause European-wide instability. Although the great powers could agree on the need to act, the terms of action were heatedly debated. [15] [#N15]

V. The Congress of Troppau

At the Congress, Austria clearly articulated its perceived interest in sustaining its domination in Italy on the basis of the Vienna territorial settlement (which provided for regional Austrian hegemony in order to secure its position in central Europe). Austria consequently preferred to deal with the revolution in Naples unilaterally, making any general right to intervention problematic (see Walker 1968: 130-31; also Schmalz 1940). At the same time, Austria was quite vulnerable strategically and had much to gain from concerted action and self-restraint, especially in regard to Russian foreign policy (see Kissinger 1994: 87). In short, Austria bargained for unilateral intervention based on European consent. [16] [#N16]

The British Foreign Secretary, Castlereagh, generally agreed with Metternich that the revolution in Naples was an Austrian matter, not a European one and would merit unilateral intervention (see Heydemann 1995: 262; Webster 1925: 262). This position reflected a commitment to deal with foreign policy challenges in the light of 'emerging necessities', rather than in terms of general rights (see Kissinger 1954: 254). While Britain and Austria could agree on the course of action in this case, their underlying conceptualization of threats diverged dramatically. Whereas Austria was bent on forestalling any liberal developments which might have resulted in the disintegration of its (multi-ethnic/national) Empire, Britain saw no reason to act against liberal domestic developments, lest they touch on its immediate security interests. Most generally, Britain would not commit to any abstract principle of intervention, be it on the basis of regime change, or any other. Britain was therefore not inclined to actively participate in an intervention in Naples and was content to send only an observer (Stewart) to the deliberations at Troppau.

The Russian and British understandings of European order could hardly have been more at odds with each other. Rather than dealing with foreign policy challenges when they arose, Russia was interested in the codification of general rules of intervention. The most influential position prior to the Congress was advocated by the leading Russian diplomat Capo d'Istria. His stance became known under the heading of the 'two freedoms', and stood for the notion that every state (1) had a claim to political liberty and national independence, and that (2) granting these rights would serve to uphold order in Europe (see Grimsted 1968). From this perspective the revolution in Naples was a European question rather than an Austrian one, and it would be the task of the great powers to establish a Neapolitan government on the basis of the 'two freedoms'. The order envisioned by Capo d'Istria was consequentially also at odds with Austrian conceptions, because it sought to establish a general right to intervention based on liberal values. Although the 'two freedoms' were unacceptable for Metternich, Austria could not alienate Russia without endangering its position in central Europe (see Schroeder 1969: 49).

Had Russian foreign policy been irreversibly set on the 'two freedoms', it is questionable whether consensus (between Austria and Russia) could have been achieved in Troppau. But as it stood, the 'two freedoms' were articulated by Capo d'Istria, while Tsar Alexander signaled that he was not yet decided on which principles to apply. Following the subsequent discussions with Metternich, Alexander distanced himself from liberal thinking and underscored the overriding importance of Russio-Austrian unity (see Bertier de Sauvigny 1958: 102; Schroeder 1969: 61; Webster 1925: 295-84). [17] [#N17] The fact that Alexander moved away from the 'two freedoms' as the underlying principles of intervention, implied that Metternich could be more accommodating in terms of a general right to intervention. [18] [#N18] Given that the discussion would now focus on a general right to intervention (and not unilateral action) it became increasingly important for Metternich to undercut the legitimacy of liberal thinking as a basis for action. Metternich consequently proposed an Austrian intervention on the 'overtures and the protestation of the legitimate sovereign' (Schroeder 1969: 63). Metternich's and Capo d'Istria's positions clearly differed in regard to the questions of who was to intervene and to what end. As Capo d'Istria and Metternich could not reach a consensus, Metternich again sought deliberations with Alexander. In these he succeeded in convincing the Tsar that any legitimate intervention should be limited to the restoration of the rights of the 'legitimate ruler' (Ferdinand). From this perspective, any constitution at all would be incompatible with legitimate monarchical rule and peaceful order. In underscoring that reinstating legitimate monarchical rule would be in the best European interest in terms of order, Metternich linked legitimate monarchical rule and international stability, while suggesting the incompatibility of liberalism and peace. Alexander, now opposing liberal principles to intervention, called for a new memorandum which would apply the principles of the Holy Alliance to the revolution in Naples (see Palmer 1986; Schmalz 1940: 74). In doing so, the deliberations at Troppau reaffirmed the monarchical versus liberal opposition formulated in the treaty of the Holy Alliance.

Given that Alexander had invoked the treaty of the Holy Alliance, Metternich seized the opportunity to modify his argumentation to better serve Austrian interests. [19] [#N19] While Metternich had so far argued that the aim of the intervention should be to reinstall the legitimate monarch unconditionally, he now called for an intervention which more thoroughly reflected the principles of the treaty of the Holy Alliance. This shift in argument had very immediate practical implications. Metternich's original stance would have allowed Ferdinand to choose his own course of action. But basing the intervention on the treaty of the Holy Alliance would give Austria a legitimate say in Naples' domestic structure. This forbade any form of representative government that would admit 'an assembly more or less numerous, formed by elections more or less general, deliberating upon questions of state without distinction, and announcing its opinions by means of a parliament and formal addresses' (Metternich quoted in Schroeder 1969: 77). The great powers, but practically Austria, would be able to supervise the regime in Naples. Ferdinand would therefore only be free to establish a non-liberal/constitutional regime 'which would not be in opposition to the internal tranquility of neighboring states' (Metternich quoted in Schroeder 1969: 77; also Cresson 1922: 103). The only acceptable form of government, which was considered to be compatible with the underlying principles of European order and stability, *became limited to* uninhibited monarchical rule. Domestic structure and international order were thus linked through the deliberations at Troppau in a way that opposed liberal-representative government and peace and stability in practice (see Clark 2005). The (preliminary) Troppau protocol consequently stated that:

> States which have undergone a change of Government due to revolution, the results of which threaten other states, *ipso facto* cease to be members of the European Alliance, and remain excluded from it until their situation gives guarantees for legal order and stability. If, owing to such alterations, immediate danger threatens other states, the Powers bind themselves, by peaceful means, or if need be by arms, to bring back the guilty state into the bosom of the Great Alliance (quoted in Walker 1968: 127). [20] [#N20]

Following these decisions, Austria, Russia and Prussia 'deduce[ed] the right and the moral obligation of the powers to intervene' (see Schroeder 1969: 73) in the affairs of liberalizing states from the prior treaties underlying the European concert. As such, it was not surprising that attempts by Naples to signal a defensive stance had no effect (Heydemann 1995: 98; Romani 1950: 124). Naples had indeed based its foreign policy on convincing the great powers that it would incorporate itself into the established order willingly. Naples had consequently protected the foreign diplomatic corps during the revolution, and suppressed a newspaper that was too outspoken against Austria (see Schroeder 1969: 35). Moreover the new government met all its treaty obligations to Austria. But most strikingly, Naples refused to annex two Papal enclaves (Benevento and Pontecorvo), even at the explicit request of the successful revolutionaries there (see Heydemann 1995: 98; Romani 1950: 124). In doing so, Naples opted against immediate territorial gains. Given the alleged intrinsic qualities of Naples as a liberal state, even these costly signals (Spence, 1973) were at best interpreted as being strategically motivated.

By invoking the treaty of the Holy Alliance, the revolution in Naples was linked to the Napoleonic experience. A discursive link was established between liberalism/constitutionalism and threat, and as a more encompassing analysis can show, between revolution and criminality, madness and evil (see Bucher 2011). As such, a new type of state, one that could be called a liberal rogue, had emerged in the European international system of the early nineteenth century. [21] [#N21] Importantly, this view of liberalism was informed by the interpretation of monarchical Christian values which characterized it as intrinsically ill-disposed towards establishing a viable international order. This only becomes visible if scientific ontologies (Jackson 2010) are able to theorize constitutive interdependencies, and more specifically 'interdependence-in-antagonism' (Kilminster 1998: 136).

This fixing of meaning not only divided monarchies and liberal*izing* states, but monarchical states and constitutional/liberal states more broadly. [22] [#N22] Not surprisingly, the reinterpretation of the prior treaties, and the terms of intervention were not welcomed by France and Britain which could not align themselves with Austria, Russia and Prussia in this matter (see Kissinger, 1954: 249). The problematic character of these developments was articulated through the British observer at Troppau who asked Metternich:

> Does not the formation of this League [...] appear to dissolve the harmony of the whole European System, removing the links in the chain by which Representative and non-Representative Govts. may yet uphold and fortify one another? And [...] will not the one half of

> Europe be forced into a direct opposite Party from the other? [...] (confidential note from Stewart to Metternich, Troppau, 15 November 1820, quoted in Heydemann 1995: 96).

The protocol of Troppau indeed signalled the emergence of a group of states that was markedly distinct from the Concert of Europe before 1820 (see d'Audiffret-Pasquier 1893; Cresson 1922). Before the Congress of Troppau, the European great power figuration was characterized by a cooperative, although not entirely harmonious, unity between Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia. By the end of Troppau the three eastern powers had formed a new 'we' in European politics, namely the Holy Allies which were based on the principles of the Holy Alliance (see Chapman 1998: 67; Temperley 1925: 16). In other words, the use of the personal pronoun 'we' of the Holy Allies became bound up with the 'they' of representational governments, including Britain and France (see Ford 1970: 270-271). Britain and France had temporarily become the Holy Allies 'they', on the basis of the principles of the Holy Alliance. But this was the result of a highly contingent process which was characterized by purposeful action and unintended outcomes. Because the emergence of the Holy Allies cannot be separated from this exclusion of liberal-constitutional states, the qualities ascribed to each of these discursive positions cannot be considered to be intrinsic qualities. Rather they emerged through temporal fixing of meanings through (partly contingent) discursive practices.

The Era of the Holy Allies was rather short lived, although the principles of the Holy Alliance were in fact applied not only to the revolution in Naples, but also to the uprising in Piedmont 1821 (Schroeder 1996: 612). This new social entity was not discursively stabilized/institutionalized, nor was the *ipso facto* threatening character of liberal states perpetuated. Quite the contrary, liberal principles of domestic organization began to become more central to the organization of Europe, making the contemporary DP literature conceivable in the first place. But the historical reversal of contemporary intuitions is one of the most interesting aspects of this brief narrative. It underscores that the attributes ascribed to regimes are not intrinsic qualities, but that they have an irreducible processual-relational character. The added value of the richer figurational ontology becomes visible here, as it is possible to account for reversals in alleged regime-type qualities without entangling oneself in problems of logical consistency or falsification. The question of 'what liberal democracies are' is therefore not only problematic in terms of eclipsing constitutive relations, but in terms of being an outflow of an ontology that privileges things over processes (see Rescher 2000). Rather than 'being', IR should concern itself with 'relations of becoming'.

Conclusion

The historical events discussed here reveal that the stark dichotomization between Christian monarchical and liberal principles cannot simply be deduced from the principles themselves or from the way regime structures would allegedly externalize their respective dispositions. Before Troppau there was no major dividing line between absolutist monarchies and constitutional regimes within the framework of the European concert. Constitutional structures were not a central issue. And as the Holy Allies were not discursively institutionalized, closer alignment became possible later on again (by 1830 at the latest). The argument here is that both Christian monarchical principles as well as liberal values needed to be discursively fixed as being relevant (compatible or opposed) in terms of legitimacy and international order. Regime types are not relevant as such, but become so through actual social practices. A central problematic aspect of the DP literature is therefore that it, through preliminary decisions of a theoretical kind, erases the co-authorship of the attributes taken to promote peace in creating conflict. To be more precise, it erases the co-authorship of persons and institution which (unintentionally) establish the plausibility of certain attributes as starting points of inquiry. Accordingly, ascriptions of responsibility become quite difficult, and it is not surprising that interactionist perspectives offer technical solutions (help democratize, or make democratic) for complex political processes that call for subtle political value trade-offs. Figurational approaches therefore call for a stronger focus on the political character of international relations and the DP more specifically.

Where DP peace approaches (especially non-constructivist types) posit a *fundamental independence* of actors and then theorize causal relationships, figurational approaches begin with *constitutive interdependence*. This article therefore does not engage the DP literature at the level of causal mechanisms, nor does it take aim at the empirical validity of the DP findings directly. [23] [#N23] To wit, the article underscores that asking the question of whether democracies 'are' more or less peaceful, in isolation of historically developing figurational settings, is misguided. Figurational thinking is at the same time very attuned to the notion that figurational settings differ in degrees of violence (see Elias 1978). But the specific characteristics of figurations cannot be anchored in the intrinsic qualities of pre-given parts. Taking a figurational perspective makes visible that the *rogueishness* of states is not a function of regime-type *per se*, but is constitutively connected to the articulation of specific values. It consequently accounts not only for the conditions of possibility of peaceful relations, but it simultaneously shows how these conditions make it possible to identify threats and problems as well. As such, the DP systematically neglects that the potential peace among democracies and the possibility of non-liberal rogues (construed as *ipso facto* problematic states) are inseparably connected.

If one begins by theorizing domestic structures individually, and interactionist perspectives are ontologically required to do so, one thereby isolates mutually constitutive elements in a *prima facie* fashion. This does not necessitate that separation would lead to conflict between the poles of the opposition. But by positing separateness where there is irreducible interconnectedness (especially in difference), it becomes difficult to see that the 'we-they nexus' is (partly) constitutive of actors. Interactionist approaches consequently run the risk of overlooking that democracy, to utilize Derrida's writings here, cannot serve as presence which is not marked by difference(s) (Derrida 1983). To be clear, the idea of interconnectedness does not have immediate normative consequences. After all, even 'the interdependence between violent enemies locked in a life-and-death struggle is a *process* of interweaving' (Elias 1978: 80, italics in original). It is apparent that the term 'enemy' is a irreducibly relational term. But it is easily overlooked that attributes become (meaningful) through processes that establish relations, when discussing regime-types.

While the critique articulated so far clearly applies to most proponents of the DP, the 'charge of interactionism' holds in regard to its critics as well. Among the later, those with constructivist leanings have been most attuned to the relational dimension of the DP, and I will consequently focus on 'their' contributions in terms of a 'hard case'. [24] [#N24] Most critical contributions to the DP have underscored that the (double) finding that democracies are more peaceful only in regard to other democracies, can only be understood on the basis of relational thinking (see Dunne 2009; Geis, Broch and Mueller 2006). This leads to a view of the DP which appreciates that one cannot infer that democracies will be peaceful on the basis of regime-structure alone. Constructivist indeed take the 'double-edged character of social norms' (Elias, 1996: 160) seriously. As such, constructivists studying the DP have rightly argued that democratization cannot 'be taken as a guarantee of global peace' (Geis, Broch and Mueller 2007: 160).

But these conceptualizations are (mostly implicitly) undergirded by arguments which stress how identities arise from *interaction* and how these identities in turn are important for actions and more generally for dynamics in the international system. The critics of the DP more often than not mirror the positions of those more favorably inclined to that thesis. This is, for instance, apparent in the statement that 'there seem to be specific features of democratic polities that encourage war involvement' (Geis, Broch and Mueller 2007: 160), namely that they intervene to restore order and have a 'strong kinship with the notion of "just war"' (Geis, Broch and Mueller 2007: 161). [25] [#N25] Some have even argued that democracies are in fact war-prone (Daase

2006). This line of argument again conceptualizes regime-attributes in terms of *homo clausus*, thereby eclipsing the interdependence of states in the international system. While constructivist authors are indeed sensitive to relations of interaction, they (to use Richard Kilminsters critique of Giddens) are 'trying to deal with interdependence in the language of interaction' (Kilminster 1998: 133). I consider this to be an outflow of the tendency to place Bhaskerian and Giddensian thinking at the heart of constructivism in IR. One can consequently argue that the constructivist critique of the DP still lacks a notion of 'interdependence-in-antagonism' (Kilminster 1998: 136), which underscores that regime-type is meaningful only at the level of figurations.

This finding, in its simplest form, draws the link between democracy (*qua* attributes) and peace into doubt. [26] [#N26] At the level of practice, this article consequently shares the concerns of DP critics that the DP has become something of an 'axiom of U.S. foreign policy' (Owen 1994:87). The empirical findings of the DP, which flow from a restricted ontology, have 'culminated into [sic!] the striking and tremendous success [...] in practical politics' (Geis, Broch and Mueller 2007: 157). This is clearly reflected in foreign policy statements since the early 1990s. To give just one example: William Clinton, arguing before the United Nations General Assembly, based his conception of 'democratic enlargement' on the notion that 'the habits of democracy are the habits of peace [because] democracy is rooted in compromise [and] rewards tolerance, not hatred' (Clinton 1993: 1615). This, and with it the stark opposition between democratic and non-democratic states, was taken to underscore that 'democracies rarely wage war on one another' (Clinton 1993: 1615). [27] [#N27] Not only are foreign policies based on DP assumptions susceptible to 'being employed as an ideological underpinning for liberal-expansionist policies' (Geis, Broch and Mueller 2007: 157), foreign policies based on a entity/attribute logic make it exceedingly difficult for states which are considered to be *ipso facto* threatening to signal non-strategic motives or benevolence. As mentioned, this was in fact observable in the historical event under investigation, as the Neapolitan attempts to signal a defensive stance were entirely ignored or overlooked. The finding that there was no 'symptom [of foreign policy aggression] in the Neapolitan revolution' (Castlereagh in Webster 1925: 282), could not alter that Naples had become *ipso facto* threatening (see Reinerman 1971: 265). This might have been a purely strategic move, but this episode illustrates how basing foreign policy on axioms that erase the basic relatedness of social actors can foreclose interpreting foreign policy signals as benevolent. Put differently, the DP literature runs the risk of reifying an interpretive scheme and taking it for an ontological matter, thereby restricting policy options. If states are considered to be *ipso facto* threatening, as an outflow of their regime-type, there is little that these states can do to signal that they are in fact not pursuing goals which are detrimental to the international order. If other states are seen to be *ipso facto* threatening, this immediately draws into doubt any policy recommendations that require a minimum of trust (in the rationality or intention) of the other state. The first strategies which are discredited by such an approach would be arguing, learning and negotiation. [28] [#N28] This might not be problematic if states indeed have irreconcilable differences. But if this is not the case, removing arguing, learning and negotiations from the foreign policy tool-box in an *a priori* fashion, is not a sensible strategy. The question of whether one can argue and negotiate with another state is a sophisticated 'empirical question', not one that should be answered on the basis of regime-type. While problems of signaling will certainly not be entirely erased by taking a figurational approach, such a perspective calls for reflecting upon one's co-authorship of threat perception. In closing, it is important to underscore that social entities and their figurational meanings are continually reinstated through practice. Given that the social world is characterized by a double-hermeneutic (Giddens 1984), and that theoretical assumptions therefore potentially feed (back) into the social realm, figurational thinking calls for a critical reassessment of the conceptual underpinnings of the democratic peace.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ursula Jasper, Alexander Heppt, Julian Eckl, James Davis, Thomas Biersteker, Cornelia Navari and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. I am much obliged to Andrew Linklater and an anonymous reviewer for their insightful and helpful comments, as well as to Katja Freistein and Thomas Mueller for supporting me in the final stages of writing the article.

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Notes

1. These include the agency-structure problem (Wight 2006; Wendt 1987), or the conceptualization and development of international society (Albert and Buzan 2010; Linklater and Suganami 2006). Furthermore, there are overlaps with post-structuralists (Bartelson 1995; Der Derian 2009). As ‘figurations are always organized around the dynamic operations of power’ (van Krieken 2007: 57), Eliasian approaches can also connect with realism (Mearsheimer 2003; Schweller 2008). Understanding challenges of governing beyond the nation state in terms of lengthening chains of interdependence might also lead to collaboration with global governance theorists (Czempiel and Rosenau 1992; Dingwerth 2007). [#N1-ptr1]
2. A parallel discussion about intrinsic rogue state qualities can be found in security studies (see Capriole and Trumbore 2003, 2005, 2006; Hoyt 2000; O'Reilly 2007). [#N2-ptr1]
3. For a competing account of these events see Weber (1995: 40-60). [#N3-ptr1]
4. The DP literature is diverse and characterized by a strong ‘internal opposition’. For critique of the DP causal claims see Brown et. al (1996); Gowa (1999); Layne (1994). For a critique of the empirical findings see Farber and Gowa (1995); Oren (1995); Spiro 1994. [#N4-ptr1]
5. See Bueno de Mesquita et. al 1999. Here relations *among* states are clearly considered. But conceptualization begins with domestic democratic organization and domestic autocratic organization. Regime types are considered individually and then studied under conditions of (strategic) interaction. [#N5-ptr1]
6. Ido Oren for instance argues that ‘America's identity has historically developed in ways that made political enemies appear subjectively further and friends subjectively closer to it’ (Oren, 1995: 268). But this perspective posits identities prior to relations and thereby remains wedded to an interactionist logic. [#N6-ptr1]
7. This implies that processes are secondary. On processes see Rescher (1996, 2000). On processual-relational thinking in IR see Jackson and Nexon 1999. [#N7-ptr1]
8. These difficulties are apparent in the agency-structure debate which unsuccessfully attempts to overcome the hyperstatization of relational processes underlying the separation of agency and structure (see Mennell 1992; Giddens 1984; Wight 2006). [#N8-ptr1]
9. For an in-depth introduction to the sociology of Elias see Elias (1978); also Bergh (1971); Gouldsblom (1977); Mennell (1992); van Krieken (2007). For Eliasian thinking in IR see Linklater (2004). [#N9-ptr1]

10. From a figurational perspective, the conceptual separation of individual and society (and the experience of oneself as *homo clausus*) is not an ontological certainty, but a reification of the possibility of self-distancing see Elias (1978: 132). [#N10-ptr1]
11. See the continuous attempts to define democracy in the DP literature, in order to be able to falsify causal claims. [#N11-ptr1]
12. The supra-denominational character of the treaty is noteworthy, as the unity of the three major Christian denominations became plausible in the act of differentiation with liberalism. [#N12-ptr1]
13. The treaty for instance juxtaposed 'true and indissoluble fraternity' (Article one of the Holy Alliance; quoted in Naef 1928) among Monarchs and the *fraternité* of the French revolution among citizens (see Brunner, Otto, Conze and Koselleck 1972; also Bucher 2011; Naef 1928; Schwarz 1935). This linked liberal conceptions with changeability thus opposing it the metaphysical notion of 'being' which is generally privileged in regard to notions of 'becoming' in Western philosophy and Christian theology. [#N13-ptr1]
14. This does not imply internalization. Practically no one except Alexander considered the treaty anything but 'a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense' (Castlereagh quoted in: Webster 1921: 382), or a 'ludicrous contract' (Talleyrand quoted in Schenk 1967: 40). But there was less danger in signing a non-binding treaty that called for Christian modesty than in alienating the Tsar (see Palmer 1986; Schwarz 1935). [#N14-ptr1]
15. I will not further engage in a discussion of the Neapolitan Revolution. Suffice it to add that the contingent character of the revolution made it an unlikely candidate for a case of 'liberal contagion' (see Romani 1951: 141). [#N15-ptr1]
16. France and Prussia played minimal roles and can therefore be excluded see Angelow (2009). [#N16-ptr1]
17. On the deliberations between Metternich and Alexander see Wieczynski (1970). [#N17-ptr1]
18. This was not welcomed by the British. But given that Austria was immediately dependent on Russian self-restraint, the rift between Austria and Britain could be considered the lesser of two evils. [#N18-ptr1]
19. Although the prospect of a general right to intervention was not welcomed by Metternich, it seems that he accepted the emergence of such a right as unavoidable. [#N19-ptr1]
20. The phrase 'the results of which threaten other states' does not refer to actual foreign policy, but to the change in regime structure as such. Regime type, not foreign policy therefore became the basis of decision. [#N20-ptr1]
21. This development can theoretically be grasped as a yoking process in which sites of difference are linked, producing a new configuration which give rise to social entities in the first place see Abbott (2001: 263-73); Jackson and Nexon (1999: 314). [#N21-ptr1]
22. Rather than viewing the protocol of Troppau as the actualization of a latent division between liberal and monarchical states, the article studies the emergence of such divisions. [#N22-ptr1]
23. The article critically discusses the ontological underpinnings of the attempt to conceptualize and falsify causal relationships between independently given entities. Rather than entering into the debate on the basis of a falsificationist logic, it attempts to grasp the constitutive interdependency of states. It does not theorize the nature of causal relations between them. [#N23-ptr1]
24. On cases see Davis (2005). [#N24-ptr1]
25. The case of the Holy Allies underscores that the willingness to intervene on the basis of allegedly universal norms cannot be limited to liberal states. [#N25-ptr1]
26. It does so at a general as well as an inter-liberal level. [#N26-ptr1]

27. For a detailed discussion see Bucher (2011). [#N27-ptr1]
28. Neta Crawford, for instance, argues that non-democracies are ‘not legitimate interlocutors’ (Crawford 2002: 424) at an international level. Non-democracies, *qua* regime type (not foreign policy actions) should consequently ‘be the subject of strategic action – sanctions, bargaining, threats, and incentives – rather than communicative action’ (Crawford 2002: 425). [#N28-ptr1]

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Online ISSN: 2166-6644