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The Myth of Democratic Peace: Why Democracy Cannot Deliver Peace in the 21st Century

ABSTRACT: There are numerous theoretical and empirical problems with the superficially appealing theory of democratic peace. Power kills and democratic states are quite powerful. The most powerful democratic states have been quite bellicose. Naturally, they have killed many, both internally and externally. Many of the pacific elements of democracies are in fact accidents: not essential elements of democracy but rather hang-overs from a more republican past. It is a mistake to focus on inter-democratic state violence when what really plagues the world is: (1) violence between democracies and non-democracies that democracies often provoke; (2) violence within democratic states; (3) the symbiotic relationships between dictatorships and democracies; and (4) the instability of democracy.

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There is no way to peace; peace is the way.

J. Muste

Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Mat 7:7.13

We are led to believe that democracy and peace are inextricably linked; that democracy leads to and causes peace; and that peace cannot be achieved in the absence of democracy. Woodrow Wilson was one of the earliest and strongest proponents of this view. He said in his war message on April 2, 1917:

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honour, a partnership of opinion. Intrigue would eat its vitals away; the plottings of inner circles who could plan what they would and render account to no one would be a corruption seated at its very heart. Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honour steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

Spencer R. Weart alleges that democracies rarely if ever go to war with each other. Even if this is true, it distorts reality and makes people far too sanguine about democracy's ability to deliver the world's greatest need today — peace. In reality, the main threat to world peace today is not war between two nation-states, but (1) nuclear arms proliferation; (2) terrorism; and (3) ethnic and religious conflict within states.

As I shall argue below, democracy is implicated in all three major threats to world peace. India (the world's largest democracy) appears to be itching to start a war with Pakistan, bringing the world closer to nuclear war than it has been for many years. The United States, the world's leading democracy, is waging war in Afghanistan. If the terrorists are to be believed — and why would they lie? — they struck at the United States on September 11th because of its democratically-induced interventions into ethnic/religious disputes in their parts of the world. The vaunted political machinery of democracy has failed to deliver on its promises. The United States, the quintessential democracy, was directly or indirectly involved in most of the major wars in the 20th Century.

On September 11, 2001 the 350-year experiment with the modern nation-state ended in failure. A radical re-thinking of the relationship between the individual and the collective, society and state is urgently required; we must seriously question whether the primitive and ungainly political technology of democracy can possibly keep the peace in tomorrow's world. Our lives depend on it.

I. A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

A. Definitions

Does democracy promote peace? Merely to ask the question is heretical, and, by now, probably illegal in some democracies. Even if democracy is the only palatable system an awareness that it has war-like tendencies (if it does) may allow for a certain degree of amelioration of those tendencies. The next problem is, compared to what? There are forms of government other than democracy. Again, I risk heresy. Do you mean to suggest there is another political system better than democracy? This paper will analyze which forms of government are most conducive to peace.

Four distinct forms of government can be identified:

1. Democracy: rulers are selected by the people; the will of the people, imperfectly revealed through the political process, is the primary determinant of the powers of the state. “Democracy” is a combination of two Greek words: *demos*, meaning “the people” and *kratis*, meaning “to rule”. The word democracy is a combination of an adjective — “demo” and a noun — “cracy”. In its purest form, democracy means majority rule. Certain auxiliary constitutional rights such as freedom of speech and assembly and procedural due process are assumed. All such rights are interpreted and enforced by officials elected by the majority.
2. Republic: government strictly limited by a constitution to narrowly defined functions such as national defense, police protection and resolution of disputes through courts. Rulers are selected by the people, but the will of the people does not sanction violation of the constitution. The government can only exercise powers delegated to it by the people.
3. Self-government: no state with final authority; each person governs himself or herself; disputes among people are resolved by private courts and arbitrators; resort to private courts is encouraged by self-interest, social pressure, boycott, ostracism and market forces such as the denial of insurance and of access to real estate to those with a history of improper self-help.¹
4. Dictatorship: a person or persons seize power by force and rule by decree.

¹ Hans-Hermann Hoppe, ‘Anarcho-Capitalism: An Annotated Bibliography’ <<http://archive.lewrockwell.com/hoppe/hoppe5.html>>

Peace: it is hard to think of another word more frequently used and so rarely defined. A Google internet search uncovers few sites which address in detail the meaning of “peace”. If we don’t know or care what it is, how can we get there?

Let’s say that peace is the absence of war and violence. War and violence involve the physical destruction of or damage to people or property. Which is not to say the peace is breached only by physical damage. What about a gun to the head? Okay, we must expand the definition to include the immediate threat of violence. What about the fact that the fellow on the bus might punch me in three minutes? No go; too speculative to involve a breach of the peace. It is clear however that the palpable threat of force is violent. What force is threatened then involves an analysis of the social context. What laws, customs, habits or mores can the individual reasonably expect to be enforced against him if he does this or that?

Is all physical destruction a breach of the peace? What if someone rips your face off with a knife? That is not necessarily violent if he is a plastic surgeon, using a surgical knife, and operating on you with your consent. Thus, the concept of consent must be an element in the definition of peace. This is consistent with the etymology of the word “peace” which is derived from the Latin word *pax*, meaning agreement or contract. What if I grab a guy and put him in a headlock? Certainly I have breached the peace. How? I have interfered with his control over his body, otherwise known as his liberty. If this happens in the middle of a wrestling match, however, it is not a breach of the peace because I have his consent. Neither is it a violation of his liberty. Thus, liberty, closely related to consent, must be factored into any definition of peace.

The theft or destruction of property without the consent of the owner is violent and unpeaceable. Thus, the concept of rightly owned property must be part of any definition of peace. Theft or destruction of property is violent because it overcomes or violates the will of the owner. The ultimate basis of property is the time and energy of individuals who either produced the property, acquired it while it was previously unowned, or traded for it with someone who had previously owned it. Property is an extension of the self. When property is stolen or destroyed, the time and energy of the owner is destroyed or wasted. Time is life. Theft and destruction are violent because they use others’ lives without their consent. Any attempt to exclude property rights from the concept of peace is absurd. Taking the absurdity to its logical conclusion, one could “peacefully” murder someone merely by snatching food from his plate for about three weeks.

What then is peace? Peace is the absence of violence or the palpable threat of violence against persons and their property. The concept of peace primarily

describes social relations and mental states, and only secondarily physical action or its absence.² Violence is the use of physical force against persons or their property in such a way that their person or property is used in a manner contrary to their will. One can be in a peaceful relationship with some people and in an unpeaceful relationship with others. For example, this author is in a state of peace with the people of Iceland. None is currently using violence against me or threatening to do so. However, my relationship with the federal government of the United States and the State of New York is not peaceful. I must pay each money regularly or I will be put in prison. This continual threat of being kidnapped is not conducive to my peace of mind.

What about the threat of violence against people who wish to assault others and destroy their property? This threat of violence is not properly considered a breach of the peace. What about actual violence against criminals? This is best seen as a breach of the peace by the criminal. The response by those charged with protecting people and property is part and parcel of the criminal's breach of the peace.

Einstein was correct when he wrote that "Peace is not merely the absence of war . . ." Certainly, wars are violent, but overt violence between states is merely one way to breach the peace. The others are violence between persons and violence between states and persons.

B. *Definitional problems*

1. *Peace*

Certainly if my definition of peace is wrong, any conclusions derived from it will also be wrong, or at least not proven. Nevertheless, I believe my definition of peace is unassailable. It defines the term in a manner that is consistent with its common usage and etymological origin. It allows the term to be used with equal validity in domestic or international contexts. Finally, I believe that even those who will not entirely accept my definition will actually agree with me on the definition of peace as far as it goes. That is, I believe almost everyone will agree with me that when violence or the palpable threat of violence is used against persons or their property, a breach of the peace has occurred.

2 Rudolph Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence* (Transaction Publishers, 2002) 153: "Most basically, then, the fundamental questions of human behavior, as for social and political violence and their causes, have to do with mentality and not with material things". But Rummel uses a purely physical definition of peace: casualties.

It is at that point that two primary objections will be made. First, some will argue that it is improper to apply the definition in such a way that the normal processes of democratic government are deemed unpeaceable. Second, some will argue that peace must also include the provision of certain basic conditions of life without which peace in the narrow sense is meaningless and without which breaches of the peace in the narrow sense are assured.

My contention is that my imagined opponents are confusing a dispute over definition with a dispute over values. That is, when some would carve out of the definition of peace an exception for democratic, majoritarian law-making, what they are really saying is they value democratic decision-making more highly than the avoidance of violence or the threat of violence against persons on the wrong end of that decision-making. As a purely empirical matter, the physical actions and mental states involved with criminal extortion ("Give me a thousand dollars or I will kidnap you tomorrow") are identical to democratic fund-raising ("Give me a thousand dollars or I will put you in jail tomorrow"). Both, in a strictly factual sense, are breaches of the peace. It is just that the democrat values democracy more than he values peace!

Similarly, when someone argues, "Yes, violence etc. is a breach of the peace, but so is poverty," a word game is being played. The disputant is being intellectually dishonest. He is trying to use a definitional dispute to disguise a value judgment. He is trying to smuggle welfare rights into the prestigious concept of peace. Let's just be honest about it. What you are really saying is, "Sure, I like peace, but I am willing to be unpeaceable to achieve welfare rights because I value them more than I value peace."

It should be noted as well that both lines of thought beg the question. That is, if the question is "does democracy promote peace?" by inserting the concept of democracy into the concept of peace, one assumes as true that which is in dispute.

2. *Self-government*

Inclusion of self-government as a form of government is controversial. Some would argue that what I call self-government is really anarchy. "Anarchy" is not a very useful term in political discourse. First, it is a term of derision like "robber baron," "isolationist" and "sweat shop". Such terms are not intended to advance reasoned discussion; they are intended to close off such discussions as beyond the pale. Second, "anarchy" has several meanings and one has little assurance that one's readers will apply the meaning the author intends.

The most fatal flaw in the use of the term “anarchy” to define self-government is that such ascription is fundamentally flawed and simply wrong. To understand why requires an examination of one the most grievous errors of modern political thought. In its most neutral, value-free sense, anarchy means a situation in which, between or among private persons (A and B in Figure No. 1) or groups of persons, there is no common lawful authority to resolve their disputes and avoid resort to self-help.

A — — — — — anarchic — — — — — B

Figure 1: Anarchy illustrated

The truth is, there is no human political system imaginable that is not anarchic! True, creating a state in a “state of nature” will eliminate the anarchic relations among the people in that area. However, all we have done is create a new form of anarchy, because now there is an anarchic relationship between the newly created state and its own citizens. See figure 2.

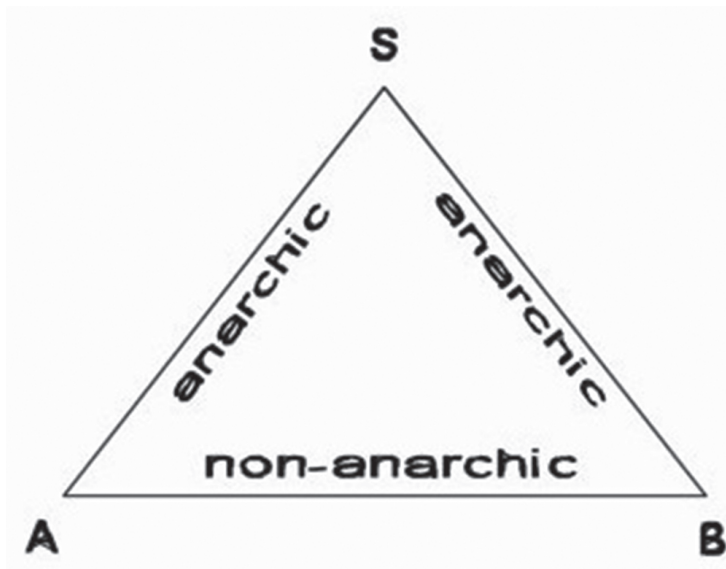


Figure 2: Anarchy between a state and its citizens

The fact that citizens can sue the government in government courts does not mean that the government's relation to its citizens is not anarchic. Anarchy, as we are using the term, is a value-neutral descriptive term for situations in which there is no common authority governing the relations of parties. When the government allows citizens to sue itself in its own courts, all it is doing is exercising a glorified form of self-help – precisely the horror of horrors for those who decry anarchy. It is judging its own cause: resolving a dispute with another in its sole discretion. It is worth noting that in the last century, states resolved disputes with 170 million of their own subjects by murdering them.³

It is claimed that a state with a monopoly on dispute resolution powers is the very prerequisite to a civilized justice system. So such power is bequeathed upon the state, or seized by it. Now we have a situation in which if one wants dispute resolution services, one must go to the state. As with any monopoly, there is a lack of incentive to provide high-quality services. Rather, the monopolist, unconcerned about securing or satisfying customers, tends to be more concerned about looking after its own interests. Courts in the United States, for example, have elaborate and fairly inflexible rules of procedure many of which seem designed to serve the needs of the court, not the litigants. Litigants are forced to hire expensive attorneys, usually specialists who know their way around in that particular court. Dispute resolution agencies which cannot monopolize business tend to adopt much simpler procedures. This rather banal example makes the larger point. Government courts, being monopolies, tend to serve their own interests not the litigants' in all aspects of their work, from procedure to substantive decision-making. This lack of solicitude is the direct result of the very monopoly powers we are told courts must have!

Because power corrupts, corruption, bribery and favoritism regularly plague the state's legal system. For example, in 1999, 580 people were convicted of "official corruption, including thirty-two federal law enforcement agents".⁴ In 1998, 42 police officers in Cleveland were charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine.⁵ Other law enforcement agents accused of corruption that year included:

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- 3 Rudy Rummel, *Death By Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1997); Mark Kramer (ed) *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Harvard University Press, 1999).
 - 4 Kathleen Maguire (ed), *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2000* (Claitors Pub Div, 2002) 411-12.
 - 5 Federal Bureau of Investigation press release, 14 January 1998.

- Three Detroit police officers who were charged with conspiring to rob approximately \$1 million;
- In Starr County, Texas, the sheriff, a justice of the peace, and five county jailers who were charged with bribery and conspiracy to commit bribery;
- Nine current or former New Jersey police officers who were charged with racketeering involving protection of prostitution and illegal gambling.⁶

In January 2002, a New York judge was arrested and charged with soliciting a \$250,000 bribe.⁷ These incidents are merely instances of an avalanche of official corruption in the state's legal system today. The known corruption is likely the visible part of a giant iceberg.

In addition to overt corruption, there is a more insidious and invisible form of corruption that only close observers of the courts can discern. All judges in a democracy are political animals. It matters not whether they are elected or appointed. The notion that appointed judges are apolitical is a fantasy entertained mainly by naïve and self-appointed court reformers. In truth, the politics involved in appointing judges is usually more covert and insidious than that involving elected judges. The public rarely learns about why judges were appointed. Who pulled what strings? Who owed what to whom? Who will owe what to whom in the future? The selection of elected judges to run for office is more transparent. They are usually lawyers associated with local political party organizations. They owe their loyalties to such organizations. However, they usually have at least some organic connection to the local community else they would lack the support to be elected. On the other hand lawyers appointed to judgeships usually are more wedded to secretive elite circles.

Whether judges are elected or appointed, they are all products of a political power structure. They therefore bring to the bench the general mindset of that power structure. They will favor the interests of the power structure because of a similar loyalty, gratitude or a desire for future appointments and other favors for themselves and their families and associates.⁸ Even federal judges, appointed 'during good behavior' tend to look out for the interests of the power structure whence they came. Perhaps from modest backgrounds, they are now accepted into elite circles. Having achieved judicial power, many become social climbers seeking the acceptance and the numerous subtle favors elite circles can now confer.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *New York Post*, 26 January 2002.

⁸ John Hasnas, 'The Myth of the Rule of Law' (1995) *Wisconsin Law Review* 199.

While such judges may fairly adjudicate disputes between ordinary private persons, when such persons litigate against the state or members of the power elite, judges will tend to discretely favor the elite. We are told that no one should be the judge of his own cause, yet the state in disputes with its own citizens is always the judge of its own cause. That this is not so because the state refers such disputes to its judicial branch is an incredibly silly and stupid argument. Similarly I suppose the next time I have a dispute with the United States, I will insist that that the dispute be resolved by an arbitrator selected by me.

The situation is aggravated when there are many states as is the case today. In that event, two new forms of anarchy are created. Each state ('S1', 'S2' in figure 3) is in a relationship of anarchy with all other states according to mainstream Hobbesian thought.⁹ Since states are in an anarchic relation with each other there is no assurance that these disputes will be resolved amicably. We are thus continually at risk of being murdered by some foreign state that feels aggrieved by our own state, or we are at continual risk of being conscripted by our own state to fight another state that has purportedly aggrieved our own. Surely, this is a state of disorder which destroys the tranquillity of the human spirit?

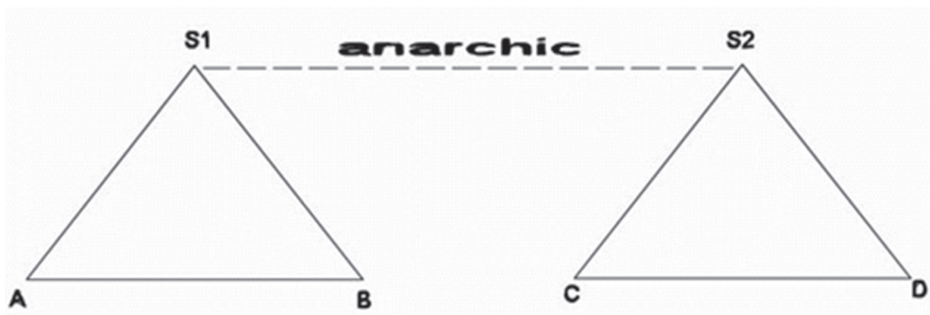


Figure 3: Anarchic relations between states

Further, each state is in a state of anarchy with the citizens of all other states and those citizens continue to be in a state of anarchy with the citizens of other states (figure 4). We are reminded of this fact by the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Villagers who claimed that the United States bombed them without just cause - e.g. involvement with the Taliban or al Qaeda - had no common authority available to

⁹ Murray Rothbard, *For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2nd ed, 2006) 221.

seek redress. This leads to the very chaos that was supposed to have been prevented by the creation of the state in the first place.

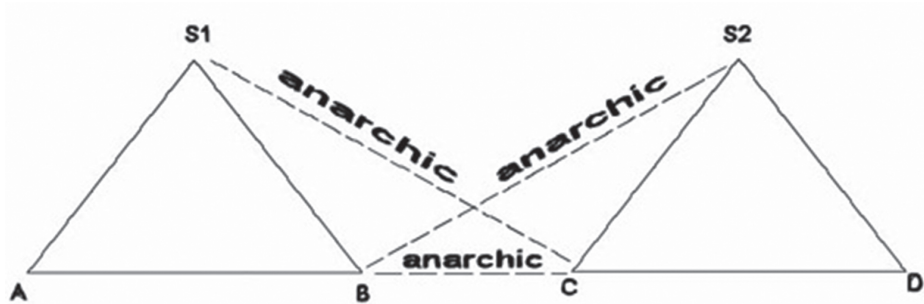


Figure 4: Anarchic relations between states and foreign citizens, and citizens and foreign citizens

Even a world government would not resolve the problem of anarchy. Under a federal world government (WG) individual states would no longer be in a state of anarchy with each other, however they would be in a state of anarchy vis-à-vis the world government. See figure 5.



Figure 5: Anarchic relations between states and the central/world government

Returning to the original point, it is misleading to say that self-government is anarchic since that fails to distinguish self-government from all other forms of government, all of which have inescapable anarchic elements.

The main objection to self-government is that it would be disorderly. Like peace, order is a term frequently used but rarely defined. The concept of order is substantially similar to the concept of peace. When people use the term civil disorder they are usually referring to riots and other forms of widespread acts of violence against persons or property. In another sense, order involves not merely peace but the provision of some assurance that peace will continue and that disputes will be amicably resolved. In this sense, it could be argued that self-government fails; it provides no reasonable assurance that disputes will be amicably resolved. This argument is fallacious. What people want is not merely some reasonable assurance that disputes will be resolved, but that they will be resolved with at least a rough approximation to justice: the correct application of the right principles to the reasonably known facts. While the state in all its forms, even dictatorship, provides a means to resolve disputes, its capacity to resolve them justly is subject to serious dispute. Why should we think the state, even a democratic state, will resolve disputes justly?

In sum, the monopoly state provides no assurance that disputes will be resolved justly, merely that they will be resolved. Of course, all disputes at all times and all places are resolved one way or another. It is argued that the state does so without the use of force yet this is a myth. Many innocent people and criminal suspects have been unjustifiably assaulted or killed by law enforcement agents. Many law enforcement agents themselves are killed or assaulted. Many judges, litigants, jurors, lawyers and witnesses involved in criminal and civil litigation have been murdered, assaulted or threatened by disgruntled parties. In the typical year, 373 people were killed or injured by law enforcement officers and 135 law enforcement officers are killed in the line of duty in the United States. Another 56,054 police officers are assaulted.

A 1998 report by Human Rights Watch studied police behavior in fourteen large American cities from 1995 through 1998. The report concluded:

Our investigation found that police brutality is persistent in all of these cities; that systems to deal with abuse have had similar failings in all the cities; and that, in each city examined, complainants face enormous barriers in seeking administrative punishment or criminal prosecution of officers who have committed human rights violations. Despite claims to

the contrary from city officials where abuses have become scandals in the media, efforts to make meaningful reforms have fallen short.¹⁰

Further, many episodes of social violence have resulted from a perception that government courts or law enforcement officers have not resolved disputes fairly or protected citizens adequately. In 1992 there was a major riot in Los Angeles sparked by dissatisfaction with an acquittal in a criminal trial. The riot resulted in 54 persons killed, 2,383 injured, 13,212 arrests and 11,113 fires.¹¹ A similar riot occurred in Liberty City, Florida in 1980 after a jury acquitted four police officers accused of homicide. Critics of decentralized dispute resolution rarely acknowledge the state's abject failure to resolve conflicts without the use of force by itself, by litigants and by their sympathizers in the community.

There is no reason to believe that localized violence resulting from disputes over private dispute resolution would be any greater than the amount of violence currently arising from the state's clumsy, unjust, and inefficient dispute resolution and police services. Many scholars define 'war' by reference to a conflict resulting in at least 1,000 combat deaths. By that measure, the United States justice system has a war every two years! All told, the number of people killed or injured during the course of the state's enforcement of its laws is truly enormous. This is far from the peaceful and orderly system of legend.

Further, the state itself exacerbates and stimulates conflict. Its legal system does this directly and its policies do this indirectly. As Hoppe has argued, the state's policies, based as they are on coercion and confiscation, create a moral atmosphere which encourages the development of aggressive personalities. In addition the state's legal system is so complex that no one understands it. This reduces respect for the law, diminishes its moral force, makes conflicts more likely and makes them more difficult to resolve. In most areas of human knowledge, increasing complexity is a sign of progress, an indication that greater information has been acquired. Not so with the law. The law's crucial function is to guide ordinary people in their interactions with other people; to reduce disputes and misunderstandings; and to make possible the expeditious and just resolution of disputes that do arise. Further, since the ultimate foundation of respect for the law is community sentiment, the law must be readily understood by most people. The modern statist

10 Human Rights Watch, *Shielded from Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States* (July 1998).

11 William Mendel, 'Combat in Cities: The LA Riots and Operation Rio' (July 1996) Foreign Military Studies Office <<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/rio.htm>>

legal system has totally failed in its critical function. No one understands even a small part of it, not even the most brilliant lawyers and judges. Legal specialists do not even fully grasp all the intricacies of their own fields.

Legislation is the primary villain in the unworkable complexity of the law. The common law system was and is based on application of a few essential principles to a wide variety of different scenarios. Though the common law can be complex to be sure, it is no more complex than the subject matter itself. Further an ordinary person, armed with common sense and a general understanding of the basic principles of the law, and acting reasonably and justly, is in a good position to conform his behavior to the dictates of the law. Legislation is a different animal entirely. Legislation is largely based on the whim of legislators and their desire to please special interest groups. It is impossible for the average person to deduce their duties under legislative law from general principles. In fact, most people could not understand most legislation even if they spent several hours reading it.

In contrast to the state system of justice, a regime of self-government has much to recommend it. Under self-government, the market will supply dispute resolution services just as it supplies other valuable goods and services. Consumer choice and competition among businesses will ensure the availability of competitively priced, high quality services. The free market, that amazing repository of the creativity of humanity, should be able to efficiently produce security and justice for the same reason it has been able to produce a myriad of other goods and services. The advantage of the market over states can be summed up in one phrase: the market is self-correcting. Problems or deficiencies in one firm's products can be remedied by other firms producing better products for profit. The market is superior to government as a problem-solver because market transactions require the consent of all parties to them. When government interacts with people, there is always at least one party that is forced to participate and that is therefore abused and exploited. The errors of states are not self-correcting. Rather, they tend to expand and duplicate themselves.

In spite of the theoretical advantages of market provision of justice services, many will balk and continue to ask, "What about order? There must be an authority with a final say, else chaos will ensue". This criticism is fallacious. We look at the cop on the beat or the government court system, and we conclude there is where order resides — with a single authority in charge. This is an illusion. Such order as exists at any given time is the result, not of government action but of diffused public sentiment that allows a regime to exist in the first place. This fact is critical to understanding the fallacy of the objections to self-government. True, the

success of a society based on self-government would depend on the opinions and actions and good will of the bulk of the population. But the same is the case with democratic regimes. Without the cooperation, support, and good will of the vast bulk of the population, democratic regimes would also fail and collapse long before Election Day.

History is strewn with examples of military dictatorships whose brute force was unable to maintain power when the regimes lost the support of the majority of the people, for example: Iran (1979), the Philippines (1986), and Romania (1989). Thus, those who worship at the altar of order and who mistakenly believe that order is the result of state action need to come to the realization that order in society is actually the result of the mores, habits, and opinions of the bulk of the population.¹² They should therefore study the question: which kinds of regimes are best suited to inculcating in the public mind the values of peace, liberty, order, and harmony? The answer must be those regimes whose animating principles are peace, order, liberty and harmony. Dictatorial and democratic regimes violate all these principles. They tend to corrupt public opinion by continually reinforcing the morality and efficacy of the use of force and violence to achieve social goals.

The ultimate fallacy underlying most critiques of self-government is utopianism. The utopian fallacy is committed when a political ideal is posited which cannot, in the nature of things, be achieved. Such schemes ignore the unalterable facts of human nature and the human condition. They contain internal contradictions, and since contradictions cannot exist outside the mind, such schemes in their intended form cannot operate. It is not so much that people are not good enough for these utopian schemes to work; rather, these utopian schemes are not good enough for them to work with real people. For example communism was utopian because it abolished private property in capital goods. As Mises demonstrates, without a market in capital goods there will be no market prices for such goods. Without prices, we cannot know whether we are taking lesser-valued goods and converting them into more highly valued goods, (i.e., producing wealth), or taking more highly valued goods, and turning them into less highly valued goods (i.e., destroying wealth).

One of the premises of utopianism is that there is a political solution for every human problem. This is why utopians insist that advocates of self-government detail how self-government will solve every conceivable social problem. On the contrary, not only is there not a political solution for most human problems, there is not an earthly solution of any kind for many human problems. Similarly, it is typical for utopians

12 Etienne de la Boetie, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (Black Rose Books, 2nd ed, 1997).

to require a complete blueprint for the future which provides for all contingencies. Statists who could not guarantee that on September 11 the US would not suffer a devastating attack insist that advocates of self-government set forth every detail of how a decentralized, privatized justice system would work. This is folly. All that can be done and that needs to be done is to set forth the essential logic of the system and to show that all competing systems of justice have failed. Self-government will work, or not work, according to the nature and character of the people in a given society. Should we continue to operate under a system that has failed — and whose failure was inevitable given its contradictions — and never find out if there is a workable alternative? Is it possible there will be problems under a regime of self-government? Yes, and what else is new? The relevant question is will problems under self-government be worse than the problems of the state monopoly system? It is difficult to see how they could be.

The statist system itself is based on utopian thinking. We are told that a strong central government is necessary because, human nature being what it is, the public needs to be protected from evil miscreants. We are then asked to assume that these same evil miscreants will not do everything they can to gain control of the state apparatus. This is contrary to all theory and experience and is thus utopian. Logic tells us that evil people will gravitate to positions of state power so they can lie, cheat, steal, and murder with the impunity granted by their legal monopoly.¹³ Experience tells us that liars, cheats, thieves, and murderers such as Hitler, Stalin, Nixon and Clinton have in fact gravitated to politics to fulfil their foul agendas.

Statists assure us that irresponsible people will act responsibly. That is, state officials, who are given power over us and who therefore are not responsible to us, will act responsibly. All logic and experience tell us this is false, and thus utopian. Statists tell us that no one should be the judge of his own cause because injustice would result but that the state may be the judge of its own cause because its judges will ensure that justice is done. We know however, that systems which contain internal contradictions cannot exist and are thus utopian in nature.

3. *Democracy/republic*

Distinguishing between democracy and republic is critical to the present undertaking. Both forms of government feature voting by the people to select officials. The primary difference between them is that while republican voting is done for the purpose of choosing officials to administer the government in the pursuit of its narrowly

13 F.A. Hayek, 'Why the Worst Get on Top' in *The Road to Serfdom* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

defined functions, democratic voting is done not only to select officials but also to determine the functions and goals and powers of the government. The guiding principle of republics is they exercise narrow powers delegated to them by the people, who themselves, as individuals, possess such powers. They cannot spring as they do in democracies *ex nihilo*, from the collective whim.

The problem for our analysis is that many governments are a combination of democracy and republic. There are very few, if any, modern governments which approximate our definition of a republic. Perhaps the closest modern example is peaceful and prosperous Switzerland. The United States still has remnants of the republican philosophy: a constitution and bill of rights. However, the dominant ethos in American politics long ago turned away from republicanism toward democracy. William Graham Sumner gave the obituary in 1899: “this scheme of a republic which our fathers formed was a glorious dream which demands more than a word of respect and affection before it passes away”.¹⁴

The rights supposedly retained by the American people and not subject to majoritarian override are interpreted by judges installed by politicians selected by the majority of voters. Over time, such rights tend to be narrowly construed so as to allow the majority will to prevail most of the time. What can be said for present purposes is that the United States began its life primarily animated by republican principles. Over time those principles though still felt have been overwhelmed by the spirit of modern majoritarian democracy. Rousseau has prevailed over Locke.

If democracies are relatively pacific, is that because of their democratic elements, their republican elements (right to bear arms, militias, non-conscription), their capitalistic elements (low taxes, free trade) or some other yet to be identified factor? Writers such as Kant, Mises, and even Rummel appear to be supportive of the theory of democratic pacifism but on closer look are actually advocating a republican pacifism model. For example Mises in *Human Action* praises democracy as a “means of preventing revolutions and civil wars. It provides a method for the peaceful adjustment of government to the will of the majority”.¹⁵ However in *Socialism* he favors not unrestrained democracy, but a liberal republic:

Grave injury has been done to the concept of democracy by those who, exaggerating the natural law notion of sovereignty, conceived it as a limitless

14 Quoted in Ralph Raico ‘American Foreign Policy The Turning Point, 1898—1919’ in Richard Ebeling and Jacob G. Hornberger (eds), *The Failure of America’s Foreign Wars* (Future of Freedom Foundation, 1996) 61.

15 Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (3rd ed, 1966) 150.

rule of the *volonte generale* (general will). There is really no essential difference between the unlimited power of the democratic state and the unlimited power of the autocrat. The idea that carries away our demagogues and their supporters, the idea that the state can do whatever it wishes, and that nothing should resist the will of the sovereign people, has done more evil perhaps than the Caesar-mania of degenerate princelings. Both have the same origin in the notion of a state based on political might. . . [O]nly within the framework of [classical] liberalism does democracy fulfil a social function.¹⁶

Mises' concept of classical liberal democracy is similar to republicanism as defined above. Further, in *Human Action*, Mises ties the type of economic intervention commonly found in contemporary democratic states to international bellicosity: "Aggressive nationalism is the necessary derivative of the policies of interventionism and nation planning".¹⁷ With states controlling much of the economic life of their populations, economic goals which would otherwise have been pursued in the market and by free exchange, are necessarily pursued by political means. War, of course, is the ultimate political means.

Immanuel Kant, who is often credited with originating the theory of democratic pacifism, himself drew a distinction between democracies and republics:

The Civil Constitution of Every State Should Be Republican. The only constitution which derives from the idea of the original compact, and on which all juridical legislation of a people must be based, is the republican. . . . The republican constitution . . . gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. . . . In order not to confuse the republican constitution with the democratic (as is commonly done), the following should be noted. The forms of a state (*civitas*) can be divided either according to the persons who possess the sovereign power or according to the mode of administration exercised over the people by the chief, whoever he may be. The first is properly called the form of sovereignty (*forma imperii*), and there are only three possible forms of it: autocracy, in which one, aristocracy, in which some associated together, or democracy, in which all those who constitute society, possess

¹⁶ Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: an economic and sociological analysis* (Liberty Classics, 6th ed, 1981) 64—65.

¹⁷ Mises, *Human Action* (3rd ed, 1966) 823.

sovereign power. They may be characterized, respectively, as the power of a monarch, of the nobility, or of the people. The second division is that by the form of government (*forma regiminis*) and is based on the way in which the state makes use of its power; this way is based on the constitution, which is the act of the general will through which the many persons become one nation. In this respect government is either republican or despotic. Republicanism is the political principle of the separation of the executive power (the administration) from the legislative; despotism is that of the autonomous execution by the state of laws which it has itself decreed. Thus in a despotism the public will is administered by the ruler as his own will. Of the three forms of the state, that of democracy is, properly speaking, necessarily a despotism, because it establishes an executive power in which “all” decide for or even against one who does not agree; that is, “all,” who are not quite all, decide, and this is a contradiction of the general will with itself and with freedom.¹⁸

Kant’s definition of ‘republican’ is not identical to this writer’s; however, an overall reading of this passage puts Kant, like Mises, into the republican camp opposed to unrestrained majoritarian democracy. Kant reveals his republican sympathies most clearly elsewhere in the essay when he writes:

Standing armies shall in time be totally abolished . . . For they incessantly menace other states by their readiness to appear at all times prepared for war; they incite them to compete with each other in the number of armed men, and there is no limit to this. For this reason, the cost of peace finally becomes more oppressive than that of a short war, and consequently a standing army is itself a cause of offensive war waged in order to relieve the state of this burden. Add to this that to pay men to kill or to be killed seems to entail using them as mere machines and tools in the hand of another (the state), and this is hardly compatible with the rights of mankind in our own person. But the periodic and voluntary military exercises of citizens who thereby secure themselves and their country against foreign aggression are entirely different.

18 Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (Hackett Publishing Company, 2003).

Opposition to large standing armies and preference for the militia system alluded to by Kant, is one of the hallmarks of republican theory. So is the right to bear arms which is inextricably linked with the militia system, the militia consisting of the able-bodied citizenry bearing arms. Thus, those who cite Kant for theoretical support for the theory of democratic pacifism are mistaken. He is most accurately cited in support of the theory of republican pacifism.

The term 'republican' has fallen into disuse, as has republicanism itself. Discussions of the relationship between the form of government, peace, and war have generally used the word 'democracy' and eschewed 'republic'. Rummel uses the term 'democracy' in his writings. However, even Rummel appears to have recognized that the pacific benefits of democracy may have republic roots. He even uses the term 'libertarian democracy', virtually synonymous with republic, as essential to reducing the risk of war.

Another leading theorist of democratic pacifism, Spencer Weart, bases much of his theory on the history of what he calls 'republics'.¹⁹ His definition and mine differ. He does not see a sharp distinction between republics and democracies, merely that in republics, fewer people are allowed to vote. He believes that regimes are peaceful in direct relationship to the number of people allowed to vote. Weart's conclusions are flawed. He completely ignores the other features of republics such as the right to bear arms, militias and strictly limited government. The right to bear arms can be critical in deterring what Rummel calls democide — a government murdering its own citizens. The militia system is essential in providing other nations with an assurance that they will not be attacked since the militia system is designed not for invasion, but for protection of the homeland.

Weart theorizes that democracies are pacific in part because democratic leaders use the same methods in foreign policy that they use in domestic democratic politics. In his view, these include willingness to negotiate and compromise with opponents and abide by legal procedures. This rosy scenario ignores other characteristics of democratic politicians: lying, manipulation, and ruthlessness. One thinks of FDR — promising to keep the U.S. out of war while conspiring with Churchill to do the opposite; Nixon — he had a secret plan to end the Vietnam war, but then escalated it; Johnson (Gulf of Tonkin) and Clinton — grossly exaggerating deaths in Kosovo to justify one of history's most massive bombing campaigns in Serbia. A more cynical view than Weart's would say that democratic politicians gain and keep power domestically by:

¹⁹ Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (Yale University Press, 1998).

1. lying about the ability of government to improve people's lives;
2. distorting the truth about their opponents programs and policies;
3. sacrificing the interests of smaller groups to gain the votes of larger groups;
4. sacrificing the general interest for the benefit of wealthy or politically powerful interests; and
5. doing what is likely to procure votes in the short run at the expense of the long-term good of the nation.

None of these methods, applied to foreign policy, bodes well for procuring peace.

C. Conceptual conclusion

Peace is the absence of violence or the palpable threat of violence against persons and their property. Democracy is not a formula for peace, domestic or foreign.

Democracy is a form of government which, by and large, places persons and their property at the mercy of the vagaries of majoritarian politics over which, as individuals, they have essentially no control, and to which, therefore, they cannot be deemed, under any view but the fantastic, to have consented. In truth, democracy is nothing more than the numerous and their manipulators bullying the less numerous. It is an elaborate and deceptive rationalization for the strong in numbers to impose their will on the electorally weak by means of centralized state coercion. It takes as its premise the right of each person to control his destiny, and, by shifting this right from the individual, to the collective, destroys it. Advocates of democracy emphasize the self-government rights of an abstraction called 'the people' but ironically recoil in horror at the prospect of real persons governing their own selves.

If democratic states can impose their will on their own minority populations, why can't they impose their will on other countries, states, and peoples, particularly if they are not democratic? Strange it is, though, that pugnacious democrats always forget the principle of majority rule when war comes. They do not seek the prior consent of the majority of the inhabitants of the nations they seek to conquer, subdue, and rule.

Having resolved the issue at the level of pure theory, I proceed to examine alternative views and views which utilize different definitions of the concept of peace. In the process I will adduce empirical evidence which buttresses the previous conceptual analysis.

II. A CRITIQUE OF THE THEORY OF DEMOCRATIC PACIFISM

A. *The theory stated*

The belief that democracy promotes peace, often termed the theory of democratic pacifism, is broadly held by academics, politicians, diplomats, and the general public. Although this paper responds to the theory itself as summarized below, the views of leading academic proponents of the theory such as R. J. Rummel will be discussed. Rummel sets forth his views most concisely in *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence*. I agree with much of what Professor Rummel has to say. For instance, his research on democide — the state killing its own citizens — has been tremendously important. My main problem with Rummel is that he doesn't take his conclusions far enough.

The theory of democratic pacifism can be stated as follows:

1. democracies rarely if ever go to war against each other;
2. democracies tend to be more peaceful than dictatorships;
3. democracies tend to have less internal violence; and
4. this tendency toward peacefulness is structural, that is, related to the nature of democracy, not an accident or coincidence.

B. *Problems with the theory*

1. *Non sequitur*

Rummel's view is that "freedom promotes nonviolence and power kills". A contradiction is immediately apparent. Though "power kills" he favors democracy, a regime that bestows tremendous power upon the state. Rummel describes democracy as "a way of solving without violence disagreement over fundamental questions". This is true, however, only if we exclude from the concept of violence, the threat of violence. For example, when federal troops escorted black students into the University of Alabama in 1963 because the governor of the state opposed integration, was that peaceful? If so, then any time one forces another to do an act by merely threatening, not actually using force, peace has broken out. This would include bank robberies where a gun is displayed. To take this to the absurd, concentration camps are peaceful because the machine guns in the guard towers are

not actually firing. Rummel's thesis crumbles at the very beginning for want of a cogent definition of peace.

If power kills one should not support democracy, but a republican minimal or ultra-minimal state or no state whatsoever (self-government). It is true that Rummel expresses sympathy for the classical liberal state with fairly limited powers however this sympathy is not consistently manifest. His apparent personal sympathy for classical liberalism appears to play no role whatsoever in his theory.²⁰ That theory vindicates modern democratic states, none of which is a classical liberal minimal state. He boasts that special interest group politics is a normal feature of democracy. He refers to the 'ideological baggage' of classical liberalism while his enthusiasm for democracy is repeated continuously and with little reservation.

2. *Asking the wrong question*

Let's assume that the vast majority of democracies are peaceful, but that a few are not. Would not that scenario allow for the generation of statistics which show that democracies are generally peaceful? Rummel considers this prospect, but casually dismisses it. He calls focusing on a few bellicose democracies a "methodological error". However, let's assume that the bellicose democracies are the most powerful democracies. Is it not then a distortion of reality to still maintain that democracies generally are peaceful? Does it really matter whether democracies in general promote peace?

Imagine you are visiting an aquarium that features a large shark tank. There are 100 sharks in the tank; 95 of the sharks are either docile or too small to injure a human. There are however, five hungry great whites. Certainly, the overwhelming majority of the sharks are harmless, but would you swim in that tank? Similarly, we should not ask whether democracies are peaceful but is the United States peaceful? Are the other militarily powerful democracies — United Kingdom, France, India, Israel, peaceful? History shows they are not (table 1). As Gowa writes, "[t]heory suggests and empirical studies confirm that major powers are much more likely than are other states to become involved in armed disputes, including war".²¹

20 R.J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence* (1997) 24.

21 Stuart Bremer, 'Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816—1965' (1992) 36 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 309—341.

Year	State	War
1899	France	Chad-France
1899	U.S.	Philippine Insurrection
1914-18	U.S., France, U.K.	World War I
1916-21	U.K.	Anglo-Irish (civil war)
1919	U.K.	Afghanistan-British War
1939-45	U.S., France, U.K.	World War II
1945	U.S.	Chinese Civil War
1946	U.K.	Indo-China War
1948	Israel	Arab-Israel War
1952	France	Algerian revolution
1950-53	U.S.	Korean War
1956	Israel	Suez or Sinai War
1956-1964	France	Vietnam
1962	India	China-India
1965-1973	U.S.	Vietnam
1965	India	India-Pakistan
1967	Israel	Six-Day War
1971	India	India-Pakistan
1973	Israel	Yom Kippur War
1975-1984	U.K.	Britain-Ireland
1982	Israel	Israel-Lebanon
1982	U.K.	The Falkland War
1983	U.S.	Grenada
1991	U.S.	Gulf War
1999	U.S.	Yugoslavia
2001-02	U.S.	Afghanistan

Table 1: Wars of the democratic powers²²

Another factor which skews analysis is the definition of ‘war’ used by researchers: any conflict with more than 1,000 combat deaths. It is absurd to lump all such wars together for statistical analyses as if they were people, apples or coins. The better way to proceed is to ask which were the most violent conflicts and which wars caused the most long-term damage to civilization. Certainly, the two most destructive wars in the last 100 years were World War I and World War II. The American Civil War was one of the bloodiest wars of the 19th century with 620,000 combat deaths and thousands of civilian war-related deaths. As Rummel observes, the Civil War was the most violent war involving western states between the Napoleonic wars and World War I.²³

²² Brian Blodgett, ‘Conflicts, Coup d’etat, Revolution, Insurrections, Civil Wars, and Wars of the 20th Century’ <<https://sites.google.com/site/blodgetthistoricalconsulting/conflicts-of-the-20th-century>>

²³ Rummel, *Power Kills* (1997) 109.

To sum up, the initial question is wrong. Let us not ask, ‘Are democracies peaceful?’ but is the most powerful democracy peaceful? Is the United States peaceful? Does the United States provoke wars? If so, how terrible are the wars that result?

3. *Wrong criteria for judging validity*

Rummel argues that the theory that democracy promotes peace is proven mainly by the infrequency of wars between and among democracies; since democracies tend not to fight each other, if we only democratized the world, peace could be assured. Though it is no doubt desirable to avoid wars between nation-states, the argument ignores several other potential criteria.

Nuclear war: Arguably, the greatest threat to world peace is the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The risk of nuclear war increases with the number of states which have them. The risk of accidental explosion increases with the number of such weapons as does the risk of terrorists securing such weapons. Democracies have led the way in inventing, producing and exploding nuclear weapons. Currently, of the eight states that have them, only two are dictatorships (table 2). The first nuclear power, the United States, developed them at the same time it was becoming the world’s most powerful state. Therefore, the nuclear bomb soon became the symbol of global political power. Other states rushed to develop them. Perhaps they would have done so anyway but the fact that the United States, the world’s most prestigious state, had done so, made such pursuit irresistible.

State	Form of government
Russia	democracy
United States	democracy
China	dictatorship
France	democracy
United Kingdom	democracy
India	democracy
Pakistan	dictatorship
Israel	democracy

Table 2: Nuclear powers²⁴

²⁴ Editor’s note: Table lists nuclear powers as of 2002 when this article was written. Since then North Korea has acquired nuclear weapon capacity of between 5 to 10 warheads. Kathleen Sutcliffe, ‘The Growing Nuclear Club’, Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, 17 November 2006 <<http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/growing-nuclear-club/p12050>>.

We are told that the United States developed these weapons to stop Hitler. However, production was rushed even after Hitler was defeated, ‘to defeat Japan’. After Japan was defeated, nuclear weapons production continued at a vigorous pace. Of course, about one minute after World War II ended, we were told that we needed them to defend against our ally, the Soviet Union. The truth is democratic states produce nuclear weapons, not to defend against a specific enemy, but to advance their power, which is after all the coin of the political realm. The proliferation of nuclear weapons by mostly democratic states means that democracy has failed to provide a solution to the greatest danger of our times. Rather, democracies are a major part of the problem.

Terrorism: Another threat to world peace is international terrorism. What we are concerned with here is not a moral evaluation of terrorism or its antecedents. Rather the question is, do democracies provoke or discourage terrorism? The evidence indicates that democracies do provoke terrorism. International terrorism led to the American invasion of Afghanistan, which in turn increased tensions between Pakistan and India which for a time were on the verge of war, perhaps nuclear war. As table 3 below shows, virtually all of the major targets for terrorism are democratic countries. Apparently, terrorists have grievances with these countries because of the foreign or domestic policies they have pursued (notice that numerous democratic states with non-interventionist foreign policies are rarely plagued by terrorism).

State	Form of government
Lebanon	mixed
United States	democracy
Germany	democracy
France	democracy
United Kingdom	democracy
Greece	democracy
Argentina	dictatorship/democracy
Israel	democracy
Italy	democracy
Turkey	democracy
Philippines	democracy
Colombia	democracy
Peru	democracy
Spain	democracy/constitutional monarchy

Table 3: Leading targets of terrorism²⁵

25 Peter Flemming and Michael Stohl, ‘Myths and Realities of Cyberterrorism’ in Alex Schmid (ed), *Countering Terrorism through International Cooperation* (2001) 70-105.

Ethnic/religious conflict: Perhaps the leading cause of organized violence in today's world is intrastate conflict between and among ethnic and religious groups. Though many of these conflicts have taken place under oppressive dictatorships, a large number of them have occurred either entirely or partially under democratic regimes as shown in table 4.

State	Type of dispute	Form of government
Afghanistan	ethnic/religious	dictatorship
Algeria	religious	Mix democracy/dictatorship
Angola	ideological	mixed
Burma	ethnic	mixed
Burundi	ethnic	mixed
Colombia	ideological	democracy
Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)	ethnic	mixed
Congo-Zaire	ethnic/ideological	mixed
Georgia	ethnic	democracy
India	ethnic/religious	democracy
India	ideological	democracy
Indonesia	religious	mixed
Indonesia	ethnic/ideological	mixed
Mexico	ethnic	democracy
Namibia	ethnic	democracy
Nigeria	ethnic	mixed
Peru	ideological	democracy
Philippines	religious/ethnic	democracy
Russia	ethnic/religious	democracy
Rwanda	ethnic	mixed
Sierra Leone	miscellaneous/ethnic	mixed
Solomon Islands	ethnic	constitutional monarchy
Spain	ethnic	democracy
Sri Lanka	ethnic/religious	mixed
Sudan	ethnic/religious	mixed
Turkey	ethnic	democracy
Yugoslavia	ethnic/religious	democracy

Table 4: Recent Intrastate Conflicts²⁶

25 out of 29 recent intrastate conflicts were ethnic or religious in nature. In 23 of the 25, the prevailing regime was democratic throughout the dispute or at least at

²⁶ Source for dispute type: Federation of American Scientists.

certain times during the dispute. In certain cases, a democratic government was overthrown because of the feeling of an ethnic or religious subgroup that its interests were not being advanced by the democratic state.

The empirical evidence indicates that democracy promotes ethnic conflict. In democracies, people tend to vote along ethnic/religious lines (since ethnicity and religion are closely linked, they can be dealt with together). People of one ethnic group tend to vote for candidates of the same ethnic group, or candidates known to favor the interests of such group. For example, 93 percent of Republicans are white according to the Gallup Poll; while Al Gore received 90 percent of the black vote for President in 2000. That being the case, it must be true that the candidates people vote against are usually identified with other ethnic groups. Since those voters opposed that candidate, it is reasonable to assume that they harbor a certain amount of resentment against those whose votes put that candidate into office. Voters may come to view any increase in the population of other ethnic groups as a threat to their wellbeing, portending as it does the election of officials they believe will harm their interests.

It is no accident that people tend to vote along ethnic and religious lines. In a democracy the odds of casting the deciding vote in favor of a candidate is millions to one and since voters implicitly recognize the virtual meaninglessness of their one vote, they have little incentive to inform themselves in detail about candidates, issues and policies and are likely to vote for ethnic reasons because the ethnic identity of candidates is usually clear. Further, it takes little additional effort to ascertain which ethnic groups a candidate serves. Thus, ethnic voting is a rational response to the problem of rational ignorance about candidates and issues. Given its efficiency, it always has been and likely always will be a major factor in elections. Even if it is argued that people of similar ethnic and religious backgrounds vote alike not because of those backgrounds per se, but because of their similar experiences, situations, values and needs, we reach the same conclusion. Since these factors themselves are closely tied to ethnic and religious identity, the voting patterns they produce will be closely tied to and, in practice, virtually indistinguishable from, ethnicity and religion.

Democracy inherently contains the seeds of ethnic conflict. History shows that, under certain circumstances, members of ethnic minorities prefer to fight wars of secession to escape from majority ethnic groups they believe are hostile to their interests. The ethnic conflict created by democracy necessarily worsens over time since the natural tendency of democratic government is to grow in size and scope.²⁷

27 Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy: The God that Failed* (Transaction Publishers, 2001); Harry Browne, *Why Government Doesn't Work* (St Martins Press, 1995); Ostrowski, 'In Freedom's Way' (Feb 1993) *Liberty* 42.

Governments grow because the desire to impose costs on others is virtually limitless. As Bastiat put it, "Government is the great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else".²⁸ The government of the United States has been steadily growing in power since 1776. Even conservative Republican Presidents increase the power of the federal government. Every one since Hoover did so.²⁹ The federal government is much stronger now than it was in January 2001, when a conservative President took office. Government tends to grow until it has substantially destroyed the society upon which it depredates. As government power increases, so does the threat perceived by ethnic minorities, and, finally, their willingness to fight wars of secession. At some point, ethnic minorities will simply refuse to have their wealth confiscated and their cultures destroyed by majority ethnic groups.

Ideological and other civil wars: Though ethnic conflict is the primary instigator of intrastate war, democracy also fails to deter ideological civil war. Ironically, democracy was supposed to avoid just such wars by allowing people to resolve their disputes through elections.

The primordial example is the American Civil War (War Between the States). It is not well known that the democratic idea led to the most destructive war ever fought in the Western hemisphere. Why did Lincoln order armies into Virginia, which had not been involved in the attack on Fort Sumter? Let him speak for himself:

[W]e divide [all our constitutional controversies] into majorities and minorities. If a minority . . . will secede rather than acquiesce [to the majority], they make a precedent which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them, whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority . . . Plainly the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy.³⁰

Hence a substantial motive for Lincoln's invasion of the South was to preserve the principle of majority rule – that is, the ability of a majority to impose its will on a minority. The War Between the States revealed the true nature of democracy as majority rule at gunpoint. It just so happens that people usually put up with it and the bullied minority is scattered throughout the nation. In the War Between the

28 Claude Frederic Bastiat, *Essays on Political Economy* (Classic Books Library, 2007).

29 J. Ostrowski, 'Republicans and Big Government' 19 February 2002 <<http://mises.org/library/republicans-and-big-government>>

30 First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861. For further discussion of this passage see J. Ostrowski, 'Was the Union Army's Invasion of the Confederate States a Lawful Act?' in David Gordon (ed) *Secession, State and Liberty* (Transaction Publishers, 2002).

States, however, the bullied minority was clustered together and willing to fight. Majority rule encourages minority groups that feel exploited by the majority to attempt to secede. The bullying majority rarely lets subjects go in peace, and thus war breaks out. The provocateur is often the majoritarian state, and that state's rationalization for fighting is always the preservation of the majority principle.

It is commonly thought that left-wing civil wars arise in response to repressive dictatorships which ruthlessly exploit the population for the benefit of a few, leaving a large body of discontents. However, such revolutions do occur in democratic countries. As indicated in table 4, such wars have occurred recently in Colombia, Peru, India and Indonesia. Perhaps the leading cause of war in the foreseeable future will be the struggle of peoples who constitute a minority in their countries to escape from oppressive democratic majority rule by those animated by alien ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, or philosophic values.

Domestic crime rates: Domestic crime rates can illuminate this debate. Table 5 presents the twenty-one most murderous nations. There is nothing magical about the number twenty-one other than I had to extend the list that far in order to include a single dictatorship!

State	Population	Homicide (100,000)	rate	Form government	of
South Africa	41,465,000	75.30		democracy	
Colombia	37,500,000	64.60		democracy	
Estonia	1,499,257	28.21		democracy	
Brazil	160,737,000	19.04		democracy	
Mexico	90,011,259	17.58		democracy	
Philippines	72,000,000	16.20		democracy	
Taiwan	21,979,444	8.12		democracy	
N. Ireland	1,641,711	6.09		democracy	
United States	272,691,000	5.70		democracy	
Argentina	34,179,000	4.51		democracy	
Hungary	10,245,677	3.53		democracy	
Finland	5,088,333	3.24		democracy	
Portugal	5,138,600	2.98		democracy	
Mauritius	1,062,810	2.35		democracy (British)	
Israel	5,261,700	2.32		democracy	
Italy	56,764,854	2.25		democracy	
Scotland	5,132,400	2.24		democracy	
Canada	28,120,065	2.16		democracy	
Slovenia	1,989,477	2.01		democracy	
Australia	17,838,401	1.86		democracy	
Singapore	2,930,200	1.71		dictatorship	

Table 5: International homicide comparisons³¹

31 *International homicide comparisons* <http://www.guncite.com/gun_control_gcgvinco.html>

It is no surprise that democracies lead the world in crime statistics. Presumably, dictatorships, unrestrained by legal procedures and popular electoral pressures, can ruthlessly crack down on crime. If that doesn't work, they can suppress evidence of high crimes rates, issue phony statistics and ensure crimes committed by the state and its allies are defined out of existence. Nevertheless, we cannot casually dismiss these statistics. Democracies sure are violent places. Even though democracies afford their citizens the right to redress their grievances and collectively solve social problems associated with crime, for some reason many democracies cannot seem to prevent widespread crime.

Some high-crime states such as South Africa, Northern Ireland (U.K.), the Philippines and the United States have long histories of ethnic or religious tensions. At least some portion of the crime in these states can be attributed to democracy's inefficiencies at smoothing ethnic and religious tensions. Another major factor in high crime rates is drug prohibition. There are high crime rates in both high drug-consuming states (e.g. United States) and high-drug-producing or selling states (Colombia, Mexico). Though dictatorships have gleefully partaken in the War on Drugs over the years, drug prohibition was virtually invented by the democratic United States and America has been its leading advocate since 1914. Bringing the discussion full circle back to international violence — beyond increasing street crime, drug profits often flow to rebel or terrorist groups which control regions where coca leaf trees and poppies are grown. There is even the possibility that the United States prior to September 11, 2001 subsidized terrorism indirectly by funneling money for anti-drug efforts to the Taliban.

Undercounting democide: Rummel estimates that the democratic United States was responsible for the unjustified killing of 583,000 people in the 20th century, and possibly as many as 1,641,000 victims "all told". He writes, "virtually all of these were foreigners killed during foreign wars". While this is truly a horrific record, I contend that Rummel undercounts. The United States is also responsible for the combat deaths of its own soldiers. By and large, these soldiers were conscripted and forced to go overseas to fight wars. The only war in which the United States was attacked was World War II; however, prior to attack, its leaders were anxious to get in the war anyway, and there was a long history of mutual provocation between the United States and Japan, largely based on American's imperialistic designs on Asia. As indicated in table 6, in the last century 635,000 Americans died in battle or from battle. Adding U.S. combat casualties in foreign wars to Rummel's low estimate of U.S. democide, we can conclude that U.S. democide was actually 1,218,000 in the last century.

World War I	116,000
World War II	406,000
Korean War	55,000
Vietnam War	58,000
Total	635,000

Table 6: US soldiers killed in combat in 20th century

Supporting dictatorships: Paradoxically, democracies, especially the United States, have a long history of supporting dictatorship. The most murderous regime in history, the Soviet Union, was an ally of the United States during World War II. This was in spite of that regime's continuous history of mass murder and treachery since its founding in 1917. The United States supplied the Soviet Union with 15,000 aircraft, 7,000 tanks, 350,000 tons of explosives, and 15,000,000 pairs of boots. Nationalist China, history's fourth most murderous regime,³² also received substantial military supplies from the United States during World War II and thereafter.

These are the most odious examples of dictatorial regimes supported by the United States. Yet the list is long and includes the Shah of Iran, the House of Saud, Marcos in the Philippines, Pinochet in Chile, Somoza in Nicaragua, Mobutu in Zaire/Congo and the Duvalier family in Haiti.³³ In 1991, the United States went to war to reinstall a dictatorship in Kuwait and stave off an invasion of another dictatorship, Saudi Arabia. Granted many of these were allegedly for the purpose of fighting communism. However, the U.S. once was allied with communism to stamp out Nazism. More recently, the U.S. is allied with dictatorship in part to stamp out Islamic radicalism. The world's leading democracy always seems to have an excuse for supporting dictatorships.

Yet another way that democracies contribute to violence is by selling arms to dictatorships. Table 7 shows the top arms exporters. Table 8 shows the world's leading arms importers, including dictatorial United States ally, Saudi Arabia.

³² Rummel, *Death By Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1997) 123.

³³ Ted Carpenter, 'The United States and Third World Dictatorships: A Case for Benign Detachment' Cato Institute Policy Analysis 58, 15 August 1985.

Country	Form of government	Total
United States	democracy	123,380
Russia	democracy	41,954
France	democracy	34,646
U.K.	democracy	16,838
China	dictatorship	5,984
Germany	democracy	10,363
Italy	democracy	3,960

Table 7: Arms Agreements to the World, by Supplier, 1991-1996 (in millions of constant 1996 U.S. dollars)³⁴

Saudi Arabia	29,800
Egypt	6,300
Taiwan	4,900
Kuwait	4,400
S. Korea	3,800
China	3,000
Israel	2,400
Iran	2,300
U.A.E.	2,300
Malaysia	2,000

Table 8: Arms Transfer Agreements and Deliveries of Developing Nations, 1993-1996 (in millions of current U.S. dollars)³⁵

4. Empirical problems

Critics of the theory of democratic pacifism mount a frontal assault on the main contention that democracies do not fight each other. They list the following counterexamples: American Revolution (1776), Great Britain versus France (1793, 1795), War of 1812, Mexican War (1848), American Civil War (1861), World War I and several others.³⁶ The proponents of the theory respond by arguing that

³⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1989–1996*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Thomas Schwartz and Kiron Skinner, 'The Myth of Democratic Pacifism' (1999) *Hoover Digest*.

these examples do not involve true democracies or that they represent unusual circumstances.

Joanne Gowa, after an exhaustive statistical analysis, concluded:

[T]he democratic peace is a Cold War phenomenon: that is, the available data show that the democratic peace is limited in time to the years between 1946 and 1980. A democratic peace does not exist in the pre-1914 world, and it cannot be extrapolated to the post-Cold War era. As a result, to the extent that U.S. foreign policy is based on spreading democracy abroad to enhance international stability, it rests upon very weak foundations.³⁷

5. *Democratic wars against dictatorships*

Democracies fight wars against dictatorships or imperial regimes, but these often begin in a questionable manner. The United States has always seemed to get attacked just when its leaders were plotting to drag the nation into war by any means possible anyway — for example Fort Sumter (*cassus belli* for American Civil War), the USS Maine (Spanish-American War) and the sinking of Lusitania by the Germans (World War I).

Examination of the international law quagmire that led to American involvement in World War I leads to the conclusion that the US had four options: declare war on Germany, declare war on England, declare war on both or mind its own business. Democracies, however, do not seem to mind their own business. What is clear is that the scope of American involvement in that war far exceeded anything justified by the alleged cause of that involvement: German attacks on American shipping in the North Atlantic. The United States was looking for any excuse to get into World War I against Germany. What about Japan, the attack on Pearl Harbor and the pretext for entering World War II? The United States wanted Japan out of China. American leaders wanted China in the hands of the mass murderer Chiang or the mega murderer Mao. An oil embargo was imposed on Japan even though it had little oil. Thus, the United States provoked Japan into starting a war.³⁸ That

37 Joanne Gowa, *Ballots and Bullets: The Elusive Democratic Peace* (Princeton University Press, 1999) 113.

38 Robert Higgs, 'How US economic warfare provoked Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor' (May 2006) *The Freeman*.

does not mean that Japan was justified, merely that it was, in its own mind, provoked. No democratic provocation, no war.

6. *Democratic regimes are unstable*

Yet another problem with the theory of democratic pacifism is the instability of democratic regimes. What good is having a democracy to promote peace if the regime ceases to exist? Germany, for example, went from democracy in 1918 to dictatorship in 1933 to launching the war of the millennium in 1939. Did German democracy promote peace? What was there about that democracy that allowed for the rise of Hitler? Democracies have been overthrown by dictatorships five times in 50 years in Pakistan. Apparently, many Pakistanis prefer dictatorship because the democratic politicians run the country so badly. Other democratic regimes overthrown by coups were Spain (1936), Czechoslovakia (1948), Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), Greece (1967), the Philippines (1972), Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976).³⁹ It is argued that the problem in such states is that the democracies are not "mature." Once mature democracies are established, there will be peace. Surely that begs the question. If democracy only promotes peace when the culture in a nation has changed sufficiently to allow for a democracy to exist, then it is not the democracy which promotes peace, but the peace which allows a democracy to exist.

Democratic regimes are unstable economically as well as politically. Rummel cites the role of the market economy in promoting a society based on "negotiation and compromise". He fails to confront the inherent instability of the democratic mixed economy demonstrated by Mises. As democratic states move away from the free market and toward socialism, there is no stopping point. Each intervention into the market generates problems that lead to pressures for ever greater intervention to remedy the problems caused by the initial intervention. For example, minimum wage laws cause unemployment; unemployment leads to more welfare payments; this causes taxes to rise; that lowers capital investment; lower investment reduces wages relative to taxes and leads to pressure for programs to subsidize the working poor such as food stamps, free medical care and free education. Eventually, the result is a completely socialized economy. A command economy eventually replaces a contract economy and the role of negotiation and compromise in social relations is drastically reduced.

39 Carpenter, 'The United States and Third World Dictatorships: A Case for Benign Detachment'.

III. THE CAUSES OF DEMOCRATIC BELLICOSITY — MEANS AND ENDS

A. *The ends of war*

1. *Domestic political goals*

Modern democracies tend to extensively intervene in the free market by means of high taxes, welfare and subsidies in order to buy the votes that keep the politicians in power. As Mises demonstrated, each intervention into the economy causes problems that lead to demand for ever further interventions. Government thereby creates its own demand. Eventually, the economic problems become intractable, leading to the inevitable temptation to create a foreign policy distraction.⁴⁰ Combine that with the fact that war, while undeniably harming the economy, gives the appearance of stimulating the economy, and we have a formula for why democratic governments would have a motive for war.

The period surrounding the Great Depression suggests how wars might be used by politicians to distract from domestic problems. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal had failed to bring America out of the Great Depression as late as 1941. Many believe that FDR welcomed American entrance into World War II to distract attention from his domestic policy failures or in the hope that the war would get the economy moving again. Such theories cannot definitively be proven. What cannot be denied is that on two fronts, FDR did a great deal to goad either Germany or Japan into attacking the United States.

Why did the United States fight a pointless war in Vietnam? One theory is that President Kennedy escalated U.S. involvement because he had accused President Eisenhower in 1960 of being 'soft' on communism. When Lyndon Johnson came to power, he had ambitious domestic plans for creating a "Great Society," and could not afford to lose political capital over the "loss" of another country to communism.⁴¹

2. *Special interest politics*

Special interest group politics is a flaw of democracy overlooked by Rummel.⁴² By focusing their efforts, votes, and campaign contributions, small segments of the

⁴⁰ Walter Karp, *Politics of War: the story of two wars which altered forever the political life of the American republic* (Franklin Square Press, 2010).

⁴¹ Interview with John McCone, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency <<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/McCone/mccone-con5.html>>

⁴² But not by Joanne Gowa, *Ballots and Bullets*, 23—24.

population can exercise influence on policy all out of proportion to their numbers. This is frequently seen in domestic policy. For example, the sugar lobby is responsible for the sugar quota which limits the amount of foreign sugar that can be imported into the United States. The result is billions of dollars in sales that benefit a few companies and their employees. Every other person in the country suffers. Because the people who gain, gain much, they are moved to lobby for this law. The people who lose, lose only a little, and thus do nothing to repeal the law.

Democracies feature all kinds of absurd laws and policies that benefit a few at the expense of everyone else. What is rarely remarked is that this special interest group analysis applies to foreign policy as well. For example, there are over 150 hundred million Arabs in the Middle East, mostly Muslims, and they have one billion coreligionists around the world. Arab countries have vast oil reserves. Yet, for over fifty years, United States foreign policy has favored the tiny state of Israel, much to the chagrin of these Arab and Islamic millions. This is a foreign policy most decidedly not in the interests of the average American. This policy has dragged the United States into every aspect of the running 50 old war over the Middle East. In addition to supplying massive military aid to Israel, American troops have shed blood nearby in Lebanon in a related conflict. Further, there is reason to believe that the terrorist attacks on September 11th were in part in retaliation for American support for Israel. As a result of those attacks, the United States is now at war in Afghanistan.

There are other examples of countries getting into wars to advance discrete private agendas. Ralph Raico writes that most Americans wanted the United States to stay out of World War I, except for the East Coast economic and social elite which had close business and social ties to England.⁴³ The US has engaged in military actions at the behest of private corporations that were foolish enough to invest in countries where property rights were not secure. The United States fought a major war in Kuwait and Iraq the only apparent reason for which was to preserve an oriental despotism. Surely, the actual reason was to protect certain discrete private interests in oil in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. From any practical point of view, the dispute did not concern the average American in the slightest. They would buy their gasoline as usual at the pump at prices set by the vagaries of the world oil market regardless of which crooked Middle East politician sold the rights to oil (he had previously stolen) to some private company. Once again, war was fought by a democracy to advance a special interest.

43 Raico, 'American Foreign Policy—The Turning Point, 1898—1919' 66.

3. *Messianic goals*

Democracies are vulnerable to messianic crusades. Democratic politicians have a sense of moral superiority which impels them to reform other nations just as they seek to reform their own citizens and societies. Woodrow Wilson is the foremost example of this spirit: “America is henceforth to stand for the assertion of the right of one nation to serve the other nations of the world”.⁴⁴ The temptation to add, “. . . whether they like it or not,” is irresistible.

Two of the most important wars in modern history were fought in part to advance democratic principles. In the case of World War I this is well known. As Hoppe explains, the United States’ intervention into that war was the catastrophe of the 20th century:

If the United States had followed a strict non-interventionist foreign policy, it is likely that the intra-European conflict would have ended in late 1916 or early 1917 as the result of several peace initiatives, most notably by the Austrian Emperor Charles I. Moreover, the war would have been concluded with a mutually acceptable and face-saving compromise peace rather than the actual dictate. Consequently, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia would have remained traditional monarchies instead of being turned into short-lived democratic republics. With a Russian Czar and a German and Austrian Kaiser in place, it would have been almost impossible for the Bolsheviks to seize power in Russia, and in reaction to a growing communist threat in Western Europe, for the Fascists and National Socialists to do the same in Italy and Germany. Millions of victims of communism, national socialism and World War II would have been saved. The extent of government interference with and control of the private economy in the United States and in Western Europe would never have reached the heights seen today. And rather than Central and Eastern Europe (and consequently half of the globe) falling into communist hands and for more than forty years being plundered, devastated, and forcibly insulated from Western markets, all of Europe (and the entire globe) would have remained integrated economically (as in the nineteenth century) in a world-wide system of division of labor and cooperation. World living standards would have grown immensely higher than they actually have.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid 65.

⁴⁵ Hoppe, Introduction to *Democracy: The God That Failed*, <<http://mises.org/library/introduction-democracy-god-failed>>

Woodrow Wilson called it the war “to make the world safe for democracy”. We have heard this refrain over and over again as the rationalization for war: in Korea, Vietnam and the Balkans. Lincoln explicitly justified the bloody Civil War as a war to save majority rule.

4. *Imperialism*

Oftentimes, democracies end up in wars that were seemingly started by non-democracies. The United States ostensibly got involved in World War II because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The reality is more complex. What was in dispute was which nation would be the dominant power in East Asia. America had staked its imperial claim 43 years earlier by going to war with Spain. Subsequently, America seized the Philippines from the natives. Japan invaded China in 1937. America applied diplomatic and economic pressure on Japan and demanded that Japan leave China. An oil embargo was imposed. Japan responded by seizing the oil fields of Malaysia and, anticipating American opposition, struck Pearl Harbor. The genesis of the conflict, however, was America’s (democratic) imperial designs on East Asia.

B. *The means of war*

Analysts of war spend too much time thinking about why wars are fought and too little time contemplating the means of war. The resources for war are acquired by conscription, taxation, confiscation and inflation. Without cannon and cannon fodder, there are no wars. In modern times, politicians neither fight nor pay for the wars they start or join. With their aura of legitimacy, democracies are particularly adept at utilizing all these means. Since citizens tend to identify with the democratic state, there is usually little trouble conscripting troops and confiscating the economic resources required for war. Perhaps this is why democracies tend to win the wars they fight.⁴⁶ War is the health of the state, but the democratic state is also the health of war.

True, dictatorships also seem to be able to secure the resources necessary for war. Yet, our analysis is not so limited. We must also consider the ability of self-government and republics to secure these resources. Regimes of self-government obviously have no taxation or conscription. Anyone wishing to go to war must

⁴⁶ James Lee Ray, ‘Does Democracy Cause Peace?’ (1998) 1 *Annual Review of Political Science* 27-46

convince others to contribute money or troops. Generally speaking wars are not profitable activities. The United States expended huge amounts of money fighting its major wars. It was able, however, to force its citizens to pay for these wars against their will by means of taxation, inflation⁴⁷ and conscription.

Theoretically, private groups could still fight wars for economic or other motives. Possibly, they could perceive these goals as outweighing the costs. Still, they would have to calculate whether they could achieve their goals more cheaply through trade or other peaceful means. It is difficult to conceive of a privately-funded war for natural resources that would be cheaper than simply buying them in the market. Further, the warriors would face the prospect of being ostracized for their violent acts, or losing the war and being annihilated. All in all, under self-government, frequent or wide-scale wars would be extremely unlikely.

Republics also discourage war. Republics differ from democracies in that they rely on militias not conscription for defense. The militia system is a powerful deterrent to invasion. To achieve victory, an invading army, with long supply lines, must subdue the entire able-bodied male population, fighting in their own backyards. As the Civil War demonstrated, it is a mistake for the invaded state to gather up its men into standing armies, and then go confront the invading army in set-piece battles in which the defenders are outnumbered. Militia and guerilla tactics would probably have carried the day. Conversely, militias are poor offensive weapons. They therefore discourage aggressive or imperialistic wars. They also thereby discourage preemptive strikes by other states that would otherwise fear invasion. Financially, republics have little or no taxation with which to fund aggressive war. Aggressive war lies beyond their constitutional mandate and the pursuit of such a war is likely to be resisted internally by well-armed citizens. Pure republics are unlikely to start wars, or lose them.

The imperial impulse springs mainly from the power elite; ordinary people are less interested in conquering far-off places. The problem is members of modern power elites are rarely interested in doing any actual fighting. Nor can a republican militia do the fighting. Thus, the elites turned inevitably to conscription, a concept alien to a free society. A brief survey of the history of American conscription shows its close link to imperial aims. Conscription was first proposed in the War of 1812

47 Inflation is a form of theft whereby the state, having arrogated to itself the right to monopolize the production of money, increases the amount of money and spends that new money, raising prices and thereby decreasing the value of the money privately-held. Murray Rothbard, *What has government done to our money?* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010).

to provide troops to invade Canada. It was defeated in Congress. Conscription, opposed by New England in 1812, was supported by New England in 1863 to provide the Union with troops to invade the South. Citizens were conscripted to fight in Europe in 1917—18. Troops were conscripted to fight in Europe and Asia in 1941—45. Troops were conscripted to fight in Korea and Vietnam.

IV. COMPARING THE REGIME TYPES

From the above discussion, we can now rank each regime in accordance with the degree to which it achieves peace, foreign and domestic:

1. Self-government
2. Republics
3. Democracy
4. Dictatorship

Self-government is based on the notion that compelling an individual to join a political society against his will is a violent and immoral act. The theory of self-government does not allow for any offensive political violence whatsoever. This is not to say that aggressive or offensive violence will not occur under this system, merely that it is not sanctioned by the theory itself. In theory, self-government is the most peaceful form of political organization however little empirical evidence exists to confirm this. The reason for this is that by the time the theory was originated — no earlier than the mid-nineteenth century, and with greater force and frequency in the past forty years — the modern nation-state system was fully developed and nearly intractable. The state tends to grow, not contract, let alone cease to exist!

Four or five hundred years of statecraft and indoctrination have made the viability of self-government unthinkable to the masses. The popular mind laughs at the prospect of self-government, but is absolutely certain that the modern state, which pointlessly killed 200 million people in the last century,⁴⁸ and is off to a fast start in this one, can guarantee peace and harmony. Though self-government has yet to prove itself in action, what cannot be denied is that it is the only political system which leaves the laboratory of the mind without incorporating aggressive violence into its very structure. In contrast, the state system is aggressively violent in both theory and reality, producing a stream of grotesquely brutal episodes,

⁴⁸ R. Rummel, *Death by Government* 13.

murdering hundreds of millions of people it was allegedly designed to protect, setting back human progress centuries, and destroying modern man's peace of mind in ways he may never fully understand. In today's world, in large part the product of the rise of democratic states, tranquillity is a state of mind best achieved by the ingestion of tranquilizers.

All other forms of government do sanction political violence, to greater and lesser degrees. But of the other forms, republics sanction the least amount. It is true a republic would insist on a monopoly of the use of legal power to resolve disputes. Beyond that however, the republican form is consistent with peaceful relations in virtually every other area of life. It is even conceivable to have a republic that lacks the power to tax.⁴⁹ Even in a republic which could tax, taxes would be limited to payment for narrowly circumscribed functions such as the courts, police and national defense. Even there, since republics rely on the militia system, defense costs are greatly reduced, as is the risk of war, as other states are assured that a republic will not launch an invasion with a standing army. As van Creveld observes:

Once the modern state started introducing regular, standing armies and navies, the situation changed. . . . Almost for the first time in history, there now existed forces that received their entire incomes from the state . . . Increasingly excluded from participation in political life, gradually of other functions such as police work, and deliberately isolated from civilian society, they possessed unprecedented freedom to devote their full attention to discovering new and better ways of killing and destroying others of the same kind.⁵⁰

Democracies are the next most peaceful form of government. That democracies are generally less violent than dictatorships is a fact that Rummel unduly celebrates. The problem is that Rummel's continuum of regimes runs from democracy to authoritarian to totalitarian. He simply ignores the possibility of self-government and the pure Lockean republic. In spite of their advantage over dictatorships, democracies in fact tend to be aggressive, imperialistic, and warlike. These tendencies provoke terrorism, which in turn provokes further foreign intervention, and

⁴⁹ James Ostrowski, 'A 21 Trillion Dollar Tax Cut' 20 March 2001 <<http://mises.org/library/21-trillion-tax-cut>>

⁵⁰ Martin van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) 250-251.

more terrorism, in an endless circle of violence. At the same time as they are aggressive abroad, they continually grow domestically in power, scope and size at the expense of property rights and liberty. They stir up ethnic and religious hostilities by pushing towards one way of life for all groups, whether the politically weaker groups like it or not. Though in theory a democracy could choose to be libertarian, establishing a minimal state limited to protecting individual rights and private property, this is a faint hope. The realistic view is that there is an unavoidable tension between individual rights and democracy. If individuals are to be allowed to own themselves and do what they wish with their justly acquired property, what exactly is the role of the “will of the people” or the majority or the legislature? Either these democratic mechanisms will rubber stamp those rights, in which case these mechanisms are superfluous, or they will overrule those rights, in which case democracy becomes the enemy of libertarian rights and therefore, an enemy of peace.

The *modus operandi* of democracies is closer to that of dictatorships than with self-government or republics. Though these regimes differ in the manner that leaders are selected, they differ little in the manner in which they relate to their individual subjects on a daily basis: both regimes impose their will by force. True, most democracies have in storage pieces of paper with words printed on them (constitutions) which supposedly limit the amount of force they can use. Alas, as Orwell taught us, words can mean virtually whatever we want them to mean.⁵¹ At the end of the day, the democratic state has the most powerful dictionary: the standing army. Other similarities include: conscription, the use of centralized power to control vast areas of social and economic life and the ability to confiscate a large portion of the resources of their societies. Democracies and dictatorships actively cooperate to suppress republican and self-governmental impulses such as secession and private ownership of arms.

While democracies tend to be less warlike than dictatorships, their relationship with dictatorships is complex and disturbing. They itch to fight with dictatorships while also forming alliances with them and providing them vital military supplies and economic aid (e.g. Soviet Union, China). They even covertly assist in overthrowing other democracies to install dictatorships they believe will advance their interests.

On the plus side, they do tend to murder their own citizens less than certain dictatorships have been known to do. This is hardly anything to brag about,

51 Henry Mark Holzer, *Sweet Land of Liberty? The Supreme Court and Individual Rights* (iUniverse, 2000).

however. I would not brag that I am a better basketball player than the Pope. Democracies have, however, killed massive numbers of their own citizens by starting or stumbling into wars and conscripting troops to fight them. Democracy is not the best form of government for preventing democide. That distinction goes to republics and self-government. By emphasizing the right to bear arms, banning conscription, minimizing conflict through the free market and free association, and starving the state of its aggressive powers and confiscated resources, republics and self-government offer our best hope of minimizing domestic death by government.

Ultimately, the theory of democratic pacifism contains a dangerous contradiction:

- Democracies do not fight each other
- If all states were democracies, there would be no war
- War is bad; peace is good
- Not all states are democracies
- Non-democracies are resistant to internal change
- The goal of world peace requires that the democracies go to war with the non-democracies to make them peaceful.

Proponents of the theory, of course, will reject the last premise, but cannot deny that it is an accurate description of much past history.

What is urgently needed is a theory of pacific regimes that does not require that the whole darn world be of a certain type. This paper presents such theories. Both self-government and republics, virtually devoid of aggressive ends and means, are far more likely than democracies are, to peacefully co-exist with dictatorships.

Dictatorships are the most violent form of government. They earn this distinction, not internationally, but domestically, because of their tendency to murder their own subjects. They do not exist in a vacuum, however. They usually use hostile democracies to justify their police state tactics. They often commit their democide during the chaos and fog of wars which democracies had a hand in starting.

Ironically, in spite of their miserable record, dictatorships, or perhaps a form of democratic totalitarianism, may be the wave of the future. One of the lessons taught to us on September 11 has yet to be fully understood. Due to the ever-increasing dispersal of scientific and engineering knowledge, individuals now for the first time in history can inflict tremendous physical damage on states and

societies. This new fact challenges the viability of states which purport to possess a monopoly on the use of force.

There appear to be two possible approaches to deal with this new reality. First, we could establish a totalitarian police state in which all human behavior is closely monitored at all times to ensure that no one abuses his technological powers. The problem with this approach is that the cure is worse than the disease. Presumably, most people would rather live in freedom for their entire lifetimes, even with the possibility of an occasional catastrophic terrorist attack, than spend their entire lives living in the novel *1984* or on the Gulag Archipelago. The other alternative is more constructive. It focuses not on preventing attacks already planned, but on creating societies which do not produce terrorists or engender terrorism in the first place. It is evident that only a radical transformation of human society's attitude toward the use of force can hope to achieve these goals. Terrorism is the melodramatic use of force to achieve political goals. Terrorism flourishes in an environment which features the widespread use of banal force to accomplish political goals and the widespread advocacy of the use of force to improve human life (the theorists of democratic pacifism are correct in this respect: regimes do impact social mores.) An inescapable aspect of such an environment is a large number of people who have been the victims of violent state action. The natural resentment this causes creates a ready army for terrorism.

The pursuit of peace requires that we renounce the use of aggressive political force to achieve our goals. This would limit the use of force to self-defense or perhaps the modest amount of force required to maintain a minimal state republic. More than this can no longer be justified or tolerated. More than this now threatens our civilization and our survival.

In the end, the question is not does democracy promote peace, but does the modern state with its democratic and dictatorial variants promote peace? That question has been answered.

V. CONCLUSION

There are numerous theoretical and empirical problems with the superficially appealing theory of democratic peace. Power kills and democratic states are quite powerful. The most powerful democratic states have been quite bellicose. Naturally, they have killed many, both internally and externally. Many of the pacific elements of democracies are in fact accidents: not essential elements of democracy but rather

hangovers from a more republican past. It is a mistake to focus on inter-democratic state violence when what really plagues the world is:

1. violence between democracies and non-democracies that democracies often provoke
2. violence within democratic states
3. the symbiotic relationships between dictatorships and democracies
4. the instability of democracy

Democracies are implicated in the three main threats to world peace today: terrorism, nuclear war and ethnic/religious conflict. Democratic pacifism fails to explain how we can achieve world peace and the theory itself continues to cause war! It is literally an intellectual dead end.

We have every right to be skeptical about the world's desire for peace. How does one reconcile this purportedly sincere and intense desire for peace with the utter lack of interest in defining the term? If you don't know where you are going, you are unlikely to get there save by accident. My suspicion is, even if the world pondered the question and was inexorably drawn to the common sense definition of peace proffered herein — the absence of violence or the palpable threat of violence against persons and their property — most people and most politicians and most intellectuals would recoil in horror at the prospect of such a world. It's not that these people don't like peace in general terms; it's just that there are many things they value more highly. Many of these things can only be achieved by the use of democratic violence or the palpable threat of democratic violence against persons and their property. That is why we live in such a violent world. We are lying in the bed we have made. Most people don't want peace, not really. If they did, it could be achieved without enormous difficulty since "There is no way to peace; peace is the way."

This paper was written in 2002, before the American/British democratic invasion of Iraq with its sequela of democratically-induced violence, terrorism and ethnic and religious conflict.