An Examination of the European Union’s Eastern Enlargement through the Democratic Peace Theory

ECSA-C 2008 Biennial Conference
September 2008

By Beatrice Marry
MA Candidate
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Email: beatrice.marry@mail.mcgill.ca
Introduction

“Recognition of the democratic-peace result is probably one of the most significant nontrivial products of the scientific study of world politics. It may also be the basis of far more important insights into the workings of the international political world in modern times (Maoz and Russett 1993: 624).”

Europe has been witness to a violent past; hence the question arises how “we can explain the comparatively peaceful state of Europe (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999)” that has existed since the end of World War Two and that has lasted for half a century. In order to examine this phenomenon, European developments, especially those that occurred since the end of the Cold War in 1989, are in need of examination. It is very likely that Europe’s post-Cold War political developments are closely tied to the rise and geographic expansion of the European Union, an entity that some have hailed as the quintessence of a new political era in the European context (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999). The European Union was initially founded in response to Europe’s war-torn past (specifically WW2). Nowadays it appears to have emerged as a new pacifying force for Europe, i.e. by attempting to incorporate and democratize the formerly communist Eastern European states. The recent European Union’s Eastern enlargement policy seems aimed at fostering a continuation of the European ‘long peace’ by democratizing the satellite states of the East.

This paper argues that the EU’s Eastern enlargement, by linking democratic regime type to increased peace propensity, is fuelled by the postulates of the Kantian democratic peace theorem. In addition, the “continued expansion of the international system and the spread of democracy within that system (Russett and Starr: 95)” warrant a reassessment of the democratic peace theorem that locates it “within a broader theoretical perspective, one that includes integration, community, legitimacy, and a special ‘liberal’ relationship between governments and societies (Russett and Starr 1993: 94).” Arguably, all of these elements can be found in the European Union and its Eastern enlargement project. The European Union’s attempts of democratizing Eastern Europe, if successful, may therefore have wider global implications by serving as an example in which a top down approach to democratization has worked and resulted in greater peace propensity.

While the democratic peace theorem has many proponents, it has been criticized for serving as an implicit policy prescription, repeatedly prompting key political decision-makers to refer to and apply its postulates. President Clinton, along with other U.S. officials is quoted to have said, “Democracies rarely wage war against each other (Oren in Chan 1997: 59)” and former German chancellor Helmut Kohl announced that European integration would be a matter of peace and war (Cederman 2001: 29). These comments are made at a time in history where democracies constitute “a majority of the states in the international system (Chan 1997: 59),” leading some to suggest that democratic norms are not only important in the context of domestic politics, but also likely to influence how world politics is conducted on a global scale (Chan 1997: 59). Even though the democratic peace theorem may have limited predictive powers, it is useful for understanding the “occurrence of momentous and fluid events like those now unfolding in Europe (Mearsheimer 1990: 9).”

The two central questions guiding this paper are as follows: First, did the democratic peace postulate motivate EU decision-makers to expand the EU to the East? Second, will peace indeed be more likely between Eastern and Central Europe as a result of
democratizing Eastern European States? It is hypothesized that the democratic peace postulate did motivate EU decision-makers, but that democratic regime type alone (without factors such as economic inter-dependence) is likely not sufficient for ensuring peace. This two-pronged hypothesis is in line with Kant’s basic postulate, which attributed peace to a combination of realist incentives, liberal norms and economic interests based on the idea of interdependency between democratic states (Doyle 1983: 351).

Admittedly, this paper is far too limited in scope to provide for an extensive account of empirical evidence. Rather, it attempts to connect some of the currently existing theoretical debates that surround the democratic peace theorem with those surrounding the EU’s Eastern enlargement policy in order to show how they overlap. The debates and issues raised in this context can only be illustrative and are inevitably speculative given that the European Union’s relative success or failure in terms of democratizing and integrating Eastern Europe can only be determined over time. Nonetheless, future academic analysis of the democratic peace theorem in the context of the European Union might not only help to account for its decision to enlarge to the East, but could in return also lead to important conclusions about the democratic peace theorem itself (Giddens 1998).

Kant’s Postulate and Eastern Enlargement

In formulating the ideas that came to be known as the democratic peace theorem, Kant attempted to merge political idealism with a pragmatic analysis of how peace among nations might be achieved via the means of democratic governance and mutual interdependence. The resulting theory is constituted by two basic hypotheses about the connection between democratic regime type and propensity for the peaceful interaction between states (Chan, 1997: 61). The democratic peace theorem contends that democratic states are less likely to go to war with other democratic states (dyadic hypothesis), even though they are just as likely to be involved in violent conflicts with non-democratic states (monadic hypothesis). Kant’s ideas about the ideal form of governance were revolutionary at the time and continue to ignite academic debates about the validity and applicability of the democratic peace theorem.

Kant "posited that a republican form of government, exemplifying the rule of law, provides a feasible basis for states to overcome structural anarchy and to secure peaceful relations among themselves (Chan 1997: 60).” Kant cautioned that ‘educational wars’ might be necessary for making leaders realize the value of achieving long-lasting peaceful societies - some academics agree with the contention that “behind any situation of stable peace one finds a history of war (Gleditsch 1995: 549).” In support of this idea, it could be argued that World War Two constituted an ‘educational war,’ ultimately leading to the creation of the European Union and the goal of stabilizing Europe; possibly this goal is being reenacted in the form of Eastern enlargement and democratic integration.

Europe as a continent has had a considerably violent past.¹ But since the end of the Second World War and during the Cold War period that followed there was a sharp

¹ Professor Gleditsch (Working Group Leader at the Centre for the Study of Civil war at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo and editor of the Journal of Peace Research http://www.prio.no ) contends that 25 out of the 75 interstate wars that occurred between 1815 and
reduction in the level of armed conflicts in Europe and an absence of war between the major European powers. This period is referred to as ‘the long peace’ (Gaddis in Gleditsch 1995: 540; Mearsheimer 1990:10). The continued long peace through much of Europe has so far contradicted more pessimistic accounts of realists, who predict increased instability as a result of the fundamental shifts in Europe’s power balance since the end of the Cold War (see Mearsheimer 1990).

Some have suggested that European enlargement “has now succeeded the single currency as the underlying project of European integration (Wallace 2000: 476).” Major transitions are thus occurring in the very fabric of the political and economic order of Europe, warranting an assessment of the Eastern enlargement through the democratic peace postulate. Kant predicted that a natural evolution in world politics and economics would ultimately result in “a widening of the pacific union of liberal republican states (Doyle 1983 part 2: 349).” Zones of peace would be established due to two inter-reliant paths – the transnational path would offer diplomatic incentives for peaceful cooperation (i.e. trade, cultural exchange), while the international path would operate “through the pressure of insecurity and of actual war (Doyle 1983: 351).” Kant’s postulate about zones of peace could help to account for the EU’s Eastern Enlargement.

Although some contend that Kant’s understanding of republics is bound to differ from a modern-day understanding of what entails a democratic state there is a general consensus that Kant’s democratic characterization of republics warrants calling them ‘liberal democracies’ in today’s terminology and that hence his concepts can be applied to modern liberal democratic states (Cederman 2001). Thus, the Kantian theory and its “assertion about the behaviour of pairs of states, or dyads (Russett and Starr 1993)” continues to be recognized as “one of the most significant nontrivial products of the scientific study of world politics. It may also be the basis of far more important insights into the workings of the international political world in modern times (Maoz and Russett 1993: 624).”

---

1993 “took place at least partly in Europe (Gleditsch 1995: 539)” and majority of the war casualties “in all interstate wars since 1815 (Gleditsch 1995: 5)” resulted from wars between European countries.

2 Even though there was initially a rise of smaller armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War, since 1993 “there has been a clear reduction (Gleditsch 1995: 555)” in the number of armed conflicts and the levels of violence in all of Europe dropped significantly (Gleditsch: 1995). The long peace therefore “contrasted sharply with European politics” as they had been conducted since the inception of the European state system and during the first 45 years of the 20th century (Mearsheimer 1990: 11).

3 Mearsheimer contends that the long peace in Europe cannot be explained with the democratic peace theorem – instead, he offers an alternative hypothesis by arguing that the long peace was a result of the military stability that existed during the Cold War period. In the author’s view, the changes since the end of the Cold War from a bipolar system to a multipolar system of European states increased rather than decreased the likelihood of dyadic conflict, because multiple alliances among the new powers likely result in greater political instability (Mearsheimer 1990).
The Limitations of Democratic Peace: Cultural and Realist Critiques

The debate about the democratic peace theorem is very diverse in the sense that it deals with multiple issues of contention. Some of these are related to logical discrepancies (Rosato 2003), the definitions of concepts and forms of empirical measurement (Gates et. al. 1996: 7), the wider implications of the theory itself (Layne 1994), the applicability of its dyadic hypothesis to the systemic level (Gleditsch and Hegre 1997) or to the overall importance allocated to regime type for increasing peace propensity (Farber and Gowa 1997).

Critics do not always start with the same assumptions or from the same ‘point of entry’ into the Kantian theorem. More specifically, the normative and institutional explanations of democratic peace effectively serve as two “competing explanations for why democracies do not fight one another (Russett, 1993; Hermann and Kegley 2001).” The normative approach suggests that democracies are founded on common democratic norms, which in effect govern their interactions with each other (Chan 1997; Doyle 1997). The institutional approach attributes the functioning of democratic systems and their higher peace propensity to factors such as institutional constraints and institutionalized democratic processes (Bueno De Mesquita 1993 and 1999). Even though the normative and institutional explanations attribute different relevance (and frequently a different order) to the functions that together create democratic states, both democratic norms and institutions are likely of equal importance for creating a stable democratic political system (Hayek 1960; Vile 1998). In addition, judging from Kant’s understanding of the two paths towards peace (transnational and international), the two approaches seem to complement rather than contradict each other.

There are numerous critiques of the democratic theorem that can broadly be divided into two major ‘camps’, being realist and cultural (Maoz 1997). Realist critiques are based on the contention that factors aside from regime structure or norms could be responsible for resulting in a greater likelihood for peace between democratic states (Gartze 2000). Peace could thus be a result of various other factors, such as “foreign hegemony, mutual deterrence, acquiescence to the status quo [or] shared values and positive interdependence (Chan 1997: 66).” Cultural critiques, on the other hand, “arise from a basic discomfort with the normative and prescriptive implications stemming from the democratic peace (Maoz 1997: 162)” (see Hermann and Kegley 2001). For instance, the democratic peace theorem has been much criticized due to empirical measurement issues, such as how to define war and peace (Owen 1994; Chan 1997).

For cultural critics, it remains debatable what constitutes European democratic values or democracy as such, which presents some difficulties for drawing definitive conclusions about the peace propensity between democracies and consequently also for accounting for the EU’s Eastern Enlargement process. Democracies themselves are often regarded as "a near-perfect sufficient condition for peace (Gleditsch 1995: 297)," which dismisses many

---

4 For example, authors Maoz and Russet believe that democracies tend to fight each other less due to both “political constraints and democratic norms (Maoz and Russet, pg. 636),” but according to their results democratic norms seem to have more of an impact than political constraints. They conclude that the normative model is more important for understanding why democracies do not fight each other than is the structural model.
instances of aggression committed by democracies. In addition, the already existing definitions of democracy are influenced by values that were never entirely objective, but that were likely to be “ethnocentric, inconsistent, incomplete and biased (Chan 1997: 65).”

Following cultural critiques, some scholars have suggested that Eastern Enlargement is subject to an EU-initiated soft-handed ideological conversion process based on “liberal membership norms (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 76).” There are some criteria that could be taken as providing proof for his contention; for instance in the accession guidelines commonly referred to as the ‘Copenhagen criteria’. Others contend that “there is only one distinguishable ideology left (Gleditsch 1995: 559)” in the European Union, making a conversion process redundant. These debates are indicative of an ongoing debate among democratic peace scholars about how to define and measure democracy and how to categorize and classify states as being democratic (Hayek 1960; Chan 1997; Vile 1998). The concept of the modern democratic state also continues to be redefined in various contexts all over the globe (Hermann and Kegley 2001: 239; Chan 1997).

These debates are important, because the ways in which one conceptualizes democracy has crucial and at times competing real life implications: While academics are debating about whether democracy is a dichotomous variable or if it should rather be measured on a continuum (Chan 1997: 70), the actual perceptions of political decision-makers are likely guided by a more dichotomized understanding of democratic systems (Russett and Starr 1993: 624). Questions surrounding the analytical study of democratic states are not only concerned with the best ways of achieving democratic systems, but also with the normative implications of democratic governance (Hayek 1960; Vile 1998). Definitions of what constitutes acts of war and what are ‘democratic interventions’ not only influence research findings and conclusions about the democratic peace theorem – they more importantly influence public perception and political decision-making. Perceptions related to the democratic peace theorem likely influence the greater peace propensity between democratic dyads, because wars by democracies against other democracies are more difficult to justify (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999).

5 The Copenhagen criteria were decided upon at the 1993 European Council in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen criteria specify that potential member countries must have achieved “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for an protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.” For more information see the following link http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accession_process/criteria/index_en.htm

6 For example, when discussing such subjects as welfare and healthcare reform, free elections, freedom of the press, personal liberty, political participation, gay marriage etc.

7 Authors Russett and Starr (1993) agree with the contention that while democracies are just as war prone as non-democracies, they have, over the last two centuries, rarely clashed with each other in violent ways and “have virtually never fought one another in a full scale international war (pg 624).” For this reason they believe that the empirical correlation between democracy and peace is not spurious or due to chance.
Did Democratic Peace motivate EU Eastern Enlargement?

All of us - the European Union, the applicant countries, and our neighbours in the wider Europe - must work together towards our common destiny: a wider European area offering peace, stability and prosperity to all: a "new European order". (Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Investiture speech to the European Parliament, 14 September 1999.)

The postulates of the democratic peace theorem that link democratic regime type to greater stability and peace propensity are directly reflected in the European Union's policies. First, an interest to foster democracy motivates the decision of enlarging the Union geographically towards the East, as is reflected in the Eastern accession criteria (see Gleditsch 1995: 561). Applicant countries have to comply with the European Union's basic values as expressed in the treaty on European Union. The treaty states, “the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, principles which are common to the member states (European Commission).” Second, the European Commission justifies the reasons for Eastern enlargement by tying it to the overall goal of sustaining peace in Europe, as the following statement exemplifies:

“Enlargement of the European Union is a historic opportunity to unite Europe peacefully after generations of division and conflict. Enlargement will extend the EU's stability and prosperity to a wider group of countries, consolidating the political and economic transition that has taken place in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989. By enhancing the stability and security of these countries, the EU as a whole can enjoy better chances for peace and prosperity. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, a strong and united Europe is more important than ever before to ensure peace, security and freedom [...] Enlargement is thus a continuation of the EU’s original purpose of healing Europe’s divisions and creating an ever-closer union of its peoples. By welcoming new members who respect our political criteria, the Union is re-stating the fundamental values that underpin it. (European Commission).”

Both EU accession criteria and accompanying EU rhetoric therefore support the contention that Eastern Enlargement is motivated by beliefs tied to the democratic peace theorem (Hypothesis 1). The following section will explore the importance of factors other than regime type for explaining the motivations behind the EU's Eastern enlargement process.

Did Democratic Peace alone motivate Decision-Makers?
The Role of Rational Choice and Vested Interest

The rational-choice theorem could partly account for the motives behind the European Union's Eastern Enlargement process. John Mearsheimer contends that the decisions of policy-makers are not rational, but rather “shaped by their implicit preference for one theory of international relations over another (Mearsheimer 1990: 9).” Yet, although it is questionable if the choices made by decision-makers can ever be purely rational or objective, it is likely that similarities in the vested interests of both the European Union and Eastern countries increased the levels of consent for Eastern enlargement (Gleditsch 1995: 561). Others concur that enlargement presents a normative outcome based on purely rational interests of the parties involved (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 48). Following this rationale, democracy building is the outcome of rational considerations expressed in the guise of
liberal norms. Thus, the Eastern expansion process was a result of the self-interest of all involved parties: while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were inclined to make democratic concessions in return for economic advantages, the European Union wanted to avoid new zones of conflict at its edges (Schimmelpfennig 2003).

In this context, factors, such as peer pressure are likely also of relevance: even though some of the established European Union member countries were against expansion to the East, this collective action problem was overcome by “shaming the brakemen into acquiescing (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 77).” Democratic concepts, norms and values, together with the sense of European identity that the European Union hoped to create and portray collectively all came together to “justify and advance (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 77)” the collective interest of the international European community.

International non-state actors, such as the Council of Europe and the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), were additional driving forces behind the Eastern expansion process because they were united in the goal of expanding the “Western international community to the East (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 76).” There is some rhetorical evidence for that assertion, as the following quote from the New Transatlantic Agenda exemplifies:

“We, the United States of America and the European Union, affirm our conviction [in] the ties which bind our people […]. Together, we helped transform adversaries into allies and dictatorships into democracies […] we built institutions and patterns of cooperation that ensured our security and economic strength. […] Today we face new challenges at home and abroad. To meet them, we must further strengthen and adapt the partnership that has served us so well. […]. We must first of all seize the opportunity presented by Europe’s historic transformation to consolidate democracy and free-market economies throughout the continent. (European Union-United States New Transatlantic Agenda)”

From this cost-benefits perspective, Eastern enlargement is beneficial for both Western and Eastern Europe as it is likely to reduce the potential for conflict in the East.

Author Richard Baldwin agrees that Eastern enlargement is not only of long-term economic benefit for the EU, but also needs to be understood as “an essential pillar in Europe’s post-Cold War architecture (Baldwin et. al 1997: 168).” According to Baldwin, the economic integration that goes along with Eastern expansion is the best means for ensuring “peace and stability in Europe (Baldwin et. al 1997: 168).” The European Union realized the need of opening itself towards the East due to its own previously inclusive rhetoric and so as not to alienate the Eastern European countries, which could have created a new division between Western and Eastern Europe (Schimmelpfennig 2003: 74). These additional motivations do not necessarily weaken the democratic peace postulate, because in Kant’s original paths towards peace, state motivations were equally guided by vested rational interests and not only based on purely normative considerations.

Does Democracy cause greater Peace Propensity?
The Role of Economic Interdependence and Geographic Factors

Some critics have examined if economic interdependence could account for peaceful interaction more so than does democratic regime type; however findings are mixed and there
is no clear academic consensus. Interdependence as the “functional theory of peace” is embedded in the belief that regional cooperation fosters peace (Gleditsch 1995: 546; Wagner 2003). Some link the long peace in Europe to functional interdependence theory. Gleditsch contends that a functional theory of peace lead to the initial formation of the European Union in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community, because the Community attempted to control the two essential commodities needed to engage in armed conflict (Gleditsch 1995: 547). Especially in liberal circles the contention is while interdependence does not eradicate conflicts, it increases the likelihood for those conflicts to be resolved peacefully (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999). Following this line of thought, the more economically interdependent the European Union will become, the greater the chances for a peaceful Europe.

Gleditsch argues against this postulate by contending that both World Wars were conducted between highly interdependent countries and that this fact weakens the interdependency postulate (Gleditsch 1995: 547). Barbieri’s results support Gleditsch’s claim and also contradict the interdependency theorem: her results show that the likelihood for conflict propensity varies according to the degree of economic interdependence; she finds that in cases of high economic interdependence the likelihood for the occurrence of conflict is even greater than in cases of low economic interdependence. If true, this could have troublesome implications for the European Union’s approach to stabilizing Europe; however other mitigating factors are likely to influence Barbieri’s basic contention.

Others attribute the EU’s decision to enlarge to the relative geographic location of its member countries. For example, Schimmelpfennig found that the more remotely located countries were more likely to be against Eastern expansion, while the countries that neighbored on to Eastern Europe were more likely to support the EU’s expansion due to greater concerns over issues of border security (Schimmelpfennig 2003). He postulates that international interdependence would likely increase with geographic proximity, as EU member countries bordering on to Eastern European countries would be more affected by violence in the East than those countries that were further away. Again, there is contradicting empirical evidence by O’Neal and Lee Ray showing that economic interdependence had no effect on the occurrence of wars, while regime type turned out to be significant (O’Neal and Lee Ray 1997). Furthermore the authors found that “a high level of democracy in one state cannot compensate for less democracy in a strategic partner (O’Neal and Lee Ray 1997).” Consequently, “the political distance separating states is an important indicator of the likelihood of dyadic conflict (O’Neal and Lee Ray1997).”

In sum, international relations scholars have yet to reach a consensus about whether or not economic interdependence fosters or undermines the peaceful interaction between dyads (Barbieri 1996; Gartzé 2001). It would be of great importance for the European case to know whether conflicts that do arise are more likely to be resolved peacefully between democratic dyads that are highly economically interdependent. If this would be the case, attempts of strengthening economic ties between the European Union and Eastern Europe should increase the likelihood for peaceful interaction. It would also need to be examined under which conditions trade can serve as a deterrent for violent conflict (Gowa 1995). It is likely that greater peace propensity is not only the result of democratic regime type alone (Hypothesis 2). However, given the contradictory contentions above, additional factors increasing peace propensity between states (aside from economic interdependence) should
be more closely examined in the Eastern European case.

**The EU: A ‘Zone of Peace’ as a Result of Democratizing the East?**

The Kantian zone of peace can be defined as “a discrete geographic region of the world in which a group of states have maintained peaceful relations among themselves for a period of at least thirty years (Kacowicz 1995: 265).” The hope that Europe as a region will increasingly be “primed for peace (van Evera in Gleditsch 1995: 555)” thereby eradicating the “zones of turmoil at its fringes (Gleditsch 1995: 563)” is likely reflected in the EU’s ongoing Eastern expansion process. By accepting applicant countries into the European fold, the European Union acknowledges their democratic nature (Gleditsch 1995: 559).”

Gleditsch is optimistic about the potential for integrating the East; according to him current debates between the EU and the recently added Eastern countries are largely about technicalities (such as the allocation of funds) rather than fundamental differences that could lead to future violent conflicts. According to De Beus the only real danger to successful European integration and democratic enlargement lies in politicizing the ‘cultural approach’ (based on cultural values), so as to avoid a nationalist backlash in the member countries (De Beus 2001: 309).

There remain to be many proponents of the democratic peace theory in scholarly circles (Levy 1989; Russett 1990; Zeev and Maos 1992; Benoit 1996; Mousseau and Shi 1999). Levy says that the democratic peace theorem is "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations (Levy 1989:270)." Russett agrees that the theory constitutes "one of the strongest nontrivial or non-tautological generalizations that can be made about international relations (Russett 1990: 123)." Even some of its critics are ultimately proponents of the Kantian peace postulate. For example, Chan states “the democratic peace proposition is arguably one of the most robust generalizations that has been produced to date by this research tradition (Chan, 1997: 60).” According to Benoit the democratic peace theorem withstands empirical scrutiny even when using different indicators of war and democracy and adding different control variables, leading him to conclude that “regime type does indeed explain variation in international conflict (Benoit 1996: 654).” Maoz also states that “the notion that democracies do not fight each other is backed by overwhelming evidence (Maoz 1997: 192)” and that critics cannot take away from the importance of “the most replicated research program in the modern study of international politics (Maoz 1997: 162).”

Yet even if the democratic postulate holds true, it is difficult to determine how Eastern European states could ‘democratize’ effectively given that the components of democratic systems (values/institutions) need time to evolve and are inherently fluid (see also Gleditsch 1995). What makes conflict with the Eastern states more likely is the contention that new or still developing democracies are inherently less stable and thus more likely to be involved in conflicts (Maoz and Russett) – if correct, Eastern Europe would be more likely to be involved in a series of conflicts before long lasting peaceful relations with the rest of the EU

---

8 According to Gleditsch’s empirical calculations, only five of the forty-three countries in Europe were non-democratic at the end of 1993 (Belarus, Croatia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia) and Bosnia was listed as being in transition (Gleditsch 1995).
There are many additional factors that could give rise to future conflicts, such as those surrounding the EU’s border security. Although the EU’s enlargement policy may eventually increase the likelihood for peaceful cooperation between member countries, it could become a point of contention for applicant countries that are denied access and hence could create conflict zones at the European Union’s new borders (Wallace 2000: 490; Grabbe 2001). In such a scenario, new lines of allegiance could develop prompting non-democratic countries outside of the European Union to feel more threatened and hence be more inclined to engage in conflict (Wallace 2000; Mearsheimer 1990). Even though authors like Jervis (2002) may be correct in suggesting that state actors, such as Russia, can only create regional tensions, it could get complicated if those tensions were addressed by the European Union in a confrontational way (Mearsheimer 1990).

The question of where the outside boundaries of the EU are located (both to the East and the South) will therefore inevitably need to be answered (Wallace 2000: 476). Yet even if the EU decided to eventually accept every applicant country, its stability could still be tested by economically weak countries and by those countries failing to comply with democratic and other norms imposed upon them. Enlargement itself is therefore not a default guarantee for greater peace in Europe and especially in a post-9/11 world security concerns are likely to overlap with the European Union’s attempts of fostering greater democratization (Grabbe 2001; Wallace 2000: 493). According to author Heather Grabbe, “the opening of east-west borders has coincided with a burgeoning internal security agenda within the EU. A policy area that could be called ‘micro-security’ is growing fast as policy-makers respond to myriad threats to the security of their citizens by developing new instruments at both national and EU levels (Grabbe 2001: 520).” Any European Union border policies may have “major security implications for Eastern Europe (Grabbe 2001: 527),” even if only in regard to limiting the flow of migrants from the East or from third countries attempting to access the European Union via it’s ‘satellite states’. Border agreements could also potentially become a point of contention with Eastern European countries (Grabbe 2001). At the same time, however, the EU needs to avoid the creation of “a new iron curtain (Grabbe 2001: 528).”

Some believe that as a result of border issues and security concerns that go along with expanding the EU’s zone of peace, countries outside of the European Union’s fold may eventually be ‘democratized’ by force (Gleditsch 1995) - this could be considered a contradiction in terms and could ironically destabilize the EU rather than making it more peaceful (at least in the short term). But there have already been cases in which outside intervention was used to enforce regime changes and there may be more such cases in the future (Gleditsch 1995: 563). The establishment of new secure borders along the European Union’s new boundaries (i.e. towards Russia) already promises to be a mammoth task just in regard to border policing alone (Grabbe 2001; DeWitte 2002).

The new drawing of the European Union’s borders could also make it difficult for the countries on the edges of the new United Europe to remain neutral (Jervis 2002). Already, Poland attempts to mediate between the European Union and Ukraine by advocating the extension of political links and although the Ukraine wants to join the European fold, it is still far from being democratic. The extent to which the European Union can facilitate cross-border dialogue is therefore likely to be of crucial importance in terms of avoiding more
pessimistic scenarios. De Beus contends that the strategies of European democratization will only be able to thrive in a quasi-national conception and that it may be “impossible to attain strong European democracy without a certain mood of offensiveness (De Beus 2001:309),” i.e. in the form of European trade blocs, commitments to humanitarian intervention and border security. Under these aspects the ‘democratizing’ efforts of the European Union that go along with its most recent expansion towards the East may indeed come to be vital guarantors of European peace.

**Conclusion**

This paper attempted to provide an illustrative account of some of the ongoing theoretical debates surrounding the democratic peace theorem and the EU’s Eastern enlargement policy. The rhetoric of the EU’s decision-makers and its accession criteria provide some merit to the contention that the EU chose to incorporate and democratize Eastern European states so as to perpetuate Europe’s long peace. It therefore seems likely that the EU’s motives for enlarging to the East are closely tied to the democratic peace theorem, strengthening this paper’s first hypothesis. Some might say that this result also confirms critiques that the democratic peace theorem serves as an implicit policy prescription. However, to confirm such a claim, additional empirical research would be needed so as to ascertain if the EU’s rhetoric is enforced in the form of de facto policy prescriptions or if its democratic criteria largely exist on paper.

One cannot be certain if Eastern expansion is the result of traditional cost-benefit analyses and security concerns or rather results from an altruistic desire to foster the creation of democratic norms and institutions in the context of Eastern Europe. Most likely all of these factors are relevant to some degree. It may ultimately be impossible to determine with absolute certainty the extent to which the European Union is responsible for ensuring peace in Europe (Gleditsch 1995: 561). This limitation is partly due to the fact that the alternative reality (non-existence of the European Union) cannot actually be tested for, making it difficult to measure the EU’s overall democratizing or peace-inducing effect in a strictly empirical fashion as one may measure other political phenomena (i.e. voting processes; see Vile 1998). The predictive power of the democratic peace theorem remains limited, because the definition of democracy and peace remain contentious. However, given the continued long peace and virtual absence of large-scale conflicts in Europe, this empirical difficulty neither discounts the value of the democratic peace theorem nor the influence that the EU is likely to have on democratization processes in the East.

It remains to be seen to what extent the EU’s Eastern European enlargement policy will be successful in integrating Eastern Europe into the existing fold of United European states. Success may depend on how Eastern European countries can be (and are willing to be) democratized and on the implications that such developments will have for ensuring peace and stability in the European Union. Consequently, the second question and hypothesis cannot be confirmed with certainty at this point in time. Eastern Europe shares a communist past, but the financial incentives for joining the European Union and for democratic integration should not to be too easily dismissed by critics of the European project. Eastern Europe may ‘democratize’ successfully as a result of such factors as vested self-interest (i.e. given the economic and security incentives) and due to wanting to belong to the European
old of democratic nations (De Beus 2001).

For the latter to occur, the associated benefits and democratic values will eventually need to trickle down to the wider population of Eastern European countries so as to create “a fully fledged democratic culture (Geeraerts and Stouthuyisen 1999).” In order for this to happen, functioning market economies need to be established in the formerly communist Eastern states of Europe; a process which involves increasing the capital inflows into those countries in the form of public and private sector investments (Geeraerts and Stouthuyisen 1999). Granted, encouraging such investments will not be an easy task given the continued widespread corruption in many of those countries (Giddens 1998; Geeraerts and Stouthuyisen 1999). Nonetheless, the Marshal Plan has shown that such an approach worked for stabilizing Germany and Europe as a whole; consequently the difficulties should not prevent the EU from following this strategy and applying it to Eastern Europe (Geeraerts and Stouthuyisen 1999).

Given the European Union’s continued commitment to its enlargement policy, the chance for democratizing Eastern Europe, albeit challenging, has become a real possibility. There are also promising signs on the horizon in the sense that political leaders in the European Union and in Europe’s national governments are likely more aware of the risks that necessitate investing in the peaceful co-existence among European states. In order to achieve greater stability and peace, European institutions need to ensure that a value-based democratic European society does not create a ‘two tiered’ systemic hierarchy between the EU’s member states (i.e. in the form of work and migration restrictions for citizens of Eastern countries). The propensity for avoiding violence in the European context may not only depend on integrating and democratizing Eastern Europe, but also on providing equal opportunities for the EU’s latest group of citizens from the East. Even though “the greatest challenge to a democratic peace in Europe” may be a “backlash of democracy (Gleditsch 1995: 560)” in the form of failure of democratic institutions, such a scenario may be prevented by both effective democratic institutions and by fostering the development of Europe’s civil society.

The scholarly debate in regard to what accounts for the greater occurrence of peace between democratic dyads continues. There may be an inherent limit to the democratic peace theorem due to the problems related to measuring democracy, such as that of determining the precise point at which democratic states become more peace prone. Although it is certainly tempting to attribute the propensity towards peace to democratic regime type alone, the processes that induce decision makers to refrain from violence are likely going to be more complex to be explained by a single theory. The democratic peace theorem thus has its limits in terms of being able to account for or predict the continuation of the long peace in Europe. Alternative theoretical hypotheses raise implications that may not necessarily contradict the democratic peace explanation, but rather enrich it by contributing to its explanatory power (see Gleditsch).

Due to the fact that de facto reality and theoretical conceptualization do not always overlap, it is difficult to draw on the democratic theorem as a predictive measure for determining peace between democratic dyads in the context of Europe and elsewhere. Yet even though it might not be able to be the sole guarantee for a more stable and peaceful European Union, democracy is likely going to establish some of the conditions under which
peace can be maintained and fostered (Hayek 1960: 161). It is in this sense that the
democratic peace theorem is valuable for explaining Eastern enlargement and it is the reason
why the theorem should be more closely examined in the European context.

Considering Europe’s violent past and its catastrophic flirtation with extremism and
National Socialism (leading to World War Two) it may be a hindrance to discuss the issues
of democracy and peace propensity by thinking of European democracy in absolute terms.
Due to the democratic peace theorem, democracy has turned into “the standard against
which we judge other political regimes (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999),” but democracy
still needs to be regarded as a means to an end (i.e. peace) rather than as an end in itself.
Ideological approaches to democratic governance and democratization are a hindrance in
terms of assessing the true value of democracy and determining the means by which it can
be established in different national contexts (Geeraerts and Stouthuysen 1999).

In conclusion, the question that may be useful to ask when democratizing Eastern Europe
is not simply ‘democracy – yes or no?, but rather ‘What kind of democracy?’ (Berman 2006;
Hayek 1960). Democracy ultimately does not exist as an abstract in the form of
institutions and governments, although it is likely to exist there first. Rather, democracy is as
much about the “process of forming opinion (Hayek 1960: 108)” as it is about establishing
stable institutions and it may be this aspect that the European Union should not forget to
consider. Following this approach, “the incorporation of the societies of Central and Eastern
Europe” could in return provide for a “stimulus to democratize and reshape EU institutions
(Giddens 1998: 144).” Finally, “the question of war or peace in Europe is not just a
European problem, but one of global dimensions (Gleditsch 1995: 540)” and it will need to
be addressed accordingly.
Bibliography:


http://www.eurunion.org/partner/agenda.htm#1


