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***The Democratic-Peace Thesis  
in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:  
Uses and Abuses***

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# Table of Contents

|                                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction                                                                           | 5  |
| Theoretical Overview and Framework                                                     | 8  |
| Democratic-Peace Theories Revisited                                                    | 18 |
| The Political Uses and Abuses of Democratic Peace: The<br>Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | 29 |
| Conclusion                                                                             | 54 |
| Bibliography                                                                           | 59 |



## INTRODUCTION

In his seminal book *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1996),<sup>1</sup> Freedon offers insights into the world of ideology. He suggests that what differentiates ideology from other sorts of political thought is its mode of persuasion and its method of functioning in the political world. Although any sort of political thought is a configuration of political concepts, the way in which ideologies configure the concepts and their meanings, and convey them, involves extrarational resources. These may include emotional means and political manipulations.

Insightful though the book is, it deals offhandedly with the question of social science theories. In a footnote, Freedon asserts that the boundary problem between ideology and science has lost its significance<sup>2</sup> because the distinction between the two has an epistemological base, and Freedon assumes that science, in contrast to ideology, uses rational means only. In this study, I will endorse Freedon's conceptualization of theory as political thought, but will reject his unsatisfactory treatment of the rich world of social science theories. It will be shown here that it is not easy—indeed, impossible—neatly to distinguish theory and ideology. This will be demonstrated by focusing on the use of the democratic-peace thesis by Israeli politicians in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study will analyze the uses and abuses of this thesis by the Israeli politicians Benjamin Netanyahu and Natan Sharansky, each of whom has subordinated the thesis to his own ideological purposes. Whereas Netanyahu uses the thesis in what might be termed a “politics of postponement,” Sharansky

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1 Michael Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

2 *Ibid.*, p. 27, n. 37.

uses it as a “politics of avoidance.” The former politician wishes to delay resuming negotiations with the Palestinians, the latter wishes to utterly avoid it. Their use and abuse of the democratic-peace thesis helped lay the groundwork for President Bush’s road map of June 24, 2002. The third part of this study will deal with the two Israeli leaders’ respective modes of politics.<sup>3</sup>

To problematize Freedman’s offhand remark, I will employ two distinct though related strategies. The first will be to show the many possibilities of constructing the concepts that constitute the democratic-peace thesis. The existence of these multiple options creates a potential for political manipulation. In other words, the democratic-peace thesis is easily exploited as a source of extrarational means of persuasion. Its argumentation stems not just from logic but from emotional attractiveness as well. Although this in itself does not obviate the possibility that theoreticians could have purely academic intentions, it contradicts the alleged dichotomy between theory and ideology. Theory, like ideology, is prone to emotional argumentation. My second strategy will be to show that different theories that seek to explain the democratic-peace thesis are based on different ideologies. The combination of the two strategies reveals that Freedman’s distinction is invalid.

The consequences of refuting Freedman’s distinction are quite far-reaching in regard to the metatheoretical understanding of the essence of theory. I suggest viewing theories as closely related to ideologies, as constructed by normative and ideological inclinations of the theoreticians.

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3 For a different study dealing with the interactions between the democratic-peace thesis and the world of politics, see Mark Schafer and Stephen G. Walker, “Political Leadership and the Democratic Peace: The Operational Code of Prime Minister Tony Blair,” in Ofer Feldman and Linda O. Valenty, eds., *Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-Cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2001), pp. 21–35. The article analyzes the internalization of the democratic-peace thesis within Tony Blair’s operational code.

Theories are a variant of political thought, and have political capital that is subject to being used and abused by politicians. This political capital endows theoreticians with a certain moral responsibility, since their creations (i.e., theories) have consequences in the real world of politics. Theoreticians must strive ever harder to refine their theories, to understand their normative and ideological foundations, and to recognize their far-reaching political consequences. When theoreticians do identify political abuses of theories, they should act as whistleblowers and publicly expose the abuses.

My analysis will follow a Gramscian framework, though without the materialist inclinations. Gramsci, in my view, offered an ingenious framework for analyzing political and social dynamics. In keeping with his mode of analysis, I employ a three-dimensional scheme. The first dimension is that of ideas, namely, the characteristics of theories that make them so attractive in the world of politics. The second is the material, objective context in which the theories are constructed and propagated, which might also contribute to these theories' attractiveness. The third dimension is the human aspect, that is, the agents or political entrepreneurs who translate theories into a lever for political change.

These three dimensions will help us understand, first, some of the political dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and second, what exactly theory is, and what are our moral, social, and political responsibilities as theoreticians.

Structurally speaking, this study will move from the abstract to the concrete, and back to the abstract. The first section will deal with the essence of theory, and will offer a theoretical framework combining Freedman's views, Gramsci's theory, and the theoretical writings on political entrepreneurs. The second section will demonstrate the first section's conclusions by exploring the democratic-peace thesis, including its attributes and the different theories seeking to explain it. The third section will analyze concrete politics, and specifically the activities of Israeli politicians, primarily Netanyahu and Sharansky, as political entrepreneurs

using the democratic-peace thesis to further political aims. The fourth section will present a discussion of this complex interplay, pointing to the moral, social, and political responsibilities of theoreticians.

## **THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK**

This section will explore three theoretical approaches and construct from them a single, coherent theoretical framework. The first approach is Freedden's view of ideology and its translation into social science theories. The second is Gramsci's theory of hegemony and politics. The third approach is the theoretical treatment of the concept of political entrepreneurship.

### *Theory as political thought*

Freedden defines ideology as "configurations of *decontested* meanings of political concepts, when such meanings are ascribed by methods at least partly foreign to those employed in currently predominant approaches of scientists, philosophers, linguists, or political theorists."<sup>4</sup> This definition is the culmination of Freedden's discussion of the essence of ideology. For Freedden, ideology is one form of political thought, and political thoughts are the assembling together of political concepts. Political concepts are the basic building blocks of every mode of political thought, such as political philosophy, political theory, and ideology.<sup>5</sup>

The core of Freedden's analysis is functionality: what the political thought's function is, and how it performs it.<sup>6</sup> The implication is that

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4 Freedden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 76.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6 Freedden himself distinguishes among genetic, functional, and semantic analysis, claiming that his analysis is semantic. Freedden defines genetic analysis as dealing with: "how did a particular set of political views come about?" *ibid.*, p. 3. He characterizes functional analysis as questioning "what is the purpose, or role (if unintended), of a



the function of any political thought is to persuade people and motivate them to political action, by providing meaning to political concepts. Political concepts are by their very nature contested; they impart manifold flexibility of meanings, which need to undergo a process of interpretation.<sup>7</sup> For example, freedom can be conceived as freedom from compulsion, or, alternatively, as freedom to aspire, act, and achieve. Likewise, equality can mean, for example, equality of outcomes or of opportunities, political equalities or economic equalities. Each of these meanings provides a different menu of political praxis. Hence, persuading people to accept one meaning rather than another leads them into one political practice rather than another. For example, if by equality we mean an economic egalitarianism based on equal results, we will strive politically for a somewhat socialist organization of society. Conversely, if by equality we mean political equality that ensures equal opportunity, we will strive for a somewhat liberal organization of the state.

As Freedon points out, however, there is yet another important issue to understand: no single political concept has a viable meaning in itself. It

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particular set of political views?" *ibid.*, p. 3. And semantic analysis asks "what are the implications and the insights of a particular set of political views, in terms of the conceptual connections it forms?" *ibid.*, p. 3. But this declaration applies to his analysis in his book of the various *particular* ideologies, as can also be inferred from the above-quoted definitions. On that level Freedon is correct, and he deals with the semantic meanings of the various particular ideologies including liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, etc. But on a deeper level, in his theoretical discussion, Freedon is guided by his analysis of ideologies as configurations aiming to decontest political concepts. This is a functional definition of ideology. Moreover, according to Freedon, people act according to the understanding they gain from ideologies. If this is the case, then ideologies are not only semantic configurations but also configurations oriented toward political praxis, i.e., ideologies are action-oriented—*ibid.*, pp. 3, 77. In other words, ideologies have functions, and the definition of the political phenomenon known as ideology, or the more general political phenomenon known as political thought, is a functional definition.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

gains meaning, viability, and political significance only in the context of a whole configuration of political concepts.<sup>8</sup> That is precisely what political thoughts offer us: a configuration of political concepts that are being arranged together, each of them conferring meaning on the others and being lent meaning by them. Thus, political thoughts such as ideologies, political philosophy, and social science theories present us with meaningful political concepts, their function being to motivate us to political action.

According to Freeden, what differentiates ideology from other kinds of political thought is its reliance on extrarational techniques such as emotional appeal, political rhetoric, and group loyalty.<sup>9</sup> Following and transcending Freeden, I suggest understanding theories in a much more holistic sense than usual. First, theories as political thoughts offer much more than mere explanations: they offer comprehensive readings of the phenomena under investigation, an entire worldview of political phenomena. Second, theories function in the world of politics. In sum, theories share with ideologies a common role: they decontest political concepts and drive people to political action.

I turn now to differentiating ideology from theory and further refuting Freeden's claim. He deals with the issue of social science theories very superficially, neglecting some potential problems regarding the ability to differentiate theories from ideologies. Only in a footnote does Freeden address the issue of scientific theory as a mode of political thought, and claims that the issue of demarcating theories from ideologies has lost its significance.<sup>10</sup> In his view, theory lies in the realm of rationality and logic.

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8 Ibid., pp. 2, 75–91.

9 Ibid., pp. 27–33.

10 “In the not-too-distant past, it seemed equally important to determine the boundaries between ideology and science. If, however, the nature of the ideological enterprise is shown to have strong non-scientific components or, alternatively, the very divide between science, philosophy, and ideology may be queried in epistemological terms... then the boundary question loses in significance” (ibid., p. 27, n. 37).

There is no room to question the rationality of theories, nor their use of logic as the exclusive tool of persuasion. This is a defect of Freedon's otherwise brilliant book. Scientific theory is a configuration meant to decontest concepts. Two related essentials, however, make it hard to dichotomously demarcate theories from ideologies. First, theories are based to a large extent on ideology; they are constituted on ideological inclinations of theoreticians. Second, theories are prone to be utilized in persuasion as extrarational techniques. Theories and theoreticians try to use rational means, but too often fall prey to ideologues who exploit theories for their political aims, using these theories as extrarational means. In other words, theories are often used as tools in the battleground over commonsensical thinking about the world, or, in yet in another terminology, as weapons in the battle over hegemony. This observation leads us to the theoretical approach of Gramsci.

### *Theory as Gramscian hegemony*

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was one of the leading Marxist thinkers in the interwar years. I will describe the main features of his thought, focusing on what is important for the purposes of this study: to construct a nonideological, non-Marxist, and nonmaterialist Gramscian framework for understanding political dynamics.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Many of Gramsci's writings have been translated into English. See, e.g., Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1992); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. 1, ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg, trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari (New York: Columbia UP, 1992). For secondary material, see Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976); John M.

Gramsci argues that *commonsense* is the feature shared by all human beings as such. It is the every-person faculty of thinking about their surroundings. Having commonsense enables any human being to calculate his/her actions in the world, be it the natural world, the social world, or the political or economic world. According to Gramsci, having commonsense makes us all philosophers, thinking creatures. Commonsense is not, however, critical and reflective thought about our surroundings and ourselves. In other words, while calculating our actions in this world, it is far from certain that we know what the real world is, and what our real needs and interests are. It might be the case that we are captives of thought structures constructed by other people. As a Marxist, Gramsci claimed that those structures were created so as to serve an economic class, the capitalist bourgeoisie. But there are non-Marxist and nonmaterialist thought structures that might captivate commonsense, such as national sentiment or patriarchal society.

These captivating thought structures are what Gramsci termed *hegemony*, and they operate in the realm of civic society. This was one of Gramsci's major deviations from the orthodox Marxism of his time. Orthodox Marxism offered a deterministic and somewhat vulgar interpretation of Marx, stressing the materialistic aspects of his thought and highlighting the brutal mechanisms by which capitalism protects its financial interests. This orthodox Marxism claimed that the capitalist bourgeoisie use the political society—the state's institutions—and its monopoly of using force to forcefully subdue the proletariat and safeguard their own sectarian interests. Gramsci took a different course, stressing the

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Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1967); Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (London: Merlin Press, 1977); Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Thomas Nemeth, *Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

less material aspects of Marxism. At the center of political and social inquiry, he placed what might today be termed “soft power.” While not ignoring the use of force in society, Gramsci claimed that the key to protecting the capitalist economy and bourgeois society from collapse is to be found elsewhere, in the domain of the civil society, not the political society. In other words, it is not brute force that maintains the social order but sophisticated control over the proletariat’s thinking, by using the uncritical commonsense with which the proletarians think about their world. The social institutions of the civil society, such as the schools, churches, cultural establishments, and other modes of socialization, easily construct the proletariat’s uncritical and unreflective thought. In this process commonsense is manipulated into accepting the social order as given, as a natural law, and as safeguarding the interests of all. This mechanism is called hegemony, that is, soft power over the common people’s way of thinking, and consequently their mode of behavior; it “stupidifies” them into a horde that does not question the capitalist economy and bourgeois order. This is the perfect mechanism by which social stability is almost effortlessly maintained.

Yet, one can also think of hegemony as not evolving out of manipulation or serving particularistic interests. Hegemony can also be viewed as a mechanism by which ideal factors frame the commonsense of the average individual, thus driving him/her into political action. Hence, ideology might serve as a hegemonic framing of commonsense, but that is also the case for social science theories. Here the agenda of the theoreticians need not be a hidden political one of advancing certain sectarian interests, but could well involve a sincere attempt at finding some universal truth in the service of humanity as a whole. Nevertheless, the result might still be hegemony: the framing of the commonsense of the average individual by ideal factors such as theories. This is the case, I suggest, with the democratic-peace thesis.

According to Gramsci, the material aspects do not operate independently of the ideal ones. Both of them constitute together a historical block.

One cannot isolate the material from the ideal, nor vice versa. Understanding how the current order succeeds in hegemonizing itself into a stable order, as reflected in commonsense, requires analyzing how the material and the ideal aspects constitute together a historical block. Thus, to understand what enables a theory to become hegemonic, we need to analyze both its internal features (ideal aspects) and its social and political context (material aspects), both of which contribute to its attractiveness.

A final relevant Gramscian concept is the *organic intellectual*. The organic intellectual transcends the average individual by his/her faculty of critical and reflective thought, with which he/she can escape the captivating effects of the existing hegemony and develop autonomous thought about the surroundings. This capacity is what makes him/her so hazardous to the capitalist economy and the bourgeois order. Some organic intellectuals serve the existing social order by further strengthening the current hegemony, but others oppose it. The organic intellectual is the lever by which the existing hegemony can be shattered, together with the entire current social order. He/she can penetrate with his/her critical thought the weaknesses of the existing social structure, and is able to locate the cracks in the hegemony. Thus, he/she can succeed in forming a counterhegemony of the proletariat, leading to the collapse of the hegemony and the founding of a new social order, a socialist one.

What is most attractive in this notion of the organic intellectual is the concept of human agency, his ability to bring about change in the political and social order. The historical block of material and ideal aspects is worthless unless human beings can understand it and deploy it. Gramscian Marxism is humanistic; it concentrates on people's ability to ameliorate their surroundings.

Yet, with all its advantages, the notion of the organic intellectual has some theoretical drawbacks. First, it is still too collectively oriented. Gramsci's conceptualization makes class an integral aspect of the intellectual; that is the meaning of "organic," namely, belonging to a class. The single individual, even if a critical intellectual, is powerless without

collective action. Second, the notion reveals a certain degree of dogmatism in Gramsci's thinking. The idea of the organic "intellectual" is embedded in Gramsci's optimistic expectation for a better world. But it seems too much of a *deus ex machina*, an undertheorized heroic figure who springs out of nowhere to mobilize the proletariat out of their subservience into the class war. It is a too-undertheorized concept, which bears traces of wishful thinking. Third, the concept "organic" lost much of its legitimacy after the brutal ideologies of fascism and Nazism stressed the concept of organic society. Thus, the organic intellectual is no longer considered humanistic as Gramsci and his contemporaries meant.

Given these drawbacks, it is worth seeking a theoretical substitute. We can find one in the contemporary theoretical literature on political entrepreneurship.

### *Political entrepreneurship and theory*

In developing the concept of political entrepreneurship, I will make use of Steiner's excellent theorizing.<sup>12</sup> Although Steiner himself mainly addresses the issue of collective entrepreneurship, his theorizing also fits the individual political entrepreneur. Because the individual agent is what we are looking for in the theories of entrepreneurship, I use Steiner's collective conceptualization in an individual conceptualization, and more specifically in the context of the *political individual entrepreneur*.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Thomas D. Steiner, "'A New Australia in a New Asia-Pacific': Agency, Collective Entrepreneurship, and Inter/national Political Change 1973–1996," paper presented at the Fourth Pan-European International Relations Conference, Kent University, September 2001.

13 For additional literature on political, policy, or public entrepreneurship, see Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1997); Oran R. Young, *International Governance: Protecting the Environment in a Stateless Society* (Ithaca

The political entrepreneur is an agent of political change; he/she is responsible for constructing new institutions or making policy innovations. As Schneider, Teske, and Mintrom put it: “They perceive opportunities for political and policy change, they advocate innovative ideas, and they transform political arenas.”<sup>14</sup> But as Steiner stresses, the entrepreneurship is not performed in an empty space but in a political context, a social structure, where power is already distributed.<sup>15</sup> In this political context the political entrepreneur strives to promote his/her novel ideas, sometimes against alternative, well-established ones. In a more Gramscian terminology, the political entrepreneur strives to construct a counterhegemony vis-à-vis the existing hegemonic structure.

The political context compels the entrepreneur to focus his/her efforts on targeted agents that are plausible and worthwhile to persuade.<sup>16</sup> The

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and London: Cornell UP, 1994), pp. 45–46, 114–15; Mark Schneider and Paul Teske with Michael Mintrom, *Public Entrepreneurs: Agents for Change in American Government* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995); Mark Schneider and Paul Teske, “Toward a Theory of the Political Entrepreneur: Evidence from Local Government,” *American Political Science Review*, 86: 3 (September 1992), pp. 737–747; John W. Kingdom, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper-Collins College Publishers, 1995), pp. 179–183, 204–205; Donna Wilson Kirchheimer, “Public Entrepreneurship and Subnational Government,” *Polity*, 22:1 (Fall 1989), pp. 119–142. A different terminology of “transitional advocacy networks” is used by Risse and Sikkink to convey a somewhat similar idea; Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink, “The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices: Introduction,” in Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Changes* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), pp. 1–38. Nadelmann discusses NGOs as “transnational moral entrepreneurs”; Ethan A. Nadelmann, “Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society,” *International Organization*, 44: 4 (Fall 1990), p. 482.

14 Schneider, Teske with Mintrom, *Public Entrepreneurs*, p. 3.

15 Steiner, “‘A New Australia in a New Asia-Pacific,’” p. 5.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.



process of persuasion is long, continuous, and arduous. It involves learning and socialization, sometimes for both parties, that is, the entrepreneur-agent and the targeted one. The successful end result of the entrepreneurship is an epistemic convergence between the entrepreneur and his targeted agent, as a new framing for thinking about the social and political structure emerges.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in a political process of persuasion and socialization the entrepreneur-agent succeeds in bringing about a political change, which, in the context of this study, constitutes a policy innovation.

### *A combined theoretical framework*

These three separate theoretical approaches will be combined in this study as a single theoretical framework. Freedman's conceptualization of political thought will offer a key to understanding an unnoticed function of theory: decontesting the meaning of political concepts and constructing these meanings in a comprehensive thought structure. When we understand theory as a configuration of decontested political concepts, we can better comprehend the political uses and abuses of academic theories. This is so especially when there are competing theories that offer alternate explanations. Thus, theories as configurations of decontested political concepts are very attractive as political tools in what can be understood as a battle to gain Gramscian hegemony over commonsense. And once a hegemonic acceptance of theory does exist, the politicians may exploit this acceptance to achieve various political goals.

To understand how people can have an impact on this social structure, it is not enough to claim that ideal factors are important. It is also helpful to adopt a theory of human agency, such as political entrepreneurship, in which the individual strives to materialize the ideal.

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17 Ibid.

The next section focuses on the different political concepts involved in the theories of democratic peace, and what makes them so susceptible to political uses and abuses.

## DEMOCRATIC-PEACE THEORIES REVISITED

If theories are indeed configurations of *decontested* meanings of political concepts, it is worth exploring the concepts that construct the theories of democratic peace. One may identify three major issues: (1) the meaning of the concepts offered by the theories; (2) the differences between the two main theories that try to explain the phenomenon of democratic peace, and the origins of these differences; and (3) how conducive these differences are to the theories' effectiveness as political tools.

During the 1970s and 1980s, international relations researchers identified an interesting empirical phenomenon: democracies never (or, in a qualified version, rarely) went to war with one another.<sup>18</sup> Although over

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18 A useful, though not updated, historical background can be found in Nils Petter Gleiditsch, "Democracy and Peace," *Journal of Peace Research*, 29:4 (November 1992), pp. 369–376. Major cornerstones in the early development of the democratic-peace thesis are: the neglected first article by the criminologist Dean V. Babst, "Elective Governments: A Force for Peace," *The Wisconsin Sociologist*, 3:1 (January 1964), pp. 9–14; his second and only slightly more circulated article, though in a popular journal, Dean V. Babst, "A Force for Peace," *Industrial Research* (April 1972), pp. 55–58; and the first major publications in the international relations discipline: Peter Wallenstein, *Structure and War: On International Relations 1820–1868* (Stockholm: Raben & Sjogern, 1973); Rudolph J. Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War*, vol. 4, *War, Power, Peace* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1979); Rudolph J. Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War*, vol. 5, *The Just Peace* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1981); Rudolph J. Rummel, "Libertarianism and Interstate Violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 27:1 (March 1983), pp. 27–71; Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12:3 (Summer 1983), pp. 205–235; Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs,

the years many harsh criticisms were leveled at the validity of this phenomenon,<sup>19</sup> it steadily gained supporters, and two major theories tried to explain it.<sup>20</sup> The first explained the democratic-peace phenomenon by focusing on the structural dimensions of democracy, claiming that the division of power, checks and balances, and the leaders' accountability to the public<sup>21</sup> cause the decisionmaking process to be complex and slow, allowing the decisionmakers of democratic states to reach peaceful resolutions of conflicts between them. The second theory highlights the normative dimensions of democratic societies, claiming that the norms of

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Part II," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12:4 (Fall 1983), pp. 323–353; Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 80:4 (December 1986), pp. 1151–69; Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986," *American Political Science Review*, 87:3 (September 1993), pp. 624–638.

- 19 See, e.g., Christopher Lane, "Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace," in Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace: An International Security Reader* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 157–201; David E. Spiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace," in *ibid.*, pp. 202–238; Henry S. Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Politics and Peace," in *ibid.*, pp. 239–262; Ido Oren, "The Subjectivity of the Democratic Peace': Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," *ibid.*, pp. 263–300; Joanne Gowa, *Ballots and Bullets: The Elusive Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); Kurt T. Gaubatz, *Elections and War: The Ellectoral Incentive in the Democratic Politics of War and Peace* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), pp. 1–3, 16–20, 104–124, 138–140; Raymond Cohen, "Pacific Union: A Reappraisal of the Theory that Democracies Do Not Go to War with Each Other'," *Review of International Studies*, 20:3 (July 1994), pp. 207–223; Sebastian Rosato, "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *American Political Science Review*, 97:4 (November 2003), pp. 585–602.
- 20 The most authoritative exploration of the two variants of the theory is in Maoz and Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace."
- 21 The accountability argument is based on the assumption that the citizens desire peace and prosperity and thus disfavor the option of war.

tolerance and openness within these states ascend to the level of the relations between them. Consequently, there is more willingness to reach compromises, and conflicts are settled peacefully.

The debate between these two theories involves the whole range of meanings we attach to the phenomenon of democratic peace, how we decontest the different concepts involved in it, and how we configure these concepts in concert—in other words, the *essence* of democratic peace.

### *The concepts of peace and war*

What is peace? Is it really a contested political concept? Do we all understand peace in the same theoretical way? In fact, a short survey of the literature reveals several definitions of peace. The realist conception of peace is the absence of war (“negative war”).<sup>22</sup> For the realists, the absence of war is something temporary. Since peace is the opposite of war, and war is the common and unavoidable feature of international relations, peace is no more than a transient lack of war. Hence, realists warn us not to be fooled by the joys of peace, which may veil the dangers lurking in the relations between states, causing us to be unprepared for the inevitable—the initiation of yet another war. Peace, in other words, is dangerous.

Yet, more is at stake here than merely the dangers of war erupting. If peace is defined by the absence of war, then war becomes a crucial concept in theories of democratic peace. War, in turn, is also a contested political concept that theories try to decontest. War also has several definitions, and explanations. For instance, Brown defines international war as “violence between organized political entities claiming to be sovereign nations.”<sup>23</sup>

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22 E.g., K. N. Waltz, *Man, State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia UP, 1959), p. 1.

23 Seyom Brown, *The Causes and Prevention of War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 1.

Clearly, several additional contested concepts are involved in this definition, such as “violence,” “political,” “nations,” and perhaps the most contested, “sovereignty.” Without seeking to analyze these concepts, it is clear that we are caught here in an unending path. Attempting to configure peace within this realist definition involves many more concepts, and an abundance of potential configurations of decontested political notions.

Yet the realist definition of peace is far from exclusive. Boulding would call such a peace an “unstable peace,” that is, not a real one. For Boulding, real peace is “stable peace”—“a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved.”<sup>24</sup> This is fundamentally different from the realist definition of peace as the absence of war. For Boulding, peace is much more than simply the absence of war; it is a kind of peace whose degeneration one does not have to fear, annulling the necessity to be perpetually prepared for war. When such a stable peace exists, as between the United States and Canada, few resources are invested in military security, and things move in the direction of a pluralistic security community.

Yet, as in the realist definition of peace, many more social and political concepts are implicated in this definition, such as expectations, calculations, and rationality. Moreover, the concepts of legitimacy and of mutual legitimacy, or of bonding interests, are also likely to be relevant. A third plausible explanation of stable peace involves Deutsch’s “security community,”<sup>25</sup> which, in turn, invokes the concept of a common identity or “we-feeling.”

There are still other options for defining peace and then explaining it

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24 Kenneth Boulding, *Stable Peace* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 13.

25 Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957). For a contemporary theoretical ofshoot, see Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).

accordingly.<sup>26</sup> For example, peace can be perceived as something utopist, entailing the total absence of conflict. It could consist of relations of mutual disregard (peace of indifference), or of cooperation and mutual transactions. It would be a Sisyphean enterprise to try and specify all the options, not to mention reconfiguring the entirety of contested concepts implicated in any one of these configurations.

### *The concepts of democracy and democratization*

The second concept, democracy, takes us to yet another realm of analysis. Here, too, serious problems of contested meanings arise. Generally speaking, there are two broad paradigms of democratic theory.<sup>27</sup> The first is elitist, structural, formal, and procedural.<sup>28</sup> It tends to understand democracy in a relatively minimalist way. A regime is a democracy when it passes some structural threshold of free and open elections, autonomous branches of government, division of power, and checks and balances. This state of affairs precludes a tyrannical concentration of power in the hands of the elites. Once this structure is in place, a regime is a democracy.

The second paradigm, which is called “normative,” “cultural,”

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26 For a theoretical overview of definitions of peace, see Arie M. Kacowicz and Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, “Stable Peace: A Conceptual Framework,” in Arie M. Kacowicz, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Ole Elgstrom and Magnus Jerneck, eds., *Stable Peace among Nations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 11–35.

27 For a short overview, see Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1996), pp. 15–21.

28 See, e.g., Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 250–283; Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922); Walter Lippmann, *The Method of Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1934); Walter Lippmann, *Essays in Public Philosophy* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1955).

“deliberative democracy,” and “participatory democracy,” tends to focus on other issues and to demand much more of democracy.<sup>29</sup> First, the emphasis is on the society and the individual citizens, not the political system and the regime. Second, there is also a demand for the existence of democratic norms and democratic culture. This implies, among other things, political rights, tolerance, openness, participation, and a sense of civic responsibility.

What, then, do we mean by democracy? Do we mean a political system that is governed by elections? Or is it a society with a set of embedded norms and cultures? Choosing between these two paradigms means choosing between two paths. The paradigms stem from two radically different worldviews. The first is conservative in nature, the second liberal or socialist (or progressive in 19<sup>th</sup>-century terminology).

The minimalist structural definition of democracy is embedded in a conservative skepticism about human faculties. In this view, it is not rationality that drives human action but a mix of perennial desires, instincts, and communal traditions. This mix is extrarational and compels humans to strive for power. Two major consequences follow. First, because every person seeks power, there is a perpetual danger of destabilization of

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29 See, e.g., Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970); Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press); Sheldon S. Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy,” *Constellations*, 1:1 (April 1994), pp. 11–25; Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, *A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: MIT Press, 1984); Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1998); A. de-Shalit, “A Radical Theory of Democracy,” *Res Publica*, 3:1 (1997), pp. 61–80.

the social and political organizations. Second, there is the opposite, constant danger of a dictatorial concentration of power in the hands of those individuals who succeed in gaining power. The conservative solution for these two dangers is a minimal, structural democracy. On the one hand, by regular elections democracy guarantees that no power lasts forever, and no dictatorial concentration of power is available. On the other, by confining political participation to elections, democracy precludes political and social destabilization.<sup>30</sup>

The normative and cultural definition of democracy is more far-reaching and is based on an optimistic, liberal view of human rationality. Human beings are rationally driven creatures. It is not that they lack emotions, desires, instincts, or communal bonds, but these are all controlled to a large extent by rationality, by rational calculations including the proper political behavior. Moreover, the rational individual is seen as the locus of indivisible civic rights. Thus, this normative and cultural definition of democracy centers on the concepts of participation and rights, seeking to enlarge the scope of citizens' political participation, and thus to broaden the meaning of democracy. There is little fear of destabilizing the polity because political participation is viewed as evolving from rationality.

These two fundamentally different paradigms correspond to the two above-mentioned theories of democratic peace, the structural one and the normative-cultural one. The resemblance is not accidental. Actually,

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30 According to conservative ideology, humans seek not only power but also other goals including peace and prosperity. The desire for power may sometimes clash with peace and prosperity; individual wishes for peace and prosperity may also clash with the conservative expectancy for irrational collective political behavior. Elitist and minimal democracy offers a way to bridge these discrepancies by limiting the political participation of the public, hence limiting the effects of the public's collective irrationality, and by electing representatives who are rationally responsible for achieving peace and prosperity for the public, i.e., who act as political guardians.



the theories of democratic peace do not “resemble” the paradigms of democracy but, rather, follow them. Those who see democracy as defined mainly by structure will seek to explain the attributes generated by democracy, that is, democratic peace, in terms of this core concept of democratic structure. Conversely, those who see democracy mainly as based on culture and morality will see those as the explanatory variables of democratic peace.

Moreover, these theories are configurations of decontested concepts, which endow each other with meaning. Thus, democracy endows peace with meaning, and vice versa. This mutual lending of meaning, however, results in totally different understandings of democratic peace. In the structural theory of democratic peace, democracy is decontested minimally and structurally. Democracy is just a configuration of elections, checks and balances, and the principle of accountability. Moreover, this meaning of democracy endows peace with a specific, minimal meaning—probably not the realist definition of peace,<sup>31</sup> but also not the fully stable peace of Boulding, or the peace of Deutsch’s security community. The reasons are quite simple. If democracy is a structure, it is relatively easy to build it, but also relatively easy to dismantle it. Hence, peace might be secured between democracies as defined by structure, but the stability of such peace is questionable. Decisionmakers and the public cannot fully trust their counterparts in the other democracy, since the stability of democracy is not guaranteed; they will still have to be prepared for war.

Conversely, in the normative variant, democracy is much more stable and comprehensive. Once a society has been socialized into a set of democratic norms, this set is embedded in the ways in which individuals act and society functions. Democratization is a long, arduous process,

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31 This realist definition of peace is left to the relations between nondemocratic states, or between democracies and nondemocracies.

but once completed and consolidated it is very difficult to reverse.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, two democratic polities can trust each other and maintain long-term peaceful relations. This is all the more so because the peace between them relies directly on the norms of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. The stability of these norms, their embeddedness in the minds and behavior of the citizens, ensure respect for the citizens of the other democracy. All this leads to Boulding's stable peace and to Deutsch's security community.

These alternative paradigms exist not only in the realm of the abstract; each of them also leads to a discrete policy. Once one accepts that democracies do not fight each other, the policy implication should be to support democratization abroad. Allegedly, each state that becomes a democracy is no longer a security threat to other democracies. To enlarge the number of democracies is to enlarge the zone of peace.<sup>33</sup>

But how can other countries and societies be democratized? Broadly speaking, democratization policies can be divided into two types that derive directly from the definitions of democracy. If democracy means a structure of elections, division of powers, and checks and balances, democratization will mean *building this structure*; that is, emphasizing the formal, the procedural, and the structural. It will also mean investing efforts in the state apparatus, in the "old" or institutional politics. If, on the other hand, democracy means a culture and morality of the sort that create a civic community, democratization will mean *building this community*. It will mean

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32 Magnus Ericson theorizes exactly this point in "Birds of a Feather? On the Interactions of Stable Peace and Democratic Research Programs," in Kacowicz, Bar-Siman-Tov, Elgstrom and Jerneck, *Stable Peace among Nations*, pp. 130–149.

33 For a theoretical overview of the "zone of peace" concept, see Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace/Zones of Turmoil* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1993); Arie M. Kacowicz, *Zones of Peace in the Third World: South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

the socialization and dissemination of democratic values so as to foster a democratic society and culture, mainly by facilitating domestic agents of political and social transformation in the target country. It will mean investing efforts on the social and individual levels, trying to construct a civil society of informed, involved, and participating citizens.

*The “historical block” of the democratic-peace thesis*

The importance of the above discussion lies not just in the realm of abstract theorization, or metatheorization. The multiplicity of configurations, and the multiplicity of options within each configuration, are what make the democratic-peace thesis so attractive to the political efforts to frame commonsense. This is especially so because the democratic-peace thesis has come to be accepted almost consensually in the democratic world, especially in the United States. Although the thesis that democracies do not fight one another was treated quite skeptically at first, gradually it became more and more accepted: democracies do not fight each other, and they do not fight each other **because** they are democracies. Thus the acceptance of this thesis spread more and more, until it became almost consensual. Indeed, it came to be conceived as almost a “natural law,” the only natural law known to exist in international relations. In other words, it gained the status of Gramscian hegemony.<sup>34</sup>

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34 See also Gleditsch, “Democracy and Peace,” pp. 369–370; Jack S. Levy, “The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence,” in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern and Charles Tilly, eds., *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), p. 270. Two of the more commonly used international relations textbooks treat the democratic-peace thesis very favorably, further spreading the word among students and helping enhance its status as commonsense knowledge: Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *World Politics: Trends and Transformation*, 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2004), pp. 71, 416, 603–605; Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, *World Politics: The*

Two main factors contributed to the dissemination of the democratic-peace idea to the wide American public and the evolvement of the consensus about it. The first is the American public's self-image as constituting a well-founded republic, and as the leader of the free democratic world in questing for peace. The second, probably more important, is the end of the Cold War. The Cold War as the constant tension between the two rival superpowers meant that a third world war threatened, or at least so it seemed. This state of affairs induced anxiety and facilitated the acceptance of realist theories of international relations. The end of this situation inspired euphoria and a public mood much more susceptible to optimistic liberal theories of international relations.<sup>35</sup> One offshoot of this optimism was a tendency to accept the democratic-peace thesis. In the Gramscian framework, a historical block of ideal and material factors produces hegemony. In this case, a rare combination of a new and relatively peaceful world order and a compelling theory that fit the self-image of the sole remaining superpower, resulted in the hegemonizing of this thesis.

A further factor, less important but still significant, was that when first published the democratic-peace theory was presented as the heritage of Immanuel Kant.<sup>36</sup> This gave it the extra legitimization it needed in the early stages when it was subject to criticism.

The wide consensus about the democratic-peace thesis makes it

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*Menu for Choice*, 5th ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1996), pp. 173–174. One should not be too surprised at these textbooks' positive attitude toward democratic peace since they are written by noted liberals, and Russett is one of the leading theoreticians of democratic peace itself. This, however, is beside the point when assessing the books' potential impact on commonsense knowledge.

35 Another theoretical consequence of this euphoric mood is Fukuyama's outdated thesis of the end of history, Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

36 Mostly in Doyle's writings—M. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," Parts I and II.

rhetorically attractive and useful to politicians. On the one hand, it is widely believed to be the truth (a self-evident natural law); on the other, it can mean so many things, enabling one to decontest whichever political concept suits one at the moment, and in a way that is not just semantic but has policy implications.

### **THE POLITICAL USES AND ABUSES OF DEMOCRATIC PEACE: THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

This section analyzes the argumentative use of the democratic-peace thesis by Benjamin Netanyahu and Natan Sharansky in the service of their respective political and ideological purposes: Netanyahu's conduct of a "politics of postponement" and Sharansky's conduct of a "politics of avoidance." Both of these politicians took advantage of the hegemonic acceptance of the democratic-peace thesis in the American public and political circles to achieve political goals. Both of them acted as able political entrepreneurs adhering to an existing hegemonic structure, while politically manipulating it.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Netanyahu and the "politics of postponement"*

Evaluating the democratic-peace thesis as a political tool requires asking what are the political aims of this ostensible tool. This task is never easy, since it involves dealing with copious rhetoric and contradictory acts. It is even harder in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict is

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<sup>37</sup> Netanyahu and Sharansky are not the only statesmen to politically exploit the democratic-peace thesis, though they are certainly the most persistent. Ariel Sharon has done the same on several occasions, including as early as 1991 at Oxford University where he asserted, in a hawkish address, that the peace process "must be based on the disarmament and democratization of the Arab world"; see Davis Watts, "Sharon Decries US Pressure on Israel," *The Times*, October 19, 1991. For a more recent example, in his address at the January 2001 Herzliya Conference on "The

marked both by uncompromising claims to the same piece of land and a rational understanding of the impossibility of realizing both claims; a rational fear of the other side and a nonrational fear of it; along with mutual hatred, problems of collective identities, and competing historical narratives. To these complexities must be added, especially on the Israeli side, the domestic aspects of a democratic process where the majority is prepared for some sort of compromise but the opposing minority gains the upper hand in the political system and to a large extent controls its decisions.<sup>38</sup>

This dichotomy also pertains to the ruling right-wing Likud Party and the two major figures of this study, Netanyahu and Sharansky. This party has become an amalgamation of moderate-right and extreme-right sectors, witnessing a constant clash over ideology. Two leaders of the party, Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon, are also themselves ambiguous about their ideology and their willingness for pragmatism. Both of these figures have argued and acted in conflicting manners, making it difficult to discern their actual positions and, more important, their goals concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: do they really seek a compromise, and what kind of com-

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National Balance of National Strength and Security,” he stated that “When the countries of the Middle East weaken, the threat to Israel will decrease. The process of democratization will also help.” See Steve Weizman, “Is Time on Our Side?” *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, February 6, 2001. In addition, in Sharon’s letter of exchange with President Bush on April 14, 2004, he wrote in regard to the Palestinian Authority: “Moreover, there must be serious efforts to institute true reform and real democracy and liberty, including new leaders not compromised by terror.” See “Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush,” [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

38 A comprehensive and ongoing survey of the Israeli public’s positions has been conducted since June 1994 by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University. The results are published as the Peace Index, and indicate more or less steady support for some Israeli territorial concessions. See <http://spirit.tau.ac.il/socant/peace>.

promise, or are they for Greater Israel no matter what the consequences?

It seems that Netanyahu, Sharon, and the Likud as a whole have unhappily accepted the notion that some sort of compromise is required. Their aspiration, however, is that the terms of this compromise will be decided less by bilateral negotiations than by establishing facts on the ground (i.e., more settlements), persuading the United States to agree to and legitimize the settlements,<sup>39</sup> and thereby pressuring the international community and the Palestinians to accept a bargain that does not include a retreat to the 1967 borders.<sup>40</sup> To achieve this, these two politicians have adopted tactics of postponement along with a massive public relations campaign aimed at both the Israeli and American publics. The democratic-peace thesis has been put to the service of this policy of postponement.<sup>41</sup>

Benjamin Netanyahu has had a meteoric political career, rising to be the youngest Israeli prime minister ever in 1996 at the age of forty-seven. In 1982 he was chosen as deputy by Moshe Arens, then ambassador to the United States, and two years later he was appointed as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations. Upon returning to Israel in 1988 he was elected as a Likud Member of Knesset and was appointed as deputy foreign minister to Arens. In these positions he won the hearts and souls of the Likud supporters, and was elected as Likud leader in 1993, heading the opposition

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39 Bush's letter to Sharon of April 14, 2004, refers to them as "new realities on the ground." See "Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush," [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

40 As a whole, this tactic of postponement fits well with the claim that Netanyahu's perception of time is that it works on behalf of Israel. See Yael S. Aronoff, "When and Why Do Hard-Liners Become Soft? An Examination of Israeli Prime Ministers Shamir, Rabin, Peres, and Netanyahu," in Feldman and Valenty, *Profiling Political Leaders*, pp. 185–202.

41 See also Zeev Maoz, "Realist and Cultural Critiques of the Democratic Peace: A Theoretical and Empirical Re-assessment," *International Interactions*, 24:1 (1998), p. 8; Yossi Beilin, "Democracy—Not as a Precondition," [www.bitterlemons.org](http://www.bitterlemons.org), May 5, 2003.

during the Oslo negotiations of 1993–1995. In 1996 he was elected prime minister, defeating Shimon Peres who had been acting prime minister since Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination. The elections were held immediately after a bloody terror campaign that helped Netanyahu electorally, given his image as a fierce fighter against terrorism. During Netanyahu’s administration Israel took a much tougher stance concerning fulfillment of the Oslo accords, insisting on reciprocity, and when violations by the Palestinian side were identified, Israel refused to go ahead with the process. Netanyahu did not, however, abandon the Oslo process and did negotiate several interim agreements, including a partial withdrawal from the town of Hebron. This policy zigzagging caused his coalition to deteriorate and, finally, collapse in 1999, when he lost the elections in a landslide to Labor candidate Ehud Barak. Netanyahu then left politics but only briefly, and after the Likud came back to power and formed another government in 2001 under Sharon, Netanyahu returned to positions as foreign minister and, later, finance minister. During all this period he never lost hope of regaining the office of prime minister.

Netanyahu is one of Israel’s most eloquent spokespersons, and as part of his explanatory efforts he uses the commonsensical knowledge of democratic peace. One of his first articulations of the idea that Middle East peace must be based on democratization was in his 1993 book *A Place among the Nations*.<sup>42</sup> It was written with the help of Dr. Yoram Hazony, a political philosopher by training affiliated with neoconservative think tanks, and a consultant to Netanyahu. Later Hazony established the most successful Israeli conservative think tank, the Shalem Center, which provides intellectual backing to the Israeli Right.<sup>43</sup>

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42 Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place among the Nations: Israel and the World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).

43 Michael Oren, a senior fellow at the Shalem Center, published an op-ed in the *Chicago Sun-Times* arguing in the spirit of the democratic-peace thesis that Israel



In *A Place among the Nations*, Netanyahu employs Kant's *Perpetual Peace* and distinguishes between two types of peace. The first type is between nondemocratic states, or between a democracy and a nondemocratic state, and is based on deterrence and balance of power. It is "peace through strength,"<sup>44</sup> temporal, reflecting interests, and not to be relied on. This is, in other words, peace as seen by the realist tradition. Netanyahu and Hazony also follow Kant in envisaging a second type of peace, namely, between democracies. And this is the Kantian perpetual peace, or in more contemporary terms, stable peace. The Netanyahu-Hazony argument is that this is the peace we must aspire to in the Middle East, and it requires promoting democratization. Until the day of a democratic Middle East that will make possible this stable peace, Israel should rely on military might and settle for "peace through strength." According to Netanyahu and Hazony, this applies to Israel's bilateral relations with the various Arab states but not to the Palestinians, who should accept Israeli sovereignty over all of Greater Israel, including the territories taken in the 1967 War, and settle for a limited autonomy in those territories and a civic status in Jordan, which Netanyahu and Hazony view as the legitimate Palestinian state.

Some interesting points can be inferred from the Netanyahu-Hazony thesis. First, there is a type of peace that is feasible with a nondemocratic state. Indeed it is not a stable peace, but there are not many who question Israel's military might and its ability to rely on such "peace through strength." Moreover, according to their analysis this type of peace does exist and is maintained with Egypt. Second, at least in 1993 when the book was written, Netanyahu's ideological commitment to the idea of Greater Israel is clearly evident. It is not a democratic peace that is pursued

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cannot expect peace with nondemocratic Arab states, including the Palestinian Authority. See Michael B. Oren, "Build Strong Foundation and Peace Will Come," *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 5, 2002.

44 Netanyahu, *A Place among the Nations*, p. 250.

regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and it is not sovereignty that is offered to the Palestinians.

A third point concerns the reasons given for this vision of democratic peace. Why, in Netanyahu's own language, are democracies "immersed in a physical, psychological, and political state of peace"? Netanyahu and Hazony consider two types of explanations common in the democratic-peace literature, the structural and the normative. In a structural argumentation, they assert that "democracies require the consent of the governed to go to war, and that is not easy to secure."<sup>45</sup> But they also claim, in a more normative argumentation, that "the whole idea of politics in democratic states is the *nonviolent* resolution of conflict."<sup>46</sup> This normative sense of democratic peace, however, evaporates in light of historical examples where democratic regimes turned authoritarian and immediately resorted to force in their international conflicts, such as Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas, Greece in Cyprus, and Nicaragua's aggressive regional behavior. According to Netanyahu and Hazony, when these states redemocratized they resolved their conflicts in peaceful ways. Yet, quick transitions from democracy to authoritarianism and back to democracy leave the regime in constant flux. The democracy that is being formed is an institutional one, not a consolidated normative-cultural one. In other words, the norms and culture of democracy do not crystallize instantly; democratization is instead the product of long and difficult cultural and social processes. Thus, citing historical examples of instant democratization such as Argentina, Greece, and Nicaragua gives the impression that the democracy Netanyahu means is a structural one, and that the explanation of democratic peace is structural.

It is with this set of ideas that Netanyahu later constructed his vision of democratization as a key to peaceful coexistence in the Middle East,

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45 Ibid., p. 240.

46 Ibid.

including in his term as prime minister between 1996 and 1999. He took an active role in the Israeli persuasion campaign regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Using his oratorical talents, Netanyahu tried in a series of public addresses to convince the American public and decision-makers that no advance in the peace process was feasible until the Palestinian Authority (PA) democratized. It is in this role of persuasion that Netanyahu can be considered a political entrepreneur of the idea of democratic peace.

One of his best-known speeches took place just after his inauguration, when on July 10, 1996, he addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress.<sup>47</sup> Netanyahu made references to the normative understanding of democracy, claiming that it is the total commitment to democracy of both the United States and Israel that binds the two countries together. He went on to praise democracy, saying: "It is to be able to disagree, to express our disagreements, and sometimes to agree after disagreements. It means an inherent shift away from aggression toward the recognition of the mutual right to differ." In this address Netanyahu introduced three novel ideas in relation to *A Place among the Nations*. First, democratic peace may also be valid regarding the Palestinians. This implies that he had abandoned his Greater Israel vision, accepting, as indeed he declared during the election campaign, the principles of the Oslo accords. But Netanyahu added three pillars to this commitment to Oslo: security, reciprocity, and democracy. Second, Netanyahu affirms once more that there is a second type of peace, the deterrence-based peace with nondemocratic states. But then again, he does not see this type of peace as an option with the Palestinians; with them he demands the third pillar, democracy. In other words, what Netanyahu is willing to accept with the much stronger Syria, peace through strength, he is unwilling to accept with the impoverished and weak Palestinians.

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47 For the full text, see "Address by His Excellency, Binyamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, July 7, 1996 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress)," [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

Third, without referring explicitly to the democratic-peace thesis, Netanyahu treats democratic peace as a well-known and established fact. “I am not revealing a secret to the Members of this Chamber when I say that modern democracies do not initiate aggression. This has been the central lesson of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. States that respect the human rights of their citizens are not likely to provoke hostile action against their neighbors.” Here Netanyahu does not refer to a philosopher from two centuries ago, but to a modern, documented fact, proven by the social sciences.<sup>48</sup> Netanyahu also refers to it as commonsensical knowledge among Americans, that is, a hegemonic American view about world affairs—“I am not revealing a secret....” And once Netanyahu reaffirms this commonsensical knowledge, he uses a political maneuver to decontest the political concepts involved in democratic peace in an altered form. First, he reinforces the observed fact about democracies: “...modern democracies do not initiate aggression.” Second, he claims that it is states that are the subject of these theories. True as it is, the political consequences of this declaration are that before democratizing the Palestinians, we need to enable them to establish a state. But to do that, we need to end the Israeli civil and military presence in the Palestinian territories. This implication, however, is absent from Netanyahu’s analysis; it contravenes his political agenda. We witness here the political abuse of the hegemonic status of democratic peace; Netanyahu ideologically decontests its political concepts

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48 The more social science orientation of Netanyahu’s remarks might be attributed to Dr. Uzi Arad, who took over from Hazony and served as Netanyahu’s foreign policy adviser when he was prime minister. Arad, trained in political science and international relations, is well acquainted with the democratic-peace thesis. See, e.g., his interview to Robert S. Greenberger and Karby Leggett of the *Wall Street Journal*, where he advocates democratic peace and claims that “the evidence was irrefutable: Democracies do not attack democracies”; Robert S. Greenberg and Karby Leggett, “Bush Dreams of Changing Not Just Regime but Region,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2003.

according to the political needs of his own agenda, distorting some of the claims and ignoring others.

Another tenet of Netanyahu's address was already put forth in his book:<sup>49</sup> the collective identity of democracies and the need to strengthen Israel on the basis of this common identity. Thus, "the proper course for the democratic world, led by the United States, is to strengthen the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel..." He emphasized this even more in speeches after September 11, 2001, when global terrorism became the main topic on the U.S. international agenda. In this period Netanyahu was no longer prime minister, rather foreign minister in Sharon's government, and it is evident how he seeks as much political benefit as possible from the new situation. In this new context, Netanyahu even further advances the idea of democratic peace. Democracy is no longer just less aggressive, it is also immune from exercising terrorism, and hence democratization is the ultimate solution to terror. This is the main theme of his address to the U.S. Senate on October 4, 2002: "The open debate and plurality of ideas that buttress all genuine democracies and the respect for human rights and the sanctity of life that are the shared values of all free societies are a permanent antidote to the poison that the sponsors of terror seek to inject into the minds of their recruits."<sup>50</sup> We can identify here the close relations between ideas and realities in forming hegemony, the historical block of ideal and material. The new realities of world politics, particularly the war against global terrorism, further enhance the attractiveness of democratic peace and lead to a new decontesting of the concepts involved. Democratic

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49 Netanyahu, *A Place among the Nations*, pp. 249–250.

50 For the full text, see Benjamin Netanyahu, "Speech before the US Senate, April 10, 2002," [www.netanyahu.org](http://www.netanyahu.org). Netanyahu published the same arguments for the wider public a week later in Benjamin Netanyahu, "The Root Cause of Terrorism Is Tyranny," *Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 2002, and yet again for the American Jewish public via the Jewish Telegraphic Agency; see Benjamin Netanyahu, "Visions for Peace: Topple Arafat, then Talk Peace, June 13, 2002," [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).

peace no longer concerns just bilateral relations between states, but the more abstract entity of global terrorism as well. Netanyahu further stresses that the terror is being sponsored by states, or “terrorist regimes,” with democracy as the eventual solution.<sup>51</sup>

This is yet another opportunity to strengthen the democracies’ collective identity, since they ostensibly face a common enemy: “I have come before you today to ask you to continue to courageously and honorably carry that torch [of freedom] by standing by an outpost of freedom that is resisting an unprecedented terrorist assault. I ask you to stand by Israel’s side in its fight against Arafat’s tyranny of terror, and thereby help defeat an evil that threatens all of mankind.” If Israel is part of this free world of democracies, Arafat is part of the global terror, the enemy. He and the Palestinians are stripped of their concrete claims and of the specificity of their territorial demands. It all meshes together in Netanyahu’s use of the concepts: democracy as identity, which implicitly means democratic culture, and terror as the aggressive totalitarian “other” to be defeated by introducing democracy.

These same themes were the hallmark of another talk Netanyahu gave as foreign minister on May 5, 2002—about six weeks before Bush’s declaration of the road map—at the Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University in Ohio.<sup>52</sup> While repeating most of the above-mentioned themes, this time he returned to Kant as the source of inspiration. But after describing the two types of peace, Netanyahu argued that Kant was wrong in regard to the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its new threat,

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51 It is worth noting that democracy as a cure for terrorism is absent from the book Netanyahu edited in 1986, when the democratic-peace thesis was just beginning to emerge and was far from its current hegemonic status. See Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Avon Books, 1987).

52 For the full text, see Benjamin Netanyahu, “Fighting Terrorism: Eighteenth Annual John M. Ashbrook Memorial Dinner, May 3, 2002,” [www.ashbrook.org](http://www.ashbrook.org).

terror. The first type of peace, peace with nondemocratic states, would leave those states' totalitarianism intact, and terror would continue to flourish. "The totalitarian mindset is the root cause of terrorism.... If we leave this last region of the world [the Arab and Islamic world] undemocratized, unventilated by the winds of freedom, we are toying with our common survival. Not with Israel's survival, but the survival of our civilization." Netanyahu argues that the United States' role is to provide leadership to the free world, and compliments President Bush for doing so. Here again we witness the new decontesting of political concepts. Democratic peace has been transformed into an antidote not only to war among states, but also to terrorism, and en route is used to demarcate a democratic "we" from a nondemocratic "they." This political maneuvering is based on a cultural definition of democracy, but, as we will see below, offers only a structural cure for the illness of terrorism.

Although the alternations in Netanyahu's addresses and writings between structural explanations and normative explanations of democratic peace could be viewed as internal incoherencies, they are better viewed as well-crafted public relations campaigning. We should not evaluate Netanyahu as a theoretician committed to coherence, but as a politician committed to political gains. It is as a politician that Netanyahu makes maximal use of the different aspects of the democratic-peace thesis, using each one to obtain a different political advantage. Accordingly, it is better to understand these incoherencies as different subtexts that Netanyahu tacitly tries to transmit to his readers and listeners. While employing normative theories of democracy and democratic peace, Netanyahu stresses a common identity, the democratic "we" against the autocratic (terrorist) "they." The potential political gain of this identity subtext is the strengthening of U.S.-Israeli ties while further weakening the shaky U.S.-Palestinian relations.

When Netanyahu shifts, however, to a structural reading of democracy and democratic peace, he conveys a different message. By stressing the structural theories, he tacitly suggests that it is not so difficult to

democratize and to be democratized. If democracy means certain political structures rather than others, what is required is no more than a structural reform of the political institutions, rather than a long and difficult process of socialization and norm dissemination. Indeed, the Israeli reservations to the road map, as presented in a document of fourteen points on May 25, 2003, insist more on structural reforms of the Palestinian Authority than on democratization of Palestinian society.<sup>53</sup> This subtext of structural definition and explanation harbors two interlinked messages. The first is that striving for democratization is the best strategy for obtaining peace. On the one hand, it secures a stable peace; on the other, it is easy, quick, and demands few resources. Hence, the best peace strategy would be to demand the PA to democratize. Here, of course, there is a postponement of the peace process until the Palestinians democratize, and more time is gained to transform reality, that is, to build more settlements. But there is a second message as well. If all that is needed to democratize and secure peace is a few rather easy structural reforms, and the Palestinians do not achieve this, then it means they do not really want peace or democracy. If they do not really want democracy, it further enhances the identity claim of “we” against “they.” Of course this concept ignores, probably intentionally, several issues. The first is the implications of the normative definition of democracy, a definition Netanyahu himself uses when it is advantageous. Actually, democratization is not easy and involves not only political institutions but also society and individuals. It is a process that could lose its legitimacy if it is perceived as imposed by foreign powers.

Hence, the tacit subtext suggesting that democratization is the best strategy to achieve peace also veils other strategies of promoting peace, namely, dealing with the problems of mutual hatred, poverty, refugees, and above all the occupation and the spreading of more and more settlements.

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53 See “Israel’s Road Map Reservations,” [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com), May 27, 2003.



This veiling of other peace strategies is also connected to the implicit blaming of the Palestinians for failing to achieve democracy. Democratization is not only a long and difficult process; it is also burdened by the Israeli military presence in the Palestinian territories. As Lieven rightly asks, how can we expect the Palestinians to democratize under military occupation, continuous curfews, and unresolved borders?<sup>54</sup> The proponents of peace by democratization do not ask this question; instead, they seek to gain politically by veiling it and blaming the Palestinians.

Netanyahu's large number of public addresses over the past few years reveal his role as an able political entrepreneur exploiting the democratic-peace phenomenon.<sup>55</sup> The political uses and abuses of democratic peace have succeeded in fostering a public atmosphere supportive of Israel and conducive to Bush's road map of June 2002,<sup>56</sup> bringing yet another delay in resuming negotiations with the Palestinians following the second Intifada. This politics of postponement enables the building of more settlements in the occupied territories, seen as facts on the ground to be taken into account during the future final status negotiations. The successful politics of

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54 Anatol Lieven, "The Wilsonian Veneer of US Foreign Policy," *Financial Times*, July 15, 2002.

55 Among the many public addresses where Netanyahu raised the same points were ones in Nashville at an IMRA (International Mass Retail Association) conference in June 2000, at the Columbia Business School in spring 2001, in Denver on January 2002, and at Yeshiva University on March 2002. Netanyahu raised the same points for an Israeli audience, e.g., at the Herzliya Conference on "The National Balance of National Strength and Security" in January 2001 (see Weizman, "Is Time on Our Side?") and in an interview to *Haaretz*, Ari Shavit, "A New Middle East? What an Amusing Idea," *Haaretz Weekly Supplement*, November 22, 1996 (in Hebrew). Netanyahu also raised the issues in several radio interviews, e.g., on the Australian Broadcast ABC in an interview on August 13, 2001, Mark Colvin, "Netanyahu Defends Israeli Policy, August 13, 2001," [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au).

56 George W. Bush, "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership, June 24, 2002," [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

postponement is also evident in Bush's letter to Sharon of April 14, 2004, where he affirms the Israeli claim that the final resolution of the conflict will have to take into consideration the map of Israeli settlements.<sup>57</sup> This letter was endorsed as Resolution 460 by an overwhelming majority of the House of Representatives on June 22, 2004.<sup>58</sup>

### *Natan Sharansky and the politics of avoidance*

A second Israeli politician who utilizes the hegemonic acceptance of the democratic-peace thesis is Natan Sharansky. Sharansky gained fame as a dissident in the former Soviet Union, a close associate of the Nobel Peace laureate Andrei Sakharov,<sup>59</sup> and a challenger of the Soviet Union for its policy of banning Jewish emigration to Israel. He was a political prisoner for nine years until his release in 1986 as part of an East-West prisoner exchange. Upon his release he was awarded the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, emigrated to Israel, and in 1995 turned to politics and formed the Russian-immigrant party Israel b'Aliyah.<sup>60</sup> Although mainly focused on immigrants' problems, the party took right-wing positions on security matters. Under Sharansky's leadership, Israel b'Aliyah entered coalition governments with the leftist Labor and rightist Likud parties. Sharansky has served in several cabinet positions including minister of industry and trade, of the interior, of housing and construction, of Jerusalem and the Diaspora, and deputy prime minister. Following the Likud's landslide victory in 2003 Israel b'Aliyah, which had lost much of its electoral strength

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57 "Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush," [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

58 For the text, see "Concurrent Resolution in the House of Representatives, June 22, 2004," [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

59 For their association, see Andre Sakharov, *Memoirs*, trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), esp. pp. 468–469; Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil*, trans. Stefani Hoffman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), esp. pp. 332–333.

60 A play on words meaning both "Israel in immigration" and "Israel on the rise."

over the years, integrated into the Likud. During all these years Sharansky, while propounding PA democratization as a precondition for peace, was a vocal opponent of every peace initiative or any attempt to withdraw from the occupied territories, including Sharon's June 2004 plan for unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Hence, we can assume that he uses the democratic-peace thesis to utterly avoid resuming negotiations with the Palestinians and the concomitant Israeli territorial concessions. Sharansky, in other words, practices a politics of avoidance.

Since embarking in Israeli politics as a right-wing leader of the Russian immigrants, Sharansky has argued against the Oslo accords. His criticism has been harsh and sometimes personal. In an op-ed he condemned what he termed the "gang of Oslo blazers" or "Beilin's gang."<sup>61</sup> Usually, though, his criticism was aimed at what he saw as the flawed logic of the Oslo accords: "Take a dictator from Tunis, bring him to the West Bank and Gaza, give him control over 98 percent of all Palestinians, offer him territory, legitimacy, money, an army, and economical tools—and, as a result, he will be so interested in playing the role of a leader of his people that he will become our partner. That was the idea."<sup>62</sup> This criticism in itself is not necessarily linked to the democratic-peace thesis. Its origins, as he himself declares, are in Sharansky's personal distrust of authoritarian regimes stemming from his experiences in the former Soviet Union. Yet, two aspects do relate his criticism to the democratic-peace thesis. The first is the logic Sharansky offers to support his personal conviction. The second is his use of the hegemonic status of the democratic-peace thesis in the United States, aimed at deflecting some of the American criticism of the Israeli occupation and convincing the Americans to adopt a different Middle East strategy.

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61 Natan Sharansky, "Temple Mount Is More Important than Peace," *Haaretz*, October 16, 2003.

62 Natan Sharansky, "Democracy for Peace, June 20, 2002," *www.aei.org*.

Sharansky's logic comes from the teachings of Sakharov:

Long ago, Andrei Sakharov taught me that a society that does not respect the rights of its own citizens will never respect the rights of its neighbors. The reasons for this are simple. Democratic leaders are dependent for their rule on the will of a free people and as such have a vested interest in promoting the peace and prosperity that all free societies desire. In doing so, the nations they govern naturally assume a nonbelligerent posture toward their neighbors, particularly when those neighbors are also democratic states pursuing the same objectives.<sup>63</sup>

This yields the axiom that "democracies do not go to war with one another."<sup>64</sup> In other words,

in a democracy, the leader has to be concerned about the well-being of his people. For him, war is always the last resort, because people want to avoid war at all costs. A dictator, however, does not depend on his people; the people depend on him. His primary goal, and greatest headache, is how to keep the people under control. To do so, he always needs an enemy, against whom he can constantly mobilize his people. The enemy can be an external one, an internal one, or if the dictator, like Stalin, is particularly adept, both external and internal concurrently.<sup>65</sup>

Sharansky likes to reiterate that he is a disciple of Sakharov. The latter's writings contain much that resembles Kant's ideas about peace. Sakharov dealt with the need for government to be accountable to the citizens, and to govern according to their needs and wishes. Sakharov, however, offers an additional prodemocracy argument involving the importance of total

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63 Natan Sharansky, "Only Democracy Brings Peace," *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2000.

64 Ibid.

65 Sharansky, "Democracy for Peace." See also Natan Sharansky, "The Mistakes of Oslo," *Haaretz*, January 22, 2001.

freedom of information and exchange of views. This stems from his training in science, where such total freedom is essential to progress.<sup>66</sup> Sakharov's reasoning mainly resembles the structural explanations of democratic peace, focusing on the need for regime accountability. Such accountability ensures that the public plays a role in the political equation of checks and balances, operating as another branch along with the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Thus the public is part of the democratic structure, which slows down decisionmaking processes and contributes to deescalating dyadic crises and stabilizing relations between states. Herein also lies the affinity of Sharansky's views with democratic-peace argumentation. Sharansky's criticism of the Oslo accords is not just a personal anger against despotism, be it of Stalin or Arafat. It reflects a deep conviction that despotism brings war, while democracy prevents it.

Based on his objections to the Oslo accords, Sharansky offers an alternative. In a *Jerusalem Post* article in May 2002, he called it "a seven-point plan of action towards a permanent peace settlement."<sup>67</sup> The points included:

1. An International Coordination Body will be established that will be responsible for setting up a Palestinian Administrative Authority (PAA).

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66 See Sakharov's three famous manifestos. The first, published in June 1968, is *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*, trans. The New York Times (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968); the second, published in March 1970, is "Manifesto II," in *Sakharov Speaks*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (London: Collins, Harvill Press, 1974), pp. 98–114; the third, published in June 1975, is *My Country and the World*, trans. Guy V. Daniels (London: Collins & Harvill Press, 1975). In these three writings Sakharov presents more or less the same internal reasoning, though he distances himself ever further from the Soviet ideology, establishing himself as a fierce dissident of the regime.

67 Natan Sharansky, "Where Do We Go from Here?" *Jerusalem Post*, May 3, 2002, p. A8.

2. The PAA will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of Palestinian affairs.
3. Israel will be responsible for security.
4. The PAA and the International Coordination Body will be responsible for developing a democratic way of life.
5. The refugee camps will immediately be dismantled, and the Arab countries and the United Nations will finance the resettlement of the refugees.
6. An international economic fund will be established for the creation and financing of industry and infrastructure development.
7. After a three-year transition period under the administration of the PAA and the International Coordination Body, there will be free and open elections in the areas administered by the PAA and then negotiations for permanent peace will begin.

Significant in this plan is the process of democratizing the Palestinian polity as a precondition for permanent peace. It contains other issues, such as the implied need to dismantle the existing PA, the internationalization of the conflict, and the postponing of the final negotiations. But points 4 and 7, which make democratization a precondition for negotiating the final settlement, are its core.<sup>68</sup> Although point 4 implies the need for democratic education, point 7 makes clear that elections and accountability are the ultimate criteria for democratization. These notions of structural democratization on the one hand, and a minimal, structural definition of democracy

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68 In "Democracy for Peace," Sharansky stated: "Democracy is for everybody. Of course, encouraging democracy does not mean that people's lives, mentality, and culture need to be transformed. 'Democracy' means one simple thing—the ability of people to express their views, thoughts, and beliefs freely, without the fear that they will be imprisoned as a result." This is a minimal and structural definition of democracy, implying that democratization is a formal, structural reform that does not affect matters of culture and norms.

on the other, mutually reinforce each other. We find here a consistent linkage among the explanation for democratic peace, the definition of democracy, and the type of democratization that can solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sharansky presented this plan in many forums, including to Prime Minister Sharon, and in many public addresses in American universities. For example, in September 2003 Sharansky engaged in an intensive one-week lecture series in thirteen American universities including Boston University, Columbia University, New York University, and the University of Maryland. The series was sponsored by Beit Hillel, a Jewish student organization. Introduced as the former Soviet dissident, facing audiences not all of which were supportive, Sharansky presented his views on the necessary linkage between democracy and peace. As he asserted at Boston University on September 16, 2003, "I believe that peace is possible, and I believe a two-state solution is possible... but only when Israel no longer is the only democracy in the Middle East."<sup>69</sup> In all these public efforts Sharansky acted as a political entrepreneur, promoting the idea of a Middle Eastern democratic peace. In keeping with Steiner's theory, Sharansky's role as a political entrepreneur was largely legitimized by his personal prestige, in this case as a former Soviet dissident, human rights activist, and recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Sharansky's most successful talk was given at the AEI (American Enterprise Initiative) World Forum in Beaver Creek, Colorado, on June 20, 2002. He was invited to the conference by Richard Perle, one of the leading neoconservative advisers to the Bush administration. Although at the beginning of Sharansky's anti-Oslo campaign he was often ridiculed, swimming against the current, this was no longer the case in 2002. Several developments contributed to this change: the outbreak of the second

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69 David J. Craig, "Human Rights Champion Sharansky: Palestinian Democracy Key to Peace, September 19, 2003," [www.bu.edu/bridge](http://www.bu.edu/bridge).

Intifada and the collapse of the peace process, which many perceived as fulfilling Sharansky's forecasts; the 2000 elections and the formation of a new right-wing government headed by Sharon; the outbreak of a new wave of world terror, purportedly directed by Osama Bin Laden and epitomized by September 11, 2001; and the rise to power of neoconservatives in the U.S. administration. The neoconservatives were looking for new strategies to combat terror and were amenable to the ideas of Sharansky, the famous Soviet dissident and one of the great warriors against the evil empire of the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup> The AEI World Forum was attended by close associates of the neoconservative circles, including Vice President Richard Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and Sharansky was one of the keynote speakers and called his lecture "Democracy for Peace."<sup>71</sup>

Sharansky, as usual, mentioned his intellectual debt to Sakharov, his criticism of the Oslo accords, and the need for democracy to guarantee peace. He emphasized four major points: democracy as the cure to terror; the shared identity of the democratic world; the collective identity of all terror; and the feasibility of the democratic idea in the Arab and Islamic world. At the beginning of the address, Sharansky declared, "We are in the midst of the first world war of the twenty-first century, waged between the world of terror and the world of democracy...." Addressing mainly the veterans of the Reagan era among those present, Sharansky praised Reagan's tough attitude toward the Soviet Union and made the familiar

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70 See, e.g., the applauding articles of two neoconservatives: Charles Krauthammer, "Peace through Democracy," *Washington Post*, June 28, 2002, p. A9; Ira Stoll, "Israel's Reagan? Natan Sharansky Understands that Liberty Is the Only Guarantee of Peace," *Wall Street Journal*, December 13, 2002.

71 See Sharansky, "Democracy for Peace." About two weeks later Sharansky published his plan in the *Wall Street Journal*, circulating it among the American public; Natan Sharansky, "Free Palestine Can Become a Reality: A Plan for Peace and Democracy," *Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 2002.



claim that terrorism had taken over from communism as a global menace.<sup>72</sup> Sharansky then referred to Stalin as the prototype of the dictator who mobilizes his people against purported external and internal enemies. From Stalin he went to Arafat, claiming that Arafat had rejected Barak's offers because as a dictator he needed Israel as an enemy to mobilize his people. From Arafat he moved on to praise the war in Afghanistan in the name of democratization. Thus, in one oratorical sweep, he meshed together America's past and current threats, its self-perceived mission in the world, and Israel's current threats. He invoked, in other words, the eternal struggle between the democratic "we" and the despotic "they."

We can detect here a brief alternation of the definition and conceptualization of democracy, a tactical move similar to the one we observed in Netanyahu. Sharansky tries—quite successfully—to construct a sense of a shared democratic identity between Israel and the United States. To this end he briefly offers a cultural-normative definition of democracy, and then returns to his usual structural notion of democracy. He asserts that just as "we" won the Cold War, so "we" will win this new world war, because "we" are democratic. In his own words, "What a powerful weapon, democracy! What a drug for the people! Give it to them, and it will be the best guarantee of security." Peoples, so the argument goes, cannot resist the freedom embodied in democracy, the freedom to express their beliefs without the fear of being punished. This irresistibility of democracy is universal and pertains even to the Islamic and Arab worlds, as long as democracy is defined minimally by structural criteria.<sup>73</sup> Thus, to defeat terrorism and promote peace in the Middle East, we need to promote democracy. Toward the end of

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72 He offers a similar flattering analysis in "Who Will Speak the Truth?" *Washington Post*, October 12, 2000.

73 See the quotation in n. 71. Sharansky further stressed this point in an op-ed about three weeks later, "Palestinian Democracy: Relevant and Realistic," *Haaretz*, July 18, 2002.

the address, Sharansky briefly summarized his seven-point plan for a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace.

This address was given less than a week before Bush's Rose Garden speech in which he announced the launching of the road map. Several commentators believe Sharansky's meetings with Cheney and Wolfowitz considerably influenced the final version of the road-map speech.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, as Milbank points out, there are many similarities between Sharansky's and Bush's ideas on several issues such as the need for a new Palestinian leadership, a three-year transition period, an international coordinating body to supervise and support the Palestinian institution building, and of course, the need for a free and open Palestinian society as a guarantee of peace and security for Israel.<sup>75</sup>

Apparently, Sharansky's entrepreneurship was successful. His public address and private meetings seem to have established the issue of democratization as the hallmark of the road map. The address and the meetings took place at a critical time of drafting and redrafting Bush's speech, which articulated a new U.S. strategy toward the Middle East conflict. Later this plan was also adopted by the Quartet, and a more detailed and operative plan was drafted in April 2003.<sup>76</sup> The impact of Sharansky's ideas on Bush's policy is indeed dramatic.

Yet, there is reason to suspect Sharansky's sincerity in using the democratic-peace thesis. He is not wholeheartedly committed to the cause of a two-state solution. He extols the prospect of a two-democratic-states solution, and there is no doubt that he is a wholehearted democrat and truly believes that democracies do not fight each other. In the case of the

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74 Jonathan Rosenblum, "Democracy—What a Beautiful Idea," *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July 5, 2002; Dan Ephron and Tamara Lipper, "Sharansky's Quiet Role," *Newsweek*, July 15, 2002; Dana Milbank, "A Sound Bite So Good, the President Wishes He Had Said It," *Washington Post*, July 2, 2002, p. A13.

75 Ibid.

76 See "A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, April 30, 2003," [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, it seems he exploits the hegemonic status of democratic peace in the commonsense thinking of Americans. Essentially, he practices a politics of avoidance. Sharansky raised the idea of democratizing the PA so as to divert the Americans from other issues, much more urgent for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem.

Ever since entering Israeli politics, Sharansky has taken hawkish positions and espoused the vision of Greater Israel. Even as a member of Barak's government, which was supposedly committed to advancing the peace process, he put up fierce internal opposition.<sup>77</sup> And as a coalition member of Likud governments he has been a vocal opponent of every political initiative, including Sharon's June 2004 proposal for unilateral withdrawal. One way to understand Sharansky's opposition is to suppose that all these political initiatives would have strengthened the Arafat dictatorship; hence Sharansky rejected them because they were doomed to fail and to generate ever more violence. But this argument is inherently problematic. Sharansky's reasoning manifests basic commitment to the notion of Greater Israel.

Sharansky rarely presents the full scope of his ideology, or his vision of the map of a future democratic Palestinian state. In one article in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, however, he offered a glimpse into his real views. Titled "Temple Mount Is More Important than Peace," it was published on October 16, 2003, and deals with Jerusalem and the most sacred place of all, the Temple Mount.<sup>78</sup> Sharansky argues that the Jewish people's religious,

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77 Especially, though by no means only, in the final days of Barak's coalition, when the failures of the Camp David summit of July 2000 became evident. See Natan Sharansky, "Open Your Eyes, Mr. Prime Minister," *Jerusalem Post*, November 3, 2000.

78 Sharansky, "Temple Mount Is More Important than Peace." For similar views, see also Sharansky's address to the 145th session of the 15th Knesset on October 30, 2000, and to the 170th session on January 1, 2001, where he declares that Jerusalem constitutes Israel's identity as a nation, [www.knesset.gov.il](http://www.knesset.gov.il) (in Hebrew).

historical, and national ties to the Temple Mount constitute the roots of the Zionist movement; they are the *raison d'être* of Zionism, of the Jewish's people's return to Israel. As such, the Temple Mount is essential to Jewish national existence in Israel, and hence is even more important than peace. Giving up the Temple Mount, Sharansky asserts, means the end of Zionism and the state of Israel. Although the article relates to the Temple Mount only, its arguments are analogous to all of the occupied territories. The religious and historical significance of the West Bank, or Judea and Samaria in biblical terms, is also very strong. It contains the landscapes of the biblical events, and whoever believes the Temple Mount is of existential religious, historical, and national importance would presumably believe the same about Judea and Samaria.

Sharansky's commitment to Greater Israel is evident, however, not only by induction from his support for Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount. He is also one of the supporters of the Israeli settlements and worked on their behalf in his different ministerial positions. Evidence of such efforts was presented in the May 2004 report of the Israeli state comptroller, which identifies Sharansky, in his position as minister of housing and construction, as responsible for massive money transfers to settlements, including unauthorized ones ("outposts") situated in the Palestinian heartland, in what seems like an abuse of his ministerial powers.<sup>79</sup> Sharansky, that is, used his position to finance and strengthen Israel's hold on the territories; or, in another terminology, he helped deepen the Israeli occupation.

This behavior runs contrary to the democratization argument. Although it is true that Israel should not go ahead in the peace process before the full democratization of the Palestinians, it is also important not to erect obstacles to such democratization. That is exactly what happens

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<sup>79</sup> See *State Comptroller Annual Report No. 54B*, May 5, 2004, pp. 345–374, esp. pp. 365–367 (in Hebrew).

when Israel builds ever more settlements. As noted earlier, Lieven asks how we can expect Palestinians to opt for a free and open society under military occupation, ongoing curfews, and a lack of recognized borders.<sup>80</sup> A democratization process is not a real possibility when Palestinians see more and more lands of their ostensible future state confiscated from them. One cannot ponder the form of the future regime when one sees the future state's viability being ruined by the loss of territorial continuity. If Sharansky were really seeking a two-democratic-states solution, he would not help build ever more obstacles on the path to it.

When we examine Sharansky's words and deeds, it seems that by using democratic peace he succeeded in deflecting the United States from the more urgent issues of the conflict such as settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem. He thereby succeeded in averting negotiations and clearing the way to further strengthening of the Greater Israel project. Sharansky did not just use the democratic-peace thesis; he abused it in a manipulative, political manner to serve his ideological agenda.

### *The entrepreneurship of Netanyahu and Sharansky*

There is ample evidence that both Netanyahu and Sharansky have acted as able political entrepreneurs. Both of them perceived opportunities for policy change, advocated innovative ideas, and transformed political arenas.<sup>81</sup> Their activities also fit Steiner's theory of political entrepreneurship with its emphasis on a long, arduous process in which the entrepreneurs use their own political resources, operate the political and social context, identify the targeted agents, and seek to gain an epistemic convergence. In our case Netanyahu utilized his personal familiarity with the American political culture and his rhetorical abilities, and Sharansky utilized his prestige as a

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80 Lieven, "Wilsonian Veneer of US Foreign Policy."

81 Schneider, Teske with Mintrom, *Public Entrepreneurs*, p. 3.

former Soviet dissident, associate of Sakharov, acclaimed freedom fighter, and recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal. Both knew well how to use the hegemonic status of the democratic-peace thesis to bring about their sought-after policy change, and they also accurately recognized the neoconservative circles around President Bush as their targeted agents. They also identified the changes that the U.S. foreign policy agenda had undergone after September 2001, and realized how to exploit them to the benefit of their ideological needs. They understood how to decontest the meaning of democratic peace accordingly, suggesting that democratization is the ultimate antidote to terrorism. Thus, by concentrating their political efforts on the neoconservative circles, they achieved an epistemic convergence that helped pave the way to President Bush's road map. Each of them accomplished a desired delay in resuming negotiations with the Palestinians, be it a temporary one as Netanyahu probably wants or a permanent one as Sharansky wants.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Two strategies were employed in this study to falsify Freedén's demarcation of social science theories from ideologies. The first was to show the political uses and abuses of social science theories—democratic-peace theories in this particular case—aimed at achieving ideological goals. It was demonstrated how Netanyahu and Sharansky used and abused the democratic-peace thesis, with its different explanations, to achieve their ideological goals. This in itself does not falsify Freedén's demarcation, but casts doubt on its usefulness in understanding real-world complexities. In other words, though it is true that politicians use theories ideologically, that does not necessarily mean the theoreticians themselves are ideologues; theories might use purely rationalistic methods to configure and decontest political concepts. Theoreticians could also use such purely rationalistic methods to persuade their colleagues. Parallel to these rationalistic moves by theoreticians, politicians can abuse theories and use them as an extrarational method of

persuasion. Hence, politicians could use theories to convey certain nonobjective aims, contrary to the theories' reputation and academic ethos, and in contrast to Freedden's claims.

The second strategy employed to falsify the demarcation of theories from ideology has more devastating results for the ethos of objectivity and rationality, and involved pointing out the ideological sources of the two different theories of democratic peace. Each of the theories originates from a different concept of democracy and a different ideology. It was argued that the structural theory of democratic peace is founded on an elitist and structural theory of democracy, which is rooted in a conservative ideology, whereas the normative theory of democratic peace is founded on a participatory theory of democracy that is rooted in the progressive ideologies, namely, liberalism and socialism. Therefore, the inner reasoning used by the theoreticians in the process of theorizing is ideological—that is, at the basis of theories lies an ideology, an extrarational conviction. Consequently, it is impossible to demarcate theories from ideologies.

Understanding theories as political thoughts, which Freedden defined as “configurations of *decontested* meanings of political concepts,”<sup>82</sup> even further strengthens the view of theories as ideologies. Every theory constitutes a total worldview of the political and the social. This is so because each theory decontests differently the concepts it employs. We saw how different the definitions of democracy and peace are in the two theories that seek to explain the democratic-peace thesis.

The difference between the two theories is even sharper when we take into consideration the secondary concepts in each of the theories, which construct the primary concepts of democracy and peace. Thus, the structural theory of democratic peace does not merely explain democratic peace by structural factors but also gives a structural definition of democracy, leading to concepts such as division of power, and checks

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82 Freedden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 76.

and balances, that need to be decontested themselves, and so forth. This theory also implies a not-too-stable peace. Likewise, the normative theory of democratic peace does not merely explain democratic peace by normative and cultural factors but also presents a normative definition of democracy, leading to concepts such as norms, and participation, that need to be decontested themselves, and so forth. This theory also implies a stable peace.

This triple theoretical framework proved helpful in understanding the political mechanisms that Netanyahu and Sharansky used in order to fulfill their ideological goals. It was shown that Netanyahu and Sharansky acted as political entrepreneurs, exploiting the hegemonic status of the democratic-peace thesis to successfully pursue ideological objectives. Netanyahu uses the political space opened up by the manifold flexibility of theories, concepts, and meanings. He does so by alternating between them, using each for a different political goal: the structural theories, concepts, and meanings, to strengthen U.S.-Israeli ties; the normative theories, concepts, and meanings, to convey to Americans that the time is not yet ripe for resuming negotiations with the Palestinians.

The political entrepreneurship of both Netanyahu and Sharansky has been successful. Together they contributed much to bringing about a doctrinal change in U.S. policy toward the Middle East.<sup>83</sup> President Bush's

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83 There are indications that the above-discussed argumentative maneuverings of both Netanyahu and Sharansky had some impact on broader U.S. policy toward the Middle East as a whole, the so-called Greater Middle East Initiative (later known as the Broader Middle East Initiative). This policy stressed democratization as a source of regional stability and peace, hence also contributing to the overall security of the United States; democratization as a counterterror strategy; the universal attractiveness of the democratic idea as rooted in human desires; the essential, quite minimal features of democracy, leaving much to cultural diversity, hence democracy as a fitting regime also for Islam and the Arab world; terrorists as the successors of the murderous ideologies of the 20th century; and the importance of accountability in



road map marked the first time that America conditioned the peace process on Palestinian democratization. Bush's declaration and the Quartet's endorsement of it gave Israel an opportunity to further strengthen its existing settlements in the territories and to build new ones. For Netanyahu, this probably accords with a strategy of constructing facts on the ground (new settlements) that will have to be taken into account in the final status negotiations. For Sharansky, it probably suits a strategy of avoiding the possibility of a two-state solution. Therefore, Netanyahu's politics was termed "postponement" and Sharansky's politics was termed "avoidance."

Different as these two politics are, they substantiate the arguments that were put forward in this study. First, theories constitute political thoughts, "configurations of *decontested* meanings of political concepts."<sup>84</sup> Second, contrary to Freedén's argumentation, theories are not far removed from ideologies; they are constructed on the basis of normative commitments and ideological attachments. Third, theories contain political capital and sometimes politicians take advantage of it, ideologically using the theories to pursue political gains.

This third argument has several implications. One is that this meta-theoretical discussion is not only abstract, but also applies on the plane of practical reasoning. If theories are indeed endowed with political capital, and have some features that are conducive to political manipulation, then

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explaining the peaceful tendencies of democracy. All these ideas were championed successfully by Sharansky. See George W. Bush, "President George W. Bush, Speech at the AEI Annual Dinner on February 28, 2003," [www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org); George W. Bush, "President George W. Bush, Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina on May 9, 2003," [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov); George W. Bush, "President George W. Bush, Remarks at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy on November 6, 2003," [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov); George W. Bush, "President George W. Bush, Remarks on Winston Churchill and the War on Terror on February 4, 2004," [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

84 Freedén, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 76

theoreticians have political and moral responsibility. This is so for two related reasons: first, theoreticians are ideologically committed and their products (theories) are not objective entities, but political thoughts that are ideologically constructed, and politically committed; second, theories have consequences in the real world of politics by shaping it. Theoreticians need not consciously intend to influence the real world of politics, but once they publish their theories they are circulated and become part of the public domain. Theories sometimes even gain the status of Gramscian hegemony, helping to construct the uncritical commonsense of the every-person. Hence, theoreticians need to be aware of the potential of their theories to gain political capital, and of the possibility that their theories will be used and abused by politicians and ideologues. To limit this, theoreticians need to refine as much as possible the definitions of the concepts they use. They should also explain the various normative assumptions that construct their theories. It will then be more difficult for politicians to alternate between different, irreconcilable theories to pursue diverse political gains, as Netanyahu did with the different democratic-peace theories. Moreover, once a theoretician identifies an abuse of his theory by politicians, it is his responsibility to take the role of whistleblower and expose it.

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