PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE TALKS:
THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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Abstract

The article develops an understanding of public deliberations during a peace process, focusing on the interaction between the elite level negotiations and the "public peace process." It does so by examining the dialogical mechanisms that are set to work in the public sphere once the elite consider the possibility of identifying the former enemies as allies or friends. These dialogical mechanisms, the author argues, add up to a shift in the manner the public interprets the discourse that regulates its relationship with the elite toward what the author calls, following Paul Ricoeur, 'hermeneutics of suspicion.' Thus, the peace process generates a need for the public to re-examine the terms of understanding that defined its relationship with the former enemy. However this same process might also lead the public to re-examine the terms by which it understands its relationship with the elite.

Introduction

"The ever present possibility of combat," according to Carl Schmitt's famous doctrine, defines the real antithetical categories underling the notion of the "political:" that of a friend or an enemy. During times of peace and stability, people might come to use the concept of "the political" in a metaphorical way and, as a result, its real meaning might be lost in everyday language. But, Schmitt (1996, 38) contended, "[t]he real friend-enemy grouping is existentially so strong," that it "pushes aside and subordinates" other competing categorization "at precisely the moment at which it becomes political." This "moment" is a threat of war. Leaving aside the question of whether Schmitt indeed identified the true meaning of "the political" (or whether there is such a true meaning), let us focus here only on one aspect of Schmitt's observation: war affects the way arguments are exchanged in the public sphere. When the drums of war are banging one category of identity, that of a friend or an enemy, "pushes aside and subordinates" other categories of identity and other ways to discuss political matters.

The consequences of the narrowing down is captured by the Israeli novelist David Grossman (2007, 28):

I immediately recall the words of the mouse in Kafka's short story "A Little Fable." The mouse who, as the trap closes on him, and the cat looms behind, says, "Alas . . . the world is growing narrower every day." Indeed, after many years of living in the extreme and violent reality of a political, military and religious conflict, I can report, sadly, that...Kafka's mouse is right: when the predator is closing in on you, the world does indeed become increasingly narrow. So does the language that describes it. From my experience I can say that the language with which the citizens of a sustained conflict describe their predicament becomes progressively shallower the longer the conflict endures. Language gradually becomes a sequence of clichés and slogans.

When language itself becomes a sequence of clichés and slogans, citizens turn more obedient and are made easier to rule. The threat of war is not only a tool used between states. It is also used by elites for domestic political control. War, even the threat of it, makes people focus on themselves and their most immediate and basic experiences: life, survival, security. Needless to add, the enemy's view is silenced, banished from consideration. But not only the enemy's view is silenced. War is used to silence voices from within as well. When this happens, what might appear to participants as a vibrant exchange of reasons can actually be manipulated to support the point of view of those who hold positions of power. To use a spatial metaphor, war puts pressure to narrow down the *vertical* discourse that defines the term by which the opposing publics understand themselves and each other. War also puts pressure to narrow down the *horizontal* discourse that defines the term by which the public understands its relationship with its own elite.

But what happens to the public sphere when the opposite process occurs, when long-standing friend-enemy distinctions are being questioned in the context of a peace process? In particular, what happens to the horizontal discourse of power and control once the narrowing pressures on the vertical discourse of friend and enemy are relaxed or even reversed? In posing these questions, this article becomes part of a body of recent works which seek to use the theoretical toolkit of interpretive social sciences for the study of war and peace as discourses (Edelman, 1988; Barker, 2007, and other works discussed in this paper). A discourse can be understood as "a shared set of assumptions and capabilities embedded in language that enables its adherents to assemble bits of sensory information that come their way into coherent wholes" (Dryzek, 1999, 34). Interpretive social sciences contend that discourses are constitutive, at least in part, of social reality. The very language which they generate to discuss politics shape the lenses through which the public understands political events. The contribution of this article is in presenting a theoretical framework that studies the interactive effects of war and peace on discourse at two levels: that of the interaction between the two communities, and that of the interaction between the public and the elite within communities.

The terminology of game-theory might be helpful here. When politicians formulate foreign policy, they are often concerned about pressures from domestic interest

groups as much as they are concerned about maintaining security or economic balance of power. Game theorists have used the metaphor of "two-level games" to describe these relationships between foreign policy and domestic political concerns. We can use the metaphor of a "two-level game" to discuss what happens in the public sphere during a peace process. We can understand the relationship between the elite-level negotiations and, what we will later call, the "public peace process," as the two levels of this game. Game theory attributes to the players only an instrumental conception of reason and takes their preferences as given. But this is insufficient. Interpretive social sciences teach us that when enemies become friends, or when friends turn into enemies, players also re-examine their preferences. In the process of exchanging arguments with domestic interlocutors and with the other side, participants come to examine and re-evaluate the frames by which they understand their present situation and their corresponding interests. Thus, while elites engage in peace negotiations for their own reasons, they try to convince their public that existing justifications for maintaining a state of enmity are no longer valid. However, in so doing they unleash a deliberative process that has the potential to escape the frames of discussion they intended to establish.

New developments in both Critical Theory and Peace Studies create a theoretical opening that allows the development of tools with which to conceptualize the relationship between the horizontal and vertical discourses. Traditionally, there were scarcely any intellectual affinities between Critical Theory and Peace Studies. In the environment of the Cold War, studies of peace focused on the bargaining process among elites, and they saw their aim mainly as ending the armed conflict. At the same time, critical theorists were scarcely interested in the intricacies of diplomacy. To the extent that they reflected on the issue of peace at all, they were concerned with the pacifying tendencies that prevailed in Western societies. When they considered violence, they did not dismiss it as illegitimate at the outset but debated whether it could be a legitimate tool in the pursuit of a more free society (see, for example, Marcuse, 1969, 95-137). It is therefore not the case that Peace Studies and Critical Theory were directly opposed to each other. They simply did not have any shared language. I argue in this article that the recent "deliberative" turn in Critical Theory and the "public" turn in Peace Studies open up a theoretical space for a shared framework – both fields now focus on social discourses as the main site where the "drama" of social interactions takes place.

To conceptualize the discursive "drama" of the peace process, I propose two theoretical moves, both of which extend the view of peace process as a discourse in two complementary directions. First, I propose understanding the peace process as an epistemological crisis, a crisis of knowledge and understanding. An epistemological crisis is a situation when the old ways of knowing and understanding do not fit the new reality. The diplomatic moves towards peace forces participants in the public sphere to imagine the former enemy as a possible interlocutor, one who is part of the give and take of reasons. However, if conflict narrows the very language by which political issues are

discussed, as Grossman observes, then the public sphere does not have the tools needed to provide reason to the former enemy. This is an epistemological crisis.

The second move builds on those who borrow the conceptual apparatus developed for interpreting texts to understanding other aspects of political life, including the peace process. Several scholars sought to understand the desired outcome of the dialogue which takes place in the peace process as a Gadamerian fusion of horizons. The idea of a dialogue and fusion of horizons helps us to conceptualize the horizontal discourse that takes place in the peace process. This idea is less helpful when it comes to understanding the effects of the peace process on the vertical discourse that regulating the relationship between the elite and the people.   Instead, we need to examine the way the peace process affects the style of interpretation that the public applies.   I argue that the peace process pushes the public towards applying the style of interpretation what Paul Ricoeur (1970) calls "hermeneutic of suspicion" when they interpret the messages of the elite.

More broadly, I argue that the understanding of war and peace with the tools of interpretive social science must go beyond a one-dimensional focus on the horizontal discourse understood and the focus on Gadamerian hermeneutic of trust. Instead, we need to examine dynamics of trust and suspicion as they shape and are shaped by the "two levels game" of dialogue between the rivalries and the dialogue between the elite and the people.

The Peace Process as a Procedure: Why the Public Sphere?

But why should scholars of peace studies attend to the public sphere in the first place? The conventional answer to this question is "sociological:" the public is an important player in the peace process and we need to understand what makes it tick. I want to present here an alternative argument in which the reason we need to examine the public straddles sociological and normative considerations.

If we were to be asked to evaluate peace agreements, say the Treaty of Versailles, the Oslo Accord, or the Good Friday Agreement, we would have readily available measures by which, at least in hindsight, to evaluate which ones lead to long-term stability and which ones ended up generating more instability. However, what measures should we use if we were to be asked whether each of these agreements were fair, equitable, or just?

One route we can follow in answering this question is identifying some general criteria by which to evaluate the fairness of the peace agreements. A Hobbesian, for example, would argue that the stability of peace is the sole normative criterion that we can apply: "peace is good, and therefore also the way, or means of peace" (Hobbes, 1985/1651, 216). Others might disagree, arguing that some stable peace agreements are inherently unfair. They can choose to follow other normative criteria: whether the agreement treats both sides as equal, whether the cost and benefits of the peace are

distributed fairly across different groups in society, whether the agreement does or does not "reward" aggressors for their actions, and so on. Each of these criteria assumes some broad general doctrine of what constitutes fairness and what fair peace agreements should look like. What they all share, however, is the implicit assumption that this question can be answered – at least principally – independently of the view of those who are subject to the agreement.

The procedural, or deliberative, turn in political philosophy suggests a different route, according to which the validity of any social norm or institutional arrangement is based on the question of whether it can be agreed upon by those who are subject were they presented with the relevant argument and were free from any coercion. In this view, outcomes are legitimate "if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned agreement among equals" (Cohen, 1997, 73).

The procedural route is attractive for those who hold democracy and equality dear. They see it as the only possible way to make normative judgments in our "post-metaphysical world" in which we no longer believe that our moral judgment can be dictated by objective moral truths given by comprehensive religious or philosophical doctrines (Habermas, 1992). The procedural account maintains that we need to study the public sphere not only as sociologists who seek to understand the social fabric, but also as moral philosophers interested in the normative validity of social norms. In this context, the public sphere is the social arena where arguments are being exchanged and where speakers are asked to justify the claims that they are making. Opinions and beliefs can be held privately, even secretly. However, the moment they are turned into arguments they enter the public sphere, and those who make these arguments may be asked to justify their position. The public sphere, then, is the social sphere where the validity of normative claims is underwritten (Bohman, 1999).

Thus, if we were to evaluate peace agreements following the procedural route, we would focus on the exchange of reasons that took place in reaching the agreement, and examine the extent to which they could indeed be the object of free and reasoned agreement among equals. If we find out that the points of view and the interests of certain groups in society were marginalized and were not taken into account in the process, we would conclude that the agreement is lacking from a normative point of view.

The procedural conception of legitimacy requires a study of procedures from the perspectives of both normative theory and critical social theory. This is why deliberative theory is inherently tied to critical social science. The core of the critical approach in the social sciences is the contention that a discourse can be tied to a web of unequal social power relations. It is not necessarily the case that discourses are a form of "false consciousness" planned and disseminated intentionally by the elite to enslave passive masses. Rather, social discourses emerge through a complex historical process and in relation to various systems of institutions. These social institutions and discourses constitute the various relations of power in society and are not only the products of

power. The relationship between dominant social discourses and relations of power is then a complex one.

Thus, any philosophical worldview that entrusts the public with the task of conferring moral legitimacy must account for the way the public sphere is situated within a broader political system. The asymmetries of power that exist in the political system can reproduce themselves in the public sphere in ways that can be opaque to both participants and observers (Hayward, 2004; Young, 2000). When participants in the public sphere present a position that they take to be an authentic one, we cannot assume that this is not the effect of power relations whose work is hidden from them.

This means that the public sphere can become autonomous only when it is able to reflect on the relations of power within which it is embedded (for a similar claim, see Dryzek's 2006 "test of reflexivity"). The challenge for scholars who study the public sphere and the reason why critical theory must be democratic is that the question of whether this condition is achieved cannot be conclusively settled. It requires an interaction between the perspective of the participant and of the observer. To be able to assess the authenticity of arguments made in the public sphere, observers must evaluate their relative merits and thus take the role of participants. At the same time, participants in a debate can believe that they have an accurate understanding of the power relation in which the public sphere is situated but for the outside observer they can appear as tilting windmills (for example, when a nationalistic public sphere take poor immigrants to be the source of their oppression).

In short, if we take a procedural view of legitimacy (as I think we must; who else can decide for us which peace agreement is legitimate) then the public cannot simply be understood as one more player in the peace process. The public sphere is the site where the *process* of peace should take place, where arguments should be exchanged in an attempt to clarify the source of enmity and what is at stake with alternative proposals for solution.

Peace Negotiations as an Epistemological Crisis

In this section, I present a framework for discussing how the peace process affects the public sphere. I argue that that the peace process can be understood as an epistemological crisis in the public sphere. Then, I make the claim that a peace process is a unique kind of epistemological crisis since it demands the expansion of the scope of the dominant discourses in the public sphere.

An epistemological crisis emerges when existing dominant ways of explaining social events can no longer account for social and intellectual developments (MacIntyre, 1988, 361-2). This epistemic vacuum opens the door for rival accounts to become dominant (Lustick, 1993, chapter 5). The process is at once an intellectual and a political

one (Gramsci, 1971, 210). The competing accounts represent the positions of competing social forces that engage in a battle for domination.

Not all crises are made equal, however. What is missing from this conception of crisis is an account of how the crisis situation affects deliberations in the public sphere. Thus, we have seen that the crisis itself generates pressures towards self-examination. However, different kinds of crises can generate different dynamics of self-examination. Up until very recently, there was no conceptual apparatus that would allow a systematic discussion of war and peace as epistemological crises faced by the public sphere. Recent intellectual shifts in Peace Studies allow the development of such a framework since they provide tools for articulating what I described earlier metaphorically as the expansion and narrowing down of the public sphere.

To begin with the case of war, the narrowing down of the discursive universe is a main characteristic of what Sigal Ben-Porath (2006) identifies as "belligerent citizenship." In her view, there are three distinctive features to this mode of citizenship. First, civic participation becomes mandatory and directed rather than open and voluntary. Second, it entails an "overpowering form of patriotic unity" in which perceived threats generate "knee-jerk responses of unification" (Ben-Porath, 2006, 13). The third feature, and the one that is most relevant for our discussion, is

> … the suppression of deliberation and, consequently, an attenuation of the public sphere. Deliberation is far less encouraged in a state of war than in other times, or the ideal that democratic models aspire to. Deliberation and disagreement are widely regarded as threats to the security effort, and the more real and pressing security threat becomes, the narrower the limits of acceptable perspectives in public debate. In situations of protracted conflict, the public agenda tends to be focused around security issues, and a vast range of opinions is perceived as unreasonable or irrelevant (Ben-Porath, 2006, 15).

Belligerent citizenship, then, affects not only the scope of democratic deliberation but also their content. It is not necessarily the case that the public sphere is less vibrant during protracted conflict, but it is carried using terms and discourses that make it difficult for new issues and new frames of analysis to emerge.

Developments in the study of the epistemological dimensions of peace processes are even more dramatic. Scholars of peace study share an acknowledgement that the field underwent fundamental shifts in its theoretical orientation after the end of the Cold War (Rogers & Ramsbotham, 1999), and a number of them began to explore possible connections with Critical Theory and Deliberative Democracy (Patomaki, 2001; Jabri, 1996; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2005). Such a dialogue becomes possible with two shifts in the orientation of Peace Studies. First, the field began to put the notions of peace and of conflict resolution into question and inquire into their scope and meaning (Jabri, 1996, chapter 6). This is captured by the shift in focus from the question of how to resolve conflicts to the question of how to transform the conditions in which they take

place, and the corresponding shift from "interests to identities" (Rothman & Olson, 2001) as the main building blocks of the problem situation. The focus on the discursive and social construction of the meaning of peace and of conflict resolution led scholars to conceptualize the peace process as a dialogue or a conversation and to study the discursive dynamics that it entails (Albin, 2005: Auvinen & Kivimaki, 1996; Reimann, 2004).

The corresponding second move is a shift in the social arenas where the peace process is understood to be taking place. The process takes place not only among political and diplomatic elites but mainly within and between the societies. Therefore, Chufrin and Saunders (1993, 155-6) call for "recognizing and naming a *public* as well as an *official* peace process" (*emphasis* in the original). The public peace process is defined as "sustained action by citizens outside governments to change the fundamental relationship between groups in conflict." In practical terms, the shift entails a focus on the role of civil society and especially of non-governmental organizations in peace processes (Saunders, 1999, chapters 3 and 5; van Tongeren et al., 2005; Gawerc, 2006). It also refers to the practice of "problem-solving workshops" wherein public official, opinion leaders, or sometimes even ordinary people from the belligerent sides meet to discuss possible venues for peace (Rouhana, 2000; Saunders, 2000; 2003). These workshops serve as an alternative track to that of the official negotiations, with the intention that the open and unconstrained dialogue among laypersons would generate innovative solutions that can be taken up by the official negotiators.

The site of the peace process in this new and expended view is not merely the policy details of the peace agreement but the respective identities of the two publics and the basic terms by which they understand each other. Thus, the peace process has, or should have, epistemological implications: it defines the basic categories through which the participants understand themselves and the others.

Moving now to the characterization of the process itself, several scholars suggested that facilitative processes of conflict resolution can be conceptualized in terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2005, 293-5; Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Lloyd Jones, 2000; Väyrynen, 2005). In this view, the aim of conflict resolution is the achievement of an understanding and the process itself can be analyzed as striving to reach such an understanding. For Gadamer, an understanding can emerge only from the language that is generated by and in the dialogue itself, not from the outside of it. What takes place in a true conversation is that "something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common" (Gadamer, 1999, 388). If one conversant believes that she understands the other conversant better than he himself does then a genuine understanding has not been reached (Gadamer, 1999, 385).

Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2006, 10-11) is right to point out that the invocation of hermeneutics in the context of conflict resolution operates on two levels. It is a description of the way the identities of the parties to the conflict and the boundaries between them are shaped and re-shaped in the discursive encounter between them. At the

same time, it is also a normative prescription for a process of successful transformation of the conflict. As a normative ideal, the claim is that the goal of the peace process can be understood as the reaching of an understanding by creating a shared language through a dialogue.

A common criticism of this understanding is that the positing of the two sides to a conflict as equal partners in a dialogue is insensitive to any power asymmetries that exist between them (Jabri, 1996, 154-5; Lloyd Jones, 2000, 655; see also, Aggestam, 2002). I believe, however, that this line of argument misses Gadamer's point. One can envision a conversation between two partners of unequal power who treat each other, for the purpose of the conversation, as equal partners. In such a case, a successful mutual understanding would have to include the recognition that the two sides are indeed equal in terms of their political or economic power. Put generally, the decision of a scholar to take dialogue as a point of departure instead of any objective material facts does not imply that the scholar wishes these facts away. Nonetheless, as I discuss later, it is indeed questionable whether an approach that takes the dialogue as the sole point of departure has sufficient conceptual tools to make a distinction between a genuine understanding and a forced consensus. In this context, Vivienne Jabri (1996, 2000) takes the procedural route and invokes Habermas's discourse ethics as an alternative normative ideal of a dialogue.

We are now in a position to discuss the uniqueness of a peace process as an epistemological crisis. The peace process requires the public sphere to come to terms, or reach an understanding, not only with itself but also with the other side. The dialogue that the peace process generates is not among participants in the public sphere but also with the public sphere of the former enemy. For the purpose of the following discussion, we need not discuss the dialogue with the real former enemy. The need to imagine an ideal interlocutor in the other side is sufficient to distinguish the process of movement towards peace from that of moving towards war. In war, or even in times of normal politics, the public sphere does not face a pressure (although not necessarily a need) to take the other side as a partner in the domestic conversation. The peace process puts pressure on the participants in the public sphere to consider whether the claims that they make can be justified not only to other participants in the public sphere but also to the other side as well.

The Dialogical Mechanisms of Horizontal Expansion

But how precisely does the peace process lead to the expansion of the horizontal discourse. In what follows, I want to examine the possible dialogical mechanisms through which the elite-level peace negotiations affect the public peace process. There are certain potentialities or tendencies that are embedded in the idea of a dialogue. I am following James Bohman (2000, 57) in characterizing these potentialities as "dialogical

mechanisms," even though language and conversations never really work as machines. These mechanisms or potentialities exist as a possibility, one which is not necessarily actualized. Furthermore, when these mechanisms are set in motion, they are often accompanied by other processes which might work in opposing directions. Nonetheless, while in the context of any specific exchange of reasons it is impossible to point with certainty at the dialogical mechanisms that operate, we can try to identify *how* these mechanisms work and make plausible claims for *when* they work.

The first mechanism is the re-examining of facts. Facts, and for our purposes we can focus narrowly on social facts, can be understood as an intersubjective agreement to limit the scope of public deliberations (Bohman, 2004). Thus, within any deliberation there are certain assumptions about social life that remain unchallenged: facts about economics, human nature, intentions, and so on. In societies that are involved in prolonged conflict, the "fact of enmity" and other "facts" about the characteristics and the intentions of the other party serve as organizing principles that limit the discussion about what is feasible. Insofar as the fact of enmity occupies a central place in the dominant discourse in society, one can expect that the challenging of this fact would invite a process of re-examining the factual boundaries of the discourse in other aspects as well.

Furthermore, social facts are not free-floating discursive entities but are often tied together through a narrative that explains the relations among them. Two aspects of the narrative are particularly important. First, the narrative has a historical dimension. It explains how existing relations between facts came into being. Second, the narrative offers relevant comparative contexts to make sense of the facticity of the alleged social facts. In the case of the fact of enmity, the contexts can explain why the conflict is unique and unlike any other or it can explain why it is similar to others being part of a broader, perhaps global, trend. Once the fact of enmity is challenged, the narratives that are associated with it are likely to be questioned. Thus, we can expect that the peace process would lead to a re-examination of central aspects of the historical and contextual narratives prevailing in society.

The narratives that tie together the facts also constitute the identities through which members of society understand their situation and the way they derive their interests from their identity. In societies that are in a protracted conflict the "fact of enmity" constitutes the main framework through which identities are defined, even those social identities that are not directly tied to the identities of friend or enemy (for example, based on their contribution to the war effort, or by alleged proximity to stereotypical characteristics of the enemy). The questioning of the core identity categorization of friend vs. enemy leads to a re-examination of both the core and the boundaries of other social identities.

Thus, communities do not turn rivalry into friendship the same way school children do, simply by deciding to put bad feelings behind. Peace between communities requires each community to re-organize the narratives through which it understands itself. In order to imagine the other side as a partner in a dialogue – in other words, to rethink

the fact of enmity – society must come to accept a different identity and retell its history. This is an all encompassing process, and, as I argue in the next section, the epistemological re-orientation has a political dimension – it requires a re-examination of the relationship between the public and the elite.

From Horizontal to Vertical Expansion

So far, we have discussed the way the public sphere expands horizontally. The peace process generates an epistemological crisis to the public sphere in forcing it to imagine the former enemy as a discursive partner who is entitled to be reasoned with. This puts in motion the three dialogical mechanisms of questioning facts, historical narratives, and existing identities. I now want to conceptualize the effects of this horizontal expansion of the public sphere on the vertical discourse that regulates the relationship between the elite and the public.

I use the simplistic and perhaps naïve distinction between elite and public purposefully. My aim is not to offer a social theory about the sources of power of the elite in any particular society. Instead, I want to examine the process by which the public itself comes to examine the nature of its relations with the elite and the elite's sources of power.

To do so, I borrow the term "hermeneutics of suspicion" from Paul Ricoeur (1970). Ricoeur uses this term to emphasize his dissent from the view that a fundamental rupture exists between the activity of interpretation and the activity of social criticism. Thus, he makes a distinction between two "styles" of interpretation: the first is Gadamer's style in which interpretation is "the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed to me in a manner of a message," the other is of interpretation as "a demystification, as a reduction of illusion" (Ricoeur, 1970, 27). Hermeneutics, the activity of interpretation, is therefore animated by "double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen: vow of rigor, vow of obedience" (Ricoeur, 1970, 27). It is important to notice, following Ricoeur, that even when interpretation is aimed at restoring meaning it can engage in criticism. However, what distinguishes this style of interpretation from the suspicious one is that in it criticism is always bound by some fundamental reverence to the traditional discursive conventions and to the modes of authority that these conventions sustain. The criticism of the school of suspicion on the other hand is "critical by constitution" in that its modus of operation is the unmasking of illusions (Ricoeur, 1981, 82).

We can apply the distinction between the two styles of interpretation to discuss the vertical discourse in society. Making arguments in the context of public debates requires the interpretation of the arguments made by interlocutors (for a discussion of democratic deliberations as an act of interpretation see Walhof, 2005). The discourses that regulate the relationship between the elite and the public can be seen as composed of discrete

messages: speeches and actions of politicians, decisions of courts, material studied in school, and so on, all of which are open to interpretation. The public can apply a "vow of obedience" and interpret these messages as an act of restoration of some consistent and sincere meaning or can interpret these messages suspiciously by trying to identify disguised meanings.

For example, we can look at the different interpretations of the "message" that no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. One can interpret this message against a "vow of obedience" to existing forms of authority and argue, say, that the invasion of Iraq intended to restore democracy and not to destroy its nuclear stockpile. It is even possible to be critical within this style of interpretation and to see it as a failure of the intelligence community, or even of leadership. However, if one applies the "hermeneutics of suspicion" this same message can be interpreted as evidence of, say, a conspiracy of a right-wing cabal or as a result of shifts in the balance of power among different sections of capital.

Thus, we have to keep in mind that willingness to re-examine the factual presuppositions of existing discourses, and the related identities and historical narratives is not in itself willingness to apply an interpretive style of suspicion. That is, one can expand and modify aspects of existing discourse to allow it to deal with new situations without challenging the forms of authority that are presupposed or constituted by this discourse. To recur to a spatial metaphor, it is possible to broaden the boundaries of existing discourse horizontally without broadening it vertically. Nonetheless, the pressure to expand the discourse horizontally also creates a pressure to expend it vertically. Such a pressure would be generated with a growing recognition of an epistemological crisis, when a "vow of submission" towards existing discourses becomes onerous. In such a case, a possible way to deal with this difficulty is to shift the style of interpretation and to apply a suspicious mode of interpretation toward these discourses.

Conclusions

At face value, the account that I provided ends up only confirming Carl Schmitt's observations. When peace appears on the horizon, "liberal talk" becomes more popular. But the moment war looms again, the categories of friend and enemy quickly win over. The same people who praised new visions for the Middle East or suggested that the real battle is between extremists and moderates, quickly turned to speak about clash of civilizations. However, such an account – of initial horizontal expansion and later contraction of the public discourse – portrays only part of the 'drama' of the peace process. The peace process generates a political struggle over the terms of understanding of social life and the discourse that regulates the relationship between the elite, and the public becomes the main fortress in this struggle.

The more general theoretical point is that when we examine the public peace process we can adopt two analytical orientations. The first is to pose a success-oriented question and to examine whether public peace processes are successful in achieving their goal. When posing the question in such a way, public deliberations are understood as a tool to bring about peace and their success is to be measured against other ways to reach peace. The question of whether it is desirable that the public should be involved in peace negotiations becomes an intelligible question only if one adopts this analytical perspective. In this work, I offered a second analytical orientation. Instead of examining public deliberations against some stated goals, we can study whether public deliberations led participants in public debate to better understand the system of power relations that shape the way they understand political life.

Now, it is possible to argue that the two dimensions of public deliberations are related. Successful deliberations must succeed in eliminating all hidden forms of power. For example, a stable peace between Israelis and Palestinians or between Russians and Georgians could be achieved only once the two publics came to terms and then transformed some basic injustices in their own societies. This indeed might be the case and certain amount of reflexivity and social transformation are necessary for peace, but I believe that the two analytical orientations can and should stand alone. The question of whether deliberations, in whatever forms, can be successful in improving decision-making is different from the question of whether deliberations affected the way the public understands the discourse that regulates its relationship with the elite and therefore can and should be studied separately.

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