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## A reconsideration of Montesquieu's liberal pacifism

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## ABSTRACT

### A RECONSIDERATION OF MONTESQUIEU'S LIBERAL PACIFISM

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Liberal international relations scholars have posited that liberalism promotes peaceful relations amongst states. These scholars utilize the writings of Montesquieu, most notably *Spirit of the Laws*, as the philosophic foundation for their liberal peace theory. My dissertation challenges this conventional understanding of Montesquieu. I contend that Montesquieu's liberalism does not bind nations together in peace but instead pushes liberal states to engage in expansionary and imperial behavior. Moeres rooted in commerce and liberty inclines liberal state to be in contention with other states and push its interests across the globe. This will lead the liberal states to push their liberalism into countries which opposes these liberal moeres, leading to the forced imposition of the liberal order on previous illiberal people. Furthermore, I challenge the notion that the liberal peace theory is even a theory of peace. It suffers from the same expansionary behavior and insensitivity to local contexts that we find in Montesquieu's liberalism. Although Montesquieu and liberal peace scholars have strong oppositions to the project of empire they still advocate for a liberal ideology that inevitably leads to said empire.

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A RECONSIDERATION OF MONTESQUIEU'S LIBERAL PACIFISM

BY

JAMES BOESEN  
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Doctoral Director:  
Andrea Radasanu

## DEDICATION

To my brother Brad Boesen for inspiring in me a love of politics and my mentor Dr. John Rapp for inspiring me to make studying and teaching political science a life-long pursuit.

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## CHAPTER ONE: RECONSIDERING THE COMMERCIAL PEACE

Contemporary interpretations of Montesquieu's thoughts on commerce in *Spirit of the Laws* present him as positing a commercial peace theory (Fort, 2009; Hirschman, 1977; Rosow, 1984). Commercial states are supposedly more peaceful through a binding of material interests and a softening of mores (*SL XX.1-2*). Commerce is, in this line of interpretation, considered a panacea to the historical tradition of conflict and violence between states. I reject this interpretation of Montesquieu and contend that he presents an account of liberalism in which liberal or commercial ideology is inherently expansionary (*SL XXI.5, XXI.21*; Wallerstein 1992). I suggest that the privileged position of commerce and liberty in England lead the English to pursue a commercial empire. Instead of commerce leading to peace between nations, it leads to belligerence, conflict, and conquest.

Despite Montesquieu's presentation of liberal expansion as gentler than traditional forms of territorial expansion, this new empire of commerce, emblematic of England, stands in contrast to the interstate cooperation resultant of liberal values and institutions that liberal international relations scholars (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2007) present in their account of the relationship between liberalism and international relations. This more peaceful iteration of international relations also seems to stand in contrast to policy proposals (derived from the liberal literature) that call for the imposition of liberal government, commerce, and mores (Doyle, 1997, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Oneal & Russett, 1997 just to list a few; Buzan, 1984 helps critique the notion of a completely benign commercial peace). Some have suggested that

commerce provides new arenas for interstate competition and potential belligerence (Hont, 2005; Lu & Theis, 2010). Although Montesquieu might not provide a remedy to the shortcomings of liberalism, a reconsideration of his work would suggest that these issues are rooted in liberalism itself and not just contemporary interpretations of it. I contend that contemporary liberal literature would benefit from recognizing its less utopian, Montesquieuan, roots. At the very least it would be more honest with itself, thus mitigating potential disconnect between literature and policy, and, at best, it might be able to remedy its more aggressive nature.

### **Saliency**

Why does this reinterpretation of Montesquieu's account of commercial peace matter? I contend that this reassessment has ramifications in our understanding of international relations liberalism and for liberalism as a dominant political ideology. Contemporary liberal international relations theory, viewing itself as derived from Kant and Montesquieu, presents itself as a gentler alternative to the realist literature, with emphasis placed on the means to achieve peaceful interstate outcomes through cooperation (Doyle, 2005, 1997; Gartzke, 2007; Oneal & Russett 1997; Press-Barnathan, 2006). Although these liberal mechanisms might be characterized as wholly peaceful in Kant's account in *Perpetual Peace* and the international relations literature derived from his work (Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998; Buchan, 2002),<sup>1</sup> commerce takes on a less peaceful tone in Montesquieu's work *Spirit of the Laws* (Howse, 2006; Radasanu, 2013; *SL* 21.11, 21.15). A critical analysis of the scholarship leads me to suggest that the liberal literature has the same issues as Montesquieu's account of commerce and liberty, both presenting

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<sup>1</sup> I recognize that Kant's account of the transition to peaceful relations can be interpreted as violent, however, I refer to how liberal International Relations literature understands Kant's works.

liberalism in a manner that ultimately suggests belligerence. When we consider that the endgame of liberal international relations scholarship is to help promote liberalism (which they claim leads to peaceful interstate behavior), I contend that the preference for these liberal constructs necessitates a lack of consideration for local contexts (Buchan, 2002; Doyle, 1997, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Maoz & Russett, 1993; McDonald, 2007; *SL XIX.2-7*). There is a lack of consideration for whether a state has the appropriate political culture for democracy or if its economy would benefit or be hurt by engagement with the global economy (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 help illustrate this threat whereas works such as Gartzke, 2007 and McDonald, 2007 demonstrate a consistent lack of concern). The liberal literature is also relatively silent with regards to whether this liberalization would make states more violent with the little research done in this area suggesting that it does lead to increased belligerence (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995).

Furthermore, a reconsideration of the pacifying nature of commerce will help political theorists better assess and understand the project of liberalism broadly (the notions of commerce and liberty/liberalism are intimately intertwined throughout this work). We should analyze whether the project of liberalism has tensions within itself or between itself and the illiberal community. If there is such tensions present, we should consider if such tensions indicate a critical flaw, thus rendering liberalism untenable, or if this tension instead perpetuates liberalism. Although a daunting question outside the scope of this dissertation, I invite the reader to consider whether, if liberalism is untenable, it is salvageable and what lessons might we learn (regardless of tenability). Liberalism has been an ongoing political and intellectual project for the past few hundred years but towards what end is it leading us? I believe that we can better understand the present and future of liberalism by returning to and reassessing one of its foundational thinkers. Montesquieu, in particular, warrants consideration because of his understanding of the necessary

connection between commerce and liberty, the two of them being exceedingly difficult to separate once bound together (*SL* XIX.27 p.328, XX.10-12). If we can better understand the complexities of that strand of thought which has dominated Western civilization, then we can better grasp and navigate our current political climate and whatever problems emerge going forward.

### **A Survey of Liberty, Mores, and Empire in Montesquieu's Work**

I want to establish a baseline understanding of Montesquieu's works, especially *Spirit of the Laws*, utilizing both the primary text and contemporary interpretations of Montesquieu's writing. Although I will expand on these notions in the following chapters of this work, I want to provide an analysis of Montesquieu's writings that serves as the foundation for my reassessment of the commercial peace. I start by considering the uniqueness of the English regime and the difficulty of imposing new mores on a people, focusing on how the English are exceptional in having liberty and commerce as the focus of their regime. I then discuss whether commerce and liberty (as provided in England) can move beyond the contexts of a people and their land, highlighting the difficulty of getting a noncommercial people to adopt commercial mores. I then reflect on how England is indicative of a shift in the fundamental nature of empire, with commerce taking on a dominant role in the project of empire. I conclude with considering the subsequent unease of the English due to their liberty and whether this unease provides the foundation for further belligerence.

### **The regime of liberty and the imposition of new mores.**

To understand my reservations about a Montesquieuan commercial peace, I must first start with the preeminent commercial state, England. Furthermore, in order to understand England and its commerce, one must understand its foundation of liberty. The novel regime of England arises from the formation of a new foundation for government, liberty (*SL XIX.27*). Liberty, understood here, is the freedom of the citizen not to be compelled to do anything outside the limits of the law (*SL XIX.27*). This popular form of government flourishes alongside commerce instead of hindering it because it was rooted in liberty instead of the virtue of ancient republics (*SL III.3, VIII.2, XIX.27, XX.4, XX.7*). This regime, despite its monarchical heritage, can't keep the monarchical vestiges of the principle of honor because this principle is not conducive to maintaining the robust liberty of the English or a commerce of necessity in line with the emerging global trade (*SL XI.5-6, XIX.2-6, XX.4-7*). This is important in an international context because it clearly indicates that new norms have developed, derivative yet distinct from their feudal heritage (*SL XIX.27, XX.2*).

This new position of liberty is a result of the unique historical, topographical, and climate context of England. The monarchical heritage of England helped set up the English constitution (*SL XI.6, XIX.27 pp.325-27*) Their island status kept them relatively free from the external threats (*SL XVIII.5*). Their temperate climate ensured that the passions were neither over- or under-stimulated and invoked an industriousness in the people (*SL XIV.2, XIV.13*). This unique context allowed for the development of a commercial people and a commercial state, commerce needing liberty to flourish (*SL XIX.27, XX.2*).

England's unique break with the past, combined with its preferencing commerce and liberty, leads to a problem regarding the context appropriateness of commercial and liberal

mores. Although commercial liberalism is the result of specific circumstances, as I just presented, it strives to expand itself (Howse 2006; Rahe, 2009 p.56; *SL* XIX.27 pp.327-29, XXI.21). This leads to the issue of whether commercial liberalism could impart itself on a people who would not be predisposed to these mores. We ought not to expect that commercial mores be readily transplanted onto a people for which these norms are alien and distinct from their own historical trajectory (*SL* XIX.2, XIX.5, XIX.14, XIX.27, and XX.2).

Montesquieu claims that mores alien to a given people can still be imbued in the society (*SL* X.14, XIX.5). He gestures that such an imposition would not be easy; without some social precedent for the new mores, great effort (e.g. military conquest) would be needed to instill them as the people would not readily take to them on their own (*SL* X.3, XIX.5). When we look at territorial conquests we can see the imposition of alien mores by the conquering forces, destroying the previous mores as they introduce their new ones (*SL* X.11, X.14). Montesquieu's presentation of Alexander the Great's conquest helps illustrate his apprehension of conquests propagating the mores of the conquerors at the cost of the mores of the conquered; he admires how Alexander was notable in his conquest aiming to preserve as opposed to destroy the mores of the conquered people (*SL* X.3, X.14). Montesquieu also suggests that such an imposition of foreign mores, even if rooted in commerce and liberty, is not inherently preferable to maintaining prior mores. His presentation of mores, and the laws and government derived from them suggests that our valuation of these mores and institutions should be based on their appropriateness to the character of a given people and not on some universal standard of good separated from context (*SL* X.3-4, XIX.2, XIX.5, XIX.21-27).

This leads to a significant disconnect between Montesquieu and liberal international relations scholars regarding their assessment of the mores, or to borrow from more familiar

terms, the norms and values of a given people. This disconnect includes both the valuation of the mores of a people and the prescribed means of rectifying any perceived deficiencies in said mores. This discussion will help further illuminate the deviation between Montesquieu's presentation of liberalism and how liberal international relations scholars understand their own intellectual project. Another major component of Montesquieu's presentation of commercial mores specifically and of mores in general is that he is careful to not present any given set of mores as somehow universally preferable to another, no set of mores is outright better than another. Instead, when he makes value judgements on mores this is typically in relation to their appropriateness to a given people and their context (*SL* XIX.2, XIX.27). This non-normative assessment that he uses for mores continues into his elaboration of regime types. Although his presentation of despotism highlights all the injustices and problems with that form of government, he recognizes that there are still places where and people for which despotism is the most appropriate or natural regime (*SL* XIV.2, XVIII.2, XIX.2).

In Book XIX of *Spirit of Laws* Montesquieu presents the reader with a detailed account of the political society of modern England (*SL* XIX.27). He writes about the benefits of England's separation of powers, which helps prevent tyranny and foster the principle of liberty and, subsequently, a commercial spirit (*SL* XI.6, XIV.13, XVIII.5, XIX.27 pp.325-28, XX.7). Despite what fondness Montesquieu might have for England, his presentation of the liberty and commercial spirit of England also entails cautions against trying to mimic England (*SL* XIX.2-3, XIX.5-6, XIX.21, XIX.27, XX.7). Just because a given regime or mores is more inclined to liberty, which Montesquieu appears to prefer, this does not mean that the liberty and requisite regime of England are appropriate for other peoples (*SL* XI.5, XIX.2-3, XIX.5-6, XIX.21, XIX.27). Even the French, with their similar history to England, would be mistaken if they tried

to move directly from their current monarchy to the English system (*SL* XIX.2-3, XIX.5-6, XIX.21, XXVIII.1, XXVIII.27 p.572, XXVIII.45).

### **Contexts and commercial liberalism.**

At first glance we might, wrongly so, conclude that Montesquieu is a determinist, taking into consideration Montesquieu's account that the character of a people can be derived from the relation between the people and geography/climate and not in relation to some ultimate good (*SL* XIV.1-2, XVIII.1-6). This broad climatic account presents equatorial regions as more inclined to despotism, moderate climates to monarchical rule, and colder climates to republicanism or more egalitarian governance (*SL* XIV.1-2, XIV.13, XVIII.1, XVIII.5). Montesquieu identifies that different climates are conducive to certain mores (*SL* XIV.1-2). These varying mores facilitate different laws and principles, each appropriate for different regimes (*SL* XIX.1-4). Therefore, the people in given locations are going to be inclined to develop and perpetuate forms of government that are proper to them (*SL* XIV.1-2, XVIII.1-2, XIX.2, XIX.5). It is important to note that Montesquieu's account of climate and geography does not make his understanding of the nature of societies and their governments deterministic. A careful reading suggests that nature is more accurately providing the initial context in which a given peoples operates (*SL* XIV.2, XIV.5, XIV.9, XIV.13 XVIII.1-6, XIX.2; Krause, 2001 pp.255-56). The climate and geography might make certain changes in mores, regime, or access to goods difficult but it does not outright dictate these changes. The climatic and topographical context of a people can help suggest what type of regime we should expect them to develop naturally but it does not suggest the totality of the range of possible regimes that the people could develop post contact with the greater world.

It is important to note, though, that the process of a people developing a regime outside of their natural inclination is an arduous endeavor and can take extensive amounts of time and effort to complete.

I want to keep this contextual yet not-quite-deterministic account in mind when I discuss commerce and the spread thereof. In Montesquieu's account of the history of commerce he presents commerce as clever and hardy, going wherever it is accepted to escape destructive prejudices (*SL XXI.5*). This is due to commerce's ability to move around and take hold wherever it is accepted, never getting completely stamped out by prejudices. This commerce might have survivability but it never is at the forefront of political society. Even when a people allowed it, it was typically placed on the periphery and kept subdued due to virtuous and religious opposition (Radasanu, 2013; *SL VIII.2, XXI.7, XXI.20*). These two forces, virtue and religion (Christianity) move against commerce because (as they would claim) it erodes away at the moral and civic fabric of the individual and society (*SL VIII.2, XIX.27 pp.328-31, XXI.7, XXI.20*). It is only with the development of modern England that these traditional prejudices begin to erode. The constitution of the English, which brings about its liberty and thus commerce, allows for commerce to be the centerpiece of the regime (*SL XIX.27 p.328 XX.7*). This legal arrangement, along with its island status and temperate climate, allows for England to fully develop and embrace its commercial prowess (*SL X.6, XIV.12-3, XVIII.5, XIX.27 p.328*). The specifics and context of England's commerce are such that a people would need to adapt to take on this commerce; yet we cannot anticipate another commercial people to naturally develop<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The discussion on the contextual uniqueness of England's development of commerce can be applied to its development of liberty. Several of the factors which helped England develop commerce as it does were integral in developing the very liberty which is requisite for the aforementioned commerce.

Despite the unique context under which commerce developed in England, the communicative and enterprising aspects of commerce would push the English's commerce to expand outwards. Montesquieu identifies commerce as not just an exchange of goods but also an exchange of ideas (*SL XX.1, XXI.5*). These notions of commerce as outward looking while most societies stay predisposed to prejudices against it leads me to question to what extent commerce can endear itself to societies that has prejudices against it. If a people are so opposed to commerce that they do not allow for it then how can we expect commerce to take hold? Montesquieu notes that commerce softens barbarous mores and combats destructive prejudices (*SL XX.1*), It appears commerce works to erode at its opposition and can imbue itself even if the people are not predisposed to it. My issue here is that we ought to expect commerce to erode at prejudices against it only once it has gained a foothold amongst that given people. If the people are not permissive of commerce, then how should we expect this commerce to soften their mores? Once again, I wonder how a people who are not predisposed to commerce can take it on.

At first glance, a reader of Montesquieu would also note that he recognizes gold and other precious metals as means of inducing commercial activity (*SL XXII.1-3*). Might the usage of gold be the key to "converting" noncommercial people and breaking from a deterministic opposition to commerce? Could a noncommercial people be introduced to such precious metals then decide to become commercial? This notion that gold is a commercial lubricant has a few important shortcomings. The overreliance on using gold as a means of exchange and symbol of wealth brings with it a myriad of problems, highlighted by the collapse of the Spanish economy (*SL XX1.22*). Even Montesquieu suggested that it was the use of credit by the English, not gold, which helped their commercial success (*SL XIX.27 p.327*). As difficult as it might be to use gold to endear a people to commerce, I suspect that using a credit system seems even more bizarre to

a noncommercial people. In addition to the above problems, using previous metals means that you are engaging in commercial exchange, not necessarily in the modern (English) commerce (*SL XIX.27 p.327-28, XX.7, XXII.1-3*). This might be a step in the direction towards becoming a commercial people but there are plenty of states with a market exchange *and* prejudices against commerce (*SL XXII.1-2, XXII.10*). How to first gain a foothold and whether this initial headway is enough to successfully induce a commercial spirit in a people is an important question with an ultimately uncertain answer. I suspect that more heavy handed methods, that is to say empire, might be needed to successfully imbue commercial mores onto a noncommercial people.

Despite Montesquieu's cautionary presentation of the problems of imposing mores on a given people, liberal international relations theory and specifically the commercial and democratic peace literature do not heed his warnings. Instead, the literature at least implicitly presents the imposition of Liberal mores and institutions as the active solution to pacifying interstate interactions insofar as homogeneity in liberal institutions leads to more peaceful interactions and heterogeneity leads to the opposite (Buzan, 1984; Maoz and Russett, 1993; Weede, 1992). Despite commerce's ability to soften mores and destroy prejudices, the tension between liberal commercial mores and indigenous mores is not fully resolved by liberal commercial mores' ability to soften the mores and prejudices against them. The attempt to impose such alien mores, and commercial mores particularly, is still at times opposed by the indigenous people with their own set of mores, even if this spread is relatively benign (*SL XIX.2, XIX.14*). Montesquieu's account of commerce's expansion into the Americas helps underline this tension (*SL XXI.21-22*). Regardless of how appealingly commerce and liberty can present themselves there will inevitably be local contexts that will not readily take to them (*SL XX.4, XXI.5*).

I suggest that this contextual issue with Montesquieu's account of commerce can be found in the liberal peace literature. The democratic and commercial peace literature typically present conclusions suggesting that a Liberal Western iteration of democratic rule and integration into the global economy are effective means of promoting peaceful interstate interactions (Gartzke, 2007; Maoz and Abdolai, 1989; McDonald, 2004, 2007; Rosato, 2003; Van Belle, 1997). There is a lack of consideration for whether the diversity of local contexts impedes the expansion of these liberal structures. International relations liberalism has a lack of consideration for whether a given people could even successfully take on the project of liberalism. This literature has little to offer regarding how to liberalize; there is a lack of robust discussion on how to impart liberality on an otherwise illiberal political society and economy. Such discussions on democratization and commercialization are usually the province of comparative politics scholarship and when they do arise in the international relations literature it is often framed in a discussion on the troubles with liberalizing (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Foweraker & Krznaric, 2002; Huntington, 1993, 2003; Keefer, 2009; Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002; Niblock, 1998; Shin, 1995; Shin & Tusalem, 2007; Tilly, 2003; Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). Montesquieu's works would refute this and consider what sort of values and institutions are appropriate for the state in each context (*SL XIX.2, XIX.5*). Blanket and blind impositions of values and institutions would be discouraged and if carried out such imposition ought to be done so with a serious consideration for what is appropriate in the given context.

### **Wealth over glory and the new empire.**

Montesquieu's thoughts on empire and England suggest that the British Empire signifies a significant change in empire and its relationship with commerce. The emerging commercial

society alters the impetus for and the nature of conquest and how changes at the domestic or societal level have a significant effect on international outcomes. If the liberty and commerce of England leads it to pursue the project of empire instead of pacifism then perhaps it is not surprising that liberalism is not of a piece with respectful cooperation among states. Montesquieu views modern attempts to pursue territorial empire, driven by notions of glory, as disastrous and misguided (*SL X.12*; also consider Montesquieu's cautionary tale of the Roman Empire and its collapse in *Considerations*). He presents these failures in contrast to England's successful pursuit of commercial expansionism (*SL XIX.27, XX.7*).

England was not the first commercial nation to attempt the establishment of empire, as witnessed by the less successful predecessors of Athens and Carthage (Radasanu, 2013; Rahe, 2009 pp. 43-57). At first glance, the English attempt at empire might appear to be just a replication of the maritime and commercial empires of antiquity, but there are important distinctions between those empires and England's. The English are better able to engage in and maintain their commercial empire with liberty supplanting virtue at the heart of the regime and with modern innovations of navigation at their disposal (Radasanu, 2013; *SL XI.5, XIX.27, XX.7, XXI.6*). The prejudices against and corrosive results of commerce found in Athens are absent in England (Radasanu, 2013; *SL III.3, XIX.27, XX.7, XXI.6*). Instead, England deviates from this previous model and opts to restrict merchants but not commerce itself. By doing this the government can direct commerce without working against it and, thus, utilize commerce to buttress the other interests of the state (Larrère, 2001 p. 350).

Without the previous obstacles and with the innovations of emerging globalization, England can project its interests without necessarily setting itself up for the decay that commerce might have previously brought about. Not only that, but England can utilize its military and

commerce to bolster each other; using its public finances to fund the navy while using its navy to reinforce its commercial interests around the globe (Rodger, 2006 pp. 169-82; *SL XIX.27* p. 328). Commerce is no longer a side project of the state but a central player and motivator in the state's pursuit of empire (Radasanu, 2013; Rahe, 2009 pp. 43-57). The commercial empire is the more successful model for empire once commerce takes center stage. Rome defeated Carthage in antiquity but now the modern Carthage, England, has the advantage (Rahe, 2009 p. 57).

Montesquieu's understanding of the nexus of liberal constitutionalism, commerce, and empire clearly runs counter to liberal international relations scholarship, which suggests that projects such as empire or conquest are anathema to the nature of liberal states. The commercial peace literature is particularly adamant about rejecting this imperial bent. The entire commercial peace scholarship is rooted in the notion that commerce makes war cost-prohibitive by making it run counter to the material interests of states (Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2007; Morrow, 1999; Press-Barnathan, 2006). A project as grand and costly as empire would surely be antithetical to the commercial state as presented in the commercial peace literature. This commercial imperialism is in further opposition to the commercial peace literature as not only is empire not cost-prohibitive but is used to advance the state's material interests instead of hindering them (Rodger, 2006 pp. 169-82; Radasanu, 2013; Rahe, 2009 pp. 43-57; *SL XIX.27* p. 328).

### **The unease of the English.**

The liberty of the English, insofar as it can be considered separate from their commerce, provides a significant source of socio-political tension. The liberty of the English provides them with a unique set of problems, distinct from even the French with whom they share a similar history. Montesquieu notes that the English are unique in having the only regime based on liberty

(*SL XI.5*). Although other regimes might have liberty and even a lot of it, no other regime has it as the foundation of their regime (*SL XI.4-7*). Although the liberty of the English is at times presented favorably by Montesquieu, he recognizes that it brings with it a multiplicity of facets that present underlining tensions. It brings with it a lack of joy, jealousy, and contractualism pitting Englishmen against one another. This character of the English will help underline several underlining tensions with both liberty and commerce.

The English are in general a dour people, fully lacking in sociable humor and an appreciation for the beautiful (Gidal, 2003; *SL XIV.12-13*). Montesquieu presents the English as always being in a state of gloom, even noting the high rate of suicide amongst them (*SL XIV.12-13*). He contrasts this melancholy of the English with the gaiety and appreciation of beauty that he finds in France (Gidal, 2003; *SL VII.4-5, XIV.12-13, Thomas, 2005*). This distinction is not purely cosmetic and helps underline fundamental differences between the two societies. The English and French have starkly contrasting sociability despite their shared histories. Part of this distinction is rooted in the climatic and geographic differences between the two countries (*SL XIV.1-2, XIV.12-13, XVIII.2*). The English have a temperate yet gloomy climate which brings with it a sense of moderation and somberness; their climate does not hinder them but they are not able to enjoy their climate and agriculture to the same extent as a people from a warmer climate (*SL XIV.12-13*).

Montesquieu laments the English's lack of appreciation for the beautiful. The English do not strive for something noble or higher like the honor of monarchies or virtue of republics (*SL XI.5-7, XIX.27*). Despite what negatives come about from honor and virtue, Montesquieu's writings suggest an appreciation for the beauty that they can invoke (Thomas, 2005 p. 72). When the English are not being unified in opposition to tyranny, they are striving towards or for

something it would be lowly and materialistic in nature (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-27, 331-32, *XX.7*). While the striving against tyranny can be easily considered a higher or noble goal, the impetus for it is more base in nature (*SL XI.6* p. 160, *XIX.27* pp. 328-32). This materially-based motivation lends itself to a hyper individualism.

Although the honor of the monarchical regime is rooted in the individual seeking accolades from others, the level of social atomization is not as extreme as in England. This honor still makes the nobleman dependent on others (*SL III.7, IV.2*). So, even though the nobility does not come together for a common endeavor as in republics, they still need the affirmation and thus cooperation of others. Additionally, the honor of monarchies still strives for the appearance of something grand. The fact that the impetus of honor is found in the appearance and not the actual merit of the deed only furthers monarchy's appreciation for the beautiful as style trumps substance (*SL III.7, IV.2*). I admittedly struggle to pin down exactly why Montesquieu has an appreciation for monarchical, and specifically French, beauty but recognize that Montesquieu admires that there is something romantic or poetic to it. Maybe there is something beyond us in these moments of beauty, something that can connect the self-centered nobility, yet I am not certain.

To what extent Montesquieu's bias towards the beauty of the French court is based on his own experience as a member of the French nobility is up to debate although I contend that there is something more to it (*SL* p. xxix). Montesquieu's writings suggest that he seriously questions whether liberty is worth the ugliness and baseness that comes with it. Maybe it is that the English use their liberty to pursue more base passions though this might be a condemnation of human nature, suggesting that we need guidance to strive beyond ourselves and pursue the beautiful. He

ultimately leaves it up to the reader, though, to decide whether liberty is worth such a price (*SL XI.5 p. 166, XIV.12-13, XIX.27 p. 327*).

The English cannot even enjoy their most prized possession, their liberty, because it brings them unease in a few crucial ways (*SL XI.6 p. 166, XIX.27 pp. 325-27*). Liberty fosters a constant vigilance against tyranny. This breeds suspicion amongst the English as they are always seeking to direct their anti-tyrannical vigilance towards something (*SL XIX.27 pp. 326-27*). Political ambition is frowned upon by the English; even a benign allotment of a preponderance of power to a political body opens the possibility for abuses of said power (*SL XI.6, XIX.27 pp. 325-27*). The English receive the benefits of their robust liberty yet they are aware that becoming complacent with their liberty would threaten it. Therefore, enjoying their liberty would undo it and maintaining their liberty precludes the passivity and rest needed to enjoy it. This vigilance is buttressed by the notion that the citizen is concerned with their opinion of whether they have liberty as opposed to considerations of if they in fact possess it (*SL XI.6 p.157, XII.1*). This means that even if the Englishman has his liberty secure he will fiercely guard it if he thinks it is not secured. This leads to a sort of paranoia amongst the English where they vehemently oppose anything appearing tyrannical lest they lose their sense of security (*SL XIX.27 pp. 325-27*).

Any bonds between Englishmen are built out of material and self-interest instead of some sense of community or love of the fatherland (*SL XIX.27 pp. 325-27, 332*). Liberty pits each Englishman against each other as citizens are more confederates than compatriots (*SL XIX.27 p. 332*). The English do not want to be ruled over by any other Englishman and they also do not want to rule over any other Englishman (*SL XIX.27 p. 332*). Admittedly, to what extent they are willing to rule over non-Englishmen is uncertain and will open the opportunity for the prospect of empire which underlines this dissertation.

The only “passion” that can bring a large group of Englishmen together is the preservation of their liberty. The English only have any sense of community or closeness when they guard against tyranny. If they perceive one governmental power as becoming too powerful in relation to another then they move to counterbalance it (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26). This usually would manifest itself as the English rally behind the legislative side to combat apparent executive encroachment (*SL XIX.27* p. 325-26). Even in this instance, their motivations are narrow and self-interested and lack the robust self-renunciation of republican rule (*SL III.3, IV.5, XIX.27* pp. 331-32). The Englishman opposes tyranny because it poses a threat to his own liberty; there is nothing to suggest that he does not do so to preserve the liberty of England or of English society (*SL XIX.27* pp. 331-32). The fact that a threat to others’ liberty is also a threat to his and vice versa is a “happy accident.”

The commercial character of the English, which is brought about by their liberty, lends itself to jealousy and contractualism. The English use wealth and merit, instead of honor or virtue, as the main means of providing social distinction (*SL XIX.27* p. 331). The English replace promoting helping others with admiring those who can best help themselves (*SL XIX.27* pp. 331-32, *XX.2*). Because wealth serves to delineate people, people focus on this distinction more than any other. If a neighbor has more wealth than you then you will grow jealous of their superior position and will want to acquire more wealth than them (*SL XIX.27* p. 331). This desire to have more than others helps spur on the industriousness of the English (*SL XIX.27* p. 331, *XX.7*).

The English replace notions of charity and hospitality with notions of contractualism. Providing for anyone is done out of either a legal obligation or for profit and not some notion that you should help others in need simply because it is the right thing to do (*SL XIX.27* p. 331, *XX.2*). The English are mercenaries and are devoid of altruism when engaging with others (*SL*

XIX.27 p. 331, XX.2, XX.7). Self-renunciation for the benefit of others is an alien concept for the English; any short-term sacrifice is for the individual's benefit. I want to clarify that the more materialist foundation of English political culture does not indicate a rational-choice or overly-calculative basis for their behavior. Instead, the material pursuits (when combined with liberty) indicate that the English can more robustly engage their human nature (*SL* I.2-3, III.1-2, XIX.27, XX.7 pp. 331-32). Even if the English are the best at being guided by reason, it is a large leap to state that the average Englishman actively and intentionally uses reason (*SL* XIX.27 p. 332, XX Invocation of the Muses, XX.7).

Both the liberty and commercialism of the English provide an underlining tension within English political society. Every Englishman is suspicious of every other Englishman and not only wants to strike down any of his political ambitions but wants to outperform others to satiate his own material ambition (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 325-27, 331-32). Right underneath this regime of liberty is the impetus for tyranny and all sorts of abuses of power (Krause, 2000). The extent to which the English might rely on external and internal solutions to this underlining tension will be explored in later chapters of this work. Specifically, I suggest that the project of commercial empire might be a means to alleviate the unease of the English.

This unease of the English runs counter to the typical liberal presentation of liberal regimes as stable and internally peaceful. The democratic peace literature claims that liberal regimes are peaceful because of norms of peaceful dispute resolution and respect for human rights (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Small & Singer, 1976; Van Belle, 1997). Certain democratization literature even suggests that a state is particularly prone to belligerence when it is liberalizing, once liberalism has become entrenched then the domestic disturbance is subdued (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002). This is in stark opposition to

Montesquieu's presentation of England as being excitable and tumultuous due to its liberty (Gilbert, 1994; Krause, 2000 p. 233).

### **Chapter Outline**

The following section will outline how I utilize the above concepts to criticize the common notion of commercial pacifism. The second chapter of my dissertation will focus on the way England represents a shift from antiquity to modernity and the saliency of this change. One of the noteworthy manners in which England represents modernity is that it was the first (and at the point of Montesquieu's writing, only) country to place commercial interests ahead of religious or political ones. Although political and religious interests are still relevant in England, these interests acquiesce to commerce instead of the other way around as they had in all countries before. The destructive prejudices against commerce are supplanted by commercial mores. The second focus of this account of modernity is the novel regime of the English. Although the English regime in certain important respects resembles the democratic republics of antiquity and the monarchies of Continental Europe, it also represents a fundamentally distinct regime with liberty at its core. These two developments provide the foundation for an embrace of liberty, which helps lead to a new form of commerce. Unlike the timid commerce of antiquity which had to travel the globe to survive, this new commerce is assertive.

All three of the developments discussed in the second chapter suggest the emergence of a new type of expansionary liberalism and commercial empire which I detail in the third chapter. I first explore to what extent liberty's relationship with commerce leads this new commerce to

take on a less peaceful tone than it had previously. Liberty and commerce establish a novel set of norms at odds with traditional mores found throughout the world. This tension becomes belligerent when we consider that liberty and commerce push each other to expand to the far reaches of the globe. If Montesquieu does posit a commercial peace theorem, then it is dyadic in nature which is problematic as England is the only truly commercial and liberal state at the time of Montesquieu's writing.<sup>3</sup> I suggest that any means of increasing the membership in the commercial community would be ineffectual as it would either not result in the conversion of mores or would result in the eradication of the society in question which runs counter to the notion of commercial states as peaceful. Ultimately, England spreads its commercial and liberal mores through commercial empire which *might* be more peaceful than traditional empires but is done so on an unprecedented scale.

The fourth chapter focuses on whether liberty and commerce can produce contentious political climates both domestically and internationally. Domestically, I consider how jealousy and contractualism result in an individualism which puts Englishmen at odds with each other. This contention amongst the English underlines the constant threat of tyranny and despotism, something realized in the English Civil Wars. I also suggest that the English regime has the spirit of separation of powers as its principle. Although this spirit serves to ease the domestic tension of the English, the requisite education of the English by their own constitution becomes problematic as it proves an ultimately unstable foundation for education. Internationally, I question to what extent the jealousy and unease of commercial states pushes them to not only

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<sup>3</sup> Although the Dutch have commerce and liberty, Montesquieu's brief writings on the Netherlands suggests that they their liberty and commerce are not a robust or central to their regime as it is in England (*SL* X1.3-4, XI.6 p. 159-60, 165, XX.2, XX.4-7).

war will illiberal noncommercial states but other commercial states as well. The importance of commercial interests increases the number of areas of potential contention between commercial states. This brings into question the more robust dyadic liberal peace literature prevalent in liberal international relations scholarship. Furthermore, commercial prowess is readily transformed into and intimately related to military power; the two notions augmenting and supporting each other. I end this chapter by reassessing the notion that Montesquieu was an avid supporter of both commerce and England.

The final chapter will shift the focus from Montesquieu's writing to the contemporary liberal international relations literature inspired by mainstream interpretations of his tract on commerce. I will discuss not just the commercial peace literature but the democratic peace literature which suffers from many of the same problems. I will contend that the liberal commercial literature restricts itself too much by dismissing or downplaying the interplay between commerce, society, and politics. I consider to what extent the peace literature suggests liberal insensitivity and belligerence towards illiberal states. Additionally, I consider how both the commercial and democratic peace literatures engage in definitional gymnastics to arrive at their liberal peace theorems. I also critique the limited liberal presentation of human nature, suggesting that they exaggerate the material basis of interests while ignoring more emotive forces; thereby overstating liberalism's appeal to a wider audience. Furthermore, I consider to what extent putting the liberal literature into action through foreign policy can push liberal states to engage in imperialist (or at least interventionist) projects that run counter to the liberal presentation of liberalism as ultimately peaceful.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REPUBLICANISM, MONARCHY, ENGLAND, AND THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNITY**

Montesquieu's presentation of regime typology in *Spirit of the Laws* helps illustrate the shift from antiquity to modernity. The fundamental difference in Montesquieu's understanding of antiquity and modernity is whether the regime is based on self-renunciation or self-interest. This shift in political dynamics is important as it helps establish liberty's and commerce's premiere positions in the English regime which provides the foundation for my account of Montesquieu's England as a commercial empire in the next chapter.

This chapter will start with a consideration of the various principles of government and discuss how Montesquieu's presentation of these principles helps establish the ancient-modern divide. I will then briefly deliberate on how despotism figures into this distinction between ancient and modern regimes. I also consider to what extent republics rely on self-renunciation and the more modern regimes of monarchy and England on self-interest. Although I suggest that Montesquieu presents England and its liberty as the most modern regime, the self-interestedness of English society is not without its shortcomings. I then reflect on how and why commerce has been more openly embraced by political society in modernity.

### **The Principles of Regimes**

Although Montesquieu starts his discussion on regimes with a mechanical account of their structures, the principle of a regime is not Montesquieu's primary concern. Montesquieu's real focus is on how the character of society and the character of government interact with each

other. In Book III of *SL*, Montesquieu describes principles as the moving force behind government (*SL III.1*). If the structure of government is the mechanics of the regime, then the principle is the spring or force which gives motion to it (*SL II.1, III.1*).

Although I briefly outline the principles in this section, the full breadth of implications stemming from these principles will be developed throughout the chapter. Republics, both democratic and aristocratic, require the principle of virtue (*SL III.3-4*). This virtue helps bind the citizens to each other and to the regime. Virtue goes hand in hand with the spirit of equality. In the democratic republic this requires no citizen to distinguish themselves from the whole, no citizen is more valuable than another. This virtue and equality is more subdued in the aristocratic republic but is still clearly there (*SL III.4*). Although the upper class necessarily distinguishes itself from the lower classes there must still be some equality, as no one aristocrat ought to consider himself superior to the aristocracy as a whole. Without this virtue, the already difficult task of being both ruler and ruled becomes nigh impossible (*SL III.3*).

Despotisms rely on the principle of fear with every subject of the despot fearing for their lives (*SL III.9*). Even the despot must fear for his own life, suspicious that all are looking to usurp his power. Without laws to guide behavior, despotism turns to humans' most primal instinct, self-preservation. Despotism reverts man back to a state similar to how he found himself before society, in which he had yet to realize his own strength and thus lived in fear of others because he felt himself weak (*SL I.2, III.9*). A major difference is that in the state of nature man was afraid of everything whereas in the despotism he is singularly afraid of the power of the despot as he recognizes that a singular wanton decree would result in his life being forfeited. Since people fear for their lives and are preoccupied with securing said lives they are willing to surrender all other possessions, material or otherwise, to the despot (*SL III.9-10*).

Honor serves as the principle of monarchic rule (*SL III.7*). This honor helps keep the nobility and monarch working with each other, which is crucial as the monarch cannot rule without the nobility and the nobility are not secure in their position without the monarch (*SL II.4 p. 18*). The monarch would be compelled to at least take seriously the depository of laws, slipping into despotism when he does not (*SL VI.1, VIII.6*). Furthermore, the nobility would refuse to follow any order of the monarch which might be deemed too extreme to be honorable and would refuse to usurp the monarch if he has not devolved into a despot (Krause, 2002). This mutual pull towards moderation leads these two political forces to work in accord instead of opposed to each other.

Montesquieu hints though, that this honor is a *false honor*. By *false honor*, Montesquieu indicates that the nobility is not concerned with actually acting honorably, insofar as the honorable is somehow *good* (*SL III.6-7*). Instead, the nobility is preoccupied with the appearance of honor. None of these noblemen are the magnanimous man who wants honor because he deserves it but instead want the honor regardless if they deserve it. Montesquieu even seems to suggest that the nobility would prefer to commit horrible acts if it somehow was viewed as honorable, though those acts which are viewed as honorable are generally antithetical to such extremes (Mosher, 2001 pp. 203-04).

Curiously, liberty is the principle of only one regime, England, and it is not discussed in any great detail until Book XI, eight books after the other principles of regimes (*SL XI*). Liberty is not to be confused with the ability to do entirely as one pleases; Montesquieu identifies this notion as a democratic feature (*SL XI.3*). Instead, liberty is the ability to do anything which the law does not forbid and not to be compelled to do anything which the law does forbid (*SL XI.3*).

The only forces left to bind human actions in a regime of liberty are one's own self-interest and the law.

It is important to note that, although liberty is front and center in England, it is present in other regimes (*SL XI.4*). One of the more obvious examples is found in monarchies where the nobility and depository of laws provide the means for liberty by checking the monarch (an important notion expanded upon in this chapter's section on moderation). Montesquieu recognizes that liberty can be found in republics though he readily concedes that it is a precarious liberty at best. There is no substantive liberty to be found in despotisms, the lack of regard for legality undermines the entire formulation of liberty (*SL II.4 p. 19, XI.3*). Religion provides for the best approximation of liberty in a despotism as it serves to curtail the malicious prejudices of the despot and the despotism as whole although this "solution" is an inadequate means to provide substantive liberty (*SL III.10, V.14*). Despite the presence of liberty in other regimes, it is still important to note that it is only in England where it serves as the central aim of the government.

### **(Im)moderate Liberty**

A cursory reading of Montesquieu would likely suggest that liberty, with its separation of powers, is a vital component of moderate regimes (*SL V.14 p. 63, XI.6 pp. 156-7*). I have reservations regarding the assessment that liberty necessarily ensures moderation (Radasanu, 2010, *SL XI.4*).<sup>1</sup> The following section aims to ascertain the complex and possibly conflictual relationship between liberty and moderation. Although the English might be the best at moderation, it is still a precarious moderation.

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<sup>1</sup> I contend that the appropriate assessment is that liberty is required for moderation, not that liberty somehow suffices for moderation.

What does Montesquieu mean by “moderate government?” A moderate government is characterized by two features, one dealing with the spring of government and the other with the various powers of government. With regards to the principle of the government, a moderate government is relatively relaxed (at least in comparison to immoderate regimes) with no need to perpetually maintain and tighten the springs of government (*SL III.9*). Instead, in a moderate government people are left to pursue their more natural inclinations.

In republics, the principle of virtue must be constantly maintained through a civic education emanating from the education of the household (*SL IV.5*). If this education were ever to relax, then virtue would be lost. This loss of virtue might take several generations to lead to the republic degrading into a despotism but once a republic loses its virtue it is almost impossible to recuperate (Diana J. Schaub, 2002 pp. 90-1). Compared to the virtue of the republic, the honor of monarchical rule is relatively relaxed. The world (society) provides the education needed for honor (*SL IV.2*). The person receiving honor does not need to be constantly told that honor is something to strive towards. Instead, the joy that he receives from people adoring him, his *amour propre*, directs him to seek out honor (*SL III.7, IV.2*).

This does not mean that honor in of itself is inherently relaxed. Although this honor can restrain the nobility, it does not effectively restrain the monarch (Radasanu, 2010 pp. 292-95). If the monarch does not wish to become beholden to honor, he can simply ignore it. Although this refutation of honor can lead the monarch to be more of a tyrant, honor cannot pose a viable defense against this encroachment. Should the nobility be moved by honor to oppose the monarch, the monarch could counterbalance the nobility by invigorating the almost inherent alliance that the crown has with the commoners (Radasanu, 2010 pp. 295-96). Even when it does restrain the nobility, the one group that it can restrain, its ability to do so is fleeting. As honor is

ever more based on the vanity of women it becomes increasingly subject to flimsy whims and fancies (Radasanu, 2010 pp. 298-99). When honor is capable of restraint, monarchy takes on a clearly moderate tone, but this moderation is still precarious.

Montesquieu identifies a moderate government as one in which the various powers of government are separated. He identifies the legislative power to enact laws, the executive power to carry out the laws, and judicial powers to judge (others before) the laws (*SL XI.6 pp. 156-7*). This separation of powers includes but is not limited to a division of governmental functions and goes beyond a strictly institutionalist account. The real driving force behind the separation of powers is to separate a given person, persons, or set of interests from controlling all three functions (*SL XI.6 p. 157*). Montesquieu had a robust understanding of the various dangers which come with giving any group of people absolute power.

In both despotisms and ancient republics these powers are all given to a singular political body, the despot and the citizenry respectively. If the despot made a decree out of anger or the citizenry enacted laws out of zealotry then there was no political institution outside their direct control to check them (*SL II.4 p. 18, II.5, XI.6 p. 157*). This means that any whim which enters politics can take hold of the reins of government and engage in more extremist (tyrannical) politics. Although these regimes have a potentially mediating force, these mediations were precarious at best. In despotism religion can serve to soften the harshness of the despot. By deferring to an otherworldly authority, the only authority which could supersede the despot, the wanton prejudices and whims of the despot can be confined within religious dogma (*SL II.4 pp. 18-9, III.10, V.14*). The obvious problem for this reliance on religious dogma to mediate is that the religious dogma might give the appearance of the despot subordinating himself but we ought not to expect him to willingly submit to any dogma which runs counter to his rule; we ought to

expect the religious dogma to only soften the barbarism of the despot but not to make him gentle (*SL* II.4 pp. 18-9, III.8, III.10, V.14).

In republics, the education to virtue might be a mediating factor. You might argue that virtue allows the individual to forgo private ambitions and not disrupt the public order (*SL* IV.5). The major problem with this is that the republic is not just threatened by grand ambitions but is also threatened by petty jealousies resulting from the slightest inequality in wealth (*SL* VIII.2). While virtue helps maintain the stability of republics, it is hard to consider it a reliable mediating force as any degradation of it can excite the citizens into acting as political and economic extremists.

These powers are separated and mediated through two important bodies in a monarchy. First, the nobility provides a socio-political check against the monarch. Because the nobility and the monarchy are reliant on each other, the nobility provides a buffer against the monarch by refusing to do vicious acts which might bring dishonor on themselves (*SL* II.4, III.7). As mentioned above, though, this spring of honor is precarious and ultimately subject to the whim of the monarch (Radasanu, 2010 pp. 292-95). This is not to say that the monarch can twist honor into something merely mimicking his whims. Instead, it means that, even though honor requires an adherence to rules, the monarch can forgo honor to engage in more despotic rule (Mosher, 2001 pp. 203-04).

Should the monarch wish to forgo honor and become a despot, honor provides little effectual resistance. Second, the depository of laws provides a more clearly judicial check on monarchical power. By being able to reference the precedence of laws laid down by the current monarch and his predecessors, the depository of laws illustrates the historical limits within which that given monarchy has operated (*SL* II.4). Like the principle of honor and the nobility, the

depository of laws is ultimately subject to the whim of the monarch (Mosher, 2001 p. 176). The depository of laws provides no effectual check should the monarch decide to ignore them. Ultimately, the moderation of the monarchy depends on the character of the individual monarch. Should the monarch decide to heed the advice of the nobility and the precedence provided by the depository of laws then the regime will act as though it was moderate. Montesquieu appears to be skeptical regarding whether monarchs would in practice consistently engage in this moderate behavior (Radasanu, 2010).

In a moderate government powers are separated; most notably, the judiciary is separate from the executive and legislative. If the prince also holds the power to judge then he would be able to act without restraint, punishing all of those who have ever slighted him (*SL XI.6* pp. 157-8). If the legislative body had judicial power then the judges would have a clear bias as both creator and ultimate arbiter of the laws (*SL XI.6* pp. 157-58). Although the separation of the judiciary is essential for moderate government, Montesquieu also recognizes the need to separate the executive from the legislative for liberty's sake. Without this separation, any tyrannical force found in creating the laws would still exist in the same laws' execution (*SL XI.6* pp. 157-60).

This separation of powers, more broadly speaking, also allows for the government to self-correct. Any law which has shown itself to be an egregious error would not only stand but be built upon and compounded further without this division of powers to check each other (*SL XI.6* pp. 156-7). With a separation of powers such errors can be corrected as the other bodies of government would readily see and then correct any error committed by another body (*SL XI.6*). In England, this separation transforms the unease of the English into partisanship, allowing for the English to redirect their fears against a particular part of government thereby allowing the English to stave off tyranny (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26).

Despite the necessary relationship between moderate government (separation of powers) and liberty, it is necessary to consider whether the regime with liberty at its core (England) is in fact a moderate government. Such a government is certainly moderate insofar as it is a government inclined against decaying into despotism, English Civil War notwithstanding. The principle of government needs no artificial education, it is derived from the laws and their reflection of man's *natural* inclinations (Schaub, 2002 p. 100). My major opposition to considering England a moderate government is that its foundation liberty does not seem moderate in itself.

Although the domestic effects of liberty certainly seem moderate (the various interests and functions of government checking each other), Montesquieu's presentation of liberty itself indicates that the impulse to support liberty is not tempered. For liberty to be secured in the English regime it needs to be guarded constantly (*SL XIX.27* p. 326). Even when the English feel their liberty secured they do not grow lazy and complacent about it. Liberty is at its core an active process, it constantly pushes people to be suspicious of others and requires a restlessness in the population (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26). This interpretation of immoderate liberty is tempered when we consider that an appreciation for the separation of powers can temper the excitability of the English (Krause, 2000). The division of powers allows for the individualism of liberty to check itself, staving off a despotic decline. The crucial fact here is that the separation of powers needs to be respected and thus acts as the spirit for the regime. The separation of powers goes beyond a purely mechanical means of pitting passions against each other and must be at the core of English political society (Krause, 2000).

This precarious moderation of the English is maintained by more than just a constitutional separation of powers. The English are educated to have a sort of spiritedness with

regards to this separation. Although the English are motivated by particular interests, they understand that the pursuit of said interests, and maintaining the separate powers, requires civic engagement (*SL XIX.27* p. 325-27). At the core of this engagement is the English maintaining the separation of powers through pursuing their own self-interest. This is not to claim that there is no civic-mindedness but that it should not run counter to self-interest. The English understand that their liberty depends on their engagement in partisan politics, usually in the form of supporting parliament against the crown (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-27). Aside from the threat that a vigorous pursuit of liberty might bring about, the English's civic engagement is threatened when parliament becomes more corrupt than the crown. This results in members of parliament taking bribes at the cost of executive encroachment (Rahe, 2009 p. 141). The extent to which this civic orientation is sustainable or reliable will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

### **From Self-renunciation to Self-interest**

The most significant distinction between antiquity and modernity, according to Montesquieu, is the shift in the orientation of one's political actions. Succinctly stated, this is a shift from antiquity when individuals oriented their politics with consideration for the general to modernity where one's political inclinations are increasingly self-centered. This is not to state that there is an increasing emphasis of the private in lieu of the public but that the individual can act as an individual in the public sphere without supplementing the degeneration of the regime.

Virtue is identified by Montesquieu as the primary means by which one's actions are oriented towards public considerations. When Montesquieu speaks of virtue he does not consider the full breadth of Aristotelian virtue presented in the *Ethics* (Aristotle 1.7.1098a1-20,

I.13.1103a4-10). This virtue is in essence what we would recognize as patriotism, a love of the fatherland that prompts the citizens to sacrifice for the betterment of their country (*SL* III.3, IV.5). Montesquieu outright rejects Aristotle's claim that virtue leads to happiness and looking back on ancient republicanism recognizes that virtue leads to (or maybe more accurately, simply is) pain (Aristotle I.7.1098a1-20, *SL* IV.5).

Despite virtue being a passion, it is a limited passion, rejecting the full breadth of passions which might serve oneself as opposed to one's country. The main problem with virtue as presented is that it is a rejection of how people are naturally inclined to behave. Montesquieu recognizes that people are inherently interested in themselves and are so in the various phases of "natural man" as presented (*SL* I.2). When all we recognize is our own weakness then fear will take hold as we try to preserve ourselves against the infinitude of threats against our lives (explained in greater detail in my discussion on despotism) (*SL* I.2, III.9). We continue this self-interest once we recognize our own strength, no longer burdened by constant concerns for the threat posed by others we can start pursuing a fuller array of interests. In the republic, we sacrifice all individualized pursuits, ranging from acquiring wealth to better our station to forfeiting our own lives in protection of the fatherland, nothing is left for the individual (Rahe 2009, pp. 72-3).

The ancients attempted to reconcile the unnaturalness of republican self-sacrifice by conflating self-renunciation with self-interest (Muller 2002, p.70). The goal there was to bring the self-interest of the individual in line with the *public good*. Although this conflation might give the virtuous individual the apparent satisfaction of doing what they want, self-sacrifice for the republic, it ultimately makes his happiness reliant on service to the public.

Another fundamental problem with the principle of virtue, however, is that it must constantly be maintained. If the springs of virtue are relaxed, even for a moment, the republic is at risk of degenerating into despotism and destructive fanaticism (*SL* IV.5-6, VIII.2). This is particularly problematic because once virtue is relaxed it is nearly impossible to recover it. Due in large part to the fact that virtue is passed down generationally through education in the family, if a generation is lacking in virtue then the next generation cannot and will not be educated properly towards said virtue and will continue its degenerative slide (Schaub, 2002 pp. 90-1).

The modern principles of government, honor and liberty, reverse this trend of outward orientation. This is not to say that there is no consideration for others, as the proceeding paragraphs will indicate, but even these considerations are still ultimately about the individual. Therefore, the social fabric of modern politics is oriented toward the individual. This helps highlight Montesquieu's presentation in which modernity is a struggle to reorient politics to the self, even in the face of prejudices against such change.

Monarchical self-interest, in the form of honor, is still in an important sense reliant on others and society at large. This is not to claim that Montesquieu's understanding of honor had a robust consideration for the public good. Instead, this consideration for others is related to vanity as people are concerned more with others opinion of them than their own lives (Rahe, 2009 p. 112). A nobleman would not engage in an act that was in some sense truly honorable if he suspects that others will not adore him with praise or that they would consider his deeds dishonorable (Schaub, 2002 p. 85). In a reverse of Aristotle's magnanimous man in which he only wants praise because he knows that he is in fact praiseworthy, the monarchical nobleman is akin to the vain man who is only concerned with receiving the praise itself and is not concerned with whether he actually deserves said praise (Aristotle 4.3.1123a35-1123b14). Although

Montesquieu terms this as *false honor*, he recognizes its political and social utility and thus he tries to hold up this honor on pragmatic as opposed to moralistic grounds (Schaub, 2002 p. 83).

Another significant issue with considering this honor as indicating self-renunciation in a monarchy is that it only restricts the nobility. The monarch must subject themselves to honor for it to effect them, something that we cannot rely on happening (Radasanu, 2010). The monarch is likely to not engage in such self-renunciation; he would not allow for honor to restrict him from doing that which he wants. Any of these intermediary forces are subject to the whim of the monarch (Mosher, 2001 pp. 175-76; Radasanu, 2010 pp. 294-96). If the nobility is to engage in any self-renunciation, it is done so at the behest of the monarch. The extent of self-interest in a monarchy, like with all other facets of the regime, goes back to the monarch (Mosher, 2001 pp. 175-77).

Despite there being notably less self-renunciation in monarchies than in republics, monarchies clearly fall short of the English's engagement with self-interest. People throw away any concern for the noble or the beautiful, that which might be considered frivolous distinctions, in favor of the practical (*SL XIX.27* p.331). Instead of the monarchical hierarchy of regency and nobility, citizens now become a confederation of individual kings with each person ruling over themselves but themselves only (Carrithers, 2002 p. 6). Montesquieu notes that the individual is so isolated in England that all social interactions are reduced to contractualism (*SL XX.2*). There is a distinct lack of a social warmth or comradery in English society as the individual who is now free to pursue his own interests within the bounds of the law reduces all concerns back to his own narrow self-interest. Whereas in the republic there is no private only the public and in monarchies there is a mixture of the two, in England there is substantively only the private as the public is paid no interest by the people (Carrithers, 2002 p. 6; Muller, 2002 pp. 68-9).

Akin to his tract on honor, Montesquieu's writings on liberty do include an odd caveat for self-renunciation. This bizarre iteration of self-sacrifice is apparent in the English parliament where Montesquieu notes that a very corrupt Parliament voted in legislation that strongly punished corruption (Rahe, 2009 pp. 137-39). Montesquieu was amazed at how these English politicians so willingly worked against their own clear self-interest. The English parliamentarians went through with this legislation because they did not want to be able to be labelled as corrupt politicians by the opposing party (Rahe, 2009 p. 139). The English are therefore willing to work against their own immediate political goals in order to put on an appealing public face. Like the nobility of a monarchy, there is no concern for actually acting morally and instead the impetus is put on the appearance of morality for the sake of political concerns: the Englishman wants to put on an upright public face because it benefits his political interests (Rahe, 2009 pp. 139-40). Even with every Englishman as a king unto himself, he is still cognizant of the utility that others' opinions have for furthering his own ambition.

### **Individualization of Political Society in Modernity**

If modernity is a rejection of self-renunciation in favor of self-interest then can we, readers of Montesquieu, ascertain the level of individualization present in modernity? Before answering that question, I must pose another question: does this issue of individuality matter? To answer this second question, I contend that it does matter which iteration of modernity experiences the higher level of individuality and self-interest.<sup>2</sup> This individualism can help delay

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to claim that Montesquieu is explicitly attempting to ascertain the most individualistic regime. Instead, the question of the most individualistic regime can be gleaned from his account of the ancient-modern divide that I have laid out up to this point in this chapter.

any regime decay, with more “modern” regimes as potentially more stable than their ancient counterparts (Krause, 2002). Montesquieu presents his work as a socio-historical account of various regimes but there is some prescriptive teaching that he had to veil to avoid the censors of the French court (Rahe, 2009 p. 87). Montesquieu seems to present modernity as a refutation of the ancient self-sacrifice and prejudices which, when deviated from, led to the regime decaying into despotic or anarchical rule (Krause, 2000, 2002). Furthermore, by figuring out what regime is the most modern or individualistic we can glean the potential problems with modernity. Although modernity might solve many of the problems of traditional regimes, an extreme or elaborated modernity might bring with it substantial issues of its own (the focus would then need to shift to how to mediate such intemperance). In addition to this, the most modern regime would give us the best glimpse into the project of modernity. Modernity is a historical trajectory towards something but what is that something?

Montesquieu recognizes that despotisms are commonplace and to an extent inevitable, but also establishes the despotic regime as repugnant (*SL V.14*). Although the descent into despotism seems inevitable in Montesquieu’s account, I contend that the regime which is least prone to decay is the preferable regime (Krause, 2002). Furthermore, Montesquieu states that only when an immoderate regime engages in regime “decay” or “change” will it descend into despotism; moderate regimes beget moderate regimes. Despite the reservations I might have in claiming that the English regime is moderate, Montesquieu suggests that both England and monarchies are moderate regimes (Krause, 2002).<sup>3</sup> Montesquieu must see something in moderate regimes to stave off this decline into despotism.

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<sup>3</sup> Although there can be a certain spirit of moderation in republics, the spirit of extreme equality or inequality can undo there all too readily (Krause, 2002).

What is this attribute that moderate regimes possess to delay this decline into despotism?

I contend that part of it is a socialized tempered politics. This moderation directly plays into Montesquieu's account of modernity and individualism. It is no coincidence that the more modern regimes are categorized by Montesquieu as moderate. This moderation is a direct result of the more open engagement of self-interest found in monarchies and in England. The first component of this moderation is restraint. Republics are too vulnerable to faction; the various classes are at violent odds with each other as soon as virtue is on the decline (*SL VIII.2-5*). Despotisms are inherently immoderate as everything is based on the whim of the tyrant (*SL II.5, III.9, IV.3*). Although religion might restrain the despot, it is up to the despot to decide if this is the case (*SL III.10, V.14*). For monarchies, this restraint comes in the form of the nobles and the depository of laws. Both institutions provide a check on the ambition of the monarch by expressing dissent (often the nobility pursuing their own interests) and presenting historical precedence, respectively (Krause, 2002; *SL IV.11, VI.1, VIII.6*). In England, this restraint is provided by the separation of powers. By dividing the powers up, no one individual or party could have unilateral say in government thereby allowing the pursuits of self-interest to cancel each other out (*SL XI.6*).

The second way this focus on self-interest brings about moderation is by lowering the stakes of politics. In republics, if you find yourself not in the party in power, your livelihood, position as citizen, and even life could be placed in jeopardy (*SL VIII.2-5*). The upper classes would promote the spirit of extreme inequality when the spirit of extreme equality threatens to undo your position; the reverse holds true for the lower classes (*SL VIII.2-5*). In despotisms, both the highest and lowest of the subjects are in a precarious position. Should the subjects disobey, their lives are forfeit, and when the despot loses his position he also loses his life (*SL III.9-10*,

IV.3). In monarchies, losing in the “political game” is much safer. Although the nobleman could lose the favor of the monarch, if the monarchy stays a monarchy and does not devolve into despotism, he can still be opposed by and oppose the monarch with no significant consequences (*SL VIII.6-9*). The maintenance of the monarchy relies on the nobility being able to pursue and express their own self-interest (*SL IV.11, VIII.6-9*). The stakes are even lower in England as losing out typically means your interests not being represented in parliament (*SL XI.6 pp. 157-58, XIX.27 pp. 325-26*). Even if an Englishman’s interests are not actively rewarded by parliament, losing still allows him to pursue his self-interest. The stakes are admittedly still relatively high for the monarch in both monarchies and England (see Charles I of England for the clearest example of this) (Baker, 2015 pp.154-67; Smith & Barnard, 2015 pp. 243-257; *SL II.2 p.22, VI.2 p.75, VIII.9*). This is even subdued, though, when we consider that the monarch not getting their way it does not indicate a crisis for the regime, only that constitutional or societal checks are curtailing their ambition (*SL IV.11, VI.1*). Therefore, the checks on power (that initial facet of moderation) help lower the cost of losing out politically in modernity.

I want to reiterate that none of this means that moderate regimes will always remain moderate regimes; this is certainly not the case. The tyrannical rule of Charles I suggests that the individualistic political society of England has shown the potential for despotism in the English regime (Braddick, 2015 pp. 4-7; Krause, 2000; *SL VI.2 p.75*). Charles XII of Sweden had despotic inclinations despite presiding over the Swedish monarchy (*SL V.14*). Rather, moderate regimes have a propensity to change into moderate regimes whereas immoderate regimes tend to descend into further immoderation.

To answer the initial question, which regime is more individualistic, I believe that England experiences the highest level of individuality and self-sufficiency. Although monarchies

have individualization, I contend that it is not as extensive as England's. As stated above, the honor in monarchies still maintains a very clear, even if at times implicit, eye towards others and their opinions (Schaub, 2002 p. 84). Although honor is about one receiving honors, these honors are necessarily bestowed upon the individuals by others. Therefore, the honor of monarchies does not push people to be concerned with the welfare of others or even the welfare of the state (though their honor makes them good citizens of a monarchy) as they are solely concerned with the opinions others hold of them (*SL III.6-7*). Despite the lack of public spiritedness in honor, this spring allows for a stable political order to emerge because of (not despite) individuals' pursuit of their own interest (honor). Because the nobility in a monarchy is drawn to pursue honor they will resist engaging in ambitious political activities such as usurpation which would likely bring them dishonor. Although the English have an odd consideration for others, it is more muted and pragmatic than honor. In monarchies, the nobility care about what others think of them: they seek not only the praise, but the respect ca of other nobleman (Schaub, 2002 pp. 83-4). In England, this consideration for the opinion of others is framed in more utilitarian terms. They do not even care if the opposition speaks of them flatteringly and instead only care that the opposition does not speak ill of them (Rahe, 2009 p. 139). The nobleman in a monarchy seeks praise whereas the English avoids ridicule.

If the shift from antiquity to modernity is in essence a shift from public-orientation and self-renunciation to individualism and self-interest then the English pursue this modern end more so than monarchies. In England's regime people can pursue their own interests with the fewest barriers. In England, liberty reduces all human interactions to self-interest, even to the extent of working against your short-term political goals (corruption) for the sake of more pertinent self-interest (being viewed favorably enough to stay in office) (Rahe, 2009 pp. 139-40). The English

take their individualism so seriously that they placed commerce, a private commerce at that, above politics (*SL XX.7*). The notion that private matters should become public affairs is an affront to their sensibilities. Each person is so self-centered that they only care about other people's activities insofar as they relate to themselves. Although monarchies have this same attitude with regards to honor, it forces the nobleman to care about the opinions of others whereas the Englishman simply wants to be left alone (*SL III.7, XIX.27 pp. 331-32*). The individualistic Englishman only cares about the activities of other Englishmen if such activities threaten his own liberty (*SL XII.1*). Therefore, if the liberty of one Englishman is at risk all other Englishmen take offense to this intrusion but they do so because they feel their own liberty is at risk and not because they have some real concern for the well-being of that other person.

English individualism, although good in many respects, has substantial problems associated with it. This individualization is the basis for significant tensions within English society. Ironically, although this individuality is part of the safeguard against tyranny it is all the foundation for that very tyranny (Krause, 2000, 2002). If the impetus to stamp out tyranny is not checked, it can lead to a self-centered fanaticism that leads to tyrannical rule. One just needs to look at the opposition to King Charles and the rise of Oliver Cromwell to see this misfortune unfold (Braddick, 2015 pp. 4-7; Smith, 2015 pp. 243-257; *SL II.2 p.22, VI.2 p. 75, XIX.27 p. 326*). Although Montesquieu is an apparent admirer of the English regime, will the English constitution and its separation of powers indeed provide sufficient safeguards against a future tyranny? It is understood that there is no perpetual regime for Montesquieu and that England is likely the best actual regime (Krause, 2000, 2002). I am left unsure whether these restraints are enough to make England the best *possible* regime to resist the decline into despotism.

There is no consideration for the welfare of other Englishmen. This is not to say that the Englishman supports the degradation of other Englishmen, as if lowering others raises yourself. Instead, this self-interest leads to an apathy regarding the welfare of others. If anything, self-interest leads to a relative disdain for other Englishmen when combined with the commercial spirit. You want not only to acquire more wealth relative to your previous performance, but want to do so in relation to your peers (*SL XIX.27* pp. 328, 331). This means that, at best, the Englishman wishes a tempered success for others.

The English also disdain the political success of other Englishmen. Foremost, the overly ambitious English politician is usually struck down by English political society lest he become a tyrant (*SL XI.6, XIX.27* pp. 325-27). Additionally, one wishes for their own particularistic interests to win out in parliament. If the success of the Englishman's interests helps others then so be it, but the English are hesitant to support the common good if it runs against their self-interest (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26). Your political concerns are oriented towards yourself and you have no consideration for the pursuit of some common good bettering the welfare of others.

It is the prospect of tyranny that unites the English to act in unison (Krause, 2000; *SL XIX.27* p. 325-26). As iterated above, even then, this acting in unison is born out of self-interest and not a concern for the welfare of others. The English only move against tyranny because it is a perceived threat to themselves as individuals (Krause, 2000; *SL XI.4 XII.1, XIX.27* pp. 325-26). Although the separation of powers helps mitigate this tension, it still only brings the English together in opposition of a power (usually the executive) growing too strong in relation to the others. The English are left to remain as self-interested as they were before.

What other possible solutions might there be for this individualization of the English (insofar as it needs rectifying)? Looking to the other popular form of government, republics

prove unsatisfactory. The virtue of the republic is antithetical to the English. Regardless of whatever problems virtue has in of itself, the mores of the English are too at odds with the self-renunciation of virtue to adopt it in any meaningful fashion. The virtue of republics requires commerce to be placed in the periphery as it directs people away from the common good. Furthermore, liberty is fleeting when left to the will of the people (Krause, 2000; *SL XI.4*). Therefore, the entire foundation of England would have to be altered to accommodate such a solution (*SL XI.6, XIX.27*).

What about the honor of monarchical rule? The main issue with this solution is that it runs counter to the commercial spirit of the English. The honor of monarchies is rooted in the notion that you are more concerned with receiving the distinctions than deserving them (*SL III.6-7*). This is in stark opposition to the English regime in which merit and wealth serve as the means on distinction (*SL XIX.27 p. 331*). This formulation means that the English value both receiving and earning your approval, both parts are crucial. The notion that your recognition might be undeserved would dampen the commercial spirit of the English. The façade of honor would acquiesce to the commercial work ethic due to the premiere position of commerce in England. The fear of despotism can be readily dismissed as a solution as the fear of despotism keeps people out of the political arena instead of bringing them together.

There is no clear solution to the coldness and isolation of the English in Montesquieu's works. I suspect that there is no available solution to the fact of individualization and instead any solution would have to rectify the ill effects of it. Therefore, further consideration of the separation of powers seems the most viable account of a solution as it directs the English to care for the welfare of each other through the pursuit of their own self-interest. I will further explore this underlining tension of English political society in later chapters of this dissertation.

## Commerce from Antiquity to Modernity

Derived from the ancient-modern distinction of self-renunciation and self-interest, the role of commerce in society and politics demonstrates the novelty of modernity. Commerce was met with suspicion in the ancient republic. This aversion to commerce is derived from commerce's opposition to and corruption of republican virtue (Radasanu, 2013 pp. 6-7). The cosmopolitan view of commerce was at odds with the patriotic virtue of the republic, the merchant attached to the world and the citizen to his fatherland (*SL* III.3, IV.5-6, VIII.2-3, XXI.4-5). This led ancient republics to bar merchants (and artisans) from citizenship, revoking the political voice that they would have had if they were of a more "virtuous" profession (Muller, 2002 p. 69). Commerce gets particularly spurned in a republic when the spirit of extreme equality takes hold. In these exceptional circumstances, the people of a republic begin attacking any bases or symbol of inequality with (*SL* VIII.2-3).<sup>4</sup> This anti-commercial hue to republican virtue does not mean that republics are deficient or unskilled when it comes to commerce. Athens and Corinth are good examples of republics skilled at commerce in antiquity. Their daring spirit made them adept at undergoing commercial projects but they still fell short of fulfilling their commercial potential (Radasanu, 2013; *SL* XX.4, XXI.7 pp. 362-3). Despite these republics' skill at commerce they rejected its benefits in favor of conquest and glory (Radasanu, 2013; *SL* XXI.7 p. 363).

The prejudice against commerce continued beyond the pagan ancient republics into the Christendom built on the ruins of the Roman Empire. The civic or patriotic virtue was replaced with an otherworldly Christian "virtue" (Rahe, 2009 pp. 175-6). Merchants who were previously

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<sup>4</sup> Although this inequality in wealth was often a result of conquest and not trade, the wealth and resultant commercial activity were still placed under egalitarian scrutiny (Radasanu, 2013; *SL* XXI.7).

met with suspicion as working against the very tangible order and protection of the republic are now held under suspicion for concerning themselves too much with this world (Rahe, 2009 p. 176). Once again, the more cosmopolitan world of the merchant was at odds with the closed world of the devout Christian. The necessary self-renunciation of both the monk and the patriot were in opposition to the self-interest of the merchant.

In contrast to antiquity, the modern regimes of monarchy and the English model openly embrace the commerce scorned by the ancient republics. The ancient and Christian prejudices against commerce are absent in England and not necessarily as pronounced in monarchies. But commerce requires more than the mere absence of visceral prejudices to flourish to the extent it does in monarchies and England.

Commerce, especially the commerce of luxury, serves to distinguish the nobility from the peasantry and from each other which helps play into the distinctions which buttress the monarchical regime (*SL XX.10-11*). It is not the nobleman that pushes this drive for acquire wealth, they at least put on a public face disdaining wealth (*SL IV.2*). This is not to state that they do not in private appreciate wealth but that their affinity for it is certainly tempered. Instead, it is the emerging role of women as influential courtiers helped spur on commerce in monarchies as their ever growing and evermore extravagant tastes helped drive the demand for more exotic and expensive goods (*SL VII.4, VII.9*). This is not to say that the nobility is motivated to engage in commercial projects (making money) but instead that they are pushed to spend even more money.

Despite monarchy's engagement with commerce, this regime still subsumes commercial interests under political interests (*SL XX.10, XX.19*). This political hue to monarchical commerce is apparent when Montesquieu notes that the prince should not engage in commercial

activity himself so as not to muddle the distinction between the private and public finances. The merchants would be lining the pocket of the prince instead of themselves if the prince had his way. But, conversely, if the prince let them operate more freely then they would give a public strength to otherwise private wealth (*SL XX.19*). Even banks are problematic for monarchies as they lessen the prince's capacity to possess and control wealth (*SL XX.10, XX.19*). This does not mean that commerce and politics are held separate; Montesquieu recognizes that the nobility is a crucial motivator for the engine of commerce in a monarchy (*SL VII.4*). Furthermore, the more economic commerce prevalent in England is rooted on more practical distinctions, based on the merit of hard work, which runs counter to the more artificial distinctions one finds in a monarchy (*SL III.5-7, XIX.27 p. 331, XX.10-11*).

It is not until we get to the regime based on liberty that we observe political interests subservient to commercial interests. In the regime of liberty, people are free to pursue whatever private interests they have under the law (*SL XI.3-4*). These private interests would certainly include the often ridiculed and very private endeavor of commercial activity. Montesquieu recognizes that in securing oneself in a regime of liberty one also secures their property (Muller, 2002 p. 74). If one person could have their possessions arbitrarily seized by the government then others would not feel themselves secured and the commercial spirit would flee (*SL XX.14*). This regime of liberty is also receptive to commerce, in particular an economic commerce, as it allows for commerce to become a robustly private endeavor, even more so than in monarchies. In an odd way, with commerce being removed from a singular fixed hand (the king or tyrant) and dispersing it to the population at large, it thereby becomes a sort of public wealth (*SL XX.4, XX.10*).

## The Novel Regime of England

When Montesquieu speaks of the various regimes he explicitly identifies three major types: despotism, monarchy, and republics (both democratic and aristocratic). The one exemption from this three-fold typology which Montesquieu provides is the example of England, a regime whose type he never labels. We might find it curious that he is hesitant to explicitly label the regime that he dedicates the most space to discussing. Considering the importance of England in Montesquieu's account of modernity it is important to figure out what regime resides in England.

A cursory summation of England would categorize the regime as an amalgamation of republic and a monarchy (Radasanu, 2013 p. 7; *SL* 5.19 p. 70). England is a republic insofar as the citizens participate in ruling through Parliament, in particular when compared to the French parliament (Rahe, 2009 pp. 49-52). The Englishman acted as both ruled and ruler, something that you only find elsewhere in republics. It is also a monarchy in the sense that a monarch does rule and a nobility still exists, even if both body politics have more tempered powers (*SL* XI.6). From a mechanistic standpoint, the English regime is a hybrid, though that description does little service to the novelty of the English regime.

This summation does not adequately describe the character of the English regime. Even if England is simply a hybrid regime, it represents something which is in important ways distinct from either a republic or monarchy. Aside from the fundamental public-private dynamics, England is more than a modernized republic; one just has to look across the English Channel at Holland to see what a republic (and a commercial one at that) resembles in modernity (*SL* XX.4). Although Holland is a commercial republic, it falls short in engaging in the commerce and

liberty of the English. Montesquieu notes that the Dutch nobility does not feel secure in their liberty which is noteworthy as the opinion of one's security of liberty is more important than the fact of that matter (de Dijn, 2011 p. 189; *SL XII.1*). Additionally, this lack of fuller liberty, combined with a deficit of work ethic and innovation, lead the Dutch to place commerce in a high but not premiere position in their political society (de Dijn, 2011 pp. 188-89). However free the Dutch might be to engage in commerce, their republican nature restrains them. At best, Holland is a poor man's England, demonstrating the limits of republics' capacities to internalize liberty and commerce. England represents the clearest rejection of the principle of republicanism while somehow revitalizing limited popular government. England is also more than a monarchy with a more democratic parliament to check it. The principle of honor is at most muted in England; the English to a limited extent concern themselves with the opinions of others but not in the robust manner necessary for monarchical honor (Schaub, 2002 p. 84). Even the gallantry that we would suspect requisite for honor is lost on the English (*SL XIX.27* p. 332)

It is important to note that despite being a republican-monarchical hybrid, England was not immune to despotism. The barbarism of the English Civil War and authoritarian rule of Oliver Cromwell are emblematic of the wanton lawless rule through fear on which despots rely (Rahe, 2009 pp. 231-3). England is saved from despotism or other such errors of government because it had the proper social climate to correct such errors. Although the English overthrew one tyrant (King Charles I) for another (Cromwell), they corrected their political course instead of falling into a cycle of despotism (Rahe, 2009 p. 232; *SL VIII.9*). This ability to correct such errors, as explained earlier in this chapter, is the distinguishing feature of moderate government (*SL III.10, VI.1*).

## Conclusion

I contend that a major point of *Spirit of the Laws* is describing the emergence of modernity. For Montesquieu, this distinction between antiquity and modernity indicates a fundamental shift in man's political nature. The self-renunciation of the ancient republic is rejected in favor of the self-interest of monarchies and England. The moderation of monarchies is dependent on the character of the monarch and the liberty of the English brings with it an unease, making this moderation precarious. Despite this tentative moderation, these modern regimes can still provide for moderate governance in a manner that is a marked improvement from antiquity. Even though the moderation of England is imperfect (something elaborated on in the fourth chapter of this dissertation), it still likely provides for a moderation that is more reliable than even that of monarchies. *Spirit of the Laws* provides a sober yet hopeful account of the emergence of political modernity.

This chapter established that the self-interest of modernity, particularly the regime of liberty, allowed for commerce to be more openly embraced by political society. This relationship between commerce and liberty, established in Books XI and XIX, provides the foundation for Book XX and Montesquieu's account of commercial pacifism. In the next chapter, I suggest that a careful reading of Montesquieu's tracts on England, commerce, liberty, and empire points towards England being a commercial empire.

### **CHAPTER THREE: EXPANSIONARY COMMERCE AND LIBERTY**

In the first few chapters of Book XX of *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu begins by presenting commerce as benign and gentle. This is a gentle commerce which softens mores and erodes destructive prejudices (SLXX.1). This leads to the proposition that a commercial community of states would be peaceful (Rosow, 1984). If the reader were to focus on these first few chapters of this book, then they would likely agree with this characterization of commerce as the great pacifying force of modernity. Once we consider the context of these few chapters within Book XX specifically, and the *Spirit of the Laws* in its entirety, this picture of a peaceful commerce becomes increasingly problematic to maintain.

I begin this chapter by defining the term commerce and the various manners in which it and related vocabulary will be used in this chapter. I will then question to what extent commercial mores pacify our interactions, between both people and states. Even if commerce pacifies states through a binding of interests, commerce can produce both intra-societal tension and international competition. I then consider to what extent liberty's intertwined relationship with commerce might push commerce in a less peaceful direction. Liberty requires a specific set of mores that are not readily adopted by more traditional people. Furthermore, this liberty lacks the patience needed to be adopted by a gradual softening of traditional prejudices. Although the commercial pacifism has a monadic dimension, Montesquieu's account of this commercial peace is effectively a dyadic peace which is problematic as there is only one commercial people in his entire account, the English. This leads me to question whether the spread of commercial mores necessary for any international commercial peace is itself peaceful itself as the most effective

means of spreading commerce for the English is through a commercial empire. Although commerce likely fosters peace between commercial states, we must consider more than the beginning of Book XX to full appreciate the complexity and possible contradictions needed for a commercial peace to fully develop.

## **Commerce Defined**

### **Commerce and its distinctions.**

In the previous chapter, I introduced commerce and how it was received by both ancient and modern regimes. That said, it is necessary to provide another account of commerce which more robustly considers Montesquieu's account of the relationship between liberty and empire. At its core, commerce is an exchange of goods, services, ideas, and peoples (*SL XX.2, XX.4, XXI.5*). As commerce is presented in this chapter, these exchanges predominately occur between states. It is important to highlight here that the exchange occurs between peoples of different states and not necessarily between states themselves. Particularly with a commercial people such as England, the state is not actually conducting the trade and instead oversees and legislatively directs the commerce (*SL XX.7, XX.12-13*). Although I might refer to commerce as an activity between states, it is at its core an activity between people.

One distinction that is important to keep in mind when considering this relationship between regimes and empire is the division between economic commerce and the commerce of luxury. In essence, this distinction highlights that the type of goods exchanged in commerce significantly influences how the commerce interacts with the regime, its people, and the international context. It is important to note that associating a given type of commerce with a given regime does not mean that the regime will only engage in that sort of commerce but

instead that the regime is more naturally inclined to the given commerce. Montesquieu recognizes that both types of commerce can be found through most regimes throughout history; although he recognizes that traditionally republics (e.g. Athens) have been the most adept at the commercial enterprise (*SL XXI.7*). The question for him is which commerce is better suited for which regime (Howse, 2006; Rosow 1984).

Economic commerce is the exchange of actual wealth between peoples, providing for the needs of a people (*SL XX.4*). For example, if a given country struggles to grow their own crops to feed their people then economic commerce would focus more on importing grain and other agricultural goods to help feed the people. This economic commerce is also rooted in engaging in a high volume of transactions in which any given transaction yields a small return, requiring hard work and innovation for a merchant to make a living from it (*SL XX.4*). In effect, economic commerce is the backbone of economic wealth as it is focused on the economic capabilities of a people in a broad sense. This form of commerce is more inclined towards a republican form of government as it allows for the exchange of wealth while downplaying the commercial distinctions or ambitions which can foster discord and distrust which erodes away at the egalitarianism of the republic (*SL XX.2, XX.4*).

The commerce of luxury, however, is aimed towards the exchange of symbols of wealth as opposed to wealth itself (*SL XX.4, XXI.22*). This does not mean that a commerce of luxury does not provide for the needs of a people but that such considerations are secondary (*SL XX.4*). These symbols of wealth include precious metals and other “exotic” goods which are sought after by the wealthy. The focus here is on bringing in goods that appeal to and can be afforded by the wealthy, and considerations of practicality are effectively absent. Monarchies and aristocracies are better suited for the commerce of luxury because the goods from such a

commerce help provide the distinctions which are the foundation of these regimes (Rosow 1984; *SL* III.4-5, XX.4).

Although engaging in both types of commerce *might* better facilitate a more eclectic commerce, Montesquieu cautions against relying too heavily on the commerce of luxury. The problem with engaging too much in the commerce of luxury is best illustrated by Montesquieu in his account of the Spanish conquest of the Americas (*SL* XXI.22). In their conquest, the Spanish brought back massive amounts of silver. At first glance, we should expect that the Spanish would have a stronger economy with this influx of silver. The reality of the matter, however, is that the Spanish focused too much on bringing in silver and did not bring in goods which increase their actual material wealth. This would lead to the Spanish economy declining as they could not readily convert their symbols of wealth into actual wealth; the obsession over accumulation leading to the devaluation of said symbols (*SL* XXI.22).

The more robust commerce of the regime of liberty, however, more fully incorporates both types of commerce. The commerce of luxury serves to foster the commercial ambitions of the people, in a way providing them a material ambition to strive towards. This allows the English to engage in their (commercial) passions more fully which helps deaden the pull of political and religious ambitions (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 327, 330-31, XX.7). Furthermore, since the mores of the people are oriented towards a healthy commerce (to the point that they will restrict the activity of merchants to prevent them from working against the country's commerce in general) they will recognize that economic commerce is needed to help maintain the overall health of their commerce (Howse, 2006; Paul A. Rahe 2009 p. 235). This commercial people will secure what wealth they have so tightly that they would not risk the error of the Spanish, sacrificing wealth for symbols of wealth (*SL* XXI.22).

### **A commercial people with a commercial spirit and mores.**

Montesquieu does not mean that a commercial people are simply a people adept at conducting commerce, although a commercial people would certainly be that. One simply has to look at examples of ancient republics, in particular Athens, to observe that a people can be quite adept at engaging in commerce while still having substantial internal opposition to the commerce (Rahe, 2009 pp. 229-30; *SL* III.3, XX.2, XX.4). When Montesquieu writes of a commercial people he also does not mean that everyone is completely oriented towards the singular goal of promoting commerce. Although English society is geared to commerce, every Englishman is oriented towards his own liberty as expressed through self-rule, a liberty which is requisite for but distinct from commerce itself (*SL* XIX.27 p. 322, XX.7). Rather, what he means is that society, including those at the top of the regime, is willing to realize the potential of commerce (unlike the Romans or Athenians) (Radasanu, 2013). The English do not allow political ambition or any other passion take precedence over commerce (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 328-29, XX.7). These commercial people are even able and willing to make the metaphysical concerns of religion subject to commerce; the more immediate worldliness of commerce finally replaces the more abstract and otherworldly pull of immortality through glory or religious devotion (*SL* XIX.27 pp.330-31, XX.7).

The commercial spirit is to a great extent the willingness, innovation, and daring which typifies commercial advancement (*SL* XXI.5, XXI.10, XXI.13, XXI.21). This is what would help produce the bold and risk-taking commerce detailed in the previous chapter. The commercial spirit softens the mores of a people and destroys prejudices against commerce; it serves to lessen the viciousness and intensity of the mores regardless of whether these mores were barbaric or benign (*SL* XX.1-2). Even the virtue of republics is softened against the grindstone of commerce.

Although this softening of the mores makes a given people more inclined to a commercial society, the initial step of the commercial spirit getting an opportunity to soften these mores will be an issue discussed later on in this chapter.

Commercial mores are to a great extent a lack of opposition to commerce and commercial activity. This is not to say that commercial mores are just *ancien* mores softened by the commercial spirit of a people. These mores more fully incorporate commerce into the society as a whole (*SL XIX.27* pp.328-29, *XX.2*, *XX.7*). Considerations for one's position within the regime are subsumed under considerations for one's success with commercial activity. Commercial mores also clearly include a love of liberty and an avid inclination to defend said liberty against any perceived encroachment which would threaten one's property and commerce, as expressed in the previous chapter (Muller, 2002 p. 74; *SL XIV.13*, *XIX.27* p. 331).

### **Pacifying Commerce?**

Montesquieu states in the beginning of Book XX that commerce leads to more peaceful relations between states (*SL XX.2*). Commerce does this through a binding of material interests between the states in which two states are mutually dependent on the resources that they receive through trading with each other. With this binding of commercial interests, the prospect of war becomes cost-prohibitive (Muller, 2002 p. 72). Commercial states recognize that trading is a more efficient means of acquiring another state's resources than an outright military conquest (Muller, 2002 p. 72). In addition to a binding of interests, commerce also softens the mores of a people (Radasanu, 2013 pp.3-4; *SL XX.1*). This softening does seem to go beyond simply destroying the prejudices against commerce. The people actually seem to be gentler in their mores, even if these mores are in a sense corrupted. The more violent tendencies that can readily

manifest themselves in a people with ancient mores seem to be absent in the commercial people (*SL XX.1-2*). At the very least, the *ancien* passions which moved people are now deadened and take a secondary role to commerce and liberty.

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Montesquieu begins to place various caveats on the pacifying capacity of commerce. Most obviously, commerce does not bind the people within a commercial state and instead it divides the people within the state. Even a baseline hospitality is incompatible with the commercial spirit as considerations for virtue or honor are replaced by concern for profit (*SL XX.2, XX.7*). The division between people now becomes commercial as opposed to religious or political as people now compare themselves to each other based on their wealth; that is to say that such considerations take center stage without the political element with which concerns for wealth might have had in the past (*SL XIX.27 pp. 330-31, XX.2, XX.7*). The commercial spirit reduces all interactions within society to contractualism, where all significant activity is carefully regulated and oriented towards the health of the country's commerce (Rosow, 1984; *SL XX.2*).

I am willing to accept the notion that Montesquieu believed that commerce had a pacifying capacity. I also believe that, although Montesquieu presented caveats to the commercial peace, he did so implicitly and did not fully consider their implications in his understanding of commerce. Commerce could foster jealousy between states that merely engaged in commerce but, now, with commerce even more at the forefront, we should expect the opportunity for jealousy and the subsequent competition to increase (*SL XIX.27 p. 328, XX.2, XX.7, XXI.23*). Whether Montesquieu should be understood as honestly positing a commercial peace theorem is a tricky matter. Although commerce takes on a pacifying character early on in Books XX and XXI, it becomes distinctly less peaceful when considered in the grander context

of his work. If I had to state my opinion on whether Montesquieu was aware of these caveats, I would suggest that he did not robustly or comprehensively incorporate these caveats into his understanding of commercial pacifism.

This question of commercial pacifism (and liberal pacifism more broadly) is a matter of relative versus absolute gains. To summarize a matter that expanded upon in detail in the chapter on the liberal scholarship in international relations, absolute gains consider one's gains in relation to what they used to have whereas relative gains focuses on one's gains in relation to the gains of others (see Halas, 2009 for an extended discussion). As explained further in the next chapter, modern commercial liberalism, and the liberal peace scholarship in general, utilizes absolute gains as a central component of their model for commercial peace (Halas, 2009). For this chapter, however, I want to highlight how Montesquieu's account of commerce is actually rooted in considerations for relative gains. Montesquieu notes that a commercial state will compare itself to other states with regard to its wealth (*SL XIX.27* p. 328). The previous paradigm of comparing state's military power is replaced by comparisons of economic power. This is not to claim that military power is no longer considered but that it becomes part of a broader consideration of power simply. With the commercial state, economic power is paramount and military power takes on a more ancillary role than it traditionally enjoyed (Rahe, 2009 pp. 229-30; *SL XX.2, XXI.21*).

On the surface, this jealousy might not seem incompatible with the notion of a peaceful commercial state. You could readily claim that the commercial state which is jealous of its more successful neighbor will not invade it. Given how cost-prohibitive war can be, this may be a reasonable supposition (Radasanu, 2013 p.4; *SL XX.2*). This lack of open aggression against another commercial state does not indicate, however, that the jealous commercial state will not

take recourse. The question then becomes what sort of recourse is available to the jealous state. Those championing commercial pacifism might point to trade restrictions and even outright embargos as mechanisms a commercial state can use to try and rectify any perceived slight (*SL* XX.8, XX.14). Montesquieu is critical of such maneuvering, however, and notes the various problems with these trade restrictions. Montesquieu's critique of a commercial state utilizing embargos is centered on the notion that such restrictions will invariably work against the commercial interest of the state imposing them (*SL* XX.8-9, XX.14). There are only two caveats that Montesquieu provides for acceptable trade restrictions for a commercial state. Trade restrictions are acceptable when these are imposed against a state that you are currently warring against, though Montesquieu is even opposed to a blanket restriction on all commercial activity in this instance (*SL* XX.14). The second exception to his opposition of trade restrictions focuses on those states which are not adept at commerce. He notes, however, that trading with these states is an ineffective method of bolstering your own commerce (*SL* XX.9).

Considering the limited power that trade restrictions can have against a commercial rival, there seems to be a lack of more peaceful means of effectively rectifying this jealousy. This is not to say that Montesquieu does not present a means by which this jealousy can fully play out. Montesquieu suggests that these rivals will engage in a sort of commercial competition in an attempt to surpass the opposition's commercial prowess (Rahe, 2009 p. 56; *SL* XIX.27 pp. 328-29, XXI.21). Although he does not use the term "commercial empire" to describe this competition, what he is clearly describing is an expansion of states' commercial reaches which resembles what we would recognize as empire, something discussed in detail later in this chapter.

How exactly does this commercial competition play out for Montesquieu? In effect, this competition is a land and resource grab. This is not just a simple expansion of trading partners, a matter of who can get access to more ports or trade with more people. This commercial competition is rooted in colonial expansion with the aim of controlling and economically benefiting from the resources of the colonized area (Rahe, 2009 p.56; *SL XXI.21*). Montesquieu looks to Europe's colonization of North America for his consideration on this matter (*SL XXI.21*). This colonization was itself not peaceful, resulting in genocide and slavery, and would even result in wars between competing colonizing states (just look to the French-Indian War as an example of two states warring over control of colonial territory).

### **Liberty and Commerce**

One of the most important relationships in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* is that between commerce and liberty. As suggested in the previous chapter, once liberty takes center stage and becomes the principle of government the relationship between commerce on one hand and society, politics, and the regime on the other is changed fundamentally in a novel manner. The following subsections will serve both to differentiate Montesquieu's account of liberty and commerce from our modern understanding of commercial liberalism and detail how liberty pushes people to strive beyond themselves in a move against tyranny and any other encroachment against liberty and commerce.

#### **Commerce's foundation of liberty.**

Commerce cannot establish a privileged position in the regime if liberty is absent (Rahe, 2009 p. 236; *SL XX.7, XX.12*). As stated in the previous chapter, liberty allows for the security

of property needed for a robust commercial spirit. If a merchant or entrepreneur feels his property is insecure he will not take risks or try to innovate since he is unsure whether or not the government will come in and seize his possessions (Muller, 2002 p. 74; *SL* XI.3, XII.1, XX.12-14). People undertaking commercial activities are more willing to risk their own property on a risky endeavor if they do not have the additional risk of the government seizing their property. Liberty helps secure these property rights, as the citizen in a regime with the principle of liberty fears neither being punished by the government for doing that which is allowed by the law (e.g. not seizing property despite not engaging in illicit commercial activity) nor compelled to violate the laws (e.g. not being forced to engage in illicit commercial activity and subsequently having your property seized because of it) (*SL* XI.3-4, XX.13-14). Whether or not their property is actually secure is a secondary concern to the perception of security: perceiving one's property as insecure would dissuade a person from taking up commerce (*SL* XI.1, XX.12-15).

If political ambitions were left relatively unchecked then commercial interests would continue to be subsumed under political ones; the political man would continue his pursuits at the expense of commerce. This is not to claim that liberty separates the political from the commercial but instead changes the relationship between the two. Without the politically overly ambitious man, commerce can no longer be bent to political whims (*SL* XIX.27 p. 332, XX.7). It is important to note, though, that a peculiar type of political ambition is still strong in liberty. This political ambition oriented against, not for, the political advancement of the individual as advancement for the individual is a basis for tyranny (*SL* XI.6 p. 157, XIX.27 p. 327). I am also not claiming that liberty does away with individually oriented ambition. Liberty allows for a commercial ambition oriented towards the material advancement of the individual (*SL* XIX.27 p. 331, XX.2). The most ambitious people in this regime are set against each other with the

separation of powers both within the government (between parliament and the crown) and between the government and merchants (*SL XI.6 p. 157, XX.10*).

### **The striving of liberty.**

Despite being a principle rooted in self-interest, liberty is akin to virtue insofar as it orients itself towards something beyond ourselves. If this is the case, then in what manner is liberty a striving towards something? I contend that liberty provides the foundation for its own expansion. Those who live under a regime of liberty and imbue themselves to it would view this liberty as the preferred principle of government; their liberty is one which they love and defend (*SL XIX.27 p. 327*). I suspect that a people with abundant liberty, particularly to the extent that it is the principle of government, are going to love their liberty so much that any other configuration is an affront to their sensibilities; their disdain for tyranny domestically carries over into their considerations of other peoples (Howse, 2006; *SL XIX.27 p. 327*). This would likely lead a people with abundant liberty to look down upon, either with disdain or pity, on those people for whom liberty does not serve as the principle of government. The English are so adamant about their liberty that they even place it and commerce above the metaphysical and existential concerns of religion and on par with self-preservation (Howse, 2006; *SL XIX.27 p. 328, 330, XX.7*). This means that the traditional manner in which humans might strive beyond themselves, whether it is towards virtue, glory, or a life beyond this one, are either placed in subservient roles or are altogether ignored in the regime of liberty. This is not to claim that these concerns are completely absent, Montesquieu rarely seems to consider political phenomena in such absolutes. Instead, such concerns take on a more muted role in favor of people being centrally concerned with their own wealth.

The extent of liberty's expansionary drive might be better understood as a striving against something as opposed to honor or virtue which are a striving towards something. If liberty is a "striving against" it is a striving against tyranny. If tyranny is the capacity to force people to do that which is against the law, whether the tyrant is a despot or a street criminal, then liberty is the clear refutation of this compulsion (*SL XI.3*). This striving is not contained solely within the state and seeks to stamp out tyranny anywhere as it is a threat to liberty (Howse, 2006). Liberty also rejects the notion of surrendering yourself and your possessions to a tyrant to at least secure a small portion of what was once yours and instead pushes to secure what you have by refusing to being forced to surrender that which is yours (Muller, 2002 p. 74; *SL XIX.27* p. 327).

#### **A matter of baseness and vigor.**

I understand that this presentation of the English and their liberty stands in opposition to more traditional interpretations. This more traditional understanding states that the baser nature of the English suggests that they are in general apathetic; they pursue selfish interests and lack an invigorating force such as virtue (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). Ironically, even though the English are free to pursue their passions to their fullest extent, they are left with a lack of commitment as their passions become fickle and fleeting (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). The English meander about in meager pursuits of material interests when they lack the aspirations of receiving honors or serving the fatherland. Material interests are more based in tastes and preferences and these are exceedingly fleeting for a people trading with the world at large (*SL XI.4*). With only their tastes to guide them and their constitution to limit them, the English become exceedingly materialistic and lowly. Whatever vigor that inspires the activity of the English subsides as soon as their own material desires have been satiated and protected (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). Even though their

passions are easily inflamed, it is just as quickly extinguished or directed elsewhere. There is a lack of stable vigor as their liberty extends the actions of the Englishman to the end of their own material interests.

This leads into a presentation of the English as excessively atomized in their liberty. Just as they would want to be neither ruled or ruler, they have no interest in being motivated by or towards others or motivating others towards them. They do not understand their interests as somehow *collective* or for the *common good* (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). Even the English's submission to taxation, something that could easily be understood as self-sacrifice for the public good, can readily take on an individualistic tone. The English submit themselves to these heavy taxes because they do not view themselves as subjects and thus not feel as though they are compelled to contribute towards some endeavor thrust upon them, not because it helps provide for some public good (Pangle 1973 pp. 144-45; *SL XIX.27* p. 327). When the English achieve some common goal it is not through intentionally doing so; they present an odd iteration of civic virtue in pursuing their vices.

Furthermore, the fleeting and material nature of English interests makes them a non-threat. Without grand ambitions, the pursuit of interests is relatively harmless. The only exception is that the legislative branch ought not to be corrupt, or at least not as corrupt as the executive (*SL XI.6* pp. 161-62). Other than that, they lack grandiose political ambitions, so embracing one's interests is not as threatening to the regime as it does not pose the same corruptive threat as it does in republics (Pangle, 1973 p.116; *SL VIII.2-3*). It is as though the English have already been so corrupted by lowly ambitions and material interests that further corruption can do no harm (the one caveat notwithstanding). Whereas such corruption would be

damning in a republic and even a monarchy, it helps provide a solid foundation for the English's liberty.

My contention to this understanding of the English is that their liberty likely requires an activity and restlessness than at odds with this more passive presentation. To defend against tyranny, they need to be vigilant, not apathetic (*SL XI.6* p. 161, *XIX.27* pp. 326-27). Not only do they need to be vigilant but this vigilance might need to be constant, never providing any slack (Rahe, 2009 pp. 116-17). In this presentation of England, the pathway for the encroachment of tyranny manifests if this vigilance lacks strength and consistency. Therefore, the maintenance of the English's liberty necessitates a vigilant restlessness. Furthermore, I contend that the defense of their liberty is in line with their more material interests. Their commercial endeavors are thrown into uncertainty and are endangered if their liberty is threatened (*SL XIX.27* p. 327). The English are necessarily concerned with their liberty and would oppose tyranny because it serves their lowly interests. To consider this anti-tyrannical bent a *cause* in the sense that a cause is some common endeavor might be a stretch but, if the English are serious and more fully aware regarding their material interests, they will strive to safeguard their liberty. This common opposition from the English might not be the same high-mindedness of virtue or honor but it instills an odd civic virtue even if the English do not understand it as such. The question of a unifying or common force invigorating the English will be taken up further in the next chapter.

### **The Quagmire of One**

One of the more curious aspects of Montesquieu's account of commerce and commercial pacifism is that, although he at times speaks of commercial people and commercial states in the plural, his depiction of England and the relationship between liberty and commerce suggests that,

if there is a “community” of commercial states at the time of his writing, it is a community of one (*SL* XIV.13, XVIII.1, XIX.27 p. 328, XX.7, XX.12). Although there have been states that have been adept at engaging in commerce, Montesquieu only ever identifies England as a truly commercial state, one in which commerce is front and center (Howse, 2006; *SL* XX.7).

Although there is a monadic dynamic to the commercial peace (softening of the mores of a people), the fuller peace brought about by the binding of interests does require both states to be commercial, a formulation which is problematic when Montesquieu identifies only one commercial and liberal state (Howse, 2006; Rosow, 1984). I mention both commerce and liberty because Montesquieu does identify another commercial state at the time, Holland (*SL* XX.2, XX.4-7). Although deductively it would make sense for Holland to be considered a regime with abundant liberty, Montesquieu at most presents Holland as a modern commercial republic, only briefly mentioning that there is some liberty in that country (*SL* XI.6 p. 159-60, 165). This is a precarious statement for Holland’s liberty; Montesquieu notes the fleeting nature of liberty in republics of virtue but is once again silent with regards to liberty in a commercial republic (*SL* XI.3-4). What nobility remaining in Holland did not feel themselves secure in their liberty (de Dijn, 2011 p. 189). This is especially problematic as Montesquieu notes in Book XII that the opinion of one’s security is more important than the fact of the security of their liberty (*SL* XII.2). The commercial nature of the Dutch republic led to its corruption. In an unpublished manuscript, Montesquieu notes how everything in Holland is done for profit (de Dijn, 2011 p. 188). At first glance this simply seems like Montesquieu’s presentation of England, which should not be problematic (*SL* XX.2, XX.7). The problem here is that Holland is a republic, not the hybrid English regime. Holland is too much of a republic, even if a commercial republic, to successfully adopt and maintain the full breadth of commercial mores and activity of the English

(de Dijn, 2011 pp. 188-89, *SL XX.7*). Furthermore, Montesquieu notes that, despite their propensity for profit, the Dutch lacked a vigorous work ethic like the English (de Dijn, 2001 p. 188). Therefore, when we consider the questions of secure liberty, corruption by commerce, and lack of work ethic, Holland appears more as a cautionary tale of the problematic relationship between republicanism and commerce than a secondary example of the commercial prowess of England.

This discussion on the community of commercial states is important because if one state is lacking a strong foundation for its commerce then the mechanisms of pacifism will not be strong enough to restrain state behavior; whatever binding of interests would be weak and insufficient. Commercial states restrain their behavior only once they have intertwined their interests with one another (Rosow, 1984). This dyadic commercial pacifism is more reflective of the contemporary understanding of the democratic peace as a dyadic peace (Geva & Mintz, 1983; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Quackenbush & Rudy 2009 are just a few of many examples). The following subsections explore why England is the lone commercial state and the potential problems with expanding this “community of one.”

### **The Naturalness of Commerce**

Even if we accept that commercial states engage in more peaceful relations with each other, there is a glaring flaw in Montesquieu’s account of the commercial peace. I wonder how does the second commercial state arise in the first place? Or to phrase it differently, why is there not a second England? There is a sort of naturalness to the commercial activity of the English. The ability to address needs and express power lends to the notion of England’s commerce being natural. If commerce helps us achieve our most basic needs and desires (e.g. material sustenance)

then there might be a natural inclination to adopt it (*SL* I.2, XX.5, XXI.1, XXI.4). Then there is the possibility that people adopt England's commercial mores due to England incentivizing doing so. The first way that England does this is through increasing trade with the country (and thus increasing their wealth, at least in theory). By appealing to the material needs of a people, the English should be able to introduce more commerce to those people (*SL* XX.5, XX.7, XXI.20). In addition to this, people might look to England and its preponderance of power and decide to replicate the commercial activity that provided the foundation for this power (Radasanu, 2013). If the people want to survive, it seems reasonable to assume that they would try to copy what England is doing.

On the surface, it seems like we should expect commerce to take hold across the world. Yet that is not what we see in *Spirit of the Laws*. We have states engaging in commerce, but no "second England" (*SL* XX.7). Despite the eloquence of these softer notions of the naturalness of commerce, people still do not readily take to this commerce. As Montesquieu points out in *Spirit of the Laws*, the mores of a given people are not easily changed. If a new set of mores is antithetical to the preexisting set of mores then the people will neither incorporate nor tolerate the new set of mores (*SL* XIX.2-3, XIX.14). Although commerce might tap into our natural inclinations, the traditional prejudices against commerce would obfuscate the perceived naturalness of commerce. Not only would commerce appear unnatural, but the requisite liberty for this commerce would be antithetical to these regimes. Liberty is antithetical to despotism and is at best fleeting in republics (Krause, 1999; *SL* III.9, XI.4, XI.6, XII.1). If there is any prospect for robust liberty outside of England, it is in monarchical rule (Krause, 1999; *SL* XI.7).

### **The French problem.**

Despite the potential for monarchies to engage in commerce and adopt liberty, I have reservations against outright expecting monarchies to develop into England (*SL* VII.4, XI.7, XX.4). As stated in the previous chapter, even a country as similar to England as France has not, at the time of Montesquieu's writing, developed the fuller liberty or commercial spirit of England. This is not to claim that France or monarchies in general were inept with regards to commerce. Monarchies are well suited to engage in commercial endeavors (*SL* XX.4, XX.22, XXI.21). Monarchies' affinity to distinctions provides the impetus to acquire wealth as the courtiers demonstrate a love for the beautiful which would include luxurious and rare goods (*SL* III.7, XX.4). The problem with monarchies and commerce is that commerce might represent a type of power in opposition to the monarch, or more accurately wealth separate from political power. This might lead the monarch to seize the goods of those whose wealth rivals the opulence of the crown (*SL* XX.10)

Intending to make France or any other monarchy into England is an uncertain endeavor for three reasons. First, regardless of what you intend to accomplish with a new piece of legislation there will always be unforeseen consequences from the law (*SL* V.5, XIX.2, XIX.5-6). Laws intended to mimic the English model of government would be more likely to fail or produce a result opposite of what was expected than to produce the intended results. The second reason why such a project would not work is due to the mores of the people. Regardless of how appealing a given set of mores is to a neutral observer, a people will only take to these mores if the new mores are compatible with the preexisting mores of that society (*SL* XIX.2, XIX.14). The more alien the mores the less likely the local population will readily adopt them (*SL* XIX.5,

XIX.14). *If* the French were to want to become the English it would have to be through piecemeal reform (Rahe, 2009 p. 218).

Admittedly, this second opposition is not as important if we consider the examples of England and France. These two countries have such a similar history, socially and legally, that their differences are perhaps unimportant (*SL* XXVIII.1, XXVIII.27 p.572, XXVIII.45). This leads me to a third reason, that something beautiful is lost even (or especially) if monarchies were to try and become England. Despite whatever praise Montesquieu might give the English with regards to their liberty and separation of powers he does not present them in a flattering manner. They are a cold people full of melancholy and incapable of enjoying the finer things in life (Pangle, 1973 pp. 157-60; *SL* XI.6 p. 166, XIV.12-13, XIX.27 p. 332, XX.7). This goes beyond their inability to enjoy their precious liberty and seeps into their dour temperament as a people (*SL* XIV.12-13). The French and other monarchical people are conversely portrayed by Montesquieu as a people of beauty and finery (*SL* XIX.5-6, XIX.9). It seems that the French are too charming to want to turn into the base English. This notion of losing something by becoming more English is not limited to the example of France. Although French might have the most beautiful society they are certainly not alone in their elegance. Monarchies in general are based on this appreciation of sophistication which is apparent in their principle of government, honor (*SL* III.7, XX.4). There is something of real value in monarchies that Montesquieu would not want it thrown away in lieu of the crude English and their liberty (Pangle, 1973; pp. 157-60). Therefore, we must consider both whether we can replicate the English model and whether we should replicate it.

### **Expanding the commercial community.**

I am left to wonder how a second commercial state, let alone the community of commercial states needed for a commercial peace, comes about if radical legislative change and a more organic development (one in which this development is not thrust on them by a foreign entity) are not viable options. One possible answer to this question is to say that commerce itself spreads commercial mores. The more you trade with another people the more you exchange your ideas with them (Howse, 2006; *SL XXI.5*). Amongst these ideas that are exchanged is the capacity for commerce and commercial mores to erode destructive prejudices (Howse, 2006; Radasanu, 2013; *SL XX.1*). We should then expect that the more the commercial state exchanges with another state the more sympathetic the other state becomes to commerce, commercial mores, and the commercial spirit.

Although this erosion of prejudices might allow for the opposition to commerce to soften, this account still does not explain the movement allowing for the “importation” of commercial mores in the first place. A strong retort to my claim would be that even a state lacking the commercial spirit may still engage in commerce. If we go back to the preceding chapter, however, we can see that the type of commerce that these noncommercial people are engaging in is muted and less robust than the one we find in the case of a commercial people (*SL XX.1, XX.7, XXI.4-5*). I am left uncertain of whether just any engagement with commerce, and not a full engagement in which you adopt the commercial spirit, is sufficient to erode away the traditional prejudices against commerce. Furthermore, spreading commerce is insufficient as it is liberty which lays the foundation for a commercial people not the other way around (*SL XIX.27 p.328, XX.12*).

Montesquieu seems at least to hint at possible means by which this commercial community spreads. His most benign account of changing mores utilizes mores to change mores. In other words, Montesquieu recognizes that people can be persuaded to change their traditional ways and adopt new mores by being exposed to the new mores (Howse, 2006; Radasanu, 2013; *SL* XIX.14). Even if mores come from half-way around the world, if it is in some way compatible or agreeable with the mores of the people newly exposed to them then these mores can readily be changed. Montesquieu seems to suggest that even if the mores are not readily compatible with a people, sufficient exposure to them will at least give these new mores a foothold in that society, even if relegated to the fringes and not accepted by the mainstream (*SL* XIX.14).

Although using mores to change mores might be the most peaceful way to change a people's political culture, Montesquieu seems to have serious reservations regarding the efficacy of such an endeavor. First, there is the problem of the extent to which given people can readily take on foreign mores. Montesquieu does not expect a people to readily adopt foreign mores, particularly those which are entirely alien to them (*SL* XIX.5-6). Montesquieu also identifies that there needs to be a series of topographical, climatic, and historical peculiarities for commercial mores to develop on their own (*SL* XIV.2, XIV.13, XVIII.5). Can we expect a people to readily adopt these alien and commercial mores if we have they would not normally take to them? There are limits to commerce's capacity to introduce commercial mores to a people who have a climatic, historical, and currently social context opposed to adopting mores and laws conducive to commerce (Rahe, 2009 pp. 215-16; *SL* XIV.1, XVIII.1, XIX.5-6). Although Montesquieu recognizes that the mores opposing commerce are hard to maintain, it is not a stretch to suggest that overturning these will not result in robust commercial mores (*SL* XX.1, XXI.20). The

problem here is not exclusively with commerce but also with the liberty that comes along with a commercial people and their mores. Montesquieu recognizes that these commercial mores will not take root without liberty (Rahe, 2009 p.236; *SL XIX.27* p. 328, *XX.7*, *XX.12*). This connection between liberty and commerce adds to the difficulty present above as this liberty requires a specific set of occurrences to organically occur; see the case of England (*SL XIV.2*, *XIV.13*, *XVIII.5*). Montesquieu appears to recognize that even if commerce can topple traditional mores opposing it there is a distinct lack of certainty that commercial mores will develop in its place.

Furthermore, this gentler conversion of a people takes too long. We could expect such a project to take decades if not centuries to be completed. A peaceful transitioning of the mores is likely a multi-generational project as you try to persuade, not force, a people to adopt mores antithetical to their traditional mores (Rahe, 2009 pp. 215-6, 218-9; *SL XIX.14*). To reiterate, this is not to say that a people will not readily engage in commerce if they are not inclined to do so. This is instead to state that imbuing the requisite appreciation of liberty (constitution and mores) and commercial spirit, to the extent that the English have both, would not be a task completed in a single generation. Even if the people appreciate the material benefits of commerce, their traditional mores will delay the full-fledged liberty and commerce of the English. The English constitution might even educate a foreign people to adopt mores of liberty; but even then, we cannot expect them to easily or properly adopt this set of laws (*SL XIX.27*). England took multiple generations to develop into the commercial state that it is; why should we expect a state which adopts these more English more so quickly if they lack the advantages of England?

This prolonged timeframe is problematic for a conversion to commercial mores due to the temperament or hyper-activity of liberty. As constant and productive as the commercial

activity is when conducted by a commercial people, the liberty of these people requires an ever-present vigilance which makes such a people impatient (*SL XI.6 p. 161, XIX.27 pp. 325-26*). The sort of patience needed for such a drawn out and relatively hands off project is antithetical to liberty and its constant campaign against tyranny. A people with sufficient liberty will likely not wait for a few decades to wait and see if a particularly ambitious leader within their own country becomes a tyrant and such impatience would be reflected in any of their foreign projects, including “converting” other people to their commercial mores (Rahe, 2009 p. 101; *SL XI.6 p. 161, XIX.27 pp. 326-27*). Even if the commercial spirit and its international project are passive or peaceful the underlining liberty requisite for such commercial venture to occur in the first place certainly lacks such an indifference.

### **A preface to conquest and empire.**

I want to preface my discussion on conquest and empire with recognizing that Montesquieu did not support the project of empire or its requisite conquest. He wrote two works cautioning against the follies of the Roman Empire and the project of universal monarchy in modern Europe (see *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* and *On Universal Monarchy*). Even within *Spirit of the Laws* Montesquieu notes the failings of imperial projects such as those of the Greek city states like Athens as well as Spain and Sweden (*SL VIII.16, X.13, XXI.23*). Empire eventually leads to the downfall of those countries which undergo such a project and Montesquieu was acutely aware of that. Each of these empires demonstrated the conflict between the need to continue expanding once you engage in empire and the inability to maintain said expansion both at home and or abroad (*Considerations IX; SL VIII.4, X.13, XXI.23*). In particular, the Romans with their grand empire

invited the expansion of their citizenry thus fueling increased corruption and paving the way for tyranny (*Considerations* VI, IX). Furthermore, empire often leads to the eradication of peoples, their mores, and their histories regardless of whatever value they might have had (*SL X.3*). The project of empire is devastating for both conqueror and conquered alike.

Let us even consider Alexander the Great's empire, the one that Montesquieu is most sympathetic towards. Why does Montesquieu praise this empire? It is because of how the project of empire was conducted, not that it was conducted or the grandeur of it. It was because Alexander conquered not to destroy but to preserve (Radasanu, 2013; *SL X.4* p. 150). Alexander kept the mores, traditions, and even the religions of the conquered peoples as intact as possible (Radasanu, 2013; *SL X.4*). Alexander was the antithesis of Rome; he sought to become more cosmopolitan as a reflection of the people he conquered whereas Rome sought to turn all the people it conquered into slaves and then subsequently Romans (*Considerations* VI; *SL X.3*). Although Montesquieu recognized the genius of Alexander with regards to his conquest, he also notes that such a genius will likely never be seen again (*SL X.4*).

#### **A less peaceful means of changing the mores.**

If a softer conversion of mores is incompatible with liberty's disposition then we have to turn to Montesquieu's discussion of violent means of changing the mores of a people. In Book X in *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu recognizes that the mores of a people can be altered and remolded through the use of military force (*SL X.3*). When one people conquers another they are given four options for dealing with the conquered people and their mores. The first option is to leave things as is with the conquering people only taking control of the current civil and political government (*SL X.3*). The second option is to impart a new civil and political order to the

conquered people (*SL X.3*). The third option is to destroy the society and let the people disseminate into other societies (*SL X.3*). The fourth option is to kill the entirety of the conquered people (*SL X.3*).

For the purposes of the discussion, the first and fourth options are clearly inappropriate for spreading commercial mores. The first option is improper because the people are not changed drastically; the conquering people have control of the government but do not move to alter it or the political culture of the conquered people (*SL X.3*). Although this method might allow for a gradual infusion of commercial laws and even mores into the conquered people, there remains enough agency left to the conquered people to maintain their traditional opposition to commerce. This might be the least drastic method of change through conquest but it also does the least to alter the mores of the conquered people. The fourth option is obviously inappropriate for spreading commercial mores because there is nobody to spread the mores to, they are all dead (*SL X.3*). The only way for this method to work for spreading commercial mores is to replace the recently exterminated people with colonists from your own society (or any other commercial society if there are any). I will not completely discount this method as it has an opportunity to play into the colonial methods of Europe with regards to the Americas (*SL XIX.21*).

It is in the second and third types of conquest where we might find the answer to imparting commercial mores. On the surface, the third means, destroying the society, might seem like the most appropriate method. If you destroy the society then what remains of the society (or societies) is a blank slate upon which to impose your commercial mores (*SL X.3*). The question then becomes to what extent the conquered people will hold a grudge against the conquering people. For how many years and decades do you need to repress traditional mores before the conquered people embrace the mores that you are imposing on them? The indigenous population

will still not be predisposed to commercial mores, likely opposing any attempts to impose a new culture in the aftermath of the destruction of their previous culture, making such a project a lengthy project and thus at odds with the temperament of liberty.

If the third method, destroying society, seems too harsh then what about the second method, imposing a new civil and political order? Initially, at least, this method seems less problematic. This method allows for a changing of the mores in a steady yet relatively peaceful manner (*SL* X.3, XIX.14). This does not mean that this method is not rife with problems, however, as Montesquieu has stated elsewhere in *Spirit of the Laws* that the best laws from a given people are derived from or are least highly compatible with the mores of the people (*SL* XIX.2). If the *ancien* mores and society are still in place then the initial stages of this transformation are going to be very problematic as the conquered people and their traditional prejudices against commerce will resist the new commercially-oriented legal system (*SL* XIX.2-6, XX.1). This method assumes that the “best laws simply” can be used to change a people and Montesquieu clearly advises against such thinking with regards to the laws and the mores of a people.

### **A commercial alternative to traditional empire.**

If full-fledged conquest is too violent for the gentler mores of a commercial people and a gradual softening of the mores too ineffective for the vigilance of liberty, then what option is left for the spread of commerce? A commercial empire, distinct from the landed empires such as Rome and akin to the maritime empire of Athens or Carthage, is utilized instead (Rahe, 2009 pp. 56-7; Rosow, 1984). I will consider Montesquieu’s account of empire and England’s commercial expansion against the backdrop of the Eighteenth Century English Empire.

The first major distinction between these two forms of empire is the purpose or intent behind it. The false notion of the glory or honor of conquest helped drive these conquests even if the conquests ran counter to the preservation of the state and the empire the state had already acquired; such empires are pushed to constantly expand with no consideration of enjoying that which has been acquired (Radasanu, 2013; Rahe , 2009 pp. 207, 229-30, 237). The commercial empire is devoid of these considerations for grandeur. Instead, this new empire is spurred on by considerations for commerce and liberty. Part of this is the aforementioned land grab of colonialism which helps increase the commercial well-being of the commercial state (*SL XXI.21*). Another part of this, however, is simply gaining commercial access to a given people, something as mundane as establishing trade in a given city or with a given state if it helps make a profit (Carrithers, 2002 p.17; *SL XXI.1, XXI.3, XXI.21*). The English do not need to engage in creating such buffer zones as its island status already provides a natural barrier against invasion (*SL XVIII.5*). I recognize, however, that the island status which England enjoys would not necessarily apply to future commercial states and that commercial states would still be concerned with their defense; I simply contend that defensive considerations are part of a larger consideration for commerce as opposed to being so front and center (Rahe, 2009 p. 182-3; see Radasanu, 2013 for more on the self-interest of the modern commercial state).

The second significant difference between the commercial and traditional empire is how it is implemented. The traditional empire is carried out through an extensive military campaign conquering neighboring territories (*SL X.2-4*). This falls in line with our traditional understandings of how a conquest is executed. To continue the conquest, the empire utilizes resources plundered from the conquered people (Rahe, 2009 p .22). Particularly with advancements in firearms and norms regarding the conduct of warfare, there are limits to landed

empires, particularly those aimed at establishing a Universal Monarchy over the whole of Europe, as the expansion of the empire would eventually require more material wealth than the empire could gain from their conquest (Rahe, 2009 pp. 22-3).

The commercial empire, however, is not a military endeavor first and foremost but, rather, a commercial endeavor. It is carried out by opening up ports and establishing favorable commercial agreements with various peoples (*SL XXI.21*). It is important to remember that this commercial empire is not lacking in military force, even when considered in relation to traditional landed empires. If we look at the English Empire in the eighteenth century we can see that the English have unprecedented naval power (Rodger, 2006 pp. 169-82). It is also this military power which gives force to the project of changing the local population into a commercial society. If the local people continue to oppose the commercial endeavors of a state then the push of liberty would lead to the commercial people imposing their mores and opposing resistance with military force (Howse, 2006; *SL X.3, XXI.21*). Unlike the landed empires, the commercial empire can afford to maintain its conquest and expansion as the nature of the conquest provided for both a more effective means of acquiring wealth and exhausted less of that wealth, preventing the conquests of the empire from depleting the very means by which it would expand (Rahe, 2009 pp. 207).

The third dissimilarity between these types of empire is scale. The landed empires certainly expanded across vast areas, conquering dozens, if not hundreds, of different peoples. History is riddled with examples of such territorial expanse, but Alexander's conquests and the Roman Empire provide some of the clearest indications that these empires can become truly massive in size. Despite their massive sizes, there were limits to the size of these empires; one such limit is the internal decay such as we observe with the Romans (Rahe, 2009 pp. 39-40, also

see Montesquieu's tract on the decline of the Roman Empire in *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, specifically Chapter IX), or the death of the conquering leader (as is the case with Alexander's Greece). If the empire was initially a republic or monarchy, then expanding its empire too far would lead it to an erosion of the regime towards despotism. The conquered lands are increasingly ruled through despotic means (*SL X.7, X.9*). As alluded to earlier in this section, even if these empires do collapse, their expansion eventually halts due to the insatiable need for wealth that cannot be satiated by the plundering of conquered peoples (Rahe, 2009 pp. 21-23, 207).

The commercial empire, however, is not as limited in its size or reach. What really distinguishes the commercial empire's scale is its ability to make use of its maritime capacity. That said, maritime empires can certainly fail. The Spanish parlayed their maritime capacity into economic ruin as the influx of silver from the Americas actually served to weaken Spain's own economic well-being and thus its capacity to maintain or expand its empire. The Spaniards focused too much on acquiring symbols of wealth (silver) as opposed to bringing in actual wealth from the Americas (*SL XXI.22*). A commercial empire, however, is able to make full use of its maritime capacity. By "full use of its maritime capacity," I mean that the commercial empire is able to project its commerce, military, and mores (in particular, liberty and a commercial spirit) across the globe. One would only need to look at the English Empire to understand that the oceans which were once a great limit to the size of empire serve instead as a means to expand it (Rodger, 2006 pp. 169-82). The binding of commerce to maritime activity helps to create a commercial empire which increases its wealth as it expands to all reaches of the world as opposed to depleting said wealth (Rahe, 2009 p. 56-7).

## Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, there are several serious contentions to the common notion that Montesquieu's account of commerce is an account of a commercial peace. The notion that commerce pacifies people needs to be qualified as it serves a point of tension both within a society and between states. Furthermore, liberty pushes commerce to expand in what might be considered a reckless manner and pace as a commercial people will try to establish commerce in far-off lands without a full consideration of the mores of the peoples from the aforementioned far-off lands. To properly satiate liberty's excitability, its opposition to the encroachment of tyranny, the commercial people might undergo the project of commercial empire. Even when a people with liberty struggle against tyranny domestically they will likely look outwards as well.

We are left with a picture of commerce and liberalism which are distinctly less benign than their depiction in mainstream interpretations of Montesquieu as well as in the modern IR literature (one merely has to look at how prominent liberal scholars such as Michael Doyle (2005) or Erik Gartzke (2007) use terms such as democratic peace, commercial or capitalist peace, and more generally liberal peace to understand how pervasive this peaceful self-perception is within the liberal IR community). This leads me to wonder to what extent this less peaceful presentation of commerce is compatible with the notion that commerce can lead to peaceful relations between states. As stated earlier in this chapter, this is not a rejection of the notion that a binding of material interests can lead states to engage in more peaceful relations with each other. I instead contend that we need to more fully consider the broader context under which this peace occurs; we need to understand that this commercial peace is a heavily qualified peace which likely necessitates what we would readily recognize as violent actions (in both the physical and societal sense) in order to be established.

In the next chapter, I explore the domestic and international outcomes of liberalism, returning my focus to Montesquieu's writings. I will question whether liberalism and its expansion can facilitate stable social, political, and economic orders. Domestically, I consider whether the foundations of liberty provide for the means of its downfall. Might the underlining unease of the English, which helps secure and perpetuate their liberty, lay the foundation for the dissolution of this liberty. I discuss whether the education of the English is sufficient to safeguard the principle of their regime against the encroachment of tyranny. From a more international perspective, I also question the underlining assumption that liberalism quells tension and promotes peaceful relations amongst liberal states. I suggest that jealousy and contractualism provide significant roadblocks in both levels of analysis. I will also consider whether the shift away from honor and glory mitigates aggressive state behavior or if liberalism provides for new outlets for said belligerence.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ANIMOSITY OF LIBERALISM**

In the second and third chapters of this dissertation I did not refute the propositions that commercial states are not aggressive towards one another and that the regime of liberty experienced domestic tranquility. This was done in the second chapter to allow for me to focus on establishing Montesquieu's presentation of modernity and England. In the third chapter, I did not dispute the notion of belligerence amongst commercial states to concentrate on the broader aggressiveness underlining England and its commercial empire. My criticisms of the gentler interpretation of the commercial liberal regime to this point have been focused on these regimes' treatment of illiberal and noncommercial peoples. Having established modernity and the prospects of commercial empire, I now move my criticisms to these areas I left unexplored. I shift my challenge of the peaceful portrayal of commercial states by further exploring the domestic politics and foreign policies of such states. The commercial liberal state becomes more tumultuous when we consider the roles of contractualism, jealousy, and the multiplicity of interests of the state.

Considering the domestic aspect of this challenge to the gentle commercial liberal state, I look to the separation of powers, English political society, and their relationship with liberty. The separation of powers in England might lead the reader of Montesquieu to view England as domestically passive, only invigorated when a prospective tyrant appears (*SL XIX.27* pp. 326-27). One example in that chapter is when Montesquieu notes, referring to the English:

“But, if those terrors arose on the occasion of the overthrow of fundamental laws, they would be insidious, lamentable, and heinous, and would produce catastrophes.

One would soon see an awful calm, during which everything would unite together against the power that violated the laws.”

I refute this notion and instead claim that England has bountiful domestic turbulence. I note how jealousy, contractualism, and the separation of powers themselves provide political space for discord (Krause, 2002). An underlining issue with England is that the very facets of its society and government which allow for liberty and domestic tranquility are also the greatest threats to this liberty and tranquility. Although the political education of the English, their laws and reason might help alleviate this tension, this education is ultimately unreliable (Krause, 2000; *SL XIX.27* pp.325, 332-33).

In this chapter I challenge the notion of liberal pacifism and consider to what extent Montesquieu’s account of the commercial state might indicate a tendency towards belligerence and hostilities, even with another commercial state (*SL XIX.27* pp. 328-29, *XXI.21*). I suggest that the binding of interests brought about by commerce can also bring about more areas for competition, contention, and conflict. The binding of commercial interests with state security also increases the saliency of commercial activity. The notion of being a more powerful state is not just a narrow consideration of military strength but a consideration of the state’s capacity to project its interests and compete (in a broad sense) with other states. This international aggressiveness is further enhanced because it may serve as a “political safety valve” to turn English tensions outward (*SL XIX.27* pp. 326-27). The extent to which this “safety valve” is reliable or sustainable is uncertain.

## **Domestic Animosity**

I suggest that jealousy and contractualism are two significant aggravating factors in English political society. Although jealousy helps drive the commercial spirit of the English, it also serves to set Englishmen against each other by making them constantly strive to outdo one another (Rahe, 2001 p. 85). Further driving this division amongst individuals is the contractualism which results in the loss of comradery and charity among the English (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 55-6; *SL* XIX.26 p. 331, XX.2, XX.7). This individualistic society results in a regime of liberty in which every Englishman is a solitary king, neither ruled by nor ruling over another Englishman (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 55-6; *SL* XIX.26 p. 332). This pitting of each man against each other leads to a high degree of tension which readily underlines the prospect of tyranny should the regime of liberty falter (Krause, 2000). This would not necessarily be the tyranny of one but also the attempted tyranny of everyone against each other, trying to advance their own interests at the expense of everyone else's. A possible solution to this tension is the separation of powers and the requisite spirit to drive it (Krause, 2000). But this solution depends on an education through the laws that is difficult to maintain (Krause, 2000; *SL* XIX.21-24, XIX.27).

### **The jealousy of the English.**

The question of whether the English are a jealous people might seem like a mundane or otherwise unimportant question. On the surface, we might ask why should it matter the specifics of interpersonal relationships of a people. Specifically, why should it matter that a people takes on a heightened iteration of a characteristic that surely all peoples (and all people) have? Jealousy plays an important role in the English regime and help situate the English as unique in both relying on popular rule and jealousy. This combination of interpersonal contention and

popular government helps illustrate the underlining tensions brought about by the regime of liberty.

By looking at how jealousy factors into the other regime types we can glean how it manifests itself in England. Jealousy is not problematic for monarchies. Jealousy of others' accolades can motivate a nobleman to act with even more honor, thus strengthening the regime. (*SL* III.7, IV.2). The only individual one could be jealous of in despotism is the despot, although he is a slave of sorts as well, and displaying jealousy for or rivalry towards him places your life at risk (*SL* III.9, IV.3). Jealousy is even at odds with the other popular form of government, the republic. It is jealousy that lays the foundation for the ruin of republican virtue. In the democratic republic, it leads to the spirit of extreme equality where people feel the slightest disparity amongst the citizens as a slight against the fatherland and thus themselves (*SL* VIII.2-3). In the aristocratic republic, the disparity between classes needs to be curtailed or subdued or else the lower classes will grow so jealous of the upper classes that they might incite revolution (*SL* VIII.5).

England represents a break from these other regimes as jealousy helps put the politics of public rule in motion instead of muddling them (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 56-7; Rahe, 2001 pp. 85-86; *SL* XIX.27 pp. 325-27). In describing the character of the English, Montesquieu notes:

“As all the passions are free there, hatred, envy, jealousy, and the ardor for enriching and distinguishing oneself would appear to their full extent, and if this were otherwise, the state would be like a man who, laid low by disease, has no passions because he has no strengths (*SL* XIX.27 p. 325).”

This, of course, does not mean that the jealousy of the English is completely safe for the English regime. I would even go so far as to say that their jealousy presents a significant obstacle to maintaining their separation of powers, that essential function which upholds their regime based

on liberty. It works against the separation of powers by provoking extreme action against the greater governmental power (Krause, 2000 p. 233; *SL XI.6*). Although the English try to balance against encroaching (executive) power, their balancing can be taken so far as to undo the liberty that they are trying to protect. We can look to the English Civil Wars and see how jealousy of the crown led parliamentarian supporters to commit all sorts of atrocities, including giving the tyrant Cromwell supreme power (Braddick, 2015, *SL II.2* p. 22).

### **English contractualism.**

One of the defining characteristics of the English is that interpersonal relationships are increasingly regulated by contractualism (*SL XX.2, XX.7*). Montesquieu typifies such contractualism in the following lines:

“But, if the spirit of commerce unites nations, it does not unite individuals in the same way. We see that in countries where one is affected only by the spirit of commerce, there is traffic in all human activities and all moral virtues; the smallest things, those required by humanity, are done or given for money (*SL XX.2*).”

This is a necessary byproduct of a commercial society as market exchanges require rules for a commercial exchange (e.g. defining property), and for these rules to be reliably entrusted to the government for enforcement (*SL XII.1, XIX.27* p. 328). Although this contractualism streamlines commercial activities, it sets up a society in which everyone is competing with everyone. An Englishman might be more inclined to view another Englishman as a commercial opponent as opposed to a fellow countryman (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 60-1; *SL XX.2, XX.7*).

This might not on the surface appear problematic but it indicates a potentially significant problem with English political society. Nobody has an explicit eye towards the common good or maintaining of the public order as they would in the republic (*SL III.3, XIX.27* pp. 331-32, *XX.2*,

XX.7). This contractualism is not just limited to market exchanges but begins to permeate all social interactions. Everybody begins to become isolated and the sense of comradeship that one might find in a republic or monarchy dissipates (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 55-61; *SL* III.3, III.7, XX.2). Notions of morality give way to considerations of material interests; things are done out of legal and material obligation instead of a moral one (Gilbert, 1994 pp. 57-61; *SL* XX.2).

This contractualism results in constant animosity within society. There is such a contention amongst the English that it needs to be regulated by contracts, the most notable being the English constitution itself (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 325-26). The moment that contracts are not adhered to or trusted is the moment that the reserved disposition of the English disappears (Krause, 2000; *SL* XIX.27 pp. 326-27). Once again, we can look to the English Civil Wars to see how vicious the unhinged nature of the English can be (Braddick, 2015; *SL* II.2 p. 22). Every Englishman is a threat to every other Englishman and needs clearly defined rules to stave off barbarism.

Oddly enough, the English Civil War demonstrates that Montesquieu's presentation of the individualized Englishman is likely an exaggeration. England is only about a century removed from its own Civil War, which was motivated by religious and republican considerations (Smith, 2015 pp. 243-257; *SL* III.3 p. 22). Montesquieu, in reference to this conflict, notes:

“It was a fine spectacle in the last century to see the impotent attempts of the English to establish democracy among themselves. As those who took part in public affairs had no virtue at all, as their ambition was excited by the success of the most audacious one and the spirit of one faction was repressed only by the spirit of another, the government was constantly changing; the people, stunned, sought democracy and found it nowhere. Finally, after much motion and many shocks and jolts, they had to come to rest on the very government that had been proscribed (*SL* III.3 p. 22).”

Various parties' attempts to support Catholicism, radical Puritanism, and a return to ancient republicanism brought conflict throughout the British Isles. The foundations of religion and republicanism are a stark contrast to the individuality and commercialism that Montesquieu's England embodies. Maybe the English have moved towards individualism and commerce in response to the bloodshed of their revolution. Even if this is the case, the timeline clearly indicates that individualism and commerce are at most recent developments. Commerce and individualism might be prevalent in England but they may lack the deep roots that Montesquieu seems to attribute to them (*SL III.3* p. 22; Smith, 2015 pp. 243-257). If anything, this shift from the religious and republican fervor of the English Civil War to the commerce and individualism of Montesquieu's England indicates that England is in flux; the mold of modernity has yet to be fully set.

The English do have a solution to this atomization of society through contracts, one that utilizes the individual pursuing their own interests and competing with other individuals. With the separation of powers, the English are able to set interests against interests (*SL XI.6* pp. 157-161). This notion of competing interests is not as fleshed out as the "multiplicity of interests" that we find in the *Federalist 51* (Madison, 2003 pp. 314-319). *Federalist 51* was more concerned with the problems of faction whereas Montesquieu's presents the English as typically so atomized that their interests are particular; they only get together to check the encroachment of one governmental power over another (typically the executive over the legislative) (Gilbert 1994; Madison, 2003 pp. 314-19; Krause, 2000; *SL XIX.* pp. 325-27). This is not to say that this solution is a perfect one; I will detail crucial flaws with the separation of powers in the next few subsections.

### **The principle of the English regime.**

In Montesquieu's regime typology, he notes that each regime has a principle, a spring to set the government into motion (*SL III.1*). For the republic, both democratic and aristocratic, this principle is virtue (*SL III.3-4*). This virtue can be considered a public spiritedness or a love of the fatherland (*SL III.3*). In a monarchy, this principle is honor (*SL III.6-7*). Montesquieu calls this honor is a false honor focused on the nobility receiving accolades (*SL III.7*). Even despotisms have their principle of fear (*SL III.9*). This fear is an ever present fear of losing everything, including one's life, to the despot (*SL III.9-10*). Yet when Montesquieu writes about the English regime he does not explicitly mention what the principle of this regime is. One might be inclined to say that liberty is the principle of the English regime, but this would be a mistake. Although the English regime is a regime of liberty and thus liberty is at its core, liberty is not that which moves the government. To say that England is a regime of liberty is akin to saying that democracy is popular rule, a monarchy is the interplay between nobility and the monarch, or that despotism is a singularly tyrannical rule (*SL II.2-5, XI.6*). These facets instead describe the structure of the regime and limits to governmental power.

To figure out the English's principle of government, let us briefly consider how the principles of the other regimes are springs for their respective governments. The virtue of the republic is needed to orient the citizenry towards serving the fatherland. Montesquieu succinctly articulated this when he stated: "One can define this virtue as love of the laws and the homeland (*SL IV.5*)." The honor of the monarchy keeps the monarch and nobility in concert with one another (*SL III.7*). The fear in despotism facilitates utmost obedience to the despot (*SL III.9-10*). We should consider what maintains that liberty, which is the basis for the English regime. The answer is the separation of powers. By dividing the various powers of the government, liberty

can flourish (*SL XI.4, XI.6 pp. 156-57*). This answer might point us in the right direction, but it is not sufficient for identifying the principle of government as it describes a mechanism of the government as opposed to a sentiment of the people (*SL III.1, XI.6 pp. 156-57*). When we look to virtue, honor, and fear we observe that they are all rooted in people's sentiments and actions as opposed to institutional constraints (*SL III.3-4, III.6-7, III.9-10*).

What is called for, then, is some sentiment related to the separation of powers, a spirit of the separation of powers.<sup>1</sup> Phrased differently, the English utilize a respect for or adherence to the separation of powers to set their government in motion (Krause, 2000; *SL XI.6, XIX.27*).

Montesquieu writes:

“Since in this state there would be two visible powers, legislative power and executive power, and as each citizen would have his own will and would value his independence according to his taste, most people would have more affection for one of these powers than for the other...  
...if one party gained too much, the effect of liberty would be to lower it while the citizens would come and raise the other party... (*SL XIX.27 pp. 325-26*).”

It is not enough for the English to simply have this constitutional arrangement of dividing powers; they must also be active in maintaining this separation or else one power would be able to overtake the others (*SL XI.6 p. 161; XIX.27 pp. 326-27*). The English must put this separation of powers into action or else it is just words on paper.

But what exactly does this mean? How would we conceptualize respecting the separation of powers? To reference a notion that I mentioned earlier in this chapter, we can look at the citizens' support for the executive or legislative powers. Although the executive and legislative powers are not fully separated in England, there is still a division in power between the

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<sup>1</sup> I opt to not use the phrase “spirit of moderation” as I criticized the notion of the English regime as a moderate regime in the second chapter of this dissertation.

parliament and the crown (*SL XI.6* pp. 160-62). The English would support the weaker of the two between the crown and parliament if the spirit of the separation of powers is present (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26). Not only would they support the weaker party but would do so despite whatever other partisan considerations they may have. The English are willing to forgo more immediate or “smaller” interests for the sake of keeping the powers separate and balanced (Rahe, 2009 pp.140-41; *SL XIX.27* pp. 326-27). Montesquieu clearly presents this notion of the English as balancers when he writes: “...if one party gained too much, the effect of liberty would be to lower it while the citizens would come and raise the other party... (*SL XIX.27* p. 326).”

This notion of active balancing is important because it goes beyond a mechanical account of setting the powers to oppose each other. It also indicates that the spirit of separation of powers requires maintenance and vigilance (Krause, 2000, *SL XI.6* p. 161; *XIX.27* pp. 326-27). This spirit of separation of powers also implies that there is a broader self-understanding of the self-interest of the English. It seems as though the English are aware that if they are to continue to pursue their more immediate and material self-interest that they need to be aware of and act towards the broader interest of maintaining the liberty which permits them to pursue their individual interests in the first place (*SL XI.3, XIX.27* pp. 326-28). This does not mean that the typical English citizen is a “rational actor”<sup>2</sup> or has a robust self-awareness of the connection between his interests but is willing to act in such a way as to secure them. The question now becomes how the English obtain this spirit of separation of powers, which is ultimately a question of what education is needed for this principle.

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<sup>2</sup> Such a rational choice or rational actor model would be out of place in Montesquieu’s writings.

### **The problem of education.**

I have to wonder to what extent this spirit of separation of powers can be maintained to help sustain the liberty of the English. An excessive pursuit of liberty can run counter to the project of sustaining that very liberty. The spirit of extreme liberty is a substantial threat to liberty itself (Krause, 2000 p. 233; *SL XI.6*). Similar to the virtue of republics in which taking it to the extreme can bring about the downfall of the regime, were liberty to be taken too far then it would undo the regime of liberty as the separation of powers becomes ineffectual (Krause, 2000 p. 233; *SL VIII.2, XI.6*). In the ancient republic, the love of country risked spurring on a spirit of extreme equality which forced everyone to serve under the tyranny of the collective. Once again, one just has to look at the English Civil Wars and the subsequent tyrannical reign of Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell to understand that liberty is so easily destroyed by the excessive pursuit of it (Barnard, 2015; Smith, 2015; *SL II.2 p. 22, VI.2 p. 75, XIX.27 p. 326*). We should expect liberty to become extreme were the education of the regime of liberty to break down and the respect for rule of law to dissipate. Liberty would develop into independence (doing as one wants) without the laws and separation of powers (*SL XI.3*). Montesquieu notes that this independence is dangerous and ultimately antithetical to liberty (*SL XI.3*).

To better understand the education of the English let us first consider the education of other regimes. The principles of the other regimes are maintained through an education provided by various social institutions. In republics, virtue is maintained by an education that starts with the family but it ultimately provided by the city as a whole (*SL IV.5*). The honor of monarchies is an education of the strict rules of social engagement and honor (*SL IV.2*). Even the principle of fear in despotisms is provided by the miniaturized tyrannies of the household (*SL IV.3*).

Although these educations are essential for the maintaining their respective regimes, they all have important flaws that ought to be considered before we explore the education of the English.

The first two educations, that of a republic and monarchy, are problematic because they are ultimately divided education.s The virtue of the republic requires an unnatural self-renunciation. This is not to state that people are not concerned with their fatherland and are not willing to sacrifice for something bigger than themselves (*SL III.3, IV.5-6*). But people are also concerned with their own self-interest and well-being; it is unnatural to reject oneself as virtue requires (*SL IV.5-6*). This is why the education of the family is so important in the republic. The self-renunciation of virtue is so antithetical to our full nature, the rejection of this nature must start from an early age (*SL IV.5*). Once a man begins to become self-serving it is impossible to get him to reject his concerns for himself. If the education of the republic begins to falter, then the virtue is effectively lost (*SL IV.5*).

This self-renunciation is not a complete rejection of the self, though, that would be a misapprehension of Montesquieu's understanding of virtue. Instead, virtue replaces the more individualized love of self (exemplified by the English) with a self-love that explicitly ties oneself to their fatherland (*SL IV.5*). The individual is not meaningfully distinguished from the political whole in the republic. Montesquieu writes:

Love of equality in a democracy limits ambition to the single desire, the single happiness, of rendering greater services to one's homeland than other citizens. Men cannot render it equal services, but they should equally render it services. At birth one contracts an immense debt to it that can never be repaid (*SL V.3*).

The individual is benefited (protected) by serving the common and the common is benefited by the sacrifice<sup>3</sup> of the individual. Should this conflation of the love of self and love of the city become untangled then, the bonds of virtue would unravel and service to the fatherland would dissolve.

The education to honor in monarchy also requires a certain sort of rejection of the self, though not nearly as extreme as that found in republics. Although wealth is in fact coveted in a monarchy, there is the need to appear as though it is beneath the honor-seeker and of little or no concern. Men in a monarchy seek honor as they want to receive all the praise and accolades available to them (*SL III.7, IV.2*). Yet these same men seek the appearance of valor with regards to this honor. They want to receive honor for great deeds but do not want it so apparent that these deeds were done for the sole reason of receiving honor (*SL IV.2*). Furthermore, this honor also calls for the pursuit of military glory. Regarding this martial honor, Montesquieu writes:

For the nobility, honor prescribes nothing more than serving the prince in war: indeed, this is the preeminent profession but its risks, successes, and even misfortunes lead to greatness (*SL IV.2 p. 33*).

If a nobleman heeds the call to arms of his monarch, he does not do so for the protection of the fatherland but does so in the pursuit of glory. The nobleman is willing to engage in sacrifice for the prospect of benefitting their name.

Their education follows this same line of ultimately aggrandizing oneself. One follows the education because the education is established by the very rules that bestow honors (*SL IV.2*

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<sup>3</sup> I want to clarify that I do not explicitly mean that the republican citizen sacrifices his life in a martial defense of the republic. Instead, this sacrifice of the citizen is much broader, directing all aspects of their life towards serving their fatherland (*SL IV.5, V.3*).

pp. 32-33). Deviating from the education leads one away from the honors that help distinguish the nobility from both everyone else and each other. Montesquieu notes:

This eccentric honor shapes the virtues into what it wants and as it wants: on its own, it puts rules on everything prescribed to us; according to its fancy, it extends or limits our duties, whether their source be religion, politics, or morality (*SL IV.2 p. 33*).

Therefore, this honor provides prescribed modes of actions, setting up rules for every interaction. This orderliness allows for the monarch and nobility to move in accord with one another; when working as intended these two forces are following the steps of a dance or lines in a play with each other.

When we consider the education required for the regime of liberty and its spirit of separation of powers we see a distinctly different education. The clearest education of the English is provided by the laws themselves, that is to say the constitution. Since the English are at liberty to do all that is provided within the laws, there is a lack of a need for a political education provided by the family or any other social unit to teach the English how to behave politically (*SL XI.3, XIX.27 p. 325*). Such other educations would contradict the education of the laws and thus anything learned in the family or out in society at large would necessarily have to take on a less political tinge. One guiding principle for the political actions of the Englishman are the laws provided to him (Krause, 2000; *SL XIX.27 p. 325*). The people take the separation of powers seriously because it is part of the very thing which educates them. Unfortunately, this ends up providing a somewhat circular logic to the education of people proper to the regime of liberty as the very institutions which the people are supposed to uphold educate the people to uphold them.

Are the laws sufficient to provide a sustainable education to the English? One serious problem here is that the laws are not some pseudo-divine doctrine as the laws laid forth by

Rousseau's lawgiver from Chapter 7 of *On the Social Contract* (Rousseau, 2012 pp. 189-195). The laws are not infallible or unchanging, even when they are somehow perfectly suited for a given people at a given time. Such a notion would run counter to Montesquieu's understanding of laws and their relation to political society. No, Montesquieu recognizes laws as acts of men and the appropriateness of a given set of laws for a given people as a fluid situation (*SL XIX.2-5*). As the society changes so will its mores and thus the laws would change as well if they were to be appropriate for the people (*SL XIX.2, XIX.5*).

Being acts of men these laws are only as good as the wisdom of those who enacted them. This might be a positive for the English as Montesquieu admires how the English are singularly adept at using reason to pursue their interests (*SL XIX.27 p. 332, XX Invocation of the Muses, XX.7*).<sup>4</sup> Although Montesquieu notes that the English are more adept at pursuing their interests than most other people, they are far from infallible when it comes to the formulation of laws. The English lack the wisdom of Rousseau's Lawgiver even with their reason; they are not wise enough to make the absolutely best laws for themselves (Rousseau, 2012 pp. 189-195). Even with the wisdom (both of successes and errors) of all the legislators of the historical legal tradition which the English have, these are ultimately laws created by flawed men who can only glean the collective wisdom of their predecessors (*SL XXVII, XXIX.1-16*). Although this wisdom is in part from good lawmaking, it also is derived from recognizing when bad laws are enacted. But even if they could draw on that collective wisdom, stretching back to the legislative successes and errors of Rome, it would not be an appropriate reason for it would tell how the

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<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that the English actively utilize reason but that the manner in which they formulate their laws and pursue their interests coincides with the what reason would dictate.

English got to where they are as a political society but would not state what is best for it currently.

Montesquieu recognizes that a people will change over time. Society is not static but is a construct that evolves due to the historical developments, both endogenous and exogenous in origin, of a people (*SL X.3, XIX.4*). Customs will change, armies might invade, even new religions might appear, and all of this will inevitably change a society. The laws will not remain as ideal laws even if the laws were at one point ideal, that is to say that they were congruent with the mores of the people. The people, their mores, and their general spirit will inevitably change enough to no longer coincide with the laws if the laws stay static (*SL XIX.23-26*). You might readily be able to ascertain the most appropriate laws for a people after the fact or at a given point but this appropriateness is largely transient. Although the spirit of a people will be more static than its mores, it still evolves over time. This reflects the notion that the development of laws is through trial and error; experience guides humans in their endeavor to form the best laws (*SL XIX.23-26*). Consistent self-reflection and some luck is needed to keep the laws in line with the mores.

Why would this incongruence of the laws on one hand and the mores and spirit of a given people be problematic for an education by the laws? This is an issue because if the laws are not in line with the spirit of the people then the people will not be inclined to adhere to the laws. If the people are not adhering to or respecting the laws then how could we expect them to get a proper education from the laws, in particular if that education is built around observing these laws? Any significant tension between the spirit and laws would detract from any force the laws might have (*SL XIX.2, XIX.5, XIX.21-23*). This further reinforces the need for the legislators to align the laws with the general spirit of the people. Another problem arises then; if the laws are

being changed then the education lacks consistency. The education of the father will be different than that of the son. The education provided by the laws would have to be focused on respecting the laws, whatever changes they may have. Therefore, the education by the laws cannot be specific and has to be more general. This eases some of the tension for the English example because it is the separation of powers that is the cornerstone of this education (Krause, 2000). Furthermore, since the spirit of the people is more durable than the mores so changes in the laws can be more gradual (*SL XIX.4-5*). Still, the focus then needs to become whether or not this reverence for the separation of powers is too easily muddled by the particulars of the laws both installed to protect and derived from this separation.

This notion of a changing society making such an education problematic is potentially relevant to the English example. A society deeply rooted in tradition and for the most part closed off from the outside world would experience a slow and gradual change, though change nonetheless. Despite the obvious importance of the English history on English society, the English are the likely the closest real world antithesis to this notion of a traditional society. As a commercial society the English are inherently cosmopolitan. Their robust engagement in commercial activities not only projects the English across the world but also brings the wide diversity of the world to the English (*SL XX.1, XX.7, XXI.4, XXI.21*). Montesquieu mentions the following in relation to trade and the exchange of ideas:

“Commerce has spread knowledge of the mores of all nations everywhere; they have been compared to each other, and good things have resulted from this (*SL XX.1*)”

“The history of commerce is that of communication among peoples. Its greatest events are formed by their various destructions and certain ebbs and flows of population and of devastations (*SL XXI.5*).”

The English, more so than any other people, interact with the whole of the world and as such exchange both goods and ideas. Therefore, England's society would be ever-changing in substantive ways. This is not a claim that the change would be seismic but instead that the influx of new ideas would be constant. Although the English would likely be more sympathetic to familiar ideas we ought not reject the notion that more foreign ideas might win out, further pushing the evolution of English society and its mores (*SL XIX.8*). I have to question the resiliency of an education by the laws with England's society changing in such a manner. The laws would necessarily need to change to reflect developments in English society but can we be confident that the changes in the law will keep the fortunate wisdom that the laws held at the time of Montesquieu's writings? In a tempered sense, I believe that this change brought about by the commerce of the English is manageable. Their commerce would certainly allow for quicker changes in the taste and mores of the English but their general spirit would be more resistant to this change. The English's love of their liberty and spirit of separate powers will not be quickly washed away by the communicative capacity of commerce; such a claim misconstrues the distinction between the mores and spirit of a people (*SL XIX.4-5*). Whatever changes commerce brings about would be rapid only in a superficial sense; substantial and fundamental change would be more gradual.

If the education by laws is problematic, then the sustainability of liberty is brought into question. Even with a regime in which liberty is the central focus, as is the case with England, can we expect this liberty to be maintained? I want to qualify this hesitation with the notion that the regime of liberty can be maintained by its laws because of the very fact that the laws are a historical aggregation of human experience. We ought to expect that the laws would be highly flawed should the laws be created in one spectacular moment by a flawed individual or group of

people. This is not the case as the laws are in effect wiser than any one person or people in any one time. Experience and nature help correct the laws and illuminate the flaws that the laws might present without exerting effort to correct frivolous errors (*SL XIX.5-6*).

This experience necessarily goes beyond the trials and errors of what laws works in a given situation or with a certain people. The English would be misguided if they focused only on the effectiveness of the laws and not consider the events which and people who brought them about. We can look to the reign of Henry VIII to demonstrate the complexity of the lessons at hand. Henry VIII kicked out the Catholic Church thereby allowing for the flourishing of commerce (*SL XXIII.29 p. 456*). Without his rancorous dismantling of the monastic lifestyle and the clergy (as then constructed), England would not have been provided as fertile of social ground to develop its commercial spirit. Yet should the English mimic his heavy handiness and readiness to resort to violence, even in the pursuit of domestic commerce? Even when the result is positive<sup>5</sup> in the long-run, every major event that has lead England to its current state has lessons both good and bad.

### **Civic foundation of English education.**

Despite its shortcomings, the education by the laws is not necessarily the only political education provided to the English. The second education comes to light when we consider that the English constitution was not just a product of accident. There was a wealth of prudence that was required (along with chance and geography) to create the laws of England (*SL V.14 p. 63, XIV.2, XIV.13, XVIII.5, XIX.27 pp. 332-33*). It would be through this prudence that the

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<sup>5</sup> By positive, I mean it leads toward commerce and liberty.

fallibility of English laws becomes less problematic. The introspective nature of English political society allows the English to consistently reassess their laws. The English do not accept the laws as they are, but reassess them and rework them (*SL XIX.27* pp. 332-33). This willingness to challenge the status quo helps lessen the problem of congruence of laws and mores as stated above. This is in part because their amending of the laws would not be based on some moral grounding or aspiration for the noble but rooted in pragmatism (*SL XI.6* p. 166, *XIX.2-6*, *XIX.27* pp. 332-33). The English would rather adapt incrementally, each step practical in its objective and readily achievable.

It is this introspective nature of the English that makes the intrinsic imperfectability of humans not as problematic as I initially posited. As Montesquieu writes in Book XIX Chapter 27 of *Spirit of the Laws*:

As each individual, always independent, would largely follow his own caprices and fantasies, he would often change parties...(p. 326)

Because, in order to enjoy liberty, each must be able to say what he thinks and because, in order to preserve it...(p. 327)

In a free nation it often does not matter whether individuals reason well or badly; it suffices that they reason; from that comes the liberty that protects them from the effects of these same reasonings. (p. 332)

The fact that the English are going to reassess, repeatedly and vigorously, allows for the “mistakes of legislation” to be corrected (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26, 332-33). When the English deviate from their constitution, their deviations do not necessarily stack. Although errors might be met with further errors of overcorrection, the English aim at the middle-ground of their liberty (*SL XIX.27* p. 326, 332). This is evident when Montesquieu notes that:

As these parties are made up of free men, if one party gained too much, the effect of liberty would be to lower it while the citizens would come and raise the other party like hands rescuing the body. (*SL XIX.27* p. 326)

The introspective nature of the English might allow for a civic-mindedness but this civic orientation is not to be confused with the virtue of ancient republicanism (*SL* III.3, IV.5-6, XIX.27 pp.332-33). Instead of a blanket loyalty to the fatherland, the English are measured in their appreciation for and adherence to the laws. They understand that the laws and subsequent separation of powers best provide for their liberty and thus their security. Whatever affinity that the English have for England is not born out of some indoctrination but is instead a result of deliberation. The ancient republic and its virtue would be broken by such open and candid criticism, as evident when Montesquieu writes:

One can define this virtue as love of the laws and the homeland. This love, requiring a continuous preference of the public interest over one's own, produces all the individual virtues; they are only that preference. (*SL* IV.5)

This weakness in republics is offers a stark contrast to Montesquieu's account of the English and their liberty in XIX.27 of *Spirit of the Laws* where he state both:

Because, in order to enjoy liberty, each must be able to say what he thinks and because, in order to preserve it, each must still be able to say what he thinks, a citizen in this state would say and write everything that the laws had not expressly prohibited him from saying or writing. (p. 327)

and

If the climate had given a restless spirit and a broad view to many people in a country where the constitution gave everyone a part in the government along with political interests, one would talk much about politics; one would see people who spent their lives calculating about events, which, given the nature of things and the caprice of fortune (that is of men), are scarcely subject to calculation.

In a free nation it often does not matter whether individuals reason well or badly; it suffices that they reason; from that comes the liberty that protects them from the effects of these same reasonings. (p. 332)

The English's liberty is if anything strengthened by such open criticism.

Although Montesquieu notes that the relationship between mores and laws can flow both ways, especially in England, I am left to wonder how well the mores can be intentionally guided

by the laws. Montesquieu advocates for change but social engineering appears antithetical to his narrative (*SL XIX.2-6*). Reason might be able to engage in this social engineering but it would also be capable of cautioning against such projects. Reason can help guide the laws to maintain their liberal mores but it must be careful to not act in an overbearing manner. Laws will have unintended consequences even under the guidance of the wisest of men (*SL V.5, XIX.2, XIX.5-6*). This will not be too much of a concern for the English as the intent would be to maintain their course as opposed to engage in massive social and political upheaval.

Taking my cue from the English, I still maintain a healthy skepticism of the effectiveness of this more civic or reasoned education. The limited use of reason and incremental nature to the necessary changes in law means that the English can guide the regime and its laws through political turmoil but that great upheavals and large shocks would still be problematic. These educations appear best at reducing the “background noise” created by the unease of their liberty.

We should be reminded of the strength of the English’s unease when Montesquieu writes:

One is afraid of seeing the escape of a good that one feels, that one scarcely knows, and that can be hidden from us; and fear always enlarges objects. The people would be uneasy about their situation and would believe themselves in danger even at the safest moments (*SL XIX.27 p. 326*).

We also should be skeptical of the power of reason, even when used in a limited and pragmatic fashion. I contend that, in remembering that reason is one of our passions and not some immutable tool, the introspection provided by reason should be used to critique reason itself. Even though these educations are adapted to work well with the imperfect nature of the English (and humans in general), it still ultimately reliant on imperfect beings actively engaging in self-correction. This is not to claim that England is more flawed than other regimes but that it is still vulnerable like other regimes.

## **International Competition**

In the previous chapter I did not seriously challenge the notion that commerce promotes peace amongst liberal or commercial states. At most, I had briefly suggested that commerce might promote a competition of colonization amongst commercial states, mainly in the form of a land and resource grab (*SL XXI.22*). Although I have been relatively dismissive of the notion of violent commercial competition, I do believe that it warrants further consideration. In particular, I believe reflecting on the role of jealousy and contractualism on commercial disputes along with the binding of commercial and military interests leads me to seriously consider whether any commercial peace theorem derived from Montesquieu's writings would have the force of the commercial peace literature found in modern International Relations literature.<sup>6</sup>

### **Jealousy, contractualism, and commercial animosity.**

I suggest that jealousy plays a significant role in promoting interstate competition. Although this jealousy is rather subdued on the surface, I contend that it lays the foundation for considerable interstate conflict. It is no surprise that saliency is integral in fostering the conditions for interstate disputes; states will go to war over issues that they view as important and not over frivolous arguments (*SL X.2*). Since commercial states value matters of trade and other economic activities so highly and because they would trade with each other more than noncommercial states, the various trade agreements between commercial states will provide ever increasing areas for salient disputes (*SL XX.7*). This notion of commerce resulting in more areas of conflict is clearly articulated when Montesquieu writes:

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter five of this dissertation has a more elaborated discussion on the contemporary literature regarding the commercial peace theory.

A commercial nation has a prodigious number of small, particular interests; therefore, it can offend and be offended in an infinity of ways. (*SL XIX.27* p. 328)

The very jealousy which promotes competition amongst the individual merchants and entrepreneurs of a commercial society would promote jealousy amongst commercial states (*SL XIX.27* pp. 328-29, *XX.7*). The English are so jealous and guard their own commerce so much that they rely on their own laws as opposed to trade agreements when engaging in interstate commerce (*SL XX.7*).

Could we expect the contractualism of commercial society to alleviate this jealousy between commercial states? Although commercial states might be more contractual in their interactions, I find it hard to accept the notion that this contractualism would suffice to restrain interstate belligerence (*SL XX.2, XX.7*). For example, what if just one of the states in question views resolving the dispute in their favor as more important than the ramifications of violating the agreements between the states? A state might view its more immediate commercial interests as so important that it opts to not engage in such agreements (*SL XIX.27* p. 328, *XX.7*).

Commerce helps spur on a creativity and interconnectedness, which increases the variety of interests within the project of commerce. New inventions are created and goods from half-way around the world become readily available (*SL XXI.1, XXI.10*<sup>7</sup>). These new commercial activities result in new opportunities to exchange goods and thus new means to bind states. The potential problem here is that these newly salient areas are also potential points of contention. If two commercial states are reliant on their exchange of goods, then asymmetry in the exchange (e.g. believing that your state is being put at a clear disadvantage with the trading relationship)

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<sup>7</sup> Indicating that not only might inventions create new goods to be created but that some of these inventions, such as the compass, can strengthen the force of commercial activity.

can lead to jealousy and contentious relations (*SL XIX.27* p. 328). Such pettiness is articulated by Montesquieu when he writes the following regarding England's trade:

This nation would become sovereignly jealous and would find more distress in the prosperity of others than enjoyment in its own

And its laws, otherwise gentle and easy, might be so rigid in regard to commerce and navigation carried on with it that it would seem to negotiate only with enemies (*SL XIX.27* p. 328).

Furthermore, if this good is scarce yet important for the states involved then states will likely be inclined to try to maximize their share of that good even if doing so runs counter to the health of the state (*SL XIX.27* p. 328, *XXI.22*). Access to the good provides a clear point of possible conflict when the states involved in the divvying up of this good are not satisfied with the arrangement.

Does this increase of potential areas for conflict mean that I expect an increase in interstate wars between commercial states? No, in fact I still agree with the notion that commercial states are less likely in engaging in interstate war with other commercial states; the notion that war can become cost-prohibitive through a binding of interests is still in play (*SL XX.2*). I want to be clear that this does not mean that commercial states will not go to war with each other at all. The commercial pacifism of Montesquieu is not analogous to the modern democratic peace theorem which claims that democratic states simply do not go to war with each other (Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002; Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009; *SL XX.2*). Instead, it seems more accurate to say that commercial states are less likely to go to war with each other. Commercial states are likely to pause and reconsider their prospective belligerence with a fellow commercial state more than with a state less bounded by mutual material interests (*SL XX.2*, *XXI.21*). This is still an important improvement as commerce might indeed point toward fewer

hostilities, but the distinction between restraining and stopping states from engaging in interstate war is still a significant one.

Although commercial states might be less likely to go to war with each other, this notion does not necessarily cover all levels of interstate conflict. This notion of level of conflict becomes more apparent when we consider how the term “war” has been operationalized in the modern international relations literature. In particular, the Correlates of War Dataset has provided a definition of war with a minimum of one-thousand combat related fatalities for combatants a year (Sarkees & Wayman, 2010). This definition of war provides a high benchmark for what is considered a “war” and still leaves a plethora of lower-level armed conflicts outside our consideration. In particular, I want to consider how colonization and conflicts related to this process play into these lesser conflicts.

The commercial peace concentrates on armed interstate conflict, and has little to say about, for example, commercial states violently imposing themselves on indigenous populations (*SL XXI.21*). The link putting commercial states at odds with each other becomes more apparent when we consider these colonial endeavors more broadly. These states are certainly not sending troops against each other directly but they are engaging in war for the sake of competing with one another (*SL XIX.27* pp. 328-29, *XIX.21*). Colonization also provides room for more direct smaller-scaled conflict between the commercial states themselves. Instead of having to fight in the fatherland itself, disputes over resource access and colonial territorial boundaries can also be fought in the colonies themselves (*SL XIX.27* p. 328-29, *XXI.21*; while Anderson, 2000 158-167 demonstrates how a European war spilled into their colonies).

Considering the potential role of colonization in conflicts, I suggest that violence involving commercial states might also take on these “lesser” albeit still bloody and costly

forms. An important notion here is that commercial states might be hesitant to escalate conflicts, preferring to keep them small-scaled in order to make them not as cost-prohibitive. This would be particularly important for two commercial states in a dispute as their commercial and thus military capacity would make going to war with each other even more costly. A commercial state might be willing to engage in violent conflict to secure commercial interests but would be aghast at the prospect of engaging in all-out war to do so, preferring conquest over clearly weaker states and peoples if possible (*SL XIX.27* pp. 328-30, *XX.2*, *XXI.21*). Commercial states may still be restrained in their interactions with one another but this restraint is qualified.

### **Commercial interests as military interests.**

Although commerce is more centrally considered in a commercial state such as England, I want to reiterate here that it is certainly not the sole nor necessarily the primary interest of the state and its people. Notions such as state security still remain of paramount importance (Rahe, 2009 pp. 229-30). This central concern for state security can lead commerce to be characterized as another means of safeguarding such fundamental interests; although one could argue that commerce is one of if not the most useful tool in ensuring the security of the commercial state (Rahe, 2009 pp. 229-30; *SL XX.2*, *XXI.21*).<sup>8</sup> This means that a more strictly commercial

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<sup>8</sup> Even though I might borrow some language from rational choice theory when I speak of states' weighing their various interests, I would be wrong to characterize Montesquieu's notions of interstate behavior as rational or calculative in some game theory or rational-choice sense. Montesquieu understands that humans are by their nature more inclined to engage in emotive as opposed to calculative endeavors. When humans engage in something that might be considered guided by reason it is likely a result of more emotive actions. Even commerce, something which Montesquieu admires for its apparent reason, is ultimately spurred on by more emotive facets such as greed. This emotional desire to acquire more wealth than one already has is essential for the commercial enterprise. This of course does not mean that Montesquieu views humans as incapable of reason but instead that we ought not rely on humans to consistently act with it. This notion of a broadly emotive human is especially important for a regime of commerce and liberty, such as England. In addition to commerce, liberty allows for and even promotes a wide array of humanness.

consideration of the costs and benefits of a given action would not be sufficient for a state considering whether to engage in belligerent behavior. Interests such as prestige, military prowess, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are not suddenly ancillary considerations when a state develops into a commercial state. Instead, the state now has to reconsider how these various interests balance against and interact with each other when considering how to act.

The interplay between commerce and the military is intensified with a commercial state such as England. England uses its commercial prowess to its military advantage; a notion that is buttressed when we look back at imperial Britain to recognize that the backbone of its military was its navy, the maritime component to its armed forces (Rodger, 2006). These two forces, mercantile and naval, bolster one another. In describing England, Montesquieu notes:

The dominant nation, inhabiting a big island and being in possession of a great commerce, would have all sorts of facilities for forces upon the seas; and as the preservation of its liberty would require it to have neither strongholds, nor fortresses, nor land armies, it would need an army on the sea to protect itself from invasions; and its navy would be superior to that of all other powers, which, needing to employ their finances from a land war, would no longer have enough for a sea war.

A naval empire has always given the peoples who have possessed it a natural pride, because, feeling themselves able to insult others everywhere, they believe that their power is as boundless as the ocean.

This nation could have a great influence on the business of its neighbors (*SL XIX.27 p. 329*).

The commercial interests of the English are supported, protected, and projected through its superior navy. Wherever the English have commercial interests they are able to use their navy to secure them (Rodger, 2006; *SL XIX.27 p. 328*). We also need to consider the other side of the relationship; navies are typically an expensive project requiring the financial support of the people (*SL XIX.27 p. 329*). The commerce of the English can provide the material means for undertaking the endeavor of creating and maintaining the largest navy of its time (Rodger, 2006;

*SL XIX.27* p. 328). Therefore, the English utilize their navy and trade to strengthen and secure each other.

This interplay between the commercial and the military facets of the state helps us better understand the imperial inclination of the English. If the English were to separate these two considerations then notions of isolationism, pacifism, or traditional empire might be seriously considered. When these two interests are so intimately connected such options are not viable. Britain does not have to acquiesce to other states' demands if they threaten their commercial interests; they can bring in the premier navy to back up their claim. Conversely, the British do not have to be timid because of commercial considerations when their military position is challenged; they can more readily afford such endeavors.<sup>9</sup>

We should also reconsider British political society when we are considering this interplay between commercial and military interests. As I mentioned previously in this dissertation, commerce, liberty, and empire are intimately intertwined. I spent the first half of this chapter describing how England is a virtual powder-keg ready to erupt into revolution and or tyranny (Braddick, 2015; *SL XIX.27* pp. 325-27). Although I mentioned how the separation of powers provides a tenuous solution, I want to revisit the notion that I mentioned in the third chapter which further connects the domestic and international dimensions of English politics. The liberty of the English makes them uneasy, but this unease is alleviated when an object is given to it. Domestically this object is the prospective tyrant but this might not be enough and can give way to the excessive pursuit of liberty found in the English Civil Wars (Braddick, 2015).

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<sup>9</sup> Admittedly the cost of such endeavors can be heavy for even the British as the financial burden of the Seven Years Wars helped spur on increased taxation of the American colonies (Anderson, 2000 pp. 572-587, 641-651).

### **International solution to domestic problems.**

This outward aggression of the English might serve as a safeguard against England's domestic tensions. In the above sections on domestic education, I had serious reservations about the ability of the English to provide a domestic solution to their unease. The way for the English to cope with their unease might be to direct it outside of the British Isles. By giving an outward direction to this unease, the English political society can avoid turning inward on itself (Rahe 2009 pp. 116-17; *SL* XIX.27 pp.326-29, XXI.21). What is this object that it is directed towards or against? I contend that this uneasiness is manifested in the form of commercial empire. In particular, I look to a quote from XIX.27 (pp.326-27) in *Spirit of the Laws*:

If, in the case where uneasiness has no certain object, some foreign power threatened the state and put its fortune or glory in danger, at that time everything would unite in favor of executive power, as small interests would cede to greater ones.

For, if disputes were formed on the occasion of the violation of the fundamental laws and a foreign power appeared, there would be a revolution that would not change the form of the government or its constitution, as revolutions formed by liberty are but a confirmation of liberty.

This would allow the English to oppose those peoples outside of England who would work against their liberty, whether it is the sovereign integrity of the English state or their commercial interests abroad. The extensive reach of English commercial interests could provide a near endless amount of opposition for the English. The interrelations between commercial interests and their military interests, and therefore their security and liberty, make the opponents of English commercial interests now opponents of their liberty. Such opposition is readily resisted by the English. With such clear opposition to two of England's most prized possessions, its commerce and liberty, the gaze of the English is forced outward (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 326-27, XX.7). This is not to claim that the English intentionally engage in empire as a means of quelling

domestic unrest. This “safety valve” might be considered a byproduct of their passions, an externality of sorts (to borrow a term from modern economics). Although this provides a potential solution to securing their liberty, their intent was to secure it abroad—the domestic effect was a “happy accident.” This is clear when we consider the first paragraph of the above quote in which “some foreign power threatened the state” causing “small interests” to “cede to greater ones” (*SL XIX.27* pp. 326-27).

One potential shortcoming to this “safety valve” is that it could easily work like a feedback loop. The domestic unease is not fully satiated by the two educations of the English and thus looks for an outward manifestation. The English, needing a direct object to their unease but being without an internal target, would look outwards (Rahe, 2009 pp. 114-17). By finding some object to direct their unease the English can embolden their liberty and commerce more which puts further strain on their domestic unrest. The English grow increasingly jealous of their dual treasures of liberty and material wealth as they become more commercially successful abroad, thereby increasing the underlining tensions of their political society (*SL XIX.27* pp. 326-31, *XX.7*).

A second significant shortcoming of this outward solution is that it indicates the unsustainability of liberty. Simply put, liberty cannot rely on itself to survive. Liberty needs opponents, either domestic or foreign to oppose it. Liberty likely will degenerate into tyranny without the consistent presence of these illiberal foils. Even these foreign foes are unreliable; one only needs to wonder what happens if there are no more illiberal regimes or if the domestic animosity outpaces the growth of the empire. Even with these means of suppressing or redirecting the unease of liberal regimes, we need to remember that no regime is immune to decline (Krause, 2002). Writing about the English, Montesquieu states:

Since all human things have an end, the state of which we are speaking will lose its liberty; it will perish. Rome, Lacedaemonia, and Carthage have surely perished (*SL XI.6* p. 166).

Although the regime of liberty might be the most durable regime, we must come to terms with the notion that it is merely durable and not perpetual. Instead, we should embrace the notion that liberty is the best at mitigating the evils of human imperfection but that it also reflects that imperfectness in its fallibility. The English might lack the obvious beauty or civility of the French. Montesquieu even writes, regarding the typical Englishman, “As one would always be busy with one’s own interests, one would not have the politeness that is founded on idleness, and one would really have no time for it (*SL XIX.27* p. 331).” Yet there is something admirable about the ugliness and honesty of the English regime.

## **Conclusion**

Despite interpretations that present Montesquieu’s England as a more subdued regime, I suggest that their liberty and commerce provides abundant tension both domestically and internationally (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). Jealousy, contractualism, and a general unease brought on by the specter of tyranny make England a contentious nation. I suspect that the education of the English, provided by their laws and their reason, is not a reliable means to subdue English belligerence. The commercial prowess of the English places them in competition with the world at large as the English are in contention with any potential rival. This is buttressed by the notion that the English’s commercial and military interests are effectively inseparable. Furthermore, the unreliability of the English political education leads me to suggest that the safety valve for such a “political powder-keg” is the project of empire. The unease of the English domestically might necessitate a belligerence in interstate behavior.

In the next chapter, I will offer an account of how the liberal animosity of Montesquieu's England plays out in the contemporary international relations literature. The commercial and democratic strands of the liberal peace literature have the same issues as I have presented throughout this dissertation. Specifically, these literatures provide a liberal impetus for aggressive behavior, towards illiberal and liberal regimes alike. Furthermore, this liberalism provides the impetus to expand without providing a context-rich framework by which to do so, with the literature assuming liberalism is a relatively monolithic cure for interstate aggression.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: A CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM IN THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LITERATURE**

This dissertation's concern for liberty and commerce is not solely relegated to the realm of political philosophers from centuries past. Montesquieu's assessment of England, commerce, and liberty has substantial implications for our modern world. The liberal international relations literature helps provide a clear indication of the contemporary saliency of Montesquieuan liberalism. One of the overarching links between this literature and Montesquieu is an intrinsic conflict between liberality and illiberality, an expansionary liberalism being opposed by an entrenched illiberality (*SL* XIX.5-6, XIX.27 pp. 326-27; Huntington, 1993, 2003; Mansfield & Snyder, 1995; Moon, 2009; Nazir, 2006). Liberalism wants to push into the illiberal world whereas illiberal societies resist this progression, often with violent results. Although modern liberalism likes to present itself as a peaceful ideology, allowing for states and peoples to engage in cooperation instead of belligerence, it falls short with delivering on this promise of peace (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Press-Barnathan, 2006; Rosato, 2003). I suggest that using Montesquieu's own presentation of liberalism, with all its flaws and possible contradictions, would help contemporary liberalism retract its unwarranted optimism. This soberer liberalism might even take a cue from Montesquieu's England and engage in some self-criticism to help temper its hopefulness and assess its viability on more pragmatic terms.

Liberalism, in the international relations context, tends to present itself as a theoretical framework for peace.<sup>1</sup> This goes beyond the labels such as democratic peace and commercial or capitalist peace, to borrow Gartzke's (2007) terminology, as the school of thought appears aimed at predominately studying how and why states are restrained in their behavior with respect to one another. This literature ultimately claims that robust liberal institutions<sup>2</sup> lead states to engage in peaceful relations (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998). Even when liberal scholars do study occurrences of interstate war, these studies are often framed as studying either why the liberal restraints did not work or how a lack of these restraints allows for states to act more belligerently (Barbieri, 1996; Bussmann, 2010; Fearon, 1994; Gartzke, 2007; Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009; Tomz, 2007; Weede, 1984; Weeks, 2008).

Liberal scholars have the same issue as those scholars positing a Montesquieuan commercial peace theorem. Both literatures make the underlying claim that liberalism or liberty and commerce lead to more pacific interstate relations. I suggest, as I do in the previous chapters, that these liberal foundations do not lead to peaceful relations amongst states and might provide the groundwork for belligerence amongst states. At the heart of this tension is the issue that liberalism classifies regimes and economies in a dichotomous manner; lumping them into liberal and illiberal communities (Dixon, 1994; Gartzke, 2007; Gowa, 1995; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; McDonald, 2004; Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002). This dichotomous grouping helps put the liberal states in opposition to illiberal ones. This is analogous to Montesquieu's presentation

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<sup>1</sup> When I use the term liberalism in this chapter I will be referring to liberalism in the international relations literatures. If I refer to liberalism in the broader or ideological sense (e.g. the liberalism of Locke) then I will explicitly state so.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "liberal institutions" to describe liberal political, social, and economic constructs. The term will only be used to specifically refer to the institutionalist literature when placed as one of the three Kantian tripods of peace.

of England in which the commercial state based on liberty pushes against local contexts that are not receptive to commercial mores or liberty (*SL XIX.27* pp. 327-29). In both situations, whatever context underlines pacific behavior also points towards belligerence: the capacity for peace within the liberal “in-group” provides the impetus for opposition to the “out-group.”

The first section of this chapter focuses on the liberal usage of the term “peace.” I will explore how liberal scholars utilize peculiar definitions of peace, conflate a warmer cooperative peace with a colder “sans war” peace, and how these definitional gymnastics readily suit their narrative while underplaying the potential for liberal states to engage in violence. Then I explore two of the three “legs” of the liberal peace, commerce and democracy,<sup>3</sup> by unpacking the theoretical (and for the democratic peace, empirical) foundations of these two “legs” and illuminate relevant shortcomings. Specifically, I will outline how the reliance on precise iterations of “democracy” and “commerce” to fulfill their peace theorems. The policy implications of the dyadic democratic peace suggest a potential for democratic belligerence that is overlooked by the literature. I also suggest that liberalism assumes democracy and globalized economies, viewing these liberal institutions as starting points rather than processes. Identifying these liberal contexts as independent variables dismisses the potential violence of such liberalization. This leads to a discussion on the context insensitivity of liberalism. Liberalism

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<sup>3</sup> My critique of the liberal international relations literature is focused on two of the three “legs” of the Kantian Tripod and omits the institutionalist literature. I overlook the potential critique of institutionalist literature primarily because whatever critiques are levied against it would lack the robustness of my critiques of the other two “legs.” The in-group out-group dynamic which produces the impetus for expansionary and aggressive liberal foreign policy does not appear to me to be as sharp or salient for the institutionalist literature as the democratic or commercial peace (Doyle, 2005; Hurd, 2005; Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998). Although I am aware that states pressure other states to join particular institutions (aside from just security pacts, which can easily be subsumed under the realist paradigm), I am hard-pressed to find an example of a state violently imposing membership into a liberal institution onto another state whereas one can readily think of examples of imposing a regime (the US overthrow of Iran’s regime in 1953) or membership in and reliance on the global market (Britain’s Opium Wars with China over British access to Chinese markets) (Rosato, 2003).

assumes that democracy and commerce are preferable without considering that certain states would neither readily adopt them nor be peaceful in the process of adopting them. Considering this insensitivity, I suggest that the policy prescriptions in the literature lead to results that counter the notion of a “liberal peace.” The chapter then concludes with a brief discussion on how international relations liberalism misidentifies human nature, even human nature in a liberal regime. This shift from a *homo politicus* to a *homo economicus* is indicative of liberalism’s inattentiveness to aspects of itself and the contexts of other peoples, which promotes belligerence instead of peace.

### **A Question of “Peace”**

The term *peace* is a term used a great deal by international relations liberalism. As benign as the usage of this term might seem, there are a few significant problems which ought to be unpacked before continuing my discussion on the different versions of the liberal peace. What is meant by the term *peace*? This might seem like a ridiculous question to ask; surely a term as commonly used as *peace* has a singular commonly understood definition. The most baseline understanding of the term peace would be the absence of war. This understanding falls short of providing a robust understanding of peace. If peace is simply the absence of war, then there would be room for lesser forms of conflict such as minor militarized disputes or military mobilization falling short of violence. This is the first way that international relations liberalism falls short of its optimistic understanding of peace. Liberalism’s claims of peace are overly optimistic, relying on definitional gymnastics regarding the term “peace.” This issue relates to Montesquieu when we consider Book XX Chapter 2 of *Spirit of the Laws* where he writes, “The natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace.” Although this peace is born out of trade and

mutual needs, there is a lack of inherent robustness to it. Montesquieu notes how England's economic prowess allows to just leave a trade agreement if it so wants to (*SL XIX.27* p. 328, *XX.7*). This problem of defining peace, binding interests, and liberalism is therefore not a novel development. Montesquieu's lack of elaboration on defining peace should serve as a caution to scholar who too readily utilize the term.

Scholarship has indicated that there are two different stages of peace. The first stage is a colder peace which is marked by the absence of clear and direct violence (Bueno de Mesquita, Marrow, Silverson, & Smith, 1999; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Miller, 2010). One could look to US-Soviet relations in the Cold War as a good example of this colder peace; there is still plenty of tension and political conflict without direct use of violence. There is a second peace, more robust and warmer, in which states not only avoid engaging in violence against each other but they cooperate with one another (Bearce & Omori, 2005; Keohane, 1989; Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009). One example of this warmer peace is the European Union, with states voluntarily coming together to legislate and enforce agreed upon international law and resolve conflict between member states.

I suggest that most of the empirical and rhetorical foundations for the liberal peace literature focus on the lesser cold peace. A significant portion of the focus in the liberal peace literature is on restraining belligerent or violent state behavior as opposed to fostering constructive or cooperative behavior (Gartzke, 2007; Gowa, 1995; MacMillan, 2003; Maoz, and Russett, 1993; McDonald, 2007; Schultz, 1999; Tomz, 2007). Notable exceptions include Press-Barnathan's work in the commercial peace literature and the liberalism literature more broadly (Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009). Additional notable exceptions to this reliance on a colder peace can be found in the institutionalist literature and some of the commercial peace literature

focusing on economic cooperation (Axelrod, 1984; Bearce & Omori, 2005; Checkel, 2005; Doyle, 2005; Keohane, 1989; Keohane & Martin, 1995; Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998).

Liberalism's reliance on a shallower peace might not initially seem problematic, but such a reliance erodes the theoretical and empirical foundations of the literature. Theoretically, utilizing the colder peace lessens the pacifying claim of liberalism. If liberalism can restrain states from fighting but does not push them to cooperate, then liberalism starts to look more like realism with flimsy restraints. Are these liberal restraints just there to stop states from engaging in war with each other, merely slowly down or dulling interstate belligerence? Most liberal scholarship would indicate that this is the case whereas only a limited number of scholars (at least outside the institutionalist literature) are trying to move towards breaking this cycle of belligerence if it already exists (Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009). This limited iteration of peace does not reduce the source of conflict or impetus for conflict but at best delays or redirects the actualization of it.

There is also the shortsightedness of a liberalism rooted in peace as restraint. In these iterations of liberalism this colder peace is reduced to an end-result; the liberal structures restrain states from acting out when exposed to some stressor (e.g. tension between states). This mistypes peace as a purely dependent variable thus ignoring the trajectory that the peace takes itself, something that can only be fully appreciated and understood if we understand peace as a process itself and not just a result. This conceptualization of peace plays back into this chapter's overarching critique of liberalism. Focusing on peace as an end instead of means ignores the propensity for violent conflict between states. Most liberal scholars, utilizing this narrower peace, would call two states peaceful even if there had been substantial interstate violence in the leadup to their peace, or if certain points of contention remained unresolved. Only a handful of

liberal scholars, such as Press-Barnathan, have seriously considered the importance of the transition from conflict to cold peace to cooperation (Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009; Ruggie, 1982).

Admittedly, utilizing the colder peace is pragmatic from an empirical standpoint. As a researcher, there are already extensive datasets (in particular the Correlates of War project) which detail instances of interstate violence, thus allowing us to extrapolate the colder peace as a negative image of these outbreaks of violence. Despite this expediency with regards to research, this reliance on peace as the absence of war dilutes the potential empirical robustness of liberal research. If peace is reduced to a binary variable, then the empirics become fed back into the theoretical shortsightedness expressed above. Liberalism relies so heavily on the term peace yet does not have a robust conception of what “peace” is. I do not find liberalism’s limited notion of peace to be problematic in of itself; there is still a lot of theoretical and empirical value to the type of peace on which this literature focuses. Yet, I contend that the literature needs to be more open about this limited peace and consider the implications of it. Knowing what your models and theories cannot explain has just as much if not more value than understanding what they can explain.

### **The Commercial Peace Reconsidered**

The commercial peace is predicated on the principle that mutual economic interests will prevent states from engaging in war with each other (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; McDonald 2007). This binding of interests is essentially the economic benefit that states receive from engaging in trade with each other (Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2007; Press-Barnathan, 2006). Drawing directly from Montesquieu’s tract on commerce and peace, states are inclined to

cooperate through this binding of interests since they would have the same set of goals, namely economic goals focused on gain from trades and investments (*SL XX.2*). This binding of interests also leads to peace by making war cost prohibitive (Bearce, 2003; Bussmann, 2010; McDonald, 2007). Whereas in the past a leader would invade another country to acquire resources, with modern commerce it would be cheaper and easier to simply trade with that state to obtain their resources. Once commerce is more fully entrenched and appreciated it is supposed to transform the spirit of conquest into the spirit of acquisition, altering the way we conceptualize gaining resources (Moravcsik, 1997; Huth, 1996; Keeley, 1996; *SL XX.2, XXI.7-8*). This more nonviolent means of acquiring resources helps promote the notion of nonviolent dispute resolution. Furthermore, with armies shifting to standing professional armies and military technology becoming increasingly advanced and expensive, going to war for any reason becomes an even more costly endeavor that puts an increased burden on the economy, an economy which is ever more valued by the political leadership (Bussmann, 2010; Press-Barnathan, 2006). This last point was one that Montesquieu explicitly made when he noted the folly of a Pan-European conquest in *Reflections on Universal Monarchy (RMU 1.1-9)*. He remarks that Louis XIV's attempted conquest of Europe was doomed from the beginning.

One of the major shortcoming of the commercial peace literature is the underlying assumption that humans can be reduced to *homo economicus*. The commercial peace assumes that people are primarily concerned with the well-being of their wealth and resources. At the extreme, the commercial peace provides that, if the economic benefit is great enough, then we might subsume all ends to material interests (Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2007; Moravcsik, 1997; Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009).

Another significant problem with the commercial peace is how the term *commerce* is used. This terminology runs into the same sort of problems which beset the usage of the term *democracy* by democratic peace scholars. Scholars tend to define commerce as an exchange of goods traditionally understood as vital to state interests (Mansfield and Pollins, 2001; McDonald, 2004, 2007). Without this saliency of goods, the exchange of said goods ought not to be expected to restrain state actors' behavior. Therefore, there is a specific type of commerce that is essential to commercial peace.

Gartzke was on the right track when he rebranded the commercial peace the *capitalist* peace (Gartzke, 2007).<sup>4</sup> He recognized that the commercial peace relies on a specific type of commerce to sufficiently bind and thus constrain states. Gartzke, amongst other commercial peace scholars, recognized that the commercial ties between states need to be robust and deeply entrenched within the country for interdependence to be capable of restraining state behavior (Gartzke, 2007; Mansfield & Pollins, 2001). Furthermore, the usage of the term *capitalism* indicates that economic relations do not take place in a strictly dyadic context. Due to the global nature of capitalism, a state does not restrain itself solely because of its dyadic economic relations but also factors in its reliance on international commercial community as a whole (Bussmann, 2010; Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2004, 2007).

To help illustrate the previous two problems with the commercial peace, let us consider an example of two states that trade with each other and in which their dyadic trade constitutes a significant portion of each state's gross domestic product (GDP). On the surface, the fact that two states trade so heavily each other indicates a substantial interdependence. If we were to

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<sup>4</sup> I will use the terms commercial peace/pacifism and capitalist peace/pacifism interchangeably throughout this and subsequent chapters unless otherwise noted.

consider what goods and services are being exchanged, however, we can readily see that the mere amount of trade is not indicative of interdependence. For example, if these two states are trading more frivolous goods such as high-end sports cars and designer clothing, then we ought not to expect interdependence to be in play as such goods are typically not vital to the economic well-being of a state (although I recognize that if a given country specializes in these luxury goods then they would be reliant on the export of such goods). This example helps demonstrate the underlying assumption in the commercial peace literature that interdependence is reliant on both the amount and type of goods and services exchanged. Therefore, the notion of the commercial peace already assumes that states have a specific economic arrangement or are predisposed to develop such an arrangement. The problem here is that not all states have this inclination towards robust engagement with the capitalist global economy, an implication which is discussed in the next section. This notion of an exact sort of commerce makes the commercial peace even more problematic when we consider that economic liberalization is difficult enough without needing to engaging is a peculiar iteration of it.

Another major shortcoming of the liberal peace literature is that it assumes states will value absolute gains over relative gains (Grieco, 1988; Jervis, 1988; Powell, 1991; Waltz, 1979 identify the underlying tensions of the debate over relative versus absolute gains). States are concerned with their own performance in of itself and have blinders on with regards to the success of other states. This argument helps explain why states might join an international agreement even though other states clearly benefit from it more than they do. The underlying argument for this claim is that a state will restrain its behavior so long as the economic arrangement results in improving the given state's economy. This binding of material interests only works when you think that you are benefitting from your current arrangements (whether it

is in the moment or considering future benefits from this arrangement). Such a model necessarily rejects the notion that states will compare their economic performance with each other, but will only care about its own performance.

Although I am willing to concede that states might be more concerned with absolute gains, I find it difficult to concede that there would be little to no concern for relative gains. Of course, a state will look favorably upon a trade agreement if it boosts its GDP, especially if it is a substantial increase. My issue is with the notion that states will accept marginal gains instead of absolute gains when there is a substantial parity between states. It is easy to accept another state “winning more” when you are still growing substantially but if your prosperity is stagnating while others’ are flourishing then you are likely to reconsider your international arrangements. When states are intermingling more, as they would when engaging in economic globalization, it is nearly impossible for them to not compare themselves to those with whom they are interacting.

This brings up the distribution of “winners” and “losers” in economic globalization. Although the world is getting wealthier, there is still a disparity in the distribution of wealth (Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). This becomes problematic when we consider the assumption of absolute gains and my criticism of it. Certain states are going to think that, even if their economic performance has been enhanced by engaging the global economy, their participation has placed them further behind other states. If states perceive themselves as “losers,” then engagement in the global economy would not restrain them and might provoke more belligerent behavior from them.

This concern with losers and winners echoes Montesquieu’s account of jealousy in commerce. Once again, Montesquieu can show us how liberalism is overly optimistic in its prospects for peace and cooperation. When he writes on the English and their commerce, he

notes how exceptionally jealous they are of their commercial endeavors (*SL XIX.27* p. 328, *XX.7*). With wealth as one of only two means of distinction (the other being merit), the English are adamant about commercial success (*SL XIX.27* p. 331). This success not only distinguished the Englishmen from one another but helps distinguish and protect the English from continental powers (*SL XIX.27* pp. 327-28). The Englishman is just as, if not more, concerned with earning more than his neighbor than earning more than himself the previous year. Furthermore, because the English utilize commerce to help bring about their security, they are more concerned with increasing their wealth in relation to potential rivals than to their past self (Rodger, 2006 pp. 169-82; *SL XIX.27* p.328, *XX.7*). The question of jealousy and the belligerence or resentment it can help create has yet to be resolved or robustly explored by liberal scholars.

### **Democratic Peace Reconsidered**

The broad claim of the democratic peace theory is that the regime type of a state determines the propensity for that state to engage in war. Taking into consideration the previous two chapters of this dissertation, Montesquieu clearly considered regime type an important indicator of a state's behavior in the international arena (regimes played a significant role in both the commercial and militaristic behavior of a state) (*SL IX.1-5*, *X.6-9*, *X.16-17*, *XX.4*, *XX.7*). Montesquieu recognizes that a liberal regime (or as he would phrase it, a regime aimed towards liberty) is at least necessary for his model of commercial pacifism to function. In the contemporary liberalism literature, the overarching claim is that there are fundamental characteristics of democratic governance which restrain states from going to war when they might do so otherwise.

One of the biggest problems with the democratic peace literature is the usage of the term *democracy*.<sup>5</sup> To a large extent, we can all readily identify states that are democratic; examples such as France, Great Britain, and the United States come to mind. Conversely, there are states that are clearly authoritarian; North Korea, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and Omar Kaddafi's Libya are clear examples. The problem, however, arises when we consider states that are neither clearly a Western style liberal democracy nor a dictatorship. Examples of these regimes would include countries with a more authoritarian leader such as Russia under Vladimir Putin or states with elections dominated by a single party such as Taiwan and South Korea during the Cold War.

The democratic peace literature has had a lack of consensus over what exactly constitutes a democracy. Even if there is an agreement over certain facets (for example there is a consensus that democracies have open and fair elections), there is a lack of agreement over how to define or codify these quintessential democratic features (Bollen, 1980; Dixon, 1994; Doyle, 1997; Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & F. Limongi, 2000; Small & Singer, 1976). Various democratic indices have been created in attempts to form a more nuanced account of the democratic peace, however, the multiplicity of indices has likely served only to clutter our understanding of the relationship between regime types and international outcomes (Rosato, 2003; Small & Singer, 1976). This has led to a lack of consideration over whether or not illiberal (or maybe more accurately non-Western) democracies have the same capacity for restraining state behavior. There is also a lack of appreciation for the separate, interrelated, and vital roles that the institutions (namely elections and laws) and the norms (free press, nonviolent dispute resolution,

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<sup>5</sup> I understand that this term does not describe purer forms of democracy, the type we associate with the ancient Greek city states, in particular Athens. Instead, the democratic peace literature uses the term democracy to describe the modern republic which utilizes democratic representation.

and transparency) play into making a state democratic and how they play into restraining state behavior (Maoz & Russett, 1993; Small & Singer, 1976; Van Belle, 1997).

The literature focusing on illiberal or transitional democracies has demonstrated the need to refine terminology utilized by the liberal peace scholarship. The literature on transitioning democracies suggests that the democratic peace only applies to those regimes that have fully entrenched democratic institutions (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 pp. 5-6, 2002). This literature even goes so far as to claim that transitioning democracies are more war prone than either well established democracies or full-on authoritarian regimes (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 pp. 5-6, 2002). These democratic institutions restrain the domestic audience and leadership while legitimizing the leadership in the eyes of the people. Without the solidified democratic institutions, the leaders are more apt to turn to aggressive foreign policy with neighbors to provide a common enemy against which they can galvanize and garner the support of the population (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 pp. 19-20, 2002). It is not until both the leadership and population have fully acclimated to democratic institutions that democratic governance restrains state behavior (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 pp. 21-26, 2002). The notion that transitional democracies are more aggressive with their neighbors helps illustrate the full breadth of problems that beset the democratic peace once it is turned into policy (as expressed in the next section); the project of expanding the community of democratic states would possess the additional baggage of creating turmoil and increasing the chances of interstate war in the short term.

Once again, Montesquieu helps allow us to temper liberalism's optimism, this time with regards to democratization efforts. When he speaks of regime change he notes that the laws ought to be in line with the general spirit of the people (*SL XIX.2-5*). Therefore, a people must

have a spirit conducive to, or at least sympathetic towards, liberal norms for democratic laws to successfully embed themselves in said people. If the people are not properly prepared, the liberal experiment would likely fail.

The preceding criticism does not even consider recent literature suggesting that homogeneity in the regimes for a dyad is the fundamental link between regime type and international outcomes. This research takes the typically monolithic depiction of authoritarian regimes and separates them into three broad categories: one-party ideological states, military juntas, and dictatorial cults of personality (Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002). When the scholars separated the authoritarian regimes into these three categories they discovered a statistically similar aversion to engaging in interstate war that is found in the dyadic democratic peace (Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002). This blooming literature provides important challenges to the democratic peace. First, by parceling out the different types of authoritarian regimes it helps highlight the democratic (and broader liberal) peace's inability or unwillingness to consider that dividing the political world into liberal and illiberal oversimplifies the claims linking regime type to international outcome.

Although there are a few important exceptions, international relations liberalism tends to view the political world in a binary fashion in which a given state is either liberal or illiberal (Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002; while Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002 are exceptions that demonstrates this general trend). There is a distinct lack of consideration for the variety within these two categories. Second, this "dictatorial peace" provides a critique of the implicit understanding amongst democratic peace scholars that only one type of regime can restrain its behavior due to the type of regime that it is. This helps cast doubt on whether "peace literature" should be focusing on liberal politics to the extent that it does.

The final criticism of the democratic peace resides in the distinction between the monadic and dyadic peaces. One of the prevalent claims is that a democratic people are themselves less violent, and because they can direct public policy in a democracy, their more peaceful nature will be reflected in foreign policy (Doyle, 2005; Maoz & Russett, 1993). These people are more peaceful because the democratic process is itself a nonviolent means of conflict resolution with political institutions such as elections, petitions, and protests allowing for the citizenry to air their grievances peacefully and resolve disputes (Doyle, 2005; Maoz & Russett, 1993).

Liberal democracies also purportedly teach respect for fundamental human rights including respect for the lives of others, which helps fuel this aversion towards violence (Davenport, 1999; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Mitchell, 2012). Their general respect for the value of human life makes them viscerally oppose the largescale violence of war. If a democracy is to use violence in a manner acceptable by its people then it would have to frame this violence as a humanitarian effort itself; using violence against those who would engage in a more severe inhumane violence (Kegley, Jr. & Hermann, 1996). Transparency plays a significant role in restraining democratic leaders. Leadership cannot engage in substantial interstate violence without the population being aware of said violence (Schultz, 1999; Tomz, 2007; Van Belle, 1997). (I recognize that covert operations are still prevalent methods utilized by democracies but these are exceptions that prove the general trend.) This ability to openly observe foreign policy combined with democratic accountability forces democratic leaders to be more cautious and open about their foreign policy decisions, thus disincentivizing war (Fearon, 1994; Schultz, 1999; Tomz, 2007; Van Belle, 1997).

There is also a sub-section of the monadic peace literature which highlights democratic accountability. The logic of this argument is that a democratic leader will temper his foreign

policy because more belligerent activity would offend the humanitarian and nonviolent sensibility of the electorate resulting in his removal from office, most notably through elections (Fearon, 1994; Maoz & Russett, 1993). If a democratic leader were to engage in an escalation of interstate violence he would seek the approval of the people before engaging in said violence, while recent research has indicated that domestic sanctions impose heavy costs on autocratic leaders for backing down from disputes (Fearon, 1994; Weeks, 2008). Due to a democratic people's aversion to violence the requisite approval for going to war would be difficult for the democratic leader to get, thus making any interstate violence by a democracy unlikely. This reflects a lot of the rhetoric that Montesquieu uses when describing a commercial society. Liberalism (whether it is democracy for international relations scholars or commerce for Montesquieu) softens a people, curtailing their barbaric inclinations (Davenport, 1999; Doyle, 2005; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Mitchell, 2012; *SL XX.1*). This reflects interpretations of Montesquieu's account of English liberty as invoking subdued and fleeting passions (Pangle, 1973 pp. 116-17). In this interpretation, the English are full of small and impotent passions that leave the English nonaggressive. In both Montesquieu's understanding and monadic democratic peace scholarship, the people become more passive and are disinclined from belligerent behavior. Admittedly these two have separate forces, any passivity for Montesquieu is born out of a tepidness whereas the monadic peace literature suggests it is rooted in fundamental principles.

Several empirical studies on the democratic peace, however, suggest that democracies are no less war prone than authoritarian regimes; they are proportionally involved in as many if not more wars than nondemocratic states (Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009; Small & Singer, 1976). These studies also tend to suggest that democracies are more prone to engage in a war with an

authoritarian regime than an authoritarian regime is with another authoritarian regime (Peceny, Beer, & Sanchez-Terry, 2002; Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009). Although earlier literature suggested that democracies were the targets of authoritarian belligerence, more recent research has indicated that democracies are more often the instigators in wars within these heterogeneous dyads than victims of authoritarian belligerence.

One might state that this dyadic component to the democratic peace simply indicates that the peace comes with caveats. I counter this claim and submit that it also suggests democratic belligerence, albeit with its own caveats. The dyadic democratic peace can just as easily be labelled the democratic belligerence. The proliferation of the term “democratic peace” suggests a preference for democratic regimes but, although I do not object to scholars having clear biases, I believe that the label is misleading and forces the narrative in a specific direction different from what the facts would allow.

### **Insensitivity to Local Contexts**

It might be odd to claim that liberal international relations scholarship is insensitive to local contexts considering that this literature deviates from traditional realist scholarship and opens the “black box” of the state. Whereas classical realism considered states as monolithic entities where variance in domestic politics had no notable effect on international outcomes, liberalism (and, subsequently, neoclassical realism) recognizes that the diversity of political and economic structures within the state has a significant effect on that state’s behavior with other states (Gartzke, 2007; Maoz & Russett, 1993; McDonald, 2004; Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009; Singer & Small, 1976). While it is true that the liberal literature does concern itself with local contexts, I contend that it does not go far enough. Liberalism discusses how liberal political

constructs can restrain interstate behavior but is silent on the process of liberalization within the state (Bearce & Omori, 2005; Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Maoz & Russett, 1993, Mitchell, 2012). There is a lack of narrative regarding how states become liberal while the focus is on the implications of whether they are liberal.

This problem is reflected in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. Montesquieu again can show liberalism how to retract its unwarranted optimism. I have expressed in previous chapters that the liberty and commerce of Montesquieu's England pushes against illiberal people (Howse, 2006; *SL* X.3, XXI.21). This is problematic for two reasons. First, not all societies will readily take to liberalism: commerce and liberty are going to be at odds with people maintaining traditional prejudices (*SL* XIX.2-6, XIX.27 pp. 327-28, XX.4). Montesquieu opposed the notion of radically changing societies to adopt completely different mores. Second, the development of liberal norms (or mores) and institutions (or laws) is a protracted and drawn-out process (Rahe, 2009; pp. 215-6, 218-9; *SL* XIX.14). Liberalization is not a certain process for Montesquieu (insofar as people are not guaranteed to take to it successfully) and this uncertainty is relatively ignored by the liberal scholarship in international relations. Liberal scholars could benefit from heeding the cautions of varying contexts and the difficulties of radically changing societies posed by Montesquieu.

As suggested earlier in this chapter, the process of liberalization can increase the belligerence of states. This is highlighted by democratization literature that suggests a state is more likely to engage in interstate violence while it is democratizing (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002). The theory for this counterintuitive claim is that leaders in a democratizing state are vulnerable and need to garner support for the regime. These leaders would use domestic outgroups as scapegoats, but, if this is not sufficient, then they would also turn to some external

“other” as an existential threat to the state. If leaders are restrained by democratic institutions, it is only because these institutions have solidified. Any restraining effect of democracy comes into effect only once the domestic audience has been properly socialized to engage in and respect democratic institutions (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995 pp. 21-26, 2002).

Liberal scholars have even been quieter when it comes to the question of economic liberalization. There is a lack of recognition that rapid economic liberalization can have a disastrous effect on the economy. The economy needs to be prepared for liberalization; a closed economy cannot simply engage in globalization (Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2004; Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009). The states involved must all be winners for the commercial peace theory to hold, as I discussed above. The binding of material interests only works to restrain states if they benefit from this binding of interests. We could not expect a state whose economy is negatively affected by liberalization to view such an arrangement as something worth maintaining. Interestingly, it is the world-systems scholarship which has explored this topic robustly (Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). The intellectual camp that is in direct opposition to liberal ideology is the one that addresses this process, claiming that globalization only benefits the core states at the detriment of peripheral states (Wallerstein, 1974).

There is a lack of consideration for whether, to borrow Montesquieu’s terminology, the mores of the people have been best prepared for liberal government. Simply imposing a democratic regime or economic liberalization on a state will likely result in these processes being rejected by the domestic audience (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002; Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). If a state does not naturally develop democratic rule, then the citizens of the state need to be taught democratic norms such as civic engagement and holding leaders accountable.

The democratic peace literature even recognizes the need for a democratically savvy citizenry. Although institutions in of themselves play a significant role in restraining democratic belligerence, democratic norms are also necessary (Mansfield & Snyder 1995, 2002; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Small and Singer, 1976; Van Belle, 1997). Democratic states need to go beyond institutional constraints and incorporate norms of nonviolent dispute resolution and a respect for human rights. These notions are the bedrock of a normative account for democratic peace yet liberal scholars write sparingly about their development. Simply imposing liberal institutions on an illiberal people will have a muted restraining effect if any at all.

The liberal scholarship needs to understand liberalization as a process instead of a starting point. I contend that, methodologically, liberalization needs to be considered a dependent variable and not just an independent variable (Gartzke, 2007; Gowa, 1995; Maoz & Russett, 1993; McDonald, 2004; Morrow, 1999). Although conceptualizing liberal politics as a starting point might provide an adequate narrative for explaining how liberalism restrains states, it does little to explain the larger narrative of how such a system would develop. Considering the reality that several states have still not been liberalized after the post-World War II waves of liberalization, either missing out completely or having partial success, this inability to account for the spread and development of liberalism indicates an incomplete and even short-sighted narrative (Foweraker & Krznaric, 2002; Huntington, 1993, 2003; Ikenberry, 2009). Limiting liberalism to an independent variable weakens the descriptive and predictive capacity of the literature.

The more robust literature on democratization and economic liberalization has been the bailiwick of comparative politics and sociology scholars (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Huntington, 1993, 2003; Keefer, 2009; Niblock, 1998; Shin, 1995; Shin & Tusalem, 2007; Tilly, 2003;

Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002 are notable exceptions within the international relations literature; with Call & Cook, 2003 identifying this gap in the literature). Unfortunately, there has been a lack of dialogue between comparative and international relations scholars with regards to the globalization of liberalism. Unfortunately, a robust answer to the question of why there is such a lack of communication between these subfields in this matter is beyond the scope of this work. At best, I can suggest that distinct origins in the historical trajectories of these literatures have not provided fertile grounds for such dialogue. Regardless of why this is the case, the fact of this deficiency is sufficient to produce concern over the intellectual maturity<sup>6</sup> of the liberal literature.

### **Policy Implications from the Liberal Literature**

Although political scientists might be prone to viewing themselves as neutral observers, their academic contributions have real world implications. How are policymakers informed on choices regarding any policy? They are informed in large part by the literature that we academics produce. This intersection of academia and policy ought to be seriously considered when we produce our scholarship. Ignoring the real-world implications of scholarly works both belittles the value of the work and safeguards such work from the most salient criticism available to it.

For my discussion on policy implications I make a few assumptions which I recognize need clarification. I assume that policymakers have a general aversion to engaging in interstate war. This is not to say that they will attempt to avoid war at all costs but instead indicates that leaders recognize the cost of war (both in terms of materials and lives lost) and thus, going into a

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<sup>6</sup> By *intellectual maturity*, I indicate a deficiency in the breadth of inquiry as opposed to some *ad hominin* critique of the scholars themselves.

dispute with another state, they would prefer to settle the dispute peacefully or at least with as little violence as possible. Another assumption is that policymakers are taking the policy prescriptions of their advisors seriously; they will pursue policies that are in line with the policy prescriptions. I also assume that the peculiar psychological makeup of the individual policymakers has no significant bearing on the policies that they pursue. None of these assumptions should undermine or misconstrue the liberal peace literature.

I contend that taking the commercial peace to its logical policy conclusion can result in counterproductive outcomes. Due to the preeminence of liberal economics in the commercial peace there is at least an implicit prescription of expanding trade, one that engages the global market, across the world. Leaders need to push inclusion in and dependence on the globalized economy to ensure peaceful and cooperative interactions between states (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Gartzke, Li, & Boehmer, 2001; McDonald, 2004, 2007; Ruggie, 1982; Press-Barnathan, 2006, 2009). By expanding the membership of interdependent states, the pacifying capacity of commerce also expands, creating an ever-shrinking number of potentially belligerent states.

The major problem here, as I mentioned in the above section, is that commercial liberalism does not give a substantive framework for how to spread these economic structures to a people that does not already have them and may not want them. Furthermore, there is a lack of consideration for the local economic and social contexts with regards to engaging with capitalism. As Montesquieu recognized in his own works, local populations do not readily take to any (economic) system that is alien to them (*SL XIX.2, XXI.5*). Montesquieu demonstrates that liberalism's claim of peace needs to be at least qualified and potentially reconsidered. If commercial states accept the overarching claim that commerce fosters pacific relations amongst states, then this would consistently put the commercial community at odds with those states and

peoples outside of their “in-group.” This occurs because the communicative nature of the commercial state would push it to interact with others states, including the noncommercial ones (*SL XXI.5*). The commercial states would be inclined to engage in increasingly aggravating interactions with noncommercial states.

The same logic and problematization applies to democratization. The democratic peace literature, and specifically the dyadic iteration of it, indicates that if we expand the community of democratic states the frequency of interstate conflicts ought to lessen (Bueno de Mesquita, Marrow, Silverson, & Smith, 1999; Dixon, 1994; Doyle, 2005; Gowa, 1995; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989). Therefore, if liberal leaders want to foster interstate peace, they ought to promote democratization efforts. Yet there is a lack of consideration for how to democratize a state. Removing an autocratic regime is easy when compared to developing a democratic government. One can look to Iraq as an exemplary case of this dilemma. Overthrowing the Hussein regime took around a month, but fourteen years later the Iraqi regime has experienced serious setbacks in democratizing (Moon, 2009; Nazir, 2006). Elections are not sufficient for establishing a robust democracy. Even though the democratic peace literature would suggest that you need both the proper institutions and norms for democracy, it is relatively silent with regards to instilling these norms (Dixon, 1994; Gowa, 1995; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002; Small & Singer, 1976; Van Belle, 1997). Montesquieu once more demonstrates the limits to this liberal optimism. He notes that a people must have an appropriate general spirit for them to readily take to a set of laws (*SL XIX.2-5*). Yet, he recognizes the potential difficulties of changing a people in such a significant manner. Mores might be able to change mores but the dual shift in society and legal institutions is difficult to navigate. Montesquieu recognizes that

such projects of massive change are hardly a certainty, aiming at instituting one regime often results in another regime (frequently tyranny) taking hold (*SL* V.5, XIX.4-6).

Without a framework for liberalization, this attempt to expand the “in-group” could be disastrous. As mentioned in the previous section, liberalization is not a guaranteed process and failed or partial attempts at it can induce belligerence instead of restraining it. Democratization efforts are only going to foster cooperation amongst democratic states if the democratization is successful, that is to say robust and not partial. If such an endeavor fails, then the democratizing state is prone to engage in more belligerence than what scholars observe between democracies and autocracies. Not only might the state become more belligerent, but incomplete liberalization and the lack of solidification of democratic institutions and norms can cause a retrograde action where the state reverts to an autocracy.

How does one induce efforts to liberalize the government and economy? Sanctions and foreign aid packages might be used to induce or deter specific behavior, but I find it difficult to believe that these usually more muted measures can induce regime change. Admittedly, I could see economic aid enticing engagement with the globalized economy. Even then, it would have to be a measured response as too much aid might produce an overreliance on the aid as opposed to developing trade and too much sanctioning might induce an aversion to engagement in globalization. Will liberal states turn to more aggressive and heavy-handed methods if such efforts fail to encourage liberalization? Democratic leaders and their citizens might disdain illiberal “out-groups” enough to engage in regime overthrow. Engaging in war to expand the liberal community (and thus expanding the zone of peace) contradicts liberal pillars of peaceful dispute resolution and respect for humanitarianism. The end-result of the liberal peace literature contradicts its theoretical underpinnings.

### *Homo economicus versus homo politicus*

The final notable flaw with international relations liberalism to discuss in this chapter, and one of the major ways in which it breaks from Montesquieu's account, is its reliance on a limited presentation of the passions of humans. There appears to be an underlying assumption that modern man is a *homo economicus* who focuses on his material interests and directs his activity to maximizing said interests (Huth, 1996; Keeley, 1996; Moravcsik, 1997; Van Evera, 1990). To a very limited extent this is reflective of Montesquieu's presentation of the modern commercial person (*SL* XIX.29 pp. 328, 331, XX.2, XX.7). The major problem here is that this is a limited or caricatured depiction of Montesquieu's commercial man. Although commercial or material interests are at the forefront for the Englishman, there is clearly more to the commercial man in the regime of liberty. The liberty of the commercial people provides them with a plethora of passions which they pursue (*SL* XIX.27 p. 328, XX.7). Despite being able to pursue a full breadth of interests, the Englishman merely tends toward material interests.

This disconnect is problematic for international relations liberalism's presentation of how a growing liberal community of peace forms. This potential misrepresentation of fundamental human motivations and interests helps illuminate the problems arising from recent backlash against the attempted encroachment of liberalism into illiberal societies. Towards the very end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama famously claimed that liberalism had defeated its last major ideological opponent and would sweep across the world signaling an end to the great social, political, and economic upheavals and revolutions of human history (Fukuyama, 1989). Samuel Huntington, conversely and likely more accurately, predicted that cultural and religious identities would become the most significant opposition to the advancement of liberalism throughout the illiberal world (Huntington, 1993, 2003).

Liberalism overstates the material incentives of humans in political society and glosses over the myriad of interests that we have. Montesquieu would likely be surprised by neither Huntington's overarching claim nor the resurgence of religious extremism (most notably radical Islam) in reaction to the preponderance of liberal values (Huntington, 1993, 2003). Both Montesquieu and Huntington recognized the difficulty of "converting" people to an ideological package absent of the religious or cultural grounding of the society in which those people were raised and politically educated (Huntington, 2003; *SL XIX.5-6*). Huntington would also recognize that the material incentives of liberalism (commerce) are not sufficient to induce sudden (within a generation or so) societal change (Huntington, 1993, 2003). Commerce, and by extension liberalism, might be able to erode destructive prejudices but it cannot be expected to completely overturn traditional prejudices.

## **Conclusion**

Liberalism in the international relations literature presents itself as a gentle alternative to realism, focusing more on how liberal political and economic orders can restrain states from going to war (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke 2007; Gartzke, Li, & Boehmer 2001; Maoz, & Russett, 1993; McDonald, 2007; Morrow, 1999; Shannon, Morey, & Boehmke, 2010). Liberalism highlights how states can successfully and consistently restrain belligerent behavior with each other without a supranational sovereign to maintain order, a proposition that realist scholars are skeptical of or outright reject (Mearsheimer, 2001; Morgenthau, 2005; Walt, 1998; Waltz, 1990). One significant flaw I find in the liberal literature is that its usage of the term "peace" overstates the extent to which states are restrained from belligerence.

Another major flaw with liberalism, at least in the context of this dissertation, is that it provides a framework for building serious interstate cooperation while making such a framework dependent on local contexts. This is a problem because the baseline requisites of liberal domestic institutions are often at odds with illiberal political societies, and pushes liberal states to impose this liberal context for the sake of promoting peaceful relations. The democratic peace literature would at least implicitly allow for regime change towards democratization, even if violent, and the commercial peace literature would suggest imposing interdependency on economic globalization. If either of these two strands of “peace” literature were self-aware they would more explicitly and robustly qualify the peace part of their respective hypotheses to consider that the very means by which states can promote peace can lead to violent outcomes in the immediacy and near future. If international relations liberalism is a theory of peace, it also cannot be achieved without significant and likely violent change.

With these criticisms in mind, Montesquieu can help us temper liberalism’s problematic optimism. Montesquieu understands that liberalism can pit states against each other (whether they are monadically or dyadically liberal). A binding of interests also means that there are more areas to contest each other (*SL* X.2, XIX.27 pp. 328-29, XX.7, XXI.21). Furthermore, Montesquieu has a robust understanding of the complexities of political and economic structures’ relationship with society (*SL* IV.1, V.1, XIX.2-5, XX.4-5). He understands that attempts at state building and imposing laws can often become counterproductive. Even his understanding of human nature and their motivations tempers liberalism’s hopefulness. Montesquieu identifies humans as complex creatures with a wide variety of interests, though only able to fully engage in them in the regime of liberty (*SL* III.9, IV.2, IV.5, XIX.27 p. 328). If liberal scholars were to more critically incorporate Montesquieu into their understanding of liberalism then they would

have a soberer assessment of liberalism's capacity to pacify states, a sobriety that might make it more effective once transferred into policy.

In the next and final chapter I weave together the substantive chapters to suggest a need for liberalism to reassess itself. After I retrace this dissertation, I reconsider the saliency of this project, suggesting it has philosophic and possibly practical importance. I then discuss to what extent Montesquieu can be considered a liberal expansionist as opposed to a liberal pacifist. I also distill the overarching tensions of Montesquieu's liberalism; these potential contradictions between liberalism's inclinations and the need for being sensitive to local contexts. These tensions make me seriously question to what extent we can consider liberalism as a vehicle for peace or for expansion.

## CHAPTER SIX: REPRISING MONTESQUIEUIAN LIBERALISM

This dissertation has challenged the notion that Montesquieu is a liberal pacifist.

Montesquieu is readily interpreted as a cosmopolitan stating that liberty and commerce will help build a more peaceful future, making humans less vicious than our traditional inclinations.

Liberal pacifist will turn to the following passages to present Montesquieu as one of their own:

Commerce cures destructive prejudices, and it is an almost general rule that everywhere there are gentle mores, there is commerce and everywhere there is commerce, there are gentle mores.

Therefore, one should not be surprised if our mores are less fierce than they were formerly. Commerce has spread knowledge of the mores of all nations everywhere; they have been compared to each other, and good things have resulted from this.

One can say that these same laws ruins mores. Commerce corrupts pure mores, and this was the subject of Plato's complaints; it polishes and softens barbarous mores, as we see every day.

The natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations that trade with each other become reciprocally dependent; if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling, and all unions are founded on mutual needs (*SL* XX.1-XX.2 p. 338).

I do not take these paragraphs as soundly establishing Montesquieu as a liberal pacifist. Instead, I interpret Montesquieu to be a liberal expansionist. Although he does clearly state that commerce leads to peace in the beginning of Book XX, Montesquieu's liberalism becomes expansionary when you consider the entirety of *Spirit of the Laws*. Not only does liberalism have a propensity to expand but it also needs to expand. Even if the English have a somberness and reserve to their character and society, this is not reflected in their empire.

This concluding chapter will serve to elaborate on the conclusions I want to remain with the readers of this dissertation. I start doing this by reconsidering the question of saliency. I want to claim that reassessing our understanding of Montesquieuian liberalism also serves to help us understand our contemporary liberalism –and its shortcomings. I will consider that my claim of Montesquieu being a liberal expansionist does not mean that he outright supports the project of liberal empire. I will then summarize the relevant significant tensions within Montesquieu’s writings: the realities of liberal expansion conflict with major claims and advise that he provides throughout *Spirit of the Laws*. These tensions will help us better understand the peculiar intellectual relation that Montesquieu had with this emerging English liberalism.

### **Revisiting Saliency**

I discussed saliency in the opening chapter to this work but I believe that it warrants one final consideration. I want to consider why it is important that we identify Montesquieu’s account of liberalism as expansionary and not pacifist. This claim of liberal expansion stands in stark opposition to and suggests that we should reconsider the contemporary notion of liberal pacifism. Supporters of liberalism tend to romanticize it, making it into a Utopian model when it does not deserve such treatment (Doyle, 2005; Fukuyama, 1994; Gartzke, 2007; Oneal & Russett, 1997; Press-Barnathan, 2006). This unwarranted optimism indicates a severe lack of awareness. Claims that liberalism has softened since Montesquieu’s account need to be tempered. Looking at liberalism in the international relations context suggests that the boldness and decisiveness of its claim of peace are unwarranted.

I want to clarify that I do not contend that liberalism needs to rectify its belligerent nature. This dissertation is not about how to make liberalism more peaceful or that its lack of

peacefulness was some moral flaw requiring correction. Instead, I want to note how we lack an understanding of the very liberalism about which we write. We need to understand the complexities of liberalism instead of oversimplifying it and Montesquieu's account of liberalism helps present liberalism in such a complex and at times contradictory matter.

This intellectual misunderstanding also has real world results. It is not just academics who are overstating liberalism's promise, it is also policymakers who are being informed by these scholars. I am not attempting claim that US operations (or lack thereof) in Iraq and Afghanistan would have been more conducive to promoting democracy if policymakers utilized Montesquieuan liberalism. Such conjecture is beyond my abilities. Instead, I suggest that policy makers in liberal states would be making better<sup>1</sup> foreign policy decisions if they were more fully aware of the capabilities and tendencies of their liberalism.

Although there is likely a multitude of ways in which liberalism has changed in the past two and a half centuries, it has one problematic development. Liberalism has lost much of the sobriety and critical self-reflection that helped develop it (*SL XIX.27* pp. 325-26). The somberness of the English has given away to a pomposity. Without these facets being pillars of liberalism, a liberal people will begin to overinflate their sense of what liberalism can accomplish. This is not to say that the English of Montesquieu's time were humble about their liberalism, as that is certainly not the case. They clearly were proud of their commercial prowess (*SL XIX.27* p. 329, *XX.7*). Instead, the English had a peculiar sobriety about them that is not commonplace in contemporary liberal societies. Even if liberalism can deliver on its promise of peace, such a notion needs to have an asterisk next to it. Akin to an infomercial on weight loss or

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<sup>1</sup> By better I mean more informed and not misleading. I do not claim that they would be engaging in "good" foreign policy but that the supposed goals and actualized goals would likely be more in line with each other.

hair regrowth, these results are neither typical nor should be expected. Relying on such peaceful results might even run counter to achieving them.

### **Montesquieu as a Liberal Expansionist**

Does my claim that Montesquieu was a liberal expansionist mean that he wholeheartedly endorsed liberal empire? No, this claim instead means that Montesquieu recognized that empire was a natural result of liberalism. Like with most things Montesquieu writes about, he urges us to consider it within the appropriate context. He is certainly not an advocate of empire but speaks positively of liberalism (Krause, 2002; *SL* IV.3, V.14, X.3, X.6-11, XI.6 pp. 156-60). Such apparent contradictions are found throughout Montesquieu's account of liberalism and England. When we consider such tension, we should also consider that Montesquieu presents both normative and empirical statements, describing "what ought to be" and "what is" often in close conjunction with each other. We must grapple with the tension of his normative and declarative statements when attempting to understand his work.

I want to make this clarification because I do not think that scholars supporting the liberal peace theories (whether in the international relations or political theory subfields) are completely incorrect. Commerce allows for a binding of interests and increases channels of communication to facilitate peaceful de-escalation of potential conflicts. I am hard pressed to find that notion controversial. Instead, I contend that such scholarship tells an incomplete narrative. It tries to oversimplify liberalism by highlighting its more agreeable qualities. I understand that an overly nuanced account teeters on uselessness. In a subfield of political science such as international relations, if you are conducting a study and actively considering a few dozen different variables in an exceedingly complex model then you end up not being able to pinpoint those facets that are

crucial. If you consider everything in your model, then your model tells us nothing. Still, liberalism presents itself as a vehicle of peace but this narrative ignores the breadth of Montesquieu's liberalism (Doyle, 2005; Gartzke, 2007; Press-Barnathan, 2006).

Even when Montesquieu is providing any substance for the liberal peace scholarship, it is usually conflated with suggestions of liberal expansionism. When Montesquieu is speaking more favorably of the English empire, it still has an ominous undertone to it. For example, consider the following exert:

And one likes to establish elsewhere what it established at home, it would give the form of its own government to the people of its colonies; and as this government would carry prosperity with it, one would see the formation of great peoples, even in the forests to which it had sent inhabitants.

It could be that it had formerly subjugated a neighboring nation which, by its situation, the goodness of its ports, and the nature of its wealth, made the first jealous; thus, although it had given that nation its own laws, the great dependence in which the nation was held was such that the citizens there would be free and the state itself would be enslaved.

The Conquered state would have a very good civil government, but it would be crushed by the right of nations; the laws imposed upon it from one nation to another would be such that its prosperity would be only precarious and only a deposit for a master (*SL XIX.27* p. 329).

This quote initially seems quite benevolent. Montesquieu notes that the colonies would be prosperous, its citizens would also be free, and that they would even have a decent government.

These notions make England's empire look preferable. What people would not want material comfort, liberty, and good laws? The problem with this line of thinking is that there are also significant negative side-effects from this empire. At first there is the potential inference of genocide being a tool of the English. The phrase "even in the forests to which it had sent inhabitants" can readily imply that the English are sending their own people over become the indigenous population has been eradicated, though I admit that this is likely a stretch (*SL XIX.27*

pp. 328-29). It still stands that the English are displacing local populations should such an endeavor benefit their commercial interests. We need to consider the tension between English interests and the genocide of the Native Americans, especially in light of Montesquieu's clear objection to Spain's use of genocide in the Americas (*SL X.4*).

The second and third paragraphs cited above have clearer implications of the darker side to England's empire. The subjugated state is not free, Montesquieu even using the term "enslaved" to describe it (*SL XIX.27 p. 329*). This indicates that the people in the conquered nation are thrown out of sync with their laws; the laws acquiesce to England, but the people and their spirit does not. Although the people themselves are not necessarily being enslaved by the English, their laws and government are subject to foreign control. The subjugated nation's wealth is also endangered. Even if the subjugated nation has an abundance of wealth due to its new relationship with England, this vast wealth is ultimately meant to serve the financial interests of England (*SL XIX.27 p. 329*). England's concern for the commercial welfare of its trading partners and colonies only extends to consideration for how England could benefit from and exploit them. Should England need to acquire additional resources to finance some project, the wealth of these conquered nations and colonies is available for England to use. Therefore, none of the benefits England bestowed on their conquests is certain. The conquered people and colonists do not have any substantive say in these matters, any plundering of their resources is ultimately subject to the whim of the English.

### **Tensions of Montesquieuan Expansionism**

This expansionist view does result in a few significant tensions or contradictions in Montesquieu's works. The first of these involves Montesquieu's writings on empire.

Montesquieu very clearly states that he does not approve of empire. Montesquieu is critical of empires' tendency to destroy both the conquered and conquerors (*SL* X.3, X.6-11, X.13).

Montesquieu uses this destructiveness to oppose empire on moral and practical grounds. From a practical standpoint, empire is counterproductive. You want to use it to strengthen your nation, but instead it leads to its downfall. A wise ruler would at least be hesitant to want to engage in empire. From a moral standpoint, the internal decay brought about by empire often leads to despotism. Although Montesquieu often presents himself as a relativist, one of the notable exceptions is his opposition to despotism. Furthermore, the destruction of the conquered peoples usually destroys the good or worthwhile traditions and laws along with the bad. There is a lack of discernment with imperial devastation.

Oddly enough, he writes favorably on Alexander the Great's conquests. He mentions that Alexander conquered the world to preserve it, not to destroy it (*SL* X.14 pp. 150-51). When he went from people to people he preferred to let the people keep their customs, religion, and even leaders as opposed to destroying them. Even when he did overturn the laws or customs of a people it was typically for the better, ending barbaric practices such as killing off the elderly. Alexander went so far as to even adopt the mores of the conquered people, becoming a cosmopolitan conqueror instead of a Hellenic one. Alexander's reign was also absent of the sort of despotism one might expect from such a grand conquest. He would rather make conquered people his allies and let them administrate themselves than to instill fear and impose a Hellenic order (*SL* X.14). Although Montesquieu appears to write favorably about Alexander, we need to remember that empires are inherently destructive. Even Alexander, who supposedly aimed to preserve, engaged in destructive behavior in his conquests, he did burn cities and execute leaders

(*SL X.14*). Alexander might have not been as destructive as he could have been but he still has his armies tear a path from Greece to the Indian subcontinent.

One might suggest that England is to an extent free from the usually culpability of empires. Montesquieu does present England and its empire as aiming to trade with the world, not dominate it. Montesquieu writes: “If this nation sent colonies abroad, it would do so to extend its commerce more than its domination (*SL XIX.27 p. 328*).” One might be tempted to think that this indicates that England has a gentle empire, if it has one at all. It is easy to suggest that England would rather just exchange goods with a people than conquer them. For the most part I agree with this notion. There is incredibly little in the text to suggest that it would prefer using heavy handed tactics to subjugate a people. At most, we get Montesquieu suggesting that England would seek out enemies of liberty outside its own borders. Yet this gentleness needs to be understood in its appropriate context. The English empire is gentle in comparison to what? Not being as destructive as a Rome or France does not negate the culpability of English expansion nor does it make England’s conquest somehow on par with those of Montesquieu’s flowery portrayal of Alexander. I willingly concede that England *might* be gentler in its conquests than a lot of other empires but that is a massive distance from being simply gentle (*SL XIX.28 p. 328*). The notion of England engaging in a gentle empire is contradictory and misleading.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As stated before, Alexander would end what he considered cruel or barbaric practices and replace them with gentler ones. One notable example was ending the practice of feeding the elderly to dogs, something which is hard to not consider commendable. This notion of whether Montesquieu supports the removal of offensive or cruel practices is a difficult one to ascertain when we consider his admiration of Alexander the Great and the British Empire. Although Montesquieu seems glad that more vicious traditions are being removed by the advancement of liberalism, he seems skeptical of the methods. By methods I mean both the usage of empire in a destructive manner and the rapid and significant alteration of the social fabric of a people, the two being interrelated. Montesquieu likely laments on the uncomfortable reality of this configuration. He would prefer a clear way to make men less vicious yet his configuration of using mores to change mores lacks force and efficacy. For

Even if England does not aim to dominate or destroy in its expansion, that does not mean that it will not engage in domination and destruction or that it is unwilling to do so. If the choices are either to allow indigenous resistance to the expansion of your commercial interests or to expand your commercial interests through using your superior military power, then the English will select the latter. The English are exceedingly jealous of their commercial interests and they will decisively oppose any opposition to them. Montesquieu notes:

A commercial nation has a prodigious number of small, particular interests; therefore, it can offend and be offended in an infinity of ways. This nation would become sovereignly jealous and would find more distress in the prosperity of others than enjoyment in its own (SL XIX.27 p. 328).

Although the above passage seems more focused on potential commercial rivals, I believe that there is more to unpack. Montesquieu notes how the colonies work as “deposits” for England just a few paragraphs later. Therefore, I contend that this of their commercial interests extends to those people who push back against English encroachment.

Perhaps one might defend English empire on the ground that its empire, unlike that of Rome’s, does not lead to the loss of domestic liberty. If anything, its conquests and projects of colonization strengthen it domestically, providing the restless English with occupations and wealth. Whereas the conquests of Rome spread the republic too thin and added too many citizens to it, the English conquest served to strengthen the resolve of the English’s liberty (*Considerations IX*, SL XIX.29 pp. 326-29). Rome’s virtue eroded with empire whereas

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Montesquieu, commerce would ideally be able to gently imbue softer mores on a people, only requiring an exchange of goods or the introduction of gold to change the world. Yet this ability to use gold requires that both parties are going to share the mores of market economics and that they so readily value material interests over their traditional mores. Both of these propositions are difficult for me to readily accept when England is interacting with the multiplicity of societies that maintain deep rooted prejudices against commerce.

England's spirit of separate powers was strengthened by it. Furthermore, when England engaged in empire, it used its strong commerce to buttress its military force which only served to strengthen its commerce (Rodger, 2006; *SL XIX.27* p. 328).

The English's project of empire is such a non-threat to its domestic tranquility that it does not invite outside threats to its shores. Even if another power would have been able to rival England's power, it could never expect to pose a threat to England itself. England had two important advantages defensively. First, it had the most powerful navy up to that point in history. This navy had a synergistic relationship with its commerce, in a sense feeding into its own aggrandizement (*SL XIX.27* pp.328-29). On England's navy and commerce, Montesquieu notes:

This nation would have secure credit because it would borrow from itself and would pay to itself. It could happen that it would undertake something beyond the forces natural to it and would assert against its enemies an immense fictional wealth that the trust and the nature of its government would make real (*SL XIX.27* p. 327).

And:

The dominant nation, inhabiting a big island and being in possession of a great commerce, would have all sorts of facilities for forces upon the seas; and as the preservation of its liberty would require it to have neither strongholds, nor fortresses, nor land armies, it would need an army on the sea to protect itself from invasions; and its navy would be superior to that of all other powers, which, needing to employ their finances from a land war, would no longer have enough for a sea war (*SL XIX.27* p. 329).

Second, England resides on an island and thus has a water barrier to protect it from invasion (*SL XVIII.5*). England combines these two features to make it near invulnerable to attack. The English Channel and North Sea act as giant moat to Fortress England as its navy serves as some beast patrolling the waterways. A foreign power could at best deny England reliable access to its colonies (a daunting and nigh impossible task), but it could never conquer England itself.

Another problem with this pacifist take on England's preference of trade over conquest, that it is somehow a gentle empire, is that England wants to be the premier commercial power. The English clearly desire to have the greatest commercial prowess. When you want to be the greatest commercial power, your ability and willingness to be peaceful in your trade relations has clear limits. Montesquieu's England appears focused on relative gains, not absolute ones. Simply improving your commerce from its previous position is not sufficient for England. Assuming states are motivated in a manner similar to England, they would not be inclined to prefer trade when such would bolster one's trading partner, making it an emerging commercial threat to you. A state adept at commerce but not focused on it would not necessarily find this problematic. England is not such a state, with commerce as a central aim for the regime and its people.

Montesquieu notes:

Almost none of England's tariffs with other nations are regular; tariffs change, so to speak, with each parliament, as it lifts or imposes particular duties. England has also wanted to preserve its independence in this matter. Sovereignly jealous of the commerce that is done there, it binds itself with few treaties and depends only on its laws.

Other nations have made commercial interests give way to political interests: England has always made its political interests give way to the interests of its commerce.

This is the people in the world who have best known how to take advantage of each of these three great things at the same time: religion, commerce, and liberty (*SL XX.7*).

In the above quotation, we see that England's focus on and jealousy of commerce are intertwined. The two of them drive each other, their focus sharpened by their jealousy and the jealousy inflamed by their focus. Any gentleness that England displays with its desire to trade is underlined by an intense obsession with succeeding at trade. Failing to satiate both desires invokes the wrath of the English, a wrath backed up by an historically powerful navy. We can even notice how malleable England's trade arrangements are. The terms of any treaty on tariffs is

only as reliable as the English parliament. Should those Englishmen engaging in commerce find the terms of the tariffs unfavorable or undesirable, then they could in due time get their elected officials to alter the terms. If the trading partner does not accept these new terms, then it would either lose trade with England or deal with the presence of its navy. Once again, the notion of its commerce being tranquil is questionable. There is no clear solution to this tension between liberal commerce and empire. The project of empire is by its very nature guilty of the sort of destruction that Montesquieu admonishes. There is no situation that I can conceptualize in which we can fully rectify Montesquieu's objection to the destructiveness of empire and liberalism's expansionary nature.

The second notable tension in Montesquieu's liberal expansion has to do with the relationship between the social fabric of a people (their mores and general spirit) and their laws. The whole of Book XIX in *Spirit of Laws* details the crucial relationship between laws and society, between the written and unwritten guidelines for our behavior (*SL* XIX.2, XIX.4). When Montesquieu speaks of good laws he is generally dismissive of absolute best laws, laws that are quasi-divine and preferable for all people. Instead, Montesquieu posits that certain laws are best suited for a given people. The standard for this goodness of the laws is whether they are in line with the general spirit of the people who will live under them (*SL* XII.2, XIX.2). Laws that are good for one people may not be good for another, so the notion of cross-societal implementation of laws is problematic. In addition, one must be careful not to attempt to change the general spirit or laws of a people radically. The foundational blocks of society and laws are best left to move in concert with each other, one gradually shifting as the other does (*SL* XIX.5, XIX.26). Radical or

reckless change can result in disaster<sup>3</sup>, throwing both the society and the regime into disarray (*SL* XIX.5-6).

The English liberal commercialism may in fact be the outcome of particular circumstances (*SL* III.3 p.22, XIV.2, XIV.13, XVIII.5, XXIII.29). The climatic and topographical circumstances that helped incubate liberty (mild climate, moderate agricultural yield, and island status) are hard enough to find elsewhere; expecting a duplication of the historical peculiarities and accidents (Henry VIII's break from the Catholic Church, the English Revolution's failed attempt at reviving ancient republicanism) is simply unreasonable. Despite's liberty ability to be more permissive of human's natural inclinations (allowing for a more open engagement with the multiplicity of human passions), it is difficult to expect it to develop elsewhere on its own. I do not think that it is impossible for liberty to develop spontaneously elsewhere, but I am suspicious of the notion that it will inherently grow in several different societies, springing forth in various corners of the world. Although slightly less daunting, we still should not expect a people even to develop a receptiveness to liberalism.

To further complicate this tension between England's attempt to impart a liberal order and its opposition from illiberal societies, this English imposition of liberalism is clearly intentional. Montesquieu clearly admits that England willingly imposes its liberty and commerce on others. Regardless of if this imposition is achieved by their military force, we see England going to illiberal places and instilling its liberalism (*SL* XIX.27 p. 329, XXI.21). The English are trying to change the customs and laws of entire nations to achieve some specific and intended

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<sup>3</sup> I do recognize that Montesquieu accepts that radical change can have positive results such as Henry VIII leaving the Catholic Church and thereby allowing for commerce to flourish in England (*SL* XXIII.29). The key here is that such happy accidents are exceptional and cannot be purposively pursued with any reliability.

end. Barbarous mores need to be softened for commerce to flourish and the English will gladly use their empire towards this goal. Even if the illiberal societies begin to adopt the softer mores of the English, as with all attempts at changing the laws, the imposition of a liberal legal order will have unintended consequences (*SL* V.5, XIX.2, XIX.5-6, XIX.27 p. 329). The art of statecraft is a precarious and uncertain endeavor.

Can these two competing notions of liberal expansion and domestic illiberality coexist? A rectification on this tension can take a few different forms but needs to focus on the fact that England is going to impose a liberal order. Regardless of any consideration for the “ought,” we need to recognize the “is” of liberal imposition. England will engage in liberal expansion and there is no real way to stop that process (*SL* XIX.27 pp. 328-29). Furthermore, Montesquieu recognizes that there will be resistance to this imposition (*SL* XIX.5-6, XIX.27 pp. 327-29). Certain people will simply not accept adopting such an arrangement. Unfortunately for those resisting English liberalism, the English can meet such opposition with preeminent military force.

### **Contemporary Considerations**

Liberalism in the international relations literature has not readily heeded any of these lessons and has failed to grapple with these tensions within Montesquieuan liberalism. They still have an oversimplified and overly optimistic view of liberalism. Liberalism in this context still overstates the pacifying capacity of liberal institutions, namely commerce and democratic rule (Buchan, 2002; Doyle, 2005; Fukuyama, 1994 ; Gartzke, 2007; Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998). Their utopian view of liberalism is in opposition to Montesquieu’s understanding of liberalism and its relation to power (Howse, 2006; Radasanu, 2013).

Liberalism does not address the tensions between requiring a given political, social, and economic order and the difficulties of creating such an order (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002). Liberalism also glosses over the notion that liberal states consistently engage in belligerent and even imperial tendencies (Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009; Small & Singer, 1976; Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). They do not recognize that their supposed peace is built on war, empire, and violent (both in the sense of being bloody and quick) overthrowing of societies and regimes. Their entire narrative of the liberal peace is undergirded by liberal belligerence and expansionism.

Whereas liberalism claims that commerce binds nations together, Montesquieu recognizes that commerce can also provide points of contention (*SL XIX.27* p. 328). These channels of communication and areas of mutual interest also provide more points of saliency, increasing the issues that could escalate tensions between states. The contemporary literature fails to fully appreciate how commercial interests are vital to state interest thus increasing a state's willingness to defend said interest. Even the democratic peace literature suggests that states are prone to conflict, regime heterogeneity indicating some underlying tension (Quackenbush & Rudy, 2009; Small & Singer, 1976). Their narrative of democratic peace is necessarily coupled with a democratic belligerence. In promising peace, the liberal literature uses a limited peace to overstate its pacifist claims.

Liberalism also oversimplifies the process of economic globalization (Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2004). They find it obvious that states would want to participate in this economic order. Liberalism tends to ignore the fact that communities will resist commerce, something that Montesquieu is acutely aware of (Huntington, 1993, 2003; *SL XIX.5-6, XIX.27* pp. 326-27; Wallerstein, 1974, 1992). Liberalism also oversimplifies the process of democratization by suggesting that placing legal institutions, and letting people about the democratic process and

democratic norms suffices (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995, 2002; Maoz & Russett, 1993). People must be socialized to those norms and must be molded to fit the laws, something that cannot happen in a few years. Montesquieu would be acutely aware that a liberal regime is not appropriate for all peoples (*SL* XI.4-5, XIX.2). He would not be surprised at the literature that notes the difficulties in solidifying democracy (Moon, 2009; Nazir, 2006; *SL* XIX.2-5). Furthermore, the only tool that liberal pacifism provides for converting states is the apparent superiority of democratic government and the capitalist economy. They do not recognize the legitimacy of using force as a viable vehicle of such change nor the discourse of addressing the problems with the various means of inducing liberalization.

Liberalism in international relations fails to recognize the above tension. I do not expect them to rectify these apparent contradictions (Montesquieu does not even do that), but am perplexed as to the lack of discussion on these matters. They need to at least recognize this tension and concede that this is as an area in need of further exploration. Ignoring these tensions does not benefit liberalism. If anything, it leaves liberalism open to fundamental criticisms that undermine the liberal project. Liberalism will have a hard time winning the hearts of people (peaceful proliferation) if they refuse to recognize outside criticisms.

Although I do not suggest that liberalism simply mimic Montesquieuan liberalism, I believe that it could learn some valuable lessons from it. First and foremost, any notion of a liberal peace is inherently part of the larger narrative of liberal expansionism. Second, claims of peace must be sober and admit of serious limitations. Third, domestic societies and laws matter greatly to international outcomes, and endeavoring to change long-standing domestic institutions and mores is precarious. If liberalism were more honest, then its claims to peace would not ring hollow.

## **Favoring Liberalism**

Despite these potential contradictions and shortcomings of liberalism, Montesquieu does seem to be in favor of the liberal order that the English are creating. Most obviously, this regime of liberty is best suited to resist regime decay (Krause, 2002). The separation of powers curtails political abuses that would otherwise lead England towards tyranny or mob rule. This is important because it is a safeguard against despotism, the one regime that Montesquieu outright condemns (*SL* III.9-10, IV.3, V.14). This regime of liberty also provides for the best protection against abuses by the government. Should the regime be based on liberty, the laws provide the guidelines for behavior, not the whims of a tyrant, monarch, or the masses. The various powers would prevent any body politic from conspiring to negate or twist the laws and their enforcement to suit their inclinations (*SL* XI.6 pp. 156-60). No singular body can conspire to inflict horrors on an individual or the people and no two bodies would conspire together but instead would be set against each other. Therefore, Montesquieu recognizes and admires that the regime of liberty is well suited to curtail the absolute worst inclinations of those who rule.

There is even something admirable about the baseness or materialism of the English. They do not engage in foolish endeavors or let notions of honor, glory, or virtue cloud their judgement. The kind of projects that the English pursue out of self-interest would put to shame the ambitions of more honorable, virtuous, and noble people. This produces an odd pride in the English as well. Their commerce and liberty allow for a meritocratic society to emerge. As Montesquieu notes: “Men would scarcely be judged there by frivolous talents or attributes, but by real qualities, and of these there are only two, wealth and personal merit (*SL* XIX.27 p. 331).” One might retort that the standard of wealth undermines merit. I contend, to the contrary, that the commerce and thus wealth of the English is built on merit. There is an honest work ethic to the

English. This work ethic is not necessarily the notion of hard work being rewarded (akin to the old adage of an honest day's work for an honest day's pay) but that of daring and innovation (*SL XIX.27 p. 328, XX.4*). Being creative and finding new ventures or negotiating a favorable contract is not construed as cheating, but is instead equated with cleverness. Furthermore, there is a strong sense of fairness within England's domestic society. This is formally enforced with all the contracts that are in use. Although English contractualism might make interactions cold and competitive, it allows for an exact sense of justice (*SL XX.2, XX.7*). The terms of every commercial interaction between Englishmen was meticulously arranged and this arrangement was enforced in this regime of liberty. Even if these contracts are indicative of mistrust amongst them, the Englishman wanting to counter his own suspicions of another Englishman swindling him, they help ensure that a peculiar form of merit is practiced. The English do not bother with trying to impress others with flattery but instead root opinions in more concrete and warranted terms.

We need to look back to some of the foundational thinkers of liberalism to understand that those who were seeing and helping develop this emerging liberalism were not blind followers. They were not all claiming that liberalism is a grand utopian path that will allow us all to live in harmony. Instead, they had had some serious reservations and significant caveats with regards to the pursuit of liberalism. Montesquieu is possibly the greatest example of this. Despite all the positive things that he writes about commerce and liberty, he still understands that there is a significant price to pay for having this liberalism. Despite whatever gentle mores it might bring along, liberalism also requires an acceptance of empire (*SL XIX.27 pp. 328-29, XX.1*).

Contemporary liberalism, both in terms of ideology and scholarship, also fails to take another lesson from Montesquieu. This lesson is that one needs to be careful when attempting to

change the mores and general spirit of a people. Changing the laws and way of life of a people is a daunting task rife with uncertainties (*SL XIX.2, XIX.5-6*). Even if somehow your political and economic system is the best possible system outright, it does not mean it is the best for every society. It might be the best system to better the material and political situation of humans, but if it is to be effective then the humans need to be suited for it as well. Considering this formulation, most people are not suited for England's liberalism.

To further complicate liberalism's misunderstanding of itself, Montesquieu recognized that changing a regime and the society it rules over is not simply an end goal but is instead a process (*SL XIX.2-6*). Understanding change as a process might imbue liberalism with some humility, something that liberalism typically lacks. This misappropriation of liberty and commerce as some clear endpoint leads liberalism to overvalue its potential to be readily adopted. In addition, being focused so much on the end goal ignores or downplays two important notions: inevitable deviations from legislative plans and learning from previous lessons. Even the best laws have unintended consequences (*SL V.5, XIX.2, XIX.5-6*). Regardless of how well thought out the law might be or how noble its pursuit, there will be unexpected results. The laws and mores of a people are in large part the result of a historical trajectory.<sup>4</sup> A supposedly good law can have horrific unintended consequences or a destroy a deeply held and destructive prejudice. Looking back at the mistakes of a people's past will help minimize (I want to emphasize it can minimize and not completely negate) the chance of repeating the same errors. By focusing excessively on the forward progress of changing a people, the lessons of their past are too readily dismissed.

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<sup>4</sup> *SL XXVIII* provides several examples of the continuation and end of legal traditions.

Despite Montesquieu's reservations regarding liberalism, I want to emphasize at the end here that he is ultimately in support of it. Liberal regimes are at their core durable, and more capable of staving off regime decline than other regime types (Krause, 2002). This is a significant advantage from Montesquieu's point of view given his focus on avoiding the descent into despotism (*SL V.14*). This does not mean that he advocates liberty and commerce for all people and certainly not in the short run. Montesquieu's assessment is more sober and qualified than that. He recognizes that most people cannot immediately and properly adopt the legal and moral systems required for liberty and commerce (*SL XI.4-5, XIX.2*). A successful expansion of liberalism is going to be both protracted and violent in all likelihood. When I say violent I mean it in a broad sense. Yes, this expansion is going to involve bloodshed and a massive loss of life but it is also going to involve sudden changes at times. England's own liberty was not a peaceful process. Although there was gradual progress at times, the reign of Henry VIII and the failed experiment of Cromwell's republic indicate an added mixture of sudden leaps forwards and cataclysmic missteps (*SL III.3 p.22, XXIII.29*). Therefore, even if you naturally develop liberty and commerce it is going to involve some violence over time. If this is the case, then having liberalism imposed on you through empire will involve substantial violence. Montesquieu would simply advise that the English engage in whatever self-reflection and restraint is possible to lessen the potential negative impact of their liberalism.

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