John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security*, 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 87-125.

Owen seeks to explain why liberal democracies do not fight each other, but do fight other nations. This, he hopes, will remedy one of the main critiques of he democratic peace proposition by giving it a theoretical base.

He argues that liberal ideology and institutions. This ideology includes the belief that humans are fundamentally the same, that they seek self-preservation and material well-being (i.e. life and property), that freedom is required for these pursuits, and that peace is required for freedom. The institutions include regular competitive elections and free speech. The ideology also holds that democracies will be trustworthy, because they seek the interests of their citizens (i.e. peace) while non-democracies may seek other ends and are thus untrustworthy. It is important to note that liberal states thus react to their perceptions of other states, and not necessarily to the actual liberality of those states.

Liberals first look at regime type when assessing a state. If they *perceive* it to be a democracy, they will support friendly relations and adamantly oppose war. If they do not believe the other state to be democratic, they will view it with suspicion and may even call for a preemptive war. The importance of perception explains most of the supposed violations of the democratic peace. Thus, for example, the United States could consider war with Great Britain throughout most of the 19th century because it did not perceive Britain as a democracy (note – it was in fact, for much of this time, more liberal than democratic, which presents an interesting issue for the democratic peace as formulated here).

Illiberal leaders (e.g. realists) may gain power in liberal states. In general, foreign policy receives little public scrutiny, and "opinion leaders" such as government officials, scholars, journalists, business men, and interest groups will primarily influence leaders. Some of these are liberals, and some are not. But when crisis occurs and war is threatened, the public becomes interested and the illiberal leaders find that war is highly unpopular if the state is considered a liberal democracy.

Illiberal democracies, from ancient Athens to the modern Balkans, can exist. They do not behave like liberal democracies (lacking the normative constraint) and thus are outside the democratic peace, although it may be hard for liberal states to make the distinction (e.g. American liberal support of revolutionary France).

Owen then puts forward six hypotheses to be tested through case studies:
1. Liberals will trust states they consider liberal and mistrust those they consider illiberal.
2. When liberals observe a foreign state becoming liberal by their own standards, they will expect pacific relations with it.
3. Liberals will claim that fellow liberal democracies share their ends, and that illiberal states do not.
4. Liberals will not change their assessments of foreign states during crises with those states unless those states change their institutions.

5. Liberal elites will agitate for their policies during war-threatening crises.
6. During crises, statesmen will be constrained to follow liberal policy.

In this paper he addresses (briefly) four historical cases, although he derived his theory from twelve cases of war threatening crises involving the United States between the 1790s and the end of the First World War. These were chosen because the United States has been dominated by liberalism and has had free elections throughout its history. They allow for a range of differing levels of actual and perceived democracy in the other states. (Note – Although some cases involve the policy of the country involved other than the United States, it does seem that dealing exclusively with cases involving the U.S., which was throughout much of this period rather isolated, could introduce bias).

The four cases in this article are Franco-American relations in 1796-98, and Anglo American relations in 1803-12, 1861-63, and 1895-96. In the first we see that (illiberal) Federalist hostility to France was constrained by liberal support of the French as fellow democrats. In the first two cases involving Great Britain, Americans did not see the British as democrats. In the firs case the Republicans in the agitated for war against a realist perceptions of national interest. In the second case, they maintained peaceful relations only because they could not afford to fight the British and the Confederates at the same time. In 1861-63, however, British liberals sympathized with the Union and, after the Emancipation Proclamation, strongly agitated for peace and against recognition of the Confederacy, against their economic interest which demanded Southern cotton. In the final case, involving a border dispute in South America, Americans were divided over whether or not Britain was a democracy, but those who thought that it was (and that Venezuela, the other country involved, was not) agitated for peace, as did British liberals, who held that Americans were trustworthy and actually got the government to accept American mediation in the border dispute.

Owen counters a number of realist critiques of the democratic peace, noting that:
1. The failure of either democratic structures or norms alone to account for peace does not mean that a combination might not.
2. The presence of illiberal leaders in liberal democracies and the fact that they do not always view each other as liberal accounts for threats and even conflict between liberal states, and for public support of this conflict.
3. Despite realist claims (and illiberal leaders efforts) public perceptions of whether or not a country is a democracy do not easily change, and tend to change more on the basis of new evidence from the other country (like the Emancipation Proclamation) than their leaders statements.

Owen notes that his theses does not completely contradict realism, and may allow for some synthesis. For example, liberal ideology could be considered in Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory. Also, it could be considered within the ideational framework of Alexander Wendt, david Lumsdaine, and others, which allows that in international anarchy, states must hold certain views about each other before fearing each other. The balance of power still matters to liberals, but they see it within a broader context.