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Peace and the Dialectics of Human Security in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

Every time we hear the expression 'peace in our world', it naturally conjures the absence of warfare and internal disorder, and the end of military or other hostilities. Throughout history, innumerable human beings have suffered from the scourge of conflict. Quite naturally they tried, often at significant costs, to protect themselves with assorted resources against all major threats to their (human) security. The human security concept continues to loom large in global policy and peace discourse notwithstanding growing doubts about the 'effectiveness' of its promise in a highly vulnerable modern society overloaded with weapons of mass-destruction amid other threats to peace. The bottom-line is the imperative of replacing the dominant thoughts about securing peace. This paper accentuates the theory of peace and its relationship to the concept of human security. It takes its point of departure from the theoretical framework of critical security studies (CSS) and argues that there is a specific sense in which CSS needs to comprehend peace, and that this understanding is closely affiliated with human security. The paper is arguably a theoretical exploration of the concepts of peace and security. It is not, therefore, an empirical examination of where or when there is peace or how to obtain it. It is important to emphasize that this is not a paper that answers the question 'what is peace?' Although a proposal of how CSS theorists should contemplate peace is made, the main aim is the theoretical relationship between peace and human security and the theoretical and possible practical gains achieved by a clarification of this relationship.

Keywords: Peace; Security; Critical security studies (CSS); Human security; Civil society

Introduction

Contemporary discussions on the subject of peace usually explore the blurring boundaries between war and peace, and the implications for understanding security. Three factors can be identified as responsible for the changing worldviews on this subject. First, was the changing nature of warfare, including theories of asymmetric warfare and terrorism. The second relates to the obscure aspects of international relations, from assassinations to psychological warfare, operating in the grey area between war and peace. With large-scale conventional warfare increasingly unlikely in the twenty-first century, the third section considers 'new' security issues in peacetime such as extreme poverty and disease [1].

In a speech in 2003, Vidar Helgesen, former Norwegian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, explained the foundations of the trend in international peace and security discourses in the post-Cold War era towards the policy of engagement as follows:

During the Cold War…peacemaking efforts in the third world was seen largely as the work of "do-gooders" in far-away places. This has changed. Security has become globalized. We, meaning we in the West, no longer have the luxury of pretending that we can carry on with our life and uphold our values regardless of what the rest of the world is doing. This was made abundantly clear to us all on 11 September 2001. The terrorist attacks on the epicentres of economic and military power were organized from mountain caves in one of the world's poorest and most conflict-ridden countries. The lesson we should draw is that trying to resolve conflicts and addressing security threats in far-away places is in our own interest as well as being humanitarian imperative (2003: 1).

The twenty-first century did not start peacefully, and rather disappointingly, most scholars of international law and relations, peace studies and diplomacy, among other interrelated disciplines, have yet to comprehend or explain the undercurrents of contemporary conflicts, much less address their foundations. This paper explores the notion of peace and its nexus with the concept of human security in the context of the increasing phenomenon of globalisation and the marked rise of multilateralism. Its entry point lies in the theoretical frameworks of peace, critical security studies and human security. The paper contends that there is a specific sense in which critical security studies (CSS) needs to comprehend peace theory, and that this understanding is inevitably allied with the broader idea of human security. Admittedly, the paper is a theoretical investigation of the concepts of peace and security and is thus not an empirical examination of models of peace or its sustenance. These aspects must be located elsewhere.

Conceptualisations of Peace

For starters, although the concept of peace was central to the early inquiries of international relations, yet, in the Cold War era, it was pushed to the margins of the discipline. The ubiquitous optimism that the end of the Cold War would generate a pacific period in global political history has not been fulfilled. Instead, this period has seen numerous conflicts, previously suppressed by the Communist regime, confrontation with the Eastern Bloc, insurgencies in Africa, political upheavals in the Middle East and the fear of nuclear war [2]. Now, more than ever, peace research is required. Whereas in the past, work focused on armament and disarmament, rapprochement and arms control, the central topic of research these days covers a broader range of subjects, including the conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East and Asia, the hazards of nationalism, the complications of European integration, the blowout of weapons of mass destruction, environmental conflicts, the

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destitution of large areas of the world, and terrorism. Peace research aims to set forth proposals for how the causes of conflict can be recognized as early as possible, how violence can be prevented and how political control can be put in place for solving the conflict. Peace research thus plays a major role in answering vexed questions, and the proposals are used by stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels [3].

While the notion of peace as a state or outcome is rife in much of the literature, what has not gained much currency is the conceptualisation of peace as a process [4]. McKnight [5], Lederach [6] and Kerr, Sprenger and Symington [7], had recognized that several resources – planning, funds, technological equipment, collaboration of multiple actors, including governments, business and the civil society, among others – all form the social, economic and cultural resources required for the making and building of peace in any society.

One other key aspect of peace theory and remained rather obscure but now beckoning for attention is the feminist approach – the women dimension to peace and conflict in any milieu. The literature is now replete with ample recognition of the role of women as objects and subjects of conflicts, and as veritable harbingers of peace and social progress [8-10].

The Oxford Dictionary [11] defines peace as 'freedom from noise or anxiety', or 'freedom from or the ending of war'. Peace is thus commonly understood as the absence of physical war, fear, violence and conflict [3]. Theories of international relations have contrived a recipe for peacebuilding (i.e., to avoid war). Peace is derivative and something to be pursued. The meaning of peace is passed to the common sense to derive its meaning by juxtaposing peace with war, violence, conflict, security, fear, danger and so on. Concurrently, the definition of war, violence, security and danger casts us back to the term 'peace' because none of them have a neutral meaning.

Banks attempted a tripartite rendition of the concept of peace in international conflict resolution – as conflict management; as order; and as justice. However, this rendition only served to illustrate shortcomings in the theorisation of each of these concepts which largely remain today, despite some landmark works [12].

Assefa [13] defines 'peace' as involving three broad elements: the transformation of destructive conflictual interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships; reconciliation, leading to healthy, mature, spiritual, ecological, social, and personal relationships of interdependence; and justice. Lederach considers peace a dynamic social construct; a social process best illustrated using the metaphor of a well-built house. The process addresses simultaneously the structural issues (leaders and substantive issues), nature of relationships, and a supportive infrastructure. According to him, building peace is like building a house, using 'the full array of processes, approaches, and stages to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships' [6]. The construction attends to the quality and type of leaders at all levels, considers the substantive conflict issues in the context of their broader settings, the resources required to undertake activities, and the way all these elements are coordinated. Conflict is inevitable and is rooted in relationships.

Assefa agrees with Lederach on the central role of relationships and reconciliation in conceptualising war and peace. Peace involves restructuring relationships that promote war so that they advance peace instead. They also acknowledge the spiritual aspects of reconciliation.

The concept of 'peacebuilding' first appeared in 1970s through the effort of Johan Galtung who called for the formation of peacebuilding arrangements to stimulate sustainable peace by addressing the 'root causes' of violent conflict and supporting local capacities for peace management and conflict resolution [2,14]. Ever since, the concept has assumed multidimensional application and tasks ranging from the disarming of belligerent factions to the rebuilding of political, economic, judicial and civil society institutions.

The United Nations (UN)'s 'post-conflict peacebuilding' emerged in the middle of a rebirth of liberal internationalist ideals in the global community in the aftermath of the Cold War. Security can be considered its expansive cousin, sharing the epistemological and ontological roots of 'peace', and being hugely influential in its own right, informing international commitment with post-Soviet and post-colonial states. This nexus among conflict, peacebuilding, democratisation, security and development is obvious in the literature [12,15].

Peacebuilding became a familiar concept within the UN following Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, which defined peacebuilding as action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict. Former UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, was summative in a 1993 speech:

Without peace there can be no development and there can be no democracy. Without development, the basis for democracy will be lacking and societies will tend to fall into conflict. And without democracy, no sustainable development will occur; without such development, peace cannot long be maintained.

The 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (also known as the Brahimi Report) defined peacebuilding as 'activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war' [16].

In 2007, the UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee agreed on the following conceptual basis for peacebuilding to inform UN practice:

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives [17].

Viewed in this light, peacebuilding manuscripts echo the all-inclusive prism of this approach and have served to broaden its application across dimensions (from security to psycho-social) and deployments. Much of this literature is itself located within the liberal conflict management tradition, and most clearly exhibited today in the work of several scholars on the democratic peace 'between' states as well as peacebuilding 'within' them [12,18].

Overall, conflict transformation and other emancipatory peace approaches illustrate the complexity involved in conceptualising war and peace by stressing the multidimensional aspect of peace involving numerous other concepts in dynamic relations. It is not enough for war and peace to be defined either in terms of rational incentives or preferences of men and women nor in terms of state or human security. A pragmatic description of peace calls for more comprehensive and inclusive terms that address social justice, relationships, citizenship, gender relations and identity, cultural identity, self-worth, spiritual renewal, human agency, reconciliation, forgiveness, sharing, truth and

healing, as well as politics. Realist and liberal approaches are unable to account for this, yet they do offer policy solutions that are often criticized for reproducing the very problem they seek to address [19,20]. Little wonder that the 2012 UN Secretary-General's report noted that successful peacebuilding processes must be transformative, creating space for a wider set of actors – including women, youth, marginalized groups, civil society, and the private sector – to participate in national post-conflict decision-making.

The diversity of opinions on peace theories signals the need to transcend narrow definitions of 'peace' as connoting the absence of war. Achieving 'positive' peace must therefore include focusing on holistic views of human security, which project beyond the narrow political arena, to include the social and economic well-being of people. This would include: social justice; the protection of national assets such as the environment; distributive justice; strategies and policies to ameliorate conditions of poverty; and the establishment of institutions that shield people from personal violence and fear. For most people, this implies demilitarisation, disarmament and a deep guarantee of respecting people's dignity [21].

Role of CSS in the Reconceptualisation of Peace

Whereas Robert Cox brought critical theory into the study of international relations, Ken Booth can be said to be the pioneer in bringing critical theory into the sub-discipline of security studies, thus launching what has been called critical security studies (CSS). In his seminal article 'Security and emancipation', published in 1991, Booth criticizes the traditional approach to security associated with the intellectual hegemony of realism. In doing this he brings in the concept of emancipation to security studies, thus saying that.

In the study of world politics, emphasizing emancipation is one way to help loosen the grip of the neo-realist tradition…The tradition of critical theory is helpful in this regard; its most important potential contribution in the present state of the subject lies in recapturing the idea that politics is open-ended and based in ethics…the next stage of thinking about security in world affairs should be marked by moving it out of its almost exclusively realist framework into the critical philosophical camp [22].

CSS has emerged both through and in response to the 'broadening and deepening' of the study of global security in the post-Cold War era. While it is not an articulate, integrated corpus of scholarship, CSS encapsulates an incongruent body of scholarship (e.g., postmodernism, critical race feminism, critical theory, critical legal studies, post-colonialism, constructivism, cosmopolitanism, etc.) that share similar critiques of orthodox security studies. The end of the Cold War signalled an opening in the intellectual field of security studies through which a growing body of scholars disillusioned by the politics of the Cold War sought to challenge the assumptions underpinning dominant discursive understandings of what security means. These challenges stemmed from critical interpretations of the territorially-bounded sovereign state and critical challenges to orthodox claims that state sovereignty equals security [23].

In classifying the notion of security as an essentially disputed concept, Steve Smith recognizes that the concept was not very contested until the late 1980s [24]. It was not until the Welsh School (notably Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones), the Copenhagen School (led by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever), the Frankfurt School (championed by Pilar Bilgin) and the appearance of critical thoughts that was later to be labelled CSS, that the concept of security came under examination. Prior to that period, the theoretical domination of neo-realism had ruled security studies. Correlative to this is the fact that the name 'security studies' is relatively new as it was originally called 'strategy studies', thus revealing its proneness towards military security of the state [25].

The prominence of emancipatory politics in defining the critical approach to security studies leads to a reconceptualisation of security itself. In hoisting emancipation as a political goal for security studies, the demands on what security connotes naturally assumes a different meaning. In remembering Robert Cox's famous statement that 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose' [26], CSS can make the statement that security is always for someone and for some purpose. This statement opens up the concept of security for critical consideration, and further answers it positively in identifying for who security is and what purpose it should have. A concept such as security is not – as realists and positivists would put it – neutral concepts. To appreciate this is thus simultaneously to appreciate that there exists no neutral ground, from where to perceive the objective meaning of security.

The contemporary debate about the concept of security is primarily concerned with how, and whether or not, to broaden and deepen the traditional view of security, which concerns issues of military diplomacy and military security. Stephen Walt, one of the protagonists of a traditional conception of security says that security studies is about ...the study of the threat, use, and control of military force...[and that]... it explores the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war [27].

The main reason for CSS to be against this conception of security is partly because such a narrow conception has troubles distinguishing other threats towards the state than pure military threats, but also because it neglects threats towards other areas that should be of concern, such as human rights violations, social injustice, environmental degradation and economic deprivation [28]. Consequently, CSS's emphasis on the emancipation of human beings paves the way to viewing the individual as the decimal object of security rather than the state, which has been the view of traditional security studies. To change the decimal of security from the state to the individual is not only to broaden the concept of security, but also to deepen it. To broaden the concept is to recognize new threats to the old sphere of state security, but to deepen the concept is to recognize that a threat against other areas, particularly individual human beings, also is part of the security concept.

Where then lies the place of CSS within this inquiry into the reconceptualisation of peace?

It is often mistakenly assumed that it is possible to create an island of security for the elite in a society that is threatened by crises and contradictions, such as high unemployment, hunger, diseases, extreme poverty, among others. State elites often get too concerned about law and order, equating it with security, and thus resort to building more prisons, investing more in policing, physically segregating themselves from the people, making more stringent regulations, just to secure themselves. The society created by such interventions not only lives in a state of siege and mutual distrust, which itself is a condition of insecurity, but is highly prone to violent explosions that could threaten the survival of states right to their very foundations.

CSS comprehends security as an integrated concept, not just at the level of values and interests but also at the level of social classes and

geopolitics. The security of the individual human being is intertwined with the security of the society itself. In this context, security involves the establishment of a stable, orderly, and developed society in which the basic needs for human life and livelihood are guaranteed. Among these are education, housing, health, rule of law, equitable distribution of resources, civil and political freedoms, including the right to participation in public affairs [29].

The move towards CSS from scholars examining peace, security and development from a political economy standpoint makes sense inasmuch as human security not only becomes the guiding principle of foreign policy thrusts in the post-Cold War world, but also broadens and deepens security to address an array of issues that find resonance in the already established scholarship. In the world of the post-Cold War era, CSS offers itself as a veritable bridge between security and development and has accentuated an important set of issues in peace scholarship. This is the juncture where CSS makes its entry point in the human security dimension to the building, making and sustenance of peace.

Human Security as a Vector of Peace

Since the end of the Second World War (WWII) in 1945, four fundamental ideas have traditionally driven UN responses to the challenges of war and armed conflict, namely, replacing war and conflict with the rule of law and negotiations; using preventive diplomacy by the Secretary-General and others to forestall armed conflicts; linking measures of disarmament to development in order to diminish the structural causes of war and conflict; and interposing international buffer and observer forces to keep the peace. To these must be added two further ideas that emerged during the last two decades, namely, the responsibility to protect individuals when their own governments are manifestly unwilling or unable to do so; and human security that shifts security concerns away from exclusive preoccupation with military protection of states toward the safety and empowerment of individuals [30,29].

The sixth major contribution of the UN in the area of peace and security is the development of the concept of human security, perhaps the most radical shift in thinking on peace and the avoidance of conflict since the UN was founded [30]. The notion of human security was first presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Human Development Report 1994:

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation states than to people (22-24).

This report argued for the need for new thinking – for a concept of human security focused on the protection of people from a variety of threats to their life and dignity. The concept was in large measure the intellectual creation of Mahbub ul Haq and the UNDP Human Development Report team. The human security concept presented by the UNDP projected seven categories of threats that affect various spheres of action: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

This later idea of security constituted a radical critique of the failure of states to provide for the good of populations and attempted to reformulate security to focus on the rights and needs of people rather than the preservation of states. Indeed, in this context, the UNDP's 'human security' discourse articulated a foundational conception of the good regarding security absent from most normatively driven accounts of security. It is worth noting here that in terms of articulating an ethical vision, theorists working in the CSS project have largely ignored the meaning of foundational claims of the 'good' and instead concentrated on what constitutes progress, usually defined in terms of expanding the discourse. This is even true of so-called Welsh School approaches.

Human security also reflected the new possibilities and priorities that emerged with the end of the Cold War, which had produced a decreased in East-West tensions but a rapid proliferation of small arms, increasing divisions based on ethnicity and identity, and a growing salience of civil wars.

The new ideas of human security were neither without debate nor is there a universal definition. Despite this, within a decade, the human security concept became central to the review of security issues within the UN and within the reports of several UN-related commissions [4].

MacFarlane and Khong [30] argued for a narrow conception of human security that retains human beings as the centre but confines what constitutes security threats to conscious threats against physical integrity that are planned and perpetrated by states, individuals, or groups that aim to do harm to people. This perspective enables human security to establish links with mainstream security discourse.

What MacFarlane and Khong as well as the multiple UN agencies promoting the lexicon of human security often omit is that the essence of human security discuss implicates emancipation which is inexorably at the core of CSS. In adopting critical theory to security studies, Ken Booth, defined emancipation as the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on (1991: 319).

Does a broader approach to security – such as canvased by Booth and the army of CSS scholars – involve more than simply rechristening other problems as issues of human security?

It is argued that illiteracy, extreme poverty, homelessness and infectious diseases threaten many people directly, but they also provide a luxuriant breeding ground for other threats, including civil conflict. Even people in wealthy countries will be more secure if their governments assist poorer countries to reverse poverty, ignorance and disease by meeting the ends of human security.

It is indeed important to note that the UN has also adopted the broader approach canvassed here. Its agencies recognize the interconnected actions required to deal with these multiple causes, prevent them from arising, and control them when they do [29]. This will, for instance, require broader approaches when making budgetary allocations and the need for considering trade-offs: how much is being spent on military approaches to security compared to spending on non-military actions, such as police expenditures to control urban crime or public health measures to control diseases and epidemics [23,30]. The argument for taking account of such broader interactions and consequences seems overwhelming. However, the specifics and trade-offs of meeting human security goals need to be analysed in specific terms, especially at the country level. This should be the thrust of debates, planning and action in the world of the twenty-first century – anchored on the collaboration of states and the civil society.

The advocacy in this paper has not been about the critical theory's definition of 'peace' or 'security' per se. Rather, the underpinning

concern here is with the evolutionary concept of human security and the analysis of whether or not this concept of security can satisfy the criteria for the creation of scenarios of positive peace, and therefore be seen as a concept that the school of CSS – and the civil society – should endorse and vigorously advance. Viewed from the prism of CSS therefore, human security presents itself as a tool for advocating and achieving peace and security as envisaged by the UN.

Conclusions

The cacophony of the multidimensional theories of and approaches considered here indicates that there is no singular pathway to peace but rather requires a combination of interrelated vectors towards achieving the ends of peace and its sustainability in any society.

The underpinning thrust of this paper is that established, traditional, state-centric approaches to 'peace' have to be transcended in a 'post-globalisation' era characterized by a set of 'new' global issues and by a range of non-state actors who are increasingly influential, even authoritative. Such a 'paradigm shift' presents particular analytic and policy challenges, but also opportunities, for developed and developing countries, erstwhile 'middle powers', with relevance to their state and non-state – civil society and corporate – actors alike. At the core of the new thinking for sustainable peace in the world of the twenty-first century lies the trajectory of human security, as canvassed in this paper.

Far from being an *ex cathedra* pronouncement on all the dynamics that should inform our understanding of peace and security in the twenty-first century world, this paper would have served its purpose if it stimulates further intellectual inquiry.

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