Week 1 Abstracts

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UN: Global Issues

The author first outlines the structures and mechanisms through which the UN tries to keep the peace between nations. The Security Council is the primary organ for this, working in conjunction with the Secretariat of the UN. UNSC resolutions sanction peacekeeping operations, ceasefire directives, economic sanctions, and so on. The General Assembly can also vote on resolutions regarding security matters, although the UNSC's P5 can veto them if they wish. The Secretary-General itself can rely on its position as an impartial mediator to bring military crises to the attention of either body.

The UN pursues two strategies to prevent disputes from devolving into armed conflict: preventative diplomacy and disarmament. Chief among the obligations that member-states have is the Responsibility to Protect peoples from genocide and mass atrocities; this principle is foundational to the UN Genocide Convention of 1948. Where diplomacy and disarmament fail, peacekeepers are deployed to enforce the directives of the UNSC and General Assembly. Peacekeeping missions have visited conflict regions around the world since 1945, although they are rarely deployed to politically polarising conflicts. Increasingly, peacekeepers have participated in intra-State conflicts rather than those between states. These missions often incorporate humanitarian goals.

Peacebuilding refers to the post-conflict process by which future violence can be averted, rather than merely ending hostilities, going home, and waiting for fighting to resume. This involves creating sustainable governing institutions, apportioning responsibility for conflicts, and promoting reconciliation between aggrieved parties. In 2005, the UN Peacebuilding Commission was established. As part of building peace through good governance, the Deputy Secretary-General chairs the Rule of Law Coordination & Resource Group, which has as its task the promotion of the rule of international law.

Among the many missions of UN security organs, Demining is an important operation which the UN Mine Action Service undertakes in conflict regions and post-conflict areas. The use of landmines is already subject to the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which has expanded in scope to a comprehensive global agreement.

Women and children are often disproportionately harmed and killed in war. The dangers they face are unique and distinct from male combatants, and their plight is often sidelined in formal peace processes. By the same token, prioritising the needs of women and children can lead to more sustainable peace.

Lastly, the UN seeks to prevent the militarisation of outer space, and maintains an Office for Outer Space to promote peaceful use of outer space and aerospace technology.

Houston, *Peace Concepts, Disputes, & Confusions*

Peace is a loaded word, and students of political violence and peace disaggregate the concept for clarity. Houston begins by linking "Direct Violence" and "Negative Peace;" direct violence is further stratified into macro-, meso-, and micro-violence, which helps us understand the differences between collective violence and interpersonal violence. Borrowing directly from Dr. Martin Luther King, a negative peace is simply the absence of violence. Einstein's corollary is that a positive peace is the presence of justice, and

it is this principle that forms the basis of peacebuilding. Recently, some have optimistically that direct violence is declining, although Houston cautions that this is largely a shift from macro-scale to smaller scale.

Houston moves on to indirect violence, which is harm inflicted through less visible means. Adopting Galtung's dichotomy between *structural* and *cultural* violence, he illustrates how the superstructures of society and polities can inflict harm without conscious effort exerted overtly. The harm remains unseen until it grows to great to ignore, or those injured are forced to seek remedy by direct violence as a last resort. Cultural violence reinforces and justifies structural violence. Lastly, ecological activists claim that violence against the natural world constitutes a form of indirect violence, as it undermines the base upon which people can live in harmonious and free relation with one another.

Crews remarks that peace studies often settle for analysing negative peace and direct violence as their subject because indirect violence and positive peace is a much more elusive concept, despite being eminently more important for *preventing* harm in the long-term. Even though this conclusion has been widely recognised for centuries, many refuse to take meaningful action to reform themselves and their societies to pursue positive peace to its end. Boulding concedes that the study of positive peace entailed far too much work to be analytically useful, especially when negative peace can be achieved more swiftly. Houston suggests that both arms of peace – negative and positive – can act in concert to create the conditions to realise one another simultaneously.

Sadly, the approach of "peace through superior firepower" continues to guide policy-makers around the world, not to establish peace per se but to accomplish political goals. However, Houston observes that deterrence logic served the material interests of the US and the Soviet Union ill during the negative peace of the Cold War, which killed millions and created instruments of structural violence which survive to this day. Additionally, as the UN piece discussed, the proliferation of arms meant that any conflicts would be more lethally efficient, despite their number declining over time.

Ehrenreich demonstrated that war and war-mindset expand over time and space; the First World War was regarded as the "war to end all wars" but still inaugurated a century that saw a tide of bloodshed on an unprecedented scale for truly stupid reasons. National identities are often wrapped up in preoccupation with military pre-eminence, and strength is often equated with the use of force rather than restraint. The line between patriotic militarism and fascistic rhetoric often blurs. Peace studies emphasise that lasting peace cannot be accomplished through force alone.

Houston offers Post-Apartheid South Africa as an example of peacebuilding through reconciliation and forgiveness rather than retribution. In Desmond Tutu's recollection, offering a path towards forgiveness served the interest of all by legitimising the newly inaugurated state in the eyes of most, if not all, of SA society. The Truth & Reconciliation Commission has been a successful example which many policy-makers and diplomats try to emulate.

Diehl, *Peace: A Conceptual Survey*

Diehl provides a survey of the state of peace research in 2019. Theories of positive peace are comparatively underdeveloped because the operationalised measurement of the concept are more difficult to capture empirically. At different levels of analysis, peace may be more prevalent than at others, further complicating the study of how violences on different scales can interact.

Realist theory of IR centres violent conflict as the traditional arena of competition for power. This is not to say that realists don't believe in peace or pursuing it as worthy end, but as the oldest school of political theory, peace theory is already comparatively underdeveloped. Diehl divides the concept into

system-level and internal-level, from the birds-eye perspective of international relations. Then, he considers Goertz's discussion as peace as a binary dichotomy or spectrum of conditions; Goertz emphasises that focusing on the middle of the spectrum can offer fruitful results, whereas a binary would preclude that, methodologically. Additionally, students of peace must consider the multiple attributes of peace which can be either binary or continuous, forming a multidimensional framework for analysis. Lastly, it is easy to presume that War and Peace, as diametric opposites, are causally downstream of similar (if not the same) variables; this assumption may not be valid.

Negative peace is widely understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition for positive peace. Recently, the concept has expanded to include the absence of so-called 'cyber-warfare' and of sexual violence. This genus of peace is often qualified with 'stable' or 'sustainable', qualifiers which limit the discursive horizons. Both are desirable qualities but extraordinarily difficult to quantify without the benefit of hindsight. An additional challenge is that negative peaces as a set are quite heterogeneous, running the gamut from Canada and the US's amicable relationship to the Korean DMZ. Nevertheless there exist indices such as the GPI which are useful but come with their own methodological limitations.

Moving on to positive peace, Galtung's main focus was the absence of structural violence. Diehl notes that this concept is defined by its opposites as well, namely the absence of something (not just war, but also injustice) and is empirically unwieldy. If one were to add normative concepts of what a *just* world would be, then that necessarily comes from the standpoint of the researchers and may not be held valid in societies that consider themselves liberated in part from structural violence. In inter-state relations, Kant's writings have underpinned notions of liberal peace. Aside from him, several other authors have also ideated upon the framework of justice and peace, usually with a top-down approach. By contrast, the Everyday Peace Project takes a bottom-up approach, preferring to feel out the concept rather than speculate. The GPI also has a Positive Peace Index which correlates with the negative-based GPI.

Diehl highlights Goertz et alia's peace scale as a promising conceptualisation. It allows for study of extreme cases of the continuum as well as parsing the aforementioned 'grey-zone' of negative peaces. He also discusses "quality peace" as another promising alternative, emphasising *predictability, dignity, and security*. Joshi and Wallensteen furthered their concept by adding *Economic Reconstruction, reconciliation, good governance, and civil society* to better understand post-conflict peaces. The Davenport Peace Scale attempted to operationalise quality peace.

Diehl next unveils how concepts of peace are embedded in grand theories of international relations. Realism, unsurprisingly, exclusively focuses on negative peace, writing off positive peace as historical accidents and fleeting balance of power formations. Conflict somewhere is always presumed. Liberalism leaves room for positive-sum outcomes which might resemble something like positive peace, especially between democratic states (but only occasionally between liberal states and illiberal ones). Again, the blind spot of liberalism is its willful refusal to acknowledge the structural violence of free markets within economies. Furthermore, the conditions of a "rules based international order" can be satisfied with a merely negative peace which permits theft of surplus labour value across borders. Critical theory, with its emphasis on exploitation and alienation, comes closer to envisioning a utopian peace without structural violence, but the majority of the literature is (unsurpisingly) focused on critiquing other theories of IR and nobody can agree on what kind of utopia is possible or desirable – typical leftist infighting. Suffice to say that the main schools of IR theory are "wedded" to negative peace.

The study of war is ancient, and the empirical study of war has received plenty of attention. The study of peace usually focuses on one aspect of positive peace at a time, bootstrapping the state of the literature towards a more comprehensive theory. Thus our understanding of peace on its own terms is comparatively underdeveloped. He concludes by saying that we ought to distinguish between inter-

state and intra-state peace and reëxamine the causal relationships between what we implicitly assume are dependent and independent variables in the peacebuilding dynamic.

Kühn, *The Peace Prefix*