Editorial

To modify a famous sentence by Hobbes: In times of war, life is nasty, brutish and short. By contrast, a peaceful world order would allow today's youth as well as future generations to unlock their potential and thrive. The value of military spending globally has grown steadily in past years, reaching 2.44 trillion US dollars in 2023. In a peaceful world, more financial resources could be invested in areas such as education, health care, and poverty and climate change reduction. The gigantic financial resources needed to maintain and modernise nuclear arsenals would become completely unnecessary.

So how can mankind achieve such a state of long-term peace? The key to answering this question is understanding the root causes of war. Some scholars begin by arguing that war is hardwired into our brains and that war will thus always exist. But others contest this notion with vigour. For example, anthropologists report that about 70 tribal societies beyond so-called 'civilisation' do not know the institution of war at all. A new multi-disciplinary study by scholars Carel von Schaik, Kai Michel and Harald Meller also suggests that humans are fundamentally cooperative animals. Whereas aggression on an individual level has always been present, they suggest that in the first 99.9% of human history, organised warfare between groups did not exist at all. War is thus a relatively new phenomenon. So, if war is not hardwired into our genes, what does cause it?

In attempting to answer this complicated question, scholars point to a range of causes in the modern world. In the mid-twentieth century, for example, the 'balance of power' theory proposed by scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and Hans Morgenthau became popular. This theory suggests that states form alliances and wage war to maintain an equilibrium of power and to stop other states gaining political hegemony over the global system. Empirical research also suggests that democracies very rarely go to war with each other, indicating that war is connected to the forms of governance employed. In terms of civil wars, scholars have pointed to the construction and instrumentalisation of identity around ethnicity and religion, resource scarcity, population growth, economic inequality, and political marginalisation as key drivers of conflict.

Very soon, climate change may well have to be added to this list of conflict drivers. Recent research by the World Bank shows that climate change and extreme weather conditions increase both the intensity and likelihood of civil and interstate conflict. Additionally, in 2015 the University of California reviewed findings from 55 studies, observing that each one-degree Celsius rise in temperature is associated with an 11.3% increase in civil conflicts. The United States Institute for Peace has also emphasised that the growth of urban populations due to the climate-induced displacement will lead to more instances of localised violence and marginalisation. Other researchers do paint a less dire picture, though. Steven Pinker, for example, has argued that violence has declined significantly in the past few decades, during which time climate change was already well underway.

International cooperation is urgently required to address crises for peacekeeping initiatives, including the effects of climate change. And yet, the role of international organisations such as the UN remains controversial for some people. The need for international cooperation was originally enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations on 26 June 1945, which starts with the words "we the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind". The Charter was formulated after the Second World War and was seen by many as a crucial step towards global governance and an enshrinement of peace as an international goal. As Michael Haiden argued in the IGJR 1/2024, UN humanitarian interventions can play a crucial role in securing peace, both for their proximate benefits, but also for their ability to promote a norm of global solidarity.

However, some activists and scholars also criticise the role of the UN as a peacekeeping organisation. They list the war in Ukraine, humanitarian disasters and conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, and the Somali civil war as examples of the UN's failures. Others criticise the patriarchal approach that the UN takes to conflicts in the so-called Global South, citing the need for regionally led and context-specific peacekeeping and aid initiatives.

The question of how to achieve long-term global peace remains complex, but it is an issue of urgent importance for present and future generations. Despite critiques of international organisations, global cooperation and solidarity will surely be vital in achieving this goal.

In the first article of this issue, Augustine Akah and Brian Chaggu offer a theoretical analysis of the causes and dynamics of contemporary conflicts, paying particular attention to conflicts that have the potential to escalate into nuclear wars. The authors compare liberal Western approaches to peacebuilding with traditional approaches from the Global South. Finally, they offer three global priorities for building long-term peace, highlighting the central role to be played by the United Nations in future peacekeeping missions.

Following this, Lukas Kiemele's article explores two conditions for establishing 'positive peace': protection from environmental crises and retribution for historical injustice. He argues that there is a close relationship between colonialism and environmental crises, noting that climate change, climate migration, and resource scarcity increases the likelihood of armed conflict. Arguably, so writes Kiemele, historical colonial injustices continue to be perpetuated today, as it is the formerly colonised nations that have contributed least to the climate disaster but bear the greatest burdens of ecological collapse.

There follow two book reviews. The first book review interrogates issues related to peacekeeping, as Gordon Hertel dissects *The Path to Zero: Dialogues on Nuclear Dangers* (2012) by Richard Falk und David Krieger. Following this, Grace Clover reviews Juliana Bidadanure's *Justice Across Ages: Treating Young and Old as Equals* (2021).

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