Intergenerational Justice Review

Issue topic:

Long-term peacekeeping (I)

Table of Contents

Editors of the IGJR

Wars and violent conflicts have devastating consequences for society. They result in loss of life and health, destroy communities and infrastructure, disrupt social progress, and often leave long-lasting trauma. Peace is not only a fundamental human need for all people in the present but also a key factor for the long-term wellbeing and development of future generations. But can humanity achieve something that seems almost unprecedented in its 300,000-year history – namely resolve conflicts without violence?

This question is of existential importance in the nuclear age. However, the answer to this question also depends on what is meant by 'peace'. Here, the common distinction between an absence of armed conflict (negative peace) and cooperation, trust, and even friendship between countries (positive peace) comes to mind. Yet, this classification does not grasp the full meaning of 'peace'. In addition to its relevance to inter-state relationships, the concept of 'peace' can also be applied to collectives, such as believers of a certain creed, ethnic groups, or politico-cultural factions within a single state that fight, for instance, 'culture wars'. Along with all these interpersonal forms of 'peace', it is also commonplace to speak of 'peace of mind' within a person (meaning e.g. tranquillity, compassion, self-control, moderation, forgiveness), which might be both a precursor for and a result of peaceful inter-state relationships. Last but not least, we should not forget 'peace with nature'.

While such a conceptual map of 'peace' might be inspirational, we should not try to achieve everything at once, but instead focus on the biggest threat: human annihilation. The possession of nuclear weapons gives humanity, for the first time in history, the means to bring about its own extinction. While the global number of nuclear warheads has been declining since the 1980s, the nuclear-armed states (USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea) have been modernising their arsenals. The war in Ukraine rages on and Russia uses its nuclear missiles as an ever-intensifying threat. Israel is at war with Hezbollah, an organisation that is backed by Iran, which itself has an interest in nuclear weaponry. And the conflict between China and the West over the quasi-independence of Taiwan could be ignited by a spark at any time. The doctrine of deterrence which prevented the use of nuclear weapons through the Cold War seems to be obsolete in the twenty-first century. At that time, only two nuclear superpowers (the US and the Soviet Union) had to coordinate their mutual deterrence but the world today is much more complex. According to the Doomsday Clock, the first nuclear war is more likely today than ever before. Research on existential risks to humanity assumes a relatively high probability of large-scale use of nuclear weapons, within the lifetime of a child born today. As we can learn from the conceptual distinctions and real-life examples above, long-term peace requires a minimum of global justice, mutual respect, and good will for the future. This brings us to the root causes of (inter-state) war. Since Immanuel Kant, a thesis has developed, which suggests that non-democratic, authoritarian (in Kant's words: despotic) governments are much more likely to start wars than democracies. Other scholars have noted that nationalism and national sovereignty are key causes for war. In this vein, one school of thought (represented by scholars such as Bertrand Russel and Albert Einstein) has proposed that a world government would ensure peace. The world government would have sole authority over armed forces but the principle of subsidiarity (graded competence) would apply. This would be comparable to the coexistence of the federal level in the US and its 50 States. Another more recent school of thought argues that national governments should be done away with completely, allowing for the rule of the individuals (backed by new communication and cooperations technologies).

A world government does seem utopian, at least for the next few decades. But is it really? For a peace theorist of the nineteenth century, eighty years of peace between the major countries of western Europe would have sounded utopian too. And yet, the European Union received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for this very reason. In the Nobel Lecture in Oslo, the then-president Barroso disclosed the secret of the European way from war to peace: binding shared economic interests very tightly and emphasising commonalities without eliminating cultural plurality. But as national identities regain power and membership of the EU is challenged, the last word has not been spoken about Europe's peace project.

In the first article of this issue, Michael Haiden addresses a divisive aspect of the United Nation's remit: humanitarian interventions. Influenced by the constructivist school of international relations, he argues that humanitarian interventions have the potential not only to save lives in the short term, but also to promote the value of global solidarity. If reformed and improved, he argues, they can weaken the norm of national sovereignty and thus realise a necessary condition for lasting peace.

The second article also argues for the importance of an international community and critiques the norm of national sovereignty. In comparison to Haiden, however, Ibrahim Khan takes a more critical view of the UN, arguing for the elimination of the veto power within the UN Security Council and for renewed disarmament efforts. He advocates for a non-hierarchical and inclusive system of global governance which integrates grassroots voices from the so-called Global South. In doing so, he builds upon the political theory of Indian scholars such as Rabindranath Tagore and Radhabinod Pal, who conceptualised a distinction between meaningful peace and an absence of war, long before Johan Galtung in the 1960s.

Finally, the IGJR 1/2024 concludes with two book reviews. The first book review continues the theme of peacekeeping, as Gordon Hertel scrutinises Andrew Fiala and Jennifer Kling's printed dialogue *Can War Be Justified? A Debate* (2023). The second review deals with intergenerational issues more generally as Helena Weinbrenner appraises Axel Gosseries' new monograph *What is Intergenerational Justice?* (2023).

Jörg Tremmel, Editor
Grace Clover, Co-Editor
Lena Winzer, Co-Editor
Markus Rutsche, Book Review Editor

Can humanitarian interventions help create global peace? Common practices, normative change and the end of nationalism

By Michael Haiden

Humanitarian interventions are an established practice in international relations, even though their proximate effects remain disputed. Some evidence suggests that they save lives and shorten hostilities, whereas other works in the literature call this into question. Instead of discussing these proximate effects, however, this essay focuses on their effects on long-term peacekeeping. Arguing that repeated practice changes norms and values in international politics, and that these affect how international relations are conducted, I outline how humanitarian interventions can promote values that are conducive to global peace. The practice of humanitarian intervention can foster ideas of global solidarity and weaken the support for national sovereignty. Both of these developments may help us overcome the current system of independent nation-states, which, as I will show, currently allows and even promotes wars. However, humanitarian interventions are currently carried out in the wrong way and do not fulfil their potential. This essay shows how they can be improved and become an important step towards achieving global peace.

Keywords: *humanitarian intervention; Constructivism; global peace; cosmopolitanism; national sovereignty*

Introduction

In 1915, during the First World War, Bertrand Russell wrote that "[t]he question whether war is ever justified, and if so under what circumstances, is one which has been forcing itself upon the attention of all thoughtful men" (Russell 1915: 127). The question certainly occupied him. Russell spent decades arguing that to avoid international conflict, humanity needed a world state with control over all means of warfare (Russell 1916: 65-67, 79). About a hundred years later, Jürgen Habermas argued that a sustainable peace would not be created through a world state, but through international law. Habermas thought that international law had to be 'constitutionalised' or made enforceable by a global organisation if we want lasting peace on earth (Habermas 2014). A global reform that would put an end to the system of sovereign nation-states remains a popular idea for achieving sustainable peace. The underlying belief is that independent nations will inevitably wage war sooner or later, and thus for peace to emerge, we must overcome nationalism. In this Russell (see Greenspan 1996) and Habermas (2014) agree. Today, pacifist literature identifies nationalism and national sovereignty as two key causes of warfare (Ryan 2013; 2023).

The purpose of this essay is to examine a path towards sustainable global peace, and it does so by seeking ways to overcome nationalism. My chosen method will be the practice of humanitarian intervention. In humanitarian interventions, states deploy armed forces to stop atrocities committed in other nations, to end civil wars, to create safe environments for humanitarian aid, and to rebuild infrastructure after a conflict. However, these are proximate effects of humanitarian interventions. By contrast, my essay examines their ultimate effects – more precisely, it analyses how humanitarian interventions can foster a sustainable global peace in the long term.

I claim that humanitarian interventions can be an important tool to end nationalism. That is because they do two things: they strengthen a norm of global solidarity and weaken the idea of inalienable national sovereignty. However, they do not achieve this automatically. In fact, humanitarian interventions may currently do the opposite. To fulfil their potential, the practice of humanitarian intervention must change.

I choose humanitarian interventions because they have already revealed their potential to change international relations. States have repeatedly used humanitarian interventions to protect foreign civilians, and every time this occurs the norm that such interventions are legitimate is strengthened. This means that humanitarian interventions have the benefit of being an established practice in international politics. Since it is likely that states will use them again in the future, those interested in creating a sustainable peace should try to use them to promote this goal.

> Humanitarian interventions can be an important tool to end nationalism. They strengthen a norm of global solidarity and weaken the idea of inalienable national sovereignty. However, they do not achieve this automatically. In fact, humanitarian interventions may currently do the opposite. To fulfil their potential, the practice of humanitarian intervention must change.

This essay is thus not a comprehensive account of global peace, but an examination of the potential that humanitarian interventions, as an already existing practice, can have. Such an examination is not the answer to all questions about war and peace. But it illuminates one possible step toward a peaceful world.

The next section will outline why global solidarity and the end of sovereignty are important. Following that, I examine how humanitarian interventions can facilitate these normative changes. Lastly, I show why humanitarian interventions currently fall short of changing norms, and what can be done to change that.

What is sustainable global peace?

Before delving into how humanitarian interventions may foster a 'sustainable global peace', I should outline how I am defining this term. It seems obvious that a sustainable global peace should fulfil some goals beyond an absence of armed hostilities between states. Firstly, it should not only mean an absence of inter-state war, but also of intra-state violence, such as civil wars, insurgencies, or government-orchestrated genocide. Thus, for instance, refusing to back Ukraine in its current struggle against Russia is not automatically a peaceful position, if we have reason to suspect that the Ukrainian population would suffer under the Russian regime or that the population may continue an insurgency against their oppressors.

Secondly, sustainable peace should not be crafted through the threat of violence alone. For example, we should not aim for a situation whereby a powerful dictatorship suppresses conflicts worldwide. While such a situation might be preferable to anarchy and constant warfare, it should not be the ultimate vision. Similarly, a balance of power between nations could theoretically be peaceful, but remain fragile, since a shift in this balance could lead to war. A sustainable peace would abolish the causes of peace – not just suppress or temporarily disarm them.

Thirdly, peace should reduce all potential threats to life as much as possible. This especially includes the nuclear stalemate. While one might argue that nuclear weapons have made the world more peaceful, they have also made it more dangerous.[1] Sustainable peace should reduce these kinds of risks, for example, by improving inter-state relations such that nuclear threats between nations become obsolete.

One might summarise the above conditions by suggesting that a global peace would be considered sustainable if all (or at least most) parties are satisfied with the current order. 'Sustainable global peace' describes a world in which there would be no reasons for states to go to war; not because they are prevented by external forces, but because they truly see no sense in it. In addition, we would want a peace that is built upon liberal ideas, not enforced by an iron fist.

An illustrative example may be the peace between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) during the Cold War, contrasted with the current peace between Germany and France. In the former example, there were no direct hostilities between the two superpowers – and they suppressed conflicts among their allies – but one could hardly call this a sustainable peace. While the US and the USSR did not wage a direct war against each other, they funded local conflicts, intervened to have foreign governments replaced, and reached dangerous levels of nuclear brinkmanship – such as during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

> 'Sustainable global peace' describes a world in which there would be no reasons for states to go to war; not because they are prevented by external forces, but because they truly see no sense in it.

In the case of Germany and France, neither country must be coerced to abstain from war with each other, nor is there bellicose rhetoric between them. While war remained a constant prospect between the superpowers during the Cold War, it seems difficult to even imagine conflict between Germany and France today. Peace between them has been internalised to a great degree. Germany and France coexist peacefully because their identities changed from being enemies to close allies.

This is a far more desirable goal. After all, today's safest societies are not safe because the police constantly arrest criminals. They are safe because norms and material conditions have changed significantly, so that most people do not commit crimes – and do not seriously consider committing one. In a similar vein, sustainable peace would mean that the thought of warfare would arise only rarely, if at all.

The reduction of inter-state war after the Second World War was a clear sign of progress. And so would be replacing all imperialist autocratic leaders with more restrained dictators. But such a development would be insufficient. We can acknowledge that the world has made progress towards peace while arguing that it is inadequate long term.

There are multiple possible paths towards the sustainable peace described above. One would be a democratic peace – based upon the assumption that democracies do not fight wars against each other (Doyle 2005) – another would be a world government. The first approach implies that if all nations were democratic, none would fight wars against each other. The second approach outlines a global reform in which nations either join a global government or where international law is 'constitutionalised' and thus enforceable – the ideas of Russell and Habermas respectively. My essay will deal with this second approach, albeit in a broad sense. I do not argue for a centralised world state or stronger international law specifically – both have their advantages and drawbacks. I only claim that for sustainable peace, we must transcend the system of sovereign nations.

States already cooperate and join supranational institutions to solve many of the world's issues, such as climate change, economic globalisation or international terrorism (Cabrera 2010). But norms of nationalism and sovereignty continue to prevail. Today, states join international institutions, but are far away from transcending the system of independent states. While some institutions, such as the EU, lower the sovereignty of their individual members, member-states can always leave.

Nation-states joining supranational agreements is certainly desirable, but truly overcoming nationalism goes beyond this. It might, for example, entail the creation of a supranational political community, in which people extend the moral concern they feel for co-nationals to everyone. As we have seen, some pacifist writers argue that world peace can only emerge once nationalism is overcome (Ryan 2013; 2023). But even many non-pacifist scholars of international relations argue that the world must replace the system of nation-states if we wish to avoid recurrent war, as the nation state fosters moral tribalism (Scheuerman 2011: 49). This tribalism can turn into indifference to the suffering of others or even a desire to harm them (Linklater 2002; Nash 2003).

> Global peace may require the creation of a cosmopolitan community – although not necessarily a world government. For my purposes, I agree with the notion that nationalism makes moral distinctions between members of the nation and foreigners. This does not necessarily lead to outright hostility, but does create a feeling that one's own co-nationals are deserving of greater moral concern than foreigners.

By contrast, there is evidence that communal feelings between different groups can foster peaceful relations (Fry 2012). The promotion of inclusive identities would inspire people to recognise the rights and equality of all humans, not just members of their in-group (Fry / Miklikowska 2012: 239). Evidence suggests that there is a correlation between people who see themselves as global citizens and those who readily endorse pacifist values (Reysen / Katzarska-Miller 2017), and scholars note that a key variable in sustainable peace is re-configuring identities to be more inclusive (Hagg / Kagwanja 2007).

Put simply, critics of nationalism highlight that the nation inhibits people from extending full moral concern to others. Global peace may then require the creation of a cosmopolitan community – although not necessarily a world government. For my purposes, I agree with the notion that nationalism makes moral distinctions between members of the nation and foreigners. This does not necessarily lead to outright hostility, but does create a feeling that one's own co-nationals are deserving of greater moral concern than foreigners.

To achieve a sustainable global peace, I propose that we must strengthen global solidarity and weaken national sovereignty. By global solidarity, I mean that that citizens no longer prioritise the interests of their co-nationals over the interests of others. By weakening national sovereignty, I mean that the world must weaken the normative importance of non-interference. Those two norms are central building blocks of nationalism and changing them could be a vital step in transcending the system of independent nations.

As is often the case in international relations theory, my argument relies on deductive reasoning, but also on induction. To build the premises of my argument, I must rely on observations from the social sphere – where one cannot guarantee that past insights carry into the present or the future. Conditions which could foster a sustainable peace may be so complex that stable insights about them remain impossible (Boulding 1963). I cannot form a definitive, universal law about peace, nor can I create an unambiguous path towards it. What a theorist of international politics must do is to build certain assumptions based on observations and then deductively follow them to their logical conclusion (Blagden 2016). For example, one explanation of the democratic peace argues that democracies do not fight wars against each other because wars against democracies are highly unpopular. This is partially dependent on observations – such as experiments suggesting that people perceive democracies as less threatening and are more reluctant to endorse offensive actions against them (Tomz / Weeks 2013). Deduction then connects this insight with democratic peace – namely, that since democratic politicians care about public opinion, they will avoid unpopular wars against other democracies.

This method may not be foolproof. In fact, an issue with international relations theory – and other social sciences – is that they are unable to create closed systems of causality. In other words, it is difficult to isolate causal factors. Rather, social sciences examine open systems, where many effects work at the same time and may counteract each other (Wight 2006: 51-52). Events thus remain open to a wide array of explanations. This affects, again, the democratic peace. While evidence suggests democracies do not fight other democracies, the causality remains disputed. For instance, it may be the case that democracies do not fight because most of them are allied with each other, such as through NATO or the EU (Rosato 2003).[2]

Any outline for a sustainable global peace relying on the methods of international relations theory is open to the same problems. However, there is hardly an alternative. The methods of international relations theory can still create important explanations. There are plausible reasons for why humanitarian interventions can foster global peace, supported both by inductive insights and deductive reasoning – which I will present shortly.

Put simply, I will rely primarily on qualitative methods of observation and deduction to outline a path towards sustainable peace. The exact contents of my theoretical assumptions will be explored in the next section, in which I will argue that humanitarian interventions can change our ideas about global solidarity and national sovereignty.

Humanitarian interventions: what they are and what they can(not) achieve

Humanitarian interventions are a popular topic in the literature on international relations. The concept is not clearly defined, and different thinkers and practitioners use the term in varying ways.

However, the term usually refers to military operations by a country (or multiple countries) in the territory of another state, with the aim of protecting civilians, creating favourable conditions for humanitarian aid, removing governments, or state-building. This happens without the consent of the state where the intervention is occurring. The interventions are based on moral principles, rather than national interests – at least, the governments which carry them out argue that they are. Be that as it may, an underlying principle is that human beings have equal moral value and a right to protection – while in turn, states that violate human rights can have their sovereignty violated (Archibugi 2004; Pape 2012).

In the last decades, the UN Security Council has endorsed various resolutions for interventions, such as in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Iraq, and Haiti (Lillich 1997). But even without UN authorisation, states have undertaken humanitarian interventions, such as in Kosovo or Libya (Pape 2012). After NATO intervened without UN approval in Kosovo in 1999 – because the Security Council was divided – supranational authorisation became less important in justifying interventions. This was further emphasised when the Security Council did not act during the Rwandan genocide – and no state had an interest to intervene – leading to nearly a million deaths (Heinze 2006). In response to a Security Council that regularly became gridlocked, humanitarian interventions undertaken without legal backing became more accepted (Sterio 2014).

Discussions about humanitarian interventions often focus on their proximate effects. In these, opponents and supporters of humanitarian intervention are divided about two key questions: do humanitarian interventions achieve what they set out to do, and is their moral foundation – the 'responsibility to protect' – a permissible stance?

Regarding the first question, there is an active discussion about whether humanitarian interventions protect civilians or shorten conflicts. Some literature asserts that interventions can do a lot of good, especially under UN-auspices (Walter / Howard / Fortna 2021) and when tied to mediation (Clayton / Dorussen 2022). Specific instances, like the NATO-led intervention in Libya, are cited as successful examples of humanitarian intervention, because the no-fly zone established as well as the airstrikes conducted by intervening states successfully protected civilians and helped rebels overthrow the country's de facto leader. A verdict by two military commanders reads that NATO's intervention

"saved tens of thousands of lives from almost certain destruction. It conducted an air campaign of unparalleled precision, which, although not perfect, greatly minimized collateral damage. It enabled the Libyan opposition to overthrow one of the world's longest-ruling dictators. And it accomplished all of this without a single allied casualty and at a cost – $1.1 billion for the United States and several billion dollars overall – that was a fraction of that spent on previous interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq" (Daalder / Stavridis 2012: 3).

By contrast, critical assessments of the Libya intervention point out that NATO prolonged the conflict – leading to more civilian deaths – and damaged regional stability. This conclusion may also be applied to other interventions, such as the Syrian civil war. An argument behind this verdict is that intervening nations tend to demonise the regimes they attack, to the extent that they later face domestic pressures to avoid negotiation with them. Thus, intervening nations call for regime change, which causes the sitting regime to fight for its survival (Kuperman 2013).

A second debate regards a norm which governs humanitarian interventions. That is, a "norm that calls on the international community to intervene when governments fail to safeguard their own civilians" (Daalder / Stavridis 2012: 3). This norm arose in the early 1990s, with interventions in Iraq, Bosnia, and Somalia, and even more prominently in 1999 after NATO's Kosovo intervention. That this intervention was not legitimised by the UN inspired a debate about the moral and legal justifications of humanitarian interventions. As a result, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty was formed by the Canadian government and the UN, and tasked with establishing rules for further interventions. In 2001, it declared the existence of a 'responsibility to protect'. In 2005 the UN General Assembly emphasised the responsibility of nations to protect their own citizens, and the duty of the international community to assist those efforts. Crucially, however, this duty required UN authorisation to be carried out (Heinze 2006; Kuperman 2013). In 2009, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined that this responsibility required nations to protect their own populations, and that the international community had a duty to assist them in doing so. This referred mostly to non-violent assistance; however, he also acknowledged the option of armed intervention as a last resort (Paris 2014).

> Pacifists argue that in focusing on armed intervention in the case of humanitarian emergencies, one fails to interrogate whether atrocities could have been prevented in the first place. Conflict scenarios requiring intervention, however, do not arise out of nowhere, but from complex historical forces and values. Pacifists suggest that we should try to change these forces and values in a way that makes interventions unnecessary.

In contrast to those who seek to legitimise humanitarian interventions, pacifists worry that such measures not only make war permissible, but also make it morally necessary. In addition, they argue that in focusing on armed intervention in the case of humanitarian emergencies, one fails to interrogate whether atrocities could have been prevented in the first place. Humanitarian interventions deal with adequate responses to emergencies, but not with ways to avoid them (Dexter 2019). Conflict scenarios requiring intervention, however, do not arise out of nowhere, but from complex historical forces and values. Pacifists suggest that we should try to change these forces and values in a way that makes interventions unnecessary (Fiala / Kling 2023: 17).

Furthermore, humanitarian interventions may not have humanitarian motives. For example, India's intervention into East Pakistan during the Bangladesh war of 1971 helped put an end to Pakistan's oppression of Bengalis, but India's justification was to prevent refugees from reaching India. Their normative causes may even be a guise for other motives. For instance, after not finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the former President Bush's government used humanitarian justifications to defend its invasion. Before that, the US used humanitarian concerns to legitimise their use of military force in Central America during the Cold War (Heinze 2006). More recently, the Russian government framed the occupation of Crimea, the support of separatists in the Donbas, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine through a humanitarian lens, in an attempt to legitimise their actions (Sauer 2023). States can perform such rhetorical tricks because the norms behind humanitarian interventions are vague (Heinze 2006). Supporters of the responsibility to protect are thus confronted with potential

misuse of the concept – but also with the critique that humanitarian intervention is a modern form of imperialism through which Western states influence former colonies (Crossley 2018).

That humanitarian interventions can be misused – and in fact, currently are – will be an important point in the next section. However, since I focus on ultimate effects, my concern will not be that the norm of humanitarian intervention may justify a specific invasion, but that their current practice solidifies norms that are detrimental to long-term peace. Thus, even if they are carried out for explicitly humanitarian reasons, interventions right now are not doing enough to change norms of global solidarity and national sovereignty.

To some extent, this approach tackles the pacifist criticism of humanitarian interventions. Instead of pondering if nations should intervene or not in a specific instance, I analyse how to create a world in which interventions are no longer necessary. In which, perhaps, armed action would become entirely unnecessary. After all, the goal of sustainable global peace should not be to solve individual crises with violence, but to ensure that these crises do not emerge (Fiala 2016).

My analysis of international politics – and my proposal that humanitarian interventions can improve it – is underlined by certain theoretical presuppositions. To examine if humanitarian interventions can change political affairs, I employ a 'Constructivist' analysis of international relations.[3] 'Constructivism' argues that, as the name suggests, international politics is constructed through norms, values, ideas, or common practices. While other IR theories such as 'Realism' assume that there is a rigid national interest, Constructivists argue that the interests of states are shaped by norms and values. As Wendt (1992) put it: "Anarchy is what states make of it".

Constructivists argue that how two states see each other, how they see themselves, and how they interpret their own international reputation affects their behaviour. All of this is subject to change. States can also have multiple identities at once, such as when the United States sees itself as a 'great power', a liberal democracy, and member of the West simultaneously (Hopf 1998). The norms derived from such identities create standards of behaviour and define rights and obligations, as well as the goals and purposes of states (Björkdahl 2002). For instance, having the identity of a 'great power' creates different obligations for the United States in different contexts. For Estonia, it would mean that the United States has a special duty to defend Estonia as a fellow liberal democracy. By contrast, for Russia or China it could mean that a liberal great power should exercise restraint and not impose its values onto others. Importantly, this must not mean that Constructivism makes prescriptive statements. While it is concerned with norms and values, it examines them from an empirical point of view – asking how norms and values affect the reality of international relations, not how they should (Barkin 2010: 79).

> Constructivists argue that how two states see each other, how they see themselves, and how they interpret their own international reputation affects their behaviour. All of this is subject to change. States can also have multiple identities at once, such as when the United States sees itself as a 'great power', a liberal democracy, and member of the West simultaneously. The norms derived from such identities create standards of behaviour and define rights and obligations, as well as the goals and purposes of states.

Constructivists note that norms or identities must not be the direct cause of state action, but that they constrain or enable choices (Brunnée / Toope 2012: 124). It may be too much to say that the United States' identity as a liberal power directly causes its relationship with Estonia. However, its identity constraints how it can behave with regards to Estonia. Likewise, the Soviet Union was constrained by its identity as a Marxist-Leninist country, and this identity made it difficult for former President Gorbachev to enact liberal economic policies (Frost 1996: 61-63). Norms, values and identities thus affect the chances of war or peace between nations. For example, an often-cited cause of war is the 'security dilemma'. It describes how states cannot be sure of their counterparts' intentions and thus, if a state acquires weapons for defensive reasons, another state could interpret this as preparation of an attack and might consider a preventive strike. However, this situation is socially constructed. It relies on an "intersubjective understandings in which states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions about each others' intentions, and as a result define their interests in self-help terms". By contrast, states could also live in a "security community", which is "composed of shared knowledge in which states trust one another to resolve disputes without war" (Wendt 1995: 73). In the latter case, the risk of war is much lower.

Constructivists thus recognise that ideas and material factors both matter. Material power determines which nations can be called a great power, but ideas and common practices determine how we perceive great powers and which expectations we have for them (Hopf 1998). It appears uncontroversial that ideas and norms construct international politics to some degree, and various scholars take the study of norms seriously (Björkdahl 2002). Even 'Realists' in international relations theory, arguing that states are primarily motived by power, would agree that state-behaviour must take norms and values into account. For instance, states should be aware of the norm prohibiting the use nuclear weapons and that a use of these weapons would get them internationally shunned (Barkin 2010: 56).

Its focus on norms, values. and identities makes Constructivism a useful lens for studying transformations in international politics, especially in the constitution of actors, institutions, and social structures (Brunnée / Toope 2012: 121; Burai / Hoffmann 2020: 169). In the case of the Cold War, for example, Constructivists can point out that the conflict ended because identities changed. For decades, the Soviet Union based its identity on the Leninist theory of imperialism, arguing that relations between capitalist and socialist states are defined by inevitable conflict. However, in the 1980s, this identity stated to crumble, paving the way for better relations with the West (Wendt 1992).

> Humanitarian interventions strengthen the idea of global solidarity because they are explicitly justified by the notion that all people deserve the same protection from atrocities. Moreover, humanitarian interventions weaken national sovereignty, because they defend foreign populations, even if the state they live in forbids any incursion into its internal affairs. They elevate the right of equal protection above the norm of non-interference.

Another presupposition here is that these norms and values can be changed or solidified if they demonstrably affect how states behave – a concept which is broadly accepted by Constructivist scholars (Björkdahl 2002; Brunnèe / Toope 2012: 123-124; Burai

/ Hoffmann 2020: 174). In regularly behaving in a certain way, states can change how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves. This process is also acknowledged in pacifist literature (Hutchings 2018; Thaler 2019). For example, by consistently honouring their alliances, even if this carries negative consequences, states form their own identity as a trusted ally. And if many states repeatedly honour their alliances, the norm that they ought to honour them grows stronger.

Having established this perspective, we can now understand the contribution that humanitarian interventions could make towards world peace. Put simply, humanitarian interventions can support beneficial norms and weaken detrimental ones. As identified in the last section, a key step towards sustainable peace may be transcending nationalism – by strengthening global solidarity and weakening national sovereignty. A Constructivist analysis, focused on practice, can demonstrate whether, and in what ways, humanitarian interventions might promote this goal.

I argue that humanitarian interventions can facilitate normative change through two processes. Firstly, humanitarian interventions strengthen the idea of global solidarity because they are explicitly justified by the notion that all people deserve the same protection from atrocities. States must ensure this protection, even if it incurs costs for them or risks the lives of their armed forces. Thus, simply carrying out a humanitarian intervention perpetuates the idea of global solidarity. Secondly, humanitarian interventions weaken national sovereignty, because they defend foreign populations, even if the state they live in forbids any incursion into its internal affairs. In other words, they elevate the right of equal protection above the norm of non-interference. Through these paths, humanitarian interventions can lay the foundation for overcoming the system of independent nation-states – and thereby help create a more peaceful world.

However, interventions are currently not doing enough to change norms of global solidarity and national sovereignty. In the next section, we will see why that is the case and how this might be improved.

Changing global norms

It seems plausible that humanitarian interventions can change international conduct. By using a Constructivist lens, we see that international politics relies on socially constructed norms, identities, and behaviours. The question is: How can humanitarian interventions bring about norms that will overcome nationalism in the long run?

I argue that they can do that by emphasising certain norms over others, through the way the practice of humanitarian intervention is carried out. For instance, every time two national leaders meet to discuss issues instead of declaring war, they support the norm of peaceful conflict-resolution. They do that solely by behaving in this specific way, not another. In a similar vein, every humanitarian intervention, successful for not, fosters the norm that every human being deserves protection from war or repressive governments – even if said government disagrees.

As a result, humanitarian interventions can promote global solidarity and weaken the idea of national sovereignty. They prioritise individual human rights over sovereignty and territorial integrity (Fiala / Kling 2023: 94). This must not necessarily go so far as to abolish nations, but it should foster a norm that every human deserves moral consideration, and that this consideration trumps national sovereignty.

Unfortunately, the way that humanitarian interventions are carried out today has the opposite effect, weakening global solidarity

and strengthening national sovereignty. The reason for this comes down to smaller practices during interventions.

Let us look at global solidarity first. If we examine past interventions, we see that despite rhetorical commitments to universal rights, Western governments placed different values on their own soldiers' lives compared to people that they set out to protect. This can be seen in the methods they employed: intervening governments regularly used air strikes, which protect soldiers to the detriment of civilians. Intervening states recognised that they had a responsibility to protect, but employed methods they would never have used to defend their own populations – one can hardly imagine a Western country air striking its own territory (Archibugi 2004; Heinze 2006). NATO's Libya intervention was praised for low material costs and no casualties on the side of the invading forces. These are not bad things, but states would not discuss material costs in this way if their own population were involved, nor would they necessarily protect armed personnel while accepting civilian casualties.

In short, there are different standards when it comes to protecting foreigners and a nation's own citizens. When firefighters died to save American citizens during the 9/11 attack, their sacrifice was honoured, but it was also considered an unquestionable success if a few firefighters died, and in doing so saved more civilians. By contrast, in a humanitarian intervention, a dead soldier on the intervening side might be seen as a greater tragedy than their failure to protect hundreds of foreign civilians.

This is not to say that more dead soldiers on the side of the intervening states would be a good outcome – that would be an absurd conclusion. And an intervention predominantly using air strikes may have proximate benefits. It may even perpetuate good norms – such as that states have *some* obligations to protect foreigners. However, this practice perpetuates the norm that intervening nations have weaker obligations towards foreign civilians than to their own populations and military services. This undercuts the idea of true global solidarity.

Secondly, humanitarian interventions should erode the idea of national sovereignty. However, they currently do this to an insufficient degree. In fact, as they are currently conducted, humanitarian interventions perpetuate a harmful contradiction. They weaken the sovereignty of states facing interventions but reinforce it for those that carrying them out. Western nations show that they can disrespect the sovereignty of others but would forbid even softer interference in their own affairs (Archibugi 2004). For example, the United States has a history of foreign intervention but is itself not a member of the International Criminal Court and reserves itself the right to military action should one of its citizens be tried in The Hague.

States thus uphold two norms that are mutually inconsistent: universal human rights and non-intervention in internal affairs (Krasner 2001). Intervening nations seem to be flexible about which norm trumps the other. Under the banner of humanitarian intervention, Western states weaken the sovereignty of others, but not their own. It then comes as no surprise that nations facing intervention highlight contradictions in the practice (Archibugi 2004). Some western thinkers spot the same problem. Jürgen Habermas, for example, has noted that in the interventions in Kosovo and Iraq, the US and UK established their own right to intervene in other nations whenever they wanted – a kind of liberal nationalism (Habermas 2002).

In this sense, humanitarian interventions currently weaken ideas of sovereignty in one part of the globe, but strengthen it in others. For this contradiction to be resolved, we need a universal standard for all states. It should not be common practice that some states can decide to violate the sovereignty of others, whilst allowing no interference in their own affairs. Unfortunately, failures by the Security Council have shown that there is a trade-off between gathering international support for an intervention and acting before atrocities are carried out. As the world grows more multipolar, reaching consensus may become even more difficult. Thus, an attempt to weaken sovereignty for all and rely on more consensus-building might come to the detriment of citizens that interventions seek to protect.

> States uphold two norms that are mutually inconsistent: universal human rights and non-intervention in internal affairs. Intervening nations seem to be flexible about which norm trumps the other. Under the banner of humanitarian intervention, Western states weaken the sovereignty of others, but not their own.

Fortunately, Western governments can do other things to remedy the contradiction. They could, for example, submit more to international authorities – such as the United States joining the International Criminal Court. This would signal an acceptance of supranational oversight – at least to a greater degree than now. If Western politicians were to be tried in The Hague, it would promote the idea that their nation's sovereignty is just as conditional on good behaviour as that of other states. It does not seem to be too strict a condition, that a nation which reserves itself the right to invade other nations should accept the relatively mild constraint of the International Criminal Court. Through such gradual steps, the world's most powerful nations can weaken the norm of sovereignty – for everyone, including themselves.

However, this should not go too far. Multilateral consensus might also mean communication and collaboration with nations that have shown no concern for universal human rights. This affects the practice of humanitarian intervention itself. For example, China has been trying to soften the emphasis on human rights in UN peacekeeping missions (Karlsrud 2023). Gathering broad consensus for an intervention could thus require weakening the commitment to universal human rights. It may erode the idea of sovereignty, but also negatively affect the idea of global solidarity, which should include a notion of universal human rights.

Liberal-democratic states thus face a trade-off. They should resolve the contradiction regarding their own national sovereignty versus that of others, but must also be cautious when reaching agreements with illiberal states. Western nations allowing more interference into their affairs could pave the way for autocratic influence – which cannot be the goal. One can criticise the United States for interfering in other nations while allowing no interference into their own affairs, but this would not be improved by states like Russia, China or Iran suddenly intervening into the affairs of the US – for example through binding decisions in international bodies.

Western nations are the main proponents of foreign intervention on explicitly humanitarian grounds, but this does not mean they are infallible or that they necessarily always act out of good motives. The reasonable position would be to criticise the practice of liberal-democratic nations whenever applicable, while barring autocratic influences through the guise of multilateralism.

To sum up, intervening states must change their practices if interventions are to be used to help the world overcome the system of

independent nation states. They must be willing to afford foreign civilians the same protection as their citizens – even if that means danger for their own soldiers. Moreover, they must be willing to weaken their own sovereignty to a greater extent than they currently do – while avoiding submission to illiberal influences. These changes alone might not create a sustainable peace order, but they can be part of a broader transformation towards global solidarity.

> Liberal-democratic states face a trade-off. They should resolve the contradiction regarding their own national sovereignty versus that of others, but must also be cautious when reaching agreements with illiberal states. Western nations allowing more interference into their affairs could pave the way for autocratic influence – which cannot be the goal.

Nonetheless, we might find that this whole project is misguided. Perhaps an end of nationalism would not achieve global peace. Perhaps it would only lead to different kinds of wars. Or perhaps nothing would change at all. However, this should not stop one from trying. After all, since humanitarian interventions are already a part of international conduct, it seems reasonable to try and leverage them for the creation of a more sustainable peace. This is an important goal – especially in a world where technology has made war increasingly destructive.

Conclusion

Securing peace is a difficult task – maybe the most difficult of all. For such a complex objective, there will not be one single solution. Wars emerge from a complicated network of institutions, norms, and actions, and it will take multiple approaches and a lot of time to resolve it. Maybe nothing can fully abolish wars. Nonetheless, the most reasonable course is to try it, even if we fail repeatedly.

This essay has examined a small portion of the debate on global peace. I analysed how humanitarian interventions may be conducive to peace by fostering the norm of global solidarity and weakening the norm of national sovereignty. Since humanitarian interventions are already an accepted practice – although regularly misused – it seems logical that we use them to improve international politics as best as we can. Continued practice of humanitarian intervention, done in a way that emphasises the notion that all people deserve the same moral consideration, and that national sovereignty is trumped by this right, might lead the world towards a more peaceful order. If repeated often enough, humanitarian interventions could foster a world order that is less marked by nationalism, and where humans treat members of other communities as moral equals. It might not be the complete solution to the problem of war. But it represents an important step.

References

Archibugi, Daniele (2004): Cosmopolitan Guidelines for Humanitarian Intervention. In: Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, 29 (1), 1-21.

Barkin, Samuel (2010): Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Björkdahl, Annika (2002): Norms in International Relations: Some Conceptual and Methodological Reflections. In: Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 15 (1), 9-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570220126216.

Blagden, David (2016): Induction and Deduction in International Relations: Squaring the Circle Between Theory and Evidence. In: International Studies Review, 18 (2), 195-213.

Boulding, Kenneth E. (1963): Is Peace Researchable? In: Background, 6 (4), 70-77.

Brunnée, Jutta / Toope, Stephen J. (2012): Constructivism and International Law. In: Dunoff, Jeffrey L / Pollack, Mark A. (eds.): Interdisciplinary Perspectives on International Law and International Relations: The State of Art. 1st edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 119-145.

Burai, Erna / Hoffmann, Stephanie C. (2020): Constructivism and Peaceful Change. In: Paul, T. V. / Larson, Deborah Welch / Trinkunas, Harold A. et al. (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations. 1st edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 169-190. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190097356.013.10.

Cabrera, Luis (2010): World Government: Renewed Debate, Persistent Challenges. In: European Journal of International Relations, 16 (3), 511-530.

Carson, Thomas L. (1988): 'Perpetual Peace': What Kant Should Have Said. In: Social Theory and Practice, 14 (2), 173-214.

Chan, Sewell (18 Sep. 2017): Stanislav Petrov, Soviet Officer Who Helped Avert Nuclear War, Is Dead at 77. In: The New York Times, (19), 14.

Clayton, Govinda / Dorussen, Han (2022): The Effectiveness of Mediation and Peacekeeping for Ending Conflict. In: Journal of Peace Research, 59 (2), 150-165. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343321990076.

Craig, Campbell (2003): Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz. New York: Columbia University Press.

Crossley, Noele (2018): Is R2P Still Controversial? Continuity and Change in the Debate on 'Humanitarian Intervention.' In: Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 31 (5), 415-436. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2018.1516196.

Daalder, Ivo H. / Stavridis, James G. (2012): NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention. In: Foreign Affairs, 91 (2), 2-7.

Dexter, Helen (2019): Pacifism and the Problem of Protecting Others. In: International Politics, 56 (2), 243-258.

Doyle, Michael W. (2005): Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace. In: American Political Science Review, 99 (3), 463-466.

Fiala, Andrew / Kling, Jennifer (2023): Can War Be Justified?: A Debate. New York/London: Routledge.

Fiala, Andrew (2016): Transformative Pacifism in Theory and Practice: Gandhi, Buber and the Dream of a Great and Lasting Peace. In: Dialogue and Universalism, 4 (1), 133-148.

Frost, Mervyn (1996): Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fry, Douglas P. (2012): Life Without War. In: Science, 336 (879), 879-884.

Fry, Douglas P. / Miklikowska, Marta (2012): Culture of Peace. In: Coleman, Peter T. / Deutsch, Morton (eds.): Psychological Components of Sustainable Peace. New York: Springer, 227-243.

Greenspan, Louis (1996): Bertrand Russell and the End of Nationalism. In: Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 26 (3), 348-368.

Habermas, Jürgen (2014): Plea for a Constitutionalization of International Law. In: Philosophy and Social Criticism, 40 (1), 5-12. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/0191453713514838.

Habermas, Jürgen (2002): Letter to America. In: The Nation. https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/letter-america-0/. Viewed 4 September 2024.

Hagg, Gerard / Kagwanja, Peter (2007): Identity and Peace: Reconfiguring Conflict Resolution in Africa. In: African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 7 (2), 9-35.

Hasenclever, Andreas / Weiffen, Brigitte (2006): International Institutions Are the Key: A New Perspective on the Democratic Peace. In: Review of International Studies, 32 (4), 563-585.

Heinze, Eric A. (2006): Humanitarian Intervention and the War in Iraq: Norms, Discourse, and State Practice. In: The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters, 36 (1), 20-34. https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2291.

Hopf, Ted (1998): The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory. In: International Security, 23 (1), 171-200.

Hutchings, Kimberly (2019): From Just War Theory to Ethico-Political Pacifism. In: Critical Studies on Security, 7 (3), 191-198.

Hutchings, Kimberly (2018): Pacifism Is Dirty: Towards an Ethico-Political Defence. In: Critical Studies on Security, 6 (2), 176-192.

Karlsrud, John (2023): 'Pragmatic Peacekeeping' in Practice: Exit Liberal Peacekeeping, Enter UN Support Missions? In: Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 17 (3), 258-272. https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2023.2198285.

Kinsella, David (2005): No Rest for the Democratic Peace. In: American Political Science Review, 99 (3), 453-457.

Krasner, Stephen D. (2001): Rethinking the Sovereign State Model. In: Review of International Studies, 27 (5), 17-42. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210501008014.

Kuperman, Alan J. (2013): A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign. In: International Security, 38 (1), 105-136. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00126.

Lillich, Richard B. (1997): Kant and the Current Debate Over Humanitarian Intervention. In: Florida State University Journal of Transnational Law & Policy, 6 (3), 397-404.

Linklater, Andrew (2002): Cosmopolitan Political Communities in International Relations. In: International Relations, 16 (1), 135-150.

Nash, Kate (2003): Cosmopolitan Community: Why Does It Feel so Right? In: Constellations, 10 (4), 506-518.

Pape, Robert A. (2012): When Duty Calls: A Pragmatic Standard of Humanitarian Intervention. In: International Security, 37 (1), 41-80.

Paris, Roland (2014): The 'Responsibility to Protect' and the Structural Problems of Preventive Humanitarian Intervention. In: International Peacekeeping, 21 (5), 569-603. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2014.963322.

Reysen, Stephen / Katzarska-Miller, Iva (2017): Superordinate and Subgroup Identities as Predictors of Peace and Conflict: The Unique Content of Global Citizenship Identity. In: Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 23 (4), 405-415.

Rosato, Sebastian (2003): The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory. In: American Political Science Review, 97 (4), 585-602.

Russell, Bertrand (1916): Principles of Social Reconstruction. London: George Allen and Unwin LTD.

Russell, Betrand (1915): The Ethics of War. In: The International Journal of Ethics, 25 (2), 127-142.

Ryan, Cheyney (2023): Why Pacifism Now? In: Journal of Pacifism and Nonviolence, 1 (1), 65-75.

Ryan, Cheyney (2013): Pacifism, Just War and Self-Defense. In: Philosophia, 41 (4), 977-1005.

Sauer, Pjotr (23 Aug. 2023): Putin Defends Invasion of Ukraine in Brics Summit Address. In: The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/23/putin-defend-russian-invasion-ukraine-brics-summit-south-africa. Viewed 2 September 2024.

Scheuerman, William E. (2011): The Realist Case for Global Reform. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sterio, Milena (2014): Humanitarian Intervention Post-Syria: A Grotian Moment. In: ILSA Journal of International and Comparative Law, 20 (2), 343-356.

Thaler, Mathias (2019): Peace as a Minor, Grounded Utopia: On Prefigurative and Testimonial Pacifism. In: Perspectives on Politics, 17 (4), 1003-1018. https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S1537592719001166.

Tomz, Michael R. / Weeks, Jessica L. P. (2013): Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace. In: American Political Science Review, 107 (4), 849-865.

Walter, Barbara F. / Howard, Lise Morje / Fortna, Page (2021): The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace. In: British Journal of Political Science, 51 (4), 1705-1722. https://doi.org/10.1017/S000712342000023X.

Wight, Colin (2006): Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wendt, Alexander (1995): Constructing International Politics. In: International Security, 20 (1), 71-81.

Wendt, Alexander (1992): Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. In: International Organization, 46 (2), 391-425.

At the time of writing, Michael Haiden was a research associate in "Moral and Social Implications of Artificial Intelligence" at the Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt. In December 2024, he will start his PhD at the University of Hohenheim, Germany. His research focuses on practical ethics, international relations and the history of ideas. He has won multiple awards for his writing, such as the 2023 Res Philosophica Essay Prize and the 2022 Bertrand Russell Student Essay Prize.

Email: Michael.Haiden@thi.de

1 During the Cold War, the world came much closer to a nuclear exchange than we might like. These incidents include the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, but also various instances where technical errors could have triggered a launch of nuclear arms (Craig 2003: 167-168.). For example, in 1983, the Soviet Lieutnant Colonel Stanislav Petrov received warning about incoming nuclear missiles from the United States, but luckily judged it to be a false alarm and did not inform his superiors about the alleged nuclear strike (Chan 2017).

2 For responses to Rosato see Doyle (2005) and Kinsella (2005). Another important question is if we can generalise current findings about democratic peace towards all nations, such as to the relations between Iran and Israel (Carson 1988).

3 I capitalise the theories of international relations ('Realism', 'Constructivism') in order to avoid confusion with other meanings of the terms. Importantly, then, 'Realism' refers specifically to the international relations theory of Realism, not to more common understandings of being a 'realist'. Put simply, a 'Realist' is someone who believes in the theoretical framework of Realism in international relations, while a 'realist' may be someone who tries to stay as close as possible to factual information in their reasoning and avoids having idealistic wishes cloud their judgment. Those may overlap, but do not have to. A 'Constructivist' can be much more of a 'realist' than a 'Realist'.

Transforming global governance: Crafting sustainable peace through Global South perspectives

By Ibrahim Khan

This essay examines the need for long-term peacekeeping to protect future generations, drawing on early twentieth-century critiques of international legal and political infrastructure, from parts of the world now commonly referred to as the Global South. It highlights foundational flaws in international organisations and legal structures that perpetuate global inequalities and conflicts. Arguing that sustainable peace requires addressing such structural inequalities and power imbalances, this essay proposes comprehensive reforms to the UN Security Council so as to encourage more representative decision-making. It also emphasises the importance of grassroots movements and disarmament efforts in achieving lasting peace. By bridging historical critiques with contemporary challenges, this analysis offers a framework for transforming global governance to create a more peaceful world for future generations.

Introduction

The world is in crisis today. Conflicts in Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, Sudan, Yemen, the Congo and elsewhere threaten populations and the infrastructures that support them. War is relentless, continuing despite popular movements, diplomatic efforts, and international courts aiming to bring it to an end. The costs of these ongoing wars are tragically high, as more instances of horrific violence come to light day by day. As United Nations (hereafter, UN) officials reported in March 2024, the number of children killed in Gaza over the four months prior to that date was greater than the number of children killed in conflicts worldwide over the past four years (United Nations 2024). The high intensity of modern warfare, enabled by large bombs and weapons which destroy life and the conditions that sustain it, threatens to destroy peace and justice for generations to come. We must urgently address this situation.

A young person born in the last decade or two would only ever have known a world at war. Throughout their life, this person would have heard of foreign invasions, emerging threats of nuclear strikes and nuclear proliferation, the rise of autonomous weapons, and intensifying superpower conflict. And these are just a few of the indicators of an increasingly unstable world. Reversing these trends is not easy. Yet this is a necessary step if we wish to ensure that future generations are not consumed by war and can inherit life-sustaining conditions. Right now, war costs countless lives each year and leads to an even a greater number of devastating injuries. It diverts large amounts of resources into the manufacturing of weapons and defence systems, at a time when the world urgently requires investment into climate change, public health, crumbling infrastructure, education access, poverty and hunger, and various other urgent crises. If the world continues along its current trajectory each of these unfolding crises will be left to develop unchecked, and war will continue to devastate populations on a large scale. A world marked by war is a world marked by every kind of harm, injustice, and neglect.

> A young person born in the last decade or two would only ever have known a world at war. Throughout their life, this person would have heard of foreign invasions, emerging threats of nuclear strikes and nuclear proliferation, the rise of autonomous weapons, and intensifying superpower conflict. And these are just a few of the indicators of an increasingly unstable world.

How, then, do we build a world that is not marked by war, and where violence is not commonplace? This question was posed repeatedly throughout the twentieth century: at the end of the First World War, and then again at the end of the Second World War. In each instance, diplomats, international lawyers, public officials, and popular leaders decided to develop an international organisation that would structure and maintain peace. In its time, the League of Nations (hereafter, 'the League'; founded in January 1920) was unprecedented in its scope and ambition. Yet it had serious flaws in how it regulated peace, including a lack of enforcement mechanisms, entanglement with European imperial interests, and a weak organisational structure. When the Second World War started, it was widely agreed that the League had failed in its mission to maintain global peace, and that an alternative organisation should take its place. When the United Nations was later founded in 1945, many of the design failures of the League were addressed, in the hope that that would allow the new organisation to maintain peace more effectively. Thus, it was ensured that prominent countries such as the United States were included as members. Indeed, official statehood was tied to membership of this new international body. Furthermore, the right to enter international conflict was limited to situations of self-defence or cases authorised by the UN Security Council. This constraint sought to prevent states from going to war after arbitration failed, as the League had permitted.

In theory, this new organisation, which structures our understanding of the laws of peace and conflict to this day, had strong mechanisms in place to ensure that peace would be the norm for future generations. The foundational Charter of the United Nations opened with the following promise to protect future generations: "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 [...]" (United Nations 1945). However, almost immediately after the new organisation's founding, the world lurched into war once again: the Cold War framed most of international history in the second half of the twentieth century. Rather than heralding a world free from war, this new era retained many elements of the early twentieth century, as fighting continued undeterred around the globe. This crisis continues unabated today, as our generation continues to be consumed by war. This lack of peace threatens to destroy any

possibility of stability and justice for years to come.

Therefore, just as the architects of the United Nations imagined a bold new organisation that would establish sustainable peace, we too must be ambitious in our imaginations. We must try to understand the challenges which face our current structures and develop strategies for addressing them. This does not necessarily mean that we must replace the UN. From a practical perspective, we should think about what substantive changes can be made to the UN and other existing international organisations, to help them succeed in their goal of maintaining peace. But we must be ambitious in these changes. It is important that we recognise that many challenges we face today are deeply embedded in the structure of our current organisations. Only by overcoming such engrained shortcomings can these organisations truly fulfil the role for which they were ostensibly designed. Thus, while it is important to remain practical, it is also important to push the limits of what is possible, for that is the only way to acquire peace.

> The foundational Charter of the United Nations opened with the following promise to protect future generations: "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".

Unlike in the case of the League of Nations, the problems facing the current international system are not immediately obvious. War is illegal under international law, other than in cases of self-defence and UN Security Council authorisation – a rule from which no UN member state is exempt. What, then, can the international community do to help bring about peace, if its highest organs and principles cannot – in their current form – prevent war?

Exploring often forgotten insights from parts of the world now commonly referred to as the Global South is one helpful avenue for diagnosing the challenges in the structure of international political and legal organisations today. Operating in the margins of dominant narratives, Global South voices have for decades developed extensive critiques of the design and function of the international legal and political apparatus. Recovering the critiques of such thinkers can thus give us invaluable insight into bringing about a sustainable peace for future generations which redresses global inequality and other root causes of conflict. Indeed, just as the contributions of thinkers from the Global South are often excluded from literature reviews or forgotten in debate, so too have the interests of the Global South been neglected in the arrangement of global power, as a few major powers continue to dominate international peacekeeping structures such as the UN Security Council.

The first section of this paper thus uses primary archival sources to recover some of these critiques. In particular, the paper focuses on early twentieth-century critiques of international organisations by thinkers from the Global South, such as the Bengali poet and social reformer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Indian civil servant N.B. Bonarjee (1901–?), and Indian jurist Radhabinod Pal (1886–1967). These thinkers all highlighted how the League or the UN created new problems in the distribution of global power through the ways they prioritised certain interventions to bring about peace. This section also considers the theme of international tribunals and courts, by revisiting early critiques of these bodies from the perspective of the Global South. Finally, this section considers debates in the UN General Assembly between the 1940s and 1970s about the definition of aggression in international law. These debates help us shine light on some of the challenges present in developing a sustainable peace.

The second section then moves from diagnosis and analysis to prescription. It asks the following questions: What can we learn from the experience of the Global South when developing specific policy proposals? What changes should be made to the international legal and political apparatus to bring about meaningful, sustainable peace? This second section offers specific policy proposals for the international level, but also national and local levels. Though ambitious, they are achievable with sufficient effort and willpower. This essay pays particular attention to the UN Security Council, as an institution which embodies many of the systemic issues identified by thinkers from the Global South. The Council's structure, with its permanent members and veto power, reflects historical power imbalances and often perpetuates rather than resolves global conflicts. By using the Security Council as a case study, this article discusses broader issues within the international legal and political infrastructure and proposes concrete reforms that address both specific institutional failings and overarching concerns raised by Global South perspectives. Thus, this essay seeks to bridge the gap between historical critiques and contemporary challenges, arguing that early critiques from the Global South remain remarkably relevant to our current geopolitical landscape. By integrating these perspectives into an analysis of present-day institutions, we can develop a comprehensive framework for reform that addresses the root causes of global instability and injustice.

> Operating in the margins of dominant narratives, Global South voices have for decades developed extensive critiques of the design and function of the international legal and political apparatus. Recovering the critiques of such thinkers can give us invaluable insight into bringing about a sustainable peace for future generations. Indeed, just as the contributions of thinkers from the Global South are often forgotten in debate, so too have the interests of the Global South been neglected in the arrangement of global power, as a few major powers continue to dominate international peacekeeping structures such as the UN Security Council.

This essay thus adopts an interdisciplinary methodological framework that combines historical analysis, political theory, and comparative analysis. It draws on archival research and primary texts from key Global South figures to recover early critiques of the League of Nations and the United Nations, situating these perspectives within their historical contexts. Through the lens of political theory, the essay then applies these historical critiques to contemporary power imbalances in international governance systems, connecting them to theoretical conceptions of peace such as Johan Galtung's distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' peace (see Galtung 1976). A comparative approach enables an examination of how these critiques have developed over time, highlighting both continuity and change in the Global South's engagement with global governance. This interdisciplinary framework – historical, theoretical, and comparative – facilitates a robust analysis of systemic flaws in international organisations. By bridging historical insights with contemporary challenges, this methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of persistent issues in global governance and informs the development of innovative solutions for achieving sustainable peace.

Ultimately, I contend that building sustainable peace requires

more than piecemeal adjustments to existing structures. Instead, we must embrace transformative changes that reorient the international legal and political infrastructure towards equality, justice, and cooperation. Only through such fundamental reforms can we hope to create a world where peace is not just an aspiration but a lasting reality for future generations. The stakes cannot be overstated. If we manage to reform the international system in this way, we can hope that our generation might one day experience peace, and that peace will become the established norm for future generations.

Insights from the Global South: lessons for building peace

Rabindranath Tagore and moving beyond a 'non-war situation'
In 1916, in the middle of the First World War, the Bengali poet and social reformer Rabindranath Tagore arrived in the United States for a lecture tour. Tagore, who had been active in the peace movement in the years prior to 1916, viewed the war as a logical outcome of the "self-interest" and "overgrown materialism" that he attributed to unchecked capitalism and nationalism (Tagore 1916: 6). Interviewed upon his arrival in New York, Tagore argued that as long as disparate groups were driven by their own self-interest and not by the interests of humanity on the whole, "peace [would be] but temporary and other clashes [were] bound to come" (Tagore 1916: 6). He suggested that for peace to truly arise, "a new readjustment of things is necessary, a new age, when the idea of nationalism will be discarded, when colonies, the storm centres of the world, will be discarded" (Tagore 1916: 6).
As Tagore scholar Kalyan Kundu puts it, peace was not merely a "non-war situation" for Tagore (Kundu 2010: 83). A simple end to active hostilities was insufficient for truly achieving peace. In a certain sense, Tagore's ideas on peace anticipated Johan Galtung's well-known categorisation of peace as either 'positive' or 'negative'. In Galtung's framework, 'negative peace' refers to the absence of direct violence or armed conflict, representing a temporary and often fragile state where immediate hostilities have ceased but underlying issues may persist. In contrast, 'positive peace' denotes the presence of social justice, equality, and harmony, addressing the root causes of conflict such as poverty, discrimination, and structural violence. Positive peace aims for sustainable, long-term peace by fostering conditions that promote wellbeing and fairness within society (see Galtung 1976). Tagore's insights into the reasons for ongoing war relate closely to – and crucially pre-date – Galtung's conceptualisation of positive peace. Tagore emphasised that peace must not be reduced to the absence of conflict and defined in such narrow terms that were bound to lead to a resurgence of conflict.
Instead, Tagore viewed spirituality, and a morality grounded in ideals of love and truth, as pillars that humanity had to maintain, so as to create a universal humanism that could overcome war. In his address some years later to the World Peace Congress, Tagore suggested that peace could come about only if the average citizen of a powerful nation would "extricate himself from the obvious anomaly of wishing for peace whilst sharing in the spoils of war" (quoted in Quayum 2017: 9). In other words, he argued powerful nations ostensibly sought peace but remained invested in an unequal and hierarchical world constructed by war, of which they were the beneficiaries. There was no notion of universal brotherhood that would overcome such divisions, or that would motivate individuals and peoples to strive for unity and equality.

It was on these grounds that Tagore was critical of the League of Nations. Writing in April 1921, soon after the founding of the League, Tagore questioned whether peace could be brought about through such an organisation: "The West is desiring the restoration of peace through a League of Powers. But can Powers find their equilibrium in themselves?" (1921: 490). Peace would only be achieved if major powers also paid attention to the concerns of the weak, "for the weak are as great a danger for the strong, as quicksands for an elephant." Tagore was sceptical that any attention would be given to his concern about global inequality: "I know I am crying in the wilderness, when I raise my voice of warning; and while the West is busy in its organisation for building its machine-made peace, it will still continue to nourish, with its iniquities, underground forces of earthquake in the vast bosom of the Eastern Continent" (1921: 491). Tagore recognised that this superficial, "machine-made" peace was a result of powerful nations preferring their safety over any kind of meaningful repair: "So long as the Powers build a League on the foundation of their desire for safety, and for securest enjoyment of gains – for consolidation of past injustice, for putting off reparation of wrongs, while their fingers still wriggle for grabbing and still reek of blood – rifts will appear in their union, and conflicts in future will take greater force and magnitude" (1921: 491).

N.B. Bonarjee and curtailing national sovereignty
Many of Tagore's contemporaries had their own concerns about the League. For example, Oxford-trained Indian civil servant N.B. Bonarjee presented two rival theories of international relations in an article in *The Indian Review*. The first, which Bonarjee traced back to the Dutch diplomat and jurist Hugo Grotius, was rooted in international law and aimed to expand the reach of law and morality so that they would govern all international affairs; this approach culminated in the founding of the League of Nations. The second theory, which Bonarjee attributed to Niccolo Machiavelli, aimed to curtail law and expand the complete power of the state, seeing it as the source of all morality. This idea of absolute sovereignty, Bonarjee argued, manifested in fascist thought, which, at the time of his writing, was rising across Europe. Bonarjee observed the growing fascist presence in Germany and Italy with alarm, and he refuted optimistic Western analysts who viewed the League as a harbinger of global peace. On the contrary, Bonarjee asserted, "the present state of International politics cannot be regarded in so optimistic a light" (1927: 157). Bonarjee worried that the continued presence of both the theory and practice of absolute state sovereignty – now in the form of fascism – would ultimately lead to conflict. Even while Britain and France and other nations embraced the first theory of international relations by joining the League and espousing internationalism, the second theory of international relations was rearing its ugly head. Support for the absolute power of the state and extreme nationalism was growing in Europe through the popularity of writers such as Heinrich von Treitschke, the nineteenth-century ardent nationalist who advocated for a German empire.
But even while Bonarjee presented two competing, timeless ideas of international relations and suggested that their mutual presence risked another world war, he also questioned the hard distinction between the two. He wrote that if we considered fascism not from the perspective of its domestic policy, but rather "as a factor in International Relations", and examine the "foreign policy of Fascism [that] flows directly from the doctrine of Machiavelli and his heirs and successors", then perhaps the difference between these two

theories was not so clear-cut (Bonarjee 1927: 155). The fascist approach to international relations entailed three principles, Bonarjee said, drawing on Treitschke's writings. First, the "idealization of power means the idealization of war." Powerful nations had to keep expanding; if a nation did not constantly expand, it would die. In this sense, nationalism had an outward-looking component: it encouraged a nation's continuous expansion. Second, the fascist approach meant a rejection of expansive notions of international law or global governance. In Treitschke's words, a "state cannot renounce its sovereignty," which meant that a state could not enter into any agreement that permanently curtailed its power. And third, this approach included a repudiation of the ideal of "international brotherhood" (Bonarjee 1927: 155). If one state pursued power, all other states would be forced to do the same, even if only for the sake of self-preservation. The idea of working for the good of humanity at large was nonsensical and impractical, according to this theory. This was the dangerous world of competition over power and the constant threat of war that fascist theory recognised and advocated. However, as Bonarjee pointed out, this was not a world built only by German nationalists, but one also built by British and French nationalists and the various liberal powers that now composed the League, and allegedly supported the first theory of international relations. Treitschke was not alone in subscribing to the view that "colonial expansion [was] essential for national power"; other European nations and empires did the same (Bonarjee 1927: 155). In fact, Treitschke triumphantly pointed to Great Britain and its expansionist empire as proof of his theories surrounding empire and nationalism.

> Bonarjee's analysis highlighted a critical paradox within the functioning of the League of Nations: while purportedly established to foster peace and international cooperation, it simultaneously upheld a system that prioritised national sovereignty, particularly for powerful European states with imperial legacies.

Joseph Chamberlain, to consider just one example from England, argued in 1899 that the "future of the world lay with great empires. The watchword of the state must be colonies; sea power, and always more sea power for the sake of expansion" (Bonarjee 1927: 155). This was not merely a theoretical matter for European empires, Bonarjee pointed out. This expansionist policy could be seen "in the partition of the African Continent between England, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, and Italy in the later 19th and early part of the 20th centuries" (Bonarjee 1927: 155-156). Because the major League powers were broadly implicated in this foreign policy, the League's effectiveness was limited. The League of Nations was "but an organ of National Governments: and these in turn merely reflect the spirit of the nations concerned [...] only if there be present a will to work it, can its machinery as an organization of international peace function" (1927: 157). Given the rise of fascism in Europe and the continued investment of various League members in imperialism, Bonarjee was sceptical that the League could ever serve as a barrier against war.

In short, Bonarjee's analysis highlighted a critical paradox within the functioning of the League of Nations: while purportedly established to foster peace and international cooperation, it simultaneously upheld a system that prioritised national sovereignty, particularly for powerful European states with imperial legacies. Bonarjee argued that this tension between international law and state sovereignty undermined the League's capacity to prevent conflict. His critique underscores a key theme of this paper: early

twentieth-century thinkers from the Global South recognised that the entrenched notion of absolute state sovereignty, especially in the context of deep inequalities and imperial legacies, created a form of structural inequality that made achieving genuine peace extremely challenging.

Radhabinod Pal, the international community, and the possibility of peace

Alongside Bonarjee's insights into the functioning of international organisations, thinkers from the Global South also offered important critiques of the functioning of international courts and tribunals. One case that diverged from the dominant view of contemporary international jurisprudence was Judge Radhabinod Pal's dissent during the Tokyo Trials after the Second World War, which tried military leaders of the Japanese empire for crimes against peace. Most significantly, Pal argued that no true international community existed. Both prosecutors and judges had argued that Japan's actions during the war must be considered aggressive, as they undermined an international community, understood either as a natural inclination of people towards solidarity and togetherness, or as established by a series of treaties that Japan had been a part of prior to its invasion of Manchuria. For Pal, however, the notion of an international community was an unfounded assumption in these arguments that, once challenged, changed how this line of reasoning could be made. Pal argued that international treaties meant that Japan was a part of international *society* in a broad sense, but that was different from there being a *community*. Here Pal drew on legal academic Georg Schwarzenberger in distinguishing between a community and a society. A community depends on "the solidarity of its members, a cohesive force without which the community cannot exist", such as church or family (Pal 1955: 5). A society, in contrast, is a group of entities that have diverging interests, brought together by necessity, their larger affinity serving to manage their conflicting interests. For a community, law only formalises "customary behaviour, which would be observed even without its existence." For a society, on the other hand, the purpose of law is to "make limited co-operation possible." In Pal's view, "the international association of the present day is at best only a society" (Pal 1955: 6). Instead of a truly international community, there was only a "partial community of interests" that did not reflect the will of every state. This was no accident, but instead was the aim and function of modern international law, which was "developed as a means for regulating external contacts rather than as an expression of the life of a true society" (Pal 1953: 48). For Pal, a society of this sort would necessarily be unequal given the varying levels of power of its members and the contradictory goals they would pursue. There was no external power that had binding power over the various states, and there was no international body that could force states to submit to arbitration in times of conflict. Thus, despite all efforts to institutionalise international solidarity, Pal concluded that the international order was still defined by the sovereignty of nation-states. Although Pal acknowledged that there had been an increase in internationalist sentiment since the Second World War, he noted that there was a difference between sentiment and reality. "This [change] is yet to happen," he wrote, and the current state of "international organisation [...] still does not indicate any sign of abrogation of the doctrine of national sovereignty in the near future" (Pal 1955: 14). Ultimately, Pal hoped that the norm of national sovereignty would be weakened so as to create a true international community based upon global solidarity and shared interests.

One immediate consequence of Pal's assessment that no meaningful international community existed was that international law was diminished in its scope and applicability. Just as the idea of society was vaguely defined and inherently unequal, similarly any international law that emerged to govern such a society might loosely coordinate agreements in a narrow sense, but would ultimately remain aspirational. It would also remain reflective of an international hierarchy skewed towards the interests of a few major powers in the Global North. This meant that international criminal law was impossible to apply in any meaningful way.

On this basis, Pal argued that it was not possible to draw up a coherent theory international criminal responsibility for war, because criminal law required a high level of maturation of the legal system: "the conception of criminal responsibility in international life can arise only when that life itself reaches a certain stage in its development" (Pal 1955: 7). Pal argued that in such a loose sense of law, none of the various theories in criminal law justifying punishment could apply.

> In the various proposals for international order that had emerged since the end of the war, there had not been any that tried to bring about what Pal considered to be real peace. None of these proposals addressed the underlying conditions that led to war in the first place, such as the stark inequalities between nations that arose from exploitative historic or current interactions, unfair international rules that newly independent states might never have agreed to, economic coercion, and other forms of indirect hostilities.

The other major challenge that the absence of international community posed for international criminal law was that it made peace impossible to define. For it to be conceivable to introduce criminal responsibility for disturbing the peace, Pal argued that peace must exist in the first place. We must be able to say that international life is already "established on some peaceful basis," the infringement of which constitutes a crime (Pal 1955: 7). Yet Pal vehemently disagreed with the idea that the contemporary international order was characterised by peace in any meaningful sense. Peace in that international order "is only a negative concept […] a negation of war, or an assurance of the *status quo*." The world was not truly at peace: "The basis of international relations is still the competitive struggle of states, a struggle for the solution of which there is still no judge, no executor, no standard of decision. There are still dominated and enslaved nations, and there is no provision anywhere in the system for any peaceful readjustment without struggle. It is left to the nations themselves to see to the readjustment" (Pal 1955: 12). Pal, like Tagore, contested the idea of peace as a lack of active fighting, pointing to the fact that political and economic domination continued to shape international affairs.

For Pal, the only kind of peace that was possible to define in the absence of an international community was very reductive. This was a negative peace characterised by a lack of active, ongoing armed hostilities. But this was not "real international peace" for Pal (1953: 57). In the various proposals for international order that had emerged since the end of the war, there had not been any that tried to bring about what Pal considered to be real peace. None of these proposals addressed the underlying conditions that led to war in the first place, such as the stark inequalities between nations that arose from exploitative historic or current interactions, unfair international rules that newly independent states

might never have agreed to, economic coercion, and other forms of indirect hostilities. International peace also required reduced forms of sovereignty that allowed for a true international community to develop, and for international law to take precedence over the whims of individual states. Pal warned that these structural changes relating to sovereignty and the development of international community had to be brought about politically through the mutual agreement of states; these were not changes that an international court would be able to undertake on its own.

Defining aggression at the United Nations

Shortly after the UN was founded, it became apparent that the implementation of the veto power of the five permanent members would hinder any attempts of the UN Security Council to effectively maintain peace. At that point, the UN General Assembly asserted responsibility of collective security in its landmark 'Uniting for Peace' resolution, claiming the right to recommend "collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression" (UN General Assembly 1950).

One area where this investment of the General Assembly in matters of war and peace manifested was in debates over the definition of 'aggression'. The notion of aggression, frequently used in international law to assign blame in the outbreak of a war, had a long history, predating the First World War but becoming especially significant in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the crime of aggression was prosecuted by an international court for the first time. In the Nuremberg Trials, the court stated that initiating a war of aggression "is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole" (International Military Tribunal 1946). Aggression thus appeared as a central concept in emerging international criminal jurisprudence, yet it had no commonly accepted definition.

While historically debates over the definition of aggression tended to be limited to Western states, after the Second World War and the beginnings of decolonisation, newly independent states in the Global South joined the conversation. They put forth unprecedentedly expansive accounts of aggression. For them, aggression was not limited to armed attack, but extended to economic aggression, ideological aggression, and other forms of indirect aggression. In the 1952 UN General Assembly debate, representatives of Afghanistan, Cuba, and Iran emphasised that economic pressure in the context of inequality led to the same result as any other form of aggression: "to force the victim to yield to the aggressor's will" (United Nations 1952). During the 1953 Special Committee proceedings on the topic, the Bolivian delegate maintained that economic aggression violated the political independence of states and their sovereign equality, and it could lead to consequences such as civil war and famine. Drafts of proposed definitions of aggression were updated to reflect the desire of Asian and Latin American states to "include acts of economic, ideological and indirect aggression" (United Nations 1954).

As we can see from these developments, Global South states were concerned that reductive definitions of aggression, that were limited to active armed hostility, did not capture the various reasons for why war would break out. For this reason, delegates from the Global South attempted to push definitions in the General Assembly that included these expanded definitions of war and peace. Global South thinkers emphasised what Galtung would later label as 'positive peace', focusing on the stark inequalities and indirect

forms of exploitation that exist in the world and that formed a major cause of the outbreak of wars. Yet they went a step beyond Galtung, emphasising that understanding historical injustice was crucial dealing with the structural inequalities at play.

> While historically debates over the definition of aggression were limited to Western states, after the Second World War, newly independent states in the Global South joined the conversation. They put forth unprecedentedly expansive accounts of aggression. For them, aggression was not limited to armed attack, but extended to economic aggression, ideological aggression, and other forms of indirect aggression.

Addressing global power imbalances

The critique of international peace efforts offered by thinkers from the Global South, spanning from the interwar period to the post-1945 era, presented a coherent and consistent theme: peace could not be achieved without addressing the underlying inequalities and power imbalances entrenched in the global system. From Tagore's critique that nationalism and capitalism fuelled war and imperialism, to the Global South's efforts to expand the definition of aggression within the United Nations, there was a consistent recognition that peace could not merely be the absence of armed conflict – what Galtung would later term, negative peace, instead, true peace required confronting structural inequalities, imperial legacies, and economic coercion that perpetuate global instability. Central to these critiques was the idea that international institutions often reflected and perpetuated existing power imbalances. Tagore's warnings about the "machine-made peace" of the League of Nations and Pal's dissent at the Tokyo Trials highlighted how international organisations tended to consolidate the gains of powerful nations while neglecting the concerns of weaker states. These thinkers consistently emphasised that genuine peace could not be realised in a system that allowed the powerful to maintain their dominance while offering only superficial measures of peace. A key theme underlying these critiques was the role of sovereignty in perpetuating conflict and inequality. Global South thinkers recognised that the absolute sovereignty of nation-states – particularly when wielded by powerful countries in an unequal world – was an obstacle to genuine peace and justice. In this context, they advocated for the weakening of national sovereignty, which they believed should be superseded by the power and decisions of collective decision-making bodies and international organisations. This would, they argued, create the conditions necessary for a more just and sustainable peace.

Prescriptions

The critiques offered by thinkers from the Global South provide a valuable framework for addressing the persistent challenges in our current international system, and for developing strategies for lasting peace. Their insights highlight several key issues: the need to address underlying inequalities and power imbalances, the problem of state sovereignty as an obstacle to genuine international cooperation, and the necessity of expanding our understanding of war and peace. Drawing on these perspectives, we can formulate a series of prescriptions and policies aimed at transforming global governance to better serve future generations. These recommendations range from structural reforms of international organisations to grassroots movements, aimed at creating a more equitable, just, and ultimately peaceful world order. While some of these proposals may seem ambitious, they represent necessary

steps towards addressing the systemic issues that have perpetuated conflict and instability across generations.

Consistency and equality in international organisations

One important step is the need for great powers and for international organisations to maintain consistency and avoid hypocrisy. As critiques from Global South thinkers indicate, the failure to address these issues can severely undermine the credibility and legitimacy of these institutions, such as the United Nations Security Council. When powerful nations engage in double standards – for example, by condemning certain acts of aggression while excusing or ignoring similar actions by their allies – they not only erode trust but also perpetuate injustice and instability. Consistency in applying international laws and principles is essential to ensure that all nations, regardless of their power or influence, are held to the same standards. This uniformity fosters a sense of fairness and equality, which is fundamental for the establishment of genuine peace. Hypocrisy, on the other hand, fuels resentment, perpetuates conflicts, and delegitimises the very institutions designed to maintain global order. Therefore, in today's interconnected and complex world, where the actions of one nation can have far-reaching impacts, it is important for international organisations and their member states to operate transparently and equitably. This commitment to integrity strengthens the ability of international organisations to maintain credibility in mediating conflicts and promoting lasting peace.

UN Security Council Reform

A major area of improvement that many nations in the Global South have highlighted in recent years is UN Security Council reform. As a recent report from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace indicates, Global South nations have pushed for reforms that focus on increasing both the representativeness and the effectiveness of the Security Council (Patrick / Adebajo / Dayal et al. 2023). Key demands include expanding the Council's membership to be more representative, particularly by adding permanent seats for African and Latin American countries, and by limiting or reforming the veto power of the five permanent members. Others have suggested creating new categories of membership, such as semi-permanent seats, to allow for broader participation. This has been a demand of the 'Uniting for Consensus' group, which opposes the expansion of veto power through new permanent members, arguing this would increase the paralysis at the Security Council further. Instead, they call for longer-term seats that are eligible for re-election. This would give prominent states without permanent membership a meaningful way to engage with matters of international security, and also ensure that each of the world's major blocs is represented (Yinanç 2023: 56-57).

In addition, there have been calls to improve transparency and accountability at the Council, to redefine international peace and security to encompass issues like climate change and economic inequality, and to enhance the role of regional organisations from the Global South in council deliberations. For example, the UN has worked with the Economic Community of West African States regarding conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali, and with the African Union in Burundi and Darfur. Previous failures to act by the Security Council, however, have led to a situation whereby regional organisations are likely to act first and then report to the Security Council later (Adebajo 2023: 41). To regain trust and effectiveness, the Security Council must demonstrate clear, unified, and prompt action in coordination

with regional organisations. Collectively, these reforms seek to make the Security Council more democratic, inclusive, and better equipped to address contemporary challenges of war and peace.

The veto power of the five permanent members has proven to be an especially significant cause of diplomatic standstills, as these members have the power to block otherwise popular motions. To address the persistent gridlock that has rendered the UN Security Council ineffective, it is essential to abolish the veto power and reconsider the notion of permanent membership. The current structure prevents timely and decisive action in the face of global crises. This veto power enables these five nations to block resolutions that may conflict with their interests, even when such resolutions are crucial for maintaining international peace and security. Removing the veto power would democratise decision-making within the Security Council, ensuring that no single country can unilaterally prevent collective action. In light of recent conflicts, there has been renewed attention paid to the paralysing effect of the veto power, both in the Global South and in the West. For example, Michael Ambühl, Nora Meier, and Daniel Thürer (2023) have recently suggested an expanded Security Council of ten member states, but of whom three member states would have to come together to block a resolution.

> To address the persistent gridlock that has rendered the UN Security Council ineffective, it is essential to abolish the veto power and reconsider the notion of permanent membership. The current structure prevents timely and decisive action in the face of global crises.

In practical terms, a structural change of this kind would require an amendment to the UN Charter, which can be initiated by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly and ratified by two-thirds of the member states, including all five permanent members. Although challenging, this process is necessary to foster a more equitable and effective international order. The reformed Security Council should comprise a diverse and rotating membership, representing various regions and ensuring that all voices are heard. This non-hierarchical structure would prevent dominance by any single nation or group of nations.

Decisions within this new framework could be made by a majority vote, requiring a substantial consensus before any intervention were authorised. Such a system would promote more balanced and inclusive decision-making and better reflect the collective will of the international community rather than the interests of a few powerful states. This change is critical to revitalising the Security Council's role in maintaining peace, enabling it to respond more swiftly and effectively to global threats. Ultimately, this would foster a more just and stable world order.

This reformed structure of the Security Council could also significantly enhance the international community's ability to address civil wars, which are among the most prevalent and devastating forms of violence today. Civil wars often lead to prolonged suffering, displacement, and instability, not just within affected countries but also in neighbouring regions. Under the current system, international intervention in civil wars is frequently impeded by the veto power, allowing geopolitical interests to overshadow humanitarian needs. By eliminating the veto and implementing a majority voting system, the reformed Security Council would be better equipped to take timely and decisive action to mediate and resolve internal conflicts. Moreover, the inclusive and non-hierarchical nature of this reformed body would enable it to approach civil wars with a nuanced understanding of local contexts, fostering more effective and sustainable solutions. This would not only help in ending immediate hostilities but also in addressing the root causes of civil conflict, thereby contributing to long-term peace and stability.

Codifying the UN General Assembly's peacekeeping role

Until the UN Security Council is reformed, we must rely on the intervention of the UN General Assembly – a more democratically organised and representative body than the Security Council. There is strong precedent for this kind of intervention. Since the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution of 1950, the UN General Assembly has stepped in on occasions where the Security Council has faced gridlock and has been unable to come to some kind of resolution or action to bring about peace. This role of the General Assembly has been especially important in recent months, as the crises in Ukraine and Gaza have faced impossible odds in the Security Council (with Russia blocking action regarding the former, the United States regarding the latter). As a result, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-11/1, which condemns the Russian aggression against Ukraine and demands an immediate withdrawal of Russian forces, and Resolution ES-10/22, which calls for an immediate ceasefire and end to hostilities in Israel and Gaza. Many of these proposals at the General Assembly have been spearheaded by nations in the Global South, highlighting the continuing role that such nations have held in trying to bring about genuine peace since the days of the League.

These recent actions underscore the General Assembly's capacity to represent global consensus and moral authority in cases when the Security Council is deadlocked. The frequency and gravity of such interventions also highlight an urgent need to formally expand and codify the General Assembly's peacekeeping powers. Until comprehensive reform democratises the Security Council and eliminates the paralysing effect of the veto power, the international community must fully leverage the General Assembly's potential. This could include mechanisms for swift emergency sessions, enhanced enforcement capabilities for Assembly resolutions, and greater coordination between the Assembly and regional organisations. Empowering the General Assembly in this manner would not only provide a more representative forum for addressing global crises but would also incentivise reform within the Security Council itself, ultimately strengthening the UN's overall capacity to maintain international peace and security.

Renewed movement for disarmament

Fourth, a renewed movement for disarmament is essential for fostering a safer and more peaceful world. This movement must encompass both formal treaties and grassroots efforts to challenge the pervasive influence of the arms industry. Treaties play a crucial role in establishing legal frameworks and commitments to reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction. However, these efforts must be complemented by popular movements that raise awareness and mobilise public opinion against the proliferation of arms. Such movements can exert pressure on governments to adopt and adhere to disarmament agreements, while also advocating for the redirection of resources from military expenditures to vital areas such as education, healthcare, and sustainable development. By discouraging the arms industry and reducing the demand for weapons, these movements can help dismantle the economic incentives that drive militarisation. Similarly, popular movements must pressure

governments to adhere to existing laws – such as the Leahy Law – prohibiting arm transfers to units responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. A comprehensive approach to disarmament, integrating both top-down and bottom-up strategies, is crucial for creating the conditions necessary for lasting peace and security for future generations.

Strengthening global institutions and multifaceted approaches to peacebuilding

As we have seen, then, increasing harmony between nations and developing the real conditions of peace requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both immediate conflicts and the underlying causes of discord. True peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, equality, and mutual respect among nations. This can be achieved through sustained diplomatic efforts, fostering dialogue and understanding, and promoting economic and social cooperation. Nations must work together to reduce inequalities and address global challenges such as poverty, climate change, and human rights abuses. Strengthening international institutions to ensure fair representation and equitable decision-making processes is also crucial. Educational and cultural exchange programs can play a significant role in building bridges between diverse communities, fostering mutual respect and understanding. By addressing structural issues and fostering a culture of collaboration and solidarity, the international community can create an environment where peace is not just a temporary respite from conflict but a stable and enduring reality.

Strengthening the international legal and political infrastructure as a whole is imperative to prevent wars and sustain global peace. Crucially, as early twentieth-century thinkers from the Global South have argued, strengthening the international system necessitates a reconsideration of state sovereignty. This involves reducing the absolute sovereignty of individual states in favour of a more collective approach to global governance – a demand that was central to Global South critiques in the early days of international organisations such as the League of Nations and the UN and has proven to be prescient. Furthermore, bolstering the international justice system to hold violators accountable is crucial for deterring aggression and promoting the rule of law. By fostering greater transparency, reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, and ensuring equitable representation of all member states, international organisations can gain the legitimacy and authority needed to act decisively. A strengthened international framework, built on principles of fairness, justice, and collective security, with a more nuanced understanding of sovereignty, is essential for creating a world where the threat of war is significantly diminished and where lasting peace can thrive.

> Strengthening the international legal and political infrastructure as a whole is imperative to prevent wars and sustain global peace. Crucially, as early twentieth-century thinkers from the Global South have argued, strengthening the international system necessitates a reconsideration of state sovereignty.

Conclusion

The pursuit of long-term peace for future generations necessitates bold and transformative changes in our international system. Drawing on the insights of early twentieth-century thinkers from the Global South, we see the critical importance of addressing the structural inequalities and inconsistencies that have historically undermined efforts to maintain global peace. The current challenges faced by international organisations highlight the need for reform to ensure these bodies operate with integrity, fairness, and effectiveness. For example, removing the veto power and restructuring the United Nations Security Council to include a more diverse and equitable representation can prevent the gridlock that hinders timely and decisive action. These changes, coupled with a non-hierarchical decision-making process, would enhance the UN's ability to respond to both international and civil conflicts. Moreover, reviving movements for disarmament and promoting harmony between nations are crucial steps toward creating the real conditions for peace. By integrating treaties with grassroots campaigns that challenge the arms industry, we can reduce the global proliferation of weapons and redirect resources toward human development. Strengthening the international legal and political infrastructure, through enhanced cooperation, robust enforcement mechanisms, and a commitment to justice, will provide the foundation needed to prevent wars and sustain peace. As we address these structural issues and foster a culture of collaboration and solidarity, we create an environment where peace is not just the absence of conflict but a stable and enduring reality.

Ultimately, the responsibility of building a peaceful future rests with us. By learning from past failures and embracing the wisdom of diverse perspectives, particularly those from the Global South, we can develop a more inclusive and resilient international system. This system, grounded in justice and equality, can ensure that future generations inherit a world where peace is not an elusive dream but a tangible reality. The stakes are high, and the path ahead is challenging, but with collective effort and unwavering commitment, we can create a legacy of peace that will benefit humanity for generations to come.

> Ultimately, the responsibility of building a peaceful future rests with us. By learning from past failures and embracing the wisdom of diverse perspectives we can develop a more inclusive and resilient international system. This system, grounded in justice and equality, can ensure that future generations inherit a world where peace is not an elusive dream but a tangible reality.

References

Adebajo, Adekeye (2023): Nigeria. In: Patrick, Stewart / Adebajo, Adekeye / Dayal, Anjali et al. (eds.): UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Ambühl, Michael / Meier, Nora / Thürer, Daniel (14 Jun. 2023): Eine Reform des UN-Sicherheitsrats ist möglich. In: Frankfurter Allgemeine. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/staat-und-recht/eine-reform-des-un-sicherheitsrats-ist-moeglich-18963691.html. Viewed 10 October 2024.

Bonarjee, N. B. (1927): Fascism and International Politics. In: The Indian Review, 28 (3), 153-157.

Galtung, Johan (1976): Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding. In: Galtung, Johan (ed.): Essays in Peace Research. Vol. 2. Copenhagen: Ejlers, 282-304.

International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg) Judgment (1946): Nuremberg Trial Proceedings. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/09-30-46.asp. Viewed 8 October 2024.

Kundu, Kalyan (2010): Rabindranath Tagore and World Peace. In: Asiatic, 4 (1), 77-86.

Pal, Radhabinod (1955): Crimes in International Relations. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press.

Pal, Radhabinod (1953): International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Dissentient Judgment of Justice R. B. Pal. Calcutta: Sanyal & Co.

Quayum, Mohammad A. (2017): War, Violence and Rabindranath Tagore's Quest for World Peace. In: Transnational Literature, 9 (2), 1-14.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1921): A Cry for Peace. In: The Modern Review, 29 (4), 490-491.

Tagore, Rabindranath (29 Nov. 1916): India Will be Free. In: The New York Times, 6.

United Nations (2024): Gaza: Number of Children Killed Higher than from Four Years of World Conflict. In: United Nations News. https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147512. Viewed 10 October 2024.

United Nations (1954): Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Defining Aggression. In: General Assembly Official Records. Ninth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/2638).

United Nations (1952): The Question of Defining Aggression. In: Yearbook of the United Nations. United Nations Department of Global Communications, 784-791.

United Nations General Assembly (1950): Resolution 377 (V). Report of the Fifth General Assembly. https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/059/75/pdf/nr005975.pdf. Viewed 11 October 2024.

United Nations (1945): Preamble. In: Charter of the United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/preamble. Viewed 9 October 2024.

Yinanç, Barçin (2023): Türkiye. In: Patrick, Stewart / Adebajo, Adekeye / Dayal, Anjali et al. (eds.): UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

At the time of writing Ibrahim Khan was a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Chicago. He has research interests in international law, anticolonial legal and political thought, and global intellectual history.

Email: ibrahimkhan@uchicago.edu

Andrew Fiala and Jennifer Kling: Can War Be Justified? A Debate

Reviewed by Gordon Hertel

War is often described as the ultimate cruelty, and with over a hundred ongoing armed conflicts across the globe, all generations are coming face to face with this cruelty. Fighting continues in Ukraine and Gaza, and civil wars rage on in Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar and many other countries. With the advent of the internet, we are more aware of ongoing conflicts than ever before. Despite this knowledge, we still lack the answers for the most important question of our time: for what reasons do we continue to wage war? Fields of literature of all kinds have sought to identify these justifications for war, be they philosophical, strategic, or societal in nature.

Can War Be Justified? by Andrew Fiala and Jennifer Kling is a summary of two sides of this debate; one side is Just War Theory (JWT) which states that some wars can be justified, while the other side is a pacifist argument which states that most wars cannot be justified. This monograph is written by the two authors in the form of a dialogue. Fiala takes the pacifist perspective. His previous works demonstrate an extensive knowledge of pacifism, ethics, theology, and politics. He is a professor of philosophy at California State University and has written books on pacifism since 2004. Kling argues for the JWT perspective. Her focus area includes political philosophy, war and peace, feminism, and race. Her other works delve into subjects such as activism, refugees, genocide, and pacifism. She is currently an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado Springs. These two authors have long tenure in the field of war and peace, and their debate represents a culmination of decades of study.

Prior to any debate, however, David Barnes (professor of English and philosophy at the United States Military Academy) provides a foreword. This section establishes the goals for the debate quite well. Barnes states, "upon reflection, we ought to ask ourselves (1) whether war is inevitable and (2) whether war can ever be morally justified; (3) if war can be justified, then how so; and (4) if war is not inevitable and it cannot be morally justified, should we ever go to war or fight in war?" (xiii). These questions make up the core of the monograph. The introduction serves well in setting the tone for the debate.

Fiala and Kling also provide further context on the upcoming debate in the preface. The target audience is established as undergraduate students or people new to the study of pacifism and JWT (xiv). The goal of this book, it follows, is to introduce readers to the varied points and nuances of this long-lasting debate, all while remaining understandable for those who are entering the discourse for the first time. The preface also dedicates its opening sentences to the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, which, as the authors note, will become a crucial case study for both pacifists and just war theorists (xvii). The authors justify the absence of more nuanced topics from the debate in stating their attempt to remain approachable for those unfamiliar with the field. Fiala and Kling end the preface on a hopeful note that international collaboration will put an end to armed conflict and create a more peaceful future – which is the collective goal of both the just war theorist and the pacifist. The following sections are framed around a dialogue between the pacifist perspective – taken by Fiala – and the just war theorist perspective – taken by Kling.

Chapter 1 is written by Fiala and explores the pacifist argument. The opening statements are focused on three central claims: "1. War produces bad consequences including death, destruction, and dislocation. 2. War involves bad (evil or wicked) intentions and actions that are intrinsically evil. 3. War solves nothing in the realm of ideas" (3). These statements summarise the consequentialist perspective, the deontological perspective, and the pacifist tradition in a brief and understandable fashion. Fiala uses the next sections to further elaborate on these perspectives and utilise compelling examples. Both the consequentialist and deontological pacifist arguments are unified in their support for the pacifist tradition. Demanding peace is one thing, but the pacifist tradition insists that the means to ensure peace likewise be peaceful in nature. Where the just war tradition seeks to wage war peacefully with the goal of preventing further conflict, the pacifist tradition instead focuses its efforts on institutional, societal, and global change through non-violent resistance. Fiala's analysis is well done and demonstrates extensive knowledge of not only the pacifist sphere of literature, but the JWT sphere as well. Despite both perspectives sharing the same goal of a peaceful world, Fiala criticises the JWT by using Martin Luther King Jr.'s argument: unjust means cannot pursue a just end; likewise, war is an unjust means and cannot be used to achieve peaceful ends. Fiala's opening statement provides a deep look into the realm of pacifist theory and tradition and considers numerous perspectives and examples to back up the three central claims.

Chapter 2 is written by Kling and outlines Just War Theory. Her opening statement outlines the main arguments for contemporary JWT, as well as the stringent requirements necessary to make a war *just*. This section is focused on three of these requirements: *jus ad bellum* (justice of going to war), *jus in bello* (justice in war), and *just post bellum* (justice after war) (66). Kling centres her

opening statements around these requirements, which provides a framework for her argument that war can be justified in certain cases. Kling explores each of the three requirements, briefly outlining their main restrictions and considers both traditionalist and revisionist perspectives. It is here where she defines the overarching goal of JWT: "The entire goal of jus ad bellum, jus in bello, and jus post bellum is to restrict warfare to only those wars that are necessary and proportionate" (74). The difficulty in the realm of JWT, it follows, is determining when war is *necessary* and *proportionate*. In the following sections Kling delves further into the details of JWT. She considers more nuanced aspects of the theory such as the use of JWT to bring groups to the table for negotiation, the danger war poses to groups caught in the crossfires, as well as the role JWT plays against oppression. These following sections focus deeply on the people affected by war, be they refugees, civilians, or soldiers. When considering whether a war is just, it is vital to also consider the role *everyone* plays within it. Kling argues against the consideration of refugees as collateral damage – a move which is gaining traction in the JWT field – but unfortunately does not divest much time into exploring this further. Kling concludes with an overarching summary of her arguments in support of JWT. She reiterates that it is a philosophical body of theory flexible to critique, and that its theorists view war only as a last resort in order to stop further harm. She concludes by stressing that war is difficult to justify. Her contributions to the debate are well founded and make use of strong examples. While some areas would have done well with further analysis, the opening statements clearly demonstrate Kling's experience and knowledge in the field and present this expertise in a very concise and understandable fashion.

After the opening statements, the debate is structured around each author's response to the other's theory. Throughout these responses, the other author also makes small statements found in cutouts. This helps the monograph read like a discussion. Fiala begins by responding to Kling's opening statements. The pacifist, Fiala argues, would take issue with the supposed necessity of war and instead prioritise non-violent preventative measures. He also stresses that pacifism is absolute, whereas JWT leaves too much room for interpretation. These are good points which demonstrate how JWT might be used to justify dangerous backsliding and militarist behaviour when used with ill intent. Kling's replies in this section are focused on the concept that JWT should incorporate pacifism as a goal and must remain vigilant against this danger. This is further expanded upon in Kling's response to Fiala's opening statement, which begins with the statement: "every just war theorist worth their salt would rather pacifism prevail in the world" (152). Kling focuses intently on weighing both the consequences and the dangers of patriotic religious followings. Her first two replies are focused on the nuanced problems of consequentialism. She then warns of the dangers of using patriotic Christianity (and other religions) to justify war, because although religions may appear morally sound, they often create narratives that support unquestioning loyalty. Her reply is concise and well structured. It points out the similarities between JWT and pacifism quite well and makes a strong case for collaboration. After these replies, a brief conclusion summarises the points on both sides and the monograph concludes.

The core arguments of *Can War Be Justified?* seem simple at first, but the work excels in displaying the many complexities of the debate. Fiala and Kling's goal is "to bring people into thinking through these topics in a systematic way" (xiv), and the debate is comprehensively structured to facilitate this. Both authors present their arguments and case studies in a very compelling manner. The monograph is an easy read while being full of important information, questions, and examples that can leave the reader pondering this topic long after reading.

Considering both perspectives, it is impossible to say which one provides a stronger argument for its case. Both authors, as mentioned, provide concise explanations, meaningful arguments, as well as helpful and important case studies. They also convey the numerous similarities between both traditions in a clear manner, something which might come as a surprise to the reader. The dialogue is intended to be read by those new to the debate, and its goal is to present each author's perspectives on the three central questions mentioned in the preface. In this regard, the monograph succeeds in achieving what it set out to do. Both Fiala and Kling address the questions outlined in the preface in unique ways, summarising their experience and knowledge in the field. This work is well adjusted to the target audience, and any bachelor's student or person new to the dialogue could easily read and understand the many nuanced points it makes.

When it comes to more complex issues, however, the monograph is unfortunately found to be lacking in several ways. Although the authors admit in the preface that analysing the many nuances of JWT and pacifism would detract from the flow of the argument, the reader is still left with a feeling that important topics have been left out. Take for example future generations. War and its horrendous effects on land, people, and society are intergenerational damages which cause intergenerational trauma. Kling does make mention of a "collective psychic scar" (153) present in Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, this is mentioned only within the context of "culture, politics, and spirituality" (153) rather than taking to account the event's impact on future generations more directly. The future is only the subject elsewhere when assessing consequences for pacifism. But this is insufficient. Would JWT consider the negative impacts of war on future generations *collateral damages*? Could the consequentialist pacifist weigh the damages on future generations when considering whether a war is just? These are questions Fiala and Kling could have addressed in their respective opening statements or their replies. While it is true that this monograph is primarily concerned with the question of a justifiable war, the possible deaths of future generations ought to be considered in the justification presented or the arguments against it.

'War' is a dirty word. The term carries with it destruction on a grand scale, the displacement and killing of many civilians, and a prolonged generational struggle. The suffering and pain of war is considered self-evident. It follows that those who wage war don't always consider it as such. Russia's 'special military operation' is a good example of how terminology can be intentionally used to influence how citizens view cruelty. These shifts in perception have the capacity to consequently shift perceptions of war overall. How do people attempt to justify war by simply avoiding the term? And where might we place 'military exercises', 'temporary occupations', and 'peacekeeping operations' within the JWT framework? Who maintains the responsibilities of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum* in these instances? While Fiala and Kling do not delve into these specific elements, nor into the role future generations play in warfare

and justifying war, their piece certainly represents a strong and significant entry point into these debates. In this world of ever shifting justifications and definitions of warfare, *Can War Be Justified?* is a work dedicated wholeheartedly to clarity and readability which, combined with the thoroughness of its many arguments, makes it well worth a read.

Axel Gosseries: What is Intergenerational Justice?

Reviewed by Helene Weinbrenner

As Axel Gosseries states in the acknowledgements to his latest book, philosophy is an intergenerational effort. So is the conundrum about finding a good definition for 'intergenerational justice'. *What is Intergenerational Justice?* is Gosseries' extremely valuable contribution to advancing this search. Gosseries, a professor for economic and social ethics in Louvain, Belgium, is already a well-established voice in the field: As early as 2004, he published the monograph *Penser la justice entre les générations*, followed by the influential volume *Intergenerational Justice* (2009), which he edited together with Lukas H. Meyer. In 2016, he co-edited *Institutions for Future Generations* with Iñigo González-Ricoy. This study can thus be read as the subtotal of years of multi-thematic and polyphonic scholarship.

In his introduction, Gosseries gives a clear and concise overview of his study's scope, ambitions, and limitations. He starts off by defending philosophy's merit for the field of intergenerational justice, underlining the importance of theoretical considerations and insights for deliberative democracies, and thereby making clear that his book not only addresses experts, but the general public alike. Gosseries then proceeds to specify the study's central concepts, provisionally defining intergenerational justice as justice "between individuals from different generations" (5). He also distinguishes between age groups and birth cohorts (i.e. groups in the same phase of life and groups defined by the time of their birth; the study's focus being on the latter), and between overlap and non-overlap scenarios (i.e. coexisting and non-coexisting generations).

The book is structured around questions which, in a way, add up to answer the titular question: *What is Intergenerational Justice*? In asking: "Can we act *unjustly* towards the future?" (20), chapter 1 deals with the non-identity problem (NIP) and presents three distinct strategies to overcome the challenges posed by its implications. The first strategy consists in introducing a 'new grammar' (36), i.e. a norm-based notion of harm, in order to disband the
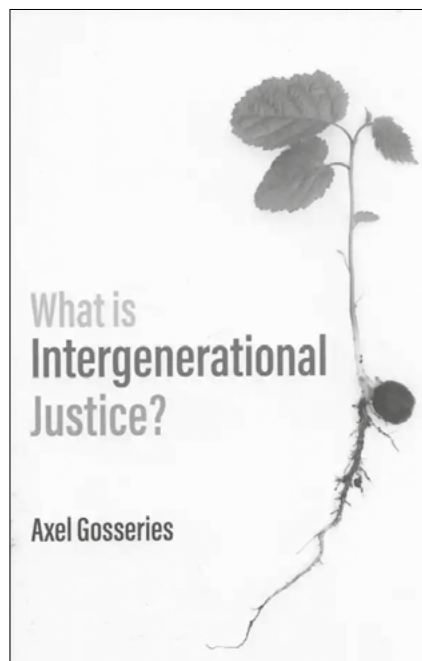
'harm-justice-nexus' at the problem's core. The second strategy, 'containment', aims at utilising overlap generational dynamics to contain the scope of the non-identity problem. As Gosseries argues, its implications for efforts in intergenerational justice do not apply to any scenario that involves an intergenerational overlap since the older generation, in these cases, is generally taken to be able to adapt their actions to the younger generation's existence and 'identity'. Strategy three envisions a 'full severance' of the relation between justice and harm. Only a notion of justice that does not equate a violation of justice with harm allows for 'non-person affecting approaches', thereby effectively "freeing justice from the non-identity problem" (50), Gosseries concludes.

Having thus established that we *do* have duties of justice to the future, Gosseries moves on to ask: "*How much* do we owe to the future?" (52) by reflecting on the principles of justice that efforts to support intergenerational justice should rely on. He presents four separate accounts. The first is called 'non-decline'. This account is based on (indirect, descending) reciprocity between generations and prohibits dis-savings (i.e. passing on less than inherited). Gosseries criticises this account for not allowing for net transfers. The second account is a utilitarian one, aiming for a 'better future' and requiring savings from one generation to the next (i.e. passing on more than inherited). The third account comes from a sufficientarianist perspective and is threshold-based, allowing for both savings and dis-savings as long as future generations are guaranteed to 'have enough', as well as requiring savings if this is not the case. The fourth and last account, called the 'narrow path', is based on leximin egalitarianism, prioritising each generation's least well-off individual, thereby leaving only a narrow path for just intergenerational distribution and very little room for both savings and dis-savings. Gosseries himself shares the most common ground with this account, although he advocates for a less strict version of it. He then goes on to problematise the role of inheritance in each of these accounts,

explaining that 'cleronomicity' (i.e. the rule of inheritance) imposes a certain amount of arbitrariness on intergenerational dynamics. As he lays out, none of the four principles is entirely independent from earlier generations' legacy, but they do differ in understanding it as reference point for current generations' duties ('non-decline', 'better future' and 'narrow path') or merely dealing with it as a constraint on current capabilities ('having enough'). Gosseries argues that 'better future' and 'narrow path' can at least be reframed in less cleronomic terms by adding 'from now on' to their requirements. This leads him to reflect on the relationship between intergenerational justice and sustainability, showing that the two notions are not at all synonymous – it is, as Gosseries argues, fully possible to come up with a concept of sustainability without justice as well as a notion of intergenerational justice without sustainability.

Following this discussion of potential *principles* of justice, Gosseries turns to the question of *metrics*, (i.e. the content of our duties to the future), in chapter 3: "*What* do we owe to the future?" (89). He begins by establishing a combination of sufficientarianism and 'Dworkinian resourcism', understood as the idea that allocating equal purchasing power to individuals while also assuming different talents and tastes will lead to some inequalities *without* being unjust. This account of justice is introduced in order to compensate for sufficientarianism's blind spots when dealing with above-threshold justice.

In applying this combination of accounts to intergenerational scenarios, Gosseries confronts us with our inability to anticipate future generations' tastes and talents. While this is easily solved by adapting a stepwise strategy (i.e. relying on overlap dynamics to reach non-overlap future people), another problem arises in this context: our influence, or lack thereof, on future generations' preferences. Gosseries presents three options to mitigate or avoid this predicament: He considers 'dematerialising' our heritage, but immediately rejects this idea as rather inefficient; he suggests 'open options', i.e. guaranteeing sufficient diversity for future generations to choose from. He also makes a case for 'inculcating frugal preferences' (106), i.e. teaching younger generations not to squander resources. However, in a final step Gosseries rejects the option of simply substituting resources with (anticipated or inculcated) frugal preferences as well as similar acts of substitution. Having thus developed a framework of intergenerational justice in the preceding chapters, Gosseries applies this framework to the intergenerational challenges posed by climate change in chapter 4, asking: "What are our climate duties to the future?" (118). He first focuses on pre-1990s, i.e. pre-IPCC emissions and their relevance for our current climate duties. Based on the non-overlap with most of the 'perpetrators' as well as their ignorance about climate change, Gosseries makes a strong case for distributive instead of rectificatory approaches to intergenerational climate justice, arguing that past emissions and our relation to their causers should have no influence on our current duties. He then goes on to contrast three views of distributive climate justice, the first of which requiring the prevention of "injustice resulting from […] human-induced climate circumstances" (129), the second one including naturally occurring circumstances, and the third one allocating "climate-related rights" (129). This last view is the one favoured by Gosseries himself, as it "refuses to insulate a climate regime from broader concerns about justice" (132) and allows us to tackle various injustices by working towards intergenerational climate justice. Gosseries then asks if there is any possibility that a >2 °C temperature increase above pre-industrial level be considered fair. He concludes that the only way that could be viable, at least in principle, would be to accept the option of substitutability, which readers will recall he dismantled in an earlier chapter. Therefore, he finds climate change above 2 °C to be unjust. He then briefly discusses two ways to deal with this injustice, 'early efforts' and 'discount rates', as well as their respective drawbacks. As he explains, expecting higher efforts from earlier generations possibly disadvantages them and could therefore be specifically problematic from a 'narrow path' perspective. Any kind of discount rates applied to the interests of future generations tends to overlook the causal relationship between, for instance, discounting future wellbeing and future wellbeing itself, thus forming a circular argument and being similarly unfair in terms of the narrow path principle of justice.

In chapter 5, Gosseries discusses the issue of the "voiceless and toothless future" (153). Problematising the relationship between distributive intergenerational justice and democratic legitimacy, he asks: "Can policies be *legitimate* towards the future?" (150). Non-overlap future generations can neither participate in current democratic deliberative processes nor are they equipped to enforce policies in their interests in any way. In search for an answer to this problem of power asymmetry and potential democratic illegitimacy, Gosseries rejects a number of possible solutions (i.e. questioning the underlying notion of legitimacy; working with a concept of 'representation') and finally reaches a fairly nuanced conclusion, arguing that "our policies [are] unavoidably 'a-legitimate' (rather than the stronger 'illegitimate') toward the future" (163) and that therefore, 'legitimacy toward the future' should not be invoked as a *positive reason* in support of our policies" (163): "[W]e are unable to do better than being benevolent dictators toward the future." (163-164). Having arrived at this potentially discouraging verdict, Gosseries is adamant about reminding us of the relevance of his theory. Firstly, he notes that the scope of democratic legitimacy in intergenerational *overlap* scenarios is not diminished by these considerations. Secondly, he reminds us that where certain notions of legitimacy do not apply, notions of justice still do. Lastly, he touches upon models of future-sensitive institutional design which might help to attenuate intertemporal power imbalances, a topic which he and González-Ricoy published an edited volume about in 2016 (which was reviewed in IGJR 1/2017).

As outlined above, Gosseries begins his study with a defensive, almost apologetic gesture, reflecting on the merit and entitlement of philosophical considerations in times of urgent crises. As he argues, deliberative democracies are dependent on "a citizenry properly equipped to reflect upon and articulate its intuitions about what intergenerational justice is about. Philosophical clarification is one of the necessary steps in that direction" (2). In specialising his research for political education in this way, Gosseries expands his intended audience and explicitly includes non-philosophers. The endeavour to keep his arguments comprehensible to a general audience without detracting from the topic's nuance, thereby illuminating his ideas with a wide array of plausible examples, might be the most applaudable achievement of *What is Intergenerational Justice?* The book's helpful structure (its very intuitive chapter titles will hardly scare anyone off, unlike those of some other works in the field) as well as an accessible presentation of its theory of intergenerational justice leave the reader with an ample understanding of the philosophical issues surrounding the notion. In dedicating a separate chapter to applying the previously established framework to questions of climate change, the study

addresses the topic at the core of contemporary debates about intergenerational justice in a constructive and practical manner, thereby further supporting the author's petition for the relevancy and necessity of philosophy for current crises.

This matter of accessibility, however, connects to the one desideratum left by Gosseries' study. Given that the book not only develops its own hypotheses and theories, but arguably also serves as a summary of years of scholarly debate, one would wish for a slightly more transparent treatment of existing theories about intergenerational justice. Detailing the supporters of various philosophical positions presented in this study – and noting their influence – would certainly further Gosseries' already commendable accomplishments in giving a viable introduction to this scholarly field. As it is, one gets the impression that there are very few other scholars on intergenerational justice – which is all the more peculiar, as two of Gosseries' earlier publications on intergenerational justice were edited volumes. For instance, in his discussion of the NIP (that has been haunting theories of intergenerational justice for four decades now), he does not engage with solutions that focus on the particular notion of causality being used when framing the NIP as a problem (see the special issue of IGJR 2/2019 on this).

This limited engagement with other scholars' theories of intergenerational justice, also noted in Giulio Pennacchioni's review elsewhere,[1] does not substantially take from the merits of *What is Intergenerational Justice?* It is, all in all, an accessible yet sophisticated, concise yet thorough study on the topic and has the potential to benefit both scholarly debate and public discourse.

1 Pennacchioni, Giulio (2023): Review of Axel Gosseries' "What is Intergenerational Justice". In: Zeitschrift für Ethik und Moralphilosophie, 6 (2), 209-212. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-023-00160-3.

What is a 'Walkshop'?

'Walkshops' (a combination of the terms 'walk' and 'workshop') are an innovative auditory learning method developed by the FRFG which aims to inform and empower young people between the ages of 18 and 35 on a particular topic. The concept draws on Aristotle's teachings, whose school of Peripatetics linked mental mobility with physical movement and transfers this approach to the current century. Throughout the Walkshop participants listen to educational podcasts while walking through diverse landscapes, visit learning venues along their route, and build on what they have learned through evening discussions with invited politicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, activists and citizens.

Since 2021, the FRFG has organised Walkshops on the topics social security and intergenerational contracts, atomic waste, the coal phase-out, and climate change. In 2025, the Walkshop will focus on the topic 'Nuclear risks and long-term peacekeeping'.

When and where is the Walkshop, 2025?

The upcoming Walkshop is scheduled to take place from Thursday, 26 June to Tuesday, 1 July 2025. For the first time a Walkshop will take place outside of Germany. The hike will begin and end in Glasgow, Scotland and will follow parts of the West Highland Way to Loch Lomond and Gare Loch, where Britain's nuclear weapons are stationed. More details about the exact route and stopping points will be released on the website in the coming weeks and months.

Why 'Nuclear risks and long-term peacekeeping'?

War has a shattering effect on human life and societies, causing death, destroying infrastructure, and significantly decreasing quality of life. Nuclear war has the potential to magnify these consequences on a global scale, possibly making the world inhabitable or causing the extinction of humanity. We cannot afford to continue to rely on the doctrine of nuclear deterrence developed in the 1950s for a bipolar world: the current handling of nuclear weapons is not sustainable for the future. For this reason, FRFG hopes to motivate and educate young people on this critical topic, as well as engage key decision makers in discussions about long-term peaceful policies.

Who can apply?

The project aims to engage participants aged 18 to 35. Political or social engagement, as well as detailed knowledge of nuclear weapons or current nuclear policy, are not prerequisites for participation but are advantageous. An interest in learning more about long-term peacekeeping, a desire to engage in discussion, and a keenness to hike between 10–20km a day are a must!

Why should I participate?

Taking part in a Walkshop can be a very enriching experience. Joining us on these events means taking a step towards becoming advocates of peace. Through the discussion evenings and podcasts, you will also learn valuable information from experts, activists, and scholars.

The Walkshop will include accommodation and meals for the successful applicants, who will only have to finance their travel to and from Glasgow, Scotland.

When do applications open?

The applications for our upcoming Walkshop in summer 2025 will open at the start of 2025. More details about the application process, as well as the hiking routes, invited experts, and learning venues will follow in the weeks and months to come on our website. We look forward to receiving your application!

For more information please use the following link.
https://walk-for-the-future.info/5.walkshop-peacekeeping/home.html

Imprint