

Peace, War and Mass Violence: Concepts and their Realities

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In contemporary times the world peace order has suffered severe blows. Global mass violence has undergone significant changes since the second world war (WW2). The horrific death toll of WW2 of some 60 million victims, with most of them being civilians, who targeted and slaughtered as in the Holocaust in Europe and the Japanese atrocities in Eastern Asia was a bad omen for what was to come.

According to the world conflict index a majority of over 400 violent conflicts that have occurred since 1945 have been intra-state conflicts. About half of all violent conflicts were æethnicø in character or have been ethnicized. Only a few percent of all conflicts were genocides but this has historically been the most deadly form of mass violence.

Today most people die of atrocities not of war. The death toll of WW2 has already been passed in the 1980s; this was in what the UN defined as õpeace timesö. Today even õpeace timesö are deadly. The meaning of õpeace timesö on global scale is the absence of large-scale wars (õworld warsö) stretching over several continents. The term õworld warö itself is misleading since there was never a war involving all continents.

Deep changes in contemporary violent conflicts call for rethinking and adaptation of the basic concepts of peace, war, genocide and other mass violence in the 21st century.

Basic Concepts and Definitions

Wars and non-war types of mass violence, such as genocide or large-scale massacres and other atrocities, have to be clearly defined and distinguished. Actors and driving forces are distinct and have to be named and explained.

Peace

has in every society its own meaning and its own taste. Peace in its real meaning can best be approached in a Kantian way: According to Kant positive peace needs constant efforts.

While *negative peace* would only mean the absence of violence or war, *positive peace*

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would be in its own right and represent a new quality of non-violence. It consists of many different forms of peaceful, creative, social interaction.

Positive peace is a human condition that is characterized by respect of other humans, other cultures and societies. In such a peace order minorities are respected and protected; all peoples have a right to self-determination. All kinds of individual liberties and freedoms are guaranteed. There are no limits for freedom except that they should not infringe in a negative way on other people's lives. Positive peace includes respect of nature and the stop of ecologically disastrous trends, culminating in the Greenhouse effect and vast and dangerous climate change. Positive peace also includes a just economic order, with odious debts being forgiven, and a just world economic order, to replace WTO, IMF and the World Bank as the instruments of misery resulting in hundreds of millions impoverished and destitute in the Global South.

Positive peace exists as an incessant effort to approach it: it has existed and does exist today. There are many challenges in efforts of peace building. Methodologically the different aspects of it can best be approached by comparing different existing and types and what would be ideal types. Almost nobody thought of the advantage of elaborating a typology of peace. An attempt to do so can identify 21 such types, cases or transitional stages of peace by their scope, key principle, their time frame or period, their characteristics and aims.¹

Major wars and mass violence

are distinguished from other armed conflicts or massacres by various degrees of medium and high intensity, claiming usually more than an estimated 1,000 victims per annum or as an

¹ See Scherrer, CP: *Structural Prevention of Ethnic Violence. Regulating Conflict through Autonomy, Nationality Policies, and Self-governance*. Houndmills/New York: Palgrave, 2002; i.e. "Challenges of building peace", pp 71-82 (21 types of peace), and "Peaceful Conflict Settlement" ö, pp 83-103.

average during the course of the conflict (see CoW, SIPRI, a/o). In many cases the numbers of victims are contested. Governments tend to reduce the number of victims while rebels inflate numbers. Additionally, in most wars the adversaries exaggerate enemy casualties. Verification of numbers of battle-related deaths and (even more so) of massacre-related deaths is an awesome task. Most governments lie about their war activities; some even declare, like the USA-UK in Iraq, "not to do body counts". This is not true since they officially only count their own casualties, not the enemy's and there is silence and deception on the huge death toll among innocent civilians. US-UK rejected the only objective way of counting the death by country-wide cluster inquiry and analysis.² A mixed US-Iraqi team found that the US-UK aggression war vs. Iraq (a illegal war according to international law) claimed the staggering number of 655,000 victims of violence, predominantly civilians from March 2003 to July 2006.³

War

is defined as a violent mass conflict involving two or more armed forces as actors in warfare. Violent clashes and combat between the warring parties take place with some degree of continuity. Ethno-nationalist wars especially tend to become *protracted conflicts*.

² As in the earlier October 2004 study, between May and July 2006 an US-Iraqi team carried out "a national cross-sectional cluster sample survey of mortality in Iraq. 50 clusters were randomly selected from 16 Governorates, with every cluster consisting of 40 households. Information on deaths from these households was gathered." This method, usually in less sophisticated way, is used in opinion polls across the world and brings reliable results if used in a controlled way. It is the best method available.

³ 655,000 Iraqis killed by occupation forces since March 2003 until fall 2006. See Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy, Les Roberts: "Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey", in *The Lancet*, publ. 11 Oct 2006, downloadable at <http://www.thelancet.com/webfiles/images/journals/lancet/s0140673606694919.pdf>.

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Not in all cases the combatants on the side of the state actors are regular state armed forces (such as the military and police forces) but militias and other paramilitary troops also are involved. Not-state actors are mainly so-called liberation movements having regular guerrilla or partisan armies, often recruiting along ethnic, national or social class lines. Tribal militias, gangs, and other irregular forces have different agendas; they have less (or no) centralised control nor identifiable lines of command.

Structural Violence

is even more deadly than direct (military) violence. The term was used by Galtung to cover indirect forms of violence which are at least as deadly as wars and genocide. To give an example: According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Professor Jean Ziegler, some 40 million people die every year of starvation or lack of food and clean water. Two hundred million more are affected and suffer from various preventable diseases. Imagine, this means **almost 11,000 people die a premature and cruel death every day, and half of them are children!**

Terrorism

is sporadic, repeated or almost systematic violent action by clandestine gangs or by state elites who pursue illegitimate demands/aims and/or criminal interests by employing unjustifiable and criminal means, characterized by serious violations of human rights, committing war crimes (as defined by the Geneva conventions) or even crimes against humanity, whereby spreading fear and horror amongst defenceless populations by randomly or selectively targeting civilian victims. Many more people die from state terrorism (e.g. indiscriminate bombing) than from group terrorism, with state terrorism being infinitely more dangerous.

Non-war types of mass violence

are characterized by a separation of perpetrators of mass murder and their victims. In most cases the victimization and aggression is organised, supported, or tolerated by state actors. As

compared to asymmetries in many types of wars (regarding quality of weaponry, availability of resources, and level of training), in non-war mass violence there is a clear difference to be made between armed perpetrators and victimised non-armed civilians, which are by definition defenceless. The worst type of mass violence is genocide.

Genocide

is defined as state-organized mass murder and crimes against humanity characterised by the intention of the rulers to exterminate individuals because of belonging to a particular national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Definitions different from the binding one made in the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 are not relevant and should be rejected.

Mass murder

committed against members of a particular political group (called *politicide*) or of a social group (called *democide*) also constitutes a horrifying crime but does not legally fall under the UN Anti-Genocide Convention of 1948.

Most deadly regimes

in the 20th century have all committed total genocide against domestic groups, mainly their barbarian attempt to exterminate domestic national, ethnic or religious minorities.

Dominant groups

got into positions of command over the so-called monopoly of violence. Their assertive relationship toward ethnically distinct nationalities (*nations without their own state*) became the most important dangerous source of violent conflict since 1945, increasingly so with each cycle of decolonization.

Ethnic communities

can be defined as historically generated or (in some cases) rediscovered communities of people that largely reproduce themselves. An ethnic or communal group has a distinct name, which often simply signifies 'person' or 'people' in the ethnic community's language, a

specific heterogeneous culture, particularly, a distinct language, and a collective memory or historical remembrance, including community myths (myths of foundation or emergence relating to shared ancestry). This is producing a degree of solidarity between members, generating a feeling of belonging.

Ethnicity

as a term is used to describe a variety of forms of mobilization, which ultimately relate to the autonomous existence of specifically ethnic forms of socialization.⁴ However, no clear-cut distinction can be made between struggles by social classes and struggles by ethnic groups. To talk about the politicization of ethnicity seems tautological. Some actors deliberately try to influence and manipulate the identity set-up.

Changing Character of Mass Violence

Today, the most frequently dominant conflict type continues to be the ethno-nationalist (31,8%), followed by inter-ethnic wars (23,4%), with a strong increase, followed by anti-regime wars (19,6%) and gang wars (14%). The latter doubled compared to the mid-1990s: it includes warlordism and international terrorism. Decolonization wars and interstate conflicts stood at 4,7% each. Genocide (1.9%) remains the rarest type of violent conflict but the one with a high mortality.

⁴ **øEthnic communities** can be defined as historically generated or (in some cases) rediscovered communities of people that largely reproduce themselves. States usually label them as “**minorities**”. An ethnic or communal group has a distinct name, which often simply signifies -personø or -peopleø in the ethnic communityø language, a specific heterogeneous culture, particularly, a distinct language, and a collective memory or historical remembrance, including community myths (e.g., myths of foundation or emergence relating to shared ancestry). This is producing a degree of solidarity between members, generating a feeling of belonging.ø (See: Scherrer, CP: *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Violence. Conflict Management, Human Rights and Multilateral Regimes*. Aldershot/Burlington/Singapore: Ashgate, 2003, pp 34-35.)

Conflicts that acquired a dominant ethnic character (types B, D, E and G) account for 61.7 % (down from two third or 66.2 % in the decade 1985-94) of all contemporary violent conflicts since 1995.

On the one hand, *ethno-nationalism from below* is carried by a multitude of political movements at the grass roots and armed groups, with the support of large sections of a particular entity; it aims at the liberation or emancipation (often acting in self-defence) of a particular ethnic entity threatened by hostile governments or state-organized onslaught. On the other hand, *ethnicization from above* is usually carried out by the leaders of an alleged nation states in order to single out members of a particular national group, in order to exclude them from the mainstream society or even threaten their existence. In the worst case, ethnicization is a preparatory stage for genocide.

7-Type Classification of Mass Violence

The ECOR world conflict index is based on a 7-type classification of wars and mass violence:

- A. Anti-regime-wars, political conflicts; state versus insurgents
- B. Ethno-nationalist conflicts, mostly as intra-state conflicts (state versus nation), often cross-border or spill-over effects
- C. Interstate conflicts, state versus state, seen as -classic warsø
- D. Decolonisation wars or Foreign State Occupations
- E. Inter-ethnic conflicts, mainly non-state actors (exclusively so in communal conflicts)
- F. Gang wars, non-state actors (warlords, religious extremists and terrorists, mixed with organised criminal elements), esp. in situations of state failure or state collapse
- G. Genocide, state-organised, mass murder and major crimes.

The heterogeneous dynamic character of contemporary violent conflicts must be grasped adequately. ECOR index addressed this as such: besides pointing at a dominant type secondary and tertiary components were codified.

Trends

Contrary to common knowledge in the 20th century the number of battle-related victims was much less than the number of victims of genocide and mass murder. Genocide and atrocity prevention is therefore among the most urgent tasks for the 21st century.⁵

Complex Crisis, State Crimes and Collapse

In the 1990s a dramatic increase of extreme crisis situations and complex emergency cases led to an alarming increase of conflict-induced mortality in cases of protracted conflicts. The most deadly cases of mass violence since WW2 were the Indochina wars by US-UK and allies against the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians with a death toll of est. 12 millions. Though the Vietnamese troops won the war against the "superpower" in April 1975, the death toll is ongoing due to illegal weapons used by US-UK & allies such as Agent Orange (Dioxin causes similar congenital defects as the US nuclear weapons on Hiroshima/Nagasaki), other banned devices are chemical weapons and cluster bombs. Most cluster bombs were dropped on Laos, a poor isolated country that has threatened no one. Every day farmers and animals die.⁶ In a cumulative count the wars and slaughters ravaging Sudan⁷ since 1954 and

the Congo⁸ since the 1960s. and mainly since 1998, toll of over 4 million each. Iraq since August 1990 reach a death toll of over 4 million by sanctions and, on top of that, one million by warfare,⁹ which is a 5 million death toll and about as many victims as in the Korea war. The duration of unprovoked but deliberate, wilful and planned aggression and genocide by sanctions against the most innocent Iraqi civilians— children, babies, women, the poor, elderly and sick people—is already twice as long as the Second World War. Its combined death toll is continuing to grow unabated and has become the highest ever since the Holocaust.

The most deadliest places (measured according to the portion of a population killed or starved to death) are three others: North Korea is among the most deadliest place in the 20th century, with staggering death rates of 32 to 34% of all killed,¹⁰ as in Croatia and East Timor, the latter two both with large-scale genocides.¹¹

Sudanese regimes onslaught in southern Sudan and now in Darfur. At present this large-scale conflict is going on unabated. Earlier most of the victims died in South Sudan. Since 2003, after a peace agreement with the South enabled the regime to send troops to the West, to Darfur, where 2 millions have been uprooted since and probably 500,000 Africans died at the hands of Arab militias and bombardments by the Khartoum regime.

⁵ Article 2 of the *UN Genocide Convention* of 1948 defines: "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: a) Killing members of the group; b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." (download at http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm).

⁶ This is due to millions of bomblets hidden in the rice fields and all over the country. If a person or animal such as water buffalo or wild elephant steps on it, the leg will explode. If no hospital can be reached in short time the person will die a brutal death. Laos has many people with artificial limbs.

⁷ An estimated 4 million people became the victims of genocide, war, and famine, as consequences of successive

⁸ Despite peace accords and elections warfare goes on in many parts of the huge Congo, mainly in the east (Kivu South and North) and northeast (Ituri).

⁹ From August 1990 until November 2003—the formal but not the factual end of the impact of the sanctions—is based on the available data for certain categories of victims, and a conservative estimate of the missing data for five other categories of victims, the over-five mortality rate (O5MR), the women, the impoverished, the elderly and the sick, some four million Iraqis have died from a massive escalation in the country's mortality rate since sanctions were imposed by US-UK in 1990 (see part III), on the Hiroshima day (6 August!), the very day the same USA dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and started the nuclear age. Additionally over one million Iraqis have died of military attacks (400,000 in 1990-1 and 650,000 since March 2003). An unknown number of Iraqi, Kuwaiti and Saudi died of cancers caused by US illegal use of the banned uranium weapons.

¹⁰ North Korea was bombed with all legal and illegal weapons available at the time except for nuclear ones

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Another matter of concern is the proportion of gang wars (warlordism, (inter-) national terrorism, international *gansterism* and other organized crime) that grew exponentially, first almost doubling from 3.9 percent to 6.25 percent in a period of less than ten years and then further rising to one out of seven conflicts or 14 percent of all recent conflicts. The gang war type of conflict in the Congo is the most die-hard one. Despite the currently largest UN peacekeeping operation in the Congo, the conflict continues to this day.

Until the mid 1990s chaos power and warlordism characterized only a small number of all conflicts (every 16th), but gang wars increased even further, as I predicted some years ago, based on data covering the period up to 1996. This concern was based on evidence that the higher proportion of mentioned cases compared to the proportion of dominance of this type of post-modern conflict indicates a trend toward further increases in dominance and frequency. Additionally, one of the components and manifold actors of gang wars are terrorist organizations and this sub-type was recently undergoing a qualitative change.

The Creation of Terrorism by States

Though in the 1970s terrorism was quite prominent in several world regions (mainly in the Middle East but included the German RAF,

(due to the threat of retaliation by USSR). The US used anthrax and other illegal chemical weapons extensively; similar to agent Orange in Indochina, they kill until today. Together with the bombing of water dams there are the deeper causes for the concurrent famines in North Korea, with government failures added.

¹¹ The Croatian genocide was by the Ustashe Nazi puppet state vs. the Serbs, Roma, Jews and antifascists. The genocide in East Timor (Timor Loroçai) was committed by the Indonesian TNI army and police after their invasion in 1979. As much as one-third of the indigenous population may have died as a result of starvation, disease, and counterinsurgency operations carried out by the Indonesian Army since the late 1970s, making East Timor one of the world's deadliest places measured according to relative mortality (death rate per capita).

Italian Red Brigades and Japanese Red Army); it developed into some sort of network.

In the end 1970s US covert action against the Afghan communist-oriented regimes (Taraki and Amin) by the other-wise rather peace-minded Carter Administration created today's Islamist terror. The USA aimed at provoking a Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan (as disclosed by Brzezinski, the chief instigator).¹² Mid 1979 to early 1989 this was done by the build-up of a radical Mujaheddin front (later al-Qaeda and the Taliban) against the progressive government in Afghanistan. Islamist terror was sponsored by the USA under Reagan and Bush Sr., Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. A highly organized extremist Islamist movement developed. The al-Qaeda (the base) organization was trained by US special forces.

Al-Qaeda, a multi-national terror organization, was build-up for the task to destabilize the Central Asia republics of the Soviet Union.¹³ It was soon led by the charismatic Osama bin-Laden, who has been closely working with the CIA for a decade. After the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan US-support dwindled.

The former allies turned into enemies, provoked by US military presence in Saudi Arabia since 1991 and failed US policies in the Middle East, with a series of terrorist attacks on US presence in East Africa and the Middle East. The Bush Jr. government claimed that this culminated in attacking symbols of America's power in the USA itself, on September 11, 2001 (9-11). Meanwhile there are serious doubts about 9-11.

¹² Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski about how the US provoked the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan and starting the whole mess in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (France), Jan 15-21, 1998, p. 76. The former director of the CIA, Robert Gates (now US secretary of defense, replacing Rumsfeld), had stated in his premature memoirs [*From the Shadows*], that US services such as CIA began to equip and train the Islamists and other Mujaheddin in Afghanistan six months before the Soviet intervention.

¹³ In this period Brzezinski was the national security adviser to US president Carter; in the interview he claimed his building up of Al-Qaeda were the reason of the collapse of the USSR (sic!).