

BROADENING THE CONCEPT OF PEACE AND SECURITY

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Summary

Traditionally peace and war have been considered in terms of international relations, and peace has meant international peace, while war has referred to major interstate armed conflicts. The concept of security has been identical to national security. National security and national defense have become virtually synonymous, and emphasis has been put on the military aspects of security. The traditional arrangements for peace and security have been balance of power and collective security. However, the post-Cold War era has brought to the fore the problem of internal and domestic conflict. Efforts towards common security have to find innovative solutions to conflict resolution that go deep into the root causes of violence. With this change in the substance of security, a broader understanding of the concept of security is needed. Non-state collectivities, particularly nations and ethnic minorities, are also an important unit of analysis. Since some military and ecological threats affect the conditions of survival on the entire

planet, there is also an important sense in which security applies to the collectivity of humankind as a whole. What has emerged is a growing recognition of the desirability of a broader and more dynamic security approach, that is, comprehensive security.

With the challenges to the security environment, which has emerged from the late 1980s, the democratic peace proposition has come to enjoy considerable currency. The democratic peace proposition has in fact come to be reflected in the security policies and strategies of the major European states and international organizations. But, in Asia, some countries are strongly against the democratic peace approach and are emphasizing their own way.

1. Introduction

The quest for peace and security has dominated international thought since the earliest times of the history of international politics. It was in the late nineteenth century that for the first time, peace proposals proliferated as a consequence of the fear of the destructive power of war rather than simply the results of its outbreak. This tendency continued into the twentieth century and the avoidance of war and the maintenance of peace have become a first-order concern for political thought.

The concept of peace has traditionally been associated with the state of international relations. Broadly, three states of international relations can be identified: war, peace and no-war. The first, war, indicates a condition of actual armed conflicts taking place between states, whereas the second, peace, signifies either the cessation or absence of such conflicts. The fact that a state of actual belligerency does not exist does not necessarily mean that peace has been established. The third state, no-war, therefore indicates that conflict or an arms race between the parties would continue to form the framework of their confrontational relations. Traditionally peace and war have been considered in terms of international relations, and peace has meant first of all international peace, and war has referred to major interstate armed conflicts.

The quest for peace is often combined with the quest for security. The Charter of the United Nations, for example, holds up as a main purpose of its foundation “to maintain international peace and security.” Yet, there is a fundamental difference between the meaning of these concepts as well as their implementation. While the concept of peace focuses on the state of international relations, the concept of security is concerned with the condition of the actors in international politics.

Historically, security has been seen as a core value and ultimate goal of state behavior. Most observers of international politics in the twentieth century have had a common understanding of the concept of security. As traditionally conceived, security implies the following: that a state is free from the threat of war and that it feels safe from potential aggressors; and that it is able to pursue its national interests and preserve its core values. In this context, the threats implicit in war and potentially violent conflict situations raise acute national security questions for political leaders. Because ideas about security are centered upon states, security policy is primarily concerned with strengthening the military power of individual states, and with maintaining the general order in the states system. Thus the concept of security has come to be identical with

that of national security. Similarly national security and national defense have become virtually synonymous, and emphasis has been put on the military aspect of security.

Few people would deny that security, whether individual, national, regional or international, ranks prominently among the problems faced by humanity. National security is particularly central because states dominate many of the conditions that determine security at the other two levels, and states seem unable to coexist in harmony. Throughout the history of states, each has been made insecure by the existence of others. The military and economic actions of individual state in pursuit of their own national security have frequently combined with those of others to produce economic dislocation and war. Thus the quest for security by individual states can threaten international security. In addition, most people would agree that peace at the international level does not necessarily guarantee peace at the national or social levels. Even when international relations are at peace, people can still be suffering from poverty or oppression. As we come to question whose security, or what level of relations of peace it is that we should seek, the very concept of peace and security comes to be disputed.

2. The Quest for Peace and Security: Traditional Approach

2.1 Balance of Power

The international system has been based on an unswerving respect for the sovereign independence of states. That system has functioned, albeit with both successes and failures, since the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648. The Hobsonian explanation of war that war is a necessary feature or an outcome in a system of independent states, otherwise known as the anarchic state system, prevailed till the nineteenth century. International peace was contingent upon the balance of power among the big powers, with the underlying assumption that individual states are guarantors of security, prosperity and development. For nearly four centuries, the doctrine of balance of power has served as a blueprint for peace in the conduct of international diplomacy. Strategies of balancing, ally seeking and coalition building, of arms racing and defense spending were the common currency of classical peace and security policy making (see *Nationalism, Realism, International System*).

The balance of power argument holds that an equality of military strength between individual states or groups of allied states is a fundamental prerequisite for the preservation of peace. This argument rests on the assumption that all states are motivated by the desire to achieve supremacy over other countries, but would not attempt to do so at the risk of their own survival. This means that in order to achieve peace we need to ensure balance and equality in military strength among the various states or groups of allied states within the international system.

As a prescription for peace the balance of power proposition has several shortcomings which permeate not only its theoretical assumptions but also its practical implications. Some of these shortcomings are explained here: First, for a balance of power arrangement to work as a deterrent to war, each country needs to be able to accurately evaluate the military strength of the other and to determine whether a balance of power

does in fact exist. It is to a certain extent possible to evaluate a balance of power only if the source of national power is strictly confined to the numerical strength of the army. But as a matter of fact, the constituents of power are so complicated that there is still no way for any country in the world to accurately assess its enemies' capabilities.

Second, the theory of balance of power assumes perfect rationality in decisions made by political leaders to engage in war. It assumes that before going to war a country will evaluate the enemies' power and capabilities and make a rational decision to enter into a war based on its chances of victory. This is an unrealistic assumption however, because rational calculations are only one factor among the many competing considerations, which often shape a country collective, or a dictators individual decision to go to war. Indeed, more often than not, it is nationalistic hatreds, racial animosities, religious conflicts, or even the democratization process that drive countries into war, not level-headed and precise calculations of chances of victory. Therefore, facing an enemy of equal strength often does little to prevent war. In fact, even an army of far superior power cannot always persuade a weaker country to avoid military invasion.

Third, both theory and practice attest to the extreme difficulty of engineering a balance of power and maintaining it even if a balance has been achieved. Given the tendency of states to continually strive for supremacy rather than equality, states tend to fall into what is known as the security dilemma. The attempts of states to strengthen their own security tend, regardless of their intention, to lead to raising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive, and the measures of others as potentially threatening. A balance of power, even if achieved, is likely to be short-lived.

2.2. Collective Security

The balance of power arrangement at the beginning of the twentieth century did not work and the First World War broke out. Shortly after the war, a new discipline called international relations was developed in the US and UK, in particular. This new discipline sought to find non-systemic causes of interstate war, looking to such factors as the human psyche, imperialism, militarism, nationalism, and racism. Yet other observers, including leaders of world politics such as Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Lenin, focused their diagnoses of the origins of war at the level of states. According to these thinkers, it is not so much the international system of states that is the source of conflict and war, but the nature of the individual states. For Lenin, it is the capitalist states that became imperialist and thus were the driving force for war. He held that communists are pacifists and that world revolution would be the solution to the war problem. For Wilson, militarism and autocracy were the culprits. He believed that democracies are fundamentally peaceful.

Under the influence of Hobsonian realism, the new discipline of international relations, Wilsonian liberalism, and Marxist revolutionism, government leaders and academics developed a full roster of prescriptions and approaches to the problem of interstate war: disarmament, outlawry of war, judicial settlement of disputes, democratization of states, peace education, international exchange, international organizations and institutions, world federalism, world revolution, and collective security. Among the new approaches to international peace, perhaps the only security arrangement that could replace the

discredited balance of power system was the idea of collective security that was embodied in the League of Nations (see *Liberalism, Communist System, Socialism and Communism*).

The system of collective security is one in which all states agree to take action against any one and unspecified state, which breaks the peace. No country is strong enough to fight against all the other states in the world, and therefore it would not make sense to go to war. Theoretically, if the collective security worked, the international peace would be maintained. There were, however, some weaknesses established under the collective security system under the League of Nations. It was not truly collective in those big powers such as the US, which did not join the League, and Soviet Union, which was not invited to join, were not members of the League. Another weakness is that the collective action was limited to diplomatic and economic sanctions so that the collective security system was not strong enough to deter Germany, Japan and Italy from breaking the peace.

Learning a lesson from the failure of the collective security of the League of Nations, the founders of United Nations provided very clearly in the Charter for collective security. The Charter required member states to renounce the use of force among themselves and come collectively to the aid of any one of them which was attacked. As a collective military action the United Nations is empowered to organize the United Nations Forces.

The post-Second World War world posed a new the configuration of international politics. Due to the emergence of nuclear weapons with an unprecedented capacity of mass destruction, and the ideologization of international politics, the world came to be divided into two opposing blocs, thus marking the beginning of the Cold War. Because of the Security Councils veto system, collective security was never put to the test properly during the Cold War.

If collective security had worked as planned and military sanctions had been taken against any super power that broke peace, it would have led to the third world war. The basis of Cold War security was mutual nuclear deterrence, which reflected the overriding need to prevent any crisis from escalating into general war. The no-war relations between the East and West were maintained by the balance of terror. At the same time, during the Cold War nuclear disarmament held the center stage in the peace process pursued by a variety of international organizations, visionary politicians and grass-roots peace movements.

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Biographical Sketch

Gen Kikkawa is a professor in international relations at Graduate School of Law, Kobe University, Japan. He is also a professor at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University. He has been working on the OSCE and its preventive diplomacy. He is the author of *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* (in Japanese), Sanreishobou, 1994 and the editor of *Preventive Diplomacy* (in Japanese), Sanreishobou, 2000.