Philosophical and Ethical Foundations of Peace

Maricar Feliciano
Communications Head, Heavenly Culture, World Peace,
Restoration of Light (HWPL)
Email: maricarfeliz@gmail.com

Christopher Ryan Maboloc, PhD
Associate Professor, Ateneo de Davao University
Email: ryanmaboloc75@yahoo.com

Abstract

The concept of peace is a paradox. The state that desires peace also sometimes acts as the same beast that oppresses its people. Peace is a holistic concept that must be seen as something that goes beyond the absence of war. It has a social, economic, cultural, and political aspect. On a personalist level, it is rooted in the concept of the tranquility of a mind that is detached from the material world. From a social and political end, it can mean the idea of a consensus grounded in the basic principle of equality, respect for human rights and the dignity of persons. But broadly conceived, cosmopolitanism responds to the state-centric approach to peace in which the respect for human rights supersedes the concept of citizenship and sovereignty. The problem, however, is that state interests are a factor when the question of peace arises. Great Power politics has made the state coercive and protectionist in character, as Russia's war in Ukraine has shown. In this regard, peacebuilding mechanisms by the state may not always be in the best interest of peace.

Keywords: Peace-Building, Non-Violence, Negative/Positive Peace, Sovereignty

Introduction

Since the advent of humankind, the world has seen more wars and conflicts than peace. Historical greatness, for instance, is attached to the notion of power and territorial subjugation. The same holds true for religion and even in the global economic order. The unimpeded advance of modern civilization has required the annihilation of peoples and the conquest of land. The world has never been a quiet place. People sacrifice their lives in order to protect their basic liberties and rights. The irony of it is that blood must be spilled at all costs. Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that "war is a continuation of politics" remains true to this day.

The problem of peace can be linked to the disregard and lack of respect for the rights of people. Humanity finds itself in many historical conflicts as minorities and indigenous peoples struggle for emancipation and the recognition of their identity. The advance of modernization, for instance, necessarily entails Westernization. The importation of foreign goods also means the intrusion of Western values which may not be compatible to the lives of local people. In this way, globalization presents itself as an assault to some deeply cherished traditional values that are now long gone, replaced by moral individualism rooted in consumer culture.

While this investigation does not cover the whole historical breath of the problem nor the whole scope of the issue of peace, it shall attempt to provide the conceptual frameworks for the liberal or state-centric concepts of peace-building and the non-liberal or the spiritual aspect of peace. To do so, we attempt to appeal to Eastern philosophical paradigms to explain the latter and to Western political concepts to elaborate the former. The arguments expressed in the paper are not exhaustive, but this present work hopes to provide the foundational basis for understanding peacebuilding as a philosophical as well as an ethical concept.

Peace is a domestic as well as a geopolitical issue. The main claim of this paper is that state-centric approaches to peace-building seldom work. This can be observed in the examples that will be elaborated in this paper. The reason why this is so is the fact that the idea of sovereignty necessitates the advancement of state interests

over crucial issues such as human rights and social justice. The state is a coercive apparatus that forces its way into the lives of people and how history unfolds, which means that the problem of peace has never be resolved because of the character of state-centric nation building mechanisms that undermine peace. History is replete with events that will define the course of a nation's destiny, but more so, of the future of its people, who are heavily burdened by the remnants of past struggles, and the perpetuation of elitist systems that only favor the powerful but continue to ignore the authentic reason for every revolution – change in the lives people live.

Mahatma Gandhi and Non-Violence

Mahatma Gandhi was reacting to British Imperial Rule in India. Gandhi saw the value of the moral force of the truth in response to the oppression and discrimination that characterized the treatment of his people. But what is the meaning of this moral force? Gandhi says that "Truth and Love – *ahimsa* – is the only thing that counts. Where this is present, everything rights itself in the end. This is a law to which there is no exception."[1] Although he had a first-class ticket on a train going to Pretoria, South Africa, Gandhi was thrown out due to racial bias. This experience changed Gandhi's mindset. Gandhi was born in 1869 at a time when India was a British colony. But he was not born poor. A devoted son, he was born to merchant parents. Gandhi became a barrister after passing the bar exam in London. He planned to work as a lawyer but ended up working in South Africa, living a life of a rich boy. Events there, however, including the one mentioned above, awakened his desire to pursue justice and equality for his people. While in South Africa, he spoke for the rights of the Indian community.

Returning to India a changed man, Gandhi travelled the whole country to understand the condition of his people, speaking to them on the concept of human dignity, human freedom and their desire for independence. Gandhi employed non-violence as a way to react to government abuses. Indeed, Gandhi's life was full of symbolism – the spinning wheel, which to him meant economic independence in contrast to British industrial power, was viewed by him as a spiritual task. The Salt March, which captured the world's attention, was a form

---

[1] Mahatma Gandhi, *The Mind of Gandhi.* Compiled and edited by RK Prabhu and UR Rao. (Ahmedebad, India: Jitendara Desai, 1966), 114.

of civil disobedience. For Gandhi, Satyagraha (Truth) is "the most powerful of all, which to him serves the moral principle and absolute basis for all human conduct."[2]

The moral force of the truth comes in the form of non-violence. Ahimsa (non-violence) is the doctrine that has guided Gandhi's life, saying that "it is not one of inaction but of the highest action."[3] It is a positive injunction that compels the oppressor to feel remorse for his moral guilt. Ahimsa is not passive. Rather, it is active force since it pressures the oppressor to come to his senses. As a means to achieve peace, it is rooted in the idea that all human beings are equal in dignity and purpose. Gandhi's approach, in this way, can be seen as ethical since non-violence is founded on self-control and love.

But Gandhi was a paradox. One sees in the man someone who has become an ascetic, renouncing worldly things in favor of spiritual salvation. Gandhi made the freedom of his countrymen his primary goal. But he was also a shrewd politician who knows how to persuade his people toward a just cause. Gandhi worked with Jawaharlal Nehru, who later become India's first Prime Minister, to advance Indian independence, and in order to unify Hindus and Muslims in India, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of modern-day Pakistan. India's triumvirate might as well be regarded as the birth of a New Rome, who had to build a brand-new state from the ground up after getting its freedom from British control. The irony that one finds in the lives of the triumvirate, and the consequences with which their destinies have been intertwined, are a product of imperial rule. The violent ending that will happen to Gandhi, least expected for a man who only wanted peace, often characterizes the tragedy of every revolution whose heroes have become the victim of the same struggle for freedom.

Civil disobedience was an important component of Gandhi's moral protest against British rule. It buttresses the argument that a citizen does not have any moral duty to comply with a law or anything mandated by the state if the same is unfair. Gandhi was assassinated in 1949 by a Hindu nationalist. The conspirators accused him of betraying India and of indirectly causing the partition of the country. Prior to his assassination, Gandhi protested (by fasting), as he asked

---

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 152

the newly-independent India to give to Pakistan its share of resources as part of the partition deal. To some Hindu nationalists, it was seen as if Gandhi was sympathizing with their new enemy. The problem of peace is political as well as a religious issue. The partition was along religious lines. Indeed, cultural imperialism as one of the faces of oppression, a concept elaborated by Iris Marion Young, has defined for many societies the future of their democracies and brand of politics.[4] For Gandhi, his desire that India should honor the terms of the partition was consistent with his ethical position. But Hindu nationalists saw it as a betrayal of their faith. In the end, Gandhi became a victim of the ills of politics.

Non-Liberal Concepts of Peace

Our interest in elaborating non-liberal concepts of peace is to show, firstly, that there is an alternative to capitalism and the consumer-driven lifestyle of the West. The problem of peace is also a question of values. Societies are defined by the way people see things. How people relate to each other depends on their sense of identity. This sense of identity, in most cases, has been stolen with the onslaught of materialism. In a way, it is fairly common to say that capitalism is an economic system that is defined by greed and profit-making. It is in this way that a return to a bio-centric way of life, in which self-realization is determined on the basis of enlightenment (or self-realization in the spiritual sense, not in terms of the Western conception of a mere potential becoming real), is considered important, although this aspect of peace appears to be centered on the individual and how the same lives his everyday existence.

Non-liberal concepts of peacebuilding are usually rooted in the principles and the moral force of religion. For instance, Buddhism offers a view of reality and a way of life.[5] It is a belief anchored in the idea that all beings suffer. Suffering in this way is the reality of existence. But suffering, the Buddha tells us, has a cause. The cause is human desires. In this sense, we must ask ourselves the nature of our

---

[4] Iris Marion Young, "The Five Faces of Oppression," Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy. Edited by Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty. (New York: Mc-Graw Hill, 2002), 342-343.

[5] SR Bhatt, "Buddhist Economics of Compassion and Communion," *Prajna Vihara: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 9:1 (2008): 88.

desires. For Buddhists, as long as man exists, he has desires. The idea in this way is cleansing our desires. What causes suffering, Buddhism teaches us, is our attachment to material things. Material things perish. Unlike love, material longings lead us to more desires. As a result, we live a life of discontentment. Every type of satisfaction, ergo, is something that is temporary. The Buddhist concept of nirvana, or release, is meant to liberate people from their desires.

Another dimension of non-liberal peace concepts comes from Zen Buddhism. One strong pillar in understanding peace as rooted in spirituality is based on the idea of the person as whole. But what does it mean to be whole? Zen Buddhism tells us that being whole is beyond logic and defies reason.[6] Reason, in this way, is not the sole basis of knowing the truth. To see the truth in a holistic way requires something beyond empirical observation. The Buddhist notion of peace building, for example, stresses the idea of love and compassion. Peace is a spiritual as a well as moral experience. It means to practice a worldview that is based on the concept of unity.[7] What is the meaning of this unity? It is rooted in understanding reality as one. This means that man is not just an economic being but also a spiritual one. Being spiritual does not mean we disregard the economic aspect of our existence. It only means that we should not limit ourselves to the material definition of human life. SR Bhatt writes:

> Buddhist economics is essentially characterized by love and compassion, benevolence and altruism, interdependence and interrelation, mutual openness and reciprocity, fellowship and participation, plenitude and happiness, giving and renouncing, caring and sharing.[8]

Christianity also brings the same message. Kenneth Obiekwe says that "the Christian pacifist perspective of peacemaking and peacebuilding sees peace as rightly the work of justice, for love, which

---

[6] Alfredo Co, *Philosophy of the Compassionate Buddha*, (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2003), 106.

[7] Juichiro Tanabe, "Beyond Liberal Peace: Critique of Liberal Peace-building and exploring a Post-Liberal Hybrid Model of Peacebuilding for a more Humane World," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 5:1 (2019): 20.

[8] Bhatt, "Buddhist Economics of Compassion and Communion," 88.

is at the heart of human dignity and relationship, cannot be separated from justice."[9] For Karl Gaspar, religion matters in achieving peace by emphasizing the importance of a "conscientization process".[10] Peace is founded on social justice. Given its political context and a long history of conflict, peacebuilding in Mindanao has been largely a product of interreligious dialogue in which both the leaders of the Catholic Church, Indigenous Peoples, and Islam have worked hard to help realize peace in the Bangsamoro region. The quest for peace is part of the nation-building process that is anchored in the basic principle of autonomy and the principle of a shared responsibility.

Conceptually, Netra Sharma explains that "peace is commonly understood as absence of hostility. Social peace is often defined as the lack of conflict or violence in a society."[11] In the Buddhist philosophy of peace, Juichiro Tanabe explains that there should respect for equality and human dignity.[12] Some comparison can be helpful. On one hand, capitalism emphasizes human creativity for the sake of self-satisfaction. Buddhist economics, on the other hand, insists on working with others, not taking advantage of others. It is spiritual and philosophical at the same time. Peace is attained, in this regard, since people value kindness, concern, and love for other human beings. For capitalists, it is about self-interest and leverage.

Our world is ruined by the superficial nature of the capital-driven consumer world. People spend more time building a reputation instead of developing their inner character and integrity as persons. Many people are far more concerned about projecting an image of themselves. The internet and the advent of social media might have contributed to the anxieties of many people, especially the young. For instance, algorithms are designed to enable social media users to engage but the same has also been weaponized to promote hate online and as a result, people are more divided. Social media (Twitter,

---

[9] Kenneth Obiekwe, "Emmanuel Levinas's Personalist Philosophy and Christian Pacifism: Towards a Responsible Process of Peace-making/Peacebuilding," *Prajna Vihara: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 9:1 (2008):108.

[10] Karl Gaspar, "Patterns of the Mindanao Catholic Church's Involvement in Social Issues." In Making Civil Society, edited by Miriam Coroner-Ferrer (Quezon City: Third World Studies, 1997), 166.

[11] Netra Sharma, "From Inner Peace to World Peace: Buddhist Meditation in Practice," In Journal of International Affairs 3 (2020): 134.

[12] Tanabe, "Beyond Liberal Peace…", 22.

Facebook, etc.) give people the platform to attack their fellows online, which often leads to emotional harm and humiliation. Big Tech profits from such kind of relationship. Populist leaders also use the same to rally their rabid supporters in order to instigate attacks.

As a counter-argument, Jonathan Haidt explains that our political leanings are not rooted in reason but in gut feeling.[13] Haidt argues that men and women evolved from group attachments in the same way as primates. There is no flaw to this design as we all are rooted in a moralistic strife given the primordial reality of conflict between groups. In which case, conflict is normal. Since we use logical reasoning in judging human character, we easily see others as fools or idiotic, thus the labels we attribute to adversaries. In reality, it has nothing to do with morals. People act this way because they want to defend our own kind. Incidentally, for Haidt, the notion of group attachment is something that is often associated with the politics of nation-states.[14] In fact, it is not the truth that people are fighting for nor are fighting over. Rather, they are simply defending their own version of the truth. The truth does not need to be protected. It is what protects us.

Liberal Concepts of Peace

The devastation from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagazaki (August 9, 1945) is a stark reminder that the two and only instances when an atom bomb was used in a conflict should be the last. Albert Einstein, who presented the idea of creating the first nuclear weapon to President Franklin Roosevelt, regretted it and later campaigned for nuclear non-proliferation. The Manhattan Project, headed by the mathematician J. Robert Oppenheimer, was meant to develop a weapon that will give the United States the supreme advantage against its enemies. The surrender of Japan marked the end of the Second World War. But the world did not attain real peace. The Soviet Union would soon develop its own nuclear weapons and maintain an arsenal, highlighted by the Cuban missile crisis, thus bringing the world closer to an apocalypse during the Cold

---

[13] Jonathan Haidt, The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion, (New York: Vintage Book, 2013), 18.
[14] Christopher Ryan Maboloc, "The Radical Politics of Nation States: The Case of President Rodrigo Duterte." In *Journal of ASEAN Studies* 6:1 (2018): 1.

War. The Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and finally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, an event that Russian President Vladimir Putin considers as the greatest political disaster of his country.

According to John Mearsheimer, Western liberals want to control the world by imposing democracy, promoting a global free market economy, and developing international relations.[15] For the longest time, Western powers have exerted enormous efforts to subdue non-democratic societies, especially in the Middle East, in order to insist on the Western style of governance. This offensive type of political realism is the essence of Great Power politics. The West can fall into some form of hypocrisy in criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine. Russia, Mearsheimer argues, wants to protect its territory from NATO's expansion (North Atlantic Theory Organization). But NATO is nothing more than a stark reminder of the Cold War. Mearsheimer is therefore blaming the West for the Russian aggression. Meanwhile, the US was unilateral in its past war efforts. Iraq and Afghanistan, both invaded by the United States and its allies, with the intent of building a society that is based on liberal and democratic values, remain fragile societies.

Liberalism is anchored in the strong belief that Western democracy ensures peace and stability among states. In Afghanistan, the US spent more than two trillion dollars in 20 years. The subsequent occupation was a result of the 9/11 Terror Attacks that Al Qaeda code-named "Holy Tuesday".[16] The US, however, lost to the Taliban. President Joseph Biden withdrew all US Forces in the country in August of 2021. According to Tanabe, "with economic interdependence framed by free trade, democratic states do not go to war with each other by complying with international law to resolve their disputes. Liberal peace theory posits that democracy and free-trade economic interdependence consolidate both national, regional and international order and stability."[17] Liberal peace building includes the idea of negotiation, resource allocation, group-

---

[15] John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 7.

[16] Peter Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between Al Qaeda and America*. (New York: Free Press, 2011), 5.

[17] Tanabe, "Beyond Liberal Peace-building…", 24.

differentiated rights, and greater participation in nation-building. This includes a consensus that is based on constitutional essentials and the protection of territorial integrity.

State-centric concepts of peace building is based on a rational process in which power relations in the state are well-defined. Thomas Hobbes, in the *Leviathan*, says that the people must submit themselves to the will of the Sovereign. The Sovereign refers to the general will, which is not the sum of all wills, but the "will of the people."[18] In practice, as states pursue justice and equality, governments that are faced with local insurgencies look into mechanisms that can operationalize the idea equality, which actually requires convincing rebel groups that they will get what they want in terms of what they say they have been deprived of. This includes the right to govern and enjoy a greater share of the resources of the state. However, it is safe to say that the real impetus why blood is shed and human lives are sacrificed is nothing but power, which in the end will be too difficult to handle for those who take over the control of the state and its mechanisms.

The world has seen the rise of terrorism and populist states in recent years that has resulted to political conflicts, both internal and external. Political realism teaches that, states will only behave and cooperate with other states if there is mutual benefit.[19] The term bullying, which was used in the past to describe the attitude of persons against helpless others, is now a prominent concept when describing the relationship between a powerful and a weak state. The same has calamitous impact in terms of the liberties of the citizens of poor societies, whose autocratic leaders deprive them of a voice by silencing their ability to participate in democratic processes in meaningful ways. The warfront is not yet outer space, but powerful countries continue to lord it over against helpless states because of their military superiority and economic might. Developing countries depend on the mercy of economic behemoths who dictate the terms of global trade and finance. Bad guys continue with their wicked ways in manipulating global financial systems and trade policies in order to favor corporate interests and greed, writes Joseph Stiglitz in *The Great*

---

[18] Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan.* (London: Harper, 1961), 78.
[19] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*. Second Edition. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 45.

Divide.[20] Sergio Marriotti warns that "the emergence of an economic nationalism built on a country's identity, security, power, unity, and on policy instruments aimed at protecting national economic and social structures."[21]

Another key concept is identity politics. Inclusive democracy is at the heart of the politics of identity.[22] It is rooted in the idea of group-membership, class, or a sense of commonality in terms of nation and culture.[23] The idea of inclusion is rooted in pluralism, which means that mainstream society must be open to indigenous cultures. While the concept and actual practice of indigenous spirituality can serve as the background of a philosophy of peace, the essential or natural element in such a philosophy is about the respect for indigenous rights and the notion of inclusivity since marginalized peoples struggle to participate in the societal culture and interact peacefully with the majority. The question is therefore political, not spiritual. To respond to the concerns of people in the margins, there is a need to protect basic rights, language rights, and land ownership, and the right to practice a unique way of life or pursue local wisdom and the right to worship.

From an ethical end, the problem of peace now takes a cosmopolitan turn. As a theory, cosmopolitanism is meant to be understood broadly, and should rightly encompass the economic, cultural, and political relationships among nations and peoples. Accordingly, Kant's view means that "we have a duty to peace and that we have a duty to act in a peaceful manner, in that we can only universalize ethics if we consider others, and this at the very least implies a commitment to peace."[24] But beyond the duty of assistance, rich states can consider redistributing global wealth, opening borders

---

[20] Joseph Stiglitz, *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and what We can do About it*, (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 7.

[21] Sergio Mariotti, "A warning from the Russian-Ukrainian War: Avoiding a Future that rhymes with the Past," Journal of Industrial and Business Economics (2022), 5. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40812-022-00219-z

[22] Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 327.

[23] Ibid., 328.

[24] Jim Page, "Philosophy of Peace," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2020). https://iep.utm.edu/peace/

to economic and political refugees, and improving citizenship rights to migrants and their families.

But it is easier said than done. Ideal Theory in politics would love to assert that peace is possible in the world. People do not empathize with those who are not their fellows. Nationalism is a problem when we begin to think about how we can humanize the world. Powerful regimes do not see the victims of conflicts as humans. They see them as mere numbers. Mearsheimer has shown that the great powers have the tendency to bully their way into global domination.[25] Why? According to Kenneth Waltz, a standard of justice is absent in international relations as, "states produce their situations."[26] The principle of sovereignty, from a global vantage point, simply means one thing, and that is the protection of national interest. Making peace in the world can be a mere façade of the interests of powerful nations. It is all about political positioning. The safety of civilians is last in terms of priority.

The present war in Ukraine is just one example as to how the United Nations, including the UN Security Council, can be held hostage by the politics in the real world. Russia, being a nuclear superpower, knows that NATO or the United States for that matter, cannot intervene directly inside Ukraine. While the US and its allies have been supplying defensive weapons to Ukraine, including missiles and anti-tanks, the reality on the ground is that Russia's neighbor has been devastated to the ground, with estimates ranging from 100 billion to 500 billion dollars if it were to be rebuilt should the war come to an end. Apparently, Mearsheimer has blamed the West for Russia's war in Ukraine, arguing that NATO has slowly expanded its membership, thus creating an existential threat to Russia, an argument often mentioned by Russian bureaucrats to justify the war.[27]

The Russian war in Ukraine has put global leaders at a quandary. They want to stop Putin but they also know that they can't. A lesson from history might be helpful. The 1938 Munich Agreement, signed by

---

[25] Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion*, 7-8.
[26] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. (Chicago: Waveland Press, 2010), 52.
[27] John Mearsheimer. "Why is Ukraine the West's fault?" University of Chicago. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrMiSQAGOS4

Germany and Great Britain, which has sought to appease Adolf Hitler, actually tolerated the German dictator's expansion in Europe and did not make the continent secure, eventually resulting to the most devastating conflict of all. First, Hitler annexed Austria, then Sudetenland, then entered into a dubious treaty not to go to war to Russia as both Germany and Russia sought to divide Poland for themselves. Eventually, Hitler would attack Russia through Operation Barbarosa, against the wishes of his generals, who argued that Germany cannot win a war on two fronts. The Wehrmacht, capable but weary, lost the Russian front as the Russian winter limited their advance and froze their armaments. The Second World War resulted to more than a hundred million casualties and over 50 million deaths. Right now, nobody knows how the war in Ukraine can come to an end. The mutually assured destruction in any nuclear conflict limits the manner of intervention by NATO and at the same time acts as a deterrent that prevents the escalation of the present conflict into a total war.

Tanabe's Four Models of Peace

The preceding section has not offered a definitive sense as to how liberalism can help achieve or even maintain peace. That is not a matter of competence. Rather, it is a question of limitation. To elaborate on this issue, Tanabe writes about the four models of peace building. First, the basic needs model is based on a universal human agenda.[28] In this approach toward conflict resolution, there is that desire to achieve for everyone their primary physiological and psychological needs. Such includes provisions for basic welfare – sufficient income, food, and shelter. People who are oppressed possess the bold resolve toward self-determination, but in the end, what they actually want is for their families to have enough in order to live well.[29] This model appears to be inward-looking, with emphasis on the individual's capacity to attain self-growth in the midst of deprivation and scarcity. It is, however, inadequate the moment we consider the dialectical understanding of social and economic injustices. Structures cause violence. By themselves, some practices, norms or rules impede the growth of people. As such, the reality of conflict is something that has deep historical and cultural roots.

---

[28] Tanabe, "Beyond Liberal Peace-building…", 26.
[29] Ibid.

Second, in the structural or social model, there is a need to look into the root of conflict in every society. There are inequalities, both obvious and latent, that need to be addressed by the societal structures. Government institutions need to be reformed or society should be redesigned to level the playing field. This requires dismantling unjust systems and unfair competition in the market. This will also necessitate an enhancement of the political culture and a common vision for society amidst all the diversity and differences. Deep structural injustices often result to a hegemonic divide. The resulting antagonism is a consequence of the reality of democratic exclusion of the marginalized. Poverty cannot be simply solved by mathematical equations since there are powerful political forces societal structures.

Third, the epistemic model suggested by Tanabe considers the politics of identity. In this view, society considers the biases of people against others. As conscious human beings, people possess values, a point of reference, and fundamental worldviews.[30] It is often the case that the conflicts people find themselves in are mostly ideological in nature. People lack the ability to be tolerant. The clash of cultures is actually a matter of one party being biased against another. We lack of capacity for tolerance. It is not a clash of civilization but a lack of understanding of the other. The other (the poor, the homeless, the refugee) is seen as alien or an outsider who has no right to enjoy the things that the majority possess. In this way, the politics of exclusion can figure significantly in social and political conflicts.

Tanabe argues that the problem of peace should be seen in an integrated way. It does not only concern political or economic interests. What is at issue is our humanity. In the holistic approach to peace building, people go back into the foundation of human dignity and consider what makes us all human. This necessitates, as a matter of principle, the respect for difference and the recognition of the sacred value of human life. People lack a sense of empathy for what others have suffered. By putting oneself into the situation of the victims of unjust wars, empathy enables one to have the compassion for the other, and in the words of Tanabe – to feel sorry – for the

---

[30] Ibid.

injustices experienced by others. The desire to achieve the common good need not be violent. In this sense, we need to believe in the innate goodness of the human being and have confidence in our own humanity.[31]

Negative/Positive Peace

Some forms of violence are either structural or systemic in nature. On one hand, structural violence refers to those social and economic forces that limit the freedoms or liberties of people by excluding them in social activities or processes.[32] An example of this is racism. Systemic violence, on the other hand, is about those patterns of behavior, practices, and policies that are built within the political, social, and economic structures that harm an individual. The caste system in India, for instance, is an example. From a development perspective, an important view that seeks to overcome both structural and systemic violence comes from the works of Johan Galtung. In his theory, the concept of peace should be understood relational in character.[33] Jim Page explains the notion of integrated peace:

> an integrated typology of peace, comprising: direct peace, where persons or groups are engaged in no or minimal direct violence against another person or group; structural peace, involving just and equitable relationships in and between societies; and cultural peace, where there is a shared commitment to mutual support and encouragement.[34]

Negative peace is about "a lack of harmony" whereas positive peace is the "presence of harmony."[35] For Galtung, culture plays a role in structural violence in society. Galtung's concept of positive peace is rooted in the idea of building just and sustainable institutions where people's rights are secured and there exists a shared concept of progress. This is the meaning of inclusive growth. Positive peace in

---

[31] Ibid., 27.
[32] Johann Galtung. "Violence, peace and peace research." Journal of Peace Research 6:3 (1969):167.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Page, "Philosophy of Peace."
[35] Galtung, "Violence, peace and peace research," 169.

this way is structural in nature. Solidarity in society exists when there is a sense of unity or a commonality of vision. In contrast, negative peace is one that "may be characterized as the absence of violence or the fear of violence."[36]

The study of conflict points to the use of non-violent means to put an end to war. Peace should be pursued on the basis of the respect for the dignity of people. The German experience after the war is founded on Christian democracy in which human dignity takes the center stage. Konrad Adenauer and the Christian democrats anchored their policies on a free market that allowed people to exercise their freedoms and act responsibly by means of the principle of subsidiarity. The idea of subsidiarity rests in the ideal of trust and responsibility. While the Marshall Plan provided Germany with the means to rebuild its society from the devastation caused by Nazi atrocities, Christian democracy empowered the German people to have faith in democracy once again and usher prosperity for its people, although the experience of West Germany had to consider the difficult realities of the division of the country after the war.

Peace can only be attained through the expansion of human freedom whereby the person is able to achieve his or her fullest potential. Education, in this regard, matters first and foremost. In the case of women, this requires allowing them to nurture their abilities and competence that allow them to flourish in society without any forms of impediments to their capacity for rational judgment. In the worship of religion, the pursuit of peace necessitates basic respect and inter-religious dialogue, one that is guided by understanding the universal truth of the value of human life. Liberalism understands the role of religion in the public sphere. Indeed, the idea of justice, equality, and respect for human rights should be not seen as obligatory fictions.

Democracy for Galtung "involves a set of legal rules which may or may not legitimize structural violence."[37] The irony is democratic societies like the United States are peace-loving internally but appear to be belligerent in terms of their behavior abroad, engaging in wars

---

[36] Ibid.

[37] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publishing, 1996), 33.

and other conflicts. For Galtung, the "long term goal is the abolition of war as an institution, just like the abolition of slavery and colonialism as institutions, an entirely realistic goal but demandingly difficult and absolutely necessary."[38] Today, the West is battling a war against terrorism, which threatens a way of life rooted in personal comfort and convenience. Meanwhile, poor countries are battling extreme poverty against the background of unjust global states of affairs.

Negative peace tells us that the absence of coercion does not necessary solve the lack of human development. Positive peace, in contrast, should be realistic when it comes to the reality of human struggle that drive people into poverty and powerlessness. This means that uneven structures should be reformed. Basic moral principles such as justice and equality must not be seen as necessary fictions but the foundation in establishing a truly peaceful world. Societies must overturn decades of abuses and exploitation. Every person has a moral worth. This moral worth is the primary value and impetus that should be considered in the design of democratic and people-centered institutions. To achieve peace, respect for the basic rights of people necessitate the dismantling of unjust institutions.

On Peace Movements

Peace movements are crucial in realizing structural reforms that can lead to a peaceful resolution to decades of conflict. The lack of progress and development contribute to a sense of exclusion which often results to rebellion. Poverty is a manifestation of a lack of opportunity. However, the injustices have historical roots. Peace movements have helped put Mindanao into the path to peace after decades of conflict and systemic oppression. Through a series of peace talks, dialogues, and negotiations, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) finally signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro on March 27, 2014. The efforts initiated by the government and the steadfast interventions by civil society groups have greatly contributed to conflict resolution.

---

[38] Ibid., 5.

A notable example would be the peace movement initiated by the Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL). On May 25, 2013, Korean war veteran, Lee Man-hee, established HWPL in Seoul, South Korea with the goal of advocating for global peace and cessation of war. He visited Mindanao and met with local leaders proposing a civilian-led peace agreement. Hon. Esmael G. Mangudadatu, then Governor of Maguindanao, and Archbishop-Emeritus Fernando Capalla of the Archdiocese of Davao responded to the call for peace by signing the proposed peace agreement on January 24, 2014 in General Santos City. As representatives of the Muslim and Catholic communities, both leaders pledged to collaborate for peacebuilding regardless of religious differences.

The peace monuments symbolize the hopes and efforts of the Filipinos towards the realization of peace in the region. These monuments marked the end of a conflict and the beginning of peacebuilding. Such markers serve as a reminder to us, citizens, that as long as we embody the spirit and culture of peace, we can be living peace monuments who will become peacemakers in our homes, schools, workplaces, communities and nation. It is the people who are the main actors in peacebuilding, driven by their experience as victims of war, discrimination and oppression through generations. The rectification of historical exclusion comes as the main frame of mind whenever civil society groups in Mindanao pursue dialogue among groups and stakeholders. People empowerment requires well-meaning individuals who inspire communities.

HWPL Chairman Lee empathizes with the victims of war in Mindanao, as one who had fought during the civil war which resulted to the separation of the North and South Korea. In the same way as the Bishop and Ulama Conference have exerted great effort to foster the climate of dialogue, HWPL's initiative is a concrete way for peace movements to make a lasting impact in helping realize for a people a life that is respectful of the dignity of human beings. During the rebuilding of Germany after the Second World War, the principle of respect for human dignity was an important source of inspiration in terms of changing the mindset of the German people who have been under Nazi rule. Chairman Lee is a man who, while carrying his memories of tragedy, positively embraced his role in educating the younger generation on conflict prevention so as not to repeat history.

Chairman Lee says that "no wealth or fortune can be worthy of a legacy that lasts for generations, but a peaceful world free of wars—a world of freedom, peace and love. These are what we must leave as an inheritance for our children's generation. This is the work we are called for in our time. It is on us as humankind to fulfill this goal."[39]

Peacebuilding is a shared responsibility; therefore, it can only be realized through strong collaborative efforts. The key to achieve peace is to sow peace in the minds of the people. Like a seed, it will grow and become a driving force in every individual to proactively work for peace based on mutual understanding, respect and harmony. Civil society sectors such as education, religion, youth and women must work hand-in-hand with each other and with the government in order to provide a holistic approach to peacebuilding that will address the needs of the people especially in the grassroots of society. People know that there are conflicts given the reality of our time. However, we have to have the resolve to pursue the cause of peace and help achieve justice for the people, especially those in the margins of society.

One person alone cannot change the world. But as the famous quote goes, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". With all the negative effects of war and violence that people are experiencing as part of the global community, we have a choice as individuals: to observe and do nothing, or to do something. If one person decides to do something in any way that he or she can, there will be a ripple effect that will bring about change in the society. In this way, civil society plays a crucial role. Peace movements can bring real hope into this world. The other alternative, human despair, is never acceptable. Societies must overcome the hegemonic nature of the type of power relations that only favor entitled nations and individuals because it is in our best interest to protect the dignity of humanity if we are to live in a just world.

---

[39] Lee Man-hee. 2021, April 28. "HWPL's 5th Annual Commemoration of the Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW),"
https://youtu.be/b6kjW18X2q8?t=4406

Conclusion

Structural and state-centric approaches are crucial when it comes to the problem of peace. The reality of human conflict cannot be reduced into the personalistic dimension but must also be considered from the point of view of unjust structures and power relations that force people into difficult situations. The analysis has shown that state-centric mechanisms that are protective of national interest harm societies and perpetuate conflicts. The desire to look into an integrated approach, which is anchored in the holistic understanding of personhood, is proper, but can be dismissive of the real cause of violence – the prejudice against people and the tendency of power to be offensive in its stance, as in the case of Great Power politics. But is there hope in the world? Perhaps, this question is about humanity finding the right principles and reasons for a peaceful co-existence.

The value of liberalism in peacebuilding remains relevant. Recognizing the freedoms of people is crucial in the attainment of a life that is well-lived. This is because such freedom is constitutive of the dignity of persons. People should not be reduced to mere means to an end or seen as economic objects. This is the hardest struggle in a society that is capital-driven and whose elite are focused on profit-making. The idea of equality or fairness requires that states should recognize the needs of people, how policies and institutions impact them, and the roots of oppression in the past. In the politics of our time, war has many victims but it also calls for each to be human and act in a humane way. Safety and protection, in this way, should be extended to war refugees or economic migrants. In this sense, respect for human rights compels us to accept the fact that we have a moral duty to show compassion and love to people.

History is a witness to the demise of many types of autocracy because humanity cannot allow freedom to perish from the earth. The war in Ukraine complicates the matter that we are trying to address. Great power politics is a difficult stance but it is used to justify the aggressive efforts by powerful states in subjugating other societies. But the reality of war often leads to a further realization. Germany, for instance, rose from the war after the devastation that was essentially caused by Hitler and Nazi atrocities. The future of a country is something that is hard to predict. But there are means to achieve

peace and stability in the state. Peace movements, for instance, are important. The resolution of every conflict cannot rest on the basic principle that every war should come to an end but also in the acceptance of the fact that every conflict has a unique cause that must be addressed.

References

Bergen, Peter. 2011. *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between Al Qaeda and America*. New York: Free Press.

Bhatt, SR. 2008. "Buddhist Economics of Compassion and Communion." *Prajna Vihara: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 9:1 (2008): 86-95.

Bull, Hedley. 1995. *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*. Second Edition. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Co, Alfredo. 2003. *Philosophy of the Compassionate Buddha*. Manila: UST Publishing House.

Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, peace and peace research." Journal of Peace Research 6 (3):

Galtung, Johan. 1996. *Peace by Peaceful Means*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing.

Gandhi, Mahatma. 1966. *The Mind of Gandhi.* Compiled and edited by RK Prabhu and UR Rao. Ahmedebad, India: Jitendara Desai.

Gaspar, Karl. 1997. "Patterns of the Mindanao Catholic Church's Involvement in Social Issues." In Making Civil Society, edited by Miriam Coroner-Ferrer. Quezon City: Third World Studies.

Haidt, Jonathan. 2013. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage Book.

Hobbes, Thomas. 1961. *The Leviathan.* London: Harper.

Lee, Man-hee. 2021. "HWPL's 5th Annual Commemoration of the Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW)." HWPL. https://youtu.be/b6kjW18X2q8?t=4406

Kymlicka, Will. 2003. *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maboloc, Christopher Ryan. 2018. "The Radical Politics of Nation States: The Case of President Rodrigo Duterte." In *Journal of ASEAN Studies* 6 (1): 1-24.

Mariotti, Sergio. 2022. "A warning from the Russian-Ukrainian War: Avoiding a Future that rhymes with the Past," *Journal of*

Industrial and Business Economics. Volume 5. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40812-022-00219-z

Mearsheimer, John. 2018. "Why is Ukraine the West's fault?" University of Chicago. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrMiSQAGOS4

Mearsheimer, John. 2018. *The Great Delusion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Obiekwe, Kenneth. 2008. "Emmanuel Levinas's Personalist Philosophy and Christian Pacifism: Towards a Responsible Process of Peace-making/Peacebuilding." *Prajna Vihara: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 9:1 (2008): 96-116.

Page, Jim. 2020. "Philosophy of Peace." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://iep.utm.edu/peace/

Sharma, Netra. 2020. "From Inner Peace to World Peace: Buddhist Meditation in Practice." In Journal of International Affairs 3 (2020):

Stiglitz, Joseph. 2015. *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and what We can do About it*, London: Penguin Books.

Tanabe, Juichiro. 2019. "Beyond Liberal Peace: Critique of Liberal Peace-building and exploring a Post-Liberal Hybrid Model of Peacebuilding for a more Humane World." *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* 5:1 (2019):

Waltz, Kenneth. 2010. *Theory of International Politics*. Chicago: Waveland Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 2002. "The Five Faces of Oppression." *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*. Edited by Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty. New York: Mc-Graw Hill.