Peace: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract: The study of peace has got immense significance in the various literature of political science. But there is no commonality in such understanding due to diversity of the political context where peace is defined and perspective adopted to define peace. This paper attempts to have a theoretical understanding of peace by taking into account various nuances. Besides, an attempt has been made to give a historical trajectory of the understanding of peace.

Key Word: Peace

There are various definitions of peace depending on the context of its conceptualization and perspective adopted to define it. It is essential to take into the account the socio political context to have proper understanding of the concept of peace.

According to Fedenico Mayor, former director general of the UNESCO, “Instead of absence of war, it (peace) is increasingly seen as a dynamic, participative, long term process, based on universal values and everyday practice, at all levels the family the school, the community as well as the nation” (Serto, 2003).

According to Jawaharlal Nehru, “Peace is not a relationship of nations. It is a condition of mind brought about by the serenity of soul. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also a state of mind lasting peace can come only through peaceful people” (Dutta and Bhuyan, 2008, p 15).

British playwright Dorothy L Sayers said, “Never thinks wars are irrational catastrophes; they happen when wrong ways of thinking and living bring about intolerable situations” (L.Dorothy, 1947).

According to Dr. Frank Buchman “peace is not just a beautiful idea. It means people becoming radically different. The thinking here is futurist and there is scope for everyone to hang” (Buchman, 1947).

Thus, the above definitions of peace signify the meaning of peace as freedom from disturbance, absence of tension and presence of quietness, calmness, tranquility, justice and brotherhood. Peace can come only through peaceful people. Peace is not just a beautiful idea; it is dynamic and long term process based on universal values. It can be practiced every day, at all levels of our life.

According to Kanti Bajpai, the concept of peace can be defined on the basis of another three different perspectives. “Firstly, peace as the mere absence of war, that is a hegemonic of deterrent peace, secondly peace as functional and economic interaction, what could be called a transactional peace and peace as a social condition in which accommodation rather than force mediate change” (Samaddar, 2004, 38-53).

The meaning of peace varied in differed period in history. For example “The Roman poet Tacitus spoke of making a desert and calling it ‘peace’ an unwanted place of sterility and emptiness. Similarly, although everyone desires “peace of mind”, the temporary “peace” that comes from drug based with drawl from social reality, the peacefulness of sleep, or the undesired “peace of a coma or even of death may not seen so desirable” (Barash and Webel, 2002, p 4).

The concept of peace in eastern world claims that “peace may be the most longed for human condition. The Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu founder of Taoism and author of Tao De Ching, emphasized that military force is not the “Tao or way for human being to follow” (Ibid. p4). His conception of peace denotes that peace is not an ultimate human goal and social harmony cannot bring peace. Instead of this type of views, he valued obedience and order as virtues of peace.

Gandhi’s vision of peace is different from other thinkers in many aspects. According to Gandhi, peace implies a state of positive and constructive world order where every individual live in co-operation and mutual aid. Peace is a cementing force for the society and the world. Gandhi viewed that truth is more important than peace and peace can be achieved only through truthful means. His vision of peace is based on his philosophy of life that is mutual good will and friendship among all the people.
Now, we hear or read so much about peace and peace are being developed on global scales under the banner of peace keeping operations of the countries. The current wars, violence and conflict situation of the world force us to offer alternative thinking about peace. Today peace is used as a defense of certain security plans and rationalities. In this context we can refers to peace as a social justice mainly concerned with resolving the problem of poverty, unequal access to resources etc. Peace is governed by global rationalities of security that is consistent with particular kind of peace efforts such as “global peace programmes, institutional capacity training plans, information sharing and environmental sustainability schemes. This kind of peace efforts has inscribed as the future focused character of international peace program and initiatives” (Ilcan and Philips, 2006, 59-60). The concept of peace is not merely stands as opposition to warfare or violent conflict; it is a metaphor for security and used to act on the security of a group or population. Thus the concept of peace is governed by various rationalities of security.

At present there are mainly two types of interpretation of the meaning of peace-negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is described as an absence of manifest violence such as war which could be realized through negotiation or mediation rather than resorting to the physical force. Negative peace simply denotes a condition in which no active organized military violence can take place.

The term positive peace was invented in the mid-1960s by John Galtung, a Norwegian peace researcher. The concept of positive peace is based on a broader understanding of social condition which implies presence of certain number of essential factors in the society. This means making available of those conditions of peace which are necessary for living a peaceful life. In the positive connotation of peace, peace is more than the absence of violence; it is the presence of social justice through equal opportunity and fair distribution of power and resources, equal protection and impartial enforcement of law. The negative conception of peace addresses the immediate symptoms conditions of war and the use and effects of force and weapon, while positive peace involves the elimination of the root causes of war, violence and injustice. It also involves, conscious efforts to build a society reflecting these commitments. On the other hand negative peace is consistent with structural violence. In last few years, the meaning of violence is changed and new meanings arise. This new focus of violence is structural violence. Structural violence implies those injuries or exploitative characters which are inbuilt in the structure itself. It generally refers to societal structure, i.e., structure of society, structure of a society may be oppressive and exploitative and also a source of violence. Structural violence is more significant because it happens in a continuous manner. Thus structural violence is a serious form of social oppression. Positive peace signifies removal of such structural violence. Thus negative concept of peace is different from positive conception of peace. While the negative peace denotes narrow understanding of peace, positive concept of peace is a broader understanding of peace. Although, there is difference between negative peace and positive peace, both imply the striving for structural stability (Barash and Webel, 2002, 6-7).

In the present context, more than the state some other actors and process are seen to be actively involved in the process of peace making. For instance, number of international organizations are today playing very significant role in the peace making process. With the means of global flows of capital, images, ideas and practices of governance; the sources of authority on peace have expanded from nation-state to international organization and institutes such as: Amnesty international govern peace, Oxfam International, the International institute of peace education, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO. In an effort to promote peace “the United Nation, Agenda for peace, initiated in 1992 under the former UN secretary General Butros Ghali, ex-compassed diverse peace initiatives that attempted to shape actions, processes and outcome in specific direction by linking peace development and democracy” (Ilcan and Philips, 2006, 59-60).

Similarly we can mention the UNESCO’s peace effort, which is implemented to promote education for peace, human rights, democracy, international understanding and tolerance. In 1945, UNESCO adopted its own constitution where it stated its purposes. The basic purpose of the organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture. UNESCO’s culture of peace program grows a ‘global movement of peace when it introduced their proposal for an international Decade for a culture of peace in 2000. The current peace programme of UNESCO reflects a new era of cultural engineering in the name of peace and security. The basic
intention of UNESCO’s culture of peace program was to building of international peace through “global effort”. Thus culture of peace implies a global effort to change people thinking and action towards peace. Finally it can be argued that UNESCO culture of peace initiative mobilize the global population into the new mentalities of peace and security through an emphasis on investing in democratic institution by training children as the future peaceful generation and facilitating women’s involvement in peace proportion (ibid., 59-60).

At present stage of human development, a wide variety of doctrines and organization expose various ways of achieving peace. In this context, peace movement is considered as source of popular opposition to war and to militarism as they are more traditionally identified (Goldstain, 2005, 261). “In addition to mass destruction, common tactics of peace movement include getting antiwar movements into the media, participating in civil disobedience and occasionally organizing consumer boycott”(ibid., 261). Peace movements participate in election and lobbying like other interest groups. It also includes the draft government buildings, taxes, and nuclear test sites and tries to educate the public by spreading information about a war or arms peace.

As peace process evolve, a wide variety of documents are produced that can be termed ‘peace agreement’. Though there is no agreed definition of the term ‘peace agreement’, we use the term to signify the formal agreement aimed at ending violent conflict. The agreement provides space for civil society involvement in the implementation of a specific peace agreement. The terms of the agreements sometimes used variously which protect and develop the civil society’s role in the provision of humanitarian relief. “In some agreement, the focus is on ensuring physical protection of humanitarian relief operations, rather than establishing new forms of civil involvement in such operation in Sierra Leone, the 1999 ceasefire agreement(s) guaranteed safe and unhindered accuse to humanitarian organization”(Bell and Rourke, 2007, 375-376).” The role of civil society in some peace agreement chiefly associated with the human right monitoring. Peace agreement can provide the civil society organization to monitor or strengthen human rights. The new human rights commission of Liberia was result of comprehensive peace agreement signed in 2003. Thus, the involvement of civil society in the peace agreement mainly provides humanitarian assistance. As a civic organization it can undermine the intended role of civil society as peace promoting (Bell, 2006, 375-376).

The peace agreement can usefuly be classified into three main types which tend to emerge at different stage of a conflict: renegotiation agreement, Framework/ substantive agreement and Implementation/ Renegotiation agreement (Ibid., 376). The pre negotiation stages of peace process are designed to resolve the fundamental issues in the conflict often termed ‘talk about talk’. “The pre negotiation stage tends to focus on who is going to negotiate and with what status, raising issues such as the return of negotiations from eviler or their release from prison, safeguards as to future physical integrity and freedom from imprisonment and limits on how the war may be waged while negotiation takes place” (Ibid.,376).

Substantive or framework agreement begins to provide a framework to address the major causes of conflict. It aimed at sustaining cease fire to stop the violence more permanently. Substantive agreement are linking with new constitutional structure for addressing governance, elections and legal and human rights institution to end military violence. And lastly implementation agreement develops aspect of the framework to bring new negotiation and include all the parties to the framework of agreement. In case of uneven or nonexistent implementation, implemented agreement can effectively involve renegotiation and new agreement. Notably it is important that the pre negotiation, implementation agreement, substantive/ framework agreement constitute peace agreement per excellence (Ibid., 376).

The above discussion suggests that today it is paramount important to redefine the peace not merely as the absence of violent conflict but as the positive and creative process of building sustainable societies. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin. When there is peace development can move much faster. Thus there is need of peace in the society for the overall socio-economic development of the society.

During the last few years, there has been a lot of talking and discussion on peace and to demands from various quarters to bring peace into the state. But the history of peace studies proves that although most people claim to be in favour of peace, the natural preference and interest for peace have been negligible. The majority seems to be most interested in war. “At present all too many people find peace boring, and war exciting. When war is mentioned on the daily newscasts, people pick up their cars, when peace is mentioned people are more likely yawn” (Barash and Webel,2002, 29). It is also found that the struggle from peace is much more difficult than challenge of war. It is ultimately a question of establishing justice rather than resolving conflict. “Thus there is need to prepare for taking peace as peace, for approaching it from the window of civil society culture, identities and differences (Dutta Hazarika, 2012, 12). The need of the peace in the multi cultural society like India is immense as it is essential for a just society that provides justifiable rights to all segments of the society.
References:


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