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## REALISM – FORGOTTEN THEORY FOR PEACEBUILDING

### INTRODUCTION

More than half a century has passed since peacebuilding originated as a category of academic studies, and more than 30 years since the UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali brought the term to international jargon and practice. Since the UN adopted the term in an Agenda for Peace in June 1992, there have been 45 UN peacekeeping operations, many of which included peacebuilding elements, such as missions in the former Yugoslavia states or in Sudan. However, peacebuilding is not limited exclusively to peace operations. It also includes long-term actions aiming at creating conditions for sustainable peace and strengthening a country's resilience to potential crises and violent conflicts. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund alone invested in these activities \$1.47 billion between 2006 and 2020 (United Nations Peacebuilding, n.d.).

Despite the decades of involvement, the results seem to be limited and daunting. Conflicts resumed and seeds of the international efforts and investments did not grow. In particular, the year 2021 brought several such cases to the surface with Sudan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts and of course the most drastic regime change in Afghanistan, where a lot of resources of the UN, the EU and the USA have been involved for two decades. Especially the latter case requires additional attention because peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan have been directed to very broad areas building structures that support peace, such as education, women empowerment and gender equality, human rights and reinforcing democratic institutions among others. After the Taliban established their power in the country in 2021, all these international efforts resulted in more than 200,000 people that supported democratic initiatives being no longer able to safely stay in their country. Besides, the situation returned to the status quo ante as if these two decades of international support did not take place.

Fairly, the recent crises in international security raise consequent questions of what are the reasons for ineffectiveness despite the amount of resources invested in the peacebuilding process worldwide. The prevailing approaches to peacebuilding covering liberal and critical IR theories seem to be insufficient in providing comprehensive answers to that question. Importantly, as peacebuilding and broader peace studies are applied fields, they influence significantly the practice of peace operations offering methodological support and guidance on how to bring about sustainable peace. Throughout the decades the offered solutions to the problems were not sufficient to

prevent conflict outbreaks or to create conditions for stability and prosperity. In fact, the existing approaches (both theoretical and practical) called upon a lot of criticism in recent years. At the same time, realist considerations on the topic can rarely be found in the literature.

The purpose of the article is thus to address a knowledge gap that exists in the studies on peacebuilding in terms of realist approaches to the topic. The objectives of the study are: to present an overlook of the existing approaches to the studies on peacebuilding, analyse to what extent realist theories can complement them, and to create a basis for improving theoretical approaches to peacebuilding. The methodology used in the article is deductive and qualitative.

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDIES ON PEACE AND PEACEBUILDING

Even though studies on peace have been developing in various countries in the XX century, the very concept of peacebuilding appeared and was developed only in the 1970s thanks to the Norwegian social scientist Johan Galtung, who coined this term. Peacebuilding is closely interlinked with his concept of positive peace, which covers not only the absence of “classical” violence but also implies the absence of poverty, repression and alienation (Galtung, 1975b). Galtung considered those as manifestations of structural violence. In his view structural imperialism is realized globally not as a “series of deliberate actions by dominance-oriented people,” but “as a pattern of billions of acts” that permeate (Galtung, 1975a: 1). Accordingly, positive peace was defined by him as social justice or “egalitarian distribution of power and resources” and the absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1975b).

In contrast to the modern discourse, in the late 1960s – early 1970s the idea and concept of positive peace went against the trend of the time due to the fact that the realist perspective with its focus on peace as an absence of physical violence (negative peace) was so prominent. The Cold War reality conduced consolidation of this perspective to an extent that even the UN peace operations were designed according to this concept. They were aimed at achieving negative peace by providing a third-party mediation or intervened to provide a buffer zone or deliver traditional peacekeeping tasks (Ozerdem and Lee, 2015: 11). Hence, Galtung referred to the positive peace not as to an existing benchmark, but as an ideal to strive for. In his report to UNESCO, Galtung describes peace as an unattainable “utopian condition,” “a goal-setting,” “a rich concept, not necessarily easily obtainable” (Galtung, 1975b). From this perspective, looking at the effects of peacebuilding efforts nowadays should not evoke resentment or surprise. At the same time since the concept was directly adopted to the international practice, it asks for utilitarian evaluation with concrete explanations of the reasons behind the shortcomings of the peacebuilding process.

Seeking explanation in Galtung’s works can shed light on the fact that technical solutions to the world problems, such as arms control, peacekeeping forces, conventions, international agencies, technical assistance for development to name some, do not solve the issues, but sometimes even exacerbate them. To address the issues of peace

and development, countries should have structures resilient to conflict triggers. Johan Galtung defines peacebuilding as a process of introducing mechanisms conducive to peace into the structure and keeping them there “as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon, just as the healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies and does not need ad hoc administration of medicine. More particularly, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur” (Galtung, 1969; Galtung, 1976).

Needless to say that peacebuilding appeared as one of the main research categories of peace studies, whose main founder was Johan Galtung. And thus, the concept of peacebuilding shares to large extent the characteristics of peace studies, which have historical roots in peace movements. During the development of the peace studies, its proponents were simultaneously engaged in peace activism, advocating for the abolition of war, elimination of arms and military weapons. In fact, political engagement of peace studies scholars was indispensable for those, who shared the critical approach to peace studies. This was clearly manifested during the two peace conferences: VI European Conference of the International Peace Research Society in Copenhagen in 1969 and in the so-called Berlin declaration in 1971 (Kondziela, 1974: 39–40). Though critics questioned the scientific basis of the peace studies discipline, with the emergence of post-positivist and critical paradigms, this normative engagement of peace scientists got acceptance.

Since the beginning peace studies have been interdisciplinary and could not have been described as a homogeneous discipline. It is more of an intellectual forum for experts and activists from different fields, willing to explore the causes of war and conditions to ensure long-lasting peace, than purely a research exercise (Lawler, 2012). Same is relevant for the studies on peacebuilding. It can be easily proved by taking a look at the most popular conferences on peacebuilding these days (e.g. Geneva Peace Week, Global Peace Conference), all of them involve actors from various fields, ranging from academia and experts, through journalists, politicians and decision-makers, to artists, humanitarian workers, religious groups and peace educators. They aim to provide a forum for this broad spectrum of actors and to share their experiences in peace work. One could even argue that practice is more relevant than theory on these forums. Unsurprisingly, studies on peacebuilding comprising various actors are characterised by methodological eclecticism and focus on addressing structural causes of conflict.

The early studies on peacebuilding also gained from the contribution made by Elise and Kenneth Boulding. They shared Galtung’s vision of structural causes of the conflict and promoted bottom-up approaches together with a radical transformation of society from structural violence to the embedded culture of peace (Keating and Knight, 2004: XXXIV). The multisectoral approach to peacebuilding was another proposal by early peacebuilding scholar, John Paul Lederach. In other words so-called the whole-society approach to support and build sustainable peace especially focuses on including various grassroots actors of society in the process (Keating and Knight, 2004: XXXIV).

Another important feature that Galtung incorporated in his concept of peacebuilding was the inextricable link between peace and development – the idea that is paramount to today’s methodologies of peace work. Peace and development practitioners

often refer to Galtung's words: development is peace, peace is another word for development. Development aid or development cooperation is one of the major tools to address the structural causes of war, as understood by the peace scholars, particularly inequality, marginalization and exploitation. At the time, development cooperation and peace operations were separate activities carried out by different organisations. However, the idea of integrating those two became quite acceptable recently. In 1993 the UN Security Council stated that its peacebuilding activities should examine the importance of the development cooperation work (United Nations, 1993). Currently merging peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and peace support operations, with such civilian tasks as emergency assistance, peacebuilding activities and development cooperation is rather seen as a norm (Voorhoeve, 2007: 22).

The Polish studies on peace have also been quite active at the end of the previous century. The interest in the field could have been noticed already at the time when Scandinavian institutes were developing their peace concepts and approaches, for example in the book of Joachim Kondziela from 1974, where he describes the so far existing legacy of peace studies and relates them to other scientific fields (Kondziela, 1974). In the 80s topic gained additional popularity, studies were conducted at the Institute of International Relations at the University of Warsaw. Polish Institute of Foreign Affairs (PISM) also opened departments dedicated to the issues of disarmament and European security (Tabor, 1991). Interestingly, when deliberating on the issue of peace studies, Polish scholars often looked into whether this field constitutes a separate scientific discipline. They also focused on assessing the range of topics that are of interest to peace researchers in various countries.

In accordance with Polish thought peace comprises not only theoretical and descriptive values, but also normative. Ryszard Zięba highlights the fact that application of the negative peace definition may help in sanctioning the existing status quo because this approach to peace does not reflect unjust structures and systems and may be in contrast to what is understood by peace by social groups and nations. The same effect has, on the other hand, the position of the extreme pacifists for whom the positive peace definition implies absolute elimination of any forms of physical violence (Zięba, 1987: 153).

In conclusion of this overview on the genesis of peacebuilding, it can be stated that attributing conflict to structural causes in society and comparing it to a sick body that requires treatment, significantly undermined the traditional approach to the matters of war and peace. It led to seeking a solution for preventing further conflicts in the transformation of society. Johan Galtung laid out the framework basics that are used in the modern peacebuilding methodology, though, of course, the concept has been significantly broadened afterwards.

## **PREVAILING APPROACHES IN CURRENT STUDIES ON PEACEBUILDING**

As it was previously mentioned, liberalism is one of the main approaches to peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding takes its roots in Immanuel Kant's idea of perpetual peace, according to which republican states tend to be peaceful because their governments respond to the citizens and their system is based on the rule of law. Hence,

republican states have strong incentives to behave lawfully in the international arena. At the same time, peace can be threatened by other regimes and this is in the interest of republican states to seek the establishment of the rule of law in international relations (Navari 2012: 31). It is believed that peacebuilding activities will bring desired outcomes if they are focused on building strong institutions supporting good governance, the rule of law and democratic principles benchmarked from the Western societies.

Peace is an ultimate aim and interest of every state, from the liberal point of view. In addition, economic prosperity and interdependence are believed to reduce the risk of war and institutions – to be able to resolve insecurities between states (Balcerowicz, 2002: 47). Liberal approach to peacebuilding focuses on the argument of the universalism of human rights, on economic cooperation and existing interdependences that foster peace with democratic peace theory going even further by arguing that democratization creates a solid foundation for peace and stability. Liberals do not share the belief in the contradictory nature of interests between states, but maintain that they are in harmony. Very often this argument is supported by bringing up the sphere of economic relations, where states are interested in cooperation and conducive climate for it because in the end, it is beneficial to all. The recent Russia's attack on Ukraine shows, however, that economic incentives may not be enough to prevent war. Despite the fact that a clear message was sent to Russian decision-makers regarding the economic sanctions that will follow in case of aggression, this did not wage on the decision to start the war. Belief in democracy as a remedy to conflicts is also shared among liberals, who claim it as the justest and the most inclusive system. As it was fairly noticed by Bolesław Balcerowicz, in contrast to the realist school liberalism exposes not what divides the states (potential conflicts or wars), but what unites them and creates conditions for potential or real peace (Balcerowicz, 2002: 48).

Liberal peace concept provides that peace is based on the following elements: the rule of law, democratic participation, social justice, “a political culture of constructive and peaceful management of conflicts,” state's monopoly over the use of force (Ozerdem and Lee, 2015: 40). Sustainable peace, according to the liberals, is maintained on the three pillars: democracy, economic interdependence and international organisations (Ozerdem and Lee, 2015: 40).

The democratic peace theory is a more “specialised” version of the liberal peace theory with a more direct interpretation of Kant's ideas. It was propelled by the political thought and practice in the United States, starting from Ronald Reagan's presidency. Through ideological consistency, building democratic peace abroad stayed as a strategy of the US foreign policy up until the end of Barack Obama's presidency (Wiśniewski, 2015: 49). The arguments that speak in favour of democratic peace theory are of structural-institutional and normative nature. Firstly, democracies have institutional checks that prevent them from a quick decision to start a war. Secondly, their choices are more well-thought and require public opinion support, as the consequence of an unsuccessful decision will most probably be a loss of power. Thirdly, joint membership in international institutions diminishes the risk of armed conflict because it creates commitments, but also provides intra-organizational mechanisms for solving the disputes. Lastly, the normative argument holds that democracies are predictable, rational and reliable (Wiśniewski, 2015: 53–55).

The democratic peace theory is based on the studies of correlations between democratic regime and peace, or more specifically no major interstate wars between democracies. The theory has not provided instruction for war avoidance, as there are many examples of wars between democracies and non-democratic countries. The correlation between democracy and lack of wars is empowered by other correlations, namely between democracy and human rights, economic development and freedom, environmental protection, famine avoidance, counter-terrorism, management of refugee flows and corruption (Moore, 2004: 1–3). The correlation however does not prove causation, nor does it show which of the factors (e.g. democracy or economic development) is of greater value for the contribution to peace. At the same time, the democratic peace proponents greatly contributed to the prescription of democracy as a treatment to many state's diseases. Amartya Sen, Nobelist and co-creator of the Human Development Index, wrote that “the only solution to famine, whether in time of peace or war, is indeed democracy” (Moore, 2004: 31). Similarly, most of the international institutions are linking stability and prosperity with government structures, economic freedom, human rights and the rule of law – the basics of democracy.

It is worth noting that most of the countries where armed conflicts currently take place fall under the category of developing or very often fragile states that lack effective institutions and are not able to provide basic public goods for their populations. They often rely on international aid and their interdependencies (in a rare case when a conflict is between states) do not have a big scope. When a conflict concerns military groups and a government, then a question of economic cooperation or interdependences seems to be irrelevant. It does not rule out the possibility for prosperity and economic development of a country to contribute to stability and peace, and lack of it should be considered as one of the causes of many current conflicts. The recent practice of liberal interventions however proved to be ineffective, when Western-type of democracy and economic order had been *de facto* imposed in settings where these ideas come as alien. The democratic peace theory in particular, justified democratization in the countries where peacebuilding had been implemented. Recently liberal approach to peacebuilding has been called into question, as the peacebuilding efforts put by the international community did not prevent conflicts from bouncing back or protraction.

The critical voices raise the issue of international organizations cooperating and supporting the like-minded local actors sharing the Western values system, which in turn fosters securitization (Marchetti and Tocci, 2015). Other critics even discuss peacebuilding as a form of new imperialism and colonialism (Matori and Kagu, 2019). Practical examples from the peacebuilding field show that blind imposition of the Western institutions and disregard for the local ones may not only fail to bring the expected outcomes but also exacerbate existing tensions. For example, the practice of “blood money” exists in several African communities and is related to a law enforcement system. When a person kills someone from another community, this community has a collective obligation of paying back in the form of money or other material goods for this death. When instead following the law enforcement reform, an arrest and prosecution are taking place, this triggers further violence between the communities and peacebuilding efforts get corrupted (Omunyin, 2020). Controversial is also a point about the “democratic crusade” or intervention in authoritarian countries with

the purpose of democratisation, or war for the purpose of achieving (democratic) peace (Wiśniewski, 2015: 49).

In contrast to the above, constructivist theories focus on local culture when they approach peacebuilding (Voorhoeve, 2007: 35). Constructivists believe that norms shape the nature of states transforming their identities and vice versa states can contribute to redefining the norms. A conflict occurs when norms of conduct are questioned and are subject to attacks when states suffer from so-called identity crisis. Peacebuilding in fact is constructivism in practice and in action. Peace missions of the West entail construction of new norms, liberal norms, as they are believed to bring peace and justice (David, 2001: 2).

Critical international relations theories have also been a major contributor to the field of peacebuilding, particularly post-colonial studies and the feminist approaches to security. Critical theories look at peace from a structural perspective, aiming to find out the structural root causes of a conflict and tackle them at various levels. Critical perspectives apply inter- and multidisciplinary approaches, which as it was put by Joachim Kondziela, entail intentionally planned, complex and multi-faceted study of a particular phenomenon (Kondziela, 1974: 36). Modern critical scholars argue that conflicts should be addressed together with underlying inequalities by strengthening local capacities for peace management. Needless to say that peace here is understood in both negative (absence of violence/war) and positive ways (process). Critical international relations adopted a complex and broad definition of peace, pointing out the importance of the inclusion of various actors (men, women, youth and children, marginalised groups) in the process. In the XXI century, peacebuilding environment has become more inclusive. Its multidimensionality allows for engagement of the private sector, NGOs, charitable organizations and international financial institutions. The effectiveness and effects of these activities are however not fully examined. Many authors voice the flaws of many actors being involved, for instance doubling of resources, lack of control over the finances, the problem of ownership etc. (Smith, 2004).

Criticism over the ineffectiveness of peacebuilding encouraged further, broader and more creative research on the topic. This allowed not only for traditional approaches to peacebuilding to develop but also invited new thinking, including the realist school. Some of the developments in the study field are quite unexpected, like primatological perspective based on the realist assumptions (Brosnan, 2021). Needless to say these intellectual experiments are not numerous, and the existing trend of choosing liberal, constructivist or critical approaches for peacebuilding has been unchanged, especially considering the fact that international institutions working in the peace domain support and promote these methodologies.

### **WHAT REALISM HAS TO OFFER: REALISTS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE TOPIC**

Realists have not contributed much to the research on peacebuilding so far, however, the current urge to a new post-liberal framework for peacebuilding allows for new perspectives in this domain. It does not come without challenges.

One of them is related to the established conceptualisation of peacebuilding versus the common understanding of peace by the realist camp. When realists speak about international security, they mean the absence of violent conflict between powers, which can be achieved by a balance of power, alliance formation, nuclear deterrence or lack of threats for security and other core interests of the countries. Thus, it lies within the negative peace definition and does not include issues, such as long-term stability, justice and development. Peace as an absence of physical violence covers the scope of other types of peace operations, such as peacemaking and peacekeeping. However, peace entailed in the peacebuilding term is much broader, what makes it difficult for the realists to engage in such a discussion. Boleslaw Balcerowicz partly solves this problem with new dialectics in this discussion. Instead of peace versus war, he proposes peace and non-peace division, considering at the same time the period of peace as strategic pause. This conceptualization allows for more flexibility in approaching peace. A situation of non-peace does not necessarily mean war, it can include crisis, conflict below the war scale, disrupted peace or threat of war (Balcerowicz, 2002: 11).

Realists believe that conflicts are intrinsic and rather impossible to eliminate. They are caused by factors like the existence of an expansionist state, territorial issues, fragmentation and polarization processes, contradictory interests of societies or states, and assistance to allies (David, 2001: 3). Thus, the state can react to the posed threats by initiating conflict or a conflict can be driven by the will to expand state's power or to help the allies. At the same time threats are not always real, but can be misperceived (Cohen, 1974; Jervis, 1976).

In realist logic, peace becomes a value when it is in the interest of a state. For example, because it provides an opportunity for economic growth, and thus for the expansion of power. If the status quo is peace and is favourable for a state, because it has a dominating position, then this state would also be interested in maintaining peace. According to Michael Fowler, a state's preference for peaceful cooperation over a violent conflict is always a strategic decision (Fowler, 2021).

Undoubtedly as the realist school is not homogeneous, understanding of peacebuilding among its different fractions can also be diametrically different. It can already be seen in the example of the differing approaches in offensive and defensive realism. While for offensive realists maximizing power is the main national interest, they would argue against most of the peacebuilding activities and peace operations, because they are costly, time and resources consuming, hence draining the power of a state. As long as the intervention does not serve the crucial national security interests, a state should refrain from it. Moreover, states would be interested in keeping the peace, if it provides them with a position of power. Defensive realists, who value above all security of a state, on the contrary, are more supportive of interventions and peacebuilding activities. In the defensive realist logic, regime change can result in an adjustment of the regional or global balance of power in the intervening state's favour, so it can maximize its security. Similarly, security cooperation, export of ideology, building alliances and investing in the cooperation with the like-minded contributes to the security of this state (Fowler, 2021).

Certainly, the conviction of the reasonableness of peace missions is not shared by all realists. According to Charles-Philippe David, "conflicts are settled through the



exhaustion of the combatants, through the victory of one of the parties, or through the intervention of a great power” (David, 2001: 4). Famous realist Edward Luttwak says that peacebuilding missions and humanitarian interventions are counterproductive because they don’t allow a conflict to run its course and remove incentives to install genuine peace (Luttwak, 1999). Luttwak’s point of view is in strong contrast to the aims of international organizations like the UN and it would not be accepted by public opinion that tends to be not indifferent to people’s suffering in other parts of the world. Going back to the drastic conflicts in Rwanda or Bosnia, one would realise that it was mainly the public opinion and the media that strongly criticised and pressured the decision-making to take action. These massacres left no one doubting that the UN misses its *raison d’être* if it is inactive in face of such massive threats to human security.

As mentioned earlier, when it comes to negative peace, realist theories have a lot to offer. Conflict management, seen as negotiating security compromises and power share, is an acceptable and even desirable tool in the hands of realists to deal with conflicts, including local ones. Nevertheless, liberal or constructivist bottom-up approaches at this stage are redundant or even counterproductive according to many realists. Recurring wars create intense societal hostility, which motivates for continuing a conflict and a peace settlement can be widely opposed by society. When resources are invested to empower society before a peace agreement is signed, the pragmatism of a state would dictate against the peace agreement. Norrin M. Ripsman suggests combining realist and liberal/constructivist approaches to deal with peacemaking and peacebuilding. Namely, peacemaking should be done according to the realist imperatives while facilitating stability and long-lasting peace should engage bottom-up approaches in the liberal/constructivist logic (Ripsman, 2021). According to him, there are several strong incentives that allow states to conclude peace, even if societies are hostile and do not favour such solution. One of such incentives is facing a greater common threat, such as in the case of Franco-German relations after World War II. Despite strong French public hostility, the rivalry turned into cooperation. The other incentive is great power pressure when the hegemon sets the rule of the game for international relations. Here peace can be achieved if the hegemon takes an interest in it and has the power to influence two sides of a conflict through coercion and/or incentives (e.g. Egyptian-Israeli peacemaking fostered by the USA). Countries in conflict may also be motivated to conclude peace when the position of leaders is shaken at the domestic level, for example by a severe economic crisis which is usually an effect of war. In order to ensure regime stability, states would terminate external rivalry, as in the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict in the 1980s. Finally, to secure the stability of a newly established regime for example after a revolution, countries would revert their resources from external conflicts (e.g. Russian withdrawal from WWI and a peace treaty with Turkey in 1921) (Ripsman, 2021).

The above-mentioned examples show that peace can be easily achieved if states perceive that it is in their interest. However, it does not ensure long-lasting effects of peace, because if the interests of states change and society’s grievances are not being satisfied, there is a conducive ground for the recurrence of a conflict. Following this logic, Ripsman recommends against starting peace processes with the conception of positive peace and empowering civil society and institutions of democracy. After

peace is concluded between the states on their terms, efforts and resources could be then channelled to grassroots organizations to diminish hostility and mistrust between societies. Nevertheless, when this is done prior to a peace agreement, most probably these resources will be wasted. In fact, the state may feel fewer pressures if society receives economic or financial support from the outside.

An important category in the realist theory is self-help, entailing that a country should rely on its own capabilities to maintain its security and be able to address threats. Most of the contemporary conflicts however do not occur between major powers or involve a major power but are rather a feature of the developing part of the world. It means that very often capabilities of the countries are disproportionate to the threats that they face and relying solely on self-help is not feasible. This is true even in the case of the current Russia-Ukraine war, though Ukraine cannot be classified as a developing country. Still, in face of larger and more powerful aggressor Ukraine's self-help would not suffice and thus international military, financial, political and humanitarian help has been sought. Developing countries in addition are very prone to economic pressures and can be easily destabilised by external economic factors, like sanctions, embargoes, global prices of their exported goods, international institutions' economic policies etc. One of the examples could be the unfamous reforms in the late 70–80s promoted by the international financial institutions that led many developing countries into economic collapse and conflicts.

One of them was Côte d'Ivoire that after decolonisation from France in 1960, has become a country with the highest economic growth rate among the African non-oil-exporting states, attracting immigrant workers from the neighbouring states, as well as foreigners and foreign capital. Like many newly independent African countries, it was ethnically and religiously very diverse and was led by a charismatic leader, president Félix Houphouët-Boigny who previously had been a politician in the French parliament. Steadily consolidating power around his figure and buying opponents by offering them government positions, Houphouët-Boigny built a famous "Ivorian miracle" or the most prosperous country in West Africa. However, when the global cocoa prices dropped down in 1978 – and Côte d'Ivoire was at that time the world's largest cocoa exporter – IMF conditioned structural reforms that had often been prescribed as the one-size-fit-for-all solution. Côte d'Ivoire had to drastically cut its subsidies for the education and health sectors, and further expand its cocoa production for the sake of the comparative advantage principle. These measures not only further deteriorated the economic situation but also led to social unrest, the creation of militia groups and civil war. The international community started insisting on political reform and a more pluralistic electoral system. However, after the death of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, his successors not able to consolidate the power, started bringing out the country's ethnic and religious divisions and exacerbating tensions to gain support among certain groups. One example was the newly introduced concept of *ivorité*, meaning that a truly Ivorian citizen was the one born to two Ivorian parents. It was codified in law and was aimed to prevent an influential opposition candidate Alassane Quattara from pretending for the presidential post. The consequences were much more deep and drastic, as it led to the polarisation of the society and communal violence, which takes place till now (Klaas, 2008).

This case alone not only poses serious questions about taking democratic institutions as a panacea to crisis and poverty but also falls under the realist's explanation of the international institutions that serve the interests of the richest and most powerful states. According to the realists, international institutions cannot be treated as separate independent actors, but rather as representations of the current distribution of power in the world (Waltz, 1979). In this sense, their policies and recommendations are designed to protect and promote the interests of those their members, who have the biggest power share (Mearsheimer, 1995). The case of Côte d'Ivoire shows that those IMF policies reduced the human capital of the country, increased its dependence on external financial sources and upset country's factors of stability and resilience.

Considering the above, the majority of current conflicts seem to be local in their nature, as they involve non-state actors and take place within a territory of one state or several bordering states. However, they are largely influenced by external actors, who often act through international institutions. Hence, there is a possibility for the realist theories to be applied to explain various areas of external influence that constitute sub-domains of peacebuilding (like development cooperation). In fact, constant challenges of making aid and development cooperation effective already encouraged new perspectives to enter this domain, including from the realist perspective. Matthew Fielden rejects the popular humanitarian argument as a base of foreign aid, but argues instead that it is influenced by geopolitical interests (Panasevič, 2012). The main incentives for aid, according to him, are:

- a will to expand the power and gain the political support of a beneficiary country (power-political model);
- social reconstruction leading to the introduction of the same norms in a recipient country in order to ensure a predictable political environment (political stability and democracy model);
- addressing global problems that affect donor countries as well due to interdependence and globalization; at the same time aid should be prioritized for those countries that have more prospects for development in the future (development and performance model);
- gaining influence in less developed countries that face ideological threats (strategic-defensive or Cold War model).

There is factual proof of the prevailing importance of donors' interests in maintaining aid, especially during the Cold War. Donor countries had been supporting mainly their former colonies and aid was widely used to support the like-minded countries or to prevent the cooperation with an ideological adversary in the Cold War competition. For instance, despite very idealistic declarations about the need to help foster fair relations between peoples and support the growth of underdeveloped regions, 86% of the US development aid in 1954 was spent for military purposes (Develtere, 2012: 59).

To address the challenge of modern conflict trends, a new realist approach has been already applied to study current, local in their nature conflicts. "Ethno-realist" interpretation of conflicts is based on the combination of the realist theory and ethnological perspective. Realist logic here is transferred on a local level: in case of the lack of central authority, a state of anarchy is created among various ethnic groups within a state, who may have contradictory interests (David, 2001: 2).

It will be fair to note that realist theory is constantly developing and there is a demand for broadening the scope of analysis by realists. Among the new research highlighting the potential of realist theories to contribute to studies on peace, there is Anders Wivel's comprehensive overview of realist's contribution to the discussion on peaceful change. This study lays the foundation for further research on peace-related issues through the realist lens. He concludes that the realist logic of peaceful change may bring peace, but it will always be conditioned by power and serve the interests of some actors at the expense of others. He particularly highlights the potential of neorealism theory for larger engagement with these topics. This is due to the fact that neorealism focuses not only on material capabilities but also on perceptions, making soft balancing an appropriate tool of diplomacy, hence reaching one's goals by peaceful means (Wivel, 2017). These considerations can help contribute to the research on peacebuilding, as it is concerned with the kind of peaceful change that leads to a transformation of society, institutions and power relations in a country.

To conclude, for realists peace can be maintained when it is beneficial for the most powerful states, as they are interested in preserving their superior position. At the same time, states may intervene when their security interests are threatened and their position of power is undermined. Michael Fowler suggests using realism in combination with other approaches, for example, constructivism or critical peacebuilding studies, in order to better understand the competing interests (including values and perceptions) of actors involved in an armed conflict (Fowler, 2021: 45). This idea falls within the modern tendency to go beyond one theory or paradigm and use eclecticism of approaches. Ronald Paris even warns against a single-paradigm approach to peacebuilding, namely liberal internationalism that has guided the work of international organizations for decades. He argues that such a practice not only turns peacebuilding into pacification but also prevents from testing alternative solutions that are closer to affected communities (Keating and Knight, 2004: XXXIX).

## CONCLUSION

In the light of the criticism of liberal peacebuilding and mentioned examples of possible application of realist thinking, it can be stated that realist theories, neorealism in particular, can provide a different explanation of the ineffectiveness of applied measures to build sustainable peace, by focusing on state's interests of power and security. Basis for the application of realist theories in the studies on peacebuilding has already been laid with several academic works cited above contributing to the field. This beginnings should however be fostered in the nearest future, as the world is struggling with many violent conflicts or consequences of those, and existing peacebuilding solutions do not solve the issue of the ineffectiveness of many peacebuilding efforts. This article can serve as a starting point for theory building exercise aiming to bring realist perspectives to the topic of building sustainable positive peace.

One possible complication of the realist approaches at this moment however is related to the fact that peacebuilding has a very broad definition conceptualised around positive peace, while popular realist approaches look solely into the negative peace

implications. As a result, it requires a more elaborated methodological application of realist theories, probably combining them with other approaches.

Nevertheless, realism provides the basis for verifying a further hypothesis: when engaging in peacebuilding major actors follow the agenda beneficial for their interests, which is focused either on establishing peace on their own terms or preserving a state of conflict and instability. It would be also interesting to further analyse how peacebuilding activities promoted by international organizations reflect the power share of particular member states of these organizations and their interests in these activities. It would require additional research, as many questions remain open, to list some: are countries involved in peacebuilding motivated by perceived threats in the sphere of their economic interests, or by the idea of power expansion? How the spill-over of third countries' instability and conflicts to peacebuilders' countries contributes to international security?

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## ABSTRACT

The article brings attention to the gap in the research on peacebuilding from the perspective of realist theories. Started by Johan Galtung, the peacebuilding field has been largely influenced by his understanding of peace and violence, as well as by the peace studies discipline itself. An Agenda for Peace turned the theoretical concept into international practice, and the liberal spirit accompanying it imprinted on the research approaches that guide peacebuilding activities. Executed in the form of democratic transformation and statebuilding, peacebuilding operations often did not bring the expected results and called on a lot of criticism. Besides, throughout the decades dominating approaches (liberalism complemented by institutional and critical IR theories) have not been able to explain the continuous unattainability of sustainable peace and

exacerbation of violence. A little attention has been given to peacebuilding by the realist theory, which has limited interest in local conflicts.

In this aspect, the article aims to discuss how the realist theories have been addressing the topic of peacebuilding so far, analyse what are the main assumptions related to peacebuilding from a realist perspective; and assess if the realist theories can be helpful in resolving the problem of peacebuilding ineffectiveness. The article opens further discussion on whether the realist perspective and its focus on states' interests, rather than (democratic and liberal) values and institutions, can be used for analysing the problems of the peacebuilding process and can help to better understand situations, where it is ineffective.

**Keywords:** peacebuilding, peace studies, realism, international relations theories, sustainable peace, armed conflicts

## REALIZM – ZAPOMNIANA TEORIA DLA BUDOWANIA POKOJU

### STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł zwraca uwagę na lukę w badaniach nad budowaniem pokoju z perspektywy teorii realistycznych. Zapoczątkowane przez Johana Galtunga pole budowania pokoju zostało w dużej mierze ukształtowane przez jego rozumienie pokoju i przemocy, jak również przez samą dyscyplinę studiów pokojowych. An Agenda for Peace przekształciła koncepcję teoretyczną w praktykę międzynarodową, a towarzyszący jej duch liberalny odcisnął piętno na podejściach badawczych kierujących działaniami na rzecz budowania pokoju. Realizowane w formie demokratycznej transformacji i budowania państwowości operacje budowania pokoju często nie przynosiły oczekiwanych rezultatów i wywoływały wiele krytyki. Ponadto, przez całe dekady dominujące podejścia (liberalizm uzupełniony o instytucjonalne i krytyczne teorie IR) nie były w stanie wyjaśnić ciągłej nieosiągalności trwałego pokoju i nasilania się przemocy. Niewiele uwagi budowaniu pokoju poświęciła teoria realistyczna, która w ograniczonym stopniu interesuje się konfliktami lokalnymi. W tym aspekcie artykuł ma na celu omówienie, w jaki sposób teorie realistyczne zajmowały się dotychczas tematem budowania pokoju, przeanalizowanie, jakie są główne założenia związane z budowaniem pokoju z perspektywy realistycznej; oraz ocenę, czy teorie realistyczne mogą być pomocne w rozwiązaniu problemu nieskuteczności budowania pokoju. Artykuł otwiera dalszą dyskusję nad tym, czy perspektywa realistyczna i jej skupienie na interesach państw, a nie na (demokratycznych i liberalnych) wartościach i instytucjach, może być wykorzystana do analizy problemów procesu budowania pokoju i może pomóc lepiej zrozumieć sytuacje, w których jest on nieskuteczny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** budowanie pokoju, studia pokojowe, realizm, teorie stosunków międzynarodowych, trwałe pokój, konflikty zbrojne

