

## RE-CONCEPTUALIZING THE CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES BETWEEN THE PACIFIST AND REALIST THEORY OF PEACE

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### ***Abstract***

*Pacifist and Realist Theory of peace agree that there is a need to act when peace is threatened; they however disagree on the approach to maintain the peace. In an attempt to bring these divergent views, at least to some meeting point or near meeting point, the concept of the Just War Theory emerged. This paper critically examines the pacifist and realist theories of peace noting their areas of convergences and divergences. Engaging library research method the paper argues that there are several areas where these theories differ from each other and also a number of areas where there seem to be some level of convergences. The work made some recommendations that may lead to the furtherance of peace in both local and international societies. Sources of data are secondary, from already published works.*

***Key words: Just war, theory, pacifism, peace, realism, theory.***

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is the general belief that when it comes to the issues of war and peace, realism and pacifism stand at opposite sides of the pole. While pacifism imposes a moral rejection of war in all its ramifications, realism believes that war has no moral limitations. In between these polar opinions is found the middle road or to use the Latin phrase ‘*via media*’ of the ‘just war’ theory which aims at the limitation of war through the development of moral and legal principles that can help determine when and how the waging of war may be considered just (Reichberg, 2008). The pacifist desires for war by peaceful means with the reality of the ongoing threat and war in the world, such a positioning identifies pacifists as being excessively moral to the extent that they are out of touch with reality. As Cady (1996) cited by Moses (2017) rightly said, “entertaining pacifists’ thoughts means being prepared repeatedly to face questions about reacting to a mugger and confronting Hitler as well as being realistic, self-righteous and self-sacrificial.”

In an attempt to examine these views on the morality of war, this paper posits that the realist view that, ‘it is wrong or impossible to think morally about war’ potentially has much in common with a pacifist position which accepts no war as morally permissible. The two could be used to enact non-violent political strategies. The two could also be seen as a coin that when thrown, each side

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strengthens or weakens the other. This work set out to critically analyze the pacifists' and realists' views on peace with particular attention on the areas of the convergence and divergence.

### CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

**Just war theory:** Just war theory is a measure to justifiably determine an active violence. According to Michael Walgert (1978), Just War Theory offers a series of principles that aim to retain a plausible moral framework for war. It has three main concepts or principles which are:

- 1 Justice of war (*jus ad bellum*): This refers to conditions before going to war and war should always be the last resort declared by a constituted authority. (Lamle, 2016)
- 2 Justice at War (*jus in bello*). Justice in war denotes the right conduct in the midst of a battle. (Lamle, 2016)
- 3 Justice after war (*jus post bellum*). This follows the cessation of war, either the army has been defeated, victorious or it has agreed to a ceasefire and a principle of discrimination is applied to avoid imposing punishment on innocent people (Lamle, 2015).

**Pacifism:** The pacifist argue that people should be committed to peaceful means of conflict resolution as against the use of violence. According to the Stanford online Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2016). Pacifism is generally thought to be a principled rejection of war and killing.

**Peace:** Peace is a state of quiet and tranquility. According to Johan Galtung (1996), peace is the absence or reduction of violence of all kinds. Peace is non-violent and creative conflict transformation.

**Realism:** Realism is a perspective on international relations that explains war and military conflict. According to Garratt Williams (2019), the realist pessimistic views of man's state of nature are naturally evil, harsh and dangerous always creates a struggle which only war can change.

**Theory:** The word theory by its conceptual classification denotes an intelligible declaration of philosophical inclinations that elucidates experimental realities or occurrences. A theory is a plausible or scientifically accepted general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena. It is a fact-based framework, a belief, policy or procedure proposed or formulated as the basis of action. According to Iliya H.G et al (2009), a theory must explicitly and precisely define the terms and relationships of facts and data in its theme in such a way that hypotheses could be tested with a view to establishing the validity of the theory. They added that a theory should not only explain facts and events but should in addition be able to lead to predictions about related events. It is pertinent to note that a theory is developed and arrived through a painstaking research process and there's nothing practical as a good theory in its ability to explain, predict and proffer solutions to events in life.

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The term pacifism is generally used to refer commitment to peace and opposition to war. Pacifism is derived from two Latin terms "paci-or pax", which means 'peace' and ficus- which means making. Hence the two Latin words put together would be '*paci-ficus*', the making of peace or to be direct, and peacemaking. The Encarta English dictionary<sup>3</sup> has three synonymous definitions for the word 'pacifism'. Firstly, it states that Pacifism means 'belief in peaceful resolution of conflicts'. It further

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<sup>3</sup> [https://microsoft\\_encarta.en.downloadastro.com](https://microsoft_encarta.en.downloadastro.com) accessed 4the Nov 2019

stressed that it is ‘the belief that violence, war, and the taking of lives are unacceptable ways of resolving disputes’. Secondly, it viewed the term not only as a belief but also as an act of ‘refusal to participate in war: the refusal to take up arms or participate in war because of moral or religious beliefs’. Finally, it went on to give an international perspective stating that it is the ‘belief in diplomacy over war: the belief that international conflicts should be settled by diplomacy rather than war’. In essence therefore, the term pacifism is opposed to war while it embraces peace and peaceful co-existence of humans devoid of violence.

Modern usage of the word ‘pacifism’ is usually traceable to Emile Artaud (1864-1921) who used the French term *pacifisme* in 1901. It is pertinent to note here that the idea of peaceful co-existence of humans is not restricted to modernity. Jesus Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount succinctly described the Beatitudes in the gospels of Matthew and Luke where he stated in verse 9 of Matthew 5

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"

The theoretical framework of pacifism goes beyond the simple dictum of total opposition to war often described as antiwar position. Hence a more liberal term ‘nonviolence’ has been proposed by Holmes (Holmes 2013:157) in a 1971 essay to describe another position of the more rigid form of pacifism whose concepts is in total opposition to war (University of Notre Dame, 2019). With the introduction of the other synonym non-violence, pacifism is being viewed to accommodate liberal ideology of the just war theory.

Realism was an artistic movement that began in France in the 1850s after the 1848 French revolution and one of the proponents is Gustave Courbet. Realism dealt with perfection of line and form, avoiding artificiality in the treatment of human relations and emotions entailing rough handling of paints (Lumen learning, 2019).

Realism is one of the dominant schools of thought in International Relations’ theory tracing its history back through classical antiquity, beginning with Thucydides. (Orwin, 219). Realism explains international relations in terms of power. Modern realist theory developed in reaction to a liberal tradition referred to as idealism which emphasizes international law, moral ideas and international organizations, rather than power alone as having key impact on international events. This is in strong opposition to the realists who believe in power politics. Realists think that mankind is not inherently benevolent but rather self-centred and competitive. According to Jeremy Moses (2017), Thomas Hobbes also shared this perspective. He believed in absolute monarchical authority. Modern Realist includes Hans Morgenthau, George F. Kenin, Nicholas Spykman, Herman Kahn, E.H Carr and Reinhold Niebuhr.

## **ANALYSIS OF PACIFIST THEORY OF PEACE**

Pacifism is a commitment to peace and opposition to war, militarism or violence. The French peace campaigner, Emile Arnaud (1864-1921) coined the word pacifism. Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) propounded the practice of steadfast nonviolent opposition which he called ‘Satyagraha’ which was instrumental in its role in the Indian independence.

Pacifist theory of peace believes that international disputes can and should be peacefully resolved. According to Alexander Moseley (2019), pacifism is the theory that peaceful rather than violent or belligerent relations should govern human intercourse and that arbitration, surrender or migration should be used to resolve disputes. According to Stanford online Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2016, he further added that pacifism is as much an element of Western thinking and in contrast with the notion of Just War Theory. He further maintained that pacifism is generally thought to be a principled rejection of war and killing. It rejects violent means for obtaining an end. In contrast to the just war tradition, pacifism rejects war as an acceptable means for obtaining peace. Pacifists will often refuse to serve in the military, refuse to support political/social systems but actively

involved in non-violent protests. Pacifists are committed to nonviolence as a way of life and to a vision of peaceful and harmonious co-existence (Fiala, 2019).

The ethics of pacifism is divided into two viewpoints; firstly, the deontological position which decrees that moral agents have an absolute duty to avoid aggression or waging of war against others. Secondly, the consequentialist's position, which asserts that no good ever comes from aggressive actions of war and it, is thereby prohibited, not because it is an evil in itself, but because it always leads to a worse off position. Many scholars have different views, for example Russell Bertrand (1943) identified his position as what he called 'relative political pacifism', which to him means 'that very few wars are worth fighting, and that the evils of war are almost always greater than they seem to excite populations at the moment when war breaks out (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016).

#### Types of Pacifism

People are pacifists for one or some of these reasons:

- 1 Religious faith
- 2 Non-religious belief in the sanctity of life
- 3 Practical belief that war is wasteful and ineffective

**1. Absolutism:** An absolute pacifist believes that it is never right to take part in war (Moses 2017), even in self-defense. An absolute pacifist thinks that the value of human life is so high that nothing can justify killing another person deliberately. Some absolute pacifists may allow for personal self-defense, while rejecting the impersonal and political violence of war. Absolute pacifism is connected to Religion in which non-violence is seen as religious commandment, for example pacifism is found in the sermon on the mount (Matt:5:9) where Jesus claimed 'peace makers are blessed in verse 21 and abhorred murder. In verse 39, He talked about turning the other cheek to anyone that strikes you, a kind of nonresistance to evil. Absolute pacifism can also be seen in the Buddhist practice. The religious foundation is often tied to the idea that there is merit in suffering without retaliation (Stanford, 2016).

#### **2. CONDITIONAL/CONTINGENT PACIFISM.**

Conditional pacifists are against war and violence in principle, but they accept that there are circumstances when war will be less bad than alternative. It is based on utilitarian principle.

Contingent pacifism can be further subdivided into three. The first version of pacifism holds that the prohibition against violence only apply to those who take a vow or make a pledge to renounce violence and war (the vow of peacefulness). A second sort of contingent pacifism holds that if a particular war or military policy is unwise it should be resisted, it is based on a cost-benefit analysis focused on the facts of particular conflict. A third sort appeals to just war theory. Just war pacifism maintains that modern wars are not fought according to the standards of the just war theory because for example, they make use of aerial bombardment and other means that do not adequately discriminate between combatants and non-combatants (Standford, 2016).

With the just war theory in mind, contingent pacifism may focus on the basis of war (as in the just war idea of Jus ad bellum), on the way the war is being fought (Jus in bellum) or on the expected outcome of the war (jus post bellum).

**3. Active pacifisms:** Pacifists are heavily involved in political activity to promote peace and to argue against particular wars. During a war, many pacifists will refuse to fight but some will take part in activities that seek to reduce the harm of war (BBC 2014).

### **CRITICISMS OF THE PACIFIST THEORY OF PEACE**

-Pacifists are often thought to totally oppose killing but can logically support euthanasia, which is usually termed 'mercy killing'. However, it is pertinent to note that mercy killing also involves loss of life.

-Pacifism cannot be a national policy; adopting pacifism stance will result to a country rapidly being conquered. This is true because there are many states who are ever ready to showcase their weaponry.

-The absolute pacifism is nearly impossible because we must kill in order to eat. Absolute pacifists also believe in the sanctity of life of animals. Absolute pacifists believe that the world presents us with a difficult 'kill or be killed' choices as in the question of self-defense or war.

-Pacifism is for cowards, free riders, traitors and other vicious persons. This criticism opined that pacifists are opposed to war because they are afraid of suffering from violence. It could also be because of sheer laziness to take up arms to fight. However, pacifists argue that pacifism evolved from noble motives rather than vicious motives.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE REALIST THEORY OF PEACE**

Realism is most often depicted as a tradition or perspective on international relations explaining war and military conflict. This is not without reason as realists have focused on war as a major or even the primary mechanism of change in international relations. Realist thinkers like Hans J Morgenthau and Renold Niebuhr accepted the ineradicable possibility of war and the need to be prepared for those wars following Thomas Hobbes' pessimistic view of the state of nature (Fiala, 2018). Thomas Hobbes state of nature believed man to be naturally evil, an environment which is brutal, harsh and short (Garratt Williams 2019). That the problematic or unproblematic conception of man is decisive for the presupposition of every further political consideration and that all genuine political theorists supports the theory that man is evil, dangerous, egoistic, self-centred and dynamic being. The problematic conception of man is therefore what causes enmity, dissociation, and separation with each side holding the conviction that it possesses the truth that political conflict generates; the real possibility of physical killing, hence war follows enmity and finally the war of all against all (Schmitt, 1996, cited in Jeremy Moses 2017).

According to Reinhold Niebuhr's brand of realism as cited by Harland G. (2019), every group as every individual has expansive desires which are rooted in the instinct of survival and soon extend beyond it. The immediate issue that presents itself lies in the realist expecting that any genuinely political activity must countenance the possibility of using violence and fighting wars against its enemies (Moses, 2017). According to the Stanford online Encyclopedia of Philosophy published in 2010 and substantially revised in 2017, 'realists consider the principal actors in the international arena to be states, which are concerned with their own security, act in pursuit of their own national interests, and struggle for power'. Hence realists emphasize on power and self-interest rather than ethical norms in relation to states thereby neglecting moral values and idealism when it comes to security and peace.

### **TYPES OF REALISM**

Realist can be divided into three classes based on their view of the essential causes of interstate conflict.

- 1 **Classical Realist:** Classical realists believe in the flawed nature of human beings as a source of international conflict. Classic authors often cited by realists are Thucydides, Nicholl Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Max Weber (Duncan Bell, 2019). Classical realists believe because the causes of conflict follow from human nature that places interests over ideologies and as such suggests the need to be prepared for war in order to guarantee survival.
- 2 **Neo Realist:** Neo realists attribute causes of war and lack of peace to the dynamics of the anarchic state system. According to Duncan Bell (2019), Kenneth Waltz is associated to this theory and argued that most of the important features of international relations, especially the actions of great powers could be explained solely in terms of the anarchical structure of the international system. For neo realist theory, it is not only the flawed nature of humans or absence of global authority but domestic variables of a nation also influence its foreign policy
- 3 **Neo-classical Realist:** it can be seen as the third generation of realism, coming after the classical authors of the first wave. It is simply the synthesis of the neo realist and classical realist approaches.

#### **CRITICISMS OF THE REALIST THEORY OF PEACE:**

There are several critical review of the realist theory especially in relations to international relations and state interests. A few of these critical views are mentioned and analyzed below.

##### **1 Neither fully empirical nor fully logical:**

The first criticism of the Realist Theory is that it is neither fully empirical nor fully logical. Their observations are rather based on experience between nations at war and have no real scientific basis. The logic of the realist theory is also limited, as their view that a policy has to be totally rational is certainly illogical.

2 **A partial approach to peace and security amongst nations:** The neorealist define politics as a 'struggle for power generated by the conflict of interest'. (Duncan Bell 2019). This makes conflict of interests the sole determinant of international politics and the quest for wars. It is very obvious that today, international relations are characterized by both conflict and co-operation. This means that the realists are partial in their approach to international relations as regards security and peace.

3 **Unscientific:** Thirdly, Many critics have held that Morgenthau's theory of realism based on the principle of *animus dorminandi*, ie the desire to dominate, enshrined in his work, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Morgenthau 1948), is unscientific because it has its roots in a particular view of human nature since there can be no scientific theory of human nature. His view of human nature reflects the influence of Hobbes' anarchic state of nature which needed absolute monarchy to sort out.

4 **Guilty of Power Monism:** Another point of criticism against Morgenthau's Realist theory has been that it places so much importance to a single factor— national interest defined in terms of power. National Interest and National Power are important components of International Politics but to make them the sole determinants of this complex activity involves an extremely illogical love for these. Morgenthau's explanation of international politics as struggle for power among nations is inadequate because it fails to reflect the real nature of all processes of relations among nations.

5 **Justification of War:** The realists proclaim that like individuals, it is natural for nations to struggle for power, which would lead to domination over other nations. When struggle for power is accepted as natural, the policy of expansionism is justified and therefore war amongst nations is inevitable thereby justifying war rather than peace. Morgenthau describes struggle for power as the natural and eternal reality of International Politics. He proclaims that like individuals, it is natural for nations to struggle for power and practice domination over others. The extreme form of this struggle for power is war. When we accept struggle for power as natural, we cannot refuse to accept the naturalness and inevitability of war. In this way, Morgenthau builds up a case which leads to a justification of war. His realism appears to build a justification for the policy of expansionism.

6. **Little Importance to Morality: Neorealists advocate that no nation bases its policies on morality.** Morgenthau posits that ‘a dependence on moral principles would make the policy impracticable and idealistic’. (Morgenthau: 1948). This view is not only unrealistic but also dangerous. Its unrealistic nature stems from the clear fact that morality definitely influences the course of policy formulation and implementation by all states. The view is also dangerous because it tends to make power struggle as central to state existence and thereby reducing the chances of peace and harmony among nations thereby increasing the chances of war between nations. Besides, it is also wrong to project the superiority of national interest over moral interests.

Hence, it can be deduced that the Realist Theory has several limitations and because of these it cannot fully explain the behaviour of states in the international system especially as it patterns to conflicts, war and peace. While it offers a partial explanation of some aspects of war and peace among nations, it fails to provide a complete and fully realistic explanation of the total international reality in terms of peace and conflict. It can be, at best, used to understand and explain the nature of power relations or strategic relations among nations.

### **CONVERGENCES OF PACIFIST AND REALIST THEORIES OF PEACE**

Both Pacifist and Realist theory of peace talk on how a peaceful society is achieved. Below are some dimensions of realist thought through which affinities or convergence could be established.

1. The first concerns the refusal to countenance the materialization of war in realist thought, which provides a theoretical commonality with pacifism. For example, according to Jeremy Moses (2017) some theorists identified with the classical realist tradition refused to approve of war as moral which emerged from the relativist position on morality that is tied to the realist conception of politics and sovereignty.
2. Another convergence is seen in the pacifist hostility toward war which was so strong as to drive them to war against non-pacifists, in a war against war, that would prove that pacifism truly possesses political energy because it is sufficiently strong to group men according to friend and enemy, if in fact the will to abolish war is so strong that it no longer shuns war, then it has become a political motive i.e. it affirms, even if only an extreme possibility, war and even the reason for war.
3. Another identifiable convergence of realist and pacifist thought, in Robert Holmes’ piece on the meta ethics of pacifism and just war theory, the conclusion is reached that from a pragmatic pacifist perspective, no actual, no probable, or possible whole wars in the modern world are morally permissible hence what both sides do in a war is wrong. This position leaves a space in which realist thinking should fall intended to reduce the likelihood of

imperial wars claimed to rest on moral or ideological grounds and the brutality of such wars (Sage Journals, 2018). Just war theory in this sense, applies to reconcile the pacifist desire for peace with the reality of the ongoing threat of war.

4. Pacifists will generally be confronted with “realistic” analogies of personal self-defense against an assailant or to what are seen as the most obvious and compelling examples of just wars.
5. Pacifist and realist theory of peace are both examining peace and war.

### **DIVERGENCES OF PACIFIST AND REALIST THEORIES OF PEACE**

1. A difference is seen in the pacifist obligation and belief in the principle of non-violent resistance when confronted with violence for example Leo Tolstoy (1894) asserts that Christ means to abolish violence even the defensive kind and give up revenge, maintaining that how can you kill people, when it is written in God’s commandment: “Thou shalt not murder”? While the realist belief is in the inherent nature of man to be evil, selfish and violent: therefore, one prepares for war before it comes.
2. Pacifism believes in the ability of non-violence to bring about change while the realist sees war as the basic mechanism for change.
3. The classical realist position is one in which the locus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man while the pacifist sees no reason why men should go to war -that which is morally wrong.
4. Realist theory focuses on the state, power and sovereignty, the state build up their militaries to survive and pursue self-interest against others which may lead to a security dilemma while the pacifist most especially absolute pacifist theory took the viewpoint that all governments who waged war are an affront to Christian principles.

Table: Assumptions of realism and Pacifism (Idealism)

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Pacifism</b>
<b>Human nature</b>	Selfish	Altruistic
<b>Most important actors</b>	States	States and others including individuals
<b>Causes of state behaviour</b>	Rational pursuit of self interest	Psychological motives of decision makers
<b>Nature of international system<sup>4</sup></b>	Anarchy	Community

### **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

This write recommends that:

1. There are situations in which conflicts do not justify escalation, so the Parties to a Conflict should weigh the situation and chances before going into war.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205780210.pdf> (assessed 5th September, 2019).



2. In International Relations, countries should not be hasty in waging war against an enemy country. Diplomatic means using the theory of contingent pacifism. Countries should try diplomacy; war should be the last resort.
3. States at War should avoid using Nuclear Bombardments, At least to differentiate between Combatants and Non-Combatants.
4. In cases where the Violence has escalated and the Lives of the Citizens will put at risk, then going for War is Justifiable and the only solution to reserve Peace.
5. This Research also recommends that Pacifist and Realist Theory of Peace can both be useful in settling Conflicts, a concept which we would refer to as the *PACIFIC REALISM* or peaceful realism. For example, Combatants can use the Tortoise style which denotes Avoidance (Pacifism) and the shark denoting Domination (Realism), to handle difficult Conflict situations.
6. Wars should be fought in accordance with the Just War Theory, a more permissive theory of war.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, pacifism advocates peaceful means to handling a conflict situation and a parameter to obtaining Peace, the Realist on the other hand believe in the imperfection of man as the cause of war and suggests the need to be prepared for war in order to guarantee survival and maintain peace. Yet while criticism of the moralisation of war for human rights or humanitarian purposes is relatively straight forward, it is around the realist principle of war as a political necessity that a pacifists face deeper challenges. It is here that the more strategic dimensions of realist thought can come in to play, allowing the pacifists to formulate effective responses to ‘wars of necessity’ (e.g. for self-defense) without being limited to moral exhortations and condemnation of the combatants.

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