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The *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTPP)* is a peer-reviewed, biannual, subscription-based, scholarly journal of contemplative cutting edge research and practice on subjects related to human social flourishing and peace.

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- a holistic and collaborative approach to complex systems,
- the transdisciplinary nature of solutions to wicked social problems, and
- a shared sense of purpose in human transnational activism for positive change.

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## Editor-in-Chief's Welcome and Introduction

I woke recently to a worried email from a colleague. The worry was for a mutual former student who's relative had been killed a few days before in the Palestinian West Bank. A 15-year-old kid standing on a street corner near a hospital, he was gunned down by retreating Israeli forces. I got a visceral feel for the wasted potential just by looking at a picture of this boy in the news story that I was forwarded. My former student, who has previously written for this outlet, was distraught and contemplating dropping out of his doctoral programme to return to his family in the occupied West Bank. In such a context, what can words convey? Should I use the power of logical and analytical persuasion to explain that my student's life and impact will clearly be greater should he stay in North America and finish his PhD? Of course, I cannot imagine the grief and guilt of being a world away when this death occurred. What would I do if I were in his situation? Such human complexities of protracted social conflicts, like the one on-going in Gaza and the West Bank, are what drive my professional calling to build knowledge and awareness of the realities of conflict and the complexities of sustained peace. These are the types of realities in which I envision transdisciplinary scholarship to be a help in building peace.

It is with such heavy thoughts that I welcome you to our twelfth (XII) issue of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTTPP)*. I still believe that the theory and practice of transdisciplinary peace is desperately needed. From the Levant to Ukraine to the forgotten wars of Africa, the constant human drumbeat of war must be countered. The *JTTPP* is a journal that does not shy away from such a value-based stance. Gone are the days of positivist science that tries to assume absolute objectivity in the face of such trauma, violence, and tragedy. I am not convinced that traditional disciplinary scholarship has the answers to such human tragedy. Further, rather than creating spaces between or amidst traditional social science disciplines, I believe we need to develop connections across and beyond the existing disciplines. Rather than just interdisciplinary collaboration we need transdisciplinary creativity to overcome the complexity of issues like protracted war. 'Transdisciplinarity, like interdisciplinarity, is descriptive of collaborative research and problem solving that, unlike interdisciplinarity, crosses both disciplinary boundaries and *sectors of society* by including stakeholders in public and private domains' (Repko, 2008: 15, italics in the original). This issue of the *JTTPP* continues such an ambitious transdisciplinary agenda by expanding the boundaries of mere disciplinary, or even locally conditioned, mindsets and frameworks of peace.

The first article by Stephanie Stephanie Gibb-Clark, entitled '(Re)Framing Our Understandings of Power in the Experiences and Practices of Women in the Kurdish Liberation Movement and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria', takes us to the Levant and provides a window into how power and gender norms show up in the context of modern North and East Syria. In outlining the history and literature of women's resistance in Rojava's Kurdish liberation movement, Gibb-Clark offers 'a creative integration of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) theories of desire and rhizomatic relationality, Rosi Braidotti's (2002) materialist analysis of nomadic figuration, and an anarchy-feminist (see for example Kornegger, 2002) praxis of prefiguration and anti-hierarchical, collective authority...in the context of Kurdish women's experience with/in the Rojava Revolution' (p.14). Despite its theoretical language and discourse, this article reframes how ideas such as intersectionality 'and Foucauldian discourse analysis, have missed some integral aspects of Kurdish women's experiences in the Rojava Revolution' (p.33). This is the type of transdisciplinary scholarship is exactly what I was referring to above when I called for transdisciplinary, as opposed to simply interdisciplinary, creativity to overcome war.

From Gibb-Clark's article about the Levant we move to cross-border conflict in Ethiopia and Northeastern Kenya in the second article in this twelfth issue. In 'Cross-Border Conflict Peacebuilding Practices of Dassanech, Nyangatom and Hammer Communities of Ethiopia and Turkana Kenya', Asmare Shetahun Alemneh argues that employing many approaches to peacebuilding through civil-society and state auspices can help to stop violence in resource-based conflict environments. Utilising Lederach's grassroots theories of peacebuilding (1997) this article articulates the complex realities of long-term and dynamic peacebuilding processes to stop retaliatory violence. Building peace between the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in this region requires a multi-pronged and transdisciplinary approach to change. This article adeptly articulates the important roles played by government and non-governmental actors in ensuring that triggering events do not lead to violence on this border region.

The third article in this issue of the *JTPP* stays on the African continent to further explore the complexities inherent in everyday peacebuilding. Focusing on the 'bottom-up initiatives' (p.60) of local peace committees, Norman Chivasa illustrates how local social practices shape community peacebuilding efforts. Chivasa's use of international theorists [e.g. Mac Ginty (2013, 2014) and Autesserre (2014) for example] illustrates not only the importance of the everyday, but also the important connections being made between local and global peacebuilding actors. This 'glocal' (Ritzer, 2003) story is critical

to the transdisciplinary development of the field of peacebuilding. Chivasa's contribution gives a local nuanced reading of peacebuilding that 'cannot be understood in isolation as only bottom-up daily habits and processes that occur between individuals and groups' (p.78).

Ali Askerov and Tomas Scott's article, 'A Post-Mortem of the Collective Security Organization (CSTO): Realist and Institutional Perspectives', addresses the context of the role of collective security organisations in the ongoing conflicts in the former Soviet states. Exploring the founding charter of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Askerov and Scott analyse an important and under-emphasised military alliance that emerged after the fall of the old Soviet Union and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. In their final analysis as to 'why the CSTO has failed as a collective security organisation' they argue that the CSTO is 'at best, a paper alliance and, at worst, an authoritarian club that hinders the development and interdependence of the member states' (p.98). The authors' final sentence sums up the current 'life' of the CSTO well: 'As the conflict in Ukraine progresses and Russia's military and diplomatic capabilities become more stretched, the relevance of the CSTO diminishes, necessitating new security options for the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia' (p.99). Coupled with other papers in this issue, Askerov and Scott's paper adds an important perspective to ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Europe's most deadly war since World War II.

The final article in our latest issue comes from Samir Kumar Das who asks: 'Is there an "Indian" Theory of Democratic Peace?' In applying a universal (and often perceived to be Western) value of democratic peace to the Indian polity, Das concludes that 'social unity is an end-in-itself' (p.119) in India, which relies less on rules and procedures than Western democracies. Even if his faith that India 'will achieve public purpose in due course' (p.119) may be driven more by national pride than some colonialist faith in Western open doors, the chapter provides an interesting transnational comparison of divergent conceptions of democratic peace. Ending this issue's articles in India provides a truly transdisciplinary, transnational, and refreshing take on democratic peace and policies aimed at achieving it.

Also included in this issue are two book reviews by Omar Sufian (review of Louis Kriesberg's *Fighting Better: Constructive Conflicts in America*, Oxford University Press, 2022) and Jeremy Rinker (review of Marjane Satrapi's new creative endeavour *Women, Life, Freedom*, Seven Stories Press, 2024). Sufian's review explores the most recent book by a lion of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies. Kriesberg, still an active emeritus scholar in Sociology and Peace and Conflict Studies, continues to work on issues of division, polarisation, and destructive conflict and Sufian provides a critical assessment of his latest

work. Rinker's review underscores Satrapi's creative leadership in a project that documents the democratic foundations of Iranian resistance to Mahsa Amini's death in September 2022. Satrapi, and the many colleagues she organised in this ambitious project, provide pointed and artistic critiques of the Iranian authoritarian and theocratic regime. Both books, one a piece of academic scholarship and the other a graphic set of vignettes about modern Iran, advance an important sense of equality and human rights as critical ingredients in effective peace praxis.

Lastly, I urge readers to explore the *Kaleidoscope* section of this issue to engage with current peace contexts inherent in an outline of some important current news events of the day. Readers may notice that there is no *R & R* section in this twelfth issue. I take full responsibility for this omission. With the end of the summer and completion of my own most recent book, *The Guide to Trauma-Informed and Emotionally Mindful Conflict Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024—see: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538168592/The-Guide-to-Trauma-Informed-and-Emotionally-Mindful-Conflict-Practice>), I have had little time to develop my own op-ed ideas. Further, my previous requests for more opinion-oriented short pieces has not bared much fruit. If you would like to help contribute to a future *R & R* section with a short (1000-1200 word) opinion piece, please reach out to me. I also hope one of our readers might like to review my own book from Rowman and Littlefield (mentioned above) that should be in print by October 2024. Please reach out should this be of interest and I can share a copy. Despite the many contexts that deserve all our sustain critical attention, my omission of this issues' *Response and Reflection* (*R & R*) section is not intended to last. This section will return in the thirteenth issue. With the US elections in November 2024 there will surely be much to opine about in that next issue.

While words and academic research will always be inadequate to express the pain and suffering that my former student endures, transdisciplinary scholarship, like what is found in these pages of the *JTTPP*, provides some opportunities for healing from the protracted social problems of our times. I hope readers will enjoy the pieces in this issue and use them in building compassion and further peace knowledge. As always, thanks to the Peace and Justice Studies Association's (PJSa), a bi-national social justice organisation that supports the work of the *JTTPP*. As an affiliated journal of the PJSa, we continue to encourage the engagement of PJSa membership through both readership and manuscript submission to our always open call for papers, found at <https://jtpp.uk/>. Please continue to support us by reading this issue and encouraging your friends and colleagues to subscribe to the *JTTPP* (<https://jtpp.uk/subscription-plan>)! Finally,

please also send us your feedback! No matter from what walk of life you are from, we want to hear from you!

With metta (loving kindness and compassion),



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# (Re)Framing Our Understandings of Power in the Experiences and Practices of Women in the Kurdish Liberation Movement and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria

Stephanie Gibb-Clark

## ABSTRACT

While the Kurdish peoples have largely been ignored in the scholarly arena in the academic Anglosphere, new research on the experiences of and social arrangements affecting Kurds as an ethnic group has exploded since the onset of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War between 2011 and 2013. One area of focus has been on the ways in which Kurdish women—who have played a major role in the multiple Kurdish political parties, social welfare programmes, and militias through the Kurdish Revolution—have negotiated power within these Kurdish organisations themselves and as part of the wider Syrian conflict and Kurdish Question. In this paper, I elucidate three main ways researchers have theorised power in the experiences of Kurdish women within the Kurdish Liberation Movement in the Bakur and Rojava regions of Kurdistan. From my reading of this literature, I then suggest three ways in which power in the experiences of women in the Kurdish Liberation movement remains undertheorised. To conclude, I point to the ways in which working with these emergent themes—Nomadism and Border Crossing, Desire, and Futurity—may provide insights into different ways of negotiating power that operate to eliminate rather than perpetuate violence.

## KEYWORDS

Kurdistan, Revolution, Social movements, Kurdish Women's Movement, Power, Subjectivity

## INTRODUCTION

In the ten years since the start of the Syrian Civil War and emergence of the Rojava Revolution, the situation of Kurds living in Rojava and larger Syria has changed dramatically yet, Western media continue to rely on the same narratives and the

same 'facts'. Despite an ever-evolving radical system of participatory democracy, the looming possibility of reintegration into Syria, and the genocidal attacks against both Turkish and Syrian Kurds by Turkish governmental forces, the story remains: 'The Syrian Kurds are carving out a new State using an army run by women!' However, this simplified version of the material and epistemic reality has not only captivated a popular audience, much of the academic literature on this contemporary iteration of the Kurdish Liberation Movement in the Rojava context remains narrowly focused on the implications of the, indeed, revolutionary social rearrangement of Kurdish majority regions in North and East Syria for the future of Women's Rights/Gender Liberation for Kurdish women, in particular, and Middle Eastern democratic practice, as a whole.

While focusing on the implications of the future of Women's Rights and Gender Liberation, scholars have rightly connected the process of revolution with the rearrangement of systems of power. In fact, a basic definition of revolution is often given thusly: Revolutions are 'forcible, irregular' events that are 'popularly supported in the change of the governing regime', (Van Inwegen 2011: 4) suggesting a focus on political systems and institutions of power and authority. Revolutions, however, do not only occur in the public, political realm but also in the social and cultural arrangements of communities of people. For instance, the concept of a gender revolution represents a perceived need for the rearrangement of the social systems that currently produce differential access to types of power/positions through the hierarchical valuing of the cisgender male over other sex/gender/sexualities (Tetreault, 1992).

An interdisciplinary literature on the women in the Kurdish Liberation Movement has emerged from researchers focused on revolutions, Kurdish women, military conflict and peace processes, and leadership studies which developed from the understanding that revolution and gender liberation are ultimately negotiations of power emerging through a complex assemblage of processes, histories, contexts, and trajectories. This emerging literature on the ways in which Kurdish women participate in both the official structures of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, the Women's Institutes of *Jineoloji*, and the People's and Women's Protection Units, and in unofficial acts of mutual aid and activism, shows the immanent connection between political and social flows of power. Indeed, many researchers seem to be asking a similar question to my own: In what ways does power show up in or through the experiences of women in the Kurdish Liberation Movement?

Building on this question, I ask instead: With what tools have researchers who focus their work on women in the Kurdish Liberation Movement identified power as emerging from Kurdish women's experiences and, according to researchers, how does power emerge in/through Kurdish women's experiences in the revolution? In

# Cross-Border Conflict Peacebuilding Practices of Dassanech, Nyangatom, Hamer Community of Ethiopia-Turkana and Turkana-Kenya

Asmare Shetahun Alemneh

## ABSTRACT

The study explores cross-border conflict peacebuilding practices of Dassanech, Nyangatom, Hamer Community of Ethiopia-Turkana and Turkana-Kenya. Peace is the most important need and value of the pastoral community and conflict is destructive and unimportant by them. To build peace various actors are participated and different approaches are used. Inter-state diplomacy, non-state actors' engagement, international and intergovernmental organisations' participation and the role of community based indigenous institutions contributed to the practices of peacebuilding. However, the objective of building lasting peace is still not achieved. Particularly, the federal government of Ethiopia gives less attention to the impact of cross-border conflicts in the study area and the Kenyan government gives much attention to the issue of conflict and peacebuilding. The environmental change, resource scarcity like water and pasture land, drought, the availability of small arms, animal raiding, and killings for revenge and heroism, cultural factors triggered the conflicts and violence. The study, therefore, concluded using multiple approaches of peace building help to mitigate conflict, and can stop violence related to resource based conflicts. Moreover, developing peace leadership could play vital role in the realisation of peace in the area.

## KEYWORDS

Pastoralism, Agro-pastoralism, Peacebuilding, Resources, Conflict, Cross-border conflicts, Violence, Peace

## INTRODUCTION

Pastoralism is a livelihood mechanism and trans-human activity characterised by livestock herding and movement in the arid and semi-arid lands of east Africa. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists move with their livestock and in most cases raids, livestock theft, abduction, droughts, presence of illegal arms, inaccessibility of pasture land, water, epidemics, degradation, negative cultural practices instigate



conflict and violence. These problems need a solution through the mechanisms which would enable to create peace and development (IGAD, 2022). Nature of cross-border pastoralist natural resource based conflict between Kenya and Ethiopia is resource driven. Further on, the salient triggers of conflict as politically motivated, and ethnic-based for resources sharing and control. It is frequently witnessed across the border with common signs seeming inevitable due to resources scarcity and environmental degradation (Shikuku et al, 2020). The sources of the conflict are complex and multi-layered and are in need of peaceful solution because the multi-layered factors leading to conflict in the area interconnected to the livelihood and survival of the community.

Conflict and peace have an impact on the relationship of the community. Peacebuilding processes vary depending on the context of the conflicts. Peacebuilding approaches can create an environment of positive community relationship (Karbo, 2008). Researchers classify the peacebuilding approaches in to state based and non-state based traditional approaches (Murthi, 2008; Omeje, 2008). Peacebuilding practices need the role of state, non-state actors with strategies to sustain peace in the control and utilisation of resource like land, pasture, water points and water bodies. Creating peaceful utilisation of these resources is vital for the survival, livelihood and development of the pastoral and semi pastoral community. The conflict in the area is situational. Mostly the resource based conflict exacerbated during dry session. This is the time of resource shortage and the community is always in search for these resources anywhere across the boundary of the two countries (Pavanello & Levine, 2011). Land and water, in particular, can be structural drivers of pastoralist conflict and violence (Nilsson, n.d). A number of interventions are being carried out by NGOs, international organisations, intergovernmental organisations and the governments in the study area to build peace and to mitigate the conflict and violence (Cross-border analysis and mapping final report, 2016). The states are not the only actor in peacebuilding. It involves the participation of various non state actors. Because the state centered approaches of peacebuilding are unable to address conflict and violence (Turo, 2010). Community based peacebuilding approaches are important part of the intervention (Temsegen, 2010). Indigenous community based approaches of peacebuilding contribute to the conflict resolution and resource sharing among the pastoral community. Indigenous conflict resolutions have been recognised by the state of Kenya and Ethiopia with the aim of creating conditions of sustainable inter-ethnic peace based on their peace culture, norms and values. Moreover, the intergovernmental organisations like European Union and IGAD, NGOs and civil society development institutions could be vital for peace (IGAD Report, 2022).

This study argues that multiple approaches of peacebuilding are the most important mechanism to resolve cross border resource based conflict and to create

# Challenges and Opportunities of Everyday Peacebuilding in Post-Colonial Rural Zimbabwe

Norman Chivasa

## ABSTRACT

The everyday peacebuilding framework involves shared offstage narratives, social practices and the often taken for granted interactions which are based on the constructed reality of a specific local group of people. These offstage social processes demonstrate resilience, local agency and resistance to elitist approaches to peacebuilding as well. They ensure insulation of the local people against practices considered as subversive to local peace aspirations. Everyday social practices culminate into the establishment of bottom-up initiatives such as informal peace committees, indigenous customary courts, village banks created in some cases by local communities and in other cases as a collaborative work between civic organisations and local communities. Although these social practices remain subjective, undocumented and limited to specific geographical locations, two important benefits are worth mentioning: First, they shape peacebuilding efforts at community levels. Second, they embody collective efforts and a stock of group experiences and knowledge which serves as a reference point for local peacebuilding efforts across the globe.

## KEYWORDS

Community, Peace committees, Peacebuilding, Zimbabwe

## INTRODUCTION

This study is an ethnographic description of a ward peace committee (WPC) in ward 8 of Seke district, Zimbabwe created based on collaborative work over a period of nine months between November 2014 and July 2015. It is part of the larger research project, which was designed using participatory action research (PAR) to examine the possibility of informal peace committees to contribute to peacebuilding in Seke district, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to set up a ward-level pilot peace committee in order to establish whether informal peace committees can be an effective response to

peace challenges bedevilling rural communities in Seke district.

In describing the creation of the WPC, the researcher began by describing how the process unfolded on one hand. On the other, the researcher described typical peace committee meetings and their potential contributions to peace. The researcher did not use an observation checklist but preferred to produce free-flowing notes on the phenomenon as it unfolded. Since the researcher was the secretary of the WPC, the researcher was at liberty to use a voice recorder because after the meeting, the researcher had the obligation to produce a record for the committee and for my research report as well. For that reason, a voice recorder was useful in that occasionally, while updating minutes of the peace committee as well as my research report I was able to reflect and compare what he observed and what transpired.

In order to gain insight into specific elements of peacebuilding at community level, he participated in 15 consecutive meetings some weekly and others monthly. Through these meetings, the researcher observed the different views about peacebuilding and more importantly, specific attitudes and behaviours to conflict and violence. Attending peace committee meetings provided a good opportunity for gaining more insights into individuals' beliefs about conflict, peace and violence and interpersonal interactions. This provided a basis for understanding why some members of the community have peace aptitude while others do not.

At almost every peace committee meeting, tolerance, respect, and a feeling of oneness characterise the atmosphere. For example, on a typical day of the meeting, members arrived 10 minutes before. Upon arrival, committee members greeted one another, some shook hands in a manner that suggests familiarity to one another. The manner in which they greeted each other depicts how long they have not seen each other, which may suggest less contact outside the peace committee forum.

When all the committee members are seated, one cannot distinguish between the chairperson, deputy and committee members because they sat on a circular arrangement. Women and men sit on the same chairs in a mixed pattern. There are no reserved chairs as each peace committee member sits where s/he feels as long as the person maintains a circular sitting arrangement. In some instances, a few women prefer to sit on the floor.

## FORMATION OF THE WARD-LEVEL PEACE COMMITTEE IN WARD 8 OF SEKE DISTRICT

We created the WPC using the self-selection process in which community members volunteered to occupy certain position in the peace formation but with all members subsequently approving those with qualities such as faithfulness, honesty and trustworthiness, or who have conflict-resolution skills. Similar formations

# A Post-Mortem of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Realist and Institutionalist Perspectives

Tomas C Scott & Ali Askerov

## ABSTRACT

Collective security systems embody the mutual protection and stability upheld by the nations that are party to a collective security treaty, in which aggression against any member is considered aggression against all members in the treaty. Given the EU and NATO's impact on global stability and peace, collective security discussions primarily focus on Europe. The functioning and impact of collective security systems in other overlooked regions must be better understood. After the Warsaw Pact collapsed in 1991, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) became Eurasia's main political-military bloc in 2002. Despite having a charter that appears to support the principles of collective security, it fails to implement them in practice, as evidenced by its lack of involvement in ethnic, religious, and territorial disputes in post-Soviet Eurasia. This paper argues that the ineffectiveness of the CSTO can be understood by systematic constraints, such as the fact that all of the members of the CSTO, apart from Russia, are landlocked post-Soviet states that have minimal material capabilities for self-defence and depend heavily on Russia for their security needs. Additionally, this paper examines the internal characteristics of these states and the dynamics of regional cooperation among their authoritarian leaders, who use organisations like the CSTO to restrict political opposition, bolster the repressive machinery, and undermine the growth of political institutions. This paper proposes two theoretical frameworks that reflect the patterns introduced in this analysis, structural realism and liberal institutionalism, which offer distinct views on why collective security has failed in post-Soviet Eurasia.

## KEYWORDS

Collective Security, Central Asia, Russian Foreign Policy, Structural realism, Liberal institutionalism

## INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental military alliances between multiple states are usually predicated on collective security, in which states agree to aid and protect each other from external aggressors in defence of common interests (Farer, 1993; Kupchan & Kupchan, 1995). Since the Second World War, the growth of international organisations has, with varying degrees of success, facilitated dialogue between nations and established international norms to promote cooperation and peace. One such organisation, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), emerged as a consolidated military alliance in 2002, forming the predominant political-military bloc in Eurasia following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991. Apart from Russia, the organisation includes five post-Soviet republics: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (See Figure 1).

The main objectives of the CSTO, as outlined in the founding charter, are to safeguard the security of its members' sovereignty and territorial integrity and to foster collective defence and cooperation in countering transnational threats (CSTO, n. d). However, the CSTO, often called 'Russia's Mini NATO', has hardly functioned as a military alliance. Despite the treaty having a *Casus Foederis* clause, Article 4 (like NATO's Article 5), in which aggression against one-member party is considered aggression against all treaty members, it was only activated once to squash domestic riots in Kazakhstan in January of 2022 (Libman & Davidzon, 2023). Besides this instance, it has rarely been considered or enforced in any meaningful way, despite numerous opportunities to do so, including the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The regional security architecture in post-Soviet Eurasia is a unique topic that

FIGURE 1 : Map of CSTO Member States



Source: Map Generated by mapchart.net

# Is there an 'Indian' Theory of Democratic Peace?<sup>1</sup>

Samir Kumar Das

## ABSTRACT

This paper makes a plea for reading Indian Political Theory in complementarity with Western Political Theory within the limited context of understanding democracies of our time. Insofar as Western Theory develops its anomalies, the paper seeks to find out if Modern Indian Political Theory could offer remedies to their resolution. The paper is divided into two parts: The first part dwells on the problem of situating Modern Indian Political Theory in the context of such developing anomalies. This part is prefaced by a reference to a few examples from the West in general and the USA in particular. The second part draws on some select writings of Swami Vivekananda, Ramananda Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in order to examine how they address the anomalies and contribute to the building of a Political Theory of Democracy regardless of their Indian and Western divisions.

## KEYWORDS

Anomaly, Democracy, Deontological Individual, Deliberation, Organismic theory, Varna

## INTRODUCTION

The doors today have opened in the West, bearing gifts,  
Behold they arrive —  
All shall give and take, mingle, and be mingled in,  
None shall depart dejected

—Rabindranath Tagore (1910)<sup>2</sup>

Our four-volume work on South Asian Peace Studies (Samaddar, 2004; Das, 2005; Banerjee, 2008 & Singh, 2008) published between 2004 and 2008 was issued

from the twofold objective of disconnecting peace from war and reconnecting it with such ethical values as rights, justice, and democracy. By the early 2010s, we could realise that the ethical values that are supposed to inform peace are neither Universal nor absolute: On the one hand, absolutizing such ethical values makes it possible for the international bodies (like the UN) and global multilateral agencies (like World Bank and International Monetary Fund) to intervene in poorer countries in the name of promoting and fostering them. Peace interventions in the name of promoting 'freedom' and 'democracy' are by no means rare as it triggered larger and prolonged conflicts in our recent past history. Peace. I argued elsewhere, has already turned into an 'industry' which benefits the conflicting parties, the international and global actors and the military-industrial complex and could serve as an instrument of hegemony across the globe (Das, 2024:106-26). On the other hand, insofar as such ethical Universals are made to work in a country like India, they are called upon to engage with many an alternative idea of peace circulating in our society. The critical engagement of these so-called Universal vales of rights, justice and democracy turns peace into a highly contested and hybrid concept (Das, 2014: 34-54). In other words, there is no given and *apriori* definition of values; the definition of each of them is negotiated through the contingent practice of critical engagement in concrete situations. The main aim of this paper is to push the point a step further, reflect on how democratic peace as one of the values is negotiated through the practices of critical engagement, situate democratic peace at the intersection of Modern Western and Indian Political Theories. The paper dwells more on the democratic nature of peace than peace per se.

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Viewed in this light, the paper is divided into two rather uneven parts. The first part discusses why and how Indian Political Theory<sup>3</sup> is invited to engage with the Western Political Theory and thus acquires its relevance for itself—a phenomenon known in our time as 'the Indian Turn' in Political Theory. We argue that Western Political Theory of democracy has developed anomalies that

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## Book Reviews

*Fighting Better: Constructive Conflicts in America*



By LOUIS KRIESBERG

pp.342, Oxford University Press, 2022, PB  
\$ 120

Reviewed by  
OMAR SUFIAN

Louis Kriesberg's *Fighting Better: Constructive Conflicts in America* is an interesting piece that provides an in-depth exploration of conflict in the United States by examining how specific struggles have been conducted with varying degrees of constructiveness. Personally, as someone who knows a little about the internal American nuances of political and social dynamics in the past few decades, I found this book very insightful as it analyses in detail the timeline of conflicts and political endeavours from 1945 onward, focusing on their outcomes and offering lessons on how to engage in more constructive conflict outcomes in the future. Louis Kriesberg is a well-versed scholar of social conflict studies since the mid-1980s. He is considered one of the pillars of Peace and Conflict Studies, as in 1998, he wrote *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield), which is still a great resource. He is an emeritus and the founder of the Programme for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC) at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Recently, he has been collecting data and analysing materials related to populism and democracies. 'Fighting Better' was one of his latest two books, released in late 2022. Kriesberg's work is timely, shedding light on the current high polarization and political strife in contemporary America. Through a careful dissection of past conflicts, the author seeks to examine conflicts related to three primary dimensions of all human societies: class, status, and power.

In the opening chapter, Kriesberg reflects on America's long destructive and constructive conflict history. He examines the upheaval leading to the 6 January 2021, insurrection, connecting it back to earlier conflicts shaped by technological, demographic, and cultural changes. Kriesberg emphasises that broader societal trends often channel conflicts and aims to show how these conflicts have



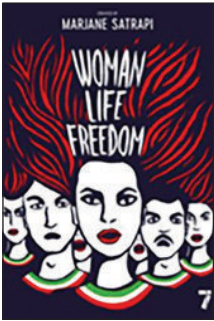
contributed to the current state of American democracy. He writes, ‘I examine how badly waged conflicts have contributed to getting the United States into this morass and previous troubles, and how constructively waged conflicts in the past have helped overcome troubles and advance democracy’ (Kriesberg, 2022, p.1).

The second chapter, which covers Class-Related Conflicts between 1945 and 1996, gets into the labour-management struggles and the fight against poverty in America after World War II. Kriesberg explains how conflicts over class inequalities were waged during this period, focusing on the successes and failures of various movements. From his point of view, he emphasizes the importance of collective bargaining and the role of unions in advancing worker rights; he says, ‘The growth of collective bargaining and improvements in its practices was an important source for the field of conflict resolution that began to emerge in the late 1950s’ (Kriesberg, 2022, p.15).

The rise of class inequality in the United States, specifically between 1970 and 1992, was a new milestone in America’s experience with social conflicts. Kriesberg argues that economic policies and societal shifts have exacerbated income disparities and have received attention quite recently, as they have become a major source of significant social conflicts. He critiques the political choices that contributed to these inequalities, observing, ‘The United States presently has exceptionally greater economic inequality than most other countries with highly developed economies’ (Kriesberg, 2022, p.28). According to Kriesberg, since the late 1970s, the conflicts related to the rise of inequality have been largely muted. Even though the reasons for this rise are disputed, more attention is needed to have greater exposure to societal issues related to economic inequality.

In the fourth chapter, Kriesberg continues his analysis of class-related conflicts, focusing on the period from the Clinton administration to the early years of the Biden presidency. He examines how rising inequality has sparked various forms of resistance, from grassroots movements such as Occupy Wall Street to more institutionalised forms of opposition using political processes such as lobbying, legislation, judicial decisions, and presidential orders. This chapter emphasises that the only way to avoid destructive conflicts is by addressing the underlying causes of inequality. Kriesberg stresses multiple times that conflicts related to hyper-inequality have profound implications for the future of American democracy.

Moving forward regarding racial inequality, Kriesberg explores the status-related conflicts that significantly impacted African Americans from 1945 to 1969. Chapter five provides a well-articulated examination of the persistent inequalities faced by African Americans, particularly regarding their status compared to Whites, and the various efforts made to combat these disparities. Kriesberg asserts that ‘progress is multidimensional’ and notes that while progress has actually happened in many areas, stagnation or regression occurred in others (p.96). Also, Kriesberg

*Women Life Freedom*

By MARJANE SATRAPI

pp.268, New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2024, PB  
\$35.95Reviewed by  
JEREMY A RINKER

Despite Marjane Satrapi's insistence that she would not draw again after the international success of her two-part graphic novel series *Persepolis* (2003/2004), which autobiographically describes her childhood and early life in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Satrapi has once again picked up the pen and art supplies. Contemporary events in Iran surely pushed Satrapi to rethink her creative shift to the medium of film (since releasing *Persepolis*, she has produced five feature films, including *Radioactive*, a well-received film about scientist Marie Curie) and we are all made better and more aware because of her choice to return to graphic print media. Even if her art only appears in limited spaces in the new work (including on the cover, see above) *Women Life Freedom*, named for the most recent Iranian feminist movement's protest central slogan, this collaborative creative project leaves readers with a defiant, yet difficult to stomach, impression of modern revolutionary resistance in Iran. Satrapi's creative leadership helps to produce this fresh and artful graphic novel that deploys many graphic styles to expose a central storyline that underscores the terror of living under Iran's theocratic regime. *Women Life Freedom* is a powerful testament to the brutality of the Iranian regime as it responded to the protests after the torture and killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian morality police in September of 2022.

The book, from the very preface, sets the context for this collaborative work as 'the first anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death' and offers itself as a 'humble contribution to the pursuit of freedom that the people of Iran so profoundly merit' (p.2). Satrapi and her co-contributors do not mince words in staking their moral stance; a stance that is humanistic and more than mere revolutionary political rhetoric. This is art for social change; art with the goal of transformative peacebuilding. Clearly spelling out the two central goals of the book as helping non-Iranian readers 'decipher events in all their complexity' and 'to remind Iranians that they are not alone' (p.2), the book's twenty-five 'chapters' or 'graphic vignettes' are testament to the Iranian regime's own inhumanity and rhetorical

hypocrisy. Broken down into three broad parts (titled: ‘The Events’, ‘A Bit of History’, and ‘An Iron Regime...A People Resisting’), *Women Life Freedom* is a quick read, but readers will want to meditate on the intricate images as they tell as much of the story of modern Iran as do the written words. The opening vignette provides a brief modern cultural and social history of feminist resistance in Iran. Culminating with the movement in response to Amini’s martyrdom, Satrapi and her co-author Milani offer brief revolutionary biographies of Iranian women as ‘small lanterns in a dark night of despotism and misogyny’ (p.13). This introductory vignette acts as a sort of introduction to set the stage for ‘The Events’ described in part 1 of the book. The diversity of both black and white and colour art in this first section is stunning and impactful. The reader, upon nearing the end of this section, cannot escape the brutal realities of the Iranian resistance movement as they encounter ‘The Winter of Executions’ by Touka Neyestani and Jena-Pierre Perrin. The haunting images of the young men executed for their support of the Women Life Freedom movement, framed at the start by the full-page macabre rendering of the evil Zoroastrian spirit of Zahhak juxtaposed across the page by the Ayatollah Khamenei (pp.76-77), stuns readers’ psyche. I hovered on this image for a long time, taking in the gory detail of Zahhak as compared with Khamenei. This comparison is made starker and explicit through a bottom banner across the entire section (pp.76-81) showing the Ayatollah increasingly sinking further and further into a pool of martyr’s blood as the reader pages through four of the many protesters executed by the Iranian regime. One can be lulled to indifference by the cartoon-like images in this section, but this is the point—these are real people, not cartoon characters, that were cut down in the prime of their lives for nothing more than publicly showing their indignation with the Iranian government’s handling of the killing of Amini. One cannot read these brief biographies of a poultry farmer, a karate champion, a music lover, and an under-employed youth and not feel sadness and a tinge of anger at the injustice. Caught up in the regimes’ suppression of protests these executions (some public displays) expose the savagery of Iran’s Islamic judicial system of sharia. If this bloodlust to maintain power were not enough to shock, part 1 ends with a finger pointing off the page asking in a paranoid voice: ‘Hey, you’re not in the hands of the regime are you’ (p.99)? As if brief stories of the hanged protesters do not stir enough emotion, the ever-present paranoia of an omnipresent regime leaves the reader aware that these executions are only a warning and, circumstances changed, easily it could have been their own execution.

The second part (‘A Bit of History’) of *Women Life Freedom* again returns to setting the historical context of the modern Iranian protests. Iran’s modern history is certainly tortured. Again, mixing colour and black and white drawings, this section provides a balanced view of how Iranians view the revolutionary history,

# Kaleidoscope

## *Iraq's parliament passes a bill criminalising same-sex relationships with jail terms of between 10 and 15 years*

In a blow to LGBT movement, in Iraq now transgender people could also be sent to prison for between one and three years under the new law. Moreover, those who promote homosexuality or prostitution, doctors who perform gender reassignment surgery, men who 'intentionally' act like women and those who engage in 'wife swapping' will also face prison terms under the new legislation. Rights groups say these are a further black mark on Iraq's record of violations against LGBT people. On the other hand, supporters of the changes view that the new law will help to uphold religious values in the country.

(Read more on: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68914551>)

## *Thailand passes historic bill recognising same-sex marriage*

Thailand's senate has passed the final reading of a historic marriage equality bill, paving the way for the country to become the first in south-east Asia to recognise same-sex marriage. The bill gained the support of nearly all upper-house lawmakers and will be sent to the palace for endorsement by King Maha Vajiralongkorn. The law will come into force 120 days after it is published in the royal gazette. Thailand will become the third place in Asia where same-sex couples can get married, after Taiwan and Nepal, and the first in south-east Asia.

(Read more on: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/18/thailand-same-sex-marriage-equality-vote-bill-legislation>)

## *Should Australia recognise housing as a human right?*

The Australian Human Rights Commission thinks so, including it in a list of rights that should receive legislative protection. The bill would require current and future governments to implement a 10-year national housing and homelessness plan in line with objectives including improving supply and affordability and ending homelessness. Recognising 'the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right' is one objective of the law. Now the crossbench will take up the cause, with the independent senator David Pocock and the MP Kylea Tink set to introduce a private members' bill

in both chambers this week. Private members' bills are usually doomed by government indifference to go nowhere but, with Labor being outflanked on left and right on housing policy at the moment, the crossbench are planting a seed in fertile terrain.

(Read more on: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/jun/24/should-australia-recognise-housing-as-a-human-right-two-crossbenchers-are-taking-up-the-cause>)

### *China changed village names 'to erase Uyghur culture'*

China has changed the names of hundreds of villages in Xinjiang region in a move aimed at erasing Uyghur Muslim culture, Human Rights Watch (HRW) says. According to a report by the group, hundreds of villages in Xinjiang with names related to the religion, history or culture of Uyghurs were replaced between 2009 and 2023. Words such as 'sultan' and 'shrine' are disappearing from place names—to be replaced with terms such as 'harmony' and 'happiness', according to the research, which is based on China's own published data. In recent years, Chinese authorities have been radically overhauling society in Xinjiang in an attempt to assimilate its minority Uyghur population into mainstream Chinese culture.

(Read more on: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cxrkl6ve39o>)

### *Imprisoned Nobel laureate handed longer sentence for 'propaganda' against state*

Iranian women's rights activist Narges Mohammadi, imprisoned since 2021, has been sentenced to another year in prison for 'propaganda'. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023 for her fight against compulsory veiling and the death penalty in Iran. Mohammadi, 52, has been incarcerated since November 2021, and continuously sentenced and imprisoned over the past 25 years for her opposition to the compulsory hijab for women and the death penalty. She refused to attend her latest trial 8 June after her request for a public hearing was denied.

(Read more on: <https://international.la-croix.com/world/iran-imprisoned-nobel-laureate-handed-longer-sentence-for-propaganda>)

### *Pro-Palestinian student protesters at US universities*

Thousands of students, at more than 130 colleges and universities across the US, have demonstrated in opposition to the ongoing war in Gaza with protests and encampments. More than 2,000 demonstrators have been arrested, but the protests continue as universities prepare for graduation ceremonies in due course. Since

the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas and Israel's retaliatory assault, students have launched rallies, sit-ins, fasts and, most recently, encampments against the war. They are demanding that their schools, many with massive endowments, financially divest from Israel. Divestment, for many of the protesters, means cutting those endowments' ties to Israeli companies or ones that do business with Israel. Many also want their universities to end academic relationships with Israeli institutions.

(Read more on: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68908885>)

### *Thousands of refugees in Indonesia spend years awaiting resettlement*

UNHCR Indonesia says more than 12,000 individuals from conflict-torn nations including Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and 40 other countries are listed as refugees under Indonesian law. Indonesia, despite having a long history of accepting refugees, is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol, and the government does not allow refugees and asylum-seekers to work. Many had fled to Indonesia as a jumping-off point, hoping to eventually reach Australia by boat, but are now stuck in what feels like an endless limbo.

(Read more on: <https://www.voanews.com/a/thousands-of-refugees-in-indonesia-spend-years-awaiting-resettlement-/7664565.html>)

### *Open letter in India calls for withdrawal of go-ahead to prosecute Arundhati Roy*

Over 200 signatories in India urge the government to reverse decision enabling action against writer under anti-terrorism law. More than 200 Indian academics, activists and journalists have published an open letter urging the Indian government to withdraw the decision sanctioning the prosecution of the Booker prize-winning author Arundhati Roy under the country's stringent anti-terrorism law. The lieutenant governor of Delhi, Vinai Kumar Saxena, gave the go-ahead to the police to prosecute Roy, along with the academic Sheikh Showkat Hussain, under the anti-terrorism law, known as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), for remarks they made at a seminar in 2010. Roy is reported to have said the disputed region of Kashmir had never been 'an integral part of India'.

(Read more on: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/23/india-open-letter-prosecution-arundhati-roy>)



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