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A new framework for studying relational peace

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VARIETIES OF PEACE

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A new framework for studying relational peace

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Abstract

In this paper we suggest that taking a relational view of peace serious is a fruitful avenue for expanding current theoretical frameworks surrounding peace as a concept. Paving the way for such an approach, this paper conducts a review of the literature which takes on peace as a relational concept. We then return to how a relationship is conceptualized, before turning to how such components would be further defined in order to specify relational peace. Based on this framework, we argue that a peaceful relation entails non-domination, deliberation and cooperation between the actors in the dyad, the actors involved recognize and trust each other and believe that the relationship is one between legitimate actors and ultimately an expression of friendship. It clarifies the methodological implications of studying peace in this manner. It also demonstrates some of the advantages of this approach, as it shows how peace and war can co-exist in webs of multiple interactions, and the importance of studying relations, and how actors understand these relationships, as a way of studying varieties of peace.

Key words: relational peace; theoretical framework; cooperation; recognition; non-domination; deliberation; trust

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Introduction

Scholar have long recognized that peace is more than the absence of war,[1] yet questions still remain as to how appropriately define and study the phenomenon of peace. Clarity in terms of definitions make a huge difference when we want to determine the breadth and width of a phenomenon, as well as when we want to explain its variation. Peace is a multifaceted concept, and this paper does not claim to offer the only way of studying peace, but it does aim to provide more clarity and depth in terms of one way that this concept can be studied. This paper proposes to focus on peace as a relational concept. Defining peace in these terms helps us pinpoint central aspects of what makes peace, peace, without overburdening the concept.

Diehl offers five guidelines to advance the study of peace.[2] First, he suggests that peace scholars need to move beyond the state as the main analytical entity by considering what peace entails above and below the nation-state. Second, he calls for a broadening of the theoretical focus beyond great powers to include non-western and non-European frameworks. This echoes contemporary pleas for more localized and empirically grounded understandings of peace.[3] Third, Diehl encourages researchers to look beyond the political science perspectives that thus far have dominated the mainstream peace research. The fourth guideline concerns the need to widen the temporal perspective and consider long term processes for studying peace. Indeed, examples of faltering peace processes and of violent conflicts that resumes several years after a war termination underlines the importance of considering how peace evolves even decades after a war-ending. Fifth and finally, peace researchers are encouraged to admit that their research is not value-free but influenced and perhaps driven by a normative agenda. In this paper, we adhere to these five guidelines by suggesting a framework for studying peace as relations beyond and below the state, by drawing on

literatures outside the western and political science based literatures, by approaching peace from a long term temporal perspective, and by acknowledging that our approach has a normative preference for peace.

This paper springs from the Varieties of Peace program, and in particular it departs from the larger differences of definitions, that can be divided into viewing peace as a situation, a relationship and an idea.[4] In this paper we focus on peace as *relationships* between actors, which can be actors of different types and at different levels. The question that needs to be answered before proceeding further with defining peace is what entity is it that is at peace or that is peaceful. Where does peace exist? From one perspective it makes sense to think of and investigate peace as a property of territorial units, such as states, or sub-national units, or even continents – this would imply studying peace as situational. This clearly needs attention and has a lot of merit. But, if we are to understand the coexistence of peace and war in such a unit in itself, then we need to turn toward the actors that are at peace. This requires thinking of peace in relational terms. This relational lens on peace is also promising as it allows us to capture imperative features of peace without resorting to general features of a 'good society'; it provides us with a more narrow approach.

The purpose of this paper is to delineate what it means to talk about peace in relational terms, and to provide a clear framework that allows us and others to study the phenomenon further. The framework can be applied at all levels of analysis, from micro-level relationships, between individuals, to macro-level relationships, society-wide, and between states. Our ambition is to both argue for the need to approach peace in relational terms, and suggest ways that this can be undertaken in a rigorous and systematic way, yet still manageable and without overburdening the concept too much.

The paper begins with noting the centrality of viewing peace as a relationship, discussing examples of work that has made this explicit in the past and the reasons for such an approach. Following this section, the paper defines what components make up any relationship, before presenting our own definition of relational peace. This definition is made up of three components: behavioural interaction (non-domination, deliberation and cooperation), subjective conditions (recognition and trust) and the idea of the relationship (legitimate co-existence and friendship). The next section details what each component consists of if we are to depict relational peace, and we discuss each one in turn. After this section we turn to some outstanding questions related to how such a framework can and should be used, for instance in terms of clarifying the limits and position of concepts such as actors and durability in the framework. In the final section we also discuss some of the implications of defining peace in this way, both in terms of directions for future research but also some areas of challenges.

Defining Peace in Past Work

Traditionally, peace research has conceptualized peace as either negative peace (absence of violence) or as positive peace (often referring to absence of structural or indirect violence, and presence of social justice and reconciliation). However, these established negative/positive peace conceptualizations fall short in capturing the empirical developments in most post-war societies, since they are 'either so narrow that they miss the point, or so expansive that they become utopian'.[5] This recognition has prompted calls for more nuanced conceptualizations of peace amenable to empirical analysis. Furthermore, the growing scholarly interest in peace and the plethora of new peace concepts has also led researchers to ponder the basic meaning and nature of peace.

We are far from alone in terms of proposing to see peace as relational.[6] A number of works suggest that peace indeed should be understood as a relationship, for instance it has been noted that peace can be defined 'as a relationship between entities in which no harm is being done (minimal) and there is mutual benefit through cooperation (maximal)',[7] or that peace is 'the facilitation of non-exploitive, sustainable and inclusive social relationships free from direct and indirect violence and the threat of such violence'.[8] Similarly, Oelsner while discussing international relations note:

> When the talk is about peace, rather than about pacific foreign policy, clearly more than one state has to be involved. Thus, international peace is a *relational* concept. It is necessary that two or more states conduct some sort of relationship or interaction to be able to assert that it is peaceful. The mere absence of war, as observed earlier, may be pointing to lack of relationship rather than to meaningful peace.[9]

Oelsner's last point is also especially important, again highlighting that the absence of war is far from sufficient if we are to understand what peace is.

These definitions that emphasize peace as relational can also be related to the understanding of conflict as essentially concerned with relationships. As Kriesberg puts it, 'parties who have nothing to do with each other do not fight each other; conflict is a way of relating'.[10] Authors also stress the interconnectedness with understanding conflict and peace in relational terms, for instance it has been stressed that '*relationship* is the basis of both conflict and its long-term solution',[11] and that conflict can be understood as moving along a continuum from un-peaceful to peaceful relationships.[12] Davenport in his definition of peace brings the two dimensions peace and conflict together in a peace scale. He defines peace as 'a situation where distinct actors (viewed in a dyadic interaction) exist in a situation of "mutuality" (i.e., one in which there is some degree of shared identity, reflected within behaviour, organization, language and

values),' which is 'juxtaposed against the conception of "conflict" whereby distinct actors exist in a relationship of opposition (i.e., one where there is some degree of competing identities, reflected in behaviour, organization, language and values)'.[13] Thus, Davenport suggests that conceptually peace and conflict are interconnected and exist along the same continuum, where the question of identity in relationships is key.

Some scholars have motivated the need for taking a relational approach to peace by stressing that peace differs ontologically from war which is commonly understood as an event. As Goertz, Diehl and Balas argue, "to conceptualize and measure peace, one must move from an events-based perspective to a relationship one: peace is a *relationship*, while war is an *event*.[14] Thus, as this argument goes peace is not the mere opposite of war and it must accordingly be understood and studied on its own merits. Related to this is the notion that peace and war can coexist. As put by Umoh and Udoh 'peace and war can co-exist since war […] does not entail the cessation of relations, interaction or cooperation'.[15] Thus, war and peace are not mutually exclusive categories since violent conflict and peaceful cooperation can coevolve and coexist.[16]

The importance of approaching peace as relational can also be grounded in research that aims to capture localized understandings of peace. For example, by taking into account people's perceptions of peace at the local level Firchow and Mac Ginty find in a study that overall people primarily use security-related indicators to define peace (i.e. a negative peace conception) but closely following these indicators are those relating to social cohesion or relationships.[17] The authors find that emphasis on positive peace indicators including relational aspects was particularly salient in areas in which violent conflict was further away in time,[18] which further supports taking a relational approach for understanding peace in post-war contexts.

Thus, previous research suggest that peace should not simply be understood as non-war[19] or as the absence of destructive conflict elements,[20] and several scholars have argued for taking a relational approach for characterizing and understanding peace as something more than the absence of war. We note that the idea of peace as relation can be found both in the IR-oriented literature, but also in the conflict transformation literature peace is conceptualized as 'a quality of relationships'.[21] Thus, it is not limited to the perspective of either inter-states or intra-states, but viewing peace as a relationship is relevant for both the literature dealing with the relationships between states and for the literature dealing with divided societies, and beyond.

Brigg describes the implications of the relational approach as follows:

> Relationality' can be provisionally defined as giving greater conceptual importance – and in some cases priority – to relations over entities by attending to the effects of interactions and exchanges. Rather than converging and fixing upon entities, or 'things' that are taken to be internally consistent and to have the character of 'substance' which sets them apart from other things, relationality turns attention to mobile relations that bring entities and things into being.[22]

As this implies, peace can be understood as a web of multiple interactions and instead of considering the conditions of broader entities *relationships* become 'a site for analysis and change'.[23] Such an understanding of peace is also compatible with understandings of peace as 'a *process*, and as such, *dynamic*'.[24] Clearly, there is already a lot of scholarly work that points us in the direction of viewing peace in relational terms. Yet, we believe that this work on the one hand has not taken the relational component serious enough, and perhaps left relational peace as a whole somewhat under-defined. We hope to contribute to this endeavour, and we draw on different literatures in this paper to identify central components of relational peace.

What is a relationship?

Before we address what peace as a relational concept entails, we should first add some clarity to the relational aspect. What does a relationship entail? Here we have turned to an entirely different literature, which deals with interpersonal relationships, romantic and family relationships etc. Reviewing this literature makes clear a number of important points. A relationship perspective immediately moves us away from separate entities, to the realm of how such entities associate with one another.[25] Primarily a relationship involves two actors (a dyad), but these actors can be groups of individuals or larger entities such as communities, or entire nations. The relationship need not be symmetric, i.e. the two actors involved need not be of the same size. A relationship can be limited in time, and may have little consequence beyond that moment, but it can also be extended in time and have huge impact on the parties involved. A relationship is only manifest when the actors involved have *some influence on each other*; if the two actors are totally independent and unaffected by the other, they have no relationship.[26] The relationship is made up of behavioural interaction between the parties involved, as well as their subjective experiences of the other (attitudes, beliefs and opinions), and their understanding of the relationship as a whole.[27] A relationship may thus be more or less volatile, where these components either shift or stay the same over time. Empirically investigating relationship properties would thus require us to not only look at these three components, but also map them in time and specify the specific actors involved in the dyad. However, these latter two aspects while they are important for the empirical study of a relationship, they do not constitute the relationship itself. If we are to define peace in relational terms, it needs to take into account all of the three core components. Below we address each in turn.

Relational Peace

Based on this depiction of what components make up a relationship ─ behavioural interaction between the parties involved, as well as their subjective experience of the other and their understanding of the relationship as a whole ─ we now turn to defining relational peace. If a relationship is peaceful what does that mean for the behavioural interaction, the subjective conditions and the dyad's idea of the relationship? We have strived for a parsimonious framework and have clustered related concepts discussed in previous research in order to identify components of relational peace. Firstly, we turn to what kind of behaviour, or patterns of interactions, that qualify as peaceful.

Behavioural interaction: non-domination, deliberation and cooperation

The first component of a peaceful relation is concerned with the behavioural interaction. Here we have identified three kinds of behaviour which we deem amount to peaceful behavioural interaction: *non-domination*, *deliberation* and *cooperation*. We define and discuss each in turn below. Marion Young in her work on progressing peace for Palestine/Israel builds on the notion of *non-domination*.[28] Young specifically struggles with the de facto entanglement of the people living in the region; they are far from independent of each other. She describes this entanglement thus:

> They have numerous economic and social interactions where each affects the others, and each risks being adversely affected by actions of the others because of their relationship. Because agents and groups are often closely related in common contexts where their actions affect one another, and because they are often unequal in resources or power, or both, some of the weaker units may be vulnerable to domination by more powerful units not because they directly interfere, but because they determine conditions under which the weaker party is forced to act.[29]

This relational entanglement, she suggests cannot be solved by a two-state solution, but

rather a horizontal federal solution, or what she terms a bi-national federation. In this discussion she shows how non-domination is an important element of relational peace. Non-domination is a republican ideal, which addresses a type of freedom, that of not being dominated by another. Non-domination is more than the lack of interference by another, it is about being free from arbitrary power.[30] This kind of behavioural interaction denotes a situation which speaks to the power imbalance that usually comes with any relationship. But here that power imbalance does not lead one actor to be dominated by the other, or in other terms a number of different actions are avoided, such as:

> coercion of the body [...], as in restraint or obstruction; coercion of the will, as in punishment or the threat of punishment; and [...] manipulation: this is usually covert and may take the form of agenda fixing, the deceptive or nonrational shaping of people's beliefs or desires, or the rigging of the consequences of people's actions.[31]

Non-domination is not limited to states but is applicable at all dyadic scales. Pettit describes the potential actors as such:

> the dominating party will always be an agent - it cannot just be a system, or network, or whatever - it may be a personal, corporate, or collective agent, as in the tyranny of the majority. The dominated agent, on the other hand, will always have to be a person or group of persons, not just a corporate body.[32]

The dominating actor does not need to actually wield its power, and actually interfere, rather the issue is that the dominating actor *could* interfere arbitrarily. Thus it requires the actual capacity to dominate, but not necessarily the intention to dominate. Crucially, if the dominated actor exhibits a pattern of limiting or censoring their behaviour due to the potential influence of the more powerful actor, then domination is occurring. Domination can also be more or less intense and widespread, thus it is not a binary

variable.[33]

Behavioural patterns of peace also need to include a dimension of non-violent political engagement, an interaction that we suggest can be captured by the concept of *deliberation*. The core idea behind deliberation is the exchange of views combined with the actors involved giving reasons for their positions. In such an exchange views are not necessarily fixed, but there is also no absolute demand for consensus.[34] The idea of public deliberation as the basis for legitimate decision-making speaks well to conflict-affected contexts,[35] as it values both inclusiveness of members of society on an equal basis and allowance for recognition of differences.[36] It has also been argued that the very act of public deliberation puts pressure on the attending persons and 'force[s] them to broaden their views and thus ameliorate conflict'.[37] Since, as Barnett further puts it, 'the principle of deliberation, […] at a minimum, requires that individuals provide public reasons for their positions and decisions',[38] deliberation can be a solution to both an overreaching state and factionalism. Björkdahl also suggests that in deeply divided societies deliberation can become a site for local articulations of peace that challenge dominant peace discourses.[39] While deliberation is often associated with political practices at the community level, it can also characterize behavioural patterns at different levels including interactions between states.

Björkdahl suggests that in postwar societies deliberation requires 'both the acknowledgment of disagreement and the crossing of multiple borders through dialogue'.[40] Thus, rather than striving for consensus, an important aspect of deliberation is that it allows for differences to be expressed, recognized and affirmed and that it views disagreement as an essential and vital part of political engagement and peaceful transformation of relationships. As Björkdahl puts it:

> Peace deliberation, it should be emphasized, is not a quest for homogeneity, consensus, or a common view on what peace should look like, as this does not exist in any society, and certainly not in a postwar society. By accepting widespread dissent and disagreement in peace deliberation, and admitting wider forms of communication—such as testimony, storytelling, or rhetoric—the peace can be invested with local characteristics. Hence, the preconditions for deliberation are, by necessity, relaxed in post-conflict peace deliberations.[41]

To capture the relational dimension of deliberative practices, several scholars emphasize dialogue as a venue for transforming relationships.[42] In deeply divided societies where conflict is inherently nested in relationships, such dialogue is importantly concerned not only with issues of disagreement but with the dynamics of the relationships underlying those issues. Thus, dialogue that embraces differences and engages with conflict does not necessarily create a basis for agreement but it can enhance mutual understanding.[43] As this implies, the actors may disagree and decide not to cooperate, yet deliberation is a step away from hostility and violence, and an important element of relational peace.

Finally, we turn to the most demanding form of behavioural interaction: *cooperation*. Campbell et al. emphasize 'the active pursuit of cooperative behaviour within and between opposing sides' to capture peaceful behavioural interactions.[44] Essentially, cooperation implies something more than the mere absence of violent conflict and avoidance of coercion and destructive behaviour associated with more negative conceptualizations of peace. As Miall puts it, it also involves the active 'development and fulfilment of complementary goals'.[45] Thus, we depart from a definition of cooperation, which is relational, where the actors involved work and act together on shared issues instead of competing. Miall distinguishes between three levels at which cooperation operates. At the basic level groups or individuals with separate goals make moves that benefit the other (because they expect the same gesture in return or because they value the benefit of the other). At the second level, they adopt common

goals or align their goals to one another, and thirdly the groups or individuals identify common interests, thus also beginning a process of redefining themselves.[46] Here we also see how cooperation also influences and relates to the conceptions of the relationship itself - but more on that later.

Cooperation can include both verbal cooperation (e.g. approve, promise, agree, request, propose) and cooperative action (e.g. yield, grant, reward).[47] Cooperative behaviour can apply at any dyadic level, which also implies that there is a vast range of examples of cooperative behaviours. It should also be stressed that cooperative behaviour can take place simultaneously with violent actions. In a study exploring the coexistence of violent conflict and cooperation Campbell et al. illustrate how for example in the South Kordofan region of Sudan some communities are regularly engaged in cooperation to resolve land and livestock conflicts while other communities in the same region fight over the same issues. The authors also emphasize that conflict and cooperation can coexist by way of involving actors at different levels. For example in Uganda local civilians regularly pursue cooperation whereas the state and LRA engage in violence.[48] Thus, while in this case the presence of violence between the state and the LRA would usually qualify as war in studies focusing on the nation level and using threshold measurements of violent events, traces of relational peace can be identified at the community level. Here the combination of the three types of behavioural interaction is central. Behaviour which may look like cooperation, under conditions of domination, falls short of what ideal cooperation is. Cooperation under conditions of non-domination on the other hand, is a much stronger indication of peaceful interactions.

Peaceful behavioural interaction thus means non-domination, deliberation and cooperation. We now turn to the subjective attitudes in the dyad that are constitutive of a peaceful relationship.

Subjective attitudes toward each other: mutual recognition and mutual trust

A peaceful relationship is not solely made up of actions directed at the other, or with the other (interactive behavioural patterns). A relationship is also made up of subjective beliefs, emotions, attitudes about the other, as well as an understanding of the relationship itself. What then would qualify as peaceful beliefs, emotions or attitudes about the other, subjective conditions as they are called in models of relationships? We suggest there are two crucial components here: recognition and trust. Below we discuss each in turn.

Recognition is a central part of relationships. According to Lindemann the plea for recognition is in essence 'an actor's determination to put forth one's self-image'. Recognition is moreover inherently relational and must be understood as part of the interaction in a dyad; as Lindemann further puts it, it is 'always an inter-subjective relation constructed through rapport between an actor's asserted image and the image returned by others'[353535].[49] Since recognition is the result of interaction, so is also the perception of denial of recognition which can contribute to provoking or preserving violent conflicts. Moreover, recognition is related to values such as dignity but also honour, status and prestige, which are often essential to people and groups in deeply divided societies that have experienced protracted violent conflicts in which they have invested a lot and suffered heavy losses. In the literature a distinction is sometimes made between thin and thick recognition, where thin recognition is a legal and rights-based form of recognition and concerns 'being acknowledged as an independent subject

within a community of law'. Thick recognition on the other hand concerns 'self-esteem' and involves being appreciated and respected 'for the features that make a subject unique'.[50] As this suggests, thin recognition is more universal in nature whereas thick recognition includes the recognition of another actor's particular identity elements. In a war or post-war setting, gaining recognition can change the power asymmetry between conflicting actors,[51] and in this way contribute to the transformation of relationships. This perspective on recognition clearly also ties in with the larger literature on struggles for recognition, and the politics of recognition.[52]

We subscribe to Lindemann's definition of recognition. Recognition expressed by one actor toward another actor can be described as a way of extending respect to the other actor. This can be done through symbolic or material concessions that seek to demonstrate peaceful intentions and attitudes held towards the other for the purpose of confirming the other's self-image. The most basic level of recognition that can be accorded to another person, group or state is the acceptance of the other's existence. Beyond that, Lindemann also suggests that recognition also entails the respect of the 'hierarchical or moral statue' of the other, respect of the other's identity, and finally empathy toward the other.[53] Again, we see how the different components of relational peace connect to each other (see discussion below about legitimate co-existence).

A number of different scholars have emphasized the centrality of *trust* for peace and in peacebuilding. This is done at various different levels, within states, both between conflict parties[54] and between public-private actors,[55] and between states.[56] Oelsner in fact notes that the higher the degree of mutual trust 'the more solid the peaceful relationship'.[57] In fact, it is also often noted that trust is key for cooperation. We subscribe to a definition of trust that we believe can be applied at various actor scales: 'Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability

based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another'.[58] Hence, trust can be interpersonal, inter-organizational, intra-state and interstate.

Idea of Relationship: friendship and legitimate co-existence

Finally, the third central component of a relationship is concerned with the constituent members' understanding of the relationship. Thus, what understanding of the relationship do the actors involved need to have, for it to be peaceful? To some degree this reflects the opposite of having a stated incompatibility; the actors involved need to think of each other as fellows, allies or partners or even as friends, rather than foes. Let's consider some examples. Once a peace treaty is signed, the other may still be thought of as the enemy or the opponent, relational peace would require the involved parties to think of the other and their relationship in other terms. As noted by Masters, 'A peace treaty does not convert former enemies into friends'.[59] The relationship between the US and the Soviet Union after World War II also suggests there is more to peace, than simply the absence of violence. These two actors still considered the other as the enemy, even if no battle death thresholds were reached during the Cold War (if we exclude proxy wars). Their idea of the relationship was not symptomatic of peace, the way the two actors thought of each other and the relationship made all the difference.

Other comparisons between dyads can also be enlightening here. Diehl highlights an important comparison that helps us get to the core of what peace really means: 'The idea that the Korean peninsula and the Iranian-Israeli relationship are just as "peaceful" as contemporary French-German or United States-Canadian relations defies common sense'.[60] Why is this? What makes these dyads different? First of all, the first two exhibit a lack of cooperative behaviour, and an incidence of dominating

behaviour toward the other, whereas the latter two exhibit cooperative behaviour and non-domination toward and with the other. Secondly the attitudes toward the other are also different between these dyads ─ in the first two there is a clear lack of trust, whereas the last two exhibit trust toward each other. Finally, the ways in which the actors involved understand the relationship as a whole between Iran and Israel, and France and Germany are clearly different, and this understanding in itself is important if we are to label something as relational peace or not. How the relationship is understood by the actors in the dyad matters for how both behaviour of the other is interpreted and for the choice of their own behaviour in turn. The degree of trust will also matter for behavioural choices for instance. This is why these three components make up the relationship.

Here too one can postulate that there are more or less peaceful conceptions of the relationship. We would argue that if the relationship is thought of as one of *friendship* it qualifies as thoroughly peaceful, whereas where the other is seen as having a right to co-exist and where it is deemed legitimate to engage in cooperative interaction that relationship need not be one of friendship, but it is not one between enemies either. We have hesitantly chosen to call this other relationship status *legitimate co-existence*.[61] Friends know each other well and cherish one another, whereas in a relationship of legitimate co-existence the actors only associate with one another, and the relationship may still be largely determined by self-interest. This kind of legitimate co-existence entails no onus to collaborate or cooperate; simply this: an acceptance of the existence of the other and should one so wish the other is deemed to be a legitimate other with which one can interact (deliberate or cooperate). Neither *friendship* nor *legitimate co-existence* have any restrictions in terms of the power relationship between the actors involved. Hence, both can include an imbalance in terms of power. But it is clear that

friendship is a deeper relationship formulation, and one that clearly goes together with cooperation and trust. Oelsner, who addressed relations between states, in fact makes this connection between friendship between states and mutual trust between states.[62] In the same way, legitimate co-existence resonates with mutual recognition and non-domination and deliberation. A relationship that is defined as legitimate co-existence does not mean that the actors involved agree on everything, in fact disagreement is expected, but the crucial difference from a relationship defined as one of enemies, is that the position of the other is deemed legitimate and worthy of respect. We recognize that the term *legitimate co-existence* is unlikely to be used per se by the actors involved when they talk about the relationship and the other, rather we would expect the actors involved to use other emic terms for describing this particular type of relationship. Crucially, however, such emic terms should fit under this category of the idea of the relationship.

Thus, we can summarize the framework of relational peace in Table 1 below. Any relationship need not fit into all categories simultaneously. And we also do not postulate that a case will fit neatly into either of the two echelons; however we do recognize that some components speak to a higher order of relational peace and some to a lower order of relational peace; both are however legitimate forms of relational peace. Just as non-domination, deliberation, recognition and legitimate co-existence go together, so do cooperation, trust and friendship, where the latter combination reflects a higher order of relational peace. We also believe that if the actors involved cooperate, they are also likely to deliberate and exhibit non-domination. Similarly, actors who trust each other also accept each other.[63] And before friendship is achieved, the actors involved think of their relationship in terms of legitimate co-existence. Achieving the higher order without the lower order components within each category we believe is

unlikely. Finally, the different actors in the dyad may not live up to the various components in a symmetrical fashion. While the behavioural interaction is focused on the dyad as a whole, one can envision a dyad where the level of trust or recognition of the other differs between the composite actors. Similarly, one actor may largely think of the relationship in terms of a legitimate co-existence, whereas the other thinks more of it in terms of friendship. This kind of imbalance is important to pay attention to, as it says a lot about the kind of peaceful relationship that is ongoing. Thus while mutuality is the expectation of the ideal relational peace, each specific dyad may not live up to that and depicting that variation is important if we are to empirically study relational peace.

A final comment on the type of relational peace represented by the combination of non-domination, deliberation, mutual recognition as legitimate co-existence, this type of relationship idea is far from devoid of content. Yet in some ways this constellation of behavioural interaction, subjective attitudes and idea of the relationship could be termed as *negative relational peace* as violence is excluded from the interaction, and little in terms of explicit positive content is included. Let us be clear, however, in order for something to be categorized as a relationship at all, the actors involved are interdependent; if they had no influence whatsoever on each other there would be no relationship. Thus, any discussion of negative relational peace could not resort to a dyad that is devoid of behavioural interaction, subjective attitudes and without an idea of the relationship.

Table 1: Components of relational peace

Category	*Lower order*	*Higher order*
Behavioural interaction	Non-domination Deliberation	Cooperation
Subjective attitudes toward the other	Mutual recognition	Mutual trust
Idea of relationship	Legitimate co-existence	Friendship

In order for a relation to be characterized as relational peace, according to us, it has to fulfill at least one of the alternatives within all three categories 1) behavioral interaction entailing at least one of the components: non-domination, deliberation or cooperation; 2) attitudes expressed need to be at least one of the two components: recognition or mutual trust; and 3) the idea of the relationship needs to fall within either a legitimate co-existence conception or a friendship conception. Relational peace is thus defined as: *A peaceful relation entails behavioural interaction that can be characterized as non-domination, deliberation and/or cooperation between the actors in the dyad, the actors involved recognize and/or trust each other and believe that the relationship is one between legitimate actors and/or ultimately an expression of friendship.* The relationship dyad can be composed of actors of varying scale, thus the framework can be applied to the study of both interpersonal relationships, as well as more society-wide ones.

Our definition does resonate with that of others. For instance, Kasten proposes a new concept that 'incorporates three dimensions—behaviour, expectations, and duration/stability—that allow us to differentiate between different levels of interstate peace'.[64] We are certainly in agreement in terms of behaviour being one central component. Kasten's *expectations* could possibly be linked to ideas about relationship or attitudes to the other, but this link is less obvious. He focuses on expectations of trust

and distrust which he further defines as 'mechanisms that allow for the development of positive or negative expectations about the other side's future behaviour and increase or reduce the willingness to engage in risky forms of cooperation'.[65] Including durability in the definition of peace seems superfluous to us. Yes, it is a reasonable property to look at, but surely not the essence of peace. We agree that a relational peace may be more or less long-lasting, but in any given moment a particular relationship can fulfil our criteria for higher order relational peace. We also believe that our framework has another advantage, and that is that we define relationship first, before adding peace into the mix, whereas Kasten's components, or dimensions as he calls them, are selected based on a clustering of dimensions in 'often-cited and influential conceptualisations' of peace.[66] Also, while Kasten engage solely with interstate peace and with elite behaviours and expectations, our ambition is to identify relational components that would qualify as peaceful also at the individual and societal levels. We are however clearly in agreement with Kasten as we also see peace as a dyadic phenomenon, and there are several other aspects which resonate between our framework and Kasten's discussions.

Applying the framework

In this section, we discuss some of the implications of applying our framework. We do this in order to help the reader see both the scope of the framework, and deepen the understanding of how it can be used.

We suggest that an empirical investigation of relational peace need to specify the actors involved in the dyad, as well as pay attention to the longevity or stability of the relationship traits. For instance, cooperation can be observed over a longer time period in terms of interactional behaviour, whereas trust or thinking of the relationship

in friendship terms may be more limited in time. Any such study could pay more or less attention to the details of the behavioural interaction, this depends on how the data itself is to be coded and how finely grained the data needs to be. For instance, one can detail it at the action per action level, i.e. 'simultaneously or sequentially occurring behavioural and subjective responses',[67] or focus on overall behaviour within a certain time period. Our framework would allow both types of approaches, allowing the approach to be adapted to the overall resources and objects of each research project.

So, what are the consequences of this *actor-centric approach*? It means that territorial units are in some sense thrown out. While each relationship can be coded in terms on what territorial area is involved, these need not stay fixed over the course of the relationship. The dyad itself, however, is stable. If the dyad disappears, so does the relationship. Again, the relationship only exists if the two actors have influence on each other. We can also conceive of a dyad that includes the diaspora as one of the actors, hence here the territory would be very dispersed. Hence, in any given territory, you can have multiple dyads at the same time, of long or short duration. Each one can be characterized as more or less peaceful, based on behavioural interaction, subjective attitudes toward the other, and ideas about the relationship. We believe this helps us capture peace as it plays out, and solve the puzzle of how war and peace sometimes are combined.

As the framework applies to all dyadic scales, one can move from the minimal relationship of simply two individuals, to a group, to a village, to a region, to organizations, to sub-national units, to states, to unions, and empires. Each actor in the dyad can be at any level, and the framework does not assume that the dyad is made up of equals, thus you can have a combination of an armed group with a state, or a village with a political party etc. Thus, these dyads need not be symmetrical. However, we

would venture to suggest that dyads that are symmetric are more likely to be peaceful, whereas asymmetrical dyads are less likely to be so. This approach also means that external actors, such as the UN, are not conceived of as being part of the relational peace; they may influence the dyad itself, or they may form their own dyad with another actor. While the territory involved thus is fluid in this framework, the actors involved need to be more carefully pinpointed and delimited in the analysis using this framework. Who actor A and B are needs to be carefully and clearly expressed, in order to enable an empirical analysis of the relational peace at stake. Thus, are we actually talking about the entire village and its relation with another village, or is it the relation between the municipal council in one village and the total village population in the other? Furthermore, since not all relationships are as central, this further underscores the importance of justifying the selection of actors/dyads in a particular context for each study. Still, while the relational approach focuses on dyads, we recognize that multiple dyads make up social systems.[68] An actor may consequently have a peaceful relationship to another actor at the individual level while at the same time both actors are part of different identity groups where the quality of the relationship is of another character. In this way, relationships can overlap. Thus, analyses can also consider social systems of multiple relationships in a specific conflict context.

While we have removed *time* from the framework (it is not a defining feature of relational peace) that does not mean that time is irrelevant for the application of the framework. As behavioural interaction and the idea of repeated patterns,[69] or as Saunders puts it 'the cumulative experience of interacting'[70] are central to the idea of a relationship, time does play a part for our framework. Thus, relationships are formed and produced through interactions over time and the longer the relational peace lasts for a dyad, the more stable the peace. Also, observing the dyad over a longer time period,

one can more accurately describe the relationship, and how the interconnection plays out between the two actors involved. In terms of measurement, the framework could be applied on a yearly basis, or one could use a more limited time window for each depiction of the components. The order in which things occur in a relationship matter, so assigning a time value is important in our model. For instance, as Oelsner notes 'Collective memory of past aggression influences the degree of trust between states and peoples'.[71] Time also becomes more important the more the researcher is interested in a causal analysis. It is important to note, however, that the framework is not built in such a way that causal factors are embedded in the definition. In fact, we exclude relational properties that ameliorate peace, as these causal issues go beyond the definition of the phenomenon itself. The framework is thus agnostic in terms of causality. We believe this more clearly opens up for thoroughly testing and studying causal claims in relation to relational peace.

How demanding is the proposed framework for data collection? The behavioural data indicated by the framework should be easier to collect, as we can focus on externally observable data. The other two components require a deeper understanding of how the actors involved think about each other and the relationship. Thus, here there certainly is a preference for data that comes closer to how each actor thinks; we need to get inside their heads, and this is more easily done if we talk to them. However, even here, if the relationship is thought about in terms of friendship, there may be public statements pointing in this direction,[72] or there may be signs that the other is treated as an accepted and legitimate partner. Again, how the framework is applied empirically comes down to the scope and resources available in each project.

Examples from Kosovo can serve as illustrations of how our framework can shed light on a complex web of relations. The ambition is not to provide an exhaustive

description of a single dyadic relationship in this case but rather to illustrate how components of the relational peace framework can be depicted and analysed at different dyadic levels and how different relational elements can coexist in the same conflict context. When the war ended in June 1999, Kosovo became an international protectorate under UN auspices through the approval of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244. In February 2008 Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, but the settlement of Kosovo's legal status remains an unresolved issue which is still at the core of the dispute between Serbia and Kosovo. The epicentre of the conflict plays out in northern Kosovo in the city of Mitrovica which is administratively divided into a northern municipality dominated by a Kosovo-Serb population and a southern municipality almost exclusively populated by Kosovo-Albanians.[73]

The conflictual state relations between Kosovo and Serbia also spill over to the relations in the city of Mitrovica where the main bridge over the Ibar river between the southern and northern part of the city is a hotspot for confrontation.[74] In the mixed residential areas in northern Mitrovica, Albanian and Serb flags and nationalistically charged murals mark the dividing lines. In general, deep social contacts between Kosovo-Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians are rare and there are occasional flares of violence. For instance, in January 2018, on the day when "normalising talks" between Belgrade and Pristina were planned to begin, the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović was shot dead outside party headquarters in Mitrovica.[75] Nevertheless, under the auspice of the EU, talks between the presidents of Kosovo and Serbia around the issue of swapping land to create more ethnically homogenous states are taking place. Under the proposal, the Albanian-dominated Presovo Valley in southern Serbia would become part of Kosovo in return for the area north of the Ibar river which would be part of Serbia. This would mean that the City of Mitrovica would be divided between

different nation states, something that is strongly opposed by nationalist on both sides.[76] Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo increased further in November 2018 when Kosovo introduced a 100-percent tax on Serb imports saying that the tax would not be lifted until Serbia recognizes Kosovo's status as an independent state. Furthermore, in December 2018 the Kosovo Parliament voted in favour of establishing an army.[77]

Thus, at the state level there are clearly *deliberations* taking place. As long as the Nato-led Kosovo Force remains and as long as the EU demands a resolution of the conflict before discussing any memberships for Kosovo or Serbia, the relationship can be characterized as *non-domination* where neither party can force their will on the other. Thus, in terms of behavioural interactions, the relationship between the states can be characterized as a negative, or lower order relational peace.

However, in dyads at the societal level strands of both the lower and the higher order relational peace can be identified, for instance at workplaces or in the streets. In northern Mitrovica, people of different ethnic groups find themselves in a relational entanglement of numerous economic and social interactions. Here no actor has a clear dominant position over the other; Kosovo Serbs form a minority in Kosovo, but a majority in northern Mitrovica and enjoy support from neighbouring Serbia. This means that the relationship can be characterised as *non-domination*, as neither actor is clearly limited or censoring their behaviour due to the potential influence of the other. Rather we see a sort of power balance where tit-for-tat sabotage of cutting of each other's water pipes and telephone lines exists side by side with practices of *cooperation* over practical matters. There is also a college were students from both ethnic groups engage in deliberation and we would thus expect them to describe their relationship as one of legitimate co-existence. Furthermore, while most Kosovo-Albanians in the north seek medical care in the south, there is a small health facility in Miner's Hill in northern

Mitrovica where a doctor attends to members of all communities in the neighbourhood since Yugoslav times.[78]

There are plenty of signs of *mutual recognition* in commercial activities, for examples, in the supermarkets *ETC* and *Emona*, were all ethnic groups do their shopping and communicate in both languages. In the smaller shops, signs of *mutual trust* can be identified between some vendors and clients of different ethnicities who accept credits. Indeed, there are also social *friendships* that transcend divisions. One person described how she and her friends always accompany each other to the main bridge over the Ibar river after dark as they live on opposite sides, telling of how their safety zones shift at the bridgeheads. This act of caring and friendship is an example of a story seldom told about Mitrovica. It is an instance of mutual solidarity, a reciprocal act that is only limited by the boundary that the bridge becomes after nightfall, also for those who pass it problem-free in daylight on an everyday basis.[79] A fully-fledged case study of this would demand additional data collection to be carried out in order to ascertain how these particular dyads at this level of analysis behave, and think about each other and their relationship. Yet, the examples here illustrate how our framework facilitates a nuanced understanding of relational peace, by specifying which components qualifies a relationship to be of a lower order relational peace and what characterises higher order relational peace.

Concluding remarks

In this paper we wanted to probe how one could approach peace in relational terms. Our aim was to provide a definition of relational peace, and develop a framework that allows for a clearly defined yet substantial empirical investigation of peace in a number of different settings. In order to do this, we started with discussing the extent to which

viewing peace as a relationship has been presented in past work. We then examined what components make up a relationship, before completing the picture and noting what behavioural interaction, subjective attitudes toward the other and what idea of the relationship would amount to peace. According to us then: *A peaceful relation entails non-domination, deliberation and/or cooperation between the actors in the dyad, the actors involved recognize and/or trust each other and believe that the relationship is one between legitimate actors and/or ultimately an expression of friendship.* In the remaining parts of the paper we discussed the implications and consequences of such a framework, and how such a framework can be applied.

Clearly, this framework has its limitations as other approaches to peace definitions. We hope however, that we have been clearer as to the scope of this framework. *Relational peace* can help us study peace in one way, but it is not the only way that peace can be approached. We readily recognize that feelings of fear, or similar, when civilians do not know if they are safe, and they feel unfree in their lives, also do not amount to peace. Yet, if the other actor is unclear, it is not necessarily about a relationship that is either peaceful or not. It should be clear at this point that peace can be studied in non-relational terms as well, but that this particular framework cannot be applied in those instances. However, when it comes to security related aspects – even if they are associated to specific actors in a dyad, we view them as part of the established negative peace conception. Thus, rather than including such components in the framework (i.e. defining what destructive behaviours or attitudes need to be absent), we have tried to take serious the ambition to define peace by identifying what components need to be *present* for a relationship to be considered peaceful.

Also, the framework is based on the idea of mutuality in relationships. The ideal conception offered of relational peace here is based on both actors in the dyad

delivering on each of the components. The components can still be useful for analysing cases where the actors e.g. perceive the relationship in different ways (i.e. competing or unbalanced understandings of the relationship). This is where studying the relationship over time will also be useful, as through pinpointing such differences we can start to develop an understanding for the dynamic in the relationship. The framework is limited when it comes to providing a brief answer to whether or not there is peace in a given country. Rather, we suggest that there can be relational peace between some actors and not others. Thus, if one wants to determine the level of peace in a given territory, one would have to start with defining the scope of the relationships present in such a territory, and then proceed to characterize each one according to this framework.

Peace is an elusive concept, and we hope that this paper contributes to current debates in the literature about the nature of peace and how it can be studied empirically. With the relational approach we draw attention to the actors at peace and the characteristics of their relationships, essentially including whether they consider themselves as friends rather than foes. Ultimately, we suggest that the framework will be useful both to characterize particular relational peace dyads and to categorize and compare different types of relational peace within or between different conflict settings.

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41. Ibid., 293-4.
42. Maddison, "Relational Transformation and Agonistic Dialogue in Divided Societies.", Björkdahl, "A Gender-Just Peace? Exploring the Post-Dayton Peace Process in Bosnia.", Saunders, *Politics is about relationship: A blueprint for the citizens' century*.
43. Maddison, "Relational Transformation and Agonistic Dialogue in Divided Societies," 1023.
44. Campbell et al., "An Ontology of Peace: Landscapes of Conflict and Cooperation with Application to Colombia," 97.

45. Miall, *Emergent conflict and peaceful change*.

46. Ibid.

47. Goldstein, "A conflict-cooperation scale for WEIS events data," 371.

48. Campbell et al., "An Ontology of Peace: Landscapes of Conflict and Cooperation with Application to Colombia," 97-8.

49. Lindemann, "Peace through recognition: An interactionist interpretation of international crises."

50. Strömbom, *Revisting the Past: Israeli identity, thick recognition and conflict transformation*, 59-61.

51. Aggestam and Björkdahl, *War and peace in transition: changing roles of external actors*.

52. See for example Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*, Hobson et al., "Recognition Struggles in Trans-national Arenas: Negotiating Identities and Framing Citizenship.", Hobson, *Recognition struggles and social movements: Contested identities, agency and power*, Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Phillips, "Recognition and the struggle for political voice.", Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition.", also see Metsola, *Reintegration as Recognition. Ex-combatant and Veteran politics in Namibia*. for an example of how recognition is handled in a post-war context

53. Lindemann, "Peace through recognition: An interactionist interpretation of international crises."

54. See for example Kydd and Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence."

55. See for example Abramov, "Building Peace in Fragile States – Building Trust is Essential for Effective Public–Private Partnerships."

56. See for example Oelsner, "Friendship, Mutual Trust and the Evolution of Regional Peace in the International System."

57. Ibid., 265.

58. Rousseau et al., "Introduction to Special Topic Forum: Not so Different after All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust," 395.

59. Masters, "The Lockean Tradition in American Foreign Policy," 257f.

60. Diehl, "Exploring Peace: Looking Beyond War and Negative Peace," 2.

61. This also resonates with the idea of *legitimate peace* as proposed in Themnér and Ohlson, "Legitimate peace in post-civil war states: towards attaining the unattainable.", where both horizontal and vertical relations are discussed.

62. Oelsner, "Friendship, Mutual Trust and the Evolution of Regional Peace in the International System," 260.

63. Still, how the components relate to each other in a particular case is in the end an empirical question. For example, since both recognition and trust are concepts that can be of different degree, it is possible that some level of trust is needed in order to obtain a more substantial degree of recognition.

64. Kasten, "When Less Is More: Constructing a Parsimonious Concept of Interstate Peace for Quantitative Analysis," 28.

65. Ibid., 38.

66. Ibid., 37.

67. Huston and Robins, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Studying Close Relationships," 905f.

68. Kriesberg, *Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution*.

69. Huston and Robins, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Studying Close Relationships," 903.

70. Saunders, *Politics is about relationship: A blueprint for the citizens' century,* 60.

71. Oelsner, "Friendship, Mutual Trust and the Evolution of Regional Peace in the International System," 265.

72. Just as stated incompatibility can be ascertained for the Uppsala Conflict Database Program, something similar should be doable in relation to this framework as well, if the aim is a database facilitating quantitative analysis.
73. OSCE, *Municipality Profile of Mitrovica South*, ---, *Municipality Profile of Mitrovica North*.
73. International Crisis Group (ICG), *Collapse in Kosovo*.
74. This analysis is based on fieldwork conducted by Sandra Segall during October-December 2017, see Jarstad and Segall, *Peace(s) in Mitrovica*.
75. MacDowall, *Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović shot dead outside party headquarters*.
76. Delauney, *Kosovo-Serbia talks: Why land swap could bridge divide*.
77. *Serbia talks up armed intervention as Kosovo approves new army*.
78. Jarstad and Segall, *Peace(s) in Mitrovica*.
79. Ibid.

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