

## ANALYTICAL ESSAY

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# Friends, Fellows, and Foes: A New Framework for Studying Relational Peace

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In this article, we suggest that taking a relational view of peace seriously is a fruitful avenue for expanding current theoretical frameworks surrounding peace as a concept. Paving the way for such an approach, this article conducts a review of the literature that 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 relationship entails deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation between the actors in the dyad; the actors involved recognize and trust each other and believe that the relationship is either one between legitimate fellows or one between friends. The article 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.

**Keywords:** relational peace, theoretical framework, cooperation

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## Introduction

Scholars have long recognized that peace is more than the absence of war (see, e.g., Galtung 1969; Richmond 2008; Wallensteen 2015; Diehl 2016; Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta 2017; Guarrieri, Drury, and Murdie 2017; Joshi and Wallensteen 2018; Goertz 2020), yet questions still remain as to how appropriately define and study the phenomenon of peace. Clarity in terms of definitions makes 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 article 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 phenomenon can be studied. This article 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 (Diehl 2016; see also Guarrieri, Drury, and Murdie 2017; Diehl 2019). 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 (Autesserre 2014; Mac Ginty 2014; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Paffenholz 2015; Randazzo 2016; Bräuchler 2018, among others). 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 resume several years after a war termination underline 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 article, 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 article 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 from situational, relational, and ideational approaches (Jarstad et al 2019). In this article, we focus on peace in terms of *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 a condition or state of things in a given territory. This clearly needs attention and has a lot of merit. However, 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. Thus, rather than asking *where* peace exists, we suggest that it is more fruitful to ask *who* is at peace or which relationships are most relevant to study in order to analyze peace. Thus, rather than selecting which territorial unit to study, the choice of actors and relationships determines in which state, part of a country, or transnational entity the peace plays out.

The purpose of this article 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 and across such levels, 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 article 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 article defines what components make up any relationship, before presenting our own definition of relational peace. This definition is made up of three components: behavioral interaction (deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation), subjective conditions (recognition and trust), and the idea of the relationship (fellowship or friendship). The next section details what elements each component consists of if we are to depict relational peace, and we discuss each one in turn. Throughout the text, we use empirical examples to highlight and further explain the framework. We also suggest that real-world cases are likely to cluster together as two types: *peace between fellows* and *peace between friends*. 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, in terms of not only 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 positive peace (often referring to the absence of structural or indirect violence, and the 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” (Klem 2018, 235; see also Stephenson 2017; Paarlberg-Kvam 2019 for a problematization of positive peace). 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 have 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 (see, among others, Kriesberg 2007; Oelsner 2007; Themnér and Ohlson 2014; Maddison 2015; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016; Brigg 2018; see also the study by Purdeková 2017, which shows how inherently relational peace is). 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)” (Santa Barbara 2005, 851), 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” (Mac Ginty 2008, 24). Similarly, Oelsner while discussing international relations (IR) 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 (Oelsner 2007, 263).

Oelsner’s last point is 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” (Kriesberg 2007, 43). 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” (Lederach 1997, 26), and that conflict can be understood as moving along a continuum from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships (Curle 1971). 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)” (Davenport, Melander, and Regan 2018, 147). 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. While we agree that both peace and conflict are relational, we would like to stress that peace does not entail an elimination of conflict. An illustrative example is the distinction between “post-war” and “post-conflict.” While the concept “post-conflict” indicates that conflict no longer exists, the term “post-war” on the other hand acknowledges that although large-scale violence has ended, central conflict issues might remain unresolved and relationships might continue more or less untransformed. In addition, if we consider conflict as a natural part of social interaction and conducive to social change, the important thing is to turn destructive conflicts into constructive ones (see, e.g., Kriesberg 2007; Chenoweth 2017).

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*” (Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016, 5). Thus, as this argument goes, peace is not merely the opposite of war and it must accordingly be understood and studied on its own merits.<sup>1</sup> 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” (Umoh and Udoh 2011, 9). Thus, war and peace are not mutually exclusive categories since violent conflict and peaceful cooperation can coevolve and coexist (see also Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta 2017). In line with these arguments, we argue that in the same location there can be peaceful dyads while at the same time other dyads are characterized by violent conflict.

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 (Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017, 7). This further supports taking a relational approach for understanding peace in post-war contexts.

Thus, previous research suggests that peace should not simply be understood as non-war (Gray 2007), or as the absence of destructive conflict elements (Kriesberg 2007), and several scholars have argued for taking a relational approach for characterizing and understanding peace as something different from the absence of war. We note that the idea of peace as relation can be found not only in the IR-oriented literature, but also in the conflict transformation literature where peace is conceptualized as “a quality of relationships” (Klem 2018, 235). Thus, it is not limited to the perspective of either interstate or intrastate, but viewing peace as a relationship

<sup>1</sup> The study of violence has been privileged over studies of peace. Bright and Gledhill suggest that the lack of intellectual exchange between these two fields prevents us from fully understanding how peace can be managed peacefully (2018). However, in this article we argue that peace in itself must be better understood beyond the absence of war.

is relevant for both the literature dealing with the relationships between states and 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 (Brigg 2018, 355).

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” (Maddison 2015, 1025). Such an understanding of peace is also compatible with understandings of peace as “a *process*, and as such, *dynamic*” (Oelsner 2007, 263). 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 perspective serious enough, and perhaps left relational peace as a whole somewhat underdefined. We hope to contribute to this endeavor, and we draw on different literatures in this article 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 (Peplau and Cochran 1990, 322; see also Nexon 2010). 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 or have similar power. 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. 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 a huge impact on the parties involved (Huston and Robins 1982, 903). The relationship is made up of behavioral 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 (Huston and Robins 1982; Peplau and Cochran 1990, 322; see also Saunders 2005, 60). While a relationship can analytically be broken down into these three components, a relationship consists of all three, and the three components reinforce or mold one another through processes of repeated interaction, exchanges, and experiences.

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. For our purposes, long-term relations (rather than short-term dyads) are more interesting to study in order to assess the patterns of interactions and the qualities of the relationship and in order to understand how the relationship evolves over time. Actors are often fluid and shifting and not homogeneous entities. However, for our relational analysis, we need to study pairs of relevant actors in a dyad and their patterns of engagement. The actors who are most relevant in the context of peace and war are often actors

whose behavior, attitudes, and ideas have political implications. Relationships that in the past have been characterized by political violence and war should be of particular interest for us to study further. However, the framework can also be used for the analysis of relationships involving citizens, civil society, and communities, as they are often central in the everyday expressions of peace. While both the mapping over time and the nature of the actors are important for the empirical study of a relationship, they do not constitute the relationship itself. The focus for analysis is the dynamic processes of what takes place between the actors, and how they interact and associate. 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.<sup>2</sup>

### Relational Peace

We are interested in the peacefulness of relationships. Based on the depiction of what components make up a relationship—behavioral 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 behavioral 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 elements of relational peace. First, we turn to what kind of behavior, or patterns of interactions, qualifies as peaceful.

#### *Behavioral Interaction: Deliberation, Non-Domination, and Cooperation*

The first component of a peaceful relation is concerned with the behavioral interaction. Here we have identified three kinds of behavior, which we deem amount to peaceful behavioral interaction: *deliberation*, *non-domination*, and *cooperation*. We define and discuss each in turn below.

Behavioral patterns of peace need to include a dimension of non-violent political engagement, an interaction that we suggest can best be captured by the concept of *deliberation*.<sup>3</sup> 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. The idea of public deliberation as the basis for legitimate decision-making speaks well to conflict-affected contexts (Dryzek 2005), as it values both inclusiveness of members of society on an equal basis and allowance for recognition of differences (Holdo 2015). 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” (Barnett 2006, 98). Since, as Barnett further puts it, “the principle of deliberation, [. . .] at a minimum, requires that individuals provide public reasons for their positions and decisions” (Barnett 2006, 96), 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 (Björkdahl 2012, 288). While deliberation is often associated with political practices at the commu-

<sup>2</sup> While we see relationships as dynamic, and in that sense go along with the relational approach in sociology and political science that emphasize, e.g., process, interaction, and experience, we are perhaps more optimistic in terms of our ability to identify specific actors and pursue empirical studies. Yet we also recognize that actors are fluid and that they change with and through relationships (for more on this, see Emirbayer 1997; Holdo 2020; Joseph 2018; Nexon 2010; McCourt 2016; Erikson 2013, among others).

<sup>3</sup> Again, deliberation can be used in both a narrow sense (in forums specifically created for the purpose, where participants adhere to specific rules and often with a task to come to some kind of agreement) and a more broad sense (in various social contexts where participants adhere to mutual respect and public-mindedness), and we subscribe to the latter (for more on this, see Mansbridge et al. 2012).

nity level, it can also characterize behavioral patterns at different levels including interactions between states.

Björkdahl suggests that in post-war societies deliberation requires “both the acknowledgment of disagreement and the crossing of multiple borders through dialogue” (Björkdahl 2012, 294). 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 (Björkdahl 2012, 293–94).

To capture the relational dimension of deliberative practices, several scholars emphasize dialogue as a venue for transforming relationships (Saunders 2005; Björkdahl 2012; Maddison 2015). Thus, in contexts that have been plagued by hostility and violence, deliberation suggests the establishment of a political process where key conflict issues can be addressed. In deeply divided societies where conflict is inherently nested in relationships, such dialogue is importantly concerned not only with issues of disagreement, but also 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 (Maddison 2015, 1023). 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 as it implies a degree of recognition of the other’s legitimacy. An arena for political deliberation or dialogue is also crucial as it allows conflict issues to be redefined and for new political discourses to be introduced, which can lead to a transformation of the conflict by overcoming political divisions. As this suggests, for an assessment of deliberation it can be important to consider what issues are being deliberated and whether there is an expansion of issue areas that are addressed and potentially changed through political dialogue and deliberation (Miall 2007, 7).

One example of deliberation can be observed in the case of Kosovo. Deliberation is taking place in the talks between the presidents of Kosovo and Serbia that are held under the auspice of the European Union (EU). The talks concern the issue of swapping land to create more ethnically homogeneous states. 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 that would be part of Serbia. This would mean that the city of Mitrovica would be divided between different nation-states (Jarstad and Segall 2019; for an example of deliberation at the local level in Kenya, see Elfversson 2016). This deliberation is intended to also pave the way for Serbia’s formal recognition of Kosovo as an independent state, so that the parties can coexist peacefully and regard each other as legitimate fellow nation-states. While we see deliberation occurring in this dyad, this does not imply that the other components and elements necessary for relational peace exist.

A second element of the component behavioral interaction is *non-domination*. We are not the first scholars to connect this concept with peace. Iris Marion Young in her work on progressing peace for Palestine/Israel builds on the notion of *non-domination* (Young 2005; see also Barnett 2006, 94; Forst 2013). 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 (Young 2005, 145).

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 (Pettit 1996; see also Pettit 1997, 2015). This kind of behavioral interaction denotes a situation that speaks to the power imbalance that usually comes with any relationship. As Young's depiction suggests, it speaks to the degree to which weaker actors' room for action is determined by the other. The type of empirical observations that are particularly telling, include such actions 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 (Pettit 1996, 578f).

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 [...] will always have to be a person or group of persons, not just a corporate body (Pettit 1996, 578).

If the dominated actor exhibits a pattern of limiting or censoring their behavior due to the potential influence of the more powerful actor, then domination is occurring. While the literature on non-domination suggests that the dominating actor does not need to actually wield its power, and actually interfere, and that the issue rather is that the dominating actor *could* interfere arbitrarily, we recognize that this understanding of non-domination is difficult to study. In order to empirically study this, we suggest focusing on the degree to which the weaker actor in the dyad adapts and moderates their behavior in the shadow of their relationship with the other (i.e., due to this potential wielding of power). We argue that it is important to recognize that there are degrees to which non-domination is present or absent in a relationship, and this is one such area where a complete absence of domination is unlikely in most relationships. Thus, domination can be more or less intense and widespread; hence, it is not a binary variable (Pettit 1996).

Centrally, this kind of non-domination does not preclude the exertion of power that is deemed legitimate by both actors, i.e., that is non-arbitrary. The exertion of power that rests on a joint idea of what is legitimate—for instance due to the rule of law, democratic procedures, or other agreed upon rules between the actors in the dyad—is compatible with relational peace. Empirically, this means paying attention to power discrepancies, and when one actor moderates their behavior as a result of the position of the other, we need to ask whether this occurs because the actors in the dyad have entered some formal agreement, which enables and legitimizes this kind of power exertion. Non-domination is thus about justice, and military, political, and economic oppression would be antithetical to non-domination

(Forst 2013, 74). And in the example discussed above by Young, it is telling that an institutional or legal solution (federalism) is deemed as needed to ensure non-domination. The point about the federal solution is to create a joint entity where all groups are entitled to equal status. This is also the idea underpinning consociationalism, which also includes a veto right to ensure the protection of vital minority interests (Lijphart 1968, 1993; see also Jarstad 2001, 28 for a discussion of additional empirical examples; see also Höglund and Orjuela 2011 for a discussion of how domination undermines trust in Sri Lanka). Similarly, other power-sharing arrangements may provide such protection from domination (see also Sriram 2017, 60–61, who problematizes the degree to which power sharing is able to provide this protection). Crucially, these institutional solutions point to ways of safeguarding from domination and should thus be studied when attempting to study non-domination empirically.

Finally, we turn to the form of behavioral interaction, which is perhaps the most interactive: *cooperation*. Campbell et al. emphasize “the active pursuit of cooperative behaviour within and between opposing sides” to capture peaceful behavioral interactions (Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta 2017, 97). Essentially, cooperation implies something more than the mere absence of violent conflict and avoidance of coercion and destructive behavior associated with more negative conceptualizations of peace. As Miall puts it, it also involves the active “development and fulfilment of complementary goals” (Miall 2007, 66). 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 first 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; at the third level, the groups or individuals identify common interests, thus also beginning a process of redefining themselves (Miall 2007, 69). Here we also see how cooperation influences and can reshape conceptions of the relationship itself, but more on that later.

Again, this element of the behavioral component is also a question of degrees. This means that coordination to stop fighting each other can only be seen as fulfilling the first level of cooperation, namely that the actors still have separate goals, but do things that still benefit the other. The ceasefires between the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao are illustrative examples. A ceasefire was first established in Mindanao in 1997. Through continuous joint engagement within the ceasefire structure for more than two decades, the parties have developed a relationship characterized by cooperation on shared security issues and the resolution of conflicts. This has also come to include cooperation so as to prevent violence from erupting that extends beyond clashes between the army and the MILF fighters (Åkebo 2019). This case shows how continuous interaction through cooperation has developed into new deeper forms of cooperation, which ultimately have changed the relationship.

Cooperation can include both verbal cooperation (e.g., approve, promise, agree, request, propose) and cooperative action (e.g., yield, grant, reward) (Goldstein 1992, 371). Cooperative behavior can apply at any dyadic level, which also implies that there is a vast range of examples of cooperative behaviors. It should also be stressed that cooperative behavior 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

(Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta 2017, 97–98). 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 national 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 behavioral interaction is central. Behavior that 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 behavioral interaction thus means deliberation, non-domination, 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 behavioral patterns). A relationship is also made up of subjective beliefs, emotions, and 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 elements 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” (Lindemann 2011, 70). Since recognition is the result of interaction, so is also the perception of denial of recognition that can contribute to provoking or preserving violent conflicts. Moreover, recognition is related to values such as dignity but also honor, 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” (Strömbom 2010, 59–61). 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 (Aggestam and Björkdahl 2009), as it often involves a recognition of the other’s legitimacy, and in this way contributes 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 (see, e.g., Honneth 1995; Taylor 1997; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Hobson 2003; Phillips 2003; Hobson, Carson, and Lawrence 2007; also see Metsola 2015 for an example of how recognition is handled in a post-war context).

We subscribe to Lindemann’s definition of recognition. Recognition expressed by one actor toward another actor can be described as a way of extending acceptance of the other actor. This can be done through symbolic or material concessions that seek to demonstrate peaceful intentions and attitudes held toward 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. This means that this element too is a question of degrees. Beyond that, Lindemann 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 (Lindemann 2011, 73).

The ethnic relations between the indigenous Māori population and relatives of the European settlers (called Pākehā by Māori) in New Zealand can serve as an illustrative example as they have developed into a web of relational peace characterized by relatively high degree of recognition, compared to other post-civil war cases. Since the late nineteenth century, Māori traditions, customs, and images have been increasingly included in the New Zealand national identity, and from the 1970s, Māori have become highly visible in all aspects of New Zealand life. The Māori and Pākehā cultures are officially recognized on equal terms, and efforts to strengthen the Māori language in schools and universities are implemented (Derby 2011). Nevertheless, the Māori as a group suffer from higher rates of unemployment, infant mortality, alcoholism, and poverty. This shows that although the peace in New Zealand is stable, other societal problems remain as a legacy of the wars between Māori and Pākehā during the nineteenth century and the discrimination that followed. This example from New Zealand suggests that in this case we are dealing with thin recognition rather than thick recognition given that it is primarily a legal and rights-based form of recognition.

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, between conflict parties (see, e.g., Kydd and Walter 2002), between public and private actors (see, e.g., Abramov 2009), and between states (see, e.g., Oelsner 2007). Oelsner notes that the higher the degree of mutual trust “the more solid the peaceful relationship” (Oelsner 2007, 265). 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” (Rousseau et al. 1998, 395). Hence, trust can be interpersonal, interorganizational, intrastate, and interstate.

In the aftermath of a conflict, there is often a far-reaching feeling of distrust in society (Dugan 2001, 366). In order to build trust after war, misunderstandings need to be sorted out and prejudices reduced, but a change of behavior is often also necessary for trust to emerge. An example of this can be located in the case of Northern Ireland. Interreligious dialogue often has the purpose to overcome mistrust and misunderstandings. Such dialogues can counter stereotypes and prejudices and promote a better understanding of the other community, and can thereby pave the way for negotiations and cooperation (Powers 2010, 341). In Northern Ireland, dialogue between religious leaders from both the United States and Northern Ireland across the religious divide spurred growing trust, which in turn led to joint initiatives (Powers 2010, 342). Trust can therefore be more than the absence of threat, centrally trust signals that there are positive expectations at work in the relationship, which can transform the relationship further, as behavior is modified in anticipation of different behavior from the other.

Peaceful subjective attitudes toward each other thus entail mutual recognition and mutual trust. We now turn to the peaceful ideas of the relationship that the actors in the dyad encompass.

#### *Idea of Relationship: Friendship and Fellowship*

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? The actors involved need to think of each other as fellows, allies, or partners, or even as friends with shared visions, rather than foes or enemies. While a common requirement for conflict is that the actors have *stated* incompatibilities, we suggest that for

relational peace to be present the actors have to have *expressed* that they *share something*, that there is a *sense of reciprocity* in their relationship, thus casting the other in the role of not an enemy, but a friend or fellow. Let us 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 and say so openly. As noted by Masters, “A peace treaty does not convert former enemies into friends” (Masters 1967, 257f). The relationship between the United States 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” (Diehl 2016, 2). Why is this? What makes these dyads different? First of all, the first two exhibit an incidence of dominating behavior toward the other, and a lack of cooperative behavior, whereas the latter two exhibit cooperative behavior and non-domination toward and with the other. Second, the attitudes toward the other are also different between these dyads—in the first two there is a clear lack of trust and recognition of the other, whereas the last two exhibit trust and recognition 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 both for how behavior of the other is interpreted and for the choice of their own behavior in turn. The degree of trust will also matter for behavioral choices for instance. This is why these three components together make up a relationship. Each component can reinforce or undermine the two others. The elements we argue make up relational peace do indeed reinforce one another; for instance, recognition of the other is likely to coincide with thinking of the relationship as one of legitimate coexistence, a relationship between fellows. Yet, we still believe it to be fruitful to analytically separate the behavioral interaction from the attitudinal and ideational content of the relationship.

Here too, we postulate that there are two conceptions of the relationship that can be considered peaceful. We would argue that if the relationship is thought of as one of *friendship*,<sup>4</sup> it qualifies as peaceful. However, a relationship does not need to be one between friends to qualify as peaceful; equally, we argue that a relationship between peers, or *fellows* if you will, where the other is seen as having a right to coexist and where it is deemed legitimate to engage in cooperative interaction that relationship is also one of peace, and not one of enmity. We have chosen to call this idea of the relationship status as *fellowship*, an idea of the relationship that is characterized by legitimate coexistence, where the two actors accept that they share a space or community with one another, making them a legitimate other.<sup>5</sup>

Friends know each other well and cherish one another, suggesting a degree of intimacy, whereas in a relationship of fellows the actors only associate with one another, and the relationship may still be largely determined by self-interest. This kind of fellowship entails no onus to collaborate or cooperate; simply this: an acceptance

<sup>4</sup> Friendship has a long history in both Western and Eastern thinking, and it is not solely a private relationship, but indeed also a public and political one (see, e.g., Nordin and Smith 2018; van Hoef and Oelsner 2018).

<sup>5</sup> This also resonates with the idea of *legitimate peace* as proposed by Themnér and Ohlson (2014), where both horizontal and vertical relations are discussed. The idea of friends, fellows, and foes also resonates with the role identities friendship, rivalry, and enmity as discussed by Wendt (1999).

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). Friendship entails some level of positive valence and affect, whereas fellowship does not require any warm feelings to be associated with the idea of the dyad. Hence, fellows can also compete with each other (in business, in politics, etc.), albeit in non-violent ways. Friendship entails some degree of moral obligation, and altruism, whereas this is not needed or expected between fellows. Friends are likely to develop shared visions, whereas this is not an expectation of fellows (Nordin and Smith 2018; van Hoef and Oelsner 2018, 115–17; Sugden 2002, 68–81; see also discussion on empathy and friendship by Miall 2011). In fact, this way of delineating between fellows and friends resonates with Schmitt's division into two types of friendship (see discussion in van Hoef and Oelsner 2018, 117). We believe it is useful, however, to name the two types of relationships in distinctive ways, and we have settled on *friendship* and *fellowship*.

Friendships across conflict lines are often rare even decades after the end of the war. In Kosovo, there is generally little contact between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. Despite this, there are friendships that transcend divisions. In a study by Jarstad and Segall, one person described how she and her friend always accompany each other to the main bridge in Mitrovica after dark as they live on opposite sides of the Ibar River. Because of the common violent incidents around the bridge, their safety zones shift at the bridgeheads (Jarstad and Segall 2019). This act of caring and friendship is an example of a story seldom told about Mitrovica, because it is in the interest of the conflict parties to maintain the image of complete separation of the ethnic groups. Therefore, this reciprocal act of mutual solidarity makes the friends vulnerable to attacks from their own groups.

Fellowship, on the other hand, is what characterized the relationship between Frederik Willem de Klerk and Nelson Mandela during the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa. During these years, the two actors recognized each other as peers, which enabled them to negotiate and reach agreement on several difficult issues. Their relationship entailed no warm feelings, and there was even clear competition between the two during this time period, all commensurate with the idea of seeing each other as fellows (Mandela 2013, 612; Sparks 2003, 10).

Neither *friendship* nor *fellowship* has any restrictions in terms of the power relationship between the actors involved. Hence, both can include an imbalance in terms of power. However, it is clear that friendship is a deeper, more intimate, relationship formulation, and one that clearly goes together with cooperation, non-domination, and trust. Oelsner, who addressed relations between states, in fact, makes this connection between friendship between states and mutual trust between states (Oelsner 2007, 260). In the same way, fellowship resonates with mutual recognition and deliberation. A relationship that is defined as fellowship 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 foes or enemies is that the position of the other is deemed legitimate and worthy of respect. We recognize that the terms fellowship or friendship are 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 their particular type of relationship. Crucially, however, either such emic terms should be categorized under these headings, if they fit, or it may become clear that the prevailing idea of the relationship is still one of enmity.

Based on this, we propose to define relational peace as follows: *A peaceful relation entails behavioral interaction that can be characterized as deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation between the actors in the dyad; the actors involved recognize and trust each other and believe that the relationship is either one between legitimate fellows or between friends.* We recognize that this is a demanding definition, but we deem that all of these elements

**Table 1.** Components of relational peace

Component	Relational peace (ideal type)
Behavioral interaction	Deliberation, non-domination, cooperation
Subjective attitudes toward the other	Mutual recognition, mutual trust
Idea of relationship	Fellowship or friendship

are part of an ideal type relational peace. See [table 1](#) for a summary of the framework. In the above discussion of all these different elements, it has also been made clear that each of them can be present to varying degrees; ultimately, this means that we expect that relational peace will be more or less present in specific empirical dyads as well. It should be clear that an ideal typical concept, in the way we have presented relational peace here, is made to accentuate the essential components, and is in its nature demanding. Such an ideal type is useful for the assessment of empirical cases. However, we consider relational peace to be a continuous concept, where some degree of relational peace may exist between adversaries, and we will discuss the application of the framework further in the next section.

### 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 the scope of the framework and deepen the understanding of how it can be used. In this section, we begin by discussing the minimal requirements for relational peace, and how we suspect that two real-world types are likely to dominate in empirical investigations, as well as how relational peace is a question of degrees, how imbalanced dyads matter, and the consequences of applying an actor-centric approach, as well as how time fits into the framework.

Depending on the goals of each specific study, our framework can be used for classification between types of relational peace (here we primarily suggest that the types of *peace between friends* and *peace between fellows* are useful as we will discuss below) and instances of relationships that cannot be deemed as peaceful (when none of the elements in the framework are present), but equally our framework can be applied as an analytical perspective; i.e., the suggested components and specific elements should be paid attention to and help the researcher scrutinize and place the specific case, thereby being able to describe the degree, depth, and composition of relational peace in each instance. Thus, while not all cases can be categorized as exhibiting all traits of relational peace, we still argue that sorting out to what degree different components and elements are present, and to what degree in specific cases (even ones where the dyad is far from the ideal form of relational peace), will be an important empirical contribution. In such cases, we will at least have achieved a deeper understanding of where there are limitations with regard to all our suggested elements in the specific case, and we can depict the peace better, than to just say that it is non-war. Ultimately, the framework helps us specify which aspects of relational peace are fulfilled, lacking, or only present to a lesser degree. Employing the relational peace framework as an analytical perspective is thus likely to be the most fruitful way to use it.

Our conceptual definition of relational peace is an ideal typical definition. In order for an empirical case to be considered to live up to at least the minimal requirements of relational peace, we argue that a case needs to at least deliver on one element in each of the components in the framework. This means that for us to consider relational peace to be present *to some degree*, one of the forms of behavioral interaction that we have identified needs to be there (deliberation, non-domination, cooperation), and one of the two subjective attitudes (recognition, trust), and one

Table 2. Clustering of real-world cases

Component	Peace between fellows	Peace between friends
Behavioral interaction	Deliberation	Cooperation Non-domination
Subjective attitudes toward the other	Mutual recognition	Mutual trust
Idea of relationship	Fellowship	Friendship

of the two ways in which the idea of the relationship can be formulated (friends, fellows). In addition, any presence of systematic political violence in the dyad disqualifies the relation from one of relational peace. However, such a conclusion is made difficult by the boundaries of the constituent actors in the dyad. When such an actor is a defused one, such as an entire community, minute instances of violence involving a few must be considered in the context of the dyad as a whole, in order to determine whether they disqualify the entire dyad to be considered meeting these minimal requirements. Crime and associated violence as such need not entail that relational peace is ruled out.

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. We also make no judgment on what components and associated elements are more or less demanding to live up to, as we argue that this is likely to be context dependent, and contingent on the previous history of the dyad in question. We also remind the reader that the relationship dyad can be composed of actors of varying scale; thus, the framework can be applied to the study of both interpersonal relationships and more society-wide ones.

We also suggest that empirically these elements are likely to cluster together into two real-world types: *peace between fellows* and *peace between friends*, which both are legitimate expressions of relational peace. We suggest that some elements are more closely related to each other, and thus empirically cases are likely to cluster around two types of legitimate forms of relational peace, even if they do not fully deliver on all the ideal type elements. *Peace between friends* is particularly characterized by cooperation, non-domination, trust and where the actors in the dyad think of the relationship in friendship terms (shared visions, altruism, warm feelings, and moral obligations). *Peace between fellows*, on the other hand, is particularly characterized by deliberation, mutual recognition, and where the actors in the dyad think of the relationship in fellowship terms (expectation of reciprocity, but not altruism, no need for warm feelings toward the other, more motivated by benefits accruing to oneself, no shared vision, and any moral obligations between the two are very limited). See table 2. Thus, *peace between friends* reflects a higher degree of intimacy and even compromise, whereas the *peace between fellows* stresses equality and a lesser intensity in the interaction, and there is less explicit positive content included in such a relationship. We also do not postulate that every case will fit neatly into either of the two real-world types, but we argue that most cases are likely to cluster according to this division. Again, both types of relational peace are legitimate forms of relational peace.

Theoretical expectations lead us to cluster these elements in this way, and further empirical studies could of course refute that these are the most likely observable peaceful relations.<sup>6</sup> As we have argued earlier in the article, deliberation requires a degree of recognition, seeing the other as one with which it is ok to interact with. Such a dyad need not agree on anything; indeed, they can compete and there is no need for extensive cooperation. In such a case, it is likely that the two actors

<sup>6</sup> Cases studies are currently being conducted on Cambodia (Söderström 2019), South Africa, Myanmar (Olivius and Hedström 2019), Sri Lanka, Cyprus, the Philippines, and Colombia.

see the relationship as one of fellowship, where they accept each other and think it possible to engage with one another in non-violent ways. Similarly, we have also argued earlier that trust is more likely to be associated with cooperation and non-domination, and as a result the idea of the relationship is also likely to contain more positive valence, and thus conform to a *peace between friends*. A full-fledged case study would demand data collection to be carried out in order to ascertain how particular dyads at the level of analysis behave, and think about each other and their relationship. We hope that this discussion illustrates how our framework facilitates a nuanced understanding of relational peace, by specifying how each element may lean toward a specific type of real-world and legitimate forms of peace (*peace between friends* and *peace between fellows*). Exactly how real-world types will tend to cluster is in the end a question for empirical inquiry.

It is important to note that each of the elements can be fulfilled to different degrees and how the components relate to each other in a particular case is in the end an empirical question. We are likely to see variations in the degree to which the different types of behavioral interaction are present in each case, and the same is true for subjective attitudes. Similarly, how each dyad name their relationship is likely to reveal emic variations, and the strength of such ideas may also vary between the two actors. These variations are central when studying relational peace, and are expected. For example, there can be different degrees of both deliberation and cooperation, and true deliberation might be more demanding than simpler forms of cooperation. Likewise, there can be different degrees of recognition and trust and a certain level of trust might be necessary to achieve higher degrees of recognition. Finally, the different actors in the dyad may not live up to the various elements in a symmetrical fashion, and this can of course also vary over time.

Asymmetry in the dyads is likely to occur and important to study in itself. For instance, one can envision a dyad where the behavior of the composite actors varies in intensity and type. Similarly, 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 coexistence, 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. We argue that such asymmetry with respect to the content of the framework is likely to lead to a relationship that undergoes change. This is discussed further in the section on the importance of time.

We suggest that an empirical investigation of relational peace needs to specify the actors involved in the dyad, as well as pay attention to the longevity or stability of the relationship traits. Which specific actors and dyads that are of importance and interest to study in each instance are context specific, but we suggest that relations with political influence and consequence, or relations acted out in specific contested arenas or arenas with symbolic importance should be considered. Importantly, dyads that have a history of conflict and violence are of course particularly relevant to study from this perspective in order to understand to what degree they have been transformed and moved away from war and closer to peace. We also suggest that listening to voices that are usually ignored will provide new and more nuanced insights into our understanding of peace, which might be particularly relevant for studies that aim to capture everyday aspects of peace. Thus, we argue that actors also beyond those that are usually considered to be the main conflicting parties are of importance for studies of relational peace.

How demanding is the proposed framework for data collection? The behavioral data indicated by the framework may be easier to collect even if there can be substantial challenges here too, especially with regard to triangulation, or due to other

contextual issues for fieldwork (security, accessibility, etc.). The other two components require a deeper understanding of how the actors involved think about each other and the relationship. Thus, 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, 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.

#### *Actor-Centric Approach*

So, what are the consequences of this *actor-centric approach*? It means that the focus on territorial units is reduced. While each relationship can be coded in terms of 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. Still, other dyads may appear in its place, serving the same role or function in society, and which in turn may be important to study. 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 behavioral 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.

While the relational approach focuses on dyads, we recognize that multiple dyads make up social systems (Kriesberg 2007). An actor may consequently have a peaceful relationship with 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 at multiple levels and across levels in a specific context. Indeed, we suggest that empirical studies of peace should ultimately aim to study the social system as a whole, even if we recognize that this is a daunting task for each individual study.

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. For instance, the state of relational peace in Kosovo can be analyzed at different analytical levels; at the international level between the political elites in Moscow, Washington, DC, Brussels, Belgrade, and Pristina, as well as at the grassroots level between residents in different neighborhoods in the ethnically mixed areas of northern Mitrovica in northern Kosovo. Taken together, such an analysis of the web of relationships provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of peace than the analysis of only one relationship at one analytical level. Studying relational peace in the international system therefore does not offer itself as easily achieved. At the systemic level, it would be a question of capturing the web of relationships occurring here, and if not infinite, the number of relevant relationships that would need to be covered is extreme to fully grasp this. We suggest, rather, that our framework is more likely to be useful for studying dyads, and even clusters of dyads, that are more clearly defined and delimited.

Thus, capturing the web of relationships within the clearly delimited case of Kosovo is a more fruitful avenue, and it then becomes apparent that while there is a conflictual relationship between the presidents of Serbia and Kosovo, this conflict also spills over to relations at the societal level in Kosovo. An example of this is when tariffs are raised to block imports of Serbian goods to Kosovo, resulting in

violent demonstrations in Mitrovica, Kosovo. At the same time, however, there are also strands of relational peace among the residents in northern Mitrovica. Despite fear of violence, relational everyday peace is manifested by meetings and compromises, cooperation on practical issues, shared spaces in shopping areas and work places, and acceptance of the other group's identity markers such as flags (Jarstad and Segall 2019). This kind of approach to a specific setting opens up doors for research questions, such as how actors at different analytical levels influence each other and also reveals how there may be differences within actors at the same level as well. How shifts between levels operate, and when openings for more positive interactions, which create virtuous cycles of peace, would be a particularly important avenue of further research.

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 composed of symmetrical actors. External actors, such as the United Nations (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 actors 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 and dyads in the particular context for each study.

#### *The Importance of Time*

We have removed *time* from the definition of relational peace; however, time is important for the application of the framework. As behavioral interaction and the idea of repeated patterns (Huston and Robins 1982, 903), or as Saunders puts it, “the cumulative experience of interacting” (Saunders 2005, 60), 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 experiences from these interactions and exchanges. Observing the dyad over a longer time period, one can more accurately describe the relationship, and how the interaction plays out between the two actors involved. This should enable us to note whether the degree to which various elements are present fluctuates over time, or if some requirements of the relational peace framework are present for extended periods of time. 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 and elements. The order in which things occur in a relationship matter, so assigning a time value is important in our model. Also, a longer time perspective allows us to grasp patterns of interaction and the dynamic processes by which relationships are formed and change. For example, we discussed earlier how cooperative interaction over a period of time can evolve into deeper forms of cooperation where the actors identify common interest and thus also begin a process of redefining themselves. Without a longer time perspective, such observations are not possible.

As noted earlier, imbalances in the degree to which different elements are reciprocal for both actors in the dyad are likely to, over time, lead to shifts in the relationship. For instance, as Oelsner notes “Collective memory of past aggression influences the degree of trust between states and peoples” (Oelsner 2007, 265). Thus, if one actor in the dyad continues with one kind of behavioral interaction, which over time is not matched with similar attempts from the other actor, or where

one actor has expectations on the relationship that are based on their friendship conceptualization of the relationship and such expectations are continually not met by the other actor, this is likely to lead the first actor to update their own behavior and ideas of the relationship over time. Our take on this thus reflects how Wendt conceptualizes reciprocal interaction:

This process of signaling, interpreting, and responding completes a “social act” and begins the process of creating intersubjective meanings. It advances the same way. The first social act creates expectations on both sides about each other’s future behavior [...] adding to the pool of knowledge each has about the other, and so on over time. The mechanism here is reinforcement; interaction rewards actors for holding certain ideas about each other and discourages them from holding others. If repeated long enough, these “reciprocal typifications” will create relatively stable concepts of self and other regarding the issue at stake in the interaction (Wendt 1992, 405).

Any study that approaches peace in relational terms should therefore pay attention to the temporal variations and how the process of the relationship unfolds. This means that studying peace in relational terms also entails studying peace in processual terms. Paying attention to rounds of interaction will not only highlight how the relationship changes over time, but also deepen our understanding of how the different components of a relationship are dependent on and shape each other.

For instance, cooperation can be observed over a longer time period in terms of interactional behavior, 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 behavioral interaction; this depends on how the data themselves are to be coded and how finely grained the data need to be. For instance, one can detail it at the action per action level, i.e., “simultaneously or sequentially occurring behavioural and subjective responses” (Huston and Robins 1982, 905f), or focus on overall behavior 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. Also, analyzing interactions over time allows us to grasp overall patterns of interactions, changes, and continuities in that respect, contra isolated sporadic action events.

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. Future studies should also help develop such causal hypotheses.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this article, 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 behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes toward the other, and what idea of the relationship would amount to peace. As a result, we presented an ideal typical definition of relational peace. We suggest that our definition of relational peace allows us as a research community to move our empirical work forward in a multitude of ways. We believe that this

framework helps us stress a specific analytical perspective, highlighting that certain areas of interaction and dyadic realities require scrutiny, and that engaging in such scrutiny will allow us to understand the basis and development of peace better. It is also a framework that can be applied at different levels of analysis, which we think is another important aspect if we are to push the research agenda on peace forward.

In the remaining parts of the article, we discussed the implications and consequences of such a framework, and how such a framework can be applied. While all these criteria for each component are part of our ideal type definition of relational peace, we suggested that real-world types are likely to cluster together as a *peace between fellows* and a *peace between friends*. The former refers to a peace that stresses equality and where relational interactions are less intense and which is more closely associated with deliberation, recognition, and legitimate coexistence. The latter refers to a form of relational peace characterized by a more intimate relationship and which is more closely associated with non-domination, cooperation, trust, and friendship. For those who are interested in classifying specific cases one way or another, this framework offers a basis for such delimitations, for instance, between cases of a *peace between fellows* or a *peace between friends*.

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, also pose challenges 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. In addition, rather than including elements in the framework that define what destructive behaviors or attitudes need to be absent, we have tried to take seriously the ambition to define peace by identifying what elements need to be *present* for a relationship to be considered peaceful (cf. Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010).

Our definition does resonate with that of others. For instance, Kasten's work on peace, which is meant to allow us to differentiate between different levels of interstate peace, includes durability in the definition of peace (Kasten 2017, 28). This 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 fulfill our criteria for relational peace. Nonetheless, time is an important dimension for the analysis of 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 dimensions are selected based on a clustering of dimensions in "often-cited and influential conceptualisations" of peace (Kasten 2017, 37). Also, while Kasten engages solely with interstate peace and with elite behaviors and expectations, our ambition is to identify relational components that would qualify as peaceful also at the individual and societal levels. Recent work on peace at the local level has stressed the importance of widening our approach to where peace is studied and understood, for instance, Autesserre (2017, 118) stresses the importance of moving beyond the macro-level to the subnational level (see also Pugh 2011; Mitchell and Hancock 2012; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Hughes, Öjendal, and Schierenbeck 2015; McCandless 2018; Möller and Shim 2019). Thus being able to move between levels of analysis is important and a big advantage of our framework. As a research community, we also should be asking more questions about how different levels of analysis relate to one another, both descriptively and causally. For instance, if one former warring dyad has shifted its relationship, how does this resonate and spill over into other dyads in the same conflict context? When elite level actors' relation-

ships have transformed, how and to what degree does this influence and resonate with elite–community relationships in other dyads?

In our work with this framework, we have worked deductively and tried to find ways of defining peace in positive terms, not just in the sense of something being absent. Firchow and others employ an inductive approach, which is very fruitful for mapping different ideas about the various local meanings attributed to peace (Firchow 2018); our framework in contrast should facilitate systematic cross-case comparisons by assessing the quality of peace using deductive criteria. The framework thus also forces a researcher to consider elements that may not be readily talked about, and in this way the otherwise invisible is also given attention and analyzed.

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 analyzing cases where the actors perceive the relationship in different ways (i.e., competing or unbalanced understandings of the relationship, or where the elements in other ways are unbalanced). 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 dynamics 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 can appear as an elusive concept, but we hope that this article 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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