Peace and Security: Two Evolving Concepts and Their Changing Relationship

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At least one thing about security seems to be agreed on by most authors – it is something good. In other words, the very term ‘security’ is positively value-loaded. And precisely for this reason much less agreement exists on what clear meaning to attach to that word (Wiberg 1987: 340).

Peace researchers and security researchers are relatively close to each other, sharing important dimensions in their analysis or the whole language of the analysis for that matter, only disagreeing on some basic points right at the beginning. There is mutual understanding, but also a feeling that the other party is simply wrong when it comes to those basic assumptions (Galtung 1988 [1987]: 61).

For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape (I Thessalonians 5:3).

4.1 Introduction

‘Peace’ and ‘security’ are closely related concepts. Yet there is strikingly systematic variation in the usage of one or the other. One chapter in this story is also a major element in the histories of ‘peace research’ and ‘security studies’ as intellectual disciplines. During the Cold War, it was widely assumed that mainstream policy research was guided by the concepts of power and security. It was crucial to the self-conception of peace research to take ‘peace’ as the aim in contrast to that traditional interest. Similarly, there were ‘peace movements’ in the street, rarely ‘security movements’, while governments worried about ‘security problems’, not ‘peace problems’.

During the 1980’s, the re-orientation of much peace research, especially in Europe, was largely a move towards ‘security’ and a rapprochement with strategic studies under this guiding theme. Similarly, strategic studies became re-labelled security studies in many places. ‘Security’ became a meeting point for creative scholarly debates during the last years of the Cold War and the first post-Cold War years. Ironically, peace emerged during the 1990’s as a powerful policy term – this time from the West in the shape of ‘democratic peace’. The politics of ‘power’ and ‘security’ has not stopped creating surprises. In parallel to all of this, the tandem of ‘peace and security’ has its own trajectory mostly within the politics of the UN Security Council.

This chapter places this history of peace and security research in the larger context of a dual conceptual history of peace and security. The chapter proceeds by asking the following questions: Peace has a long conceptual history (as explored by several peace researchers), but what has been the particular meaning of ‘peace’ in different phases of the 20th century? When could it be invoked for what purposes? Similarly, and much less studied: what has been the historical meaning of ‘security’ and how should we understand the particular 20th century centrality of this concept? Finally: how did the two concepts relate to each other in different periods and contexts, e.g. why is it that the magic formula of the UN Security Council with which it can turn an issue into a Chapter VII matter (and thereby grab extraordinary powers) is to label it a matter of ‘international peace and security’? Many hear this as a typical UN pleonasm, but in the light of the continuous and complex relationship between the two concepts, it is more likely that sense

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1 This chapter is an extended remix of “Peace and Security: two concepts and their relationship”, published in the Festschrift for Haakan Wiberg: Stefano Guzzini and Dietrich Jung (Eds.): Contemporary Security Analysis and Copenhagen Peace Research (London: Routledge 2004b): 53–65. The author appreciates the permission of the editors and the publisher to use parts of the initial text and to develop this chapter further. The new enlarged version is greatly influenced by the unusually penetrating, knowledgeable and inspiring comments from three anonymous reviewers and the series’ main editor.
could be made out of this. Most importantly, such a stereophonic conceptual history can alert us to post-Cold War conceptual shifts and emerging patterns.

The chapter will not be heavily loaded with theory and methodology in relation to the analysis of concepts, but a hint for the particularly interested is ‘Skinner-contextualized-by-Koselleck’. Both of these main theories within conceptual history agree that political and social concepts can not be approached as purely analytical questions enabling linguistic ‘precision’ and thereby better empirical analysis (the role of traditional ‘conceptual analysis’), because politics often happens through language. Therefore, conceptual history has to be approached as important in itself and as a powerful way to read broader changes, not as something to be ‘defined away’ by conceptual clarification. The so-called Cambridge school of Pocock, Skinner, and others then focuses on particular ‘speech acts’ where the importance of a given historical text can be understood by re-constructing its context, that is: by understanding what was changed by a given move within the conceptual universe (Pocock 1985, 1996; Skinner 1978, 1988, 1989, 1996, 2002). In contrast, the German school of ‘Begriffsgeschichte’ led by Reinhart Koselleck, Werner Conze, and Rolf Reinchardt has more emphasis on the integration of social and political history, and looks at larger, more gradual changes in contrast to the more point-oriented studies in the Cambridge tradition (Koselleck 1967, 1972, 1979, 2002). There are additional differences - including their privileged historical period and the relationship between synchronic and diachronic studies - and possible synergies, but this will do for now (Richter 1995; Palonen 2002, 2003; Wæver 2006).

As a final methodological note of introduction, it should be emphasized that this chapter focuses on the European/Western history of the concepts. The rationale for this is dual. First, that to do conceptual history, one should focus on trajectories with actual connections. Therefore, it is methodologically a very different - and difficult - thing to start saying that there is a concept in say Bengali or Vietnamese for ‘the same thing’ as security, because this entails to operate with a ‘concept-free’, de-textualized and free-floating ‘idea’ that in abstraction can be carried to different places; otherwise it is not possible to talk about ‘the same’. Conceptual historians like Skinner, Pocock, and Koselleck have delivered elaborate arguments against this kind of study of ‘ideas’. Any assumption of ‘the same idea’ can be avoided, when the study is organized around the continuous transforma-

tions of a specific concept, where the later concepts evolve out of the earlier.

Obviously, it is extremely interesting to study how different cultures and regions have thought and today think about ‘security’ and ‘peace’ (see the very inspiring chapters 11–22 below), but to combine and integrate multiple analyses like this in a methodologically sound way probably demands that one anchors them in the present. That is: today these local concepts have all become interpenetrated, because they have influenced each other, and it will therefore be possible in concrete studies to link traditions that emerged independently.

As it will be shown below, the mid-20th century history of ‘security’ is to a large extent driven by the USA selecting this as key concept, and given the political position of the USA, it spread. However, as argued generally by post-colonial theory, such processes are never simple mimicking, but always more in the form of hybridity. Thus, it might be inexplicable without the US factor, why shifts happened in say Japan (Sato 2000) and Germany (Kaufmann 1970: 71ff) to concepts, we translate as ‘national security’, but these local concepts remained shaped by the imprint on them by local histories and previous conceptual moves.

The second part of the rationale is, that the purpose of this chapter is not to provide a comparative overview of different concepts of security and peace, but to show how the history of these concepts shapes current concepts and present politics - and how current politics can be understood in terms of textual moves in the landscape of concepts. Therefore, I need first of all to reconstruct the history that is most important to the main players I focus on for the present due to my own political possibilities and limitations, i.e. debates over theory and policy in Europe and North America. Although, surely politics will be understood better, when we give due attention to non-Western actors even within issues and stories usually presented as played out solely among actors in the North/West (Barkawi/Laffey 2006).

4.2 History of the Concept of Security until 1945

Security seems to be a straightforward concept, and therefore most of the discussion claiming to problematize it has assumed that the critical part resided in its specifications such as ‘national security’ vs. ‘common security’ or ‘human security’, thereby not necessarily