Chapter 19
Securing a Human Right to Peace: A Peace Education Imperative

Dale T. Snauwaert
The University of Toledo, USA

ABSTRACT

In a groundbreaking session at the United Nations on June 6, 2013 members of civil society and the UN Secretariat opened a very significant inquiry into fundamental questions of the desirability and possibilities of bringing an end to war. Some have posed this query in terms of whether there is a fundamental human right to peace. The United Nations, members of the global civil society, and scholars have engaged in a significant effort to articulate a human right to peace (See, for example, Alston 1980, Roche 2003, Weiss 2010), and the UN Human Rights Council has established an open-ended intergovernmental working group to draft a United Nations declaration on the right to peace (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/AdvisoryCommittee/Pages/RightToPeace.aspx). This brief essay is intended to launch that same discussion among peace educators.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations, members of the global civil society, and scholars have engaged in a significant effort to articulate a human right to peace (See for example, Alston, 1980; Roche, 2003; Weiss, 2010), and the UN Human Rights Council has established an open-ended intergovernmental working group to draft a United Nations declaration on the right to peace. The purpose of this chapter is to explore, from the perspective of a human right to international peace, the normative purpose and justification of peace education. What morally justifies an education for international peace?

It will be argued that the duty to secure a human right to peace provides a compelling public reason that justifies an education for peace as a form of civic education. From the perspective of this obligation, entailing the basic human rights of security of person, liberty, and self-determination and the non-ideal ethical principles of jus ad bellum, jus in bello, and jus post bellum as the content of public reason, the...
fundamental purpose of peace education should be the development of the *political efficacy* of future citizens, conceived as the capacity to participate in public deliberation and public reason regarding issues of international peace. From within the imperative of securing a human right to peace the development of a sense of justice is the normative core political efficacy and thereby of peace education.

**INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

The answer to the question of the justification of peace education is contingent upon the way in which “peace” is conceptualized. As Betty Reardon (1988) suggests:

> practitioners of peace education must begin to define and delimit the field: We need to reach some general agreement on its central concepts, educational goals, and preferred instructional approaches... The definitional problem (my emphasis) seems to be one of achieving conceptual clarity without closing off a continued open inquiry into what constitutes peace, how it can be achieved, and how we can educate students to work for it and to live in it as the normal state of human society (p. 11).

One’s definition of peace, and hence one’s approach to peace education, is logically interconnected with one’s conception of political society, nationally and internationally (Brown, 1992; Doyle, 1997). Although it is generally recognized that justice is the normative core of peace, and although there are basic common elements of justice, on different levels of generality from personal to the local to the national to the international the nature of justice and hence peace are distinct. A full treatment of all these levels is beyond the scope of a single chapter. The focus of this chapter, therefore, will be international peace. The conceptualization of peace is in turn dependent upon our understanding of the nature of the international system. It is generally recognized that there are three dominant paradigms of international order: Realism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism (Jackson, 2005; Nardin & Mapel, 1992; Wight, 1991). From the perspective of these paradigms of international order, there is a plurality of conceptions and means of achieving peace: the imperative of maintaining a *balance of power*, the imperative of an *international legal order of states*, and the imperative of a *cosmopolitan order* grounded in human rights.

Realism asserts an international moral skepticism: the belief that ethics has either dubious or little relevance to the action of states. It maintains that relations between nation-states are mainly political, in the sense that they concern interests and power, not what is right *per se*. This skepticism is based upon the three following understandings of the international arena: (1) the international arena is an anarchy, a condition wherein there exists no higher legal or moral authority than individual states; (2) that war is by its very nature unlimited; and (3) states act out of exclusive self-interest (with little, if any, moral concern for others). Thus, the core assumptions underlying the moral skepticism of Realism are anarchy, unlimited war, and the imperative of self-interest.

From the perspective of Realism, peace can only be achieved through the maintenance of a balance of power (Cady, 1989; Doyle, 1997; Hinsley, 1986; Smith, 1986). Under the conditions of anarchy, power (and fear) takes precedence over law and morality. In fact, the international anarchical system is in a continual state of war, in the sense that war is always imminent. Under the conditions of anarchy self-defense is rational. Others, however, not knowing one’s intentions with certainty, will respond out of self-defense with an increase in arms. The result is escalation, leading to an increased probability of the outbreak of conflict. This phenomenon is referred to as the “security dilemma:” to defend one’s self is