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What is This?

Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies

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Abstract
This article is a conceptual scoping of the notion and practice of everyday peace, or the methods that individuals and groups use to navigate their way through life in deeply divided societies. It focuses on bottom-up peace and survival strategies. The article locates everyday peace in the wider study of peace and conflict, and constructs a typology of the different types of social practice that constitute everyday peace. While aware of the limitations of the concept and the practice, the article argues that everyday peace can be an important building block of peace formation, especially as formal approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding are often deficient. An enhanced form of everyday peace (everyday diplomacy) has the potential to go beyond conflict-calming measures to encompass more positive actions linked with conflict transformation. The article can also be read as an exploration of 'the local' and 'agency' in deeply divided societies. It provides a counterweight to accounts of conflict-affected societies that concentrate on top-down actors, formal institutions and conflict resolution 'professionals'. The apparent 'banality' of the everyday challenges us to think creatively about perspectives and methodologies that can capture it.

Introduction

In 1970s Northern Ireland, I remember going to the swimming pool with my older sister one afternoon. I was about six years old and I spent most of the time playing with another boy of my age. I had never met him before. At one stage, he asked me if I was a Catholic or a Protestant. I answered, and we continued playing. On the walk home, I told my sister about the question I had been asked. She was very angry that I had answered the boy, and proceeded to tell my mother when we got home. An inquisition began: 'Who was the other boy?' 'What did you tell him?' 'Why did you tell him?' 'What religion was he?' Clearly I had transgressed a set of rules that governed everyday life in a deeply divided society. But where did these rules come from? Who maintained them, and what was their wider social significance?

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This article is interested in the everyday intergroup contact and civility that can be found in deeply divided societies. This grudging coexistence is under-researched. Our interest is in the social practices of everyday peace that individuals and collectives use to navigate their passage through a deeply divided society. The article is mainly an exercise in conceptual scoping[1] that draws on a diverse literature (international relations, sociology, social psychology and anthropology) to try to unpack cosmopolitanism within communitarianism. It responds to Brewer's (2010) call for a more sociological (and human-focused) approach to our accounts of peace and conflict, and connects with an emerging interest in the vernacular in international relations (Lister and Jarvis, 2013).

Everyday peace refers to the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence. It involves coping mechanisms such as the avoidance of contentious subjects in religiously or ethnically mixed company, or a constructive ambiguity whereby people conceal their identity or opinion lest they draw attention to themselves. As will be discussed later, everyday peace can go beyond coping mechanisms to encompass more ambitious activities that can challenge the fixity of conflicts. For the purposes of this article, a deeply divided society is taken to be a society in which there is a significant cleavage that goes beyond the politcal institutions and party politics. Thus it may manifest itself in residential segregation, media and cultural consumption, language, and access to public goods. It may sometimes involve direct violence, and will certainly contain a good deal of indirect violence in the form of threats or identity-based discrimination (Guelke, 2012; Lustick, 1979).

The main aim of the article is to conceptualize, situate and typologize the social practices that constitute everyday peace. It begins by justifying this research agenda as part of the critical approach to peace and conflict studies. A concentration on bottom-up, localized and particularistic conflict-calming measures stands in contrast with the emphasis on top-down, standardized, technocratic and institutionalized approaches to peace favoured by many international institutions (despite their conversion to a rhetoric of the local) (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). The article then seeks to conceptualize everyday peace by first setting out three premises upon which our thinking is based: the fluidity of the social world, the heterogeneity of groups, and the importance of environmental factors such as place or the cycle of a violent conflict. All three premises should be seen within a context of power. This is followed by a definition of everyday peace and a description of the factors that shape it. A rudimentary typology of the different types of social practice that comprise everyday peace is then constructed. The article then assesses the limitations of everyday peace, recognizing its potential to maintain division and thereby prolong conflict. In many cases, our focus is on everyday coexistence and tolerance rather than the more expansive concept of peace. Yet, given the circumstances of intergroup enmity and the capacity for rapid conflict escalation, it may be that the more modest goals of coexistence and tolerance are all that can be hoped for. The article concludes by considering the extent to which everyday peace may contribute to wider goals such as peace formation (Richmond, 2013). It develops the notion of everyday peace beyond a negative peace of conflict-calming and avoidance, towards everyday diplomacy or people-to-people activities that can move a society towards conflict transformation.

Agency and the everyday

Escalation to mass violence does not just happen. It requires active agency and precipitating circumstances. Bailey (1996: x) well encapsulates the transition from ethnic coexistence to active enmity in the case of the former Yugoslavia:

> I do not understand … how good-natured neighbours could so quickly and so thoroughly be turned into demonised adversaries. How did the mild pride in being Yugoslav, the patriotic and seemingly affectionate memory of Tito, the taken-for-granted pragmatism that helped people cope with their everyday life, the habitual tolerance of ethnic differences and the plural society, and the equally relaxed acceptance of the official (and unifying) Tito-communist ideology all vanish so swiftly and so completely to be replaced by the utter mindlessness of true-believing perpetrators of genocide?

Some communities and localities have avoided levels of violence experienced by relatively nearby and similar areas (Armakolas, 2011: 230; Heitmeyer, 2009: 105). For example, some cities in India and the former Yugoslavia remained relatively insulated from the sectarian rioting or ethnic cleansing that seized neighbouring cities. There may be multiple reasons for such good fortune, but some of it may be connected with the nature of the social capital and institutions that predated the upsurge in conflict. In this way, everyday peace connects with debates on resilience and the ability of individuals and communities to cope with stressful situations. Above all, everyday peace is a form of agency. It is not something that people always and necessarily engage in. It relies on opportunities and context, as well as the ability of individuals and groups to exploit these. Therefore, our consideration of everyday peace must also be viewed through the lens of power.

It is also worth noting that many deeply divided societies seem stuck in a holding pattern of intergroup friction. Even if an elite-level peace accord has been reached, as has been the case in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, intercommunal differences often persist. These societies have seen very little reconciliation, truth-telling and accountability that might amount to catharsis (Seidman, 2012: 11). In the absence of formally endorsed and people-orientated reconciliation strategies, individuals and communities are left to their own devices, and self-directed coping mechanisms come into play. As the article explains, the conflict-defying, conflict-delaying and conflict-minimizing social capital of everyday peace can have a positive impact. But the unwritten and informal rules of everyday peace are often deeply embedded and can reinforce conflict.

The concept of the everyday has been a staple in social theory for many years. Lefebvre, De Certeau, Foucault, Bourdieu and even Adam Smith, Durkheim, and Marx and Engels have been associated with the term (Kalekin-Fishman, 2013: 714–716). For this article, the everyday is regarded as the normal habitus for individuals and groups, even if what passed as 'normal' in a conflict-affected society would be abnormal elsewhere. The term 'everyday' is beguilingly simple. On the one hand, it speaks of phenomena that are familiar and within easy reach. But, on the other, it demands perspectives and methodological tools that can capture something that 'passes by, passes through' (Seigworth and Gardiner, 2004: 140).

International relations has devoted growing attention to sociological, and even anthropological, readings of its core ideas (Autesserre, 2014; Davies and Niemann, 2004; Kessler and Guillaume, 2012; Montsion, 2010). The notion of the everyday helps us move beyond formal institutional spheres (Richmond, 2008: 452), towards spheres of life that are (potentially) empathetic and social (Bahr, 1973: 48). Together with the so-called vernacular turn, it has challenged us to re-examine taken-for-granted levels of analysis and to expand relevant issues beyond international relations staples (Lister and Jarvis, 2013). The everyday lens has allowed new interpretations of key international relations ideas of power, legitimacy and responsibility. Adler-Nissen and Pouliot (2014: 3) reflect on how 'the everyday performance of international politics is not a mere epiphenomenon of deeper structural forces; it is also a generative force in and of itself'. So the everyday is constitutive of the international, and it is prudent to see it as an integral part of international processes. In recent years, we have seen the further opening up of debates within international relations to encompass a range of issues aligned with the everyday: the local, hybrid political orders and resilience (Chandler, 2014: 1–4). All of this points to a constructivist agenda writ large, in which social practices and communities are taken seriously.

Everyday peace as a research agenda

Interpersonal and intergroup civility is far removed from many standard top-down and systems-level approaches to international relations. It questions the primacy of the state and formal institutions as the principal or only referents for investigations into peace and conflict. Top-down, institution-centric research is well established, and there has been considerable resistance to perspectives that attempt to look beyond the state (Selby, 2013; Zaum, 2012).

The study and practice of peacebuilding has experienced a 'technocratic turn' and the valorization of the 'expert' (Goetschel and Hagmann, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2012a). Much peacebuilding activity and discourse has been standardized and professionalized through 'best practice' and 'lessons learned'. While such activities have often had positive outcomes, they reinforce the notions that 'expertise' is exogenous and that local actors (who often have direct experience of the conflict or war-to-peace transitions) are passive victims and recipients who lack the agency to chart their own path unaided. By focusing on everyday peace, or the coping mechanisms deployed by so-called ordinary people, we can confront the dominant narrative that associates peacebuilding expertise with outsiders and essentializes 'locals' as insular and passive. The extensive repertoire of conflict avoidance and conflict-minimizing skills used by people in deeply divided societies points towards a diffuse expertise that does not come from diplomatic training academies or workshops by conflict resolution 'gurus'. Instead, it points to a widely held empathetic and intuitive genius. Bailey's (1996: xii) observations of a religiously mixed city in India identified people as 'calculators, pragmatists, quotidian thinkers, in the habit of working out consequences when they made decisions'. In other words, individuals have very sophisticated cognitive abilities.

The focus on everyday peace also counters a fatalism that can attend the recognition of a growing power of technocratic approaches to peace. While peacebuilding has experienced a 'technocratic turn', opportunities still remain for hyper-local initiatives, human agency, creativity, alternatives and innovation. The everyday peace agenda is potentially subversive in that it takes peace beyond the realm of programmes, projects, initiatives, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. It occurs in an informal sphere that is not immediately subject to the same controls (budget cycles, reporting mechanisms, end dates, etc.) that shape many formal projects. As a number of authors have claimed, much mainstream peacebuilding revolves around notions of control and order. This is perhaps best encapsulated by the promotion of 'stabilization' as a form of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2012c; Tschirgi, 2013). By remaining outside of the realm of control, and often beyond surveillance, there is a possibility that everyday peace connects to resistance to the central narrative of liberal peacebuilding. It takes the form, in Scott's (1992) terminology, of a 'hidden transcript' that is not always visible to outsiders (Mac Ginty, 2013). Potentially, it also connects with that elixir in peacebuilding and development circles: local ownership. Mainstream peacebuilding has been criticized for maintaining shallow forms of ownership, in which 'local ownership' amounts to local acceptance of schemes conceived, funded and managed from the outside (perhaps with the assistance of local or national elites).

It is worth noting that everyday peace is not necessarily linked with international peacebuilding efforts. It is a social institution that can predate and operate independently of such efforts. Indeed, such externally led intervention is often a latecomer and is limited in terms of duration, scope and geographical reach. It is also a reminder that conflict is rarely total: many societies, even in ostensibly 'war-torn' contexts, have zones of collaboration and negotiation.

As the interrogation of everyday peace will demonstrate, this research agenda allows us to question the fixity and homogeneity of categories. Oppositional binaries dominate the study of peace and conflict (e.g. international versus local, insider versus outsider, ally versus foe, Hutu versus

Tutsi, rational versus irrational, etc.) (Gibson-Graham, 2003). The unpacking of everyday peace reveals that interaction across sectarian, ethnic and nationalistic boundaries can be common despite a meta-context of societal division. Thus we can confront the often hegemonic narrative of homogenous, near-hermetically sealed groups that have no or only aggressive interaction with the out-group. The everyday peace notion shows that a complex array of intergroup interactions can occur in many contexts and are sensitive to calibration according to gender, class, locality, and interpretations of decency and civility. Apparently fixed categories often contain outliers and anomalies, and so our analyses must be very cautious about the categories we use.

The exploration of the notion of everyday peace thus fits within the critical peace and conflict studies research agenda. The article also touches on a range of other debates in sociology, anthropology and political geography. For example, it finds resonance in Billig's (1995) work on the 'banal' and how ideas and practices that appear mundane can be significant and political. Actions and words that are apparently 'mindlessly remembered' (Billig, 1995: 144) may actually reflect contexts of power. Billig (1995: 8) notes how 'the metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building'. In a similar way, this article is concerned with phenomena hidden in plain view; events that are apparently ordinary but, given the conflict-affected context, are extraordinary. To play with Hannah Arendt's phrase, the article is interested in the banality of civility or the everyday and familiar social practices that constitute life in the workplace, the neighbourhood, the park, the shop and the bar. Rather than the formal political sphere, it is concerned with instances like a cross-community mother-and-toddler group in a particularly tense part of Belfast. Catholic and Protestant mothers might meet in the neutral space provided by a crèche, but their socialization would not extend beyond being 'mummy friends'. In the words of one interviewee from Smyth and McKnight's (2013: 315) study, 'we are just day friends'. The article also connects with debates in critical geography that see physical space as process. Thus, borders are not just about divisions (sometimes physical), but also about multiple contestations and encounters that both challenge and confirm social orthodoxies. Perkins and Rumford's (2013: 269, 271) notions of 'the role of ordinary people in bordering activity' and 'everyday borderworks' underscore how citizens and so-called ordinary people can participate in the making and unmaking of political order.

Conceptualizing everyday peace: Three premises

It is worth setting out three premises upon which the conceptualization of everyday peace rests. First, and following on from work on hybridity (Mac Ginty, 2010; Peterson, 2013; Richmond and Mitchell, 2011), we assume fluidity in the social world. Although narratives of the fixities of boundaries and identities are often deployed to characterize deeply divided societies, and the communities and conflicts therein, closer examination reveals significant levels of inter- and intragroup negotiation, change, adaptation, co-optation, resistance and agency. So, in thinking about everyday peace, it is worth bearing in mind the malleability of individuals, collectives, ideas and practices. As a result, we can think of everyday peace as fluid: possible at some periods and impossible at others, strong on some issues (e.g. the lending and borrowing of agricultural labour across communal boundaries) but weak on others (e.g. toleration of intercommunal marriage).

This emphasis on the fluidity of individuals, collectives, ideas and practices leads to a second premise: the heterogeneity of groups often seen as homogenous. Again, reflecting human agency and constant processes of social negotiation and adaptation, it is prudent to conceive of groups in deeply divided societies as containing a wide range of intensity of affiliation. By transcending the notion of resolute communal blocks, we can see variety in the intensity of belief and identification. This is important in terms of everyday peace, as cross-communal interaction may occur between

pragmatists on both sides, while zealots would avoid such contact if possible. Communities are likely to contain a fluid mix of gatekeepers, social entrepreneurs, leaders and followers, the politicized and the non-politicized (Mac Ginty, 2012a), all of whom may have different attitudes to cross-community interaction.

The third premise upon which the conceptualization rests is to stress the importance of environmental factors (Armakolas, 2011; Ferriss, 2002: 377; Kunovich and Deitelbaum, 2004: 1103). Everyday peace occurs in a space or locality over which individuals and communities will exercise limited control. Everyday peace may occur episodically, or even clandestinely, according to prevailing conditions. It may be made impossible by direct violence or a physical separation between communities (e.g. Israel's separation wall or the 'peace walls' in Belfast). Crucially, issues of class, gender, demographics, and perceptions of decency play a significant role in patterning everyday peace practices. Observers may make the mistake of imposing 'problematics on communities' and only seeing them through the lens of the most obvious conflict (e.g. racial, religious, ethnic) (Seidman, 2012: 7). Individuals and communities on the ground will be well aware of the meta-conflict that gains international headlines. But, in their everyday lives, they must negotiate a way through a complex range of social norms, practices and aspirations that shape their inter- and intra-communal experience. Gender, clientelism, deference to elders, and a range of other factors will shape life, providing opportunities and obstacles. Those living with the conflict may not have the 'luxury' of concentrating only on the main political conflict. In a number of deeply divided contexts, issues of class feature prominently in how individuals and families situate themselves in their political hinterland. Social class may be a robust predictor of an individual's proclivity to mobilization. In Northern Ireland and elsewhere, for example, anthropological and sociological research has pointed out how class cleavages found within ethnic groups pattern involvement in political and street activity (Hughes et al., 2008: 525; Skeggs, 1997: 3).

Defining everyday peace

Everyday peace refers to the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intra-group levels. These techniques are universal in the sense that they can be found in every human society. Indeed, immigrants deploy them in adjusting to their new locale. Their use becomes particularly acute, however, in deeply divided societies in which tension and single incidents can escalate into direct violence. In this sense, everyday peace can be conflict calming, providing enough social glue to prevent a society from tipping from sustained tension to all-out war. Simultaneously, however, everyday peace activities can be conflict provoking, especially if in-group members find cross-community contact threatening. Everyday peace involves unwritten and constantly evolving systems of governance that apply to inter- and intragroup relations (Hejnova, 2010: 743). The practices and norms of everyday peace lie at the intersection of these shifting systems of governance, with individuals striking an uneasy balance between the allegiances and norms of the in-group and contacts with the out-group. Some group members will seek to be norm gatekeepers, entrepreneurs, changers and perpetuators. Much group activity will take the form of 'reiteration practices' that reinforce generalized images of the disputed 'other' (Leonard, 2006: 1117–1133; 2010: 333). Often, everyday peace activity will occur in marginal 'unthreatening' spaces (e.g. in rural or inaccessible locales) or among groups seen as somehow removed from the frontline of the conflict (e.g. in some cases mothers with young children) (Harris, 1972). Smyth and McKnight (2013: 304) note that 'mothers [in Belfast] move between "private" segregated neighbourhoods and "public", mixed or historically forbidden places'. Motherhood temporarily

opens up spaces otherwise closed in a sectarian context, although such space can be dangerous and requires deft manoeuvring by those who venture into it.

Reflecting the lack of a rulebook, everyday peace is not formally taught. Instead, it relies on 'sensitive perception and intuitive responses' (Heyd, 1995: 218). Parental guidance, observation, trial and error, and common sense are its principal transmission modes. The principles are implicit, embedded within and between communities but rarely explicated (Cecil, 1989: 111). The social psychological literature repeatedly refers to the sense of touch, and how individuals and groups draw on almost tactile senses as they feel their way through the possibilities and impossibilities of everyday peace (Heyd, 1995: 219; Poland, 1984: 292). The absence of a 'rulebook' should serve as a reminder to the formal peacebuilding sector that everyday peace probably cannot be modelled, taught or replicated (Pye, 1999: 769). It is highly context-, location- and time-specific, and relies on well-honed interpersonal skills. One mother interviewed by Smyth and McKnight (2013: 312) expressed a fear of calling her child by its name while in religiously mixed company (in shops) for fear that this would identify the family group as outsiders.

Everyday peace is dialogic in the sense that it relies on interaction, social recognition and social responses (Skeggs, 1997: 4). The strategies used by individuals and groups (e.g. avoiding contentious conversation topics) rely on reciprocity, or an unspoken pact whereby actors agree to abide by the same ground rules and operate within broadly shared parameters. Such 'conversational contracts' are social practices that are simultaneously ad hoc and scripted (Papacharissi, 2004: 260). They are ad hoc in that the precise details may change according to the circumstances and individuals involved, but scripted in the sense that mutually recognized boundaries pertain. Everyday peace connects with a key anthropological puzzle: how people are simultaneously patterned by social discipline and a drive to conformity, while still able to engage in improvisation. In this way, individuals and groups are constituted as both agents and subjects (Holland, 1998). For such interaction to take place, and for reciprocal behaviour to develop, actors must be in a position to recognize and interpret the behaviour of others. This is possible in contexts where communities share the same language and are in a physical proximity that allows mutual observation. In contexts like Georgia and South Ossetia, or Israel and Palestine, however, linguistic differences and physical separation minimize the opportunities for the development of reciprocal behaviour.

The intragroup dimension of everyday peace reflects the variety in intensity of affiliation likely to pertain within a group. While some group members might be zealous, vocal and active in their support for the cause, others may maintain a more pragmatic approach or may have relatively little interest in politics and group-identity issues (Howe, 2005; Mac Ginty, 2012b). These stances are, of course, subject to flux. Group members must deploy their everyday diplomatic skills to situate themselves within their own group. A group member with an equivocal attitude to the group may, for example, find it pragmatic to display a greater degree of commitment and interest when in the company of more zealous group members. To engage in such deft manoeuvring requires a highly attuned emotional intelligence, able to pick up on multiple signals, act upon them, and calibrate responses to a particular audience (Donnan and McFarlane, 1989: 14). Given the sometimes violent intragroup policing and gatekeeping roles adopted by some community members (e.g. as strongmen or militia leaders), intragroup everyday peace skills can be crucial for self-preservation. A similar set of skills is required for intergroup interaction. Here, the structural and long-term nature of communal fissures might mean that people and groups have a sensitized alertness or awareness that misjudgement and misunderstanding could have dire consequences (Hughes et al., 2008: 528). As a result, people may go out of their way to avoid giving offence and to be deliberately polite to out-group members during periods of calm. Self-restraint is almost 'subliminal, part of their collective consciousness but unspoken' (Bailey, 1996: xi–xii).

Of course, instances and practices of everyday peace can become targets. If too prominent or widespread, everyday peace may threaten the narrative of division and incompatibility that community leaders may wish to perpetuate. Violence is often used instrumentally by political and community leaders as a way of policing intergroup boundaries. It can create fear that makes everyday peace extremely difficult to pursue. For example, after an upsurge in violence, community members may change their behaviour, not travelling or shopping out of 'their' own areas, and restricting contact with out-group members.

Types of everyday peace

In thinking about a rudimentary typology of everyday peace activity, the principal division is between inter- and intragroup activity. The five everyday peace social practices identified in Table 1 operate in both inter- and intragroup spheres. They are context-dependent and take the form of tactics that individuals and groups use in their everyday interactions in deeply divided societies in order to minimize risk. From literature, interviews and observations, five types of everyday peacemaking are identified: avoidance, ambiguity, ritualized politeness, telling and blame deferring. There can be overlaps between all five, and, illustrating the extraordinary cognitive skills involved, individuals and groups can deploy them simultaneously. At first glance, the list of social practices associated with everyday peace methods may seem rooted in the realm of negative peace: content to allow conflict to persist but willing to move beyond that. In a minimalist interpretation, everyday peace can simply be eking out safe space in a conflict context and allowing a façade of normality to prevail. On closer inspection, however, everyday peace involves considerable innovation, creativity and improvisation. It rests on considerable agency at the individual and group levels. Indeed, often this agency will be exercised in the face of the overwhelming power held by states, militias and other institutions. It can constitute a category of resistance, especially to the division and incompatibility that may be preferred by political and military elites. As such, everyday peace can be conceived of as rupturing the idea of totalizing conflict and division. As discussed in the conclusion, it may hold the potential to contribute to peace formation or the pooling of micro-solidarities that can sustain peace initiatives. Such everyday diplomacy goes beyond the immediate aim of self-preservation and a restitution of 'normal' practices. Instead, it is interested in challenging (even subtly) the dominant norms that legitimize conflict and division.

Perhaps the principal everyday peace activity is avoidance. This can take multiple forms, most prominent among which would be the avoidance of controversial and sensitive (e.g. political or religious) conversation topics when in mixed company. Reflecting on how her Jewish relatives maintained close relations with their Polish neighbours in pre-World War II Poland, Fulbrook (2012: 20) noted that 'by effectively agreeing not to discuss politics, they ensured a continuing emotional bond'. Seamus Heaney's 1976 poem 'Whatever you say, say nothing' reflects how people in Northern Ireland perfected the skill of talking about the weather and inconsequential issues so as not to discuss the ongoing civil war. Hughes et al. (2008: 536) note 'a tendency for conversation to be circumscribed by a shared concern to promote and preserve cordial relations' (see also Burton, 1978: 57). Another avoidance technique is to evade situations and people that have a chance of leading to conflict. Avoidance also involves avoiding revealing too much about one's true beliefs. This operates both within and outside of the group. At the intragroup level, it might involve deliberately avoiding community gatekeepers and radicalized figures. At the intergroup level, it might involve the extreme of having virtually no contact with 'the other side'. This might be facilitated, indeed enforced, by a conflict geography that prevents intergroup contact (e.g. Israel's separation wall), or individuals and families may restrict intergroup contact through choice. This might take the form of choosing to live, work, socialize and shop among co-religionists. Where intergroup contact does take place, it may be

Table 1. Types of social practice that constitute everyday peace.

Types of everyday peace activity

Avoidance
  - *contentious topics of conversation*
  - *offensive displays*
  - *high-risk people and places*
  - *escapism into subcultures*
  - *not drawing attention to oneself*
  - *live in the present*
Ambiguity
  - *concealing signifiers of identity*
  - *non-observance or 'not seeing'*
  - *dissembling in speech and actions*
Ritualized politeness
  - *system of manners*
Telling
  - *ethnically informed identification and social ordering*
Blame deferring
  - *shifting blame to outsiders to appear more socially acceptable*

carefully regulated and restricted to neutral spaces or daylight hours. A further avoidance technique is to display little or no interest in the ongoing conflict and division. This may be difficult to do, and may involve an escape into a youth subculture, such as skaters or goths (Howe, 2005; Mac Ginty, 2012b). Such escapism may also be dangerous in that it may stand counter to the wishes of some community members for unity and conformity to the cause. It may also counter one of the key traits in everyday peace: not drawing attention to oneself (Smyth and McKnight, 2013: 309). Seidman (2012: 11) notes how 'the retreat from sectarianism has often meant a pre-occupation with personal fulfilment, for example, with consumerism or careerism'. A final type of conflict avoidance is to 'live exclusively in the present' and try, as far as possible, to dis-remember past trauma (Grass, 2008: 286). Of course, the luxury of dis-remembering may not be available to all.

The second everyday peace activity is the deliberate use of ambiguity in representing oneself. This may be especially useful in mixed or neutral space when an individual does not want to advertise affiliation with a particular group. It might involve discarding or concealing any signifiers of affiliation, such as choice of dress or name. This points to a widespread cognitive deftness that allows individuals and small groups to adopt chameleonic qualities. Signs of ethnic affiliation may be difficult to conceal completely, however. Individuals and groups may be highly attuned to picking up the fine detail of affiliation. In many cases of inter-ethnic contact, there is a generalized recognition that people are 'routinely both tolerator and tolerated' (Smyth and McKnight, 2013: 311). As a result, people find it rational to engage in 'studied non-observance' or a deliberate not-seeing of the other, while at the same time knowing full well that all parties have a full awareness of identity (Sharp and Kordsmeier, 2008). These mutual and reciprocal theatrics illustrate the malleability of identity, and how individuals and groups can temporarily sublimate one part of their identity (e.g. connected to politics) and replace it with a more neutral stance (Donnan and McFarlane, 1989: 16). Smyth and McKnight (2013: 306) refer to it as the 'practice of respecting differences largely by ignoring them'.

The third everyday peace activity, ritualized politeness, can often work in tandem with the use of ambiguity (Bailey, 1996: xii). Actors in an intergroup exchange might engage in semi-scripted

interchanges that carefully avoid any behaviour or language likely to cause offence and risk escalation (Harris, 1972: 199). Exchanges might be 'reserved, tepid, less spontaneous', but they conform to acceptable standards and minimize risk (Papacharissi, 2004: 260). People living in deeply divided societies buy into a mutually understood 'system of manners' that at once accepts the existence of conflict around them, but also facilitates interpersonal civility (Caldwell, 2012: 241).

The fourth everyday peace activity is 'telling', or an intense form of social identification and social categorization whereby individuals attempt to ascertain the identity and affiliation of others. Rosemary Harris (1972: 148) notes, in her classic ethnographic study of a religiously mixed rural community in 1950s Northern Ireland, how 'each [person] looks automatically for slight indications from another's name, physical appearance, expression and manner, style of dress and speech idiom to provide the clues that will enable the correct categorisation to be made'. Drawing on the works of Erving Goffman (1961), Frank Burton (1978: 38) regards telling as 'a central process in creating and sustaining the coherence of a sectarian cosmology'. While telling may rely on stereotypes and generalizations, it also relies on personal observation and calculation. Individuals in deeply divided societies will develop a sensitized alertness that can pick up threatening cues and take the appropriate action (Hughes et al., 2008: 528).

The fifth everyday peace activity refers to blame deferral, whereby individuals and members of a community might blame outsiders or minorities within their own group for trouble. The main aim is to maintain the modus vivendi of everyday peace and perpetuate the constructed notion of intercommunal or interpersonal good relations. Through the blaming of trouble on outliers or 'deviants', a message is transmitted that they are unrepresentative of the group.

The five mechanisms combine to produce a complex system of interaction aimed at survival and risk minimization. It allows at least two simultaneous processes to exist. First, it renders tolerable the habitation of a 'sectarian imaginary' (Ali, 2010: 739). It brings a sense of order to a world that outsiders might perceive as lacking rules and predictability. The mutuality and shared nature of conflict-calming measures evokes a set of ground rules or parameters, which pertain during periods of relative calm. Second, it perpetuates and normalizes a sectarian culture and helps sustain the long-term nature of divisions. As discussed below, everyday peace does not necessarily confront conflict and the attitudes that sustain it. Indeed, it can help maintain the moral distance required to 'other' individuals and groups and so justify violence or discrimination against them. Everyday peace amounts to bounded civility, with the boundaries amounting to an acceptance of restrained conflict.

Although much of everyday peace operates in the realm of routine and ritual, it does allow for the possibility of improvisation and unpredictable behaviour (Holland, 1998). Such behaviour may involve the transgression of social norms and may open opportunities that challenge the existing order. While there are rules associated with such challenges, they may also contain possibilities for conflict transformation and new forms of intergroup interaction and learning (Kappler, 2012).

Limitations of everyday peace

The principal criticism of the notion of everyday peace is that it is a very limited form of peace. In this view, it is a form of conflict management rather than the more expansive conflict transformation. It accepts the bases of conflict and seeks to minimize the impact of conflict through toleration and coexistence, rather than through measures that are directed at the underlying causes of the conflict. It is, in the words of Harris (1972: 200), a 'tolerance of prejudice'. As a result, it risks perpetuating and reinforcing the conflict, almost guaranteeing its intergenerational and chronic nature. So, for many peacebuilders, everyday peace would not actually amount to peace. Yet, to some extent, this criticism is unfair. It may be that limited forms of everyday peace are all that are

possible given the conflict context. Indeed, such activities may involve a high degree of bravery and risk ostracization from the in-group. Moreover, by their very nature, everyday peace activities are highly localized. As a result, they are unable to address many of the structural, international and transnational elements of conflict. On their own, they are unlikely to be a sufficient factor in effecting significant change in the dynamic of the conflict unless they connect with elite-level and wider initiatives (Heitmeyer, 2009: 114; Sorabji, 2008: 98).

Another, and related, criticism of everyday peace is that it operates within a wider power context in which one group in society holds more power than another. In effect, everyday peace can be ongoing and produce highly localized islands of civility, while there is widespread structural violence in the form of ethno-religious discrimination and political and economic inequity. All societies operate according to political economies, although in deeply divided societies these are likely to be inflected with sectarian, ethnic or racial overtones. Employment and land-ownership patterns may favour one group over another, and in-group members are likely to display a preference for doing business within their own ethnic group (Dilley, 1989: 130; Harris, 1972: 139).

A further criticism of everyday peace is that it can be insincere, a mere front that people use to ease day-to-day relations in a deeply divided society. The danger is that outward shows of respect inhabit 'a world of ceremony, not substance' (Whitman, 2000: 1291) and do not demand that participants engage with one another in terms of meaningful respect. The charge is that everyday peace activities often amount to a form of dissembling, whereby individuals and groups may say one thing and mean another. Reminiscent of Scott's 'hidden transcript', individuals may say one thing in the in-group but moderate their speech when in mixed company. Yet all individuals do this in all societies. It is an inherent part of human interaction and is connected with what Goffman refers to as 'positive face', or the desire to gain acceptance and approval from others. In a deeply divided society, the risks of conflict escalation may be accentuated, and so it is entirely rational for individuals and groups to develop skills that allow them to gain approval from the in-group and toleration (and possibly more) from the out-group. It is possible to adopt a moral position and critique some everyday peace activities as being dishonest and duplicitous. Yet this does not stand up to scrutiny. Given that there is mutuality involved in everyday peace, all sides are likely to be aware that a procedural insincerity is in operation to ease social relations. This social pact is unspoken, but nonetheless participants are aware of it. For Whitman (2000: 1290), it is 'socially sanctioned lying'. Bhabha (1985: 76) encapsulates the knowing complexity by referring to 'doubly inscribed figures face two ways without being two-faced'.

A very grave criticism is that everyday peace is highly context-dependent and thus there are limits on where it can operate. It requires individuals and groups of different identities to have contact with one another. While this may be the case in locations like Rwanda or Lebanon, in other locations, for example parts of Israel–Palestine and Georgia–Ossetia, there are physical barriers to intergroup interaction. Indeed, many states make it policy (under the guise of security) to minimize intergroup contact. Even in locations where intergroup contact is feasible, it may be socially proscribed. In the divided city of Mitrovica, for example, 'bridge watchers' – groups of men in leather jackets – stand on the Serb side of the bridge, monitoring who is crossing the bridge between the Serb and Albanian parts of the city. Ostensibly providing community protection (in the form of an early warning system in case of attack by Albanians), they are also capable of intimidating the in-group and making it clear that any mixing with 'the other' will not go unnoticed. They have also succeeded in deterring around 10,000 displaced Albanians from returning to the now Serb-controlled part of the city. In a very literal sense, it is what Leonard (2010: 335) terms 'border maintenance'. In many deeply divided societies, individuals and groups go out of their way to self-identify (through choice of dress, symbols, behaviour, etc.) as members of a particular group. A walk around Jerusalem, for example, illustrates the very obvious identity-markers that people

deploy. In one sense, this can be interpreted as a display of in-group loyalty or possibly hostility to the out-group. But it can also be interpreted as 'playing by the rules', of conforming to what Israelis and Arabs 'should look like' and thus ruling out ambiguity that might lead to uncertainty and tension. We must be careful not to slip into essentialist group stereotypes, yet the example again illustrates the sophisticated psychological calculations at work in many deeply divided contexts.

Although intergroup and interpersonal contact might be very restricted in some contexts, it may be the case that some contact is possible. This may be subterranean, restricted to certain groups (e.g. academics) or facilitated through the Internet. The key point is that borders can rarely be hermetically sealed, with the result that counter-hegemonic messaging can take place. This might be rudimentary and sporadic (e.g. balloons with messages tied to them and sent northwards from South Korea), but it does illustrate how human and bottom-up ingenuity can thwart official attempts to stem the exchange of information.

A final criticism of everyday peace is that it can be seen as part of the shallow policy agenda that has elevated 'resilience' to a cure-all status (OECD ECHO UNISDR, 2013). Hopefully the current discussion of everyday peace avoids the 'resilience trap'. The term 'resilience' has become trendy in academic and policy circles (Chandler, 2012). Behind much of this interest, however, lies an ideological worldview that connects with neoliberalism and communitarianism. Resilience, so this strain of thought runs, illustrates that communities under duress have superior coping mechanisms, and therefore actors in the global north can absolve themselves of responsibility to assist. Certainly, the everyday coping mechanisms outlined in this article point to how communities can be adaptable; often they have no choice and have to fall back on their own resources. But the notion of resilience, on its own, is limited and can restrain ambition towards more expansive goals. This unpacking of everyday peace is not intended to reinforce or legitimize notions of resilience that somehow romanticize local capacities. Moreover, everyday peace is not equivalent to the neorealist school of conflict management in which conflicts are deliberately kept 'cold' – where they are left unresolved but care is taken not to escalate them too much. In distinction from the neorealist stance, everyday peace allows for agency and innovation, and hence the possibility for conflict transformation.

A further discussion point arises from the literature: whether everyday peace can best be achieved in rural or urban settings. Certainly, much of the fieldwork on everyday civility examines rural communities in which inhabitants have to rely on one another, particularly for agricultural assistance (Harris, 1972; Henig, 2012: 11). Yet the urban studies literature is useful in illustrating how city-dwellers develop elaborate coping mechanisms to navigate their way through urban life. Many of these mechanisms reflect those identified in this article as 'everyday peace activities' and so suggest that everyday peace is not just a rural phenomenon. 'Pax urbana' relies heavily on indifference and nonchalance (Tonkiss, 2003: 301). 'What appears as dissociation is, in fact, the basic form of urban sociation, one that allows us to coexist with all these largely unknown others' (Tonkiss, 2003: 300).

Concluding discussion: Everyday peace and peace formation

In order for everyday peace to be taken seriously as a conceptual category and as a meaningful practice, it needs to be conceived of as more than an aggregation of coping mechanisms. It needs to be seen as a phenomenon that goes beyond social navigation (Vigh, 2009), resilience (Chandler, 2012) and civility (Bhabha, 1985). If it is only islands or islets of calm and civility, then it may not be worth unpacking in such detail. The contention of this article, however, is that these islands have the capacity to be something more; that they can constitute a more significant political phenomenon that holds out the possibility of making a qualitative impact on the nature of peace and conflict.

Everyday peace activities can connect with what Richmond (2013) calls 'peace formation'. In this understanding, everyday peace would step beyond the realm of coping and enter more positive territory. We can conceive of everyday peace operating along a continuum, with minimalist versions concerned with survival and coping at one end. At the other end would be more ambitious forms of everyday peace that can be termed everyday diplomacy to denote their more activist form of people-to-people practice. Modifying the term 'diplomacy' with 'everyday' is important in denoting that we are moving away from statist and elite notions of inter-institutional communication. Instead, under this conceptualization, everyday diplomacy has a more humane and bottom-up profile. It moves beyond eking out space for 'normal' existence in the midst of conflict to more ambitious territory, such as challenging the norm that conflict and division are the only modes of intergroup relations or bypassing approved methods of communication to establish new modes of contact. In this form, everyday diplomacy can be subversive in undercutting political elites and positing alternative sources of legitimacy.

Richmond defines peace formation as 'relationships and networked processes where indigenous or local agents of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, development, or in customary, religious, cultural, social, or local political or local government settings find ways of establishing peace processes and sustainable dynamics of peace' (Richmond, 2013: 276). Peace formation, in this understanding, usually occurs beyond the formalized and official ambit. It includes a series of 'micro-solidarities', as individuals and small groups engage in cooperation and accommodation. Some of these activities may be deliberately aimed at dealing with conflict and points of contention. Others might be directed at common problems (e.g. rural isolation or economic issues) that are not directly linked to the conflict (Richmond, 2013: 276). They may even have an element of resistance or subversion in them, as they may run counter to, or compete with, formalized, top-down and bureaucratic state-building and peacebuilding initiatives. Everyday peace or diplomacy could contribute to peace formation through the development of new modes of intergroup activity or stripping away at dominant narratives of conflict. In this way, it is 'diplomatic' in that it involves sensitive mediation between groups, even at the micro level of individuals and small groups. There is the possibility that the horizontalism of everyday diplomacy can break new ground. Depending on context, it may occur 'under the radar' of formal national and international actors. Institutions are often hamstrung by static ways of gathering information. If noticed, there is the possibility that formal peace agents (states, international organizations, international NGOs, etc.) may seek to co-opt and instrumentalize it. But it may be that everyday peace and diplomacy can send important signals to political elites. It may signal the unsustainability of narratives of 'the other' as untrustworthy, illegitimate or not worth talking to. It may serve as an exemplar to political elites, encouraging them to investigate new avenues and suggesting that their constituencies are prepared for change. Of course, this is dependent on context, with some contexts allowing only minimal deviation from in-group discipline. But, in some cases, on-the-ground activities, even if seemingly banal or inconsequential, can signal that a conflict is not destined to continue unchanged. In Northern Ireland, Lebanon and many other deeply divided societies, the everyday location of the workplace, and the ability of many workers to set aside sectarian difference, have undermined elite political narratives based on singular and exclusive identities.

Coping mechanisms may inhabit the world of reactions, resilience and conflict management. Everyday diplomacy has the possibility of connecting with the more positive realm of conflict transformation. Education and enhanced self-awareness play a key role in conflict transformation (Lederach, 1995). If engaged in a process of conflict transformation, individuals and groups gain a deeper understanding of themselves, the other, and the factors that maintain and construct conflict. Everyday peace, especially the banal intergroup interactions that may form part of it, can play an important role in breaking down barriers and the mystique of 'the other'. The everyday aspect of

these interactions is important: often familiar, repetitive and unthreatening. They allow individuals and group members to compose accurate and complex portraits of 'the other' that move beyond uni-dimensional caricatures.

In many accounts of conflict, peace activists and their agendas are somehow pigeonholed as being marginal, as are those who seek to continue with life as unaffected as possible by conflict. But if we take a wide view of peace, and see it as social harmony as well as direct attempts to deal with conflict and violence, then we can see that peace activity in many conflict-affected societies is more widespread than many conventional analyses would admit. Such peace activity is often subaltern, marginal and not particularly obvious. But, crucially, it is difficult to write it off as inconsequential. Such everyday peace and diplomacy activity can provide the social glue that prevents a society from tipping over the edge. It can help retain some semblance of civility, for example, in preventing the complete 'othering' of the out-group. This is important, as it helps introduce some rules, however informal, into warfare and situations of chronic tension.

Everyday peace has advantages that externally inspired and top-down peace initiatives may have difficulty in mobilizing. Primarily, everyday peace, given its bottom-up origins, may have a chance of legitimacy and authenticity that may be lacking from imported initiatives. Legitimacy and authenticity can only go so far, of course, especially if they have few material resources. Yet legitimacy and authenticity are often precisely what imported peace initiatives lack. Those involved in everyday peace and peace formation – community leaders, brave individuals and non-conformists – may be the very people who can be useful to international peace-support actors when they wish to intervene. Some might be co-opted into the formal peacebuilding realm. While others may choose to remain outside this realm, their contribution to the preservation and growth of bridging social capital is not to be underestimated and is often an invisible enabler of more formal attempts to build peace.

Note

1. A longer work by the author will draw directly on fieldwork interviews and observations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. For reasons of space, interview material is not directly cited here, although it has informed the conceptualization.

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