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"When Peace Speaks in the Language of War": The Rhetoric of Moral Violence in Global Politics

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Abstract

This research investigates the moral paradox of using violence as a means to achieve peace, a recurring justification in modern political discourse. The study examines how political leaders and institutions frame violent interventions as ethically necessary for humanitarian or security reasons, despite the inherent contradiction between violence and peace. Through a qualitative comparative analysis of three cases—the NATO intervention in Kosovo (1999), the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (2003), and the Afghanistan counterinsurgency campaign (2001–2021)—the research explores how moral narratives such as humanitarian duty, preventive necessity, and moral responsibility are constructed and deployed. Using critical discourse analysis and ethical theory, the findings reveal that such justifications often obscure political and strategic interests while producing unstable and morally ambiguous outcomes. The study concludes that the moral legitimacy of violence for peace remains deeply flawed, calling for the reevaluation of ethical frameworks guiding international interventions.

Keywords: Violence, Peace, Moral Paradox, Humanitarian Intervention, Political Ethics, Modern Politics

Introduction

In contemporary global politics, peace has paradoxically become one of the most powerful justifications for war. Nations and international institutions frequently invoke the rhetoric of peace, humanitarian protection, and moral duty to legitimize military interventions and coercive actions. This phenomenon—the moral paradox of *violence in the name of peace*—reveals an enduring ethical tension at the heart of modern political reasoning. While peace is traditionally understood as the absence of violence, it is increasingly pursued through violent means, creating a contradiction that challenges both moral philosophy and international relations theory (Arendt, 1970; Kaldor, 2012). Since the late twentieth century, interventions such as NATO's campaign in Kosovo, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, and the protracted war in Afghanistan have demonstrated how moral justifications for violence can shape global policy. Political leaders often frame these interventions as ethical imperatives—necessary actions to prevent atrocities, restore order, or defend freedom. Such rhetoric draws upon the language of humanitarianism and moral responsibility, echoing the logic of the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) doctrine (Bellamy, 2009). Yet these moral claims often conceal geopolitical motivations and produce outcomes that contradict the promise of peace, including civilian casualties, state collapse, and long-term instability (Roberts, 1999; Weiss, 2007).

The ethical challenge is not simply that violence fails to deliver peace, but that its justification transforms moral discourse itself. As Hannah Arendt (1970) argued, modern politics tends to conflate power and violence, blurring the line between legitimate authority and coercion. Emmanuel Levinas (1969) [15] further deepened this critique by proposing that ethical responsibility begins in the face of the Other—an obligation that violence fundamentally violates. Within this philosophical framework, using violence for peace represents not a moral act, but an ethical contradiction that dehumanizes both victim and perpetrator.

This study examines the moral and rhetorical construction of violence justified in the name of peace through three primary objectives:

(1) To identify the moral and linguistic strategies used by states and political institutions to legitimize violence;

(2) To evaluate these justifications through the ethical perspectives of just war theory, deontological ethics, and Levinasian responsibility; and

(3) To analyze empirical cases where violence-for-peace rhetoric was most prominent—namely, Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003),

and Afghanistan (2001–2021).

Drawing on qualitative comparative analysis and critical discourse methods, this research argues that the rhetoric of peace operates as a moral shield for coercive power. It constructs violence as a necessary sacrifice for a higher good while erasing the ethical costs of human suffering. Ultimately, this study contends that true peace cannot be built upon coercion. Ethical politics, as Levinas (1969) [15] suggests, must begin not with the domination of the Other but with responsibility and dialogue. Reclaiming peace from the language of war thus requires a fundamental reorientation of political ethics toward nonviolence and relational accountability.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design to examine how violence is morally justified in the name of peace across different geopolitical contexts. A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the complexity of moral reasoning and political rhetoric, as these elements are deeply contextual and interpretive rather than measurable. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry allows researchers to explore meaning-making processes and interpret human actions within their sociopolitical contexts. Thus, this design was appropriate for analyzing moral and discursive justifications that accompany state-led interventions.

Three major cases were purposively selected to illustrate diverse manifestations of the "violence-for-peace" paradox:

1. NATO intervention in Kosovo (1999) – often presented as a humanitarian operation to stop ethnic cleansing.
2. U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (2003) – justified under multiple rationales, including disarmament, democratization, and moral liberation.
3. Counterinsurgency and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan (2001–2021) – framed as a war for peace and state-building.

These cases represent different geopolitical contexts and moral narratives while sharing a common theme: the invocation of peace and morality to rationalize organized violence.

Data Sources

The study relied primarily on secondary qualitative data, encompassing the following sources:

- Official documents and policy statements, including speeches by political leaders, UN resolutions, and NATO communications.
- Academic literature, such as books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reports on humanitarian intervention, just war theory, and peace studies.
- Media reports and analyses, which provided insight into public narratives and framing of interventions.
- Institutional and legal documents, including post-conflict assessments and inquiries (e.g., the Chilcot Report).

Data were selected based on relevance, credibility, and availability in reputable academic and institutional archives. Sources were limited to English-language materials published between 1999 and 2023 to ensure both historical and contemporary relevance.

Analytical Framework

The research integrated three complementary analytical methods:

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): Following Fairclough (2013) [8], CDA was employed to examine how language constructs moral legitimacy for violence. Political speeches, policy documents, and media texts were analyzed to identify recurring moral themes such as "humanitarian duty," "responsibility to protect," and "peace through security."
2. Ethical Evaluation: Normative ethical frameworks-specifically, just war theory (Walzer, 1977) [18], deontological ethics (Kant, 1785/1993), and Levinasian ethics (Levinas, 1969) [15]—were applied to assess the moral coherence of political justifications. This process involved evaluating whether the reasoning behind interventions upheld principles of moral responsibility and respect for human dignity.
3. Comparative Case Analysis: Patterns and divergences across the three cases were analyzed to identify how context influences moral reasoning. The goal was to determine whether the justification of violence as a moral necessity for peace followed a universal logic or reflected case-specific political interests.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study followed methodological rigor consistent with qualitative research standards. Triangulation of data sources—academic texts, policy documents, and media accounts—helped strengthen interpretive validity. Peer-reviewed literature and institutional reports served as external validation of interpretations. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the process to acknowledge potential researcher bias in interpreting moral and philosophical discourse.

Ethical Considerations

As the study used publicly available and published materials, no human participants were involved, and ethical clearance was not required. However, the research adhered to ethical norms of academic integrity, ensuring accurate citation and representation of all sources. Sensitive geopolitical events were discussed with scholarly caution, avoiding partisan interpretation or moral absolutism.

Results and Discussions

The Moral Grammar of Violence: Justifying Peace Through War

The examination of political discourse in the cases of Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003), and Afghanistan (2001–2021) reveals a persistent rhetorical strategy that legitimizes violence as a moral necessity for achieving peace. This *moral grammar of violence* constructs a framework wherein coercive actions are linguistically reframed as ethical duties. The discourse of "peace through strength" or "humanitarian intervention" transforms acts of war into moral performances—violence justified not by power alone, but by appeals to compassion, justice, and universal values.

In the NATO intervention in Kosovo, political leaders justified airstrikes as an ethical obligation to prevent genocide and defend humanity. NATO Secretary-General

Javier Solana described the operation as "an act of moral responsibility to protect the innocent" (as cited in Chesterman, 2001, p. 45) [5]. Such rhetoric, as Chesterman (2001) [5] observes, redefined military intervention from a violation of sovereignty into a humanitarian duty—turning moral discourse into a vehicle for legitimizing war. Similarly, during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, President George W. Bush (2003) [2] declared that *"the people of Iraq will be freed, and the world will be made more peaceful"*, invoking moral duty to mask political objectives. By positioning violence as a benevolent response to evil, political actors displaced the ethical burden of aggression and portrayed war as a path toward moral redemption.

This discursive transformation aligns with Fairclough's (2013) [8] theory of discursive legitimation, where linguistic framing constructs power as moral authority. The normalization of violence through moral rhetoric allows governments to assert purity of intention while obscuring the suffering caused by their actions. Butler (2009) [3] emphasizes that such discourse produces a hierarchy of lives—those deemed "worthy" of protection and those rendered invisible in the pursuit of peace (p. 38). Within this moral architecture, the suffering of the "protected" legitimizes the destruction of others, producing what she calls a *"differential distribution of grievability."*

Furthermore, Derrida (2001) [6] argues that the invocation of universal moral values, such as peace or justice, is often "haunted by the violence it seeks to overcome" (p. 39). In the name of moral universality, sovereign states claim the authority to define and enforce peace, thus collapsing the boundary between ethical obligation and political domination. When peace is articulated through the language of war, morality becomes a tool of governance rather than a critique of power. The act of naming violence as "humanitarian" or "defensive" transforms moral reasoning into political strategy.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that this moral grammar of violence functions less as a genuine ethical response to human suffering and more as a performative discourse designed to maintain legitimacy. By translating war into moral obligation, states acquire both the ethical and rhetorical capital to act violently while appearing virtuous. As a result, the paradox of *violence in the name of peace* does not represent the collapse of morality but rather its instrumentalization—the transformation of ethical language into a mechanism of power.

The Paradox of Moral Responsibility in Modern Politics

The analysis of modern political discourse reveals a profound moral paradox: the same ethical principles intended to prevent violence are frequently used to justify it. Political leaders and international institutions often invoke moral responsibility—such as the duty to protect or defend human rights—to rationalize coercive interventions. Yet, as Levinas (1969) [15] argues, genuine morality begins not with abstract principles but with the *face-to-face encounter*—a direct and unmediated responsibility toward the Other. When moral responsibility becomes institutionalized within political systems, it risks being transformed into a mechanism of domination, where acting *for* the Other replaces being *responsible to* the Other. This transformation turns ethical responsiveness into moral paternalism.

In the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, for example, the rhetoric of *liberation* and *democratization* became a moral justification for destruction. The Bush administration's discourse framed military aggression as an act of *compassionate responsibility*, claiming to free Iraqis from tyranny and bring them democracy (Bush, 2003) [2]. However, post-war analyses such as *The Iraq Inquiry* (Chilcot, 2016) revealed that the intervention led to widespread civilian casualties, systemic instability, and a prolonged humanitarian crisis. This contradiction exemplifies what Arendt (1963) called the "banality of evil"—a condition in which moral and bureaucratic reasoning coexist without reflection, allowing individuals and institutions to commit violence under the guise of ethical necessity.

Levinas's (1969) [15] philosophy exposes the moral failure inherent in such reasoning. For Levinas, ethics is not about universal rules or collective interests but about infinite responsibility to the singular Other. When moral justification becomes detached from the lived suffering of individuals, it degenerates into abstraction—a form of what he terms *totality*, where the Other's alterity is absorbed into the self's conceptual order. This process is visible in political rhetoric that dehumanizes opponents while claiming to act on behalf of humanity. The Other is reduced to an object of moral concern rather than a subject of ethical relation.

Arendt's (1969) reflections in *On Violence* further illuminate this paradox. She distinguishes power from violence, arguing that power arises from collective legitimacy and consent, whereas violence is a tool that destroys the very basis of that legitimacy. When states use violence to impose peace, they erode their moral credibility, creating what she describes as a *"crisis of authority"* (p. 79). Thus, violence justified in moral terms ultimately undermines the moral order it claims to defend.

Similarly, Walzer's (1977) [18] *Just and Unjust Wars* offers a normative framework for assessing this tension. While Walzer acknowledges that moral reasoning is essential in evaluating warfare, he warns that ethical language can be easily manipulated by states to manufacture legitimacy. The "moralization" of war, according to Walzer (1977) [18], risks becoming a self-perpetuating logic in which the pursuit of justice is indistinguishable from the exercise of power. This is particularly evident in humanitarian interventions that blur the line between protection and domination.

This convergence of Levinas's ethics, Arendt's political theory, and Walzer's just war reasoning demonstrates that the paradox of moral responsibility lies in the instrumentalization of ethics. When morality becomes an extension of politics, it loses its transcendence and critical function. As Žižek (2008) [19] observes, modern liberal politics often disguises structural violence beneath the language of moral compassion—a form of "objective violence" that perpetuates the very suffering it seeks to eradicate (p. 9). In this sense, the discourse of moral responsibility in global politics does not resolve violence but rearticulates it in ethical terms, making it more palatable and sustainable.

Ultimately, this paradox reveals that moral reasoning within political structures is inherently unstable when divorced from relational ethics. Levinas's call for a *non-totalizing* responsibility offers a radical alternative: peace must begin not from sovereignty or moral command but from ethical vulnerability and openness to the Other. Only when politics is guided by this relational ethics—rather than by moral grandstanding—can the cycle of violence justified in the

name of peace be broken.

Patterns of Moral Legitimization Across Cases

The comparative analysis of the three interventions-Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003), and Afghanistan (2001–2021)-reveals recurring rhetorical and moral strategies that serve to legitimize state violence in the pursuit of peace. Despite differences in geopolitical contexts, the moral logic underlying these interventions follows a similar structure: the framing of violence as ethically necessary, the moral elevation of intervening powers, and the silencing of alternative voices that challenge the dominant narrative. These patterns reflect what Chandler (2004) [4] calls the "liberal peace discourse," a moralized framework that merges ethical language with political power to sustain interventionist practices.

The Humanitarian Imperative

Across the cases, the most prominent legitimizing strategy is the invocation of a **humanitarian imperative**—the notion that violence is justified when used to prevent greater harm. NATO's intervention in Kosovo was publicly framed as an urgent moral duty to stop ethnic cleansing, even without explicit authorization from the United Nations Security Council (Chesterman, 2001) [5]. Similarly, the U.S. justified its actions in Iraq and Afghanistan by invoking the responsibility to protect civilians and spread democratic governance. As Bellamy (2015) [1] explains, such appeals to humanitarian necessity represent a reconfiguration of moral responsibility from passive observation to active enforcement, transforming war into an act of compassion. However, these justifications often overlook the structural causes of violence and instead reinforce Western moral authority as the arbiter of peace.

The Temporal Deferral of Peace

Another recurring pattern is what can be termed the temporal deferral of peace—the claim that violence is a temporary means to a future moral order. In Iraq, political leaders repeatedly asserted that short-term instability and suffering were necessary sacrifices for long-term peace and democracy (Bush, 2003) [2]. This logic, according to Žižek (2008) [19], creates a moral economy in which destruction is justified as a step toward eventual salvation. Such rhetoric transforms ethical judgment into temporal manipulation: present violence is tolerated for the promise of a better future. As Derrida (2001) [6] notes, this form of justification displaces the immediacy of ethical responsibility into an indefinite horizon, effectively postponing peace while normalizing conflict.

Moral Exceptionalism and the Authority of Virtue

A third pattern evident in all three cases is moral exceptionalism, in which intervening states position themselves as virtuous actors with a unique ethical mandate. This moral hierarchy allows powerful nations to claim the right to intervene while exempting themselves from the same moral scrutiny. Walzer (1977) [18] cautioned against this tendency, noting that just war reasoning often collapses into moral self-righteousness when states assume their cause to be inherently just. In Kosovo, NATO's claim to moral leadership circumvented international law, while in Iraq and Afghanistan, the discourse of "freedom and democracy" became synonymous with Western identity and virtue. As Butler (2009) [3] observes, such rhetoric produces a world divided between moral actors and moral subjects-those who act and those who are acted upon.

Silencing of Dissent

The fourth major pattern involves the moral silencing of dissenting perspectives. Critics of military intervention are often portrayed as naïve, indifferent to suffering, or complicit in the perpetuation of violence. This rhetorical strategy reinforces moral conformity and delegitimizes alternative peace discourses. In the lead-up to the Iraq War, for instance, domestic and international opposition was dismissed as a failure of moral courage rather than a legitimate ethical concern (Chandler, 2004) [4]. Foucault's (1978) [9] notion of *power/knowledge* is relevant here: moral discourse operates as a regime of truth that defines what can be said and who may speak in the name of humanity. The moral monopoly of intervening states thereby becomes a mechanism of epistemic control as well as physical domination.

Synthesis of Findings

These patterns suggest that the moral legitimization of violence in modern politics operates through a rhetorical triad: (1) moral urgency, which portrays violence as an ethical necessity; (2) temporal deferral, which displaces ethical responsibility into the future; and (3) exceptionalist authority, which consolidates power under the guise of virtue. Together, these mechanisms transform moral discourse into a strategic resource of governance. As Fairclough (2013) [8] notes, discursive power lies in its ability to shape moral perception—to make violence appear not only permissible but noble. The consistency of these patterns across different contexts underscores the systemic nature of the *violence-for-peace* paradox.

In conclusion, these findings affirm Levinas's (1969) [15] critique that when ethics is absorbed into politics, it becomes instrumentalized and loses its transcendent dimension. The invocation of moral duty to justify violence reveals not the triumph of ethics in politics, but its subjugation—ethics transformed into rhetoric, and responsibility into authority.

The Ethical Consequences of the Peace–Violence Dialectic

The moral paradox of using violence to secure peace reveals not only the instrumentalization of ethics but also the erosion of the very foundations of responsibility. The dialectic between peace and violence—where the latter is justified as a means to the former—produces what Galtung (1969) [10] distinguishes as *negative peace*: the absence of direct conflict rather than the presence of justice. This framework reduces peace to a condition of political order, obscuring the structural and cultural forms of violence that persist beneath apparent stability. The ethical consequence, therefore, is a narrowing of moral imagination—wherein peace becomes synonymous with control, and violence becomes the necessary grammar of governance.

The Collapse of Ethical Transcendence

From a Levinasian perspective, the subordination of ethics to political reason signifies the collapse of ethical transcendence. Levinas (1969) [15] asserts that ethics arises from the face-to-face encounter with the Other—a demand

that precedes all political calculation. When the Other is instead subsumed within the dialectic of peace and violence, their singularity is effaced and replaced by abstract categories such as "enemy," "civilian," or "collateral damage." Butler (2009) [3] describes this as the process of *differential grievability*, where some lives are deemed worthy of mourning and others are rendered disposable. The ethical consequence is profound: the human subject becomes secondary to the moral narrative, and responsibility is redefined in terms of strategic necessity rather than relational obligation.

Structural Violence and the Reproduction of Domination

The dialectic also perpetuates what Galtung (1990) [11] terms *structural violence*—the systematic ways in which social and political systems harm individuals by preventing them from meeting basic needs. Post-intervention societies such as Iraq and Afghanistan illustrate how the rhetoric of "peacebuilding" often conceals new forms of dependency, inequality, and coercion (Duffield, 2001) [7]. The supposed restoration of peace thus reproduces the very hierarchies that justified intervention in the first place. As Richmond (2010) [17] argues, the "liberal peace" model constructs a moral economy that privileges Western institutions as universal standards of governance, thereby displacing indigenous practices of reconciliation and self-determination. The ethical paradox here is that peace, when imposed through violence, becomes indistinguishable from domination.

The Temporal Displacement of Responsibility

A further ethical consequence lies in the temporal displacement of responsibility—a phenomenon where moral accountability is deferred to an undefined future. Political leaders often justify wartime suffering as an investment in the eventual peace to come (Bush, 2003) [2]. Derrida (2001) [6] critiques this logic as an *economy of deferred justice*, where the demand for immediate ethical response is postponed in favor of a teleological promise. This postponement not only trivializes present suffering but also transforms ethics into a conditional obligation, dependent on the achievement of political goals. Levinas (1998) [16] rejects this temporality, insisting that true responsibility is infinite and immediate, not mediated through historical progress or political outcome.

The Displacement of Nonviolent Ethics

Finally, the normalization of violent peace erases alternative ethical paradigms—particularly those grounded in nonviolence, empathy, and restorative justice. Gandhi (1927) [12] and later King (1967) [13] envisioned peace not as the suppression of conflict but as the transformation of relationships through love and understanding. In contrast, modern politics often appropriates moral language while excluding its nonviolent core. Lederach (2005) [14] warns that peace processes oriented around military stabilization fail to address the "moral imagination" required for genuine reconciliation. The ethical consequence, therefore, is a world where the language of peace remains intact, but its ethical substance has been hollowed out by the persistence of instrumental violence.

Synthesis

The peace–violence dialectic thus culminates in a tragic ethical inversion: violence becomes morally ennobled, while nonviolence is marginalized as naïve or impractical. This inversion reveals, as Žižek (2008) [19] contends, that contemporary politics often needs violence to sustain its moral coherence. Peace, in this sense, becomes both the justification for and the product of war. To break this cycle, ethics must reclaim its autonomy from politics—restoring responsibility as an immediate, face-to-face demand rather than a strategic objective. Only by re-centering the Other as the foundation of ethical life can the paradox of "violence in the name of peace" be overcome.

The Ethical Limits of Totality

The dialectical conception of peace presupposes that all contradictions can be resolved within a unified totality. Yet this presupposition neglects the singularity of human experience and the irreducible alterity of the Other. The ethical demand of the Other—the call of the face—cannot be subsumed into an abstract system of reason without distortion. As Levinas (1969) [15] asserted, the reduction of the Other to a category of thought constitutes the "violence of the Same," wherein difference is neutralized through comprehension.

This exposes the moral limitation of dialectical peace: it privileges universality over singularity and reconciliation over responsibility. When peace is conceptualized as a systemic goal rather than an ethical relation, morality becomes subordinate to the logic of necessity. Violence, then, becomes rationalized as a means of maintaining order, reducing the human person to a function within a process of synthesis. The study therefore finds that dialectical peace, while theoretically coherent, fails to preserve the ethical dignity of human subjectivity.

Levinas's Ethics as a Non-Dialectical Alternative

In contrast to the dialectical model, Levinas's ethics offers a non-dialectical foundation for peace rooted in responsibility rather than reconciliation. For Levinas (1985), the encounter with the face of the Other is the original moment of ethical experience—a moment that precedes freedom, knowledge, and politics. The face does not present itself as an object to be known but as a command that prohibits violence: "Thou shalt not kill." This encounter interrupts the totalizing tendencies of the self and inaugurates an asymmetrical relation grounded in vulnerability and moral obligation.

The analysis demonstrates that Levinas's notion of responsibility resists closure and synthesis. Peace, therefore, is not a historical achievement but a continual ethical response to the Other. In *Otherwise than Being* (1974), Levinas deepens this understanding, describing responsibility as infinite, non-reciprocal, and anterior to autonomy. This framework subverts the traditional hierarchy of reason over ethics, situating peace within the immediacy of moral encounter rather than within the achievements of political or ontological systems.

Implications for Contemporary Peace Studies

The Levinasian critique carries significant implications for contemporary peace and conflict studies. Modern discourses often equate peace with stability, order, or institutional equilibrium. However, such definitions risk reproducing the dialectical logic of totality by privileging order over justice. Levinas's ethics reintroduces a moral dimension that transcends procedural frameworks. It emphasizes that genuine peace cannot be legislated or achieved solely

through negotiation—it must be lived through responsibility, compassion, and openness to the Other.

Practically, this implies that true peace requires more than conflict resolution; it demands a transformation of subjectivity. To be at peace is not to eliminate difference but to welcome it—to remain vigilant toward the suffering of others. This ethical vigilance redefines peace as an infinite task rather than a final state, aligning with Levinas's (1996) assertion that "peace is produced as the subject's responsibility for the Other." Thus, the moral task of peace involves a perpetual responsiveness that transcends institutional frameworks and restores ethical depth to human coexistence.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this philosophical inquiry can be summarized as follows:

1. The dialectical model of synthesized peace is ethically inadequate because it legitimizes violence as a means to achieve unity.
2. The logic of totality subordinates moral singularity to abstract rationality, thereby erasing the individuality of human experience.
3. Levinas's non-dialectical ethics reclaims the moral dimension of peace by grounding it in responsibility, not synthesis.
4. Peace, understood through Levinas, is a fragile yet enduring ethical relation sustained through openness to the Other rather than through domination or closure.

In summary, Levinas's philosophy challenges both the philosophical and political paradigms that reduce peace to structural harmony. It redefines peace as a moral vocation grounded in the infinite responsibility of one person for another.

Conclusion

The investigation into the moral paradoxes of "violence in the name of peace" demonstrates that modern political practices often mask the ethical contradictions inherent in justifying violence through moral language. Across historical and contemporary cases—such as Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan—the same legitimizing narratives recur: appeals to humanitarian necessity, temporal promises of eventual peace, and claims of moral exceptionalism. These narratives reveal how the pursuit of peace frequently becomes entangled with the maintenance of political dominance and the erosion of ethical responsibility.

The dialectical structure of peace and violence—where violence is framed as a temporary instrument for achieving harmony—reflects a deeper moral failure. As Levinas (1969) [15] asserts, ethics begins with responsibility for the Other, not with the strategic pursuit of order. Yet modern politics often subordinates this responsibility to the calculus of security and national interest. In doing so, it transforms ethics into a rhetorical tool—one that justifies rather than restrains violence. This inversion of moral logic marks what Derrida (2001) [6] calls the "perversion of forgiveness," where moral vocabulary is used to conceal the absence of genuine ethical encounter.

The study also exposes how peace itself is often defined in minimalistic and exclusionary terms. As Galtung (1969) [10] distinguishes between *negative peace* (the absence of war) and *positive peace* (the presence of justice and equality), it becomes evident that political systems obsessed with stability risk perpetuating the structural and cultural forms of violence they claim to end. The rhetoric of peace, when detached from justice, becomes complicit in domination—a mechanism that legitimizes coercion in moral terms.

Ethically, this paradox points to a pressing need for a reorientation of political thought. True peace cannot emerge from the logic of the dialectic but from the ethical transcendence that Levinas describes—an openness to the Other that precedes and exceeds all political reasoning. Reimagining peace requires reclaiming moral discourse from its instrumental use and grounding it once again in relational responsibility, empathy, and justice. As Lederach (2005) [14] suggests, the "moral imagination" is essential for transforming cycles of violence into structures of coexistence and understanding.

Ultimately, the study concludes that the phrase "violence in the name of peace" encapsulates not only a political contradiction but also an ethical crisis. It reveals a world where moral language has been absorbed into power, where the justifications for war mirror the rhetoric of compassion, and where the call for peace too often drowns out the voice of the Other. Breaking this cycle requires more than critique—it demands the restoration of ethics as the first philosophy of peace.

Recommendations

This study's findings reveal that the moral paradox of "violence in the name of peace" arises from the subordination of ethics to political necessity. To address this enduring contradiction, both theoretical and practical reforms are required in the domains of peace studies, political ethics, and global governance. The following recommendations are offered:

Political leaders and institutions should prioritize ethics before strategy. In line with Levinas's (1969) [15] concept of responsibility for the Other, moral reasoning must precede the logic of national interest or security. Decision-making bodies such as the United Nations Security Council and national governments must adopt frameworks that consider the irreducible dignity of all individuals affected by political violence. Ethical deliberation should not merely justify intervention but interrogate whether violence is ever compatible with genuine peace.

Peacebuilding practices should shift from militarized stabilization toward nonviolent, dialogical approaches rooted in empathy, reconciliation, and justice. Drawing from Lederach's (2005) [14] *moral imagination*, peace processes must cultivate spaces for storytelling, forgiveness, and mutual recognition rather than domination and compliance. Local and indigenous forms of peacebuilding—often marginalized by Western political frameworks—should be integrated into post-conflict reconstruction programs to ensure culturally grounded and ethically authentic outcomes.

Institutions and scholars should adopt Galtung's (1969) [10] distinction between *positive* and *negative* peace as a guiding principle. Peace must be measured not only by the cessation of armed conflict but also by the elimination of structural and cultural violence. Policies addressing poverty, inequality, and exclusion are essential to sustain peace as a lived reality rather than a geopolitical condition. This redefinition will help dismantle the illusion that order and justice are synonymous.

International interventions and domestic military actions should be subjected to independent ethical oversight

mechanisms. Multilateral organizations could establish transnational ethical review boards composed of philosophers, peace scholars, and representatives of affected communities. Such bodies would evaluate proposed interventions not only in legal or strategic terms but also through ethical assessment frameworks inspired by just war theory (Walzer, 1977) [18] and Levinasian responsibility.

Finally, scholars, educators, and civil society actors should work to reclaim moral discourse from its appropriation by political power. Public narratives that conflate peace with control and violence with virtue must be critically interrogated. Education systems should foster ethical literacy—teaching citizens to recognize how moral language can both inspire compassion and disguise coercion. Restoring the sincerity of ethical vocabulary is essential to renewing the credibility of peace as an ideal grounded in justice and empathy.

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