

# Constructivist Pragmatism and Academic Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution

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## Introduction

Academic Diplomacy, a term coined by Peter Wallensteen, means activity where international experts, rather than other states, try to broker peace as moderators, mediators or facilitators, by using means and methods that are advised by the theory of conflict resolution [1]. Such an approach has been associated with positivist approaches of peace research and it has aimed at creating exogenous conditions that science has proven as useful for peace, and removing exogenous conditions that analysis has associated with the onset or continuation of violence. Peace diplomacy by scholars is therefore based on knowledge rather than power, but it uses only knowledge that is practical; knowledge that puts the academic diplomat on top of things in conflict resolution. Thus the value of knowledge in academic diplomacy is being judged by pragmatist criteria.

This paper aims at reviewing some approaches of peace research by looking at their practical value in academic diplomacy. Instead of comparing scientific premises of different approaches to some criteria of good science that these approaches themselves have arrived at, I will look at how different scholarly understandings work in practical academic diplomacy for the prevention of conflicts and violence. Since academic diplomacy is normally associated with very positivistic “social engineering” of peace, I will in this paper, look at how post-positivist approaches could be useful for academic diplomacy and how post-positivist approaches could reveal problems of traditional peace research approaches in the social engineering of peace. My main focus is in a selection of empiricist premises that dominate mainstream peace research (and classical pragmatism), whose limitations I criticize by showing how a selection of post-positivist approaches manage to do more for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Thus the aim of the paper is not just to criticize some approaches of peace research by using pragmatist criteria, but also to criticize some of the empiricist assumptions in the classical version of pragmatism. For the sake of conceptual clarity I will therefore name the criteria I am using for the critique of positivist peace research “neo-pragmatism”.

The main focus of my pragmatist critique is policy-oriented, positivistic mainstream peace research. Policy-oriented social science normally operates on the basis of very classical pragmatist, empiricist premises. Whatever has been learned in the philosophy of social science after Peirce, James and Dewey has not been considered useful in pragmatic peace research. Policy-oriented peace research that aims at building a linkage between peace research and peace practice often assumes a Humean concept of causality. From that premise it then tries to find exogenous, objective, material and measurable conditions that cause peace. Once such conditions have been identified, practitioners will then contribute to peace by creating conditions that cause peace and by removing conditions that cause war. The simplicity of such social engineering is challenged in by this paper, which basically concludes that ontologies that take the social construction of social structures of peace and war seriously are not just intellectually intriguing, but also pragmatic for peace practitioners.

This paper is essentially a product of experience of academic diplomacy and capacity-building in conflict management in West

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Kalimantan. This activity aimed at contributing to peace but it also contributed to the “diagnosis of the conflict” in West Kalimantan. At the same time, the knowledge of the path to conflict of the peace practitioners in West Kalimantan was constantly tested by practice; whenever blocking some paths to conflicts failed to reduce violence, the diagnosis had to be revised.

What the practice taught to research was not what was expected, i.e. generalizations on exogenous conditions of peace. Instead, it taught about the opportunities to denaturalize and criticize social constructs that were necessary for the legitimation of violence, opportunities to challenge and deconstruct them and to offer alternative constructs that constituted less violent realities. In short practice of academic diplomacy in West Kalimantan taught about the pragmatism of critical and constructivist peace research.

## Academic Diplomacy as Social Engineering of Peace

Classical pragmatism and traditional peace research and academic diplomacy are all committed to empiricism, which does not distinguish between natural and social sciences. Instead empiricism derives the methods and ontologies of social science from natural science. For Dewey, “Knowing is a way of employing empirical occurrences with respect to increasing power to direct the consequences which flow from things, the application of the conclusions must be made to philosophy itself.” [4] This is why academic diplomacy advised by classical pragmatist peace research is like social engineering of peace. When there is a problem with a physical machine, scientists of technology are needed to investigate the causes of the problem and create prescriptions on how to remove these causal conditions. Similarly classical pragmatist peace research engineers problems of conflict and peacemakers follow the prescriptions of peace researchers. Thus, according to Dewey, social engineering is the function of pragmatist social sciences [3].

The way in which social engineering has traditionally studied occurrences to increase the power of the ones, who know about these occurrences, is related to causality. If we know what conditions or events cause conflict, we can engineer peace by systematically avoiding

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those conditions and events. Despite the problems later discovered in this kind of thinking, peace research that has followed the maxims of social engineering have managed to create a lot of knowledge useful for peace-makers.

Any discussion with practical peace-makers, academic diplomats, about the use of social sciences reveal that most mediators and facilitators of peace processes think about knowledge on peace and war within an intellectual framing of social engineering. They think of conditions that could help create peace and conditions and situations that could be prevented in order to prevent war or escalation of violence. This is why it is useful to take the use of peace research as social engineering very seriously. Social engineering of peace can save, and, indeed, has saved many lives, and thus regardless of problems related to it, it can be used in a valuable manner.

Furthermore, social engineering frame of peace research needs to be taken seriously also because of the problems involved in it. If most academic diplomats of peace and security think of knowledge in their practice of social engineering of peace, pragmatist peace research must also take this framing seriously as something that needs to be criticized and developed further, as the flaws of the social engineering frame also kill people in wars.

Social engineering of peace in the main peace research journals (*Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution and International Security*) tends to recognize the complexity of causal relations in peace and conflict situations. Instead of looking at single deterministic independent variables that could explain peace and war in their entirety, most scholars follow long and complex causal chains and acknowledge the probabilistic (yet probabilistically deterministic) nature of causality. Instead of claiming that poverty causes war, scholars of relative deprivation, for example, claim that economic decline and ethnic diversity together with ethnic functionalization of the economy cause *relative deprivation* which, again, increases the risk (causes in a probabilistic sense) of conflict [5,6].

The frame of social engineering of peace by using causal models has resulted in several useful theories. While causal modeling simulates causal mechanisms in natural sciences, in the social engineering of peace, they have often sought explanations for causal relationship from a frame that seems to assume purposive action and certain voluntarism. War causes have been explained by conditions that

1. Make existing peace frustrating or intolerable (see for example, theories of relative deprivation; [5,6],
2. Make violence attractive (see for example, theories of gainful violence, [7,8]
3. Create opportunities for gainful violence (see for example theories of resource mobilization, [9] or
4. Block alternative ways of political influence and thereby force people to violence [10].

Theories do not tend to explain the contradiction between voluntarism and causation, as the former suggests that people can decide what they want while the other suggests that at least in a probabilistic manner human action is determined by some conditions. Wendt suggests that these theories assume an objective set of preferences with a given logic of rationality that determine human action. If then conditions are changed in a way that increase

the utility of violence, the likelihood of violence increases. In such a framing human's might be purposive but not free, as their purpose is to maximize utility in a set of preferences that are given to them [11].

### **The Problem of Determinism in Social Engineering of Peace: Morality and Norms**

One of the main problems with peace research that imitates the criteria of science of natural science, by using the laws that research defines for phenomena for the engineering of societies is the problem of determinism. Even if peace research only produces conclusions on probabilistic causality such models too are deterministic. They claim to explain only the variation it has managed to cover by deterministic rules. The unexplained part of conflict reality could be ruled by free will, but that is not included in the covering rule-models. Furthermore, in line with models of natural science empiricist peace research thrives to models that explain maximum share of variation and thus its optimum could be seen as a model that is fully deterministic.

The problem with such deterministic models is that they leave out human purposiveness, the question of the "will", and the related issues of norms, morality, multiplicity of potentials for the development of the society existent in each social situation etc.. This problem boils down to the simple fact that while water does not consider boiling in 100 degrees Celsius, human behavior is fundamentally different, as people do consider their actions. Water cannot be held morally accountable for its boiling, while a human being is always morally accountable for her/his actions, simply because she/he has had the opportunity to decide whether or not to do what she/he does, while water has no choice. Responsibility for actions that we take out of a degree of free will has been the foundation of our understanding of morality. At least Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, James Bentham, Rousseau, Mills, John Locke, and Hayek have made this very explicit in their analysis of ethics. In addition to theories of ethics also our common sense thinking links morality with free will. Studies show that a majority of people associate these two and would not understand morality without at least some sense of freedom of the will. Thus if we do not incorporate some degree of freedom to our study of peace and war, we cannot incorporate norms and morality in our analysis either.

In West Kalimantan determinist truth regimes were used to wiggle out from moral accountability. In some cases moral accountability was removed by using popular version of some of the classical positivist peace research explanations of conflict, such as relative deprivation. If relative deprivation is a condition that causes violence like temperature causes water to boil, perpetrators of violence would have no more moral accountability for their violence than water has for its boiling. A youth leader in TanjungKeracut village explained how the arrogant behavior of youth of the migrant Madurese community was like the pressure on a spring (representing Malay patience). It could be pressed to a certain extent, but after that the spring was bound to bounce back [12]. According to the village head of the same village, Malay mobs burned the houses of the Madurese only to chase them away in order to stop killings by the Madurese. According to both, the escalation from burning houses to mass killings was outside anyone's control: "It was much like an accident." [13].

Similarly, the discourse of indigenous rights created a rationale for another indigenous community, the Dayaks, to wiggle out from the moral condemnation of their violence against the Madurese community. According to several activists of indigenous rights, the

marginalization of the indigenous Dayak community, the threat of modernity to their way of life and the role of the Madurese migrants who were ignorant and insensitive about these grievances created a situation of deprivation that somehow automatically caused violence [14]. When discussing about incidents of violence against the Madurese migrants many Dayaks and Malays, including several Malay and Dayak scholars insisted on focusing on the “root causes” of violence, namely the conditions that Madurese appearance to West Kalimantan created to the local communities. This way deterministic modeling and copying the types of scientific ways of building explanations in the study of social structures of conflict not only miss the opportunities norms and moral accountability could offer for peace-making, it also offers truth regimes that help perpetrators of violence escape moral accountability.

### **The Problem of Determinism in Academic Diplomacy: Association of Violence to the Characteristics of The Enemy**

When determinism affects one's own identity it takes away morality, but when deterministic “knowledge” affects one's perception of the enemy it removes resolution of conflicts from our menu of options. If a conflicting party has a deterministic view of his/her enemy, it is the characteristics of the enemy that cause their violent preferences (instinctivism) or it is the conditions to which the given preferences of the enemy mechanistically reacts to (environmentism), not their will that could be reconciled with the will of conflicting party's own side. If preferences are determined there is no room for a voluntary alteration of one's will and preferences and thus negotiation cannot achieve much. Logically this leads to a conclusion that violence springs from the enemy and thus the enemy has to be stopped (enemy's ability to act in accordance to its preferences have to be taken away) or liquidated as a measure to prevent violence: villages have to be destroyed and people in them have to be killed in order to secure them as a US Major said in a news briefing in defense of a military operation in a Vietnamese village.

In West Kalimantan ethnicity was assumed to carry objective characteristics. Malays were lazy, Dayaks stupid and the Madurese violent. As in many conflicts between “migrants” and “locals”, in West Kalimantan, the conflict activities of the migrant population were treated as being caused by the vicious character of the that population. The Madurese had violent preferences due to their genetic make-up [14, 15]. Later the explanation changed and the same people interviewed earlier explained that it was just the Madurese culture that was incompatible with the local Dayak and Malay cultures: According to the head of the Sambas regency, Ir. H. Burhanuddin A. Rasyid “The cultural patterns of the Madurese are not compatible with those of the local population. They tend to have difficulty in assimilating to the local tradition. This is what is at the root of the conflict here.” [16]. According to a Dayak community leader, BonggasBernandinus, the Madurese were unable to assimilate and this created a friction that inevitably lead to conflict [17]. The conclusion of was the same regardless of whether the regime of truth emphasized determinism of race or a culture: the Madurese had to be expelled from the district and those who refused to leave had to be killed.

While the treatment of conflicts as inconsistencies of purposes allows conflict scholars to focus on how best these purposes could be reconciled, explanations that emulate explanations in physics or chemistry – explanations that do not see the fundamental difference between free purposive actors and determined entities – do not only

fail to identify opportunities for peace-making, but they also contribute to truth regimes that entail legitimacy for violence. While deterministic peace research is obviously more nuanced and does not ignore purposes, its founding philosophy and the scientific ethos is incompatible with modeling that starts from the concept of conflicting free wills.

Finally, perceiving one's opponent's belief of oneself as determined by material realities gives one an opportunity to exploit this naive belief in one's inability for moral action. If we believe in a materially determined mechanism of relative deprivation our opponent can create the conditions of such deprivation to squeeze concessions from us. The construction of indigenous rights created a perception of relative deprivation and by acting as if that condition had forced people to violence, some Dayak activists managed to gain concessions from other communities. In Sanggau, a group of Dayaks decided that it was unacceptable for a regency with a Dayak majority to have a regent from any other community, and so to prevent this from happening a spontaneous reaction to prevent other communities from voting by physically preventing their access to the ballot boxes happened just like an accident [18].

While it is natural that positivistic peace research does not create these deterministic misunderstandings, and that theories like the one on relative deprivation, were abused in West Kalimantan rather than used in a scientifically acceptable manner. However, it is still the rejection of the free purposiveness of humans that contributes to all these destructive truth regimes, and this rejection is typical for thinking that treats social science as natural science. If we recognize the possibility of alternative futures in each social setting – the fact that purposive actors are able to move to several directions from one basic setting – this does not only mean a different way of modeling conflicts. It also means that evidence of the actualized futures does not prove the impossibility of the not actualized futures [19]. This shakes the fundamentals of empiricist peace research and challenges the empiricist premises of the classical version of pragmatism.

### **The Problem of Exogenous Causal Conditions**

Mainstream peace research finds its relevance for peace practitioners in its ability to identify the objective exogenous conditions that cause war and peace. The remaining task for peace practitioners is then simply to remove the conditions peace researchers have found causally associated with conflicts, conflict escalation or difficulties in conflict termination. There is no doubt that causal models that peace research has produced have actually been very useful in practical conflict prevention. Causality exists side by side with purposive action and interacts with it.

It is also understandable that causal analysis tries to avoid treating “illusions of causality” between conceptually/analytically linked phenomena as real. Being bachelor does not genuinely cause people not being married, as the two are analytically linked rather than one causing the other. It is thus understandable that peace science makes the distinction between analytical and synchronic associations and sets strict criteria for causal analysis against analytically associated dependent and independent variables. Yet this practice has thrown out some of the crucial tools from the toolbox of peace practitioners. What if social structures that exist only in our consciousness have elements that constitute each other, and thus have causal powers by being analytically linked?

In West Kalimantan it was clear that there was a dialectical, mutually constituting relationship between aggressive policies and identities of fighters or masculine men. People did fight because they felt it was in their identity, and yet, their identity was that of a fighter simply because they did fight. Fighting is what defines a fighter, and fighting is what a fighter does. Even if they could stop fighting and thus cease being fighters, or they could stop identifying themselves as fighters and then stop fighting, it was clear that this analytical association between identity and action was something that needed to be tackled as a dialectical relationship that in reality affected people involved in the war.

In West Kalimantan the concept of masculinity was defined in a way that included some violent characterizations. In some Dayak subtribes oral tradition claims that men had to have committed a killing of another man before they could ask the father of the woman they loved for the permission of marriage [14]. This construct of masculinity necessarily had causal effects on conflict behavior. The fact that language that structured thinking of Dayak men was born before each of the individuals were born, meant that the existing violent concept of masculinity was taken as something natural, and not as a social construct that people could also transform [20,21]. Masculine identity naturalized their aggressive behavior simply because if masculinity was violence and they were men, then they were also violent, and since they were violent, they also made violent acts.

The fact that Humean causal tradition dominates in peace research obscures the opportunities peace makers have in inventing non-violent ways of expressing an identity or ways of denaturalizing and deconstructing/transforming identities that are harmful for peace. In West Kalimantan it would probably be possible to study the correlative relationship between the number of conflict fatalities in villages and whether or not these villages had a volleyball field in the middle of the village. It seemed clear that villages that had a volleyball field had been much less violent. Yet it would be absurd to claim that volleyball and killing have any exogenous causal relationships. Yet a volleyball field materially facilitated an alternative expression of masculinity, which then reduced the need to express one's masculinity in a violent manner [21-23]. In a culture where masculinity is defined through violence, symbolic battle on a volleyball field offers ways of enacting masculinity in a peaceful manner. Yet since causal powers affect peacefulness through mutual constitution of identity and action, such measures of pacification are rarely used by peace practitioners that are advised by mainstream peace research.

Even less have traditionalist peace-makers explored opportunities of transformation of violent social constructs. In modern societies men no longer need to protect their families with violence, but in a modern capitalist society education protects families much more effectively than violence. This material reality makes the identitive association between masculinity and violence irrational. Thus violent masculinities could be possible to link to their ancient material foundation and thereby criticize their ancient character. Referring to current material realities it would also be possible to help the construction of peaceful, capitalist masculinities [24,25].

The condition of exogenousness in mainstream causal peace research thus prevents peace practitioners from focusing on identities that facilitate violent action. To some extent it also prevents attention

to norms and the "realm of appropriateness" [11]. It would not be in accordance with the Hume criteria of causality to claim that a certain norm prevents violent action. The existence of a norm requires certain type of behavior-without any respect for the normative principle in practical action it would be difficult to claim the existence of a norm in a given society. Thus associating norms causally with non-violent behavior would not be possible as norms and actions tend to be analytically/conceptually partly associated [26]. The valuation of development, for example, in some parts of West Kalimantan, and the norm prescribing people to focus on activities that promote economic development already conceptually rule out destructive actions, such as violent conflict behavior. Yet it could be that the best way of promoting long term peace in West Kalimantan would be to support the emergence and spread of the "norm of developmentalism" in the province.

### **The Problem of Meanings and Social Constructs in Academic Diplomacy**

The problem of limiting research to exogenous relationship between independent and dependent variables already points to the direction of realities that exist only in meanings and the consciousness of people and are reproduced in language and meaningful social practices. Such realities cannot be studied by using scientific methods of natural sciences. Water does not attach meanings to its boiling while what is crucial to understand in human activity are the meanings people attach to their action. If a violent act is revenge, a murder, an act of aggression or law enforcement makes a great deal of difference even though they are empirically observed the very same act of violence.

According to Blumer, and his symbolic interactionism, we can understand peoples' actions only if we understand the meanings they give to their actions and if we understand what the actors themselves believe about their world [27]. The aim of social science, for symbolic interactionists, is therefore to reconstruct the reality actors that social scientists study perceive. The worst mistake a social scientist can do, according to Blumer, is to replace the meaning of the actor with the meaning the situation and the acts have for the scholar. If we think of traditional peace research let alone security studies, we can easily realize that scholarly meanings of key elements of peace and war, the concept of security, concepts of offense and defense, etc. are unproblematically assumed as given and not something conflicting parties could define themselves. Such view fails to understand the reasons of conflict behavior from the point of view of the one that conducts such behavior. In order to achieve this understanding specialists of conflict problems should not assume a given conflict setting, but instead, they need to analyze the constructions of the conflict, by the conflicting parties and meanings that exist in language and existing social practices.

### **Deconstructing harmful constructs**

But what is important, too, is not just how the conflict setting is constructed, but also how it could be deconstructed and reconstructed. The key is not just the symbol, but also the symboling, the manipulation of symbols by active persons, defining and redefining their social situations [28]. This is one of the basic ideas of critical discourse analysis – critical discourse analysis is not only the analysis of existing interpretations, but also analysis of the production of reality which is performed by discourse [29].

Empiricist analysis of violent acts can observe a phase in which several young men from the migrant Madurese community committed violent crimes especially in connection with economic activities and in the defense of their right to see girls from the two local communities.

In the next phase an empiricist could see a counter-reaction first in Bengkayang in 1996-7 by a large segment of the Dayak community and then in Sambas by an even broader segment of Malay men. A strict scientist cannot even observe this as the existence of a Dayak or Malay communities, the interpretation of an action as “counter-reaction”, as well as the conventions that constitute the regions are all meanings and constructs that exist beyond direct observation. This counter-reaction consisted of demands and eventually terror to push Madurese people out of the two districts, and as this did not manage, a full-scale cannibalistic riot that killed thousands of Madurese men, women and children and effectively threw out the Madurese community from the areas where districts of Bengkayang and Sambas currently exist.

What could not be explained by simply observing the events was the way in which ordinary Madurese families with clear dispositions against violence and crime could sympathize with the Madurese criminal violence. Often even after murders ordinary Madurese families were willing to hide the perpetrators [30]. However, all this becomes much more understandable if one realizes how law and legality was interpreted in districts of Bengkayang and Sambas as extensions of local customary practices of the Malay and Dayak communities. “Criminal offenses” and the insistence of the right to date Dayak girls were ways to articulate an argument of common, equal Indonesianness of the communities in West Kalimantan, and to do away the reality of customary order in Bengkayang and Sambas. Only this way it becomes possible to understand the ethnic loyalty between criminal and law obedient Madurese individuals. “Criminals” in this context of meanings were defending equality of those people who provided “criminals” places to hide.

Furthermore the violent demand by the “local” communities to the Madurese either to assimilate or to leave articulated an argument in favor of the local customs and constructed the agency of “locals” and “visitors”, which then violence enforced upon the Madurese too (who no longer could live as if it did not exist). Violence was not a reaction to exogenous conditions, but an argument and a way of constructing social realities of agency in the region. This becomes clear in the reaction of the Madurese who before the conflicts felt they belonged to the place, but who after the conflict realized how strange the place was to them [31]. Even for some members of the indigenous communities the conflict “revealed” that the Madurese were guests. According to a Malay village leader in Sambas, “the Madurese were considered almost like local before the conflict (but no longer during and after it)” [13].

It is not possible or necessary for the argument in this paper to prove the accuracy of the reconstruction of the meanings that the conflicting parties gave to their actions and the contexts surrounding them. Yet, it is clear that these meanings could have been attached to the situation and if so, understanding them would have been crucial for the understanding or preventing the conflict. Alleviating grievances or addressing material disagreements would not have settled the conflict unless one addressed the social situation that was created by the meanings given by the conflicting parties to their actions and to the conflict. Realities were not there to be observed,

but they only existed in the minds of the conflicting parties, and they were not real without them being considered real. Thus focusing on material, objective realities only, leaves part of the crucially important conflict realities outside the focus.

The need to focus on socially constructed realities does not give a researcher the opportunity to reinterpret meanings as they please: social realities are socially, not individually constructed. Yet, the relationship between knowledge in social situations like peace and war is different than it is in natural sciences. A common knowledge about Dayakness does create Dayakness, while knowledge about the fact that water boils at 100 degrees Celsius has nothing to do with the process of boiling. This means for pragmatism that knowledge is no longer just an adaptation strategy to the external reality (as it used to be for classical pragmatists). Instead, knowledge is also a strategy of creating the external reality (constructivist pragmatism). Whether Dayaks are a political agent (or left-handed people, for that matter) should be judged against practical, ethical and political considerations. The question for research is still what should we consider as real and live as if it was real [32], but in the analysis of social structures we should remember that this is because knowledge makes them real. With regards to peace research this means that without sensitivity towards socially constructed social structures scientific peace research risks throwing out many tools from its toolbox of peace making.

In West Kalimantan the fact that violence was used as a way of articulating equal rights, or special rights of “local” communities leads peace practitioners to the search of alternative ways of articulating arguments about rights. In Indonesia addressing conflicting issues is rare and negatively sanctioned by the culture. Yet, arguing verbally something that has before been articulated only with demonstrative action is more efficient. Words are often more accurate expressions of meanings than actions. In West Kalimantan ethnic leaders found the West Kalimantan Ethnic Communication Forum, which was born out of a university class on conflict resolution targeted for these conflicting ethnic leaders, an efficient alternative to the articulation of their factual and normative construction of their conflict situation. The fact that both university education and the facilitation of the forum by the vice president of Indonesia boosted their prestige, made them eager to endorse the forum and participate in it constructively. The fact that ethnic agency in West Kalimantan was hierarchically constructed and that the ethnic leaders were undisputed in their leadership contributed to the discipline of ethnic action.

When ethnic leaders issued a statement banning ethnic mobilization in local and national parliamentary elections (Decision of the West Kalimantan Ethnic Communication Forum in June 2009), this made it risky and potentially treacherous for politicians to mobilize ethnic mobs in their support. Thus, elections after 2009 Pontianak Declaration on elections by the ethnic leaders became less violent and less marred with violent ethnic mobilization. The speech act of this declaration deconstructed ethnic agency in political campaigns and thus changed the reality of political competitions without in any way changing any exogenous, material, measurable conditions that could be considered causes of conflict.

With widely publicized declarations ethnic leaders also deconstructed ethnic agency in inter-ethnic homicides—an event category that previously had sparked most ethnic riots. Whenever there was a murder or a rape by a person from another ethnic community, community leaders from the perpetrators and the victims community jointly declared in the local radio and in the local

radio and in the local newspaper their condemnation of the individual action. The leader of the perpetrator's community forbade any assistance in the hiding of the perpetrator individual by members of his community, while the victim's community leader declared his acceptance of the fact that the murder was a criminal rather than an ethnic event between individuals rather than representatives of their communities. Referring to this he banned any community revenge and together with the perpetrator's community they appealed to their communities for working with the police in order to catch the perpetrator. The police participated in the meeting of the communication forum that issues this protocol for inter-ethnic violent criminal events and issued a liaison official in the police for cooperation with the community leaders in these cases. Without changing any of the exogenous conditions community leaders managed to create a procedure that could frame the reality in cases of inter-ethnic violent crimes [24]. Several of such incidents and declarations took place at least in Bengkayang, and there speech acts by community leaders indeed did make these incidents individual rather than ethnic [33].

Several other well-publicized declarations of the West Kalimantan Ethnic Communication Forum that were planned in the course of peace research training of the community leaders acted as speech acts creating realities that had obvious causal powers in the behavior of members of the ethnic communities. Despite of not being measures to counter exogenous causes of conflict they nevertheless constituted realities that were positive for peace [34-36]. Declarations did not cause peaceful realities as consequences but instead, peaceful social realities were constituted in speech. Thus the mechanism of change was unimaginable for the traditional policy-oriented, pragmatist peace research, and therefore such peace research would not have managed to design such a strategy for peace. Understanding of the conflict situation had to be liberated first from the constraints of empiricist determinism [37,38]. Then the critical idea of denaturalization was needed for the opening of the opportunities of reframing. Symbolic interactionism was needed for the understanding of the meanings actors in conflict gave to their actions and the context of their action. Constructivism was needed for the designing of the possible alternative non-violent social structures and post-structuralist theory of speech acts was needed to design speech acts that constituted the necessary non-violent alternative futures. Post-positivist theories that are often considered intellectually intriguing, but hopelessly philosophical and impractical were clearly needed for pragmatic understandings that enabled successful peace action in West Kalimantan.

## Conclusion

This paper has intended to deliver an argument in favor of some post-positivist approaches in peace research and academic diplomacy for peace. Instead of making these arguments by referring to criteria of scholarship that scholarship itself set for itself, the intention here is to escape the tautologies of the philosophy of social sciences by referring to the praxis in support of theoretical arguments. Instead of demanding that scholarship has to be scientific in order to be good science, this paper has insisted that peace research has to contribute to peace by being useful for peace diplomacy in order for it to be good. The criterion for quality of scholarship is then in "life" rather than in the definition of the scholarship itself.

This paper is based on a fuller analysis of a peace process in West Kalimantan, from which elements have been selected for the demonstration of the practical usefulness of approaches that mainstream peace research has often considered intellectually

intriguing, but hopelessly philosophical, at times poetic and always impractical.

While the cases used for the demonstration of usefulness of post-positivist approaches have been empirically accurate, they have undoubtedly been selective. This has exaggerated the causal powers of the constructs and speech acts arrived at with the use of several post-positivist approaches. I do not try to hide this. Selection has been made for the sake of not getting too deep into the factual details of the case of West Kalimantan, which for the scholars of conflict are not equally interested in. Yet, one needs to keep in mind that the intention of this paper has not been to demonstrate how useful post-positivist approaches have been in the peace process of West Kalimantan. Instead, the cases have been used to show that post-positivist understandings can, in general, be pragmatic in a way that goes beyond the usefulness of post-positivist approaches.

Furthermore, one needs to keep in mind that my effort has not been to claim that positivist perspectives could not be useful for conflict resolution. Undoubtedly, especially when we approach the basic elements of survival, constructs of meanings of necessities of life tend to be so uniform in cultures that prefer life over death (i.e. all cultures) that one does not always need to consider the social meaning-giving to matters of life and death. Whatever meanings communities give for eating, or avoiding deadly force, it is often practical simply to assume that deprivation of safety or nutrition makes people do desperate, even violent things. Treating threats to nutrition or safety as exogenous factors to violent actions in contexts where violence can remove such threats could very well be useful. Thus, despite the fact that this paper has several times attacked the theory of relative deprivation, for example, I do not challenge that theory's usefulness in many conflict contexts.

Finally, even if the post-positivist approaches that I have argued for, take their departure from the critique of empiricism of mainstream peace research, one should not conclude that this paper has attempted to attack everything that empiricism entails. Too often the poetic, impractical nature of post-positivist scholarship has been due to the total disregard of systematic empirical evidence, and reliance on random individual incidents or isolated reflections. Academic poetry does not offer much for academic diplomacy and thus also critical approaches need to be empirically accurate in order to be useful for academic diplomacy for peace. Even if I argue that one should not think that elements relevant for the understanding of social structures of conflict and peace can all be operationalized into observable, let alone measurable factors, it is often possible to find proxies that reveal the directly unobservable elements in conflict realities. The construct of ethnic categories in politics in West Kalimantan, for example, cannot be observed directly. Yet, unless one can find proxies of such constructs in the way peoples speak about politics, one should not claim the existence of ethnicity in West Kalimantan politics. Furthermore, before claiming that such constructs are meaningful, let alone dominant in local politics, one needs to be able to measure the existence of traces of such constructs in a sample of political texts/speeches and compare the number or extent of such traces against traces that can be used as proxies alternative constructs. Thus despite problems in the philosophy behind empiricism one can accept many of the methodological and scholarly criteria of empirical peace research.

## Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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