

Normative Security

A Rawlsian Approach on Creating Principles of Security

Abstract

In this paper the Rawlsian contractual method—including the original position and the veil of ignorance—is used to create principles of security. The method enables transcendence from contemporary restrictions to a broadened view where general principles guide us to the most important aspects of security. The principles guide us to the core. I arrive at two and only two principles: existential security must be guaranteed for all; civil liberties and freedom must be guaranteed for all.

The different parts and postulates of Rawls method that I have chosen for this paper are discussed in length. The reason is that they have important implications for the principles. The most important parts are the original position; the veil of ignorance; the rationality of the actors and the maximin strategy.

In the course of the paper I discuss the implications of the principles. The most important implication is the state as the guarantor of the principles. The ambiguity of the role of the state in security issues is discussed in length. I briefly mention the view of realism, human security and the Copenhagen school on what constitute a security issue and illustrate the traps they have fallen for in their analysis. The method used in this paper eludes those traps but lose precision.

Keywords: Rawls, the state, survival, freedom

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1. Introduction

In this paper I construct principles of security. I create them using John Rawls' well-known hypothetical method used when Rawls constructed his theory of justice, published in 1971. Rawls' original position and the veil of ignorance surrounding the actors in the original position will be the starting point. In addition, I use Rawls' restrictions and postulates on how the actors think and act. However, instead of using this method to construct a complete theory, I use a minimalistic version of Rawls' method to construct principles of security.

The reason for using Rawls' method is that it makes it possible to create principles that one is able to legitimize by arguing they are what the actors would agree on (Badersten, p. 136 f. & 159 f.). Another reason is that this method allows for the focus of the security concept to be on the individual (more on these reasons follows). By utilizing this method time and space (among other things, see below) are disregarded as factors. The importance of placing the individual actor in the center of the security discussion is the individual actors are who in the end constitute the state. Placing the state in the center of the construction of the principles of security, in my opinion, would cause one vital point to be missed: security can never be experienced by an inanimate object or construct. Thus, even if the state was to be eradicated, that is only a security threat if it is to be considered a security threat to the individuals constituting the state. This statement may seem both obvious and trivial, but it is important to emphasize as security studies traditionally focus on states' security as well as have it as the main referent object (Hough, 2007, pp. 2 ff.). The following quote emphasizes one important aspect of why the main referent object of the security principles should be the individual:

Security is a human condition. To define it purely in terms of state bodies whose aim it is to help secure their state and people in a certain dimension, rather than the people whose security is at stake, is both odd and nonsensical. [...] A security issue, surely, is an issue which threatens (or appears to threaten) one's security. (Hough, 2008, pp. 9–10)

Having brought Hough's argument of security being a human condition forth, I still regard the state as the main actor in the international arena. Its importance will, of course, be reflected by the rational actors constructing the just security

concept behind the Rawlsian veil of ignorance. It must, however, be highlighted that it is not rarely one's own state that may pose the security threat/-s. And if not the state per se, then other internal security threats within the borders of the state (Hough, 2008, p. 7). Examples of these internal security threats are poverty, disease and economic instability. An example of the state as the main security threat toward its own citizens can be a dictatorship oppressing and harassing its citizens. However, what are labeled as internal security threats above would only by some security schools be considered *security* issues. According to other views, categorizing those issues as security issues would take away meaning from what is considered security issues: military conflict (Hough, 2007, p. 11 ff.)

Remembering how multi-faceted the term *security* is when the principles are constructed, it allows for a shift in focus from a western point of Westphalian state-security view to more nuanced and all-embracing security principles with the individual as the starting point. I must stress, however, that even though I am embracing the deepened security idea of the individual as the main referent point (traditionally brought forth by the Copenhagen School of security (Hough, p. 8)), I do not embrace any particular school of security as particularly true in this paper. Instead I try to the greatest extent to let the hypothetical actors make their rational decisions without me being a factor.

Rawls' intention with his hypothetical method is to lift the contractual idea of a social contract put forth by Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant (among others (Badersten, 2006, pp. 126 f.; pp. 157 f.)) and lift it to a higher level of abstraction. Thus Rawls aims at broader generality of his principles (Rawls, 1971, § 3 pp. 32–38). I aim at the same goal: broad and general applicability of the conceived principles. The reason to strive for broad and general applicability is that it allows us to find the core of what any security school should include.

2. Ensuring validity

The reason for the following explicit explanation of the validity of the principles is to make it easier to identify the steps I have taken on the way to the finalized principles. These steps are all as important as the next step as they build upon each other. A serious fault anywhere along the chain of arguments and the validity of the paper could be weakened. Through this section of the paper I thus clarify the steps taken.

2.1. Internal validity

In order to achieve internal validity in a normative paper precision regarding terms used and a stringent argumentation are central. This means it is important to define any term and concept used so there are no uncertainties as to what is meant. I do this by using footnotes on any ambiguous term or concept. The arguments presented have to follow the prerequisites made (explained in length under heading 3. The theoretical foundation). The arguments also have to be presented in a clear way (Badersten, 2006, pp. 73 f; 83–86). Therefore I present a brief summary of the arguments and conclusions. Each argument and each conclusion is then presented in length further into the paper. The summary below is thus providing an overview and clarification.

- The starting position is the original position. This is where the actors in the hypothetical experiment act.
- The actors are rational and act to avoid a worst case scenario. They have to reach unanimous decisions. This leads to any agreement being a minimum all can agree on.

- They have a basic ontological¹ understanding of the world, but know of no personal specifics such as whom they are or at what time in the ages they will live (they act behind a veil of ignorance). Since they do not know who they are, if they are strong or weak, they will act to avoid the worst scenarios such as one where only the strong will prosper.
- To ensure all will be guaranteed a chance in life they agree on a general principle claiming all are to be guaranteed existential security².
- The actors are aware that they will come to have goals in life once the veil is lifted. Not knowing the specifics of the goals all they can do is to ensure following personal goals in life is possible. They do this by agreeing basic liberties and freedoms must be guaranteed all, upheld and protected.
- The actors will not agree on more extensive principles than the two above, as more extensive principles can have far-reaching implications that are difficult to predict. Since they are acting to find an acceptable minimum all can agree on it is risky to agree on anything more than is absolutely necessary.

2.2. External validity

The principles originate from the hypothetical actors' reasoning. Principles can then be justified on basis of referring to this reasoning. Elaborated:

Constructivism also enables Rawls to provide an account of the objectivity of moral judgment and correctness of moral principles that is consistent with a Kantian idea of autonomy. In showing in detail how the principles of justice can be justified on the basis of certain conceptions and principles that originate in practical reasoning itself, Rawls sees himself as having carried through with the Kantian aspiration of showing how moral principles of justice are the result of “reason giving principles to itself, out of its own resources. (SEP no. 3)

¹ Ontology: “The study of what there is” (SEP no. 7).

² Not relating to the theory of existential security; merely relating to the adjective: existential—adj. of or relating to existence, esp human existence (see Dictionary.com below for link).

Using a hypothetical thought experiment as the method is thus a way to externally validate the conclusions. The conclusions are good if one is able to show they are good through the hypothetical intellectual experiment (see Badersten, 2006, 135 f.). The principles agreed upon in the hypothetical original position are thus validated through the process occurring behind the veil of ignorance. It is through utilizing the hypothetical process itself validation is achieved. Thus, in order to hypothetically validate a principle, one needs to argue that the principle would be agreed upon in the original position (on Rawls: Badersten, 2006, p. 159 f.; Rawls, 1971, p. 38).

In other words, one must examine which principles it would be rational to choose in the contractual situation behind the veil of ignorance. This, according to Rawls, connects his theory of justice with the theory of rational choice (Rawls, 1971, pp. 38–42). I validate and justify the security principles in this paper in the same way: by arguing the agreements reached on security are the rational choices to be made in the hypothetical situation. Thus, the method validates the results as long as it holds true that the results are the rational choices the actors would agree on, given the postulates they act according to.

An important reason for choosing Rawls' method – apart from ensuring validity – is being able to transcend from contemporary and territorial blindness. An illustration of these traps and the security schools/views that have fallen for them:

- Human security has been criticized for overloading the security term (Hough, 2007, pp. 10 f.), with issues such as disease or migration. Also, if issues of economic and health related character are to be considered security issues it would imply that states need to be big and powerful in order to combat the big issues. While a big state can of course be the source of problems.
- The Copenhagen school has been criticized for being euro-centrist in its implication (westernizing issues) and focus (see Wilkinson, 2007).
- The more traditional and mainstream realist³ view of the extreme focus on states has been criticized for being to state centrist (Hough, 2007). The

³ See a more full description of and discussion on realism (or political realism in international relations to be more precise) at SEP no. 6.

realist perspective has also been outdated by some, claiming that times have changed:

Throughout the total war era of the twentieth century a case could be made that the security of individuals was inextricably tied up with that of their states but that era has now passed into history. Hough, 2007, p. 19.

However, even though the times may very well be changing, the actors agreeing on the state as the guarantor of existential security have still agreed on the most rational principles. This statement holds true due to that Hough speaks with a contemporary voice while the hypothetical actors do not. Having a state as a guarantor of existential security, civil liberties and freedoms and not adding other issues is the rational choice, unbound by time, to make in the setting presented. Adding to this and letting the hypothetical individual actors be without any territorial grounding the trap the Copenhagen school has fallen for is being eluded. What we lose, however, is the clarity and accuracy a contemporary voice could have when commenting on contemporary issues and how they should be labeled and addressed.

In summary, the principles are externally valid since it is possible to argue they would be chosen by the rational actors in the hypothetical situation (elaborated below).

3. The theoretical foundation

In this section of the paper I introduce the foundation on which the principles are derived from. The setting where the rational actors agree on a fair security concept is called the original position, and is explained below. The original position has a few important building blocks. These are presented and explained separately. The reason for separating them rather than subordinating them under the heading: *The original position* is to maintain a higher degree of clarity. Under each heading I present a separate part of the theoretical foundation. Apart from explaining the individual building block, I also explain the implications it has for the principles of security.

3.1. The original position

The original position is the hypothetical arena where the concept is constructed. Rational actors act (forced by reason to be impartial, more on this under 3.3) and reach decisions by rationally ranking preferences and choosing the most preferred option. The decisions are made behind a veil of ignorance (see below: 3.4) which ensures the information they base their decision on is exactly the same and, importantly, imperfect. The assumptions made by Rawls on how the hypothetical actors think, behave etcetera necessarily lead to certain conclusions on a given problem (SEP no. 1). The problem the hypothetical rational actors will solve in this paper is to construct fair security principles.

According to Rawls, it is of importance that the perception of the principles (the principles of justice in Rawls' case) is reinforcing support for itself (Rawls, 1971, p. 144). I will be striving for self-reinforcing support regarding the principles of security presented in this paper. One way to do this is to ensure the security principles seem intuitively correct to our innate image of what security is. It is important with self-reinforcing support as it proves the legitimacy of the principles and ensures security can be upheld and enforced in a society with the support of the individuals. This ensures stability as well as availability of

prolongation for the principles (SEP no. 4). Had there not been stability and the principles agreed upon are disregarded as a consequence there would be no meaning to the construction of those principles. Stability is thus a necessity for the other prerequisite of definitive agreements and unanimity throughout time (see below).

In summary, the more general idea of the original position is to create a procedure producing a fair result that reinforces support for itself (SEP no. 1).

3.2. Requirements and postulates

The requirements and postulates below are the ones used in this paper. Rawls has a more extensive list and as I use a heavily reduced version of Rawls' so are the postulates and requirements reduced in numbers. They are also reduced in their descriptions and motivation for why they are chosen. (For extensive discussion, explanation and validation of them I suggest each corresponding SEP source⁴.)

1. The actors are continuous moral persons. May be thought of as continuous genetic lines.
2. The original position can be entered at any time by any living person in a reasonable age.
3. Formal terms for principles: generality, universality, ranked preferences and definitive agreements.
4. Actors act behind a veil of ignorance and thus have *imperfect* information (may be contrasted with the rational actor model where actors have complete information).
5. Motivation: mutual disinterest in each other's interests.
6. Unanimity throughout the ages.

The idea is that rational agents with these characteristics following these postulates would arrive at a rational and general decision in the original position. Whether or not this role of the perfectly rational actor can be used to achieve the same decisions with real individuals using the original position to alter their way of thinking is irrelevant (see, for example, Rawls, p. 153). It is rather more likely

⁴ See a summary of the postulates I use and the rest of them used by Rawls on p. 151 f. (1971).

that any given individual would be unable to adjust their mindset to fit the prerequisites of the original position. It must, however, be kept in mind that it is merely a hypothetical method helping us to think in new and constructive ways, as well as to legitimize positions and ideas. The method is thus not intended to be implemented practically, even though the results of the method may very well be applicable and implemented.

3.3 The rationality of the actors

What is to be considered beneficiary to the individual actor when considering how to be rational? One of Rawls' assumptions is that the actors would, behind the veil of ignorance, prefer more rather than less of *social goods* (they are according to Rawls rights, freedoms and possibilities (1971, p. 103)). This would be rational of the actors as the social goods enable a life according to ones' preferences, whatever they might be. These social goods are assumed to be wanted by rational individuals and the rational actors acting in the original position as well. Importantly this is intuitively rational as none of these social goods hinder us from leading a life we want to live. We are—regardless of preferences—obviously more likely to be able to achieve our goals in life with more, rather than less, freedom, rights and possibilities (Rawls, 1971, pp. 103, 144 ff. / SEP no. 5). One implication this could have for the security principles could be an argument for an overarching institution. This institution, a state (regime disregarded) would then uphold existential security for all as well as make sure basic civil rights and freedoms are upheld. The rational point of the institution is that it would grant survival, freedoms and rights for all and not only for the stronger or better adapted individuals. A state can thus be justified by rationality with the hypothetical method as a starting point and the individual as the main referent point.

The rational actors agreeing on subordinating under a state can be said to be in accordance, or similar, to a conclusion Rawls arrive at (1971, p. 149): the rational choice for the actors is to try and protect their freedoms, broaden their own opportunities and expand their means in order to come closer to achieving whatever goals they may come to have – this is mentioned above as striving for more rather than less social goods. Agreeing on a state to ensure survival would then be the foundation needed in order to have protection for basic freedoms and thus enabling individuals to pursue goals. Do note, however, that the prerequisite

of applicability throughout the ages brings with it that the goals will have to be general in character, and intuitively this seems correct. One such individual goal an actor in the original position might come to have could be a prosperous life relative others. In order to clarify: the actors don't know what their different goals in life will be. They do, however, base their decision of principles on the assumption they will have goals. Thus, they will have to make sure achieving individual goals is possible, and ensuring more rather than less social goods are available is one way to do this.

This is furthermore in accordance with another assumption of rationality: the availability to rank preferences (even though it may at a first glance appear to not be the case, as the actors rank preferences without perfect information). The actors are unaware of what their individual goals will be, but they do understand what will be of importance in order for them to be able to achieve whatever the goals might be (Rawls, 1971, p. 148). And as they know they will have a goal to strive for, they are able to and will rank preferences in accordance to how important they are in achieving that goal. They rank their preferences because they are rational actors. For example, one important preference ranked high by the actors would be the degree of personal freedoms (economic, social, political, etcetera), and is – as stated above – a part of the more general category of social goods. Rawls explains it more eloquently:

Still the thin theory of the good shows, which the rational actors are assumed to accept, that they in order to promote their goals, whatever they might be, in general need more rather than less of the primary social goods. When they agree on the original agreement the rational actors thus assume their conceptions of the good have a certain structure, and that this is enough for them to be able to choose principles on a rational basis. (Rawls, 1971, p. 375 – my transl.)

In addition to this, I assume (still following Rawls' footsteps) that the actors know they will be working towards rational long-term plans for how to live their life once the veil is lifted (such as plans for wealth, knowledge or influence) (Rawls, 1971, p. 136). Following a life plan is also made possible by allowing for a greater degree of freedom.

3.4. The veil of ignorance

The veil of ignorance is of vital importance in order to maintain a focus on the principles, rather than focusing on direct individual goals. It enables the construction of principles to be valid throughout time and space. The reason for the broad validity is the *definitive agreements* requisite mentioned above. The validity holds true due to the innate construction of the veil itself as well. The function of the veil in the aspect of time is that by using the veil of ignorance, it is ensured that the information is always the same and the result will therefore always be the same (i.e. the same principles will always be chosen) (Rawls, 1971, p. 145). A prerequisite mentioned above that is necessary for the validity through time to hold true is that one is able at any time to enter the original position behind the veil of ignorance. And again, no matter at what time the original position is entered the result will be the same, as the prerequisites are the same.

When the actors enter into the original position they must have an ontological understanding to make the decisions. If not, there might not be any applicability of the principles the actors arrive at. They will be acting to avoid a worst case scenario. This is a valid and rational assumption as they do not know details about the world on the other side of the veil. Finding a way to ensure safety from existential threats is thus of vital importance. A brief example of what they could arrive at otherwise:

- The actors assume, while being egoistical, it is rational to have no overarching institution. Every man and woman for him-/herself. This is rational to assume for the actors as humans, while being egoistical, would never want to harm a fellow human being for their own gain or any other reason, such as fear. Creating an overarching institution with rights to limit someone's freedom would thus be an unnecessary limit to the freedom of all. A state in any form thus becomes an unnecessary evil. Having this view on humanity, a state becomes unnecessary to achieve existential security (survival). Ensuring survival is best done by the individual.

The example above shows the actors have a naive view on how to perceive humanity. Coming to the above conclusion is irrational as they are not taking into

account this *could* create a hazardous anarchy where stronger groups or individuals prey on and systematically harass weaker ones. Without a state there *could* exist a peaceful anarchy where there are no existential risks posed by others. Preparing for such a utopia would, however, not be a rational choice. What is rational is to prepare to avoid a worst case scenario. Many similar dystopias could be described, but the point is still the same: preparing for the worst case scenario is, yet again, the rational thing to do when securing survival from possible existential threats. Owing to this I assume the actors have a basic understanding of the world. A collective knowledge, it might be called. This will make ensure, as has been said, any decisions are applicable, regardless of time and space. A brief summary for clarity, put in other words:

... [T]he parties are deprived of all knowledge of their personal characteristics and social and historical circumstances. They do know of certain fundamental interests they all have, plus general facts about psychology, economics, biology, and other social and natural sciences (SEP, nr 1)

Having elaborated the picture on how the veil of ignorance should be perceived and its implications, it might be added that the situation is, of course, to be seen as a situation of choice with imperfect information. The pieces of information missing are key components needed to make an egotistical rational choice applicable to one's own direct interests. Removing these key components of information means the actors will still have to be rational, as well as egoistical. However, as I mention above, this places the focus on the principles rather than the individuals' goals.

3.5. Continuous persons

The actors in the contractual situation acting behind the veil of ignorance are to be thought of as continuous (Rawls, 1971, pp. 284–288). Disregarding any position in time a person might have, each person must decide for all, in all time (Rawls, 1971, p. 146). This feels intuitively correct: If one doesn't know how one will be affected by the decisions made, and knows one could end up anywhere at any time in history, the principles must have validity throughout the ages and for all.

The implications are that the actors will be concerned with the foundation ensuring security, such as institutions. The reason is that not knowing where in

time the actor will be living, the person must focus on ensuring a security principle. The principle is thus universal in time. One important aspect of being universal in time means that the concept takes responsibility for all generations. By looking out for themselves, as rational individuals, they ensure the principles are fair for all regardless of at which time in history one is born. Importantly, as has been said, one cannot benefit oneself directly in any way (Rawls, 1971, p. 155).

3.6. Generality, universality, unanimity

The importance of generality is that it (as is also argued above) enables applicability throughout the ages (Rawls, 1971, pp. 138–139; 142). It is worth mentioning one more time that the actors are forced to resort to general principles as they are egoistical and rational but act with imperfect information behind the veil of ignorance. They do, however, want to maximize their position and not knowing what their position will be they go for maximizing the minimal position—avoiding the worst case scenario (more on this under 3.8 Deciding using the maximin strategy).

Universality of principles is intuitively understood as important. All are to follow what has been decided. Thus, the principles are to be chosen with regards to the consequences of all following them (Rawls, 1971, p. 139; 142). I would like to emphasize that principles are chosen with respect to the consequences of *all* following them. One such consequence to regard could be accepting a domestically intervening state in order to ensure anyone breaking the principles would be held responsible.

Unanimity throughout the ages (Rawls, 1971, p. 148) means that no matter which generation one turns out to belong to once the veil is lifted, the principles have to be chosen with respect to the consequences of living with them. The prerequisite of unanimity ensures the principles agreed on are a compromise as well as boundless of time (Rawls, 1971, p. 148).

3.7. Rights and obligations

Seemingly trivial though important to mention are the obligations following having rights: A person is obliged to follow the common rules agreed upon has s/he from free will enjoyed benefits from the system. The principle is in short that we should not gain from the cooperative work by others while not contributing or collaborating ourselves. This principle feels intuitively right and is used by Rawls (who names it the principle of fairness) (1971, pp. 117-122; 327 f.). Intuitively this too (compare universality of principles above) can be interpreted as a moral argument for the enforcement of security domestically. For example: Those putting others' lives at risk in any way are disregarding the social contract and are a danger to the general safety. If the state did not act to enforce security for all the point of subordinating under a state would be eradicated. Safety must be upheld as that is the task of the state. Thus, through the principle of fairness we can morally justify a domestically intervening state. This is an important conclusion as it allows for a state to be the actor providing security practically. Had it not been justified for the state to intervene and thus uphold security then the actions of the state could be argued to be illegitimate. The principles would then lack of any real meaning.

3.8. Deciding using the maximin strategy

The maximin strategy is one of several strategies utilized in rational choice theory to choose rationally among alternatives. Rawls employs this strategy as it allows for rational choices to be made under uncertainty (SEP no. 2). According to Rawls, one ought to construct society in a manner where one imagines one's enemy was to assign one's social position. Further, the maximin strategy has the implication that alternatives are prioritized according to their respective worst case scenario. Having ranked alternatives or preferences, the alternative that has the best worst case scenario relative the other alternatives should be chosen (1971, p. 158 f.). In short, the actors should try and agree on a satisfactory minimum

level all can agree on (a lowest common denominator) and that no one would want to jeopardize (Rawls, 1971, p. 161).

The principles can be thought of as guarantees of a lowest possible–acceptable–minimum:

It is then *sui generis*, a choice of the conditions for all future choices. Rawls argues that because of the unique importance of the choice in the original position—including the gravity of the choice, the fact that it is not renegotiable or repeatable, and the fact that it determines all one's future prospects—it is rational to follow the maximin rule and choose the principles of justice. For should the worst transpire, the principles of justice provide an adequate share of primary goods enabling one to maintain one's conscientious convictions and sincerest affections and pursue a wide range of permissible ends by protecting equal basic liberties and fair equal opportunities and guaranteeing a social minimum of income and wealth. (SEP nr 2)

The quote above explains the rationality of choosing the principles of justice. The reason for making that choice is in case the worst transpire. This is why the maximin rule has validity for the principles of security as well. Instead of ensuring a social minimum, however, the actors will ensure existential security. The conditions of when it is rational to use the maximin rule are explained below:

Rawls says that in general there are three conditions that must be met in order to make it rational to follow the maximin rule (TJ, 154-55/134). First, there should be no basis or at most a very insecure basis upon which to make estimates of probabilities. Second, the choice singled out by observing the maximin rule is an acceptable alternative we can live with, so that one cares relatively little by comparison for what is to be gained above the minimum conditions secured by the maximin choice. When this condition is satisfied, then no matter what position one eventually ends up in, it is at least acceptable. The third condition for applying the maximin rule is that all the other alternatives have (worse) outcomes that we could not accept and live with. Of these three conditions Rawls later says that the first plays a minor role, and that it is the second and third conditions that are crucial to the maximin argument for justice as fairness (JF, 99). (SEP nr 2)

The first criterion of an insecure basis is met by using the veil of ignorance and original position.

The second criterion is met as well: Having agreed on a state to ensure survival and protection of basic liberties and freedoms one would care *relatively* little for anything gained above this minimum.

The third condition is also met: any other alternative than having an overarching institution protecting basic liberties, freedoms and survival is worse (since they try to avoid a worst case scenario when using the maximin rule of choice).

Having met these three conditions it is rational to act by the maximin rule of choice (Rawls, 1971, p. 160).

3.9. Summary of the theoretical foundation

Why have the contractual setting presented above? Why the need to hypothetically reach a contract on principles of security? The goal of the contractual idea, according to Rawls, is to determine that they together place *boundaries* as to which principles are acceptable (1971, p. 38). By showing the principles would be accepted in the original position with the above applicable the principles can be justified. This has the important implication that enforcing and acting on the agreed upon principles can be justified. The actors are mutually disinterested in each other and reluctant to let their own interests be sacrificed for other individuals' interests (SEP no. 5). They must, however, reach unanimous decisions. They reach their agreements by observing the maximin rule: maximize the minimal position so that one cares relatively little about what is to be gained above it.

4. A discussion on the ambiguous role of the state

Above I have shown that some of the implications of the postulates are that a state should be the provider of existential security for the individuals. But is it plausible a state can ever be strong enough to secure the individuals' security from external existential threats? It would not be far-fetched to claim this could lead to the world view of the realist—with an arms race as an indirect implication—where states compete to be ahead of the others to assure safety through might and fear (Hough, 2007, p. 3).

Further examining the similarities to realism one could argue the need for an overarching institution securing our safety from each other may lay in human nature (some realists would say that humankind is inherently aggressive with war being a product of this aggression (Hough, 2007, p. 57)). A perception of human nature is, however, not the reason for the actors to agree on it. What does or does not lay in human nature is irrelevant to the principles in this matter. The reason for agreeing on the overarching institution is, yet again, merely a way to avoid a worst case scenario. The states acting through might and fear could be labeled a security issue itself (Hough, 2007, p. 3). A reminder of an empirical example near in time is, of course, the cold war. Military strength in states to secure the individuals from external threats while not knowing on which side of the border the actor would be placed in, seems irrational to the point of a haphazard or careless gamble. Clearly, a highly militarized environment brings various extensive risks to the table as a highly militarized environment can be labeled an unstable international environment. A highly militarized and unstable environment is not one, intuitively, to be thought of as secure. With the arms race and militarized international environment as a *possible* implication (or worst case scenario) of having the state as the guarantor of existential security it may seem implausible for the actors to want states. Perhaps the actors would prefer equally powerful states, as they do not know in which state they will live. However, the original position is not a place where it is possible to reorganize the world and the way actors (i.e. states) act. So, in order to reach a more general security principle,

rather than trying to reorganize the world, I argue the actors would come to the conclusion that, the above risk taken into account, states are necessary to maintain a stable society where basic survivability is guaranteed by the state. The logic is as follows: Preceding living a life where basic rights and freedoms are secured comes securing survival; to secure our survival we, hypothetically, reach a social contract where we trade in some freedom for security from each other.

The question that follows is, however: What follows having states securing freedoms and safe guarding individuals from existential threats? It seems one does end up with the realist assumption where power balance is what keeps a state safe from war - and thus the individuals safe from existential threat. Would it then be the rational choice to agree on giving up freedoms to a state that could end up being the catalyst for war and thus an existential threat? The answer must be “yes”. First comes creating a society by giving up freedoms to a state, where we are kept from killing each other. This is the step where instant survival (existential security) is guaranteed, and it is the argument for the state to be the securing actor. Remember that it is rational for the actors to act on preventing a worst case scenario. Thus, even if a highly militarized environment where states compete for power with might and fear would follow from having states securing existential security it would be the rational choice to make as it is the closest they come to a guarantee of security from instant existential threats. What may or may not follow from surviving must be the next issue in line, rather than the first order of business. This argumentation follows directly from the actors acting to avoid a worst case scenario, or in other words: to come to accept the best worst case scenario.

Would this mean that existential threats to the state are to be considered an indirect existential threat to the individuals? Hough presents a case against the two equating with each other:

Security *is* subjective in that individual fears do not necessarily tally with the reality of threats but this is a better guide to the issues that matter than the priorities of governments. The security of governments does not equate with the security of the people they are meant to represent (Hough, 2007, p 18; italics in orig.).

Hough may very well be right. However, in this hypothetical method the actors do equate the state with existential safety and protection of liberties and freedoms. Thus, they would in the original position accept the state as the securitizing actor (in this case the one framing issues as existential threats to

security or freedoms – i.e. threatening the principles of security (Hough, 2007, pp. 15 ff.)).

If the security of the state is not seen as a prerequisite for the individuals' security, then the priority agreed upon would be:

- A state is acceptable as long as it amplifies the security of the individuals. This would imply a weak state, where as little power as possible is transferred to the state. The state would only exist to secure existential security and protect civil liberties and freedoms.

If the above priority would be chosen and there is no overarching institution as a state with a police or similar, what is to say the masses won't be oppressed by a strong group of individuals? To me this shows that the state is intuitively a prerequisite for the individuals' freedoms.

If the security of the state is in fact to be seen as a prerequisite for the security of the individuals constituting the state, then the priority becomes:

1. The security from existential threats to the state is what enables the security of individuals.
2. To the greatest extent the state is to grant security ensuring freedom for individuals.

The reason for choosing the above priority (where the state's existential security enables personal security) is mainly that by empowering the state it would be practically possible to make sure the contract is honored. If not, what is to stop anyone in bad circumstances from jeopardizing another's security for their own gain? This choice is made despite the fact that the state might become a security threat itself.

The freedom of the individual is thus subordinated the security of the state by equating guaranteed basic survival for individuals with the survival of the state. This holds true when the security of the state is a prerequisite for the security of the individual. Therefore the security of the state is prioritized over the freedom of the individual. The following trade-off can thus be said to have taken place:

Freedom is being traded in for security from existential threats. More stable freedom is however gained from this trade as the freedoms cannot be taken away

by any other individual. In other words, empowering a state as the overarching institution is the best of the worst case scenarios possible to choose.

5. Prioritizing

It seems inevitable to reach an agreement on principles of security without the principles conflicting at some point. The matter of prioritizing preferences thus becomes of vital importance in order to proceed further towards clear principles of security. Do note that the assumption of the actors being able to rank preferences is one of the assumptions of rationality made previously (see *The rationality of the actors*).

The principle discussion below will be about the trade-off between securing basic rights to freedom and securing the very lives of individuals.

The actors would first and foremost agree on securing survival as the top priority. This may seem trivial and obvious. However, importantly it also must follow from the prior stated stipulations. As the actors are rational and egoistical, acting with mutual disinterest in each other, it must be that they will ensure their own survival by stipulating that to be secure everyone's survival must be the first order of business. This must, however, be narrowed down before the actors would agree on it. What I mean is that ensuring survival for all may seem a basic cornerstone in any society, regardless of time. That would, however, imply there actually is a society or similar to keep the possibly aggressive and anarchic human nature in place (the human nature being aggressive and anarchic is a worst case scenario they act to avoid). In theory joining a society is not a necessity but an optional choice with pros and cons. The actors would in theory choose to sign the social contract and join a society, giving up freedom and ensuring survival as their number one preference.

Granted that a state would bring with it a set of problems the actors would still agree on a state to prevent the strong from preying on the weak. The actors do take into consideration the risk for the powers granted to the state to be abused by the state. In turn, this keeps them from surrendering too many of their basic

freedoms when agreeing on the principles. As a direct result they will not consider it necessary that the state eradicates poverty, ensures economic stability, combat disease and similar issues in order to be secure. Elaborated, the reason not to consider the above issues as security threats is that it would imply a too powerful state. It would need to be much more powerful as the issues above are complex and big. Note that this conclusion is in direct contrast to Human security (presented above and below) that claims these issues are indeed to be considered security issues:

'Individual freedoms and rights matter a great deal, but people are restricted in what they can do with that freedom if they are poor, ill, illiterate, discriminated against, threatened by violent conflict or denied a political voice . . .' (UNDP 2005: 18–19, as quoted by Amitav Acharya in Baylis et al., 2008, pp. 492 f.).

Though the above is a valid point, it must be remembered the actors must unanimously agree on definitive principles that are never to be changed. I would argue that any addition to what the actors conclude is the necessity for security (existential security) would thus be difficult for all to agree on (as unanimity is a condition and some surely would argue that handing over any more power than is necessary to a state is gambling with one's future).

The next preferences the actors have in order to come closer to a successful strive for personal goals are ensuring personal freedoms. The importance of personal freedoms has been brought up above. In summary, personal freedoms enable having personal goals. All rational individuals have goals, but they do not know what the goals will be once the veil is lifted. Therefore the actors can only make sure following individual goals is possible to the greatest possible extent, trade-offs taken into account.

This is in summary how I argue the actors would prioritize:

1. Survival – basic level – *Vital* for security – Legitimizes the state
2. Freedom and civil liberties – middle level – *Necessary* for security – Enables a pursuit of personal goals and a pursuit of what the individual considers to be good in life.
3. Welfare (such as the issues brought up by Human security above) – High level – *Unnecessary* for security as it empowers the state and from the view of the original position could thus risk to bring with it an even worse case scenario than welfare could justify. The actors would

consider it a risky gamble not worth doing as the actors care relatively little about what is gained above ensuring survival and freedoms.

Exemplifying with two possible choices:

1. Maximize freedom: Prioritize freedom by avoiding handing over power and freedoms to overarching institutions/ a state. Potential loss: without the state human nature will bring chaos where the weak are the prey of the strong.
2. Maximize the state's powers: Prioritizing the state's possibilities to keep individuals from breaking the social contract of security. The state and state bodies gain more powers and individuals lose power. The state might have much better possibilities to combat disease, poverty, economic instability and natural disasters (examples of what is feared in the world (Hough, 2007, p. 10)) than a weaker state. However, civil liberties and freedoms risk being constrained by the more powerful state. An Orwellian Big Brother–society is one possible dystopian scenario. A functioning welfare state could be a possible utopian scenario.

None of the two above scenarios would be chosen, I argue. They are both too much of a haphazard gamble. The above scenarios would not be chosen by the rational actors when avoiding a worst case scenario and ensuring the possibility of following one's own goals. They would ensure there is a state to protect their civil liberties and freedoms (as this enables the individual to follow whatever goals s/he may come to have). By not handing over more power than this when agreeing on the social contract of security they have agreed on an acceptable minimum.

In conclusion, the lowest common denominator they arrive at is having a state protecting their survival from each other. They thus manage to escape a possibly dangerous anarchical environment by creating something with powers above those of any other ordinary individual—a state.

6. The principles of security

Throughout the paper the implications of the actors reasoning have been discussed. The postulates have been explained as well as the consequences of them. What may follow from the choices made have been briefly mentioned. The main reason for not digging deeper into the consequences of the principles chosen is to maintain focus on the core and why it should be the core of security when utilizing this Rawlsian method. The principles of security have been reached previously in the paper but are defined below.

1. Existential security⁵ is to be guaranteed for all.
2. Fundamental freedoms and civil liberties are to be guaranteed for all.

The principles are just, as they were agreed upon by free and equal people (a prerequisite made; see above). This is important to note since the principles could not be enforced otherwise. This follows from an assumption by Rawls where he claims that obviously unjust institutions cannot bring with them any obligation to lead under their rules. Forced promises or obligations are empty promises without relevance (see Rawls, 1971, p. 328).

If these two principles are followed, then security is to be considered to be upheld. Through these two principles all are guaranteed to be able to follow their goals in life and pursue what they consider to be good in life. The first principle overrides the second one. It overrides logically—if your right to your own life is not upheld, then your fundamental freedom has obviously been taken away as well.

⁵ Not relating to the theory of existential security; merely relating to the adjective: existential—adj. of or relating to existence, esp human existence (see Dictionary.com below for link).

7. Summary

The general idea behind this paper is that through imperfect information the hypothetical person is able to help us think outside the world we are heavily influenced by and make the most rational choice on how we could and perhaps should construct our society regarding security. They give us a foundation to build upon; principles. One very important point to highlight is that it is irrational and not egotistical to attempt to benefit oneself directly. Being rational and egoistical actors acting behind the veil, they will agree on a maximized minimum scenario – or a best worst case scenario – they could all accept. The actors have different preferences. Not knowing the specifics of the world they will live in or who they will be once the veil of ignorance is lifted and they leave the original position but knowing they will have goals in life they attempt to make it possible to pursue goals. The top priority to agree on is therefore agreeing on securing survival for one and all. This implies some kind of a guarantor to uphold this existential security for all. I arrive at this actor being the state. The second priority is having a guarantor for civil liberties and personal freedoms. The second priority enables one to strive for goals and what one personally considers to be good in life.

The principles are justified and validated as I argue they are what would be agreed upon in the contractual situation in the original position by the free and equal rational actors.

8. Conclusions

The connection between freedom and security – and the tradeoff between them in particular – has been consistently brought up throughout the paper and the discussions. Even though I have not reached any fundamental conclusion on the connection between the two, the importance of including existential security and freedoms under the term security has been consistently discussed as well. The importance of guaranteeing freedoms has of course been identified previously by many influential thinkers. Bentham, for example:

“[...] Bentham saw security and liberty as synonymous, declaring that ‘without security equality could not last a day’ (Bentham 1876: 96)” (Hough, 2007, p. 12 f.).

A more prominent conclusion reached is the importance of the state. The state is acknowledged as the way to guarantee existential security, civil liberties and freedom. Having an overarching institution with powers superseding those of the individuals is problematic, and this is discussed. For the actors to agree on subordinating under the state is still the rational choice to agree on in the original position behind the veil of ignorance.

Apart from having the state as the guarantor, the conclusion that the state’s existential security must be prioritized above that of the individuals is reached. The reason for this conclusion is that the actors equate the survival of the state with the existential security of the individuals. The actors also accept the state as the securitizing actor.

Realism and its similarity to the principles of security in regard to the conclusion of the importance of the state are brought up. It is briefly discussed whether the assumption realism makes about the state as the main actor in the international arena could be said to be defended by using the principles in this paper. It would then be done by using the individual as the main referent point (rather than the state) and also without having the same view on humankind, of which the presumed anarchic world is a product of to the realist. The arguments presented in this paper could surely be used as a moral justification of the state as the source of existential security. However, claiming the principles could be used

as a moral justification for realism in general would be taking the conclusion too far. The reason for examining realism in connection to the principles of security is the emphasis they both place on the state.

The final words sum up my conclusions. They belong to Karl Popper:

[...] only freedom can make security secure.⁶

⁶ 1966, *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Volume 2, *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, as quoted in Hough, 2007, p. 3.

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