

# Working Paper

## Challenges of Peace Research

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and Sandra Pfluger (eds.)

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# Introduction

As part of its 25th anniversary celebrations, swisspeace hosted an academic workshop which aimed at bringing together a wide range of scholars to reflect on the self-understanding of peace research, its relation to policy and practice, theoretical and methodological considerations as well as benchmarks for quality assessment and evaluation. This working paper is a collection of these reflections on the various challenges of peace research. Being limited to the volume of a working paper, this publication by no means aspires to cover all these issues in depth. However, the eight contributions cover a number of important and timely aspects in the field.

They include the tension between the objective of doing critical research and being of practical relevance at the same time: this tension refers to one of the most challenging aspirations of peace research, because it builds on the expectation towards peace practitioners critically reflect their own doing. But it also builds on the readiness of researchers not to identify too much with the policy field they observe. The latter has been particularly open for discussion over the past twenty years due to the tremendous development of peacebuilding. In terms of methodology, peace research ranges from quantitative to ethnographic approaches, each with their particular opportunities and caveats. We included examples from both worlds and additionally gave attention to particular approaches with theoretical and methodological implications such as gender and hybridity. The “right” evaluation of peace research depends of course on the understanding of this research and the expectations which follow from it. This last point represents a different kind of challenge: it establishes a bridge between the content and the framework in which peace research may develop and prosper.

Wishing you a pleasant read and thanking all the authors for their insightful contributions.

Laurent Goetschel and Sandra Pfluger  
Bern, October 2014



# Revisiting Peace and Conflict Studies

Tobias Hagmann

There are many ways of characterising peace and conflict – whether we define peace merely as the absence of violence or as co-existence among people, or whether we define conflict as 1000 or more battle deaths per year or simply as incompatible interests.<sup>1</sup> Independent of disciplinary tradition ‘peace’ and ‘conflict’ have different meanings for different people.

Personal exposure is crucial in how we approach and define these ‘social things’ that peace and conflict are. Someone who was displaced by war or lost a family member attaches different meaning to them than a person who had the privilege of growing up in peaceful Western Europe. If we are to think about peace and conflict, we first need to interrogate our own experiences of peace and conflict both at a personal and collective level. Peace and conflict are among the most normative concepts within the social sciences. We therefore need to constantly take distance from them, in a rigorous effort of epistemological rupture, if we want to get to the bottom of things. This implies that we are aware of our own peace and conflict experiences as they are formative of how we study peace and conflict.

In this article, I will first draw attention to the surprising, but ultimately problematic trajectory of peace studies from the period of the Cold War to the present day. This is a trajectory from ‘peace’ as a critique of dominant geopolitics to one of ‘peace’ that has become part of the very dominant geopolitics it initially set out to criticise. Secondly, I will map – undoubtedly in cursory and incomplete fashion – the scholarly communities and literatures dealing with questions of peace and conflict. Rather than a literature review or an attempt at synthesis, my purpose is to highlight the broad variety of existing units of analysis, motivations, theories and methodologies of peace and conflict studies. Thirdly, I will propose a number of suggestions for a research attitude that, in absence of a better word, I subsume under the heading of ‘critical peace and conflict research’, striving to understand peace and conflict as concomitantly subjective and objective, as critique and hegemony, as normative and value-free, as local and global.

## 1.1 Peace As Critique, Peace As Hegemony

The paradox of peace research is not so much its inability to prevent or mitigate highly escalated conflict, namely war, but that ‘peace’ itself has, once again, become part of the dominant order. In other words, while positive peace and in extension a fair amount of peace research were part of a critique to the status quo of Cold War politics, positive peace has gradually become normalised since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Peace is no longer part of a critique to global politics, but has been domesticated by the anti-politics machine of international aid.

<sup>1</sup> Instead of the usual in text references, I suggest a number of readings that have informed my argument after the conclusion.

In the 1970s and 1980s, peace researchers wished that donors took their insights more seriously. Today, conflict analysis and mapping, stakeholder identification, conflict issues and drivers, alternative dispute

resolution, the famous dictum that ‘no need to fight for the orange – one party can use its flesh and the other the skin’ are staple ingredients of civilian peacebuilding. While peace was political with a capital P during the Cold War and therefore not part of the realm of development, which was – falsely of course – framed as technical, peacebuilding today is a mundane task performed by NGOs. Training community members in conflict resolution, organising dialogue forums, encouraging beneficiaries to engage in some sort of joint project activity are common peacebuilding activities around the globe. Laudable in their objective, civilian peacebuilding is often informed by questionable assumptions about the supposedly aggressive nature of its target groups. Frequently it reveals deeply engrained prejudices about local populations. This type of civilian peacebuilding is paternalistic and orientalist. It conveniently ignores local agency, complexity and power relations by reducing conflict to a behavioural problem.

As international aid agencies compressed positive peace into the logic of project cycle management, peace has become increasingly instrumentalist and prescriptive. Peace is no longer political, but it is plannable and measurable, a composite of indicators that can be evaluated once the project draws to its close. This is a shallow peace, not real peace. Not the kind of peace that addresses inequality, domination or power imbalances. It is ‘donor peace’, modelled on the same vague yet orthodox idea of liberal peace, which is held to be universal and exportable like spare car parts. Donor peace is a sophisticated type of pacification that seeks to change target groups’ behaviour not with the threat of military might but with the persuasion of per diems. When most pronounced, donor peace shares many traits with neoliberalism as it concomitantly commodifies, bureaucratises and individualises peace. In the most extreme, violent conflict in the global South is no longer viewed in terms of struggles for rights, liberation or self-determination, but as criminal, senseless and/or threatening Western security interests. As Mark Laffey recently put it: ‘It is OK to pursue violence in the name of liberal peace’,<sup>2</sup> but all other types of violence are considered illegitimate and need to be eliminated, read pacified.

If we agree that the triumph of liberal peacebuilding has proven problematic for it depoliticises rather than emancipates existing relations of domination, what is the implication for peace researchers? Should we engage in a radical critique of peacebuilding practices and discourses, denouncing it as a (neo)colonial machination? Should we abandon the concept of peace all together? Do we need to redefine peace? Or must we look for peace in different places? Can we maintain peace research’s historic normative commitment to peace, which has set it apart from other disciplines? Is it possible to study peace without reproducing the problematic effects of peacebuilding? I shall return to this matter.

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<sup>2</sup> Talk given at the International Studies Association, San Diego, 4 April 2012.



## 1.2 Disciplinary Traditions

Peace and conflict mean very different things in different disciplines and there is an apparent disconnect between different disciplines and bodies of literature in how they approach peace and conflict. My choice of bodies of literature is admittedly selective and I am leaving out other important fields of inquiry. Moreover these bodies are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive. I will cursorily, and probably unfairly, present five bodies of literature and scholarly communities, highlighting how they study peace and conflict, their assumptions, methods and respective contribution.

Let me begin with the applied *peacebuilding literature*. This literature flourished in studies by think tanks, consultancy reports and, occasionally, academic publications. Its axiomatic belief is that peace can be facilitated by what are assumed to be well-meaning external actors who support local civil society in preventing, dealing with and overcoming violent conflict. The applied peacebuilding literature operates in intellectual proximity to, and sometimes even personal congruence with, donor and NGO peacebuilding programmes. At its best, it highlights the operational challenges and complexities faced by peacebuilders. At its worst, it reproduces paternalist stereotypes associated with donor peace.

This body of work has a heavy normative baggage and vocabulary.<sup>3</sup> It takes peace, meaning liberal peace, essentially for granted and considers violence as dysfunctional. Applied peacebuilding scholars rarely make use of rigorous research designs, instead preferring to offer causal assumptions that are often intuitively appealing, but scarcely reflected upon. The main contribution of the applied peacebuilding literature is the provision of a peace-building narrative on which donors and NGOs recurrently draw when devising or justifying their projects.

Political scientists and some economists who study peace and war by dint of *large N research* designs represent another important group within academic conflict research. This body of literature, predominantly published in the *Journal of Peace Research*, and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, has turned the study of peace and conflict into a natural science. In other words, violence is transposed into numbers. Ever more elaborate datasets on all aspects of peace and conflict – from peace agreements to military expenditure to battle deaths, for instance the famous Correlates of War database – drive this scholarly field.

Large N conflict researchers are solidly positivist and favour negative peace definitions. Their aim is to unlock the inner secrets and mechanics of the onset, dynamics and termination of armed conflict, mostly civil war. Their assumptions are that (1) human beings seek to maximise utility and (2) conflict can be studied with little knowledge of context and history as regression analysis and agent-based modelling provide clues to the evolution of warfare.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, designating groups opposed to a peaceful settlement as 'spoilers'.

Members of this scholarly community are intellectually indebted to IR thinking as they tend to prefer governments, states and political order, viewing armed rebellion with considerable suspicion.

The major contribution of this literature is to identify recurrent patterns and overall trends of political violence over time. In recent years, more disaggregated databases and the use of GIS have made large N conflict research more appealing. This literature is, however and ultimately, unable to capture or connect with the everyday experiences of those living in conflict. It thus often remains a methodologically sophisticated abstraction of human suffering.

Next, a heterogeneous but influential group of scholars has critically scrutinised the rise of international peacebuilding and – closely related – *statebuilding practices and discourses* of the past two decades. These scholars draw on political economy, on post-colonial and on post-structuralist theories to make sense of what they consider an imposition of liberal peace by the West on the rest.

While applied peacebuilding scholars see international intervention as part of the solution, critics of liberal peace regard it as part of the problem. In line with earlier critics of Western imperialism, this scholarship interprets international peacebuilding and statebuilding as elaborate attempts by OECD countries to neoliberalise the global South in their own image, and for their own interest. Authors of this research strand mostly adopt single or comparative case study research strategies and are strong in discourse analysis, at times also in field research.

Their major contribution is to embed international peacebuilding in broader patterns of capitalist production and geopolitics, which operate through multiple avenues, both practical and discursive. Its strength lies in its post-positive theoretical framing. This literature has, however, a tendency to ‘totalise’ the most minute speech act or event or bureaucratic programme into an all-encompassing governmentality. It is more concerned with the violence manifest in symbolic domination than of real life physical coercion. More importantly, it rarely takes into consideration local agency, norms and patterns of resistance that so often bifurcate international aid through processes of ‘side tracking’ or ‘selected appropriation’.<sup>4</sup>

*Anthropologists of violence* have arguably provided the most empirically detailed studies of what people experience in conflict zones.<sup>5</sup> While anthropologists have historically, with few exceptions, studied societies in peaceful settings, in recent years ethnographies of civil war, (ethno-)national violence and state repression have dramatically expanded a more anthropocentric understanding of political violence.

Contrary to much of peace research, anthropologists of violence see violence not only as destructive, but as constitutive of social relations. As

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4 See, Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2006). *Anthropology and Development: understanding contemporary social change*. London: Zed Books.

5 See, for example, the University of Pennsylvania's book series “The ethnography of political violence”.

humans cope with, succumb to, navigate and survive warfare, individual and collective strategies of dealing with conflict become apparent. Armed conflict is associated with danger, displacement, sufferance and fear. But it also offers opportunities for some, creates new communities, and shapes political identities. This body of literature predominantly relies on multi-sited ethnographies during field research.

It mainly contributes to emplacing, to contextualising peace and conflict empirically, drawing attention to the social condition that is war. This literature has two additional strengths: (1) it is more sensitive and reflective about the role of researchers in representing or writing about peace and conflict, an aspect missing in the other research strands, and (2) anthropologists of violence are able to shame the reductionism of certain conflict analyses – think ‘greed vs. grievance’ or ‘old vs. new wars’ – by recourse to in-depth area studies knowledge accumulated during repeat field visits.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, the *geography of peace, conflict and violence literature* is noteworthy in this context. Markedly variegated in terms of methodology, regional focus, and theories, geographers of peace and conflict dissect the territorial and spatial dimensions of contentious politics, namely violent nationalism. An older generation of geopolitics specialist explained interstate conflict through the lenses of land and sea, rivers and forest, steppe and mountains, built and open environment. Proponents of the critical geopolitics school analyse the imagined and cartographic construction of superpowers. Geographers of resource conflicts investigate the nexus between civil war and a range of both renewable and non-renewable resources. More theoretically inclined geographers discuss contemporary geopolitics, security policy and counter-terrorism in terms of scale, networks, flows, sovereignty, territory and empire. This literature reminds us that all politics is spatial, and therefore also temporal.

### 1.3 Critical Peace And Conflict Research

What are the implications of the above trends for future research then? Should we continue the business of peace and conflict studies as usual? Or do we need to make our work more relevant and meaningful by rethinking some of our assumptions? What attitude then should a critical peace and conflict researcher embody? A critical peace and conflict researcher readily engages with the emotional destructiveness that accompanies political violence, yet takes neither ‘peace’ nor ‘conflict’ for granted, knowing very well that some types of ‘peace’ are more brutal than conflict and that some types of ‘conflict’ are the product of legitimate struggles. Such a starting point leads us to reconstruct the actions and narratives of all actors involved, local and transnational, with a keen awareness that not all actions are equal and that every narrative has its counter-narrative.

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6 See, Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2001). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. Washington D.C.: World Bank and Kaldor, M. (2002). *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge/ UK: Cambridge Polity Press.

Critical peace and conflict researchers know that violent conflict is always tragic, but never archaic or antiquated – even if the weapons used lack the sophistication of high-tech militaries. Contemporary conflicts are thoroughly modern. Critical peace and conflict researchers are sensitive to power relations not only in conflict zones, but also in the production of knowledge about conflicts and their dynamics. They accept that no matter how many layers of propaganda, suffering, hypocrisy and delusion we penetrate with data collection, a part of our analysis remains contested. Critical peace and conflict researchers know that no one theory can explain the multitude of motivations and trajectories that mark individuals and communities in violent times.

Critical peace and conflict researchers are aware that their object of inquiry is as material as it is symbolic, as hard as it is soft, as enduring as it is malleable. They realise that if they study a conflict long enough, keeping emotional distance becomes increasingly impossible as we become part of the conflict. Critical peace and conflict researchers know that violence will always exist, taking different forms over time. But they also know that particular conflicts will subside eventually as humans strive for peace as much as they strive for status, domination and recognition.

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# Peace During and After the Age of Intervention<sup>1</sup>

Oliver P. Richmond

UN peacekeeping during the Cold War was founded upon the need to maintain consent amongst host populations, state elites and the international community, from which an efficient, cheap and limited policing-style quasi-military/diplomatic intervention could unfold. Under these circumstances, impartiality and non-intervention would ensure the continuation of consent and the bare minimum of a cease-fire might be maintained, in the interests of sustaining the Cold War state-centric order. This would minimise overt violence and create a short-term, negative peace, built around a cease-fire agreement (James, 1969).

From a critical perspective, such intervention also had the effect of upholding the post-war hierarchy of states and the global political economy, as well as maintaining a sense of the superiority of the liberal-realist traditions that dominated US and European international relations (IR) narratives about intervention, progressive politics and acceptable forms of statehood in the post-colonial world. However, sensitivity towards the interests and role of former colonial powers and the new superpowers meant that intervention, even to end war through liberal peacebuilding, became politicised and controversial, either as ideologically motivated or as an attack on the principle of sovereignty. The concepts of human security, preventative diplomacy, as well as the responsibility to protect, all came under such fire despite offering a more progressive line of thought about peace in significant ways.

This paper outlines the implications of the critical debate surrounding these evolving forms of intervention. It does so by interrogating two important strands of their evolution. Firstly, it underlines the inconsistencies and injustices perpetuated despite, or because of, such practices, through historical, structural and discursive framings. Secondly, it engages with the hints of, and possibilities for, emerging emancipatory practices through significantly modified processes, or through new alternatives.

## 2.1 Critical Perspectives of Limitations in Previous Research

Cold War peacekeeping was a major contribution in the sense of providing a tool through which a preliminary negative peace could emerge while maintaining the current status quo, Cold War and post-colonial dynamics included. It was soon realised that its negative peace could provide a basis for a more ambitious peacemaking process, which might reconstitute the state along more liberal lines, as was the case with the attempts at UN mediation in the Cyprus conflict in the mid-1960s (see for example United Nations, 1965). This ambition was partly spurred by the necessity of avoiding any relapse into conflict, but also by growing - and UN-supported (Mazower, 2012) - expectations of more progressive forms of politics at the international and domestic levels. Indeed many subjects of such interventions in conflict-affected societies welcomed liberal reforms along with the removal of discriminatory power structures and elites.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a considerably shortened version of the original paper which was published in the *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 2014, 21(4), 509-519.



After the Cold War, integrated missions and peacebuilding interventions radically extended conflict management's logic, indicating an ambition to create a liberal peace and state, even without the consent of populations, factions or indeed elites. This reflected a political and economic rationality that had become clear in the role of the international financial institutions in post-socialist countries at the end of the Cold War (IBRD and World Bank, 2005). It involved a top-down reconstruction of regional order, the state, its institutions and law, its economy and society. International consent and legitimacy were preferable but not necessarily required, whilst local consent and legitimacy were not required and perhaps not even preferable.

Light and heavy footprint approaches were experimented with during this era: light footprint approaches aimed to improve local consent and legitimacy and to avoid overextension, whereas heavy footprint approaches served to ensure that local pathologies of power did not upset the new, liberal peace (see for example Suhrke, 2011a). But such 'integrated' approaches have threatened or destabilised local and international power structures while trying to produce order, challenged national sovereignty, stretched the capacity of the international community to the limits, tested its resolve and exposed hegemonic interests.

More efficient and elaborate forms of conflict management have emerged in an evolutionary process rather than by design. The latest is statebuilding (already waning in policy appeal), which to critical thinkers is an ideological and bureaucratic contamination of the earlier goals associated with liberal norms, humanitarianism and human security. Nevertheless, all these approaches tend to suffer from a range of destabilising consequences. Firstly, they avoid or compromise on sensitive diplomatic problems, preferring instead the exercise of power or a fudged resolution. Secondly, a limited power-sharing framework tends to be developed more or less always within the confines of territorial sovereignty (eschewing some of the more positive lessons of the European project). Thirdly, they depend on very limited resources to provide security, development and rights, preferring efficiency over justice. Approaches to peace and development fare poorly relative to arms budgets or extractive industrial investment (Archer and Willi, 2012). Fourthly, they often weaken the need for pluralism with respect to identity problems, preferring instead to use territorial division to establish power-sharing mechanisms. Fifthly, they avoid discussions of justice in historical and contemporary, local and global settings, especially vis-à-vis material aspects of conflict, meaning the issues of the dispute are not addressed. Finally, they avoid questions of deep reconciliation, and ultimately end up replicating exclusion and division albeit in softened form.

Liberal peacebuilding duties create significant pressure because integrated missions have long moved away from a broad local, social-to-elite consent basis. The question is whether the later generations of peacekeepers are, in a sense, architects of their own downfall because they have neglected local sites of legitimate authority in favour of the liberal international, which

itself has limited capacities for enforcement or conditionality. Recent tendencies towards trusteeship in order to compensate for local opposition and insurgency (as in BiH, Iraq or Afghanistan), or light footprint engagements designed to promote local 'resilience' (Chandler, 2012), skirt around the problem of how to make a progressive peace that its subjects feel is legitimate.

Such interventionism has been constantly challenged, however, not just by 'spoilers' as with the Taliban in Afghanistan, but by local populations concerned with global distributive justice, the erosion of identity, the role-back of state welfare, the onslaught of international capital, the loss of long-standing patronage frameworks and localised forms of legitimate authority. Thus, such approaches appear not to herald peace and progress but indeed offer new disruptions as noted across the Balkans with the growing phenomena of nostalgia for the old Yugoslav system (Judah, 2009). Such problem-solving approaches appeared to be status quo oriented, seeking to 'stabilise' (e.g. the UK military now have a policy aimed at 'stabilisation')<sup>2</sup> a homogenous states-system subject to international capital rather than a just international order.

This opposition is over the terms of progressive peace in the 21st century in normative and ideological terms, and over how it might be organised and supported. It raises a number of challenges related to structural North/South inequality and representation, the naturalisation of the currently unequal international order, continuing socio-economic and gender inequality (see for example Björkdahl and Mannergren, 2013), the problem or issue of identity and its implications for institutional and legal design, the issue of legitimacy and consent, and the securitising impacts of the 'bunkerisation' of the aid, peace and development industry.

## 2.2 New Directions: Modifications or Alternatives?

Peace operations have become overloaded by a range of humanitarian, political (and ideological), technical and administrative, as well as developmental tasks. Peacekeeping style activities continue to substitute for the often limited Weberian state control of the means of violence, or oversee its development. In Cyprus, regional security concerns have displaced political, legal and social concerns with a relatively comfortable status quo, which has become almost unbreachable by a peace settlement even within the EU. In Kosovo security concerns meant the co-optation of political institutions into an ethno-nationalist, self-determination state project (albeit one with some guarantees for minorities). In BiH it has meant trusteeship-style governance and deadlock over a type of state and economic model few support (other than, perhaps, in terms of ethno-nationalism) and, ultimately, recent social unrest.<sup>3</sup> In Afghanistan 'war on terror'-driven intervention and reform toward a 'good enough' state have become the target of a new wave of violence by those excluded, notably the Taliban, meaning that all internationals, from the military to peacebuilders, have become targets.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Roger Mac Ginty for this point.

<sup>3</sup> "The latest troubles in Bosnia may wake up the country's inept leaders", *The Economist*, 15th February, 2014.

None of these examples suggest that the aspirations for positive peace, liberal peace, democracy, human rights, development, human or state security have been achieved through the contemporary mix of peace, institutions, law, markets, technology and intervention.

This raises the question of whether a return to simpler, or more consent-based, quasi-neutral and impartial approaches might be better in order to foreground locally-driven solutions. But this could not, in a globalised world and an embedded international system, produce radical alternatives, though it suggests a lot more flexibility and local ownership. Could a progressive peace connected to various forms of intervention be made more plausible and legitimate across local-scale contexts, and might consent-oriented approaches be more appropriate frameworks through which to respond to root causes? How might ethno-nationalist politicians be persuaded to negotiate for a pluralist entity? How might ideologically opposed liberation movements, or violent factions with other motivations, be brought into peace processes, thus mitigating the possibility of peacekeeping and peacebuilding being caught up in fresh outbreaks of political violence (as in Sri Lanka in 2007, but also at various points in Timor Leste, Kosovo and Sierra Leone)?

These are especially important questions now that critical positions on the connection between peace and progressive forms of politics are widely accepted and aspired to. It is unlikely that the liberal peace/ neoliberal state system can deal with most of the claims that are being made. Rather peace missions will support hybrid forms of peace (Richmond, 2014), where legitimacy is measured from a mixture of local, state and international perspectives. Does the related 'local turn' (see amongst others Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013; Autesserre 2010; Kappler, 2014), the need for which has been well illustrated by recent work on the DRC or BiH among many other cases, and the need for greater legitimacy on the ground require less intervention (Suhrke, 2011b) but perhaps more 'enablement' of local agency (see above IBRD and World Bank, 2005)?

Critical theory is in general suspicious of inequalities and injustices in IR as well as the exercise of power, and has been a natural contributor to the debates about what type of peace and states-system is being negotiated, mediated, kept or built.<sup>4</sup> One strand of the debate, however, is comfortable with the idea that the liberal peace system needs to be maintained by the use of force if necessary because it at least provides for rights and representation in a thinly cosmopolitan international community. This approach has converged on a 'trusteeship' project for peacebuilding and statebuilding (see for example Ignatieff, 2003), which merely requires the implementation of liberal peace and neoliberal statebuilding. Another strand of critical theory is much more concerned about the fact that even this cosmopolitan project is contaminated by great power interests, capitalist ideology and Eurocentric preferences, and is also failing to deal decisively with inequality or injustice, local or historical. These two versions may be differentiated in the Coxian sense: problem-solving approaches culminate in the refinement of the existing

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<sup>4</sup> For a survey, see Richmond, 2008.

international order aimed at liberal or neoliberal peace (leading in practice to a negative hybrid form), while critical approaches require structural transformation if a sustainable (and so probably positive hybrid) peace is to emerge (Cox, 1981).

## 2.3 Conclusion: Implications for Future Research

The goal of ending violence (both overt and structural), whilst avoiding using violence (both overt and structural), is a critical goal for a world in which rights, democracy, justice and independence are equated with more positive, emancipatory and empathetic forms of peace.

Engagement with and enablement of local agency, peace formation from below and micro-level understandings of the requirements of what would potentially create a positive hybrid form of peace are necessary. A peace process may be defined as progressive *in the eyes of broad local constituencies*, as well as vis-à-vis international norms. Indeed, the local scale provides a positionality from which the specific modalities of structural reform at the state and international level can both be understood and also evaluated. The broad requirements of peace when seen from below determine - at least partly - what may be progressive about the state and the international's contribution to peace.

Managing expectations has been very difficult. Nationalism, discrimination and non-democratic or capitalist power structures are condemned by internationals, who are nonetheless often forced to work with the authoritarian state forms they have produced- as in Cambodia and Rwanda. Hints of paternalism, trusteeship, illiberal governance, as well as the problem of global inequality tend to be condemned by host governments and populations alike.

In the light of these difficult debates, some clear assertions can be made about new generations of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and state-building, as well as their implications for the international system. The conflict-affected subject is the focus of peace interventions, but must be understood to be the basis for legitimacy and politically autonomous rather than as the subject of intervention and modernisation. The architecture of a progressive peace must emanate from a wide variety of local to international scale contexts and be reflected in the structural reform of the machinery and models of peace at the international level. But this should be subject-driven. This means there cannot be a single blueprint approach, and the form of state and economic model will vary. This should reflect both local legitimacy and international (i.e. not merely northern/elite) legitimacy and a broad, global (i.e. not northern) scientific consensus as the basis for a progressive form of politics within the state.

These comments call for a research agenda that is defined by the subjects of peacekeeping and peacebuilding - a radical re-orientation of research away from the interests of states or problem-solving research agendas, which maintain the 'natural' historical hierarchy of international order. Research could focus on how to achieve broader consent, what would be on the agenda for such voices, and how peace and the state may be reframed accordingly. Research could also focus on how internal systems of discrimination, whether on an identity, social class or gender basis may be reformed consensually, as well as how far better accountability mechanisms might emerge at local, state and international levels.

Peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and statebuilding are clearly vital to maintaining the current order. They have formed part of the interventionist, modernisation and trusteeship project, which has naturalised the current international hierarchy. The question is whether this evolving system can still aid in the development of a more secure and just order. Can inequality and injustice be addressed in an era of structural conflict in order to achieve more sustainable forms of reconciliation, while avoiding trusteeship style impositions? Since the recent New Deal and other indications, including the emergence of the G7+,<sup>5</sup> there are signs that the necessary structural reforms needed to improve global and local-scale legitimacy are returning to the international agenda. Intervention, peacebuilding and statebuilding appear to be something the international community and populations around the world cannot yet do without.

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5 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, Republic of Korea, 29 November – 1 December 2011). See also <http://www.g7plus.org/>.

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# A Gendered Reading of Peace<sup>1</sup>

Annika Björkdahl

Scholars from various disciplines, theoretical perspectives and methodological convictions have proposed different pieces of the peace puzzle.<sup>2</sup> As these sometimes disparate pieces of the puzzle are fit together, the missing pieces become more visible. Gender is among them. As gender studies, feminist IR scholars and peace and conflict researchers informed by a gender perspective have contributed to this puzzle, new and critical questions concerning the quality of peace have been raised: Whose peace? Peace for whom? How do men and women experience war and peace differently? What is a gender-just peace?

Such questions have helped rethinking progressive peace. Efforts to grapple with these questions have influenced and contributed to refashioning the agenda of peace education and identified conflict resolution practices that are gender-sensitive. By rethinking, peace scholars and peace activists alike have advanced peace-intensive notions of politics, power and security, added the dimension of militarism by connecting gender and militarism, patriarchy and war, and mapped the different effects of conflict on men and women, as well as the marginalisation of women in conflict resolution and peace processes. These endeavours advance a critical and progressive way of thinking about peace, and it becomes clear that looking through the gender lens brings “new” aspects of peace to the forefront.

This article highlights how progressive peace research can be understood from a gender perspective: It situates peace in gender studies and rethinks peace beyond the liberal peace paradigm. This article argues that if peace research should continue to be a progressive force, it should not shy away from discussions about gender but challenge gender hierarchies of power and confront various power relations of domination and subordination.

## 3.1 A Progressive Peace – A Gender-Just Peace

In gender studies, peace is a progressive notion. Yet, efforts to promote progressive notions of peace or peace(s) such as positive peace, emancipatory peace, gendered peace, or gender-just peace are seen as utopian and thus regarded irrelevant to the conventional, conservative analysis of war and peace. A gendered reading of peace reveals an understanding of peace that moves beyond the negative peace towards what the founder of modern peace research, Johan Galtung, coined as positive peace (Galtung, 1969). In contrast to the limited negative peace, which refers to the absence of specific forms of violence associated with war, positive peace requires not only that all types of violence are minimal or non-existent, but also that the major potential causes of future conflict are removed. An egalitarian vision of ‘positive peace’ generally embodies equality between ethnic and regional groups. Far less often does it mention equality among the sexes.

While gender scholars have critiqued Galtung for neglecting the issue of gender in his early writings, his research opened up a space for discussion of

1 For a more detailed discussion about situating peace in gender see the chapter Gender - the missing piece in the peace puzzle by Annika Björkdahl and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic forthcoming in Oliver Richmond et al. *Dimensions of Peace* (Routledge 2015).

2 Debates about peace span both classical and contemporary literatures, and a range of intellectual debates and it is beyond the scope of this article to recapture these debates. Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace in IR* (Routledge: Abingdon and New York, 2008) provides an excellent overview of the genealogy of peace in IR.



gender in relation to structural peace and positive peace. In addition, the creation of a culture of peace is central to Galtung's peace concept. A culture of peace would include education for peace, the replacement of military values with social justice and equality and sharing of political and economic power, while tackling poverty and inequality. Galtung's emphasis on the need for peace at the level of the people, in the everyday where women are active, rather than the state, where women often lack representation and/or are absent, are clearly of particular relevance to conceptualisations of peace from a gender perspective.

In contrast to most models of peace, feminist notions turn the conventional state-centric models upside-down by locating peace at the micro-level in the everyday and conceptualise peace 'from the personal, experiential level' in terms of the lived lives of people on the ground. Gendered readings of positive peace have also expanded the understanding of peace to foreground gender hierarchies, disclose relations of subordination, and reveal the continuities of violence, while highlighting various agencies of peace. Clearly, a gendered understanding of peace thus diverges substantially from the contemporary hegemonic notion of the liberal peace as it finds peace to be situated in the everyday and built from below. Such understanding of peace brings to the fore equality, social welfare and equity, and by being emancipatory and empowering it also provides for a shift in existing power and gender relations.

A gender-just peace is thus understood not as a reconstruction of the pre-war situation, but as a progressive peace that provides for social justice and equity, and that recognises women's social and reproductive roles, and women's agency in relation to local context and everyday issues as well as global liberal norms. It is a peace that contributes to a fundamental shift in the provision of specific rights related to women's gender roles, a transformation of gender relations in society and a redefinition of caste hierarchies.

### **3.2 Gendered Peace Gaps**

By implication, a gendered peace is distinct from the liberal peace paradigm in two ways. A gender-sensitive peace embraces universal values of human rights – at the centre of the agenda. And it challenges and criticises liberal peacebuilding for being gender-blind and for neglecting the gendered dynamics and consequences of large-scale peace-building projects.

Post-colonial feminists among others have criticised the liberal, universalist agenda and the liberal peace's echoes of colonialism. Thus, a peace meaningful to women i.e. a gender-just peace would require not just the absence of armed and gendered conflict locally and globally, but also the absence of poverty and the conditions which recreate it. The 'feminisation' of peace or the introduction of gender-just peace is not meant to be complementary but progresses beyond the liberal peace.

The gendering of peace also makes visible the indirect and long-term consequences of war over time and destabilises the temporal underpinnings of understandings of peace. The period after a conflict can be a period where women are more vulnerable to the effects of violent conflict than during the conflict itself. It has been pointed out by gender scholars that what women gain from the shifts in gender relations during the war they may lose in the cusp, in the period between war and peace. Thus the transition from war to peace emerges as a critical moment in the shifting terrain of gender power and women's important wartime gains may be lost in peacetime. Cynthia Enloe (1987) brings to the fore the feminisation of poverty prior to, in the midst of and post-conflict by regarding peace as not just the absence of armed and gender conflict but also as the absence of poverty and the conditions which recreate poverty. Such understanding allows Enloe to provide us with a definition of peace as 'women's control over their own lives'.

Gender-blind peacebuilding practices and the absence of women in the peace process hence often produce "peace gaps" that are gendered. Peace gaps are shortfalls between internationally brokered peace accords and local understandings of a just peace. Women, as subjects of peace, are marginalised and their voices nothing but a whisper in the margins. Despite the fact that gender empowerment has become a standard tool in international peacebuilding, many peace processes are characterised by a conservative backlash for women, and this has become a hallmark of women's post-war experience in many places. Thus, few women benefit from the peace dividend and this certainly has implications for the quality of peace women experience. By showing more respect for the subjects of peace and recognising women as subjects of peace, peacebuilding could give women a voice in peace processes and provide space for women to exercise agency.

### 3.3 The Paradox of Gendered Peace

Such critical insights and questions have fed into the rethinking of peace within gender studies and continue to be developed in a productive and close constitutive relationship with the world of policy and activism. The most noticeable advances for gendering peace are linked to the Women Peace and Security agenda (WPS) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 with the ambition to ensure that all aspects of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction were to be undertaken with sensitivity towards gender. It was a landmark victory for women peace activists and lobbyists from all over the world. The UNSCR 1325 stresses three key concepts: protection, presence and participation, addressing not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in building sustainable peace. The adoption of the resolution has in turn triggered an on-going and fruitful critique and further conceptualisation of the gendered peace construed in the resolution, e.g. pointing out

how it constitutes women as a homogenous group and delimits their agency within the presence and participation paradigm, in a direct dialogue with the critical gender research that questions such set roles.

The liberal peacebuilding agenda has been partly constituted, partly constitutive of these global policy developments, and ideas of human security and the UNSCR 1325 are part of the liberal peacebuilding machinery. In this sense, the concept of liberal peace has been used to encompass women's rights. Indeed, gender equality is often held up as an intrinsic value of liberal peacebuilding and the plight of women and girls has repeatedly been used as a *raison d'être* for interventions. However, in practice, liberal peacebuilding undertakings by international actors at elite level have repeatedly failed to pursue gender equality as part of the peace process and the UNSCR 1325 is often ignored. As attempts to rearrange gender relations are perceived as possibly jeopardising the entire peace process, the issue of women's rights rarely enters peace negotiations making gender invisible in the peace settlement and in the post-conflict situation.

Thus, despite the fact that local feminist peace activists agendas often converge with the universal rights and liberal peace paradigm, gender equality is an issue that tends to be downplayed by international actors in response to local processes of (re)traditionalisation and social conservatism. This is a paradox of gendered power at the core of contemporary liberal peacebuilding.

### 3.4 Concluding Reflections

Peace as the absence of war does not measure up and the dominant discourse and practice of the liberal democratic peace can no longer set the standard for progressive peace. Such peace is fragile and tentative, lacking the conditions which enable it to be continually recreated. Peace is not established after the eradication of large-scale violent conflict alone, but when the women and men of post-conflict societies themselves perceive there to be an everyday peace that includes gender equality, equal rights and opportunities. Yet, these issues rarely enter the peace negotiations, making gender issues invisible in the peace settlement and in the post-conflict situation. Thus, global ideas of a liberal democratic peace and the gendered dynamics of peacebuilding need to be confronted if a gender-just and self-sustainable peace is to be envisioned. Gendered conceptualisations of peace travel from the academic realm of theory to the field of practice and as such impact policies and practices pertaining to Human Security, Responsibility to Protect, UNSCR 1325 and liberal peacebuilding. Uncovering the gendered hierarchies of conventional understandings of peace and revealing the gender dynamics of contemporary peacebuilding practices requires that peace research is strengthened and informed by a gender perspective.

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# Does Ethnic Inclusion Cause Peace? Overcoming Problems of Endogeneity

Lars-Erik Cederman

Previous empirical research has shown that the exclusion of ethnic groups increases the probability of civil war (Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013). Based on such findings, it is natural to conclude that ethnic inclusion would guarantee peace. Yet, power sharing in its territorial and governmental forms remains controversial.

In part, this is so because ethnic groups' power access cannot be treated as an exogenous factor. Governments may well include or exclude groups with an eye to the likelihood of future conflict. Indeed, governmental policies toward inclusion or exclusion are endogenous to conflict rather than being administered randomly. This article discusses some ways to overcome this problem. First, however, a few words about the research question itself are in order.

## 4.1 Exclusion and Ethno-Nationalist Civil War

Ethno-nationalist conflict is arguably the most important type of civil wars. Yet, most of the contemporary literature on civil war advances materialist accounts based on greed and opportunities inspired by economics while regarding explanations rooted in political and economic grievances with considerable suspicion (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Applying statistical tools to the problem, the conclusion drawn in some of the most influential research is that ethnic groups' grievances do not drive patterns of political violence. In a nutshell, researchers argue that ethnic frustrations are too widespread to be linked to internal conflict.

To a large extent, however, this ubiquity-of-grievances argument remains an untested assumption (Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013). The problem is that grievances, including those stemming from political exclusion and economic inequality along ethnic lines, are notoriously difficult to measure directly (Blattman and Miguel 2010). As argued by Cederman and Giardin (2007), the indicators used in the current literature, such as the Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization index and the Gini coefficient of inequality, capture interactions among individuals but say little to nothing about group-level conflict processes. Rather than being an individualist phenomenon, however, ethno-nationalist civil wars are fought between states and rebel organisations that claim to represent, and are actually supported by, ethnic groups.

Moreover, the conventional measures of ethnicity are merely demographic and therefore do not differentiate between groups that are included in the government and those that are not. Analysts who focus on ethno-demographic aspects of ethnicity, such as diversity or polarisation, thus overlook the power of ethno-nationalism (Cederman 2013). In contrast to ethnicity, nationalism is by definition about access to state power. Whereas members of ethnic groups sometimes clash in communal conflicts with little

state involvement, civil wars ultimately are about control of the state, whether the goal is to oust the current government or to create a breakaway state through secession.

While it is hard to capture grievances directly, it is possible to identify structural situations in which ethno-nationalist violence might be especially likely (Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013). Wherever ethnically distinct populations are ruled by governments perceived to be foreign, the principle of nationalism is violated. Viewed as being profoundly unjust by those excluded from power, such situations bring forth collective emotions of resentment that can be exploited by rebel organisations to challenge the state. In such situations, the risk of violence increases substantially, as illustrated by the conflicts that brought down the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires in the early 20th century and the European colonial empires during the second half of the same century. If subjected to “alien rule”, organisations claiming to represent excluded groups may attempt to challenge the government directly or indirectly by demanding a greater degree of autonomy or even independence.

The dataset Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) provides information about the power status of all politically relevant ethnic groups around the world from 1945 and 2009.<sup>1</sup> It can be accessed through a data portal on the ICR web page.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on civil wars in sovereign states after the end of World War II, research shows that groups excluded from influence over the executive, especially those whose power was recently reduced or entirely blocked, are much more likely to engage in civil violence than those that enjoy secure access to state power (Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013).

## 4.2 The Problem of Endogeneity

What is accounting for the increased degree of ethnic inclusion? Gurr (2000) holds that the willingness of governments to include ethnic minorities through power sharing is the main reason for the pacifying trend since the end of the Cold War. However, much existing research comes to fundamentally different conclusions, largely arguing against the merits of power sharing institutions as a means for conflict management (Bunce 1999; Snyder 2000; Roeder 2005). Observing that such arrangements often collapse into fresh violence, there are even those who argue that it is better to give “war a chance” as a way to redraw the ethnic map and thus produce stability (Luttwak 1999).

The argument that ethnic inclusion through power sharing often fails is not in itself a valid objection if conflict would have broken out sooner, or may be even more likely in its absence. Put differently, since power sharing is not randomly assigned and in fact probably more likely in difficult cases where tensions are high or conflict has already occurred, we cannot conclude that it causes more harm than good on the basis of simple static correlations.

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of this dataset was developed with researchers then at UCLA, see Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://growup.ethz.ch/>.

Failing to understand this type of reverse causation would lead us to identify hospitals as a threat against patients' health, since more people are ill in hospitals than elsewhere. However, the reason why people are hospitalised is often that they are seriously ill and are more likely to die (thus the positive arrow from death to hospital). This by no means excludes that their mortality is actually reduced by seeking medical treatment in a hospital (Wucherpfennig 2011).

Power sharing may look conflict-inducing, whereas in reality, this stems from reverse causation because such arrangements are only implemented where the risk of conflict is high in the first place (McGarry and O'Leary 2009; Grigorian 2012).

Thus, the reasons for governments' decisions to exclude or include would have to be factored into the analysis, or we would not be able to assess their influence on conflict. In fact, the aforementioned results on the link between exclusion and conflict also suffer from this potential problem of reverse causation (Fearon 2011).

Rather than naively tallying the power status and political stability in case after case, we have to adopt a strategy to overcome the problem of reverse causation. One way is to include the very choice of policy into the analysis. Another one is to find an alternative measure of power status that is not influenced by conflict.

Striving to overcome these difficulties, the International Conflict Research at ETH Zürich has adopted both strategies. In his dissertation, Wucherpfennig (2011) explicitly models the reasons why governments decide to exclude groups. If this part of the decision-making process is taken into account, power sharing does not look so bad anymore, very much like hospitals are not inherently lethal. In other words, according to this research, power sharing and inclusion are likely to occur when the chances for peace are slim to begin with, since governments which have relied on exclusion in the past would usually prefer to uphold these types of arrangements unless they anticipate a serious threat.

Relying on the technique of "strategic estimation" (Signorino 1999), Wucherpfennig is able to show that once reverse causation is taken into account, it turns out that criticisms of power sharing -- at least for post-conflict situations -- have been overstated. His research shows that the risk of conflict outbreak under power sharing is particularly low in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and this effect persists for decades, since the risk of conflict for exclusionary status quo regimes is consistently higher.

Illustrating the second approach to endogeneity, Wucherpfennig, Hunziger and Cederman (2012) attempt to find a measure of exclusion that is independent of conflict. Focusing on post-colonial states, they exploit differences in the colonial empires' approach to the ethnicity of colonised

populations within each colony. Findings indicate that contrary to the French ethnically neutral approach that tended to include those groups that were close to the coast, the British application of “selective indirect rule” made peripheral groups more, rather than less, influential. Thanks to this variation in terms of colonial strategies and group locations, they come up with a clean estimate of initial exclusion in post-colonial states, and use this variable as an explanation of internal conflict. Based on this research strategy, the results are very clear: they confirm previous studies that explain ethno-nationalist conflict in terms of limited power access. If anything, this work has tended to underestimate the actual conflict-inducing impact of political exclusion.

Even more recently, Cederman, Hug, Schädel and Wucherpfennig (2013) exploit differences in the frequency of autonomy arrangements between states that emerged from the French and British colonial empires. Whereas the French preferred a more direct style of rule, the British often favoured autonomous institutions. Based on this contrast, an exogenous measure of autonomy can be constructed. This study also comes to the result that inclusive institutions become more likely in anticipation of future conflict.

### 4.3 Conclusions

This brief summary of research suggests that quantitative conflict analysis provides us with tools to overcome pitfalls haunting causal analysis of conflict. These attempts to address endogeneity support the search for policies that stand the best chance of bringing peace to war-torn areas. In particular, one should note that ethnic inclusion, usually through power sharing, appears to help pacify war-torn countries. Of course, there is no guarantee that there will be no reversals in the future. But for now, conflict resolution through compromises and decentralisation appears to be a safer bet than ethnic domination.



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# 5

## Critical Notes on Categories of Peacebuilding and Peace Research

Briony Jones and Didier Péclard

### 5.1 Introduction

As peace researchers we are primarily engaged in knowledge production; we aim to add value to and shape discourse in ways, which are beneficial for increasing understanding of the idea and practice of 'peace'. The methods through which we conduct our research are the subject of lively and necessary debates, some of which are reflected in the contributions of this working paper. Here, we would like to reflect on a connected issue: that of the making, shaping, and use of categories. The way in which we label that which we seek to know, and that which we make claims to know, is fundamental to the process of research and it has direct implications far beyond the confines of the academic community. The use of categories is a necessary way of labelling and organising the world around us but it is just as necessary to reflect critically on the categories used in peace research. This is because they determine the knowledge, which we produce, the way in which it can be understood and used by others in a broader scholarly exchange, and the way in which it interacts with the practice of peacebuilding. Accordingly, we have selected three widely used categories in peace research to reflect on how we choose and give content to the categories we use, whether such categories are developed a priori or through exchange in the field, connected methodological challenges, and how such categories can be applied in often fluid and complex field environments.

### 5.2 'Peace' and 'War'

Debates about the meaning and definition of peace have been at the heart of peace research since its early days. During the Cold War, talking about or researching peace was by definition political, and war was equally perceived and understood as a primarily political project. Since the end of the Cold War however, dominant perceptions of peace and war as both analytical categories and fields of action have undergone a parallel process of de-politicisation. This process has had important effects on the hermeneutics of peace and on our understanding of the transition from war to peace.

With the gradual institutionalisation of peacebuilding in the wake of the 1992 Agenda for Peace, 'peace' as a category of research and action became an increasingly technical matter, which required the development of adequate policies and tools by specialised divisions within bilateral and international donor agencies. In the time of 'peace by bureaucratic means' (Goetschel and Hagmann 2009), peacebuilding, in a similar way to development, became an 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1994). In parallel, dominant discourses about the origins and causes of violent warfare started to question the idea of war as a political project. With widely publicised works such as Collier's economistic perspective on the causes of conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 1999) and Kaldor's distinction between 'old and new' wars, whereby the "new wars" of the 1990s were no longer fought "with" or "alongside the people" in defence of clearly

articulated political projects sustained by identifiable ideologies, but “against the people” by greedy rebels exclusively interested in getting their share of the economic and political cake (1999), war equally came to be considered as anything but a political project.

The main problem with such arguments is that they “serve to set up a dichotomy between war as some kind of inherent ‘bad’ (the world ruled by instincts and base desire), and peace as an ideal ‘good’ (the world ruled by principle and law) (Richards and Helander 2005: 3). But (civil) war is much more than a social and moral aberration. It is “not a stupid thing” (Cramer 2006) and rather needs to be analysed as “one social project among many competing social projects” (Richards and Helander 2005: 3).

In that respect, peace research faces two main challenges. Firstly, it needs to move away from the tendency to oppose war and peace as distinct analytical categories and to focus on the historical, social and political continuities between both. Secondly, it needs to reflect on how civil wars contribute to shaping and producing political orders, rather than simply destroying them (Kalyvas 2006; Arjona 2008; Péclard 2011; Arnaut and Højbjerg 2008). Indeed, wars are not only the violent expression of deep-rooted social conflicts; they are also moments and sites where alternative social orders can be created and as such are inherently linked to long-term processes of state formation.

### 5.3 ‘Local’ and ‘International’

In the context of a recent ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding research (Richmond 2010 and 2011, MacGinty 2011 and Wallis 2012) the categories of ‘local’ and ‘international’ remain as pertinent as ever, either to define and target actors and spaces, or to be critiqued as analytically and empirically problematic. Indeed it seems hard to move beyond potentially simplistic language when there still remains a need to talk about and identify different types of actors, spaces and practices, which are relevant for peacebuilding. A group of scholars have attempted to do just that by engaging with the idea of ‘hybridity’ and ‘hybrid peace’ but it is not yet clear whether such work can move us forward in this debate.

Scholarship on hybrid peace starts from a position of the ‘international’ versus the ‘local’ and questions the ways in which external actors intervene in post conflict contexts. Such critiques include the imposition of western norms of liberalism, a lack of understanding of the local contexts in which violence and peace occur, a top-down approach which favours external ‘expertise’ rather than local ‘knowledge’ and a one-size-fits all approach in the face of diverse local cultures (van Leeuwen, Verkoren and Boedeltje 2012). From these critiques has emerged the use of the term ‘hybridity’ as a new taxonomy of peacebuilding (Heathershaw 2013). Hybridity as a term has its origins in

critical analysis of colonialism, its form and its aftermath (Young 2001). In relation to peacebuilding it is described in a multitude of ways according to varied perspectives and priorities, but in general terms it is used to refer to the mixing and transformation of the liberal (read international or external) and the local when they meet in peacebuilding contexts.

In the literature 'hybridity' is both an analytical lens through which to view societies, which are the subject of peacebuilding interventions, and at the same time a descriptive term for what scholars of hybridity believe exists as a reality on the ground. Importantly, underpinning much of the literature on hybridity, particularly that which comes from critical peace studies, is a sense of the "supposed transformative power of hybridity" in which resistance against particular forms of hegemony provides hope of an alternative to liberal peacebuilding interventions from the 'outside' (Peterson 2012: 16). However, hybrid forms of peacebuilding do not entirely escape the categorisation challenges posed by the use of terms such as 'international' and 'local'. In much of the literature a notion of distinct categories remain, at least in the shadow, despite their supposed mixing and re-shaping. Work by Shaw and Waldorf (2010) on localised forms of transitional justice is interesting here as they take a somewhat different approach to hybridity and speak instead of mutually constitutive positionalities and standpoints rather than fixed categories, such as 'international' and 'local'.

Research on peacebuilding engaging directly with the complexities of empirics is often well placed to draw out such standpoints that cut across the categories of local and international and go further towards defending against the romanticisation or demonisation of either category (see for example Hellmüller 2014 and 2013). If researchers are able to do this then locally relevant knowledge and sensitivity to context will start to define the legitimacy of any given actor to intervene in a peacebuilding context, rather than a fixed categorisation of being either 'local' or 'international'.

## 5.4 'Identity'

Civil wars have increasingly been considered as resulting from deeply engrained divisions between competing communities within a given society, and these communities as defined primarily on the basis of their cultural, religious, ethnic or social identity. Identity politics, so the argument goes, took over from ideology as a factor of conflict. As a consequence, peacebuilding in deeply divided societies is also often understood as an effort to bridge divisions between the communities that went to war against each other by various mechanisms including power sharing, dialogue workshops and integrated schooling. There is little doubt that identities have played and continue to play an important role in many violent conflicts across the world, and that identity politics can have devastating effects in contexts of transition from war to peace. The problem, however, is that identities have tended to be

taken for granted as ontological or primordial categories and thereby risk being reified in peacebuilding and peace research despite their inherently dynamic and changing nature.

Firstly, in research on the role of identities as a source of conflict it is important not to conflate causes with instruments. Identities are very potent mobilising tools, but waging war in the name of a particular identity group does not necessarily mean that the roots of the conflict are ethnic, religious or linked to inter-communal enmity. Violent conflict shapes identities as much as they are shaped by it. Secondly, identity categories are not necessarily efficient as mobilising tools, and their mobilising potential depends on the political context, as Péclard (2012) has shown in relation to the mobilisation of ethnicity during the anti-colonial war in Angola. Thirdly, framing transition processes and peacebuilding interventions on the basis of claims made during conflict regarding certain identity categories risks reifying and fixing very dynamic processes of identity formation.

It is crucial therefore for peace researchers to disaggregate and deconstruct identity categories, even when these are formulated by social actors themselves as a crucial element of the conflict or post-conflict political settlement. Jones (2009) has taken such an approach in her research on reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country in which an understanding of the 1992-1995 war as ethno-national has dominated analyses of conflict dynamics and also the design and analyses of peacebuilding interventions. Looking specifically at reconciliation policies in the multi-ethnic district of Brčko, she has critiqued the way in which peacebuilding actors relied on ethno-national identity categories, meaning a policy of reconciliation in which mixing of fixed ethno-national categories was not only a pre-condition for a reconciliation intervention but was counted as an indication of its success. However, case studies on education (2012, 2011a), local government (2011b), and interactions with the state (2009 and 2011b), demonstrated that Brčko District residents would find ethno-national identity more or less relevant in different places and different times, depending on the dynamics of ongoing contestations over social and political membership. This illuminated the complex, contested and perhaps even contradictory ways in which identity categories were independent from, shaped by, and formed in reaction to peacebuilding intervention in Brčko District.

## 5.5 Concluding Remarks

To return to the questions posed in the introduction, the brief examples given here demonstrate that the categories we as peace researchers use to make sense of the phenomenon we study are part of an important and ongoing exchange about how best to produce and apply knowledge on violence and peace. But these categories may also constrain knowledge production if we take for granted their content and fix them as immovable points on our epistemological landscapes. Innovative, honest methodologies and reflexive work

are required to allow for the possibility that the categories we choose to work with may not best reflect the realities we seek to shed light on. To hold on to categories when they no longer provide us with new or relevant insights is a greater danger than to risk re-working or even leaving them behind. Such a progression is a necessarily collaborative effort between all those who produce knowledge: researchers, practitioners, activists, and the people themselves who are the subjects and objects of the work that we do.

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# 6

## Critical Peace Research and Policy

Thania Paffenholz

This short essay deals with the question whether peace research, understood as a critical science, can be, should be or must be relevant for policy. This question is pertinent, but not new at all.

Since its inception in the early 1950s, peace research has faced an inherent dilemma. Its critical notion has always been in conflict with its policy orientation. As a value-oriented science, “peace research must meet the needs of the decision-makers” and thus engage with the power holders in the international system. This makes proposals for fundamental change in the international system practically impossible as “only adaptive change within the system is possible” (Schmid, 1968: 229). This observation from the late 1960s holds true until today.

Peace research has always struggled with accusations of being either not sufficiently critical or not sufficiently policy relevant. Hence, the core question that arises still today is how peace research can be both, policy-relevant and critical as Jutila, Pehkonen and Väyrynen analyse: the “lack of criticality and policy relevance marks, in our view, the death of peace research’ (2008: 625).

The more systematic establishment of a deliberately critical peace-building research school (CPR) in recent years is a very timely and needed endeavour. Its further consolidation with a journal in 2012 (Journal of Peacebuilding) and the foundation of a new association for peace and conflict studies with an annual conference invites to critically reflect upon the state and future direction of critical peacebuilding research with special emphasis on its policy orientation.

How CPR deals with the issue of power is of particular interest here. On the one hand, the analysis of power within international and local peacebuilding structures is the subject of inquiry of critical peacebuilding. On the other hand, the distance of CPR from these power centres shows that critical peacebuilding is at risk of becoming a self-referential system that is most critical but insufficiently change-oriented.

Peace research has been an ‘oriented’ science from its inception. It wants to contribute to social change and justice. As mentioned, this policy-oriented notion has always been in conflict with the critical character of peace research. How peace research can be a fundamentally critical science and relevant to policy at the same time, has been a subject of lively debates in the late 1960s. In essence, these debates centred on the core question of achieving a certain closeness to power holders without limiting the critical essence of research.

Interestingly this question has not been the subject of much debate in CPR while it has been debated in other peacebuilding schools (see below). This is puzzling. Has this debate simply been forgotten, deliberately ignored or do we see a change in *Zeitgeist* where CPR does not want to contribute to change any more?

It is clear that an overemphasis on policy relevance can be the end of CPR. Disproportionate focus on policy can narrow the perspective of research as only system-immanent changes are analysed and promoted. CPR must therefore convince with critical analysis based on solid theoretical reflections and robust empirical evidence. But here comes the dilemma: Who should be convinced? At the end it is those who hold the power to contribute to change.

The compartmentalisation of peacebuilding research in different schools of thought that do not dialogue with each other has equally contributed to narrow foci on certain aspects and a lack of a broader critical cum policy-oriented perspective. How the main schools of thought in peacebuilding have addressed the 'policy versus critical' dilemma is further elaborated below:

Many peacebuilding researchers with a conflict management orientation have been successful in producing research that analyses effectiveness or ineffectiveness of peacekeeping missions, security sectors, peace negotiations or other aspects of peacebuilding.<sup>1</sup> With their work as peacebuilding analysts and experts advising decision-makers, they have contributed to improving existing sub-systems. However, this comes at a price of thinking and acting within the orthodox box of the liberal paradigm.

Representatives of the conflict resolution school have continued researching and practicing track 2 and track 1.5 dialogue workshops. In some cases, these activities resulted in enhanced quality of track 1 negotiations for example by providing new ideas or keeping track 1 alive during difficult times. Some initiatives have also been successful in connecting local and oppressed voices to the track 1 power holders. However, only limited research has been conducted analysing the transfer mechanisms used by researchers to influence change.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, only very few studies in the last 20 years have looked into the impact of these processes on change for the system as such as well as for the local voices therein.<sup>3</sup>

The conflict transformation school (mainly Lederach theories), have changed the peacebuilding practise of a generation of international and local peacebuilding NGOs and experts. Lederach's three-track model and his theory of supporting the middle range local actors has become almost a peacebuilding mantra. Paffenholz (2014) has, however, shown how the narrow interpretation of Lederach's approach by peacebuilding donors and NGOs over the past 20 years has limited the empowerment of local actors.

CPR – as mentioned earlier – has overall not had traceable impact on policy due to its deliberate distance to application. Though, CPR has further pushed the focus away from the international to the local in peacebuilding. Critical peacebuilding researchers have thereby contributed to a better understanding of the 'local', hybrid forms of interaction with the international as well as forms of resistance in the everyday. CPR has thereby revitalised the emancipatory notion of early peace research. However, much of the same

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1 See for example the volumes by the US Institute for Peace, i.e. *Turbulent Peace or Leashing the Dogs of War*.

2 See notable exceptions: Cuhadar, E. and Dayton, B. (2012). *Oslo and its aftermath. Lessons learnt from Track Two diplomacy*. *Negotiation Journal* 28(2), 155–179 as well as Fisher, R. J. (1997). *Interactive conflict resolution*. In: Zartman, I. W. (ed). *Peace-making in international conflict: Methods and techniques*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

3 See for a compilation of such works: Paffenholz, T. (2010). *Civil society and peacebuilding: A critical assessment*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

questions that peace researchers have asked themselves in a phase of critical self-reflection in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are still debated in CPR. At the core of these debates has been the question how CPR can contribute to emancipation when the subaltern is only allowed to speak through the lens of the researcher. Research has insufficiently contributed to the empowerment of the very 'local' and its agency (Paffenholz, 2014) as highlighted by the Latin American researcher Paulo Freire in his 'Pedagogy of the oppressed', where he emphasises that there is no pedagogy that is truly liberating that remains distant from the oppressed without involving them in what is to benefit them at a later time (1993). Hence, as Roberts (2011) has criticised, the inability of CPR to translate its emancipatory notion in research into alternatives to existing liberal peace orders remains a core challenge.

The challenges associated with alternatives to the liberal project are manifold: First, CPR as a matter of theoretical and moral principle in line with Foucault does not want to present meta-alternatives to the existing order of the liberal international peacebuilding project. Second, even if that principle would be nullified or some researchers would not rely on it, CPR has so far been unable to suggest valid alternatives to the liberal project. Third, within the debate on hybrid forms of governance, we find hidden alternative discourses that are, however, not made explicit and also not thought through in a critical or policy-oriented way. Moreover, the way these possible alternatives are put forward open the ground to misuse leading to more oppression and less emancipation. To avoid being misused by power politics in providing alternatives to power holders that support their power systems, CPR needs to face the challenge of being policy relevant in a responsible way.

Transferring research results into policy is not an easy undertaking. What kinds of research result are being used to inform policy has also to do with the power of transfer in general.<sup>4</sup> There is a new species of peacebuilding experts that have impact on policy. They come from research, NGOs or consultancy firms. They advise or work for governments, multilateral organisations or international and local NGOs. They are formed in degree programmes and a multitude of executive education programmes around the world. Due to the above-described compartmentalisation of peacebuilding research and education, attending a training or degree programme based on a holistic overview of the discipline is hardly possible. Hence, in general terms, these experts can be clustered along these different schools. This, in suit, determines the kind of advice decision-makers receive and what schools of thought influence policies. Andrew Mack has demonstrated, for example, how Paul Collier's research on 'Greed and Grievances' (despite heavy methodological critique on his statistical methods by established colleagues) has gained momentum in policy due to his post as research director at the World Bank. This confirms results on successful transfer from track 2 to track 1 as the proximity to decision-makers has been the most influential transfer mechanism identified. Direct advice and the provision of readymade 'how-to' tools that reduce the complexity in peacebuilding to an almost meaningless undertaking, are also high on the agenda of decision-makers when asked how

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4 See Mack, A. (2002). Civil War: Academic Research and the Policy Community. *Journal of Peace Research*, 39(5), 515-525.

they make use of research. This makes peacebuilding a technical endeavour (Hagmann and Goetschel, 2009). This critique is not new: Already in the early 1970s, researchers criticised that peace researchers have become the tools of the establishment contributing to social engineering by simplifying the research results in order to sell them to decision-makers. Schmid (1968) has, however, argued that a certain technicality in peacebuilding is needed to make it useful for decision-makers.

Though the technical nature of peacebuilding is a risk, there is another development that in fact shows that adding substance to the policy debate is not an easy task. When looking at the latest UN reports on peacebuilding or the World Development Report on Fragility and Conflict, it becomes evident that primarily researchers have authored these documents. These are overall documents of good quality as they provide useful overviews and analyses including current trends and challenges. As Heathershaw (2008) notes, nevertheless, all possible challenges and critique that could be absorbed into the existing systems is taken into account. In consequence, these documents are theoretically guiding policies, but practically, they are so complicated that practitioners on the ground rarely use them as guidance for operations.

In conclusion, the debate shows first that combining a critical and a policy-oriented notion in peace research is a challenging undertaking. Second, the attempt to be policy-oriented does not come easily into action. However, the problem within CPR is that it does not even wish to face these challenges and has so far shied away from debating transfer mechanisms that allow for critical reflection and change orientation at the same time. This short essay has not intended to provide the reader with ready-made answers but rather calls for a substantial debate on the future direction of critical peacebuilding scholarship as responsible scholarship in an understanding of Chomski's 'Responsibility of the Intellectuals' (1967).

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# Evaluation and Funding in Peace Research

Michael Brzoska

*A quantitative evaluator, a qualitative evaluator, and a normal person are waiting for a bus. The normal person suddenly shouts, "Watch out, the bus is out of control and heading right for us! We will surely be killed!"*

*The quantitative evaluator calmly responds, "That is an awfully strong causal claim you are making. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that buses can kill people, but the research does not bear it out. People ride buses all the time and they are rarely killed by them. The correlation between riding buses and being killed by them is very nearly zero. It is such an extraordinary thing to be killed by a bus, I wouldn't worry."*

*When the normal person continues to shout: "The bus is coming, it will kill us," the qualitative evaluator interjects, "What exactly do you mean by bus? After all, we all construct our own understanding of that very fluid concept. For some, the bus is a mere machine, for others it is what connects them to their work, their school, the ones they love. I mean, have you ever sat down and really considered the bus-ness of it all? I hope I am not being too forward, but may I be a critical friend for just a moment? I don't think you've really thought this whole bus thing out. It would be a pity to go about pushing the sort of simple linear logic that connects something as conceptually complex as a bus to an outcome as one dimensional as death."*

*Very dismayed, the normal person runs away screaming, the bus collides with the quantitative and qualitative evaluators, and it kills both instantly.*

*Very, very dismayed, the normal person begins pleading with a bystander, "I told them the bus would kill them. The bus did kill them. Why didn't they believe me?"*

*To which the bystander replies, "Tut tut, my good man. I am a "randomista", an expert on the analysis of cause and effects. And I can tell you that with a sample size of 2 and no proper control group of people not hit by a bus, you cannot possibly conclude with confidence that it was the bus that did them in."<sup>1</sup>*

Evaluation is a serious matter. Not a matter of life and death, but very often of careers, projects and programmes, including in peace research.

What are good research projects which merit a part of the very scarce funds available for peace research? Unsurprisingly, views on this issue differ. I venture that two are dominant, both of which are problematic.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <http://savageminds.org/2010/04/01/major-changes-at-aaa/>

## 7.1 Research over Peace

The evaluation of research projects with the focus on research almost by nature needs to be given to specialists in the same field. Who else would be able to assess whether a project proposal is adding to knowledge? While this is true, there are potential caveats of specialist peer-review. Worthy projects get rejected, for instance, because they are seen as a threat by an academic rival. In most cases, however, peer-reviewing results in overly positive reviews. Evaluators are interested in more research in their field, as more research will likely lead to more citations of their work and thus improve their own citation ranks.

Moreover, peace research has grown into a field with specialists of different theoretical and methodological strands (see Thania Paffenholz's contribution). Their tendency to recommend projects within their own specialty makes unbiased project reviews by funding bodies difficult. Some common standards are required. Two standards are currently the central evaluation hallmarks for research projects in peace research: the "puzzle" and "professionalism in methodology".

On the one hand, researchers need to find a "desideratum", something worthy of explanation but defying available explanations, or where various explanations diverge. This requirement favours projects that aim to fill, even tiny, gaps in bodies of existing knowledge over the development or rethinking of such bodies of research. On the other hand, applicants need to very clearly show how they want to arrive at their conclusions. Although the requirement for applicants to reflect about epistemology and methodology in their proposals is laudable, the strong emphasis on laying out – prior to the project start – when what will be done why in case the project is funded, can be a straightjacket later on. There are defensive measures available for applicants, such as claiming to do grounded theory, or simply doing whatever seems best once the project is funded, but these may be punished in later applications. Both criteria favour projects which seek incremental, very well-substantiated increases in knowledge. As a result, they feed into the general tendency in social sciences of fads, of the prominence of certain topics that come and go. In the 1990s, for instance, ethno-political conflict was a very prominent research topic, in the 2000s it was resource conflicts; Peacebuilding in the 1990s, criticism of liberal peacebuilding in the 2000s, US hegemony in the 1990s, power transition in the 2000s.

Conforming to a purist approach to science, political or societal objectives are not among the recognised priorities in current peace research evaluations. Research should not be normative. The selection of priorities is at the discretion of the projects combined with the implicit assumption for projects to be innovative in whatever direction. Such a position is problematic in peace research which by definition and intellectual history has a normative agenda. However, even academic reviewers who generally adopt a normative

approach are often reluctant to discuss how their proposed project links to peace. In most cases, this means that the two criteria mentioned above, the puzzle and methodological professionalism are decisive with regard to funding decisions.

## 7.2 Peace over Research

The other strand in the evaluation of peace research projects favours “peace” over “research”. One rarely finds this approach in the academic world of national research foundations and their likes. It is in the realm of governments, particular development ministries, private foundations, consultants and NGOs, where this approach is applied.

Again emphasising critical tendencies, one can argue that the evaluation of applied research and consultancy selects research as a tool for activism. Research is judged more by its likelihood to legitimise action than its contribution to knowledge.

Security sector reform (SSR), for instance, has become a major tool for donor strategies in many transition and post-conflict countries. The number of projects in this domain has grown. The German government, which is not among the most active in this domain, recently listed almost one hundred projects, mostly in Africa, predominantly in police reform. Some of these can be classified as research projects, as the focus is on increasing knowledge about SSR and its precondition or consequences.<sup>2</sup>

Based on personal impressions, most evaluations, both of proposals and post-project, are critical but constructive. They identify deviations from the original list of objectives or implementation shortcomings. But they also see some positive benefits in advancing knowledge about SSR. A rather unsurprising finding, since the request for evaluation was based on the idea of improving SSR.

In contrast to this assessment of the average SSR project, the academic community has by and large a very critical view of SSR as a strategy for peace and development.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, there are differences between the academic and the activist world with respect to the expectations of the type of social change which external interventions can bring about: Between high-flying ideas about building peace and development, and the toils on the ground of the day-to-day struggles for better societies. But there is also the element of finding success when looking for it.

<sup>2</sup> The list is not public. For a summary see Permianseder, M. (2013). Das deutsche Engagement bei der Sicherheitssektorreform in Afghanistan am Beispiel des Polizeiaufbaus. Zeus Working Paper 5. Hamburg: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Schnabel, A. and Farr, V. (2012). Back to the Roots: Security Sector Reform and Development. Berlin/Zurich: LIT Verlag.

### 7.3 Strengthening the Middle Ground

Where does this assessment of the two strands of evaluation leave us? My conclusion is that both types of evaluations, with their differing criteria and idiosyncrasies, create biases, towards incremental research on the one hand, and affirmative research on the other.

One consequence is that the two research strands often find it hard to speak to each other. Literally, because a good part of academic research is disseminated through publications which require not only a degree in the relevant discipline but also additional special training in certain methodologies, theories, or jargons as an entry ticket. Figuratively, because many academic researchers do not find research in the context of project evaluations relevant, as it has not been conducted with the strict methodology they consider necessary. As a result, a sizeable portion of academic research never filters into activism-oriented research, even though it should, and academic research misses out on both data and knowledge from activists that would improve its own contribution to knowledge.

Another consequence is that research in the “middle” is disadvantaged. Academically sound research with a broad scope aiming at informing political or practical work for peace without seeking immediate applicability will have difficulties to either meet the “puzzle” and “professionalism” or the activism standards. As a result, there is a considerable lack of research that is results-oriented and critical at the same time, methodologically informed but not hooked on knowing all steps in research upfront. There was definitely more of it in the past, for instance in works by Johan Galtung, E.O. Czempiel or Dieter Senghaas.<sup>4</sup>

What can be done to strengthen the “middle ground”? There are some simple measures, which however, are rather difficult to implement. To begin, research foundations should adapt their criteria for research funding to be more open to topical, interdisciplinary research. In Germany for example, the German Research Foundation (DFG) long was sceptical. In recent years it has become more open, and a good share of peace research, including some interdisciplinary and less incremental research is funded by the DFG.

A second strategy is to get universities to fund more chairs in peace research, including in disciplines where peace research is not well established, such as in the natural sciences and economics, and in interdisciplinary centres. Recently, particularly in the United States, but also in Germany, such efforts have been quite successful. But the number of chairs in peace research remains very small in most parts of the world. Often seed funding is needed for the establishment of chairs.

Motivating governments and affluent NGOs to fund research into peace beyond their immediate needs is a third strategy. The German government has

<sup>4</sup> See for example Galtung, J. Johan Galtung and Fischer, D. (2013). Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research. Heidelberg: SpringerBriefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice; Czempiel, E. (1989). Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s. Lanham: Lexington Books; Senghaas, D. (2012). Dieter Senghaas: Pioneer of Peace and Development Research. Heidelberg: SpringerBriefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice.

done so, and so have other governments, but with limited scope. The Swiss and UK governments that have gone furthest in this direction and have funded research centres on specific topics, such as fragile states, small arms and SSR, and also supported NGOs which have a research portfolio, such as International Alert or Saferworld, and indeed swisspeace. There are also some privately-funded NGOs supporting good work in the field, such as Oxfam in the UK and the Berghof Foundation in Germany. Some important peace research has also been funded by foundations, such as the Open Society Institute on democratisation, or on nuclear disarmament by the McArthur and Ford Foundations.

Finally, a fourth strategy is to establish public foundations which specifically aim at peace research, with criteria that differ from those for disciplinary research, such as in Germany in 2001, when the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF) was established by the government. It received the explicit mandate to fund research with the objective to promote peace. There are few other such foundations in the world, and the DSF remains a very small institution, with not much more than half a million Euro to allocate to research per year.

None of these strategies is a panacea; they all have their challenging aspects. Fortunately, they are complementary. But they all suffer from the same basic problem: a lack of resources. Within large research foundations, the competition is tough. And programmes which do not follow the general trend, and peace research is not one of those, are generally precarious. The same is often true for universities. Funding by governments, NGOs and foundations for peace research also often has to be justified with respect to other priorities.

This brings us back to the beginning: evaluations. Money is short in all the named institutions. So decisions have to be made on the basis where money is best spent. Evaluations cannot be avoided. But evaluations which are less self-referential to the systems from which they emanate, and more attentive to the combination of peace and peace research, would be a welcome new trend.

# 8

## Assessing Quality in Peace Research

Laurent Goetschel and Sandra Pfluger

Peace research as a discipline polarises as much as peace as a concept. Peace and peace research are both positioned between vastly differing expectations and reflections. If peace is seen as a purely idealistic goal without meaning in the real world, there is little to be desired from research. Understood as a goal with relevance for action, however, peace and peace research merit the highest priority.

The era of the Cold War gave an additional twist to the interpretations of peace stemming from the threat to humanity posed by the superpowers and the doctrine of mutual nuclear deterrence. Technically, this threat remains in place, but its immediacy has lessened considerably due to changes at the geopolitical level. This polarised view of peace was also reflected in the appraisal of peace as an object of scientific inquiry. Peace researchers saw themselves as admonishers in a bi-polar world marked by nuclear self-destruction (Deutsch, 1972). They were primarily indebted to ethical standards in their identity as researchers, and saw their critical position vis-à-vis official policies and viewpoints as a result of their scientific endeavours. Their critics, in turn, saw them as ideological products devoid of any scientific quality. Such debates already existed between World War I and World War II. They mainly revolved around the significance of the League of Nations. States as well as intellectuals tried to lend credence to collective security in order to strengthen trust between former wartime enemies in Europe.

This brief historical reference already provides four key elements that help to understand the debate on quality<sup>1</sup> in peace research. First, the assessment of quality is subject to the fundamental understanding of peace. This understanding remains a much discussed and - in its current configuration - contested concept. Second, peace research is an inherently critical scientific field. Critical reflection of prevalent positions in scientific or societal realms forms a constitutive aspect of any peace research. Peace research pursues new forms of social learning and their conditions for implementation (Linklater, 1996). Third, peace research contains an ethical component; the prevention or reduction of violence constitutes its common normative basis. The orientation of peace research does not derogate its scientificity. In no way does this orientation determine the theoretical or methodological design of peace research, nor does it curtail the diversity of approaches. In contrast, it lends direction in view of thematic foci and research questions. Finally, peace research is in constant exchange with decision-makers and other users of research findings. Peace research claims to have an impact.

Since the end of the Cold War and the associated bloc thinking, the discussion around the relevance of peace has partly stabilised. In international politics, peace no longer figures as a polarising political concept, but has established itself as a core objective in numerous programmes funded by states and international organisations. Within peace research, this trend has generated interesting debates between action-oriented, evidence-based research on the one hand, and predominantly norm-oriented, ethical contributions on the other (Jaberg, 2009). In addition, adjacent scientific fields such as

<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses exclusively on the assessment of quality in peace research project and their design. It does not provide any statements on performance evaluation or measurement.

development or sustainability studies, which share certain commonalities with peace research, have evolved and add meaningful points to the debate.

## 8.1 Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity

The commonalities are found in their interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, for instance. Peace processes are part of societal change and their dimensions are manifold (economic, societal, political, historic, technological, etc.). Consequently, adequate scientific inquiry into aspects of peace processes requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines. Not every study in the area of peace research needs to be designed in an interdisciplinary fashion. However, such studies should take pertinent findings of other fields into consideration, and be designed such that they are compatible with future interdisciplinary work in other disciplines.

Transdisciplinarity stems from the self-understanding of peace research as the practice-oriented science mentioned above. Peace research by definition is geared toward application (Imbusch, 2005). This does not mean that peace research only generates directly applicable results. Rather peace research strives to produce knowledge accessible to the actors concerned, who can then utilise the results. This exchange beyond disciplinary confines is also seen as a criterion assuring quality in peace research and contributing to securing scientific excellence. Transdisciplinarity has a host of implications, from the selection of the research question, to the choice of methodology and the design of the research process, and the communication of findings and their application (Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn, 2007). Research for development has produced numerous results, which – adapted accordingly – are also meaningful for peace research (Jones et al., 2012).

Consequently, peace research projects must pay due regard to the environment in which they are situated. Should peace research fail to do so, it risks disintegrating into a technocratic, ethno-centric science detached from any realistic foundation. It must first and foremost hold itself to the same standards it demands from peacebuilders (Goetschel and Hagmann, 2009; Hilhorst and van Leeuwen, 2005). This standard may be analysed, reflected and discussed from different perspectives.

For instance, if the foreign relations of a country are the object of peace research, then the respective (foreign) policy culture and, particularly, the pertinent decision-making processes are to be considered; research question, process and design are to be structured such as to ensure – with high probability – that relevant decision-makers take note of the findings. In this area of foreign policy, peace research is not only about the standards of pertinence in the findings, e.g. in the frame of foreign policy analysis, but also about the field of policy advice and the ethics of advising (Rungius, 2013).

In the case of peace research in a conflict context, a set of additional standards comes into play. For researchers from an OECD country, for example Switzerland, questions concerning the objectives of the research, the role of research partners and the links between research and the conflict arise (Richmond, 2011). The inherent notion of applicability of peace research demands a concrete contribution to peace. The research should aspire to have an impact on the object of inquiry or its environment. Consequently, research that solely strives to complete data sets, does not meet the quality standards of peace research, while its general scientific relevance remains intact.

## 8.2 Conflict Sensitivity

Finally, conflict sensitivity constitutes a specific principle in the assessment of quality in peace research. It requires actors in conflict contexts to pay due attention to preventing harm; not in the sense of intentionally aggravating a situation, but rather by disregarding certain cares and, thereby, inadvertently fuelling existing local tensions.<sup>2</sup> Similarly to research partnerships, the principle of conflict sensitivity is more easily formulated on paper than put into practice. Challenges span from terminology choices, to the interaction with interview partners or the placing of field studies, to the handling of data and the communication of results. Researchers need to consider that their research and interview partners remain on site after the completion of a research project. They also need to understand that certain expressions or statements may have unexpected meanings in a specific context and thus provoke sensitivities.

What is more, insights from research for development show that research partnerships – research in teams, where researchers from the respective conflict contexts and external researchers cooperate on equal footing – are particularly suitable to meet the above-mentioned standards of peace research. Extensive guidance papers and reports on experiences with research partnerships are already available in the broader field of development (KFPE, 2009; Maselli, Lys and Schmid, 2004).

Peace research essentially seeks to generate knowledge on topics related to conflict and pertinent conflict contexts. As a practice-oriented science, it should feed the knowledge gained back into the relevant conflict context with the goal of transforming conflict (Goetschel, 2009) and, thereby, building peace. The capacity to do so defines the specific value added of peace research vis-à-vis other fields of research. The value added is based on the normative preconception of peace research, its relation with disciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, conflict sensitivity and application as well as the implications for applied research.

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<sup>2</sup> The relevant mind-sets originate from research in the frame of development programmes, but are highly pertinent for activities in the field of peace research. See for example Anderson, 1999.

Many of the above points have been taken up in the practice of peace research. While a strong need for discussion remains, many researchers orientate themselves along the aforementioned criteria, which have their



roots in specific epistemological traditions, e.g. action research (Reason and Bradburg, 2008), grounded theory (Birks and Mills, 2011), interpretative research (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012), and in experiences from peace-building. Even if peace research approaches are more often associated with qualitative than with quantitative designs, they are in principle not constrained in terms of methodology.

However, quality assessment criteria for the evaluation of peace research remain vague. Often, these criteria do not only vary to a usual degree, but structurally and systematically diverge from researchers' own standards. For example, conflict sensitivity and transdisciplinarity are rarely found among evaluation criteria of research programmes. In some exceptional cases, transdisciplinarity is a criterion in very specific funding instruments. This may once have been based on general suspicion of peace research, but today is more often due to a lack of understanding with regards to the concerns of this kind of research.

To sum up, interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and conflict sensitivity form the cornerstones of quality assessment criteria in peace research. The actual handling of these terms begs for a differentiated framework or guidelines, which help evaluating bodies to assess projects in line with the diverse requirements of peace research.

The main criteria for the assessment of quality in peace research are:

## Relevance

*The significance of the research question for peace research (basic knowledge) and the contribution of the research to the reduction of violence or the prevention of conflict can be assessed based on the relevance criterion.*

- Does the research make an innovative contribution to peace research?
- Does the research add to existing knowledge or bring in new aspects?
- Does the research question have the potential to contribute to the reduction of violence or the prevention of conflict?

## Scientific notion

*The criterion of scientific notion serves to assess the critical notion of peace research as a discipline and to ensure the consideration of thematically relevant, normative and ethical aspects.*

- Does the research clarify its link to thematically relevant, normative and ethical aspects?
- Does the research clearly differentiate theoretical and methodological aspects from normative-ethical considerations?
- Does the research apply a critical approach to prevalent practices and theories?

## Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity ensures that the *notion of peace is presented from different disciplinary perspectives and that the complexity of topics contained in peace research are integrated.*

- Does the research present the relevant notion of peace from different disciplinary perspectives?
- Does the research integrate scientists from different disciplines?
- Does the research design allow for an adequate integration of complexity and different perspectives?

## Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity assures due consideration of the *significance of the research question for peacebuilding practice and the compatibility of the results for users beyond academia.*

- Does the research link to current questions of peacebuilding?
- Does the research question correspond to a potential interest of practitioners and policy-makers?
- Did the research identify and include relevant actors from practice, policy and society in the development of the research question?
- Have measures been taken to ensure that relevant actors from practice, policy and society have an interest in the findings?
- Does the research include an approach to communicate adequately with actors outside the realm of science?

## Conflict sensitivity

Based on the conflict sensitivity criterion, the *conflict context* and the “*Do No Harm*” principle are duly considered.

- Does the research process take into account the prevalent tensions of the conflict context?
- Does the research formulate goals (research questions) that specifically pertain to the conflict context?
- Does the research respect the principle of “Do No Harm” (non-aggravation of prevalent tensions)?
- Does the research take into account the safety of research partners, particularly interviewees?
- Does the research team have sufficient expertise in terms of the conflict context and are local researchers included in the team?

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Thania Paffenholz is also a trained mediator and facilitator, and has participated in several missions of the United Nations, as well as being an advisor to different national and international organizations. She was also member of the Board of the UN Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Council Member of the International Peace Research Association and Member of the Executive Committee of the Peace Studies Section of the International Studies Association (ISA).

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Finally, he edits a Palgrave Book Series called Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies, which seeks to provide a forum for the development of new and alternative approaches for understanding the dynamics of conflict and of the construction of peace. He is also on the editorial board of the Review of International Studies.





# About swisspeace

swisspeace is an action-oriented peace research institute with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. It aims to resolve armed conflicts and to enable sustainable conflict transformation.

swisspeace sees itself as a center of excellence and an information platform in the areas of conflict analysis and peacebuilding. We conduct research on the causes of war and violent conflict, we develop tools for conflict resolution and formulate peacebuilding strategies. swisspeace contributes to information sharing and networking on current issues of peace and security policy through its analyses and reports as well as workshops and conferences.

swisspeace was founded in 1988 as the “Swiss Peace Foundation” with the goal of promoting independent peace research in Switzerland. Today swisspeace engages about 50 staff members. Its most important clients include the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Swiss National Science Foundation. Its activities are further assisted by contributions from its Support Association. The supreme swisspeace body is the Foundation Council, which comprises representatives from politics, academia and the administration.

swisspeace is an associated Institute of the University of Basel and member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS).

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