

1 Shaping a vision

The nature of peace studies

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Why study peace?

The twentieth century has been described by many historians as the bloodiest century in recorded human history. Judging simply by the numbers of people who have suffered violent death or the many other terrors of warfare and social strife, they are surely justified in their claim. The majority of those killed in the two major world wars, like most of the victims of the many regional wars that followed, were terrified, innocent civilians. The latter half of the century was dominated by a "cold war" in which the superpower nations of the world, having developed weapons of mass destruction, threatened massive genocide upon each other's populations. Their weapons, many scientists believed, held the potential to terminate human life on the planet. Although this "cold war" came to an end in the last decade, the nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons it produced remain in existence and continue to place the peoples of the world at risk.

This is only a part of the bloody story of the twentieth century, however. The rest includes chapter upon chapter of border wars between smaller nations, and ethnic, religious, and revolutionary conflict, in which acts of terrorism, guerilla war, and even genocide have become commonplace. The human race has achieved many apparent economic, scientific, and political advances in the modern era, but when it comes to managing our conflicts our most recent record demonstrates that we have made little, if any, progress. Indeed, it appears that the human race has a decided penchant for turning its most impressive technological achievements to the task of finding ever more painful and destructive ways of dealing with its conflicts.

Surely one of the most important tasks for humanity in the new millennium is to learn how to handle individual, social, and national or international strife in more constructive and peaceful ways. The toll in human misery and the threat to our survival on this planet have become far too great. Rather than continuing to rely on entrenched procedures, we need to find less destructive, less violent ways of dealing with conflict at every level, from the family and the neighbourhood all the way up to the community of nations and states.

For this reason increasing numbers of educators and scholars have developed the conviction in recent years that the problem of conflict and violence in our world requires focused attention to the conditions that can turn human conflicts so quickly and easily to violence and war, as well as new ways of thinking about the alleviation of these conditions. After seeing the horrible power of the atomic bombs dropped upon the Japanese people at the end of World War II, Albert Einstein observed that nuclear weapons technology had "changed everything, except our way of thinking." What he meant by this was that the awesome power this technology introduced had radically changed the world, especially humanity's ability to

threaten the life of the planet. This, of course, should have altered just as dramatically the way we think about the place of violence and war in dealing with human conflicts, but it did not. Many people concluded that the only serious way to respond to the problem noted by Einstein was to set issues of peace and conflict apart as a special area of research and education in the university.

Of course, problems of conflict and its resolution have always been the subject of study and research by the traditional disciplines represented in the university. Historians study the history of conflict. In fact, many people think that historians tend to focus too much of their attention on wars and violence, as if these were the only important events in history. Psychologists study human behaviour at the individual level, to try to understand what influences us to choose violent or nonviolent means of handling our disputes. Social psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists focus their attention on the behaviour of social groups; political scientists try to understand the behaviour of nations and political organisations. Philosophers and theologians are interested in the moral and religious significance of conflicts and the most appropriate means of dealing with them. Even some of the so-called "hard sciences" like biology, zoology, and ethology claim insights into the problems of human violence.

But each of these disciplines tends to study only a narrow aspect of human behaviour; that is, the one that most naturally fits its own methodological approaches and assumptions. And it is clear that the problems of human conflict and their peaceful resolution are much larger than any single discipline can capture. Each discipline has important insights to offer, but none can understand these problems fully in their real-life contexts. Further, there are aspects of these problems that can fall in the cracks between disciplines. This is why the proper study of human conflict and its resolution is *interdisciplinary* – understanding the problem requires the insights both contained in and overlooked by many disciplines. Only by setting the study of conflict and peace apart as a separate *problem area* is it possible to stimulate the "new ways of thinking" necessary for our radically changed world.

Objections to peace studies

Is it really a discipline?

The points just mentioned indicate the usual rationale for the development of "Peace Studies" as an independent course of study in many colleges and universities. But some traditional academics have argued that Peace Studies really isn't a "discipline" in the commonly understood sense of that term, and therefore should not really be a separate field of study. This argument is not very persuasive, because it is not at all clear what defines academic "disciplines" in the first place. They are not identified by a common methodology, since in many disciplines there are lively debates about the proper methods to use (especially in the humanities and social sciences). Nor are they characterized by common assumptions shared by their members, since these too are constantly debated. It appears that many disciplines are defined by the range of problems, or the *subject matter*, they study. History is defined by its concern with events in the past, psychology with human behaviour, anthropology with practices of different cultures, and so on.

In this respect, Peace Studies, which takes as its subject matter the problem of human conflict and its peaceful resolution, is no less a *discipline* than many of the well-recognized academic disciplines which have emerged over time, especially in the twentieth century. But it is not necessary to establish Peace Studies as a distinct academic discipline in order to establish its value as a separate course of study, because it is clear that some of the most significant and

highly respected courses of study to emerge in colleges and universities in the past several decades are, like Peace Studies, attempts to explore highly important social issues which require perspectives of many disciplines.

Take, for instance, the emergence of Environmental Studies in universities around world in the past forty years. Environmental issues have come to be recognized as demanding immediate, well-founded responses in personal behaviour and in economic and political policy. Understanding these issues requires input from many sciences, as well disciplines in the humanities; physics, biology, geology, zoology, ecology, psychology, sociology, geography, political science, economics, ethics, and religious studies, just to name the most relevant. But these disciplines cannot tackle environmental problems in integrated and coherent way in their own isolated corners. They need to be brought together around real environmental problems, where the solutions require insights from each and require each to recognize the limitations and possibilities identified by the others. Environmental Studies is one of the best examples of the importance of *interdisciplinary* research and education in dealing with critical social problems. Other similar examples in the university include Development Studies, Area Studies (e.g., Canadian Studies, African Studies), and Ethnic Studies (e.g., Aboriginal Studies). Few people today would argue that these do not have a legitimate place in the university, even though many of the traditional "disciplinarians" were highly suspicious of them when they were first proposed because they infringed on their "disciplinary turf."

Is peace studies too political?

Even though Environmental Studies is now an accepted and highly respected course of study, when it was first introduced into college and university curricula many people opposed it on the grounds that it was not an "objective" science. It was, they said, merely an excuse for introducing environmentalist political activism into the academic curriculum, and this was violation of the scholarly commitment to maintaining a neutral or "objective" attitude. It not appropriate for colleges and universities to be supporting items on the "green" agenda (like "limited growth," sustainability, or "saving the spotted owl"), which are controversial and challenge many entrenched ways of thinking and acting within our society.

Peace Studies programs meet with the same arguments. They, too, are charged with being "too political" because they are often critical of mainstream ways of thinking about government behaviour and policy. Thus they are often seen as promoting pacifism, socialism, or other "left-wing" political agendas and providing a platform for engaging students in anti-war protests and other forms of activism, rather than maintaining the appropriate level scholarly "objectivity."¹ Now it is certainly true that Peace Studies, like Environmental Studies, looks for new ways of thinking about conflict and violence that often are critical of entrenched ways of thinking about these things. But there is nothing inherently more "political" about this than other accepted forms of critical scholarly inquiry. Indeed, most people would argue that this is just what the university is all about: the promotion of new, and often very unpopular, ways of thinking. "Politicization" is something to worry about in universities, but the "politicization" to be feared is not that of ideas critical of mainstream politics. It is rather that which suppresses the free expression of unpopular viewpoints for political reasons. We might also ask which is the greater threat to the objectivity of the university: a research grant of millions from a government defence department to a physics professor to study the feasibility of a laser weapon, or a Peace Studies course which investigates nonviolent alternatives for national defence or international peacekeeping?

Is peace studies value-free?

An important related question is whether Peace Studies is defined by a commitment to a certain set of values. Some of its academic critics have claimed that it is defined *primarily* by such a value commitment, and that this is the sense in which it is really the inappropriate introduction of a moral or political agenda into scholarly research and education. Thus it is often said that Peace Studies is defined by a common commitment to pacifism or nonviolence as a moral or political ideology, or that it shares a common opposition to patriotic nationalism in favour of trans-nationalist or internationalist sentiments. Some of its harshest critics have even claimed that it is motivated by strong socialist or Marxist ideology.

There is an important sense in which it is true that Peace Studies is defined by certain values. One of these is certainly the value of peace itself; that is, the belief that peaceful relations among people and nations are better than unpeaceful ones. This implies another closely related value central to the very definition of Peace Studies – that violence is undesirable, and that where the same human goods can be achieved by them, nonviolent means are preferable to violent ones. But these two values are, as just stated, hardly controversial ones. They would be shared by most people and should not be identified with any particular “political” agenda.

With respect to these value commitments, Peace Studies is no different from many, probably most, other academic and scholarly endeavours, which are also motivated by underlying values or goals. For example, the whole point of Environmental Studies is to find ways to ameliorate destructive impacts upon the environment. This distinguishes it from Geology, which is more often taught with an eye towards facilitating the extraction of resources from the environment (this, after all, is what most geology graduates do). Administrative and Management Studies have as underlying values such things as efficiency and profitability. Aboriginal Studies is premised upon the explicit value of preservation of cultural and ethnic traditions and practices. Even Strategic Studies, often hailed by its proponents as a “value-free” or “realistic” enterprise, is based upon national interest. These are, in each case, values appropriate to the community served by the area of study and appropriate to the area of study itself. Peace Studies is committed, equally appropriately, to the values of peace.

The subject matter of peace studies

As already suggested, Peace Studies is defined, not so much in terms of its methods and assumptions, but in terms of its *subject matter*, the problems with which it is concerned. This problem area has been loosely identified as that of “human conflict and its peaceful resolution.” The domain of human conflict is, of course, extremely broad, because we are very conflict-prone creatures who construct many levels of social interaction and generate conflict at every level of that interaction. Individuals find themselves in conflict with others in a variety of social contexts: in families, in schools, in the workplace, and in the community. We organize ourselves within racial, religious, ethnic, economic, and political groupings which regularly come into conflict with each other. And we also form nation states and alliances in the international arena which vie with each other for power, influence, resources, and territory. If we ever encounter beings from other galaxies, we will surely add intergalactic conflict to the list!

That humans come into conflict with each other at various levels of individual and group interaction is normal and expected. Conflict is itself inevitable among beings who live together in situations where common interests meet finite resources, and where different interests

lead to incompatible activities. There is nothing particularly bad, or even undesirable, about the inevitability of conflict. It is, in itself, neither bad nor good, though it can have both good and bad consequences. It can lead to misunderstanding, hostility, alienation, and violence. But conflict can also be a stimulus to creative thinking and the development of new ideas, new technologies, or new forms of social interaction, all of which can make things better for everyone. Nothing would be more boring and unsatisfying than life without conflict. The only human community without conflict, it has been said, is to be found in a cemetery!

Conflict can be defined (and usually is defined in conflict theory) simply as what results from the existence, real or imagined, of incompatible interests, goals, beliefs, or activities. It is a situation in which one party's interests cannot be fully realized without their impinging upon the realization of some other party's interests – or a situation in which one of them *thinks* that the interests are incompatible. Defined this way, it should be clear that conflict among finite beings on this earth is inevitable. It would be inevitable even if humans were perfectly good beings. It is not our failure to be good that brings us into conflict with others. It is simply the fact that, being the same kinds of beings, with similar interests, we will naturally want the same things when there is not enough for everyone at the same time. But we also have different beliefs and values, and these too come into conflict with the beliefs and values of others. This is normal and natural – there is nothing bad about it at all.

The important thing about human conflicts, then, is not so much the conflicts themselves as the *means we choose to deal with them*. These means largely determine whether the conflict leads to good or ill. Not only do we generate strife at various levels of social interaction, from the individual to the international, we also have developed habits, practices, and institutions for dealing with it at all these levels. Some of these work better than others, are better at *preventing* hostility and violence, while others seem to *promote* hostility and violence or even depend upon them.

The primary concern of Peace Studies is to understand how conflicts among human beings arise, what causes them to become harmful for some or all the parties, and what means are most likely to deal with them in less harmful ways. Adam Curle, founder of one of the first Peace Studies programs in Britain, defined the function of Peace Studies as identifying and analyzing "unpeaceful relationships" in order to "devise means of changing unpeaceful into peaceful relationships."² A useful aspect of Curle's definition is the way it points out that human conflicts can be handled in "unpeaceful" as well as "peaceful" ways, and that the point is to find ways of turning conflicts of the former type into conflicts of the latter type. What this amounts to depends, of course, upon what is meant by "peaceful relationships," and, as we shall see in a moment, this is a matter of much interesting debate within the Peace Studies community.

Another useful aspect of Curle's definition is that it defines Peace Studies very broadly, since it includes the study of peaceful and unpeaceful relations at every one of the levels of human conflict from the individual to the international. Peace Studies is interested in the analysis of conflict between individuals and groups in communities and in finding methods of transforming violent and harmful relations arising in these conflicts into more constructive or "peaceful" relations. This is the focus of what is often called "Community Conflict Resolution Studies."

But Peace Studies is interested in conflicts at the more "political" levels as well. These include the unpeaceful relations that often arise in conflicts between the diverse racial, religious, ethnic, and political groups within our communities and nations. While most states have legal and political institutions for dealing with these conflicts – police, courts, prisons,

social agencies, elected councils, and legislatures, which are designed to "keep the peace" – they often do not perform in ways that resolve the underlying conflicts or transform them into more peaceful relationships between the parties. Creative nonviolent means of confrontation and conflict transformation, such as those used by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., have therefore been a major subject for study.

Conflict between nations and between ethnic or nationalist groups within nations, which typically leads to the organized violence of civil or international war, has been a major focus of Peace Studies in the past. Indeed, during the past several decades the major impetus for the establishment of such programs in European and North American universities and colleges has often been concern about the growing destructiveness of regional wars around the world, the high risks of nuclear war during the cold war period, and the emergence of ever more horrifying military technologies, such as chemical and biological weapons. The search for more peaceful ways of managing regional and national conflicts rightfully remains a high priority. There is a desperate need for investigating new methods of intervention in highly volatile situations: peacebuilding or peacekeeping roles which do not simply multiply the violence and suffering of the people in conflict, as traditional military methods of intervention so often do.

Peace Studies researchers and educators have also been interested in undertaking critical examination of the prevailing doctrines and ideologies that shape the mainstream ways of thinking about human conflict. This is especially true at the level of international conflict, where international relations theory has been strongly dominated by debates between "realism" and "idealism," Marxism and capitalism, liberalism and fascism, and similar dichotomies. Many people think that these debates are based upon assumptions about individual, group, and national behaviour that are outmoded and prevent the emergence of new, creative solutions to conflict at this level. Perhaps these assumptions – the identification of political power with force and violence, the idea that human individual or group behaviour is essentially egoistically motivated, that social order is dependent upon the monopoly of violence, and so on – need to be challenged. Here Peace Studies provides a useful service by examining the evidence from the many sciences which may call these assumptions into question. For example, the "political realist" assumption that social order and cooperation can only be maintained by the existence of a scheme of centralized enforcement has been called into serious question by recent research on the emergence of cooperation and altruism among insects and animals in their natural evolutionary adaptation to their environment.¹ There is reason to believe that the same might be true of the human animal in social contexts.

So we see that Peace Studies is defined by concerns with human conflicts and their peaceful resolution across a broad spectrum of human interaction. The chapters in this book speak to this wide variety of conflict issues and introduce critical challenges to entrenched ways of thinking. It is thus clear in what ways Peace Studies can be distinguished from many other disciplines and research programs. For instance, Strategic Studies, a growing area of research in universities and non-academic research institutes, generally limits its focus to international conflict situations, and it views them from the point of view of the national interest of a particular national actor or government. It tends to make certain assumptions about the interests of states and their use of power and examines conflict situations with the aim of finding the most effective "strategy" for maximizing the interests of the particular state. It provides useful input for policy-makers who are interested in serving the particular interests of their own country, however these interests may be defined (and they are usually defined in terms of economic advantage and political influence). Peace Studies, on the other hand, attempts to take

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broader view, which may include the critical assessment of assumptions made by Strategic Studies and their implications for peaceful relations among nations.

Central concepts in peace studies

Peace

The best evidence against the claim that Peace Studies is defined by any particular ideology lies in the existence of an ongoing vigorous debate within the field about how to define "peace," the concept central to Peace Studies as a field of research and education. If we accept anything like Adam Curle's definition of the field, as the analysis of unpeaceful relationships and the means of transforming them into peaceful ones, then the first question we must address when undertaking our study is: What do we mean by "unpeaceful" and "peaceful" relationships between people?

Curle himself defines these terms in the following way. "Peaceful relationships," he says, are "those in which individuals or groups are enabled to achieve together goals which they could not have reached separately." In contrast, "unpeaceful relationships are those in which the units concerned damage each other so that, in fact, they achieve less than they could have done independently, and in one way or another harm each other's capacity for growth, maturation or fulfilment."¹ Curle clearly includes more within the concept of "peace" than is usual in newspapers and popular language. He does not mean merely the absence of war or other forms of overt violence which kill or maim persons and does not believe that a situation is "peaceful" simply when there is a ceasefire or temporary truce in hostilities between parties. There are many subtle and inconspicuous ways in which people can harm each other psychologically, socially, and economically even though they are not actually engaged in acts of violence in the usual sense of this term.

Curle's definition of peace is an example of what has come to be known as "positive peace," because it is said to define peace in terms of the *presence* of a state of affairs that is beneficial for all the parties in a relationship. "Positive peace" is contrasted with "negative peace," which defines peace negatively – as the *absence* of certain kinds of specific violent actions, like those which physically maim or kill other persons. From the point of view of "negative peace," a situation is peaceful among individuals and groups if they are not engaging in specific acts of physical or psychological violence, such as occur in assaults in which people are seriously injured or even killed. Among nations there is "negative peace" if they are not at war or are not using the threat of war to advance their diplomatic objectives. The concept of "negative peace" is the one that we typically use in our ordinary speech when we talk about peace among nations or among conflicting political groups within a society.

Curle prefers to use a "positive" as opposed to a "negative" conception of peace because he thinks that there are many ways in which relations among individuals and groups can be harmful to some or all the parties to the relationship even when they do not involve overt acts of violence. A situation should not be called "peaceful" if persons are suffering harm from the nature of the relationship. A marriage is not "peaceful" if one of the partners is being exploited, oppressed, or prevented from realizing his or her potential as a person because of power imbalances or simply habitual ways of structuring the roles, even when these are unrecognized or unintended. A society is not "peaceful" if, as in a slaveholding society, its laws or social practices demean or impoverish certain groups or exclude them from the opportunities and benefits available to others. Those who, like Curle, prefer the notion of "positive peace" would say that any relationship of extreme injustice should hardly

be considered "peaceful." Furthermore, a situation that places people in such positions is a fertile breeding ground for overt forms of violence, and thus is not likely to be peaceful even in the "negative" sense for very long.

The well-known Scandinavian peace researcher, Johan Galtung, has defended an even stronger conception of positive peace than Curle's. He calls any situation unpeaceful in which "human beings are being influenced so that their actual (physical) and mental realizations are below their potential realization."¹ Galtung has been much criticized for this view because it suggests that we have peace only when we have reached a perfect Utopia! Others have pointed out that on this definition there is no difference between the concept of peace and the concept of perfect justice. We will return to this criticism a bit later.

Violence

Johan Galtung also has an interesting way of explaining the distinction between positive and negative peace by pointing out that really each of them has a "negative" definition – peace is the *absence* of something, which can be called "violence." But negative and positive peace, it may be said, refer to the absence of two *different kinds* of violence. The violence with which negative peace is concerned Galtung calls "direct, personal violence." This is what we normally think of when we hear the word. Violence in this sense has four essential elements: a) an identifiable *actor* or groups of actors, b) an identifiable physical *action* or behaviour, c) a clear physical or psychological *harm* which results from the action, and d) an identifiable *victim* who suffers the harm. The usual things that come to mind when we hear the word "violence" – such as physical assaults, stabbings, shootings, bombings – have all four of these elements.

But Galtung points out that some of the most pernicious ways people are harmed do not have all these elements, and hence they tend to be ignored or not recognized as "violent," even though they should be. People can be harmed, not only by the actions of others, but also as a result of the way the relevant relationships or social practices are structured. In these cases it is not anybody's particular *actions* but the structures themselves that cause the harm. The examples cited earlier of the lack of "positive peace" – slavery, apartheid, or an oppressive marriage – are for Galtung perfect examples of what he calls "structural violence." In these cases there is a clear "victim" who is being harmed in some way in the situation, or *by* the situation, but the victim may be unable to identify any particular *action* of any particular *person* or group as the cause of the harm. It is the way things go as a result of the relevant social arrangements that puts the person in the disadvantaged situation. The poverty and dehumanization of the slave is the result of the *system of slavery*, not the result of any identifiable act of violence on the part of the slavemaster. The fact that a specific slavemaster may be very "nonviolent" (in the sense of direct, personal violence), or even unusually benevolent, in the treatment of his or her slaves does not mean that the situation of the slaves is not extremely detrimental to them. There is a sense in which slavery "does violence" to the slaves, even though no one may be "acting violently" toward them. This is what Galtung means by structural violence.

This distinction between direct, personal violence and structural violence makes it easier to clarify the distinction between negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace can simply be understood as the absence of direct, personal violence. Positive peace is the absence of structural violence. When viewed this way, it becomes evident that the common element in both conceptions of peace and violence is the element of *harm*. How broadly we understand the notion of peace depends in large part upon what we include as the types of harm that are "violent" or "unpeaceful."

This is not just an academic question about terminology, as it might appear to be on surface. Very important debates about the nature of peace studies, peace research, and peacemaking turn on this issue. Consider, for example, the debate that raged among peace researchers in the 1960s and 1970s, when Galtung and Curle were writing about the issue. Many of the most visible wars occurring in the world then were "wars of liberation," in which dissident groups fought revolutionary guerilla wars against very oppressive, undemocratic regimes. Even if we agree that the goal of peace research is to find ways to help these societies restore a peaceful situation (to "turn unpeaceful relationships into peaceful ones," as Curle puts it), we must still ask whether this means finding ways to end the wars (restoring negative peace) or finding ways to end the oppression of the governments, against which the wars were being fought (restoring or creating positive peace).

Not surprisingly, peace researchers did not agree about this, nor did many of the people involved directly in the violent situation. Some people (like Galtung and Curle) argued that merely to focus on the direct, personal violence of the fighting and to advocate ways of stopping it was to take sides with the oppressive status quo which the people were fighting to end, to side with the political and economic structures that were structurally violent, and to prefer a negative peace to a positive peace. If one wanted to contribute to peacemaking in this situation, it was argued, then one should focus upon ways of ending the oppression, not just on ways of ending the war. Further, the revolutionaries fighting these wars claimed that they were not the ones who should be criticized for being "unpeaceful". They were, in fact, fighting against the structural violence of the oppressive regime and for positive peace (as well as for negative peace in the long run). They needed to break the negative peace (with direct, personal violence) in order to achieve positive peace. Those who were truly on the side of "real" (positive) peace should, they said, side with the revolutionaries. Those who merely wanted to stop the fighting weren't really on the side of peace.

Other peace researchers, like the well-known American economist Kenneth Boulding, were strongly critical of this position. They argued that this emphasis on positive peace confuses the issues. By defining "peace" and "violence" so broadly, they said, the ideas become indistinguishable from the concepts of "justice" and "injustice," thus obscuring an important and enduring moral question that arises when we face the need to choose between peace and justice. We value negative peace too, the critics argued, and sometimes it comes into conflict with justice. When it does, we simply have to make a moral decision about which value is more important: whether the injustice is so great that ending it justifies breaking the peace by using direct, personal violence. Recognizing that this is a real choice between two *values* also forces us to look seriously for the least violent (or as we should say, most "peaceful") ways of struggling against injustice. This, Boulding argued, was exactly that Peace Studies and peace research should be seeking to do – to find effective nonviolent ("negatively peaceful") ways of fighting against injustice. So, negative peace should be the central conception of peacemaking.

Those who in this way prefer the concept of negative peace as the controlling idea in Peace Studies point out an important fact about human beings and their propensity to violence in dealing with conflict. The fact that people nearly always believe in the rightness of their own cause. So, when they fight, they are fighting "for justice." If the injustice against which they fight is perceived to be grave, then the temptation is to use whatever means are considered necessary to succeed. This is why intense conflicts have the well-known tendency to spiral into ever-increasing levels of violence and horror. And as they do, the parties on both sides become ever more firmly convinced that their horrible deeds are justified by the end of the justice they seek. The more people use the term "structural violence" to describe the injustice

of their opponents, the easier it becomes for them to think of themselves as "peacemakers" and the more difficult it becomes for them to see the violence of their own actions. The language of "structural violence" and "positive peace" helps warriors to avoid making an explicit moral choice about the justification of their own violent actions, or about whether there might be morally preferable, nonviolent ways of dealing with the conflict.

The debate about justice and peace cannot be resolved here. Perhaps the best thing to say at this point is simply that the two concepts of violence and peace call our attention to importantly different aspects of conflict and its peaceful resolution. We know that situations of structural violence are often fertile breeding grounds for the outbreak of many kinds of direct, personal violence and that, in most cases, structural violence is maintained by the regular use or threat of direct personal violence, which often incites those who suffer to employ violent resistance. So there is a clear sense in which it is true that the only real peace is a positive peace. It is also clear that to be concerned about negative peace, without taking into account the underlying conditions that produce the direct, personal violence, is to take too narrow a view. Those who seek negative peace as a goal must also be concerned about how to achieve positive peace (or justice) peacefully.

Different "peacemaking" approaches can give high priority to both these values.

This allows us to suggest an alternative definition of Peace Studies to that provided by Adam Curle. Perhaps we can say that its aim is to analyze human conflicts in order to find the most peaceful (negatively peaceful) ways to turn unjust relationships into more just (positively peaceful). This definition has the advantage of capturing the full importance of the concept of positive peace without losing sight of the distinction between peace and justice.

Conflict

We often think of conflict among human beings as a bad thing – something to be avoided at all costs. Partly as a result of this perception many people avoid conflict as much as possible. We might even think that peace is the absence of conflict, and that the aim of Peace Studies is to find ways of avoiding or reducing conflict among human individuals, groups, and nations. This would be a mistake, however. The reader will notice that the definitions of "peace" we have reviewed so far have referred to the absence of violence – both direct and personal and structural – but not the absence of conflict.

This is because conflict is not necessarily a bad thing, although it is the *occasion* for the well-known unpleasant things people may do when they are not very good at handling it. In fact, conflict can cause many good things. Loreleigh Keashly and William Warters point out the many positive functions that conflict can play in human relations, such as fostering creative solutions to problems, facilitating personal and social change, and maintaining personal and social identities. In addition, it can be exciting and fun. This is the whole point of competitive games, of course – to engage in a contrived, but controlled, conflict for the enjoyment of the participants and the spectators.

Many people think that if they find themselves in a conflict with another person or group, it must be because someone – me, another person, or both of us – is doing something wrong. Psychologists have found that people have tendencies toward one or other of these alternatives. Some people tend to assume that they, themselves, are doing something wrong when they find themselves in a conflict. They feel guilty and tend to resolve the conflict by giving in immediately to the other party. Others assume the opposite. They feel threatened by the conflict, blame the other party, and are more likely to be combative and aggressive. Still others blame themselves *and* others. These people are either very pessimistic and fatalistic about

conflict and avoid or withdraw from it, or they look for ways to reach quick compromises. None of these are very constructive ways to deal with the problem. None of them motivate the person to engage in constructive problem-solving. A person who does not immediately assume that conflict is a sign of someone doing something wrong is less likely to engage in blaming (oneself or the other) and is therefore less likely to be aggressive and competitive and more likely to look for constructive ways of dealing with the situation.

So the point of Peace Studies and peacemaking is not necessarily to find ways to end conflicts, but to handle them more constructively. Because conflict is so often the occasion for people to become nasty toward one another – to become hateful, distrustful, alienated, aggressive, and violent – we need to find ways to carry on conflicts without becoming nasty ourselves.

Power

Another central concept in Peace Studies, power, is like conflict, commonly understood in many different ways. Throughout human history there has been a tendency to think of power (especially political power) as synonymous with force and violence or the threat of force or violence. Western political theorists from the Greek historian Thucydides to the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes and modern social theorists like Max Weber and Mao Zedong have all claimed that the use or threat of force or violence was the source and measure of political power. They believed that the greater the ability of a person or state to wreak violence upon others, the greater its power. Hobbes, for example, believed that all forms of social cooperation and trust, including moral relations between people (and presumably all animals), were possible only because a strong leader could punish with violence those who refused to cooperate.⁶ Apparently he had never observed "social" animals and insects, who seem to cooperate regularly, without threat from such a centralized leader.

However, throughout this same history there have also been thinkers such as Socrates, Jesus, and the Buddha, and such influential modern political theorists as Gandhi, Hannah Arendt, and Gene Sharp, who have seriously questioned this equation of power and violence. They define power in broader, more general terms, as the ability to organize persons and groups into cooperative enterprises for the accomplishment of social goals. When power is defined as *cooperation*, it leaves open the question of its relationship with violence. Threat of violence or force may be one way to exercise power, but it may not be the only or even the most effective way. As Arendt puts it, violence may be an efficient means of exercising *destructive power*, but it is an extremely inefficient and often ineffective way of exercising *constructive power*.⁷

At the centre of the argument for nonviolent action is the view, shared by Gandhi, King, and Sharp, that there are forms of social power, made possible by the willingness of people to stand up to threats of violence against them, which can undermine the power of those who depend upon the threat of force and violence. The argument is based upon a simple but often ignored fact: a person who threatens others with violence in order to get them to cooperate and do his or her will is powerless if those others refuse to give in to the threat. All that is left for the threatener to do is to wreak his violence upon the refusers. In doing so, he or she destroys those who are needed to carry out the purpose. This is what Leo Tolstoy taught Gandhi about the British subjugation of India: the British colonizers needed cooperative Indian colonists to do their labour and buy their goods. When Gandhi gave the Indian people the courage to resist the British threats of violence, there was nothing the latter could

do to get the cooperation they sought. It is the subjugated, Gandhi realized, who ultimately have the power over the subjugators.

Part of the task of Peace Studies is to understand the dynamics and uses of power. It is one of the most important elements in conflict, since balances of power among conflicting parties have a significant impact upon the "outcome" of the conflict or the way it is handled. If peacemaking is concerned with both peace and justice (or "negative" and "positive" peace), then it is concerned to find ways of managing conflict which do not simply allow powerful parties to impose unfair settlements upon weaker parties.

Approaches to peacemaking

One of the primary objectives of Peace Studies is to identify, test, and implement many different strategies for dealing with conflict situations. Human beings have had such strategies for as long as they have experienced conflicts. However, some are more violent than others, and some are more effective at achieving positive peace, or justice. Some aim at "winning" the conflict or imposing a loss on the opponent; others try to find some way of ending the conflict altogether by finding a "win-win" solution. Some attempt to "manage" the conflict through agreed-upon procedures (like tossing a coin or voting) or systems of rules, while others aim at actually intensifying the conflict in order to motivate one or more of the parties to resolve it in a constructive way.

Some conflicts are between parties that are relatively equal in power and resources; some are not. A strategy likely to reach a fair resolution between parties (such as a mediated negotiation) is not nearly as likely to do so if they are highly unequal. The outcome of a negotiation between two unequal parties is predictable: it will favour the interests of the party who has the greater power. So an unrestrained negotiation between unequals will not necessarily produce a more just, or positively peaceful, outcome than will an unrestrained fight between two parties of unequal strength. Negotiation is a more negatively peaceful means than fighting or war between parties, but it does not necessarily guarantee that the resulting relationship will be good (or even better). This is why methods of conflict resolution that may be good in one type of conflict may not be as good in others.

Figure 1 provides a helpful way to understand important ways in which strategies of peacemaking define their objectives differently and employ different procedures with different implications for "peacefulness," in both of the senses we have discussed. It distinguishes three very different approaches, each defined by a different underlying conception of the "peace" to be attained. Within each of these three general approaches both coercive (and violent) and noncoercive (and nonviolent) methods can be used. The bottom row provides some examples of actual conflict resolution techniques that can be used to achieve the goals of each approach. You will notice that some techniques, such as bargaining and debating, can be used to accomplish quite different goals.

The most important things to notice in Figure 1 are the three very different aims that a peacemaking approach might have. In the first, which I have called "Conflict Resolution," the goal of the approach is to end the conflict between the parties altogether. There are many ways to do this, of course, some more constructive than others. Conflict resolution is most appropriate and constructive in those situations where the parties may *perceive* their interests to be incompatible, but where there is a "win-win" solution available which would allow them both fully to achieve their goals. Careful problem-solving through negotiation, often with the help of a mediator, can be the most constructive or "peaceful" approach. A typical way to "end the conflict" is for one of the parties simply to inflict defeat on the other and

distinguishes Conflict Transformation from Conflict Resolution that aims merely at beating or eliminating one's opponents.

Notes

- 1 A summary of these criticisms can be found in the *International Peace Studies Newsletter*, 15.2 (Winter 1986). One of the strongest criticisms of Peace Studies as a politicization of education is made by Caroline Cox and Roger Scruton, *Peace Studies: A Critical Survey* (London: Institute for European Defense and Strategic Studies, 1985).
- 2 Adam Curle, "The Scope and Dilemmas of Peace Studies," inaugural lecture at the University of Bradford, 4 February 1975 (Bradford: School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford).
- 3 See, for example, Robert M. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). See also, M. Nowak, R. May, and K. Sigmund, "The Arithmetics of Mutual Help," *Scientific American* (June 1995): 76-81.
- 4 Curle.
- 5 Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6.3 (1969): 167-91.
- 6 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (Paris, 1651; New York: Collier Books, 1962).
- 7 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1970).
- 8 Rituals like these are common ways of settling important disputes within certain so-called primitive tribes and cultures, often with great success. More "advanced," scientific cultures are suspicious of ritualistic ways of deciding disputes, since we believe that conflict resolution should be "rational." But maybe our modern societies would be better off if we tossed coins to decide very tense political disputes between warring parties!