

## AN EDITORIAL

### *What is peace research?*

It is highly doubtful whether much would be gained by a heavy intellectual investment in semantic clarification to define a field of research, or to establish criteria for priorities. Clarity may perhaps be obtained in the sense that any piece of research can be classified as peace research or not, but such criteria would at best reflect the state of our knowledge and conceptual framework today. There is the danger that strict definitions may throw a shadow of Today into Tomorrow, freezing the *status quo* by tying us to perspectives and dimensions that may be outworn very soon. One is reminded of such conceptual borderlines as that drawn between moving and non-moving bodies in physics, defining the former as somehow unreal. Or the tri-partition of animals using 'in the water, on the land or in the air' as the guideline for scientific progress in zoology. Indispensable tools in one phase may become the strait jacket of the next. Empirical and theoretical research, and conceptual clarification, must go hand in hand, in a pattern of mutual fertilization.

On the other hand, the flatness of a naive kind of operationalism, 'peace research is what peace researchers do', is also unacceptable. Constraints on the selection of topics for research may serve to direct the attention towards crucial points of attack. Complete liberty is also complete liberty to waste resources on the irrelevant or at least the peripheral. It may be argued that this is not wise policy today. One needs a vision of a landscape, with certain provisional goals and paths.

One such vision might be as follows.

Imagine a world which we can call GCW, 'general and complete war'. Under GCW the Hobbesian condition reigns, there is

*bellum omnium contra omnes*. This has two implications. The world has a completely individualistic structure; there is no group formation with cooperation within and conflict between the groups. And there is no restraint on the choice of means of destruction: everybody uses whatever kind of violence he knows to destroy whomever he wants. Hobbes had the vision, nuclear physics has perfected the means.

We know of very few situations, if any, where this state of affairs has existed. Man in extreme deprivation under the conditions of starvation or in a concentration camp may be capable of such behavior. A world with 50 billion inhabitants and nuclear capability well dispersed likewise. But apart from these extremes, two factors keep us away from the Hobbesian world.

First of all: *Man identifies*. He is capable of empathy and solidarity. He sees himself as a member of groups where a norm of reciprocity is valid and cooperation a dominant mode of interaction. Under GCW there is identification only with one's self. But in the real world integration is a fact. Man surrounds himself with a sphere of amity and mutual aid. But outside this sphere enmity and mutual destruction may be the rule.

But secondly, however bellicose the relations with persons and groups outside the sphere of identification and however incompatible their goals, *Man rarely uses all his means of destruction against all enemies all the time*. Even the total war one generation ago, 1939–45, was short of the total war we are capable of imagining. There are limitations and rules, there are elements of a game in the fight.

Imagine now that we extrapolate these two tendencies of integration and control of violence. Many people have a vision of extending the sphere of cooperation, in-



tegration, harmony, to encompass the whole world, until a state is reached where Man experiences no differential in his identification with other men. Others have visions of reducing the use of violence to zero. Combine the two, and another extreme is reached, GCP or 'general and complete peace' where there is *pax omnium cum omnibus*. Each human being loves his neighbor like himself, and everybody is his neighbor. This Utopia knows no borderlines. One need not deprive it of conflict and change, only ensure that dynamics without recourse to violence is built into the system; there are other ways of accommodating conflicts.

Whether we are closer to GCW or to GCP may be disputed. We certainly do not know enough to introduce a metric in this space where degree of integration and degree of violence would be coordinates. All we know is that 3 billion human beings are divided into groups according to a number of principles, with a high degree of in-group solidarity and integration, as well as a capability of mutual out-group destruction.

*One may now look upon peace research as research into the conditions for moving closer to the state we have called GCP, or at least not drifting closer towards GCW.* Thus, there are two aspects of peace as conceived of here: *negative peace* which is the absence of violence, absence of war — and *positive peace* which is the integration of human society. Correspondingly, there are two branches of peace research.

Some comments on this.

We do not conceive of peace research as concerned with international conflict alone. There are many borderlines cross-cutting mankind, creating steep gradients in degree of integration and willingness to use violence. Only some of these borders are national borderlines. To use the transitory phenomenon known as the national state as a sole criterion for defining a research discipline is both ethnocentric and strategically short-sighted. It suits the

world surrounding the North Atlantic, where a certain religious, racial, and even social homogeneity has been built into the definition of the nation, and even into the reality of some of them. But *le tiers monde* is full of national frontiers criss-crossing equally or even more important lines of group division. In Asia, religious conflict between Buddhists and Catholics, between Muslims and Hindus; in Africa and North America racial conflict dividing black and white; in Latin America class conflict between rich and poor. Satisfaction and deprivation — these are foci of identification as real as national borders, and as consequential. Peace research should be symmetric here and concern itself with reduction of violence and promotion of integration regardless of the basis of group-organization. Thus, race conflict or other group conflicts are relevant to peace not only because they may lead to international conflict or teach us something about it, but in their own right. Another question is in terms of priorities: not all group conflicts are equally consequential, and not all are equally 'researchable'. And even though the GCW model should focus our attention also on interpersonal conflict with no group-formation we feel this is peripheral, except as a basis for understanding group conflict and group integration. This applies even more to intrapersonal conflict, except where intrapersonal conflict can be seen as a cause or effect of macro-level conflicts, or its theory as a contribution to general conflict theory. But each of these levels, from the intrapersonal via interpersonal and intergroup to the international is *sui generis*. Analogies are at best good hypotheses, never proofs.

Further, negative peace and positive peace should be conceived as two separate dimensions. One can have one without the other. One can conceive of a world with extremely individualistic structure, with mankind divided into even smaller groups than was the case in the earliest stages of human history — with in-group

cooperation and no out-group contact, hence no war. And one can imagine a very integrated world state where violence, potential or in action is nevertheless used as a mechanism of conflict resolution. The first of these worlds, whether we like it or not, is impossible today, if for no other reasons than the population explosion and the communication explosion: the world is too small. But the second possibility is more likely: a world state dominated by one nation, or a United Nations, equipped with coercive power and readiness to use it are quite conceivable. Too rapid integration, before internal consent or some kind of contractual basis is set up, means coercion which may be expressed in terms of violence.

Man can now be seen as fighting against the strong forces driving him towards the GCW corner. He makes fumbling steps forwards, he slips and rolls back, then forwards again: it may be disputed whether he progresses much at all. Sometimes he wins in integration with no reduction, or even increase, of violence. On other occasions violence is reduced with no gain in integration that could serve to cement the reduction in violence.

There are countless suggestions as to how to come closer to GCP, but we can now by and large, classify them under the two headings of negative and positive peace policies.

For some people peace is a question of reducing the use of violence. GCD, the 'general and complete disarmament' currently under discussion is one of them, whether achieved through unilateralism, 'mutual unilateralism' or multilateralism; whether or not supported by control measures, international security forces, sanctions against perpetrators; whether brought about by decisions from above or by refusal to use violence from below. Others are content with less: the means of violence may exist as long as they are not used or their use is regulated. Geneva conventions to outlaw special forms of violence, arms

control measures, or age-old balance of power strategies are peace policies in the sense defined above. It may be said that 'si vis pacem para bellum' has shown severe limitations in the past — and that peace research should concentrate on less dangerous and more reliable systems of violence-reduction. But we intend to include this as a topic for research, we do not think that peace research should concern itself only with peaceful means of peace-keeping — even though it might well give priority to the study of such means.

On the other hand there is an avalanche of proposals concerning positive peace, concerning human integration. The range is well-known: from efforts to change the 'minds of men', change their ideas about other groups, improved contact through exchange, improved understanding through studies, peace research itself, semantic analyses, improved communication — especially news communication — changes in the economic order of society, and so on to functional cooperation between groups or nations through technical and cultural cooperation or trade policies, to institutional fusion with superordinate bureaucracies, police forces, courts and governments till the world state is reached. For others it is more a question of conflict management alone without other types of integration: power given to suitable personality types, new methods of arbitration and mediation, new conference techniques in general, in diplomacy, in summit meetings, non-military resistance in case of war, and so on. For all it is not only a question of knowing under what conditions peace may be achieved and maintained, but of knowing under what conditions Man may be willing to adopt such measures.

There is no need to go into too much detail. It is clear that evaluation of most of what presents itself as peace policies, or deals with reduction of violence and/or integration at a macro-level is included

in peace research as conceived of here. But to tie peace research to evaluation of existing policies only would be another way of tying it to the past. Peace research should also be peace *search*, an audacious application of science in order to generate visions of new worlds, closer to GCP — and to suggest policies. What can make it peace *research* would not be empirical confirmation, but theoretical consistency. This also applies to analyses of peace research itself.

There are some implications of what has been said above for the strategy of peace research, and this would also apply to the policy of *Journal of Peace Research*.

That peace research is international and interdisciplinary hardly needs repetition. It is concerned with the human condition all over the world, and this should be reflected in a geographical and disciplinary distribution of topics, authors and research teams. To exclude a discipline *a priori*, even to say that 'peace research is mainly a question of studies in international relations', may impair the free search for the relevant. Rather, one should start with a practical or theoretical problem, such as 'under what conditions are people in general willing to see costly weaponry destroyed?', and use the tools that suit the problem. This conflicts with the institutional borderlines drawn in universities and with the mental compartments in the minds of most academic men. For that reason there will be a lag in institutional growth relative to what is otherwise possible, not to mention relative to what is needed. But grow it must: like medicine, the future science of international health depends for its development on the coexistence, under one roof, in one journal — and in some individual minds — of a multidisciplinary approach.

But does not this mean that one is ideologically tied to one conclusion? In a sense it does, just like in medicine. But we do not feel we have to defend our concern for the movement towards GCP

— if this is a value it is among the most consensual ones. And we are not afraid of the word 'peace'. It implies nothing in terms of empirical evaluation of past peace policies, nor in terms of theoretically guided speculations about the future. It does not limit us to research on peace — health can only be understood against a background of illness. Nor does it limit us to peaceful means, although we would focus on them. In short: ideological coexistence is possible within the frame of peace research. This also applies to methodological orientation: there is nothing in the program of peace research that necessitates a choice between, say, case studies and statistical studies, or between verbal and mathematical formulations, as long as there is a reasonably explicit and disciplined methodology present. What should be avoided are discussions that are merely programmatic and bring nothing new in theory and/or data, or discussions that are merely conceptual and taxonomic and hence contribute nothing in terms of hypotheses or propositions. And discussions should, preferably, have relevance for peace policy: one should try and state explicitly — if only in general terms — what kinds of policy one would favor as a consequence of the findings made.

It is our goal to make the bulk of the articles professionally adequate, as well as accessible to the informed public, and we know that this leaves us with a narrow margin. Nevertheless, we hope through the journal to make an ever so small contribution to social science in general, to peace research in particular and — perhaps — even to peace policy. In this big task we invite all our readers to join us: by contributing articles, by criticism, by suggestions.

If we should try to define further the aims of this journal, we might fall into the trap we warned against at the beginning of this editorial. Let therefore the following articles and issues speak for themselves.