

Defining Peace Research

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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REVIEW ESSAYS

Defining Peace Research

Elias, Robert, and Jennifer Turpin, eds. *Rethinking Peace*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 1994.

Wehr, Paul, Heidi Burgess, and Guy Burgess, eds. *Justice Without Violence*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994.

What *is* peace research? These two recent volumes, *Rethinking Peace*, edited by Robert Elias and Jennifer Turpin, and *Justice Without Violence*, edited by Paul Wehr, Heidi Burgess, and Guy Burgess, are both situated within the field of peace research, yet the reader can infer from them very different understandings of the content and limits of the field. These differences reflect an on-going debate about the nature of peace studies, security studies, and international relations, especially as it relates to the curriculum.

Though research and teaching on how to attain cooperation and find solutions to international conflicts has been included in international relations since its emergence as a social science field in the 1930s, the end of the Cold War has increased the salience and popularity of research and teaching on peace and conflict resolution. Each of the 15 US member institutions of the Association of Professional School of International Affairs offers courses in international conflict resolution, and four of those schools have dedicated programs in international conflict resolution.¹ Publications, both books and journals, are plentiful.

Yet these journals and courses do not reflect any strong consensus about what constitutes peace research. One way to parse the field, as Elias and Turpin do in their introduction to *Rethinking Peace*, is to invoke Carolyn Stephenson's categorization of three overlapping waves of peace research: the positivist wave, 1930s to 1970s; the reaction to Vietnam phase, late 1960s to the present; and the grassroots, anti-nuclear phase, 1980s to the present. I would like to refine that categorization by distinguishing between research questions, assumptions, methodologies, and the scope of the research. To simplify, peace researchers employ three approaches: the war focus; the cooperation focus; and the holistic approach.

The War Focus

Researchers approaching the study of peace from the perspective of the war focus ask, how can international conflicts be resolved? The fundamental assumption for this approach is a Hobbesian one: that conflict is the normal state of international relations and that war is an ever-present possibility. Yet another assumption is that states and their leaders can be understood as rational actors seeking to maximize interests in a world in which everyone else is also seeking to maximize their interests. Researchers seeking to find answers to components of this

question generally use empirical methods (case studies or quantitative approaches) to examine international or intranational conflicts in which there is actual violence or the potential for violence. This question reflects what, in Kuhnian terms, might be called "normal science." J. David Singer's work with the Correlates of War Project is, perhaps, the best-known use of this approach.

The Cooperation Focus

Researchers invoking the cooperation focus approach ask, how do we foster cooperation? Research addressing aspects of this question assumes that violence is pathological, that the international and intranational systems are neither inherently violent nor conflictual, and that violence represents the breakdown of social mechanisms for redressing conflicting interests and rights. Researchers using this approach may include structural violence — the social and economic disadvantages suffered by some because of the political, military, social, and economic power wielded by others — in the definition of violence. Still, though, the methodology conforms to social science norms of empirical investigation of hypotheses. Well-known works that take a cooperation focus approach include Ted Robert Gurr's work on relative deprivation as a cause of conflict and the late Edward E. Azar's work on social, political, and economic factors contributing to intractability and severity of protracted social conflicts.

Wehr, Burgess, and Burgess's *Justice Without Violence* is another example of this approach. The volume begins with four theoretical chapters that explore the conditions under which non-violent actions by groups experiencing injustice (and are therefore in a state of conflict) can successfully induce those wielding power to change their behavior. The eight case studies that follow test the hypotheses derived from the theoretical chapters, and the volume concludes with a "theoretical synthesis," in which the strength of several different hypotheses is evaluated. The theoretical chapters offer clear conceptualizations of terms such as justice, non-violence, threat, and power. Research questions and hypotheses are delineated in a chapter by Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. The chapter by the late Kenneth Boulding on types (or "faces") of power — threat power, economic power, and integrative power (the power of legitimacy and moral rectitude) — provides a causal explanation of the link between power (of groups using nonviolent means and of their targets) and the success of the nonviolent tactics. Doug Bond's chapter also provides a theoretical model for explaining behavioral change as a result of nonviolent action. His theory focuses on mechanisms of action (how nonviolent action occurs) and the conditions under which nonviolence will lead to stable change.

Unfortunately, the case studies fail to address the research questions and hypotheses in a systematic manner. This is understandable, since the real world is muddled and messy. Rarely is nonviolence practiced exclusively in a situation of grievous injustice. The student protesters of Tiananmen Square in 1989 come closest to this ideal, and, as described in a chapter by Stephen C. Thomas, the

students wielded only moral, integrative power. Thomas suggests that although this use of nonviolence ended tragically for the protesters, "the student demonstrations may have set the stage for the reformation, even the abolition, of the Communist Party." (p. 160) This conclusion seems a bit optimistic and depends on the government losing power due to a serious slowing of economic growth or, in the extreme case, a reversal of it. Only then would the integrative power of the protesters be able to counter the economic power of the government.

In the other cases, nonviolence was used some of the time or even most of the time, but it was used when at least some of the protesters saw the resort to violence as a real possibility. The way in which the case study authors have dealt with this complexity has resulted in some incommensurability between chapters. For example, in James R. Scarritt's study of ethnic political action in Africa, he uses the "Minorities At Risk" dataset, compiled under the direction of Ted Robert Gurr. Protest, in this dataset, is broken down into three types, each encompassing an ordinal scale of increasingly more severe activities: riot ("scattered acts of sabotage to . . . armed attempts to seize power locally"), rebellion ("political banditry to . . . civil war"), and nonviolent protest ("verbal opposition to . . . large demonstrations, strikes, and rallies"). "[T]hus protest is analyzed in terms of the most severe levels of nonviolent protest, riot, and rebellion engaged in by each [ethnopolitical] group during various five-year time segments or longer periods that are aggregations of such segments." (p. 168) Here the variables are operationalized to focus attention on the most extreme actions.

In a later chapter, Amin M. Kazak takes a different tack in his discussion of the *intifada*. (p. 226) While recognizing the violence in the *intifada*, Kazak operationalizes the uprising as nonviolent because it is more nonviolent than violent. Scarritt's coding would present a different result since he focuses on the most severe, and not the modal, actions.

Partially as a result of such inconsistencies, the Burgess's final chapter does not present the clarity of the initial theory chapters. The categories of variables differ from the initial chapters, and the complexity of feedback relationships and overlapping conceptualizations of variables makes drawing conclusions difficult. Still, this book is a valuable exemplar of research on nonviolence as a tool of political action. Its systematic, social scientific methodology (theory to hypotheses to cases to conclusions) lays bare the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research. The authors do a good job of providing evidence to support nonviolent action to effect change, in contrast to simply serving as advocates of nonviolent action under all conditions.

The Holistic Approach

The social scientific methodology and cooperation approach typified by Wehr, Burgess, and Burgess's *Justice Without Violence* stands in contradistinction to the holistic approach, which is intentionally prescriptive and broad in scope. The research question guiding this work could be stated as: what should we do to end human suffering and create a society in which every individual can live harmoni-

ously with society and the environment? Those using a holistic approach take an expansive view of the subject matter. Their research addresses problems of social, economic, cultural, and political inequities at all levels of aggregation of human society. Thus the problems of crime and wife-beating are as germane as the problems of nuclear proliferation. The underlying assumptions justifying this conceptual leap are first, that all forms of injustice, from physical violence to structural violence to discrimination and so forth, share essential features, and second, that the level of aggregation at which the injustice occurs, from interpersonal to intergroup to international, does not matter since the phenomena are intrinsically equivalent.

This approach is also characterized by "action research," in which the goal is not simply to understand the causes and consequences of a set of behaviors but rather to change behavior: in this case, to make more peaceful, more equitable, more socially, economically, and politically just societies. Holistic approach researchers view advocating change as the purpose of their work. Because of the broad scope and the focus on advocacy, particularly grassroots advocacy, in the holistic approach the methodology of research differs from the other two approaches. Interpretation and persuasion are preferred to hypothesis testing. Researchers tend to take post-positivists' dim view of empiricism. Essays drawing on literature and the arts, often deconstructing popular works, typify some publications.² A strong focus is on educating youth and college students to create a more peaceful future, so the specialist's privileged knowledge and means of expression (scholarly jargon) is less valued than accessible prose.

Holistic research is best when it does not stretch too far substantively, when it identifies the ways in which political, social, cultural, and economic characteristics of societies are linked, and when its prescriptions are grounded in a clear, well-defined discussion of conditions and relationships. What constitutes evidence should be unmistakable: is the quality of life of people based on United Nations statistics, on the author's observations, or on something else? Are claims about the activities of multinational enterprises derived from the popular press, from governmental sources, from employees' reports? Which kinds of sources are valued and which kinds are dismissed?

Reflecting this holistic view of peace research, Elias and Turpin have collected in *Rethinking Peace* an eclectic mix of articles, culled from *Peace Review*, a journal they edit. The quality of the articles varies significantly, as does the subject matter. One of the better selections is an essay on conflict mitigation in the former Yugoslavia by Jan Oberg: a thorny issue and one that certainly falls under any plausible definition of the scope of peace research. Also fitting easily into the field of peace research is Jackie Smith's discussion of the role that activists can play in reframing public debate on national security, away from a purely militaristic definition of security, toward a more integrated definition.

Other works fit less easily under the peace research banner. One example is the elegantly written piece by Isabel Allende on political themes in her fiction. This

essay is certainly of value to students of international relations, comparative politics, literature, and the humanities in general, but is it *peace research*? Elias and Turpin, by including it in this volume, seem to say, yes. Also of contestable relevance is Elias's essay on war metaphors in reporting and government pronouncements on crime. If the article was properly substantiated and grounded in the literature, it might be an interesting Robin Lakoff-style approach to understanding the role of metaphor in the way societies approach problems. As it stands, however, the article is no more than a polemic on how crime and its perpetrators are socially constructed in the United States to focus on the types of crime perpetrated by the poor and socially disadvantaged rather than on white collar crime. Again, to what extent can such subject matter fall under a coherent field of peace studies?

Of course, those advocating this third, action research oriented approach argue that addressing the pressing totality of problems related to how humans interact with each other and the environment is the only way of understanding the complexity of life in times of true dangers from weapons of mass destruction, environmental degradation, hunger, and disease. Moreover, they argue that the audience for such discussions should not be limited to those elites who are skilled in interpreting the social science research of the other two approaches to peace research or of professional writing in sociology, psychology, or any other body of scholarly writing. In their preface to *Rethinking Peace*, Turpin and Elias write: "Our essays are written to be read: They are short, provocative, jargon-free, and accessible to the expert and lay public alike." (p. xii)

There is much to be said for this style. There is no value in jargon-laden prose of some social science articles in which the verbiage inhibits understanding. But I must take exception with Elias and Turpin's implementation of accessibility. They have chosen essays that are polemical in nature, that make truth claims without substantiation, and that have no footnotes to allow the reader to check sources.³

For example, Elias and Turpin state: "Rather than taking the position — as do US officials — that economic rights contradict political rights, advocates of positive peace believe that they are complementary and that more just ways of organizing societies and the world can be devised." (p. 5) Do US officials uniformly take the position that economic rights (however they are defined) contradict political rights (however they are defined)?

In his article on crime wars, Elias claims that "[f]or our escalating drug crime, the newsweeklies blame drug use even though drug laws and enforcement are the real cause." (p. 127) By what evidence can this truth claim be substantiated?

Joseph J. Fahey's article contains the statement that "[t]he United States has fought more than 200 wars in its history — almost all undeclared by Congress. The vast majority were wars of expansion against the Native American nations and the Mexican people." (pp. 182-83) To arrive at this number, the author must be using an unusual operational definition of war, one which is unexplicated in the text.

Particularly egregious, from my perspective, is the ascription of essential qualities to groups of people. In fact, generalizations about categories of people —

African Americans are essentially and intrinsically this way, women are essentially and intrinsically that way — permeates several of the essays in this book and lessens its value. The United States government (run by white males) is bad. African Americans are sensitive. Women are good. James N. Kariuki asserts that:

African Americans have the additional capacity for open-mindedness in foreign relations to the extent that they have fewer vested interests in the global economic and political status quo than their white counterparts . . . African Americans appear to have an affinity for Islam and, presumably, can show greater tolerance for other non-Western faiths and cultures. (p. 223)

This is stereotyping even though the characteristic the author is associating with the group is a positive one. Had Kariuki presented evidence, most convincingly in the form of a well-conducted survey, that there is a *tendency* for African Americans to be more tolerant of other faiths and cultures than European Americans or than other people of color, then he would not have been making sweeping, unfounded generalizations.

Similarly, David Krieger's and Brigit Brock-Utne's contributions fall within a radical, essentialist feminist school of thought. Krieger asserts: "War must be viewed as too cruel and costly a use of human resources to be allowed. Mothers instinctively know this with regard to the participation of their own children, and fathers can learn too." (p. 319) Instead of tearing down the hierarchies that have subjugated minorities and women, such stereotyping simply attempts to invert the hierarchy while reifying differential levels of social worth.

At the risk of underestimating the audience of undergraduates who might read the essays in Elias and Turpin's volume in a course on peace research, I am concerned that some may accept these essays as authoritative rather than as places to begin a discussion that ought to be grounded in fact and informed by clearly articulated normative judgements. I am most certainly not advocating a return to pretensions of objective, value free social science research on the causes of war; nor am I asserting that the only violence that counts is that perpetrated by a soldier with a gun. Rather, the community of peace researchers should rethink *Rethinking Peace* and other similar action-oriented, holistic approaches. What do we gain in understanding when we expand the conception of peace to include perfect political, social, economic, and cultural equity and equality, and what do we lose? How can we make generalizations without essentializing groups? How can we address the pressing ethical issues in the global community without having our normative ends determine the conclusions of our research? It is not necessary for those in the field to come to a consensus on these questions, but they must be discussed.

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Endnotes

1. Louis W. Goodman and Brian S. Mandell, *International Conflict Resolution for the 21st Century: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders* (Washington, DC: Association of Professional School of International Affairs, August 1994).
2. I do *not*, however, mean to imply that all holistic peace research is postmodern or that all postmodernism is holistic peace research.
3. In the journal *Peace Review*, where these pieces were originally published, each article ends with a recommended reading list.

Whither Peacekeeping?

Jockel, Joseph T. *Canada and International Peacekeeping*. Toronto and Washington, DC: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies and Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994.

Smith, Hugh, ed. *International Peacekeeping: Building on the Cambodian Experience*. Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994.

What are the lessons for peacekeeping which can be learned from the Cambodian experience? It should be noted at the outset that it was something of a misnomer to call the agreement signed in October 1991 to put an end to the Cambodian conflict a peace accord. In all the negotiations preceding the conclusion of the agreement, the different Cambodian factions involved in this conflict had not been able to concur on a power-sharing formula, and the international community was now attempting to launch with this diplomatic initiative a conflict resolution procedure based on a different strategy. According to the logic of the October 1991 document, a broad international peacekeeping force under the aegis of the United Nations would first, for all intents and purposes, take control of Cambodia and establish a "neutral political environment" so that "free and fair elections" could be organized in the country. The government brought to power through this process would then have to be recognized as legitimate by all the different Cambodian factions, and the endless discussions as to who among them represented the rightful power in Cambodia, which had hitherto paralyzed the peace process, would end at that point. The Cambodian factions were thus essentially agreeing to suspend their conflict while the United Nations created a democratic political environment in Cambodia and to then relocate it within these parameters. They had not resolved the contest which had divided them for years; they had simply accepted to move it from the battleground to the electoral arena.

Peace thus was understood in this perspective as the transformation of a violent conflict into a non-violent one. This was to be accomplished as the United Nations instituted what would amount to a new social contract in Cambodia; one