REVIEW ESSAY

Peace and Conflict Studies Today
Stephen Ryan, University of Ulster

Peace and Conflict Studies (second edition)
David P. Barash and Charles P. Webel
Sage, 2002
HBK: ISBN: 0761925074   £50.00
pp. xiii + 571 (including: bibliographies & name and subject indexes)

Searching for Peace: The Road to TRANSCEND (second edition)
Johan Galtung, Carl G. Jacobson and Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobson
Pluto Press, 2002
HBK: ISBN: 0745319297   £50.00   US$ 69.95
PBK: ISBN: 0745319289   £15.99   US$ 24.95
pp. xxiii + 338 (including: notes & index)

Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction
Ho-Won Jeong
Ashgate, 2000
HBK: ISBN: 184014095X   £59.00   US$ 104.95
PBK: ISBN: 1840140984   £22.00   US$ 34.95
pp. xvi+407 (including: bibliography & index)

> '[A]nybody who believes that there is a simple road to progress
> in these areas has my sympathy' (Hoffmann, 1981, p. 140)

The Origins and Development of Peace and Conflict Studies
If we accept conventional genealogies of peace and conflict research, then this area of study is not yet fifty years old. Its origins have been traced back to many influences but its development as a relatively organised and coherent group of scholars began in Stanford and Michigan in the mid-1950s (Conflict Research) and then at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo a few years later (Peace Research). Of course this is an oversimplified account which omits certain anomalies such as the French Institut Français de Polemologie, established in Paris as early as 1945, and the Lancaster Peace Research Centre (later the Richardson Institute), which was created at the University of Lancaster in 1959.

Peace and conflict research was a child of its time. It originated and developed in reaction to global politics and the way the latter was studied. The end of the First World War and the memories of Verdun and the Somme did induce disillusionment and a sense of gloom, but it also provoked a renewed commitment to making the world a more peaceful place. The strongest manifestation of this in the world of academic research was the establishment of the first chair in International Relations at Aberystwyth, followed by others around the world. For about twenty years international relations scholars engaged in what has come to be called utopian or idealistic research focused on issues such as strengthening international law, promoting disarmament and building a collective security system as an alternative to the discredited balance of power approach.

However, after the Second World War optimism was harder to come by. Albert Camus summed up the reasons very well in his acceptance speech at the banquet that followed the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in Stockholm in December 1957. The author described himself as 'rich only in his doubts' and went on to describe the 'twenty years of an insane history' that his generation had lived through:

> These men, who were born at the beginning of the First World War, who were twenty when Hitler came to power and the first revolutionary trials were beginning, who were then confronted as a completion of their education with the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War the world of concentration camps, a Europe of torture and prisons – these men must today rear their sons and create their works in a world threatened by nuclear destruction. Nobody, I think, can ask them to be optimists. (Camus 1957)

The strongest manifestation of this pessimism in the academic study of international politics was the tight grip that realist theories of inter-state behaviour placed on the analysis of world affairs. International politics was defined as power politics. The primary goal of statecraft was the promotion of the national interest. Progress was impossible and belief in a more peaceful world was a dangerous illusion. Indeed, for the hard-headed realist, peace thinking had actually contributed to the onset of the Second World War because it underpinned a misguided foreign policy known as appeasement and undermined the will of the people to take on Fascism in the only way it could be defeated – through armed resistance. After 1945 we therefore find time and again the use of the 'Munich Analogy' to attack peace initiatives and those who want to question the use of military force. Indeed, we see echoes of it today in the US government's attitude to the attempts by France and Germany to restrain the move to war with Iraq.

The failure to mobilise a strong peace movement immediately after 1945 illustrates an important lesson for the vitality of peace and conflict research. On the one hand there needs to be a strong sense of danger or concern about international developments, however there also needs to be a belief that something positive can be done about these dangers or concerns. In the ten years after the end of the Second World War there was a real sense of threat – the Cold War ensured that. However, there does not seem to have been the sense of optimism required to mobilize people to respond positively to it.

In the 1950s the sense of threat grew as the destructive power of nuclear weapons increased and the arms race accelerated. It was against this background that peace and conflict research emerged, coming from groups of people unhappy with the state of the world and the failure of academics to offer solutions or alternatives. But what were the grounds for optimism? In the 1950s, within the new peace and conflict research community, the basis for that optimism seemed to have been science, and in particular the behavioural revolution in the social sciences. The hope was that quantitative analysis of the causes of wars could provide information that could reduce large-scale violence.

Here we can cite a remarkable passage written by J. David Singer, one of the key figures in quantitative conflict analysis. He claimed that 'if the scientific study of world politics had taken root earlier in the century along with the "behavioural revolution" in psychology, sociology, and economics, it is not totally inconceivable that the First and Second World Wars might have been averted' (Singer 1991: 41). Faith in scientific analysis as an antidote to war was also a strong factor in the work of Kenneth Boulding, another of the founders of conflict research. He argued that:

> The removal of conflict from the arena of folk knowledge to the area of scientific knowledge has a stabilizing, one is tempted to say a soothing, effect… If ideological struggles can be transformed even partially into conflicts of scientific theory, we have a much better chance for their resolution (Boulding 1982: 238).

In the 1950s, then, it was the 'hum of the calculator' that pointed the way forward. However, more recently the sources of optimism have tended to be less a belief in

science and more a revival in normative theory. Here we should note (as do the Barash and Jeong surveys) the important contributions from feminist peace and conflict research and green thinking. Marxist analysis also continues to adhere to a progressivist vision and has had its strongest input in this field in the debates on underdevelopment and the nature of the global capitalist economy. There has also been some interest in critical theory. A recent article by Heikki Patomaki (2001), for example, claims that peace research needs to be revitalised and calls for a redefinition of peace research in accordance with critical theories and Jeong invokes critical theory in his own analysis. But on the whole peace and conflict research seems to lag behind International Politics in this area, an uncomfortable thought for an area of study that has always regarded itself as the more radical. Perhaps the most significant normative input however has come from a revived liberal internationalism, especially the 'democratic peace' hypothesis.

Peace and Conflict Studies after the End of the Cold War

In some senses the end of the Cold War was a tuning point in the development of peace and conflict research. It presented both a danger and an opportunity. The danger was a perception of declining relevance. If the Cold War was over and the arms race had stopped why did we need peace and conflict research anymore? Violent conflicts still existed, of course, but they no longer threatened global annihilation. Indeed, several important research centres were closed as funding dried up. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War allowed for a rapid development of research in areas unrelated to nuclear weapons. These included: 'non-traditional conflicts' and 'new wars' especially ethnic conflict; broader definitions of security to include human security; and issues related to democratization. There was also a trend towards differentiation in peace and conflict research which meant a greater awareness of the impact on, and the role of, specific groups such as women, children and refugees.

The fear of destruction declined in those parts of the world lucky enough to escape violent conflict. However, there was also, at the start of the 1990s, a growing optimism about conflict resolution. The reasons for this optimism included the success of non-violence revolutions in central and eastern Europe, the spread of democracy, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and UN successes in Namibia and elsewhere which provoked the 1992 report by the Secretary-General, *An Agenda for Peace*. The apparent move towards negotiated settlement in South Africa, Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, and several states in Central America stimulated interest in third party involvement in internal conflicts and acted as a catalyst for work on 'post-conflict peacebuilding'/ conflict transformation and conflict prevention, two of the major growth areas in terms of academic research in the 1990s.

The early 1990s therefore witnessed a flourishing of Peace and Conflict Studies as it moved into previously under-researched areas. This built on the consolidation of the area of study over the previous thirty years, which had seen the growth of professional bodies (IPRA, COPRED etc), the creation of over three hundred research institutes (e.g., US Institute of Peace, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Berghof Institute, the Institute on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity), the launch of respectable number of professional journals, and the development of courses in a wide range of universities. By the end of the century, Peter Wallensteen (2001: 21) was therefore able to claim that the number of courses had grown to an impressive size and that 'new teaching programmes [were] proliferating more quickly than research centres'.

The spread of taught courses in Peace and Conflict Studies has led to a demand for good quality texts. As someone who teaches both Peace and Conflict Studies and International Politics this reviewer has always been struck by the large number of good introductory

texts for the later subject and the relatively poor range of materials for the former. The books by Barash & Webel and by Jeong can be seen as attempts to remedy this state of affairs and to provide students with a solid introduction to this area of study. They should also help to answer the question of what peace and conflict research actually is? Given the diversity of the field simple definitions are difficult, and the growth in Peace and Conflict Research over the past decade has not helped. It is probably best to agree with Andrew Mack that 'attempts to derive a neat, all-inclusive definition of peace research seems unlikely to succeed... So rather than attempt what is probably impossible it may be more fruitful to conceive of peace research as a syndrome. By syndrome I mean a collection of attributes which tend to cluster together' (1985: 23). Mack wanted to identify the most important attributes as interdisciplinarity, optimism, broad definitions of peace and violence, policy-orientated research and a commitment to certain values.

This is close to a definition that appears in a recent review of the field by Paul Rogers and Oliver Ramsbotham. They argue that what distinguishes peace research from overlapping fields of study is 'its central concern with issues of peace and conflict, its multi-disciplinarity, its holistic approach combined with quantitative and empirical methodologies, and its normative commitment to the analysis of conditions for non-violent social and political change' (1999: 742). None of the three books examined here would seem to want to refute this description of the field.

The multi-disciplinarity and the willingness to study peace and conflict at all levels allowed academics in this field to avoid the state-centric focus of International Relations and to respond more effectively to the problems of more complex world of the 1990s. An interest in ethnic conflict, for example, emerged much more quickly here than at gatherings of International Relations scholars. Indeed, two of the leading figures in this field, Johan Galtung and John Burton, had been working with a frame of analysis based on human needs analysis which was hostile to the state-centric model and which led Burton to call for a paradigm shift in our approach to conflict analysis. Interestingly, both of these key figures have developed their ideas through action research that has seen them intervene in on-going conflicts. Galtung describes some of these interventions and the principles behind them in one of the books under review here, whilst Burton wrote the foreword for the Ho-Won Jeong's book and has had a strong influence on its approach to conflict resolution.

What none of the three books examine, however, is the tension between the desire for academic respectability and the importance of value commitment. It is not impossible to combine analysis and therapy, but it is a difficult balancing act. The normative commitment is at the core of peace and conflict research, for as Galtung has pointed out, without it Peace and Conflict Studies becomes social studies or world studies. This is reinforced by Barash & Webel, who point out that 'the field itself differs from most other human sciences in that it is value oriented, and unabashedly so' (p. x). But how do we stop the values contaminating the attempts at knowledge creation? The standard answer is to invoke the medical analogy. The claim is that peace researchers are like doctors who also combine scientific knowledge with a value commitment to make people better. Good medicine only works if it is based on a strong knowledge base. So the Galtung et al. book states that in working against violence 'we analyze its forms and causes, we predict in order to prevent, and we act preventively and curatively – all medical terms, since peace relates to violence much as health does to illness' (p. xiii).

However, this is an analogy that might flatter peace research, where the degree of knowledge about violence is surely nowhere as solid as the knowledge possessed by the medical profession. We should note the warning of Singer, who claimed that 'our knowledge base is much too slender to justify much confidence in one or another

theoretical position' (1991: 53). The suspicion, therefore, continues that peace work is more heavily impregnated by values than medicine.

Introducing and Defining Peace and Conflict Studies

So how, if at all, can the two introductory texts by Barash & Webel and Jeong help us with the problem of focus in peace and conflict research? In fact they are of enormous assistance because both are in close agreement on the broad outlines of what should be included in a Peace and Conflict Studies programme. There are core concepts, which include negative and positive peace, direct and structural violence, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and justice. Then there are core questions that have been at the heart of the subject area since its inception. Perhaps the most significant of these is the debate over the causes of violence. Given the optimistic tendencies of peace and conflict researchers most writers in this field are rather sceptical of nature theories of aggression and instead focus on avoidable causes. This is true of both the Barash & Webel and the Jeong studies, which warn against reductionism. Other core questions include how to resolve violent conflicts and how to promote good governance at the global level. Both are interested in the effectiveness of non-violent action. As well as peace, they also agree on what the other value commitments are: the promotion and protection of human rights, economic development and social justice, and the protection of the environment. Both also discuss peace movements, feminist peace research, and future directions.

That these topics might now be considered core to Peace and Conflict Studies receives support from the composition of the main professional body, the International Peace Research Association. This is subdivided into a number of study groups that mirror quite closely the chapter headings of these two books. They are: peace culture and communications; conflict resolution and peacebuilding; peace and ecology; global political economy; human rights; internal conflicts; non-violence; peace education; peace history; peace movements; peace theories; refugees; religion and peace; security and disarmament; gender and peace; reconciliation; art and peace; and indigenous peoples.

For all these similarities, there are still a number of differences between the two books. As we shall see the Jeong volume is more in tune with recent developments in the field. Barash & Webel are stronger on the debates about the 'reasons for wars', which takes up 150 pages whereas the Jeong volume deals with this in one short chapter. On the other hand, Jeong is stronger on conflict resolution. Indeed the Barash & Webel book does not even mention the work of the Burton School. Jeong is also much better on ethnic conflict.

The Barash & Webel book is a second edition of a book published in 1991 by Barash alone. Entitled *Introduction to Peace Studies*, it was an extremely useful book for any teacher of Peace and Conflict Studies, but went out of print quite quickly. I always hoped that it would be published again in a second edition, but have to confess to being disappointed that the revisions for the new edition are not as extensive as they could have been, given the growth of the literature over the past ten years. One indication of this are the works cited at the end of each chapter. The vast majority of these come from the 1960s to the 1980s. I could only find one from the 1990s (by Al Gore!). The implication, unintended I'm sure, is that nothing of significance was published in Peace and Conflict research in the past decade. This strikes me as unsustainable given the changes identified above. The text has been amended to take into account significant issues in the past ten years. So Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor are all mentioned. Some references and analysis have been deleted. Compared to the first edition there is much less here on the Cold War, central America, nuclear weapons and nuclear ethics, and radical perspectives. Yet the substance of the book remains basically the same and many of the changes are relatively superficial. Fortunately, although some literary references have been cut, many survive; and one of the strengths of the book is the variety and

scope of the literature used. There are fewer historical references in the second edition, but many remain to enliven the text. These factors combined with clarity of style and efficient organization probably make this a better introductory text than Jeong's book, despite its rather dated feel now.

Jeong on the other hand is more in tune with contemporary developments and is better as a more advanced text. It is not as user friendly or as rich as the Barash volume, nor is at as well presented (there is, for example, a repetition of a line of text on pages 63-64). The writing style may also be a little dense in places for first year undergraduates and the index could have been more extensive. However, the book is far more comprehensive when it comes to conflict resolution, so anyone interested in this topic might find it a more useful introduction.

Both books are effective guides through a complex area and it interesting also to point out certain characteristics that the two volumes share that might tell us something about the present state of Peace and Conflict Studies. To begin with, each combines Peace and Conflict Studies under a single standard. This might indicate that the historic tensions between the two approaches have now lost their relevance. But it might also underestimate on-going disagreements about focus and methods. There are still some conflict researchers who do not want to be thought of as part of the 'imagined community' of peace studies.

Both books adopt what Kenneth Boulding called a broad approach to peace. The authors are comfortable with the concept of structural violence, and are happy to include a wide range of topics as being legitimate concerns of Peace and Conflict Studies. This does reflect existing practice. It is now hard to understand the vigorous debates that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s over the desire of the narrow school to retain a focus on direct violence. One peace researcher even claimed that 'Galtung's theoretical conception of "structural violence"... had increasingly built into the heart of his theories... a standing invitation to indulge in the most grotesque excesses of seventies' radicalism' (Boasson 1991: 111). Linked to this is the acceptance in both studies that we should be working for positive peace as well as negative peace. In other words peace is conceptualised as not just an absence of direct violence, but also the presence of social justice, respect for human rights, and ecological balance.

The other interesting feature of the two studies is that neither embraces the 'scientific approach'. There is an awareness of the work of quantitative analysts such as Singer and Small, Gurr and Vasquez, but there is no attempt to engage with the advantages and disadvantages of 'scientific peace research'. The interest here is in their findings but not their methods. Jeong devotes less than a page to the scientific method, whilst Barash & Webel do not discuss it at all. The same is true of the Galtung, Jacobson and Brand-Jacobson study despite extensive use of the medical analogy. Whether this is indicative of a general decline in the scientific approach or whether this is just a reflection of the personal preferences of the authors is difficult to judge. A glance at the Journal of Conflict Analysis and the Journal of Peace Research (still the two leading journals in the field) suggest that quantitative analysis is alive and kicking, so it is hard to explain the lack of interest displayed here. Some explanation of the absence would have been useful, as one fear is that a gap could grow between peace research and peace education, with students unable to understand or to respond effectively to quantitative analysis.

Finally, one would have liked both volumes to have adopted a slightly more critical perspective towards the field of study. Important challenges, questions and debates seem to have been sidelined and interesting criticisms of Galtung (e.g., Lawler 1995) and Burton (especially questions about the idea of basic needs) are not mentioned or are dismissed too easily.

The TRANSCEND Approach to Peace and Conflict Studies

We have already identified the marriage of theory and practice as an important feature of Peace and Conflict Studies. At the cutting edge of such initiatives is the work of Galtung and his colleagues at TRANSCEND. Here is a book full of originality and insight based on practical interventions in real world conflicts. The aim is not just to introduce us to the academic study of peace and conflict but also to tell us how these ideas can be operationalized. It emphases four pillars: action, education/training, dissemination and research and is keen to identify a number of areas including conflict transformation, peace pedagogy, peace zones, global governance, peace journalism, peace and the arts, peace business, and peacekeeping. It is claimed that TRANSCEND has held more than two hundred workshops for over four thousand participants in thirty-one states around the globe. It has also produced training manuals, courses and an Internet based Masters in Peace and Development.

If the second edition of the Barash & Webel book suffers from under-revision this is not a charge that can be laid at the book by Galtung, Jacobson and Brand-Jacobson. Even though the first edition only came out in 2000 the second edition is in some ways a very different volume. The three chapters in the original by Carl Jacobson (who died in 2001) devoted to Russia-China, the new-century Eurasian conflicts and East Asia and then South China Sea do not re-appear. And a chapter by Galtung on twenty-first century conflict formations has been dropped. They are replaced by new chapters by Galtung, on September 11 and on a bird's eye view of conflict, war and peace. Other chapters are reorganised. As a result the overall impact is a more coherent volume than the first edition. The number of conflicts subjected to the 'diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy' analysis, which makes up nearly half of the book, increases from forty to forty-five.

This book is really 'pure' peace studies and it is difficult to see how it could have been written in any other field of academic study. It does however provoke certain questions. Listing interventions is one thing, proving an impact is another. So how is the work of TRANSCEND evaluated and how do we know what impact it has had? What was the exact nature of the interventions in each case? How were local actors identified and engaged and how much local support is there for the individual therapies? Who funds this 'practical therapy' work? What criticisms have arisen about this work and how have these been responded to? And how realistic are some of these therapies, which seem to require major changes in the way the parties view their relationships? There is also a proselytising tone that sometimes seems to be making a call for dialogue in a rather monologic manner.

Galtung's answer to the pragmatists is 'do not be deterred by those who say ideas are too idealistic, or not realistic enough… When a conflict does not die down, it is because 'realistic' ideas are often not realistic (p. 177). However, at this point I am drawn back to Stanley Hoffmann's criticisms of the World Order Models Project initiative, strong in the 1970s and early 1980s, for which Galtung wrote the most impressive study, *The True Worlds*.

Hoffmann believed that this radical approach, based on the design of 'relevant utopias', was too impractical and instead he championed a more reformist and pragmatic approach that was both 'essential and elusive' (Hoffmann 1981: 194). This combined an 'ethics of compromise' with an 'ethics of wisdom'. The problem with utopian visions, he argued, was how to get from here to there and he went on to express envy for 'the writers of this school because they have a very easy task – when they meet an obstacle they just describe it away'. The point Hoffmann is trying to make is that impractical therapies are not that useful.

Conclusion

The tension between a sound knowledge base and a commitment to values is one that cannot be avoided. Too firm a demand for academic rigour, however, can lead to the 'paralysed bystander' (Scherrer 2001: 15). Empirical evidence tells us that in some parts of the world life-expectancy is decreasing and one-fifth of the worlds population will not live beyond their fortieth birthday. Every year HIV infects 800,000 children in Africa and nearly 11 million children die from common illnesses and malnutrition associated with poverty. Yet the world can spend about $900 billion on defence and military hardware. The gap between the richest and poorest is growing and the wealth of the ten richest billionaires is greater than combined national income of the 48 poorest states. Violent conflicts have taken the lives of millions of people since the end of the Cold War, including two million children and have left many more physically and mentally damaged (e.g., Machel 1996).

The moral outrage that facts like these should provoke needs to be channelled into positive action. This, Camus knew, required more than academic knowledge. At the Nobel banquet he argued that individuals have to 'forge for themselves an art of living in times of catastrophe' where technology had gone mad and we are in the grip of worn out ideologies, debased intelligence and mediocre powers who 'can destroy all yet no longer know how to convince' (1957). This needed individual responsibility and the willingness of ordinary people to do extraordinary things in a spirit of tolerance and moderation. One of the strengths of Peace and Conflict Studies is that it is trying to work towards this. All three books provide guidance on how not to become a 'paralysed bystander' and they encourage optimism and a commitment to core values. They also provide an antidote to power politics and help to stimulate innovative approaches to deadly human problems.

References

Boasson, Charles, 1991, *In Search of Peace Research*, (edited by Peter van den Dungen), London: Macmillan.

Boulding, Kenneth, 1982, 'The War Trap' in Richard Falk et al. *Toward a Just World Order*, Boulder: Westview.

Camus, Albert, 1957, 'Banquet Speech', http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1957/camus-speech.html.

Galtung, Johan, 1980, *The True Worlds*, New York: Free Press.

Hoffmann, Stanley, 1981, *Duties Beyond Borders*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Lawler, Peter, 1995, *A Question of Values: Johan Galtung's Peace Research*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Machel, Graca, 1996, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, http://www.unicef.org/graca.

Mack, Andrew, 1985, *Peace Research in the 1980s*, Canberra: Australian National University.

Patomaki, Heikki, 2001, 'The Challenge of Critical Theories: Peace Research at the Start of the New Century', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, no. 6, 723-737.

Rogers, Paul and Ramsbotham, Oliver, 1999, 'Then and Now: Peace Research-Past and Future, *Political Studies,* vol. 47, no. 4, 740-754.

Scherrer, Christian P., 2001, *Peace Research for the 21st Century: A Call for Reorientation and New Priorities*, Institute for Research in Ethnicity and Conflict Resolution.

Singer, J. David, 1991, 'The Peace Research Movement: A Conscientious Objection', in Jaap Nobel, ed., *The Coming of Age of Peace Research*, Groningen: Styx Publications.

Wallensteen, Peter, 2001, *The Growing Peace Research Agenda*, Notre Dame: Kroc Institute Occasional Paper 21. http://www.nd.edu/~krocinst/ocpapers/op_24_4.pdf.