Definitions of Peace

In January this year, we invited many scholars and researchers to define 'peace'. This was because we thought that the concept of peace was rather vague and confused, and that some conceptual reconstruction was in order.

Some ten scholars have answered our request, and the following are the definitions of peace they gave. We hope that they will help readers construct or reconstruct their own concept of peace.

H.R. Alker, Jr. Massachusetts Institute of Technology

'Peace' may be negatively defined at different levels as the absence of psychic distress, civil conflict, intergroup violence, or war. Positively, its definition makes more explicit the varying conditions thought to enhance, or to derive from, negative peace: mutually rewarding inter-relationships and harmonious interests; limited, balanced or regulated competition; enhanced nonviolent conflict resolution capacity; empathy, trust, predictability and a sense of community.

E. E. Azar University of North Carolina

Peaceful relations have three aspects: People engaged in such rela-

tions solve common problems without physical or psychological coercion; they do not engage in mere management of conflict through establishing superior coercive authorities. Peace is predicated upon the equitable distribution of both goods and opportunities, not the institutionalization of inequities as incentives to either production or obedience. Peace involves cultural transformation, the creation of non-scarce human resources like cooperation and love, and the renewal of natural resources as valued ends, rather than having material production and the concomitant depletion of natural resources as a goal.

The opposite of peace is victimization, which may be physical, psychological, or may come about through unconscious obedience to institutionalized habits of thought and action.

From, "Proposal for a World Welfare Indicators and Models Project," and "Notes on Victimization, Structural Violence, and the Future of Peace and War Studies."

M. C. Bradbrook Cambridge University

There are many definitions of Peace, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you' is the religious definition (St John's Gospel. 14.27) peace is defined in English dictionaries negatively, as the absence of conflict; but it needs to be redefined as an active force for goodwill. *The ability to convert stress into energy* means recognising the unavoidable conflict of interests; it also means the overcoming of fear. Aggression springs from fear. In social

and political terms, the necessary interdependence of groups who may have little direct contact will preclude withdrawal or autarch; only the growth of intercourse will generate sufficient goodwill to resolve conflicts and defeat fear. Social Peace, a dynamic arising from shared tasks, is a multiform not a simple activity, where successes will counterbalance inevitable local failure.

P. P. Everts Institute of International Studies, Leiden University

Peace first of all refers to the situation, in which the use of open violence or the threat or preparation of such use in the relations between nation-states and other large social groups is absent. Since such a situation is perfectly compatible with the existence of gross social injustice and inequality, when either the awareness of this situation or the possibility of changing it does not exist, peace is more. It is also the condition of a society, national or international, in which social and economic justice, physical and psychological well-being are realised to such an extent, that conflicts do not acquire such intensity that open violence does occur. It is not a static, but essentially a dynamic situation, in which social and political change can take place according to agreed nonviolent procedures.

J. Galtung   University of Oslo

Peace is a process, a struggle for the realization of human capacities, the satisfaction and further development of human needs-material as well as non-material; security and welfare as well as freedom and identity-giving first priority to those most in need.

Thus, as you see, my conception of peace could just as well have been a definition of development - I see these two concepts as identical. Also, to me the unit of peace is the individual human being-peace has something to do with human beings, it is not merely a relation between states. In fact, I would strongly criticize conceptions of peace as absence of violence between states: these are conceptions in the interest of those who benefit from the world seen as a State System, mainly those on top of the political and economic power pyramids. That absence of war between states is close to a necessary condition for peace in the broader sense that I indicate, is another matter - with this I would agree; but it is not a sufficient condition.

R. Preiswerk   Institut d'Études du Développement

The classical *negative* definition which regards peace as the absence of physical violence and war should be extended to include the absence of global maldevelopment. Even if there were no war at the present time, the world could not be regarded as peaceful as long as overdeveloped societies, classes or group (not exclusively to be found in the "North")

prosper next to underdeveloped or underdeveloping ones (not the monopoly of the "South")

Positive peace begins with the definition of minimum and maximum standards of material well-being for all of humanity, thus avoiding both large-scale hunger and wasteful consumerism. Based on an image of the world, in which one's own state is not the center of attention, man must use resources in a way which guarantees the survival of all without destroying the life base of future generations. A dramatic shift in investments from means of selfdestruction (7,000 billion dollars since 1945) to constructive development is obviously indispensable.

Positive peace means transferring real power to functional supranational agencies dealing with specific issues (e. g. exploitation of the sea bed). In the UN, non-governmental organisations should be given real powers as well.

Non-material needs are defined by different societies in accordance with their cultural heritage. The respect for the cultural identity of others is an element of positive peace. Peace also means the psychological liberation from feelings of racial, social and cultural infericity created by oppressors of all types.

Wherever possible, non-violent means should be used to undermine régimes which only survive due to the conscious and arbitrary use of violence against legitimate aspirations for freedom, equality and equity in their societies. However, positive peace cannot in all cases be achieved through non-violent means.

A. Rapoport   University of Toronto

"Negative peace" can be defined simply as the absence of war, that is, massive violence, planned and carried out by states or analogous centralized authorities. Definitions of "positive peace" involve specifications of conditions, presumably sufficient and sometimes assumed to be necessary before war as an institution can be abolished.

In my opinion, negative peace is the more appropriate concept to serve as a point of departure of peace science. This would put primary emphasis on the analysis of the war system and its dynamics rather than on the idealized conceptions of positive peace. Conceptions of these conditions will certainly keep changing as the chronic threat of war diminishes. War, on the other hand is a phenomenon easily recognized by all. Therefore, at this time, war, rather than peace should be at the center of attention of peace researchers, just as disease, rather than "perfect health" (whatever it may mean) is at the center of attention of medical science.

Obvious, constantly-threatening evils are easily recognized, and ways of combatting them are suggested by the nature of the evils themselves. The Ultimate Good, acceptable to every one, is difficult to conceive, let alone to bring about.

M. Schlauch   Emeritus Professor, Warsaw University

Peace is that condition prevailing among members of the human

race when differences of opinion and issues of socio-political organization are resolved by rational discussion, concordant agreement and joint action without recourse to arms. At its best, such a condition is used for constructive effort towards improving the situation and environment of humanity as a whole.

D. Senghaas Hessische Stiftung Friedens-und Konfliktforschung

Neither the pattern nor the content of the existence of man, as well as of the interrelation between men have ever been stabilised once and for all; both are not biologically predetermined. Rather, they have been changing over time. Interest conflicts between men, social groups and states are, therefore, more likely than social harmony and the absence of conflicts in human interrelations. This is why it should become the continuous concern and endeavour of peace policy to find rational modes of conflict resolution. The aim of any peace policy is to contribute to a reduction of existing collective violence potentials as well as to achieve a state of social justice within and between societies. Complete social justice is, however, practically impossible to achieve-and even a contradiction in itself. Peace cannot be defined as a state of social harmony but as an aim of human action to be discussed and redefined over and over again. Thus, peace policy has to be understood as a continuous process of realizing human conditions among men. Therefore, the definition of peace will most likely undergo various changes in the future, and its conceptualization will became far broader than it used to be.

P. Smoker University of Lancaster

Alternatively a brief peace experiment might change the direction of a trend in a desirable way. For example appropriate action before or after a crisis in some social system could in theory radically alter future trend-determined states of that system. Such experiments might also be evaluated in terms of long term trends and the change in trend relative to the utopian base of the experiment.

This approach to peace experiments where changing images of reality and utopias are directly proportional to success of peace experiments is in opposition to social science approaches which assume human behavior or realities are somehow fixed. The progressive interaction between experiments, trends and utopian images might in principle enable peace processes to develop and peace research and peace action to combine. Of course at different levels of global society different mixes of private and public experiments might be in order, thought being given to risks, costs and benefits.

If the validity of peace experiments is measured in terms of changes in trends and creation of alternative images of utopias, aspects of a dynamic peace definition can be suggested. An essential component of peace from this point of view would be continuous creation of more desired future states in information environments. This is to maximize the variance in utopian images. A second aspect would be the elimination or modification of trends currently considered undesirable. This involves changes in reality perceptions and facts of life. Of course as images of utopias change, definitions of desirability change and previously valued expectations, such as an increasing GNP trend, can become undesirable.

There are similarities between this notion of aspects of peace and

some ideas on violence. Galtung, for example, has defined violence in terms of "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual."[15] The peace processes above are also concerned with the potential, alternative images of utopias, and the actual, existing undesirable trends and facts of life. Whereas Galtung's definition implies that a state of no violence would exist if there was no difference between the potential and the actual, the peace definition above argues that such a state is not possible if peace processes operate. The achievement of one utopia, which previously may have been the potential, makes possible new images of utopia which previously were unimaginable of unattainable. Peace processes will continually operate and maintain a gap between potential and actual.

Galtung discusses changing levels of potential while developing his definition of violence. But his definition of peace is still in terms of absence of violence. The dilemma can be resolved when it is realized that the potential in the case of our peace definition is in terms of imagined alternative futures that are probably not achievable now. Within Galtung's framework such imaginings are outside the definition of potential. For Galtung the potential must in principle be achievable now. For example death by tuberculosis in the eighteenth century is not symptomatic of violence to Galtung since it might have been quite unavoidable, whereas death today in this way is symptomatic of violence.

The distinction now becomes clear. Galtung's definition of violence like most conflict theory accepts present day facts of life as a framework for theory. It is based on present day images of reality and an information environment steeped in conflict images. Our definition of peace is based on images of alternatives, even if those images are unattainable. In fact it is of course not possible to know very precisely what is and is

not attainable but this does not matter for the present discussion. While it is of course quite proper to define violence in terms of facts of life and peace in terms of absence of violence, it is equally proper to define peace, in terms of movement towards currently imagined utopias and violence as absence of peace. An alternative is one of the positions taken at the present time by this author. This accepts existing conflict theory frameworks based on existing facts of life as legitimate frameworks for conflict analysis; and argues for alternative futures frameworks for developing peace theory in such a way as to avoid self-fulfilling conflict processes.

This process view of peace implies organic growth and denies an end state of perfect social peace, for example, the end of war may or may not coincide with ongoing peace. Peace from this perspective implies changing and interacting goals, trends, and behaviors. This is quite different from conflictual definitions of peace. Conceptually peace processes of this sort are independent of conflict behavior and definitions of conflictual situations since images of alternatives are taken into account. Peace is not defined in terms of absence of personal or structural violence. Changing models of utopias and modified world views are essential components. Given a process image of peace in terms of moving toward utopias, public peace experiments can include implementation. Trends may be changed and images of alternatives developed as a result of a Woodstock or Yellow Submarine. Implementation can be doing an experiment.

Of course peace theory is still very primitive and the above discussion of peace is meant to be illustrative rather than definitive! It can be argued that there are advantages in developing peace theory using alternative assumptions about future facts of life, namely utopian theories, particularly if modification of information environments towards self-

fulfilling peace thinking is the result. On the other hand the dominant conflict images and facts of life will be hard to change and there are advantages to being realistic in these matters.

[15]*See Violence, Peace and Peace Research*, *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 3 *(1969)*, p. 168.

From : P. Smoker, 'Anarchism, Peace and Control : Some Ideas for Future Experiment.', Peace Research Society : Papers, XVI, The Rome Conference, 1970