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# Contemporary Peace Research: From Utopia to Feasibility

WILLIAM O. PETERFI\*

**ABSTRACT** - This paper proposes to bring into focus some major problems confronting the discipline of peace politics. There appears to be an urgent need for systematic analysis of the many diverse areas and approaches currently lumped together in the general scope of so-called peace research.

Peace research, like peace itself, is admittedly in disarray.

Historically speaking, peace has been an idea pursued by man over the ages and once-in-a-while made into a short-lived reality (Melko, 1973). However, the idea of the establishment of "peace among mankind" on a permanent basis, satisfying all nations, has so far eluded mankind in general and the peace-makers in particular.

It has been argued that under the existing international system, based upon nation states, conflict cannot be eliminated, and therefore war remains as the ultimate choice or resort of nations for their own preservation and the defense of their national interest.

To be meaningful, peace research cannot disassociate itself from the contemporary international system, its principles, scope, operation and objectives. The major principles, unique to the system, such as the nation state, sovereignty, and power, cannot be left out from consideration of the so-called "alternative world futures" and/or "preferred world order" providing for eventual world peace. Since the international system is made up of states as the basic units or actors, peace research cannot be limited only to individuals, minority groups or a few states; it must be all-encompassing or global in range. As far as the operation or functioning of the international system is concerned, with its multi-faceted approaches, including diplomacy, alliances, threats of force, and international organizations, peace research must offer viable alternatives as the operational or functional aspects for its own peace plans and proposals. Lastly, the generally shared objectives of the contemporary international system as viewed by its component parts, the states, such as the national interest, continuous existence of the individual units, and attempts to improve one's own power relative to its possible adversary, demands constructive and realistic counter-proposals from the students of the politics of peace.

The basic problem, as it can be then surmised, lies not only in the development of proposals through alternative world futures or preferred world orders, resulting in appealing "systems" of world peace. Any meaningful and constructive peace research must above all address itself to the ways and means leading to the realization of its preferred objective of permanent world peace. According to Johan Galtung, (1972) a leading peace researcher from Norway, for a peace proposal to be realistic, it should contain the following: actor designation, place designation, and time designation.

Or as he put it, criticizing current peace proposals in general:

... what is missing is not what should be done and why it should be done - but who should do it, how and when and where. In other words, what is missing is the actor-designation, a clear image of the transition path, including the first steps, and some type of idea of the concrete context involved.

The scope of contemporary peace research has generally included the three major and vaguely defined categories or sub-fields of: 1) peace movements and anti-war movements or the general area of pacifism, 2) the so-called utopian peace proposals, and 3) the so-called practical or realistic peace proposals.

This author believes that to provide for a systematic approach to peace research, a reorganization of the categories or sub-fields is essential to bring clarity, objectivity and purpose to the general study of peace. In accordance with Galtung's criteria, there should be three major categories or sub-fields established as objective and legitimate concerns for peace research. These categories may be called "models" and they are: 1) utopian models of peace, 2) conventional models of peace, and 3) unconventional models of peace. In this context the so-called category of "pacifism", although somewhat related, does not strictly fit into the definition of a "model of peace" because of its limited scope, objective, and actor-place-and time designation. According to presentations of the Canadian Peace Research Institute, meaningful contributions are those plans and proposals which are "the result of empirical research or theoretical research which can be tested empirically".

Generally speaking, contemporary peace research developed and is faltering in two distinct directions; the one arguing for a change of the international system as a prerequisite for eventual peace (conventional models), and the other reaching out to the realm of non-existing or improbable situations as a basis to future peace (utopian models). Even between these two categories, the scope of pacifism is only tolerated as an appendix of either category according to the preference of a particular researcher.

In the preparation of any realistic, objective, and practical peace proposal the feasibility aspect is important because, no matter how appealing a particular proposal may be, if it is outside the contemporary international system, it cannot and should not be considered more than a utopian model of peace at best. A similar position was taken by Saul

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H. Mendlowitz when analyzing various projected models of international stability. He emphasizes the so-called "reality quotient" as a prerequisite for realistic and practical consideration of any peace proposal (Mendlowitz and Reardon, 1968).

A final point to be raised about the general problems of peace research is the unresolved matter of the definition and meaning of the term "peace" itself. In general and common usage, "peace is the absence of war". The history of mankind, however, has amply demonstrated that this is not so. On the contrary, peace was always followed by new war ending in a "new peace" which, in turn always carried the seeds of another "new war". On the basis of this concept, there obviously can be no hope for general world peace in the foreseeable future.

Peace between two nations is not peace in the global context. Also, peace between two neighbor nations, that have no past or present differences will differ from a "peace" situation of two states which have just concluded a "peace treaty" as a result of a military contest favoring the one over the other. Enforced peace is not a true peace.

Peace as a concept needs first of all a philosophical-theoretical definition and a political-practical definition. It should be normative and empirical at the same time. It also should be idealistic and realistic, as Kant argued in his treatise on *Perpetual Peace*.

These then are some of the real problems confronting contemporary peace research. To further clarify some of the points raised and put them into perspective, a discussion of the various models, starting with the scope of pacifism and its place in the overall study, may be helpful.

#### **Movements and concepts**

The so-called peace movements, anti-war movements, and the general concept of pacifism should all be considered as aspects of the overall problem as a theoretical or practical contribution. However, since none of them proposes action in the context of the existing international system, their possible or probable impact over the component units of the system can best be described as peripheral. The argument is that as long as the component elements of the international system—the nation state, national interest, and power politics—exist and prevail, these "movements" will have no meaningful impact leading to a change within the system resulting in the establishment of world peace.

The very impressive pacifist literature, going back into the pre-World War I period, is mostly anti-war in its scope and objectives. The abolition of war as an objective or prerequisite for eventual peace cannot be achieved as long as the concept and practice of sovereignty prevails, i.e. as long as the nation states retain the "right" to self-defense.

Max Scheler, writing in 1927, has distinguished eight kinds of pacifism as follows: heroic and individual pacifism, Christian pacifism, economic pacifism, juridical or legal pacifism, semi-pacifism of communism, imperialist pacifism, cultural pacifism, and international class pacifism.

This discussion shall be limited to some of the most current "techniques such as general pacifism, non-violence, and non-resistance".

Pacifism as a proposal and attempt at the creation of world peace cannot be applied to the general scope of interaction among nation states. Even if it should become to pass that several states would at the same time proclaim "pacifism" as their sole and permanent foreign policy objective, there would be no guarantee that other nations would honor the professed goals, not to mention the extreme like-

lihood of joining them.

Pacifism as a conceptual framework for peace will have meaning in the limited context of individuals, such as war and/or draft resisters and conscientious objectors, but would be predestined to failure in the global context of the competing nation states.

Non-violence as a concept for the possible establishment of world peace is also limited in its scope because of the same reasons. Non-violence in general can assist individuals and mostly minority groups against oppression because of racial, religious, economic, or ideological differences. Extrapolating the same concept to the international scene, it simply would mean that a nation state, if threatened, by an adversary, would deliberately and by national consent or choice, decide not to resort to military means for its protection. The very likely outcome of such behavior would be incorporation or at least a subservient status for such a state, and the cause of world peace would definitely not be promoted.

Non-resistance as a concept also would appear to be limited in its scope because it could achieve only one thing, avoidance of conflict, in a particular and limited area by refusing to defend itself.

In this respect, non-resistance by an entire people against an aggressor is not the same as a "voluntary dissolution" of a state.

A classic example of non-resistance by a nation state facing an aggressor is the behavior of Denmark before the German invasion of April 9, 1940. A more recent public declaration of similar intentional surrender was made by Mogens Gistrup, the leader of the Danish Progress Party, during the December, 1973, election campaign when he declared: "Denmark cannot defend itself. Instead of an army, we should substitute an automatic telephone-answering service that, in case of invasion, replies in Russian: "We surrender".

In summary, while recognizing the merits of pacifism in general, it cannot really be classified as an integral part of the wider-scope peace proposals from the point of view of feasibility.

#### **The Utopian Formula**

The so-called utopian models of peace fulfill one basic prerequisite insofar as they propose global solutions. If one considers the proposals by the "classic" writers, such as Plato, More, and Campanella, it can be seen that all have in mind "the ultimate solution" which is the establishment of an "ideal environment" which they assure us would form the basis of the new world order providing for a permanent peace.

These utopian models of peace subdivide into several categories, ranging from the various types of "absolute utopias", such as voluntary submission of all states to a supernatural authority, the withdrawal of one or more nations from international involvement, etc.

The problem with the utopian models is that they are unrealistic in scope and organization, at least into the foreseeable future. The international system, being what it is, a continuously changing and dynamic process, it does not allow for radical changes without global repercussions. However, the merit of so-called utopian peace proposals lies in the conceptual framework of the proposals themselves as a theoretical and philosophical exercise providing thought and ideas for continuous dialogue about peace.

#### **Conventional approaches to peace**

Generally speaking, the models of peace that sometime in the past have had exposure to the general public or have



been put into effect can be described as the so-called "conventional models of peace". There are four major areas of research in this category: international conventions but not necessarily including peace treaties, various aspects of disarmament, international organizations, and various types of world government. There are basically two unifying factors in these models justifying their being put into a separate category from the unconventional model of peace. First, all propose the establishment of world peace or a major step and/or breakthrough in the same direction. Second, all have been tested at sometime in the past with the exception of the model for "world government".

International conventions such as the Treaty of Westphalia, the Congress of Vienna, the Congress of Berlin, and the Hague Conventions all had certain characteristics in common. All were deliberate efforts on the part of the participants, the states and their representatives, to change the previous state of affairs for the purpose of improving it and introduce a particular system based upon world peace or later foundations of a new system which eventually would pave the way for world peace.

The scope of disarmament, with varied approaches and subfields, also should be considered as part of the conventional models of peace. General disarmament, partial disarmament, arms limitation, and arms control all propose the establishment of a revised or new international system in which existing or possible differences and conflicts among the nations would be solved in a way different than by war. In addition, all the disarmament related proposals claim to have as their long range objective the eventual elimination of all armaments and the achievement of peace through a so-called "warless world".

International organizations propose the establishment of world peace by uniting any or all nations into a new system in which differences may be solved through negotiations, mutual understanding, or compromise, and with the approval of all participants. The single major problem with contemporary international organizations, the League of Nations and the United Nations, is the fact that both were born as a result of a war and excluded the former enemy states, their sympathizers and some neutrals. A true international organization cannot have multiple-type membership, as has been the practice of the League and the UN, establishing invited and admitted categories. Also, a true international organization should not be created out of a war situation for the possible establishment and protection of a new status quo advantageous to the victorious powers. Finally, the inequality of the membership within the organization, through the introduction of various devices, security council, veto power, majority vote, etc., do not provide for an organization which could bring about change in the international system.

These and similar problems confronting practical international organizations brought into being an area of study leading to the new model of peace called world government. This idea centers around the reorganization of the United Nations through world law, or the establishment of world federal government, and variations of the same.

All the conventional models of peace are to be considered so-called "working proposals" because they have been previously used by the nation states in their more sincere and unified efforts for peace. Because of remaining "vestiges" of national interest, however, struggle for power, and adherence to the concept and implications of sovereignty, these models may need a long time before they can successfully achieve their professed peace objective.

This situation leads then to the consideration of some new approach.

#### **A Needed Alternative: Unconventional Models**

The unconventional models of peace are by no means mere substitutes for the conventional models but, on the contrary, should be considered as an integral and logical extension, outgrowth and expansion of the latter. Considering the basic prerequisites of a realistic and practical proposal, based upon the implications of the contemporary international system, the unconventional models possess all the essential features making them realistic and practical in scope, operation, and ultimate objective. The one substantive difference between the conventional and unconventional models is in the fact that various proposals under the conventional type of models already have been tried, the parallel proposals categorized as unconventional models have so far never been "tested" practically speaking. Yet at least some of these models have been before the general public for some time in the form of proposals and recommendations developed and submitted by various scholars and students of international affairs and peace researchers.

It would appear that the main reason for the development of a new category of peace models came into being for the simple fact that the existing models have not really succeeded. The failures of the tried conventional models led to looking beyond the existing state of affairs of peace research for new ideas which could perhaps more successfully further the cause of world peace. Thus, the coming of unconventional models is to be considered as a natural and logical sequence in the overall peace research and effort. Inquiry into the apparent failure of the conventional models provided the impetus for a so-called "next stage" of general peace research.

A preliminary listing of some possible approaches for implementing unconventional models of peace might eventually result in achievement of the ultimate objective of world peace and, at the same time, slowly and without "pain" lead to the transformation- -by consent of the members of the international community- -of the international system itself. The list calls conventional models alpha, utopian ones beta, and unconventional models gamma. The latter includes, self-disintegration of a state on a voluntary basis to prevent the outbreak of a threatened conflict, unilateral disarmament by one state or a group of states for the same purpose; political revolt in international organization (e.g. in the UN by the small states, abolishing the veto power, the permanent membership in the Security Council, or organization of another organization "by an invitation only" membership).

Obviously, such a list is by no means complete. It represents a point of departure to stimulate thinking about possible alternatives. But the fact is that at least some of the ideas have already had some exposure and need only more detailed scrutiny and elucidation.

Besides the fact that the various proposals under the unconventional models of peace have not yet been tried practically, they also have other characteristics making them different from the known conventional models of peace. A perhaps unique feature of the gamma models is that they assume action on a unilateral basis. Another novel characteristic would be that action is taken without the previous approval and/or consent of other members of the international community. Finally, the unconventional models of peace would be put into operation exclusively by political action, "based upon the recognized rules, practices and customs of international law, giving them validity and



the force of sanction- -at least theoretically if not also practically“.

Needless to say, that the concept and frame of reference of the unconventional models of peace as of now is in a very preliminary state of development and will require a profound probing and critical evaluation to make it an integral part of overall peace research.

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## FROM THE EDITOR:

### Mailing Addresses Required on All Papers

Almost 150 papers were listed in the program for presentation at the 1978 annual meeting of the Minnesota Academy of Science, and many were, as usual, offered for possible publication in the *Journal*.

Unfortunately, several manuscript papers again were submitted without mailing addresses of the presenters and without compliance to the few requirements for such submissions. Those requirements, while they may differ from various other publications, are fairly simple and are published in most issues of the *Journal*. The information also should be accessible to most participants in the Academy meetings at institutional libraries.

Unless accompanied by an adequate mailing address, no papers will be acknowledged.

Chairpersons of several sections at the year's annual meeting at Macalester College were, happily, diligent in enforcing the submission rules and offered papers in duplicate and with proper identification. Other section heads asked about deadlines, so it should be emphasized that papers can be considered at any time.

This year probably will see publication of four issues of the *Journal*, including the recent special edition with information about the 1980 International Science and Engineering Fair, for which the Minnesota Academy and City of St. Paul are to be local hosts. The three regular editions will provide space for publication of more papers, and chairpersons who have not already done so may still submit papers from their sections. But again, it must be emphasized that manuscripts by offered in the desired form to expedite production.