

**The Thin Line Between Peace Education and Political
Advocacy: Towards a Code of Conduct**

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Abstract

Peace education, like many other topics in the social sciences, is susceptible to the tension between the academic objective of value-free analysis, on the one hand, and particularist as well as highly subjective advocacy, on the other. In many cases, social sciences have difficulty in coping with this tension, and this is particularly true for peace education. As a result, such programs often cross the line between neutral analysis and advocacy, not only of specific programs and ideologies, but, in some instances, of particular parties and positions in disputes. An important dimension of the literature, based on Hobbesian and "realist" perspectives on the nature of violence and the use of force to manage conflicts is often ignored, while idealist models tend to be presented uncritically. Under the cover of "critical theory" (a form of post-modernism) academic frameworks are used to impose a particular definition of "the just society" and dictate who should be empowered, and who should be ostracized. These political laden and biased approaches have produced ideologically distorted curricula, including reading lists, video material, and speakers who present models and analyses of conflicts, that are based on politically inspired distortions, furthering damaging the integrity of peace studies as an academic endeavor. One recent example is the decision of the Sydney Peace Foundation, which is closed entwined with Sydney University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, to award a prize to Hanan Ashrawi, an outspoken official of the PLO whose words and actions are generally associated with violence and conflict, rather than peace and reconciliation. In order to deal with these important problems, the author will present a model code of conduct for peace studies programs in which academic values are maintained.

The Thin Line Between Peace Education and Political Advocacy: Towards a Code of Conduct

Evolution of Peace Studies

The origins of “peace studies” (including conflict resolution, conflict studies, etc.) as an academic discipline can be traced to the late 1940s, and the field has been developing steadily since then.¹ By 2000, the number of academic peace studies and conflict resolutions programs numbered in the hundreds, located all over the world, and organized in professional frameworks such as the Peace Studies section of the International Studies Association and the Political Studies Association (UK).²

The peace studies approach to international relations and conflict was founded by a group of scholars with backgrounds in economics and the social sciences, including Kenneth Boulding, Howard Raiffa and Anatol Rapaport. The backdrop of the Cold War and the political reaction against the threat of nuclear war provided a major impetus for the growth of peace studies, which many people saw as an antidote to programs in war studies, strategic studies, etc. that also developed on many campuses during this period.

In the early 1960s, during the Kennedy Administration in the U.S., in particular, new emphases in the government that were reflected in the creation of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), in order to “balance” the influence and power of the Defense Department and Pentagon, reflected another dimension of this trend. In the context of increasing emphasis on arms control negotiations, and the transformative game theory approach developed by influential academics (many of whom served as government advisors on these issues) such as Thomas Schelling and Roger Fischer, the link between government and academia in the area of peace studies developed further. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and the

¹ Claims for earlier origins are far fetched and demonstrate the absence of continuity with the more modern versions. The first post-WW II Peace Studies program was established in 1948 at Manchester College (Indiana), by the pacifist Brethren, but this was also an isolated example. (Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, v. 504: “Peace Studies: Past and Future”; Ian M. Harris, Larry J. Fisk, Carol Rank, “A Portrait of University Peace Studies in North America and Western Europe at the End of the Millennium”, *International Journal of Peace Studies* 3:1 January 1998, http://www.gmu.edu/academic/ijps/vol3_1/Harris.htm)

concern that the policies of strategic deterrence had brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation, accelerated the growth of peace and conflict resolution studies in academic frameworks.

In parallel, the concept of peace and disarmament studies began to develop in Scandinavia, including the establishment of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), and related programs at a number of universities. Alva Myrdal, a prominent Swedish diplomat, who wrote *The Game of Disarmament* (1976), played a central role in the founding of SIPRI and the promotion of this area of research and analysis.

In addition, the controversies and political upheaval over the Vietnam War, including large scale protests centered on university campuses contributed to the growing interest in peace studies. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a major increase in research projects and courses related to "Problems of War and Peace", and these often evolved into full-fledged degree granting peace studies programs. One of the first, at Colgate University, explicitly noted the link between the founding of a peace studies program on campus and "the continuing nuclear arms race and the protracted war in Indochina".³ In other instances, the role of religious institutions in the development of academic programs was central. For example, the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University in England was established in the early 1970s, under the influence of the Quaker denomination (Society of Friends).

Funds from philanthropic organizations such as the Institute for World Order, and the Ford and McArthur foundations were allocated to the development of courses and research programs on conflict resolution on many campuses, particularly in the U.S. This process reinforced the links between policy, politics, and academic activities in the realm of peace studies.

The trend continued during the era of negotiations between East and West during the 1970s, including the SALT agreements, as well as the Helsinki process, with its emphasis on confidence building measures (CBMs)

² <http://www.earlham.edu/~psa/history.html>

³ Colgate University Peace Studies Program
<http://departments.colgate.edu/peacestudies/default.htm>

and links between the three baskets – security, economic interdependence, and civil society (democracy, human rights, press freedom, etc.) In these processes, academic involvement in the negotiations, as well as track two meetings and publication of analyses, was very significant. Quasi-academic groups such as Pugwash provided informal and unofficial frameworks for discussions that were designed to influence public policy. At the same time, the academic community published analyses, developed theories and held conferences based on these activities.

Major universities in different countries opened such programs; some based on the discipline of international relations or international law, others in the framework of political studies or psychology and yet others as interdisciplinary programs. Over the years, these programs became independent, offering advanced degrees and hiring specialized tenured faculty. In addition, a number of journals in this field have been established, such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the *Journal of Peace Studies*, *International Negotiation*, etc. The creation of the government-funded U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in the 1980s marked a further landmark in this process.

In this period, a number of theories and models have been developed and are used widely in research activities. These research frameworks include approaches based on game theory, “reconciliation”, pre-negotiation, “ripeness”, and mediation. A wide research literature has developed focusing on these frameworks and their applications. Many of these publications seek to apply the models and analytical frameworks to real cases of international conflict, such as Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution, India and Pakistan, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, etc. However, as the continuing conflicts in most of these areas illustrate, the field of peace studies has not been able to make much of a difference, in terms of providing empirically useful description or realistic prescription. Further, peace and conflict studies are subject to increasing criticism reflecting the impact of ideological and subjective political positions that go far beyond the boundaries of careful and value-free academic discourse.

The Ideology and Limited Curriculum of Peace Studies

The failure of peace studies to provide empirically useful analysis and prescriptions for resolving or managing protracted ethno-national conflicts is, in part, a reflection of the complexity of the subject. However, there are additional factors, including a tendency to emphasize a single approach, as well as a dominant ideology of peace studies that strongly rejects, on normative grounds, the legitimacy of the use of force for reducing conflict and self-defense.

In the curricula and syllabi of many peace studies and conflict resolution programs, the dominance of the Kantian and idealist ideological framework stands out. Many of these programs focus on theories and approaches that are based on socio-psychological concepts and models such as reconciliation, dialogue, forgiveness, historic justice, empathy for victims, etc. The normative models, publications and simulation exercises of Kelman, Montville, Kriesberg, Lederach, Rothman, etc. are featured centrally in the reading lists and case studies. International law, norms and frameworks, as well as resolutions and reports of the United Nations and its ancillary groups, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, supported by the powerful NGO community⁴, are also emphasized in this idealist school (i.e. Falk & Mendlovitz, 1982). Many peace studies programs emphasize the goal of defining and furthering “ways of working toward a just and harmonious world community”.⁵

In contrast, approaches that are anchored in the Hobbesian approach to international conflict and conflict resolution, and that include *realist* theories and models based on deterrence, the security dilemma, and the use of force to prevent or resolve conflict, are all but ignored, or, in some cases, explicitly rejected on ideological grounds. As a result, students in peace studies programs rarely encounter the analyses of Hobbes, Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, and other *realists*. Similarly, peacekeeping and war prevention strategies based on the use of force for self-defense, preemption, prevention, etc. are also quite rare in standard peace studies curricula. Although some idealist

⁴ See the analysis posted on www.ngo-monitor.org

⁵ Forcey, L. “Introduction to Peace Studies”, in L. Forcey (Ed.), *Peace: Meanings, Politics, Strategies* New York: Praeger, 1989 p.7, cited by Harris, Fisk, and Rank.

based reading lists include discussions on just war (in particular, Michael Walzer's volume on *Just and Unjust Wars*), this is also far from the norm.

The rapid adoption of post-modernism among many academics, including the ideology and terminology of critical theory, in which subjective concepts are concretized, has amplified this process. Using the terminology of universal human rights, and other norms and values, adherents to this ideology have supported "empowerment", meaning political action and even including support for terrorism and violence, in the name of social justice. In peace studies, the adoption of this approach insists that is universal agreement and objective criteria for distinguishing between aggressor and oppressor, or victim and perpetrator.

Furthermore, the idealistic approach to peace studies – including dimensions such as reconciliation, apology, rebalancing of power relationships, and historic justice – are based on inherently subjective and often highly political judgments. In considering power relationships, the orthodox (idealist) approach to peace studies and conflict resolution inherently assumes that weaker parties and instances of historic injustice can be readily identified.

The danger of distortion from subjective judgements was enhanced with the spread of critical theory, and the enthusiasm with which it was embraced and propagated. Critical theory, in its various forms, easily descends into aggressive political correctness, which claims to distinguish between justice and injustice. Adherents of the critical theory approach seek to empower the disenfranchised and oppressed, or at least to rebalance an asymmetric power relationship. But justice and power relationships are subjective, and when transferred from the philosophical to the political realm, are readily manipulated.

This problem is particularly acute in consideration of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the context of peace studies programs. In general, this dispute is truncated into its Israeli-Palestinian component, and in this very limited and artificial context, Israel is automatically portrayed as the more powerful or dominant party, while the Palestinians are depicted as powerless victims of historic injustice. This assessment is highly subjective, based on a narrow and generally self-reinforcing restriction of criteria, which generally ignores the

objective impact of Palestinian terror and the explicit and continuing threats to Israelis security and survival from the region and the wider Islamic and Arab world. Similarly, the standard claims of historic injustice focus on Palestinian refuge claims, Israeli settlements, etc. But these are based entirely on the Palestinian narrative, which ignores responsibility for central historical events, such as the longstanding Arab rejectionism beginning with the 1947 UN Partition resolution and the violence that resulted, or the context of the 1967 war, which led to the Israeli occupation.

Similarly, in this and in many other cases, historic injustice is a matter of perception and interpretation, often depending on the determination of a particularly starting point, and therefore outside the realm of useful academic analysis. (The South African case and the clear distinctions between the apartheid regime and the Black majority is exceptional. Efforts to learn and apply lessons from the South African experience to other conflict situations generally create distortions and reflect political and ideological biases. In this context, the use of the term “apartheid” in different contexts is politically and ideologically judgmental, rather than academic, and the demonization of Israel becomes part of the conflict, rather than contributing to its management or resolution.

These deficiencies resulting from a narrow idealist approach to conflict and peace studies and from uncritical adoption of post-modernist critical theory, are reinforced by the relative lack of systematic investigation and empirical evaluation of the relevant theories and models. While descriptive case studies and normative articles have been published dealing with conflict resolution efforts, particularly with respect to protracted ethno-national conflicts (the Middle East, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and others), critical evaluations of failed peace processes are generally lacking. Evaluative and comparative methodologies, such as the single analytical framework approach developed by Alexander George, and based on empirically observable variables that are derived from the theories and models in the peace studies literature, are necessary to remedy this weakness in the field. (For a notable and insufficiently cited exception, see Fen Osler Hamson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996.)

This overall absence of useful empirical analysis that can ascertain the applicability of the various theories and approaches to peace studies is illustrated in the case of the treatment of the Oslo process in the literature. In Following the initial agreement in 1993 (the Declaration of Principles), many scholars “explained” this apparent success⁶ and failed to predict the subsequent failure. Most theories and models appear to be tautological in nature, without independent and externally measurable variables with which to determine the link between cause and effect or to measure success or failure. This constitutes a major weakness in the academic approach to peace studies.

Advocacy: Talking Peace While Promoting War

As a result of these factors, in recent years, academic peace and conflict studies programs have also drawn increasing scrutiny and criticism, both from within and from external analysts.⁷ George Lopez, Senior Fellow and Director of Policy Studies, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, has acknowledged the ideological nature of peace studies.⁸ This ideology enhances the tendency inherent in peace studies to move from academic inquiry and research to advocacy, and without careful navigation, it is all too easy for peace studies programs to be drawn into the conflicts that students and faculty claim to be studying.

Furthermore, in an idealist framework in which all use of military force by state actors is essentially anathema, and which is strongly influenced by external non-academic and often ideological factors, the framework of peace studies has often been exploited for attacks against specific countries, specifically the U.S. and Israel. The policies of both countries are routinely subject to condemnation (such political judgements are in themselves outside

⁶ See, for example, Pruitt, Dean G. (1997). “Ripeness theory and the Oslo talks.” *International Negotiation* 2:91-104. Kelman, Herbert C. (1998). “Social-psychological Contributions to Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in the Middle East.” *Applied Psychology* 47(1): 5-29; and Kriesberg, Louis (2001). “Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” *Journal of Peace Research* 38, 3:373-392.

⁷ *Peace Studies: A Critical Survey* by Caroline Cox and Roger Scruton (IEDSS, 1984); *World Studies: Education or Indoctrination* by Roger Scruton (IEDSS, 1985); *Peace of the Dead* by Paul Mercer (Policy Research Publications, 1986).

the realm of academic inquiry) and the context in which force is used in self-defense is often ignored. In a major departure from academic norms of conduct, and in a manner that undermines the credibility of peace studies, faculty members encourage their students to participate in political rallies, boycotts, and similar activities.⁹

While a detailed analysis of this negative phenomenon is beyond the scope of this essay, a few examples of such abuse to pursue an anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian ideology provide indications of the overall trend. As noted above, the Palestinian side is consistently labeled as the weaker party and a victim of Israeli power and aggression. In a particularly blatant example of the political abuse, Stuart Rees, the head of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at the University of Sydney has long championed a pro-Palestinian position and ideology, disguised within the post-modern jargon of support for the “disempowered”. In November 2003, Rees and the Sydney Peace Foundation (which he also heads and which is closely linked to CPACS) awarded its annual peace prize to Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO hierarchy and a former minister in the Palestinian cabinet. Ashrawi has been a major figure in the political campaign against Israel, (for example, in the Durban conference in 2001), and in the strident Palestinian organization known as MIFTAH.¹⁰ This award and ceremony, which took place in a university facility, was highly controversial and stood in sharp contrast to the Sydney Peace Foundation’s explicit criteria for awarding the prize, which include the pledge to “use the prize to further the cause of peace with justice”. The process also undermined Rees’s claims to be advancing the cause of peace.

Similarly, the peace studies program at Bradford University in the UK has also become the setting for anti-Israeli propaganda. In a recent example, UK peace studies association, which is hosted by Bradford University, advertised demonstrations against the Israeli separation fence. (“On the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, members of Leeds Coalition Against

⁸ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, v. 504: “Peace Studies: Past and Future”, p. 9

⁹ Brian Sayre, “Peace Studies’ War Against America”, *FrontPageMagazine.com* April 30, 2003 <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=7583>

¹⁰ <http://www.ngo-monitor.org/editions/v1n02/v1n02-1.htm>

the War will demonstrate in graphic form, with the aid of cardboard boxes, what they believe needs to happen to the wall that the Israeli government is erecting between Israel and the Occupied Territories. 'Palestinians are being cut off from their livelihoods and families, and Israelis are being separated from neighbours with whom they have lived in peace. This symbolic action is taking place to draw the attention of the Leeds public to the conflict in Israel-Palestine, in order to mobilise the voices of peace'. " In this call for action, the facts are greatly distorted, the context (of Palestinian terrorism) is entirely absent. Under the umbrellas of peace studies, this program, as in the example of Sydney University, is, in fact, promoting conflict.

A third example is found in the December 2001 Newsletter of the Peace Studies section of the International Studies Association, in an article entitled "Another Voice against the War", written by Mohammed Abu-Nimer from the Program on International Peace and Conflict Resolution, American University, Washington, DC. On its masthead, this publication notes that "The aim of the PSS/ISA is to seek a better understanding of the causes of war and violence and of the conditions of peace in the international system. To this end, the Peace Studies Section links scholars of various disciplines and methodologies, develops, encourages, and disseminates research, and facilitates research-based teaching in peace and conflict studies."

Abu-Nimer's essay begins by focusing on terror attacks of September 11, 2001, agreeing that this "was a horrible act and everyone should agree that there is no religious or political motivation that justifies such a crime." However, he then goes on to address the question of possible causes for Islamic anger and violence, including U.S. policy in the Middle East, and turns the essay into an anti-Israel polemic that is entirely inconsistent with the mission statement of PSS/ISA, as noted above. Abu-Nimer refers to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as "the main thorn in the Middle East and in the relationship between western countries and Islamic countries." In particular, in this analysis, the conflict is based on the denial of self-determination to the Palestinians. Furthermore, "Every Muslim believes that the U.S. and European governments, if they want, are capable of placing enough pressure on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and allow Palestinians to live in freedom. This might not be a totally accurate belief, however it is

derived from the fact that such governments act as suppliers of weapons and protectors of Israeli interests and policies in every international setting; the recent decision to pull out of the conference on anti-Racism in South Africa is a prime example of such policy.”¹¹

Towards a Code of Conduct

As in other forms of deviance, the first step in efforts to end the politicization of peace and conflict studies is to acknowledge that the problem exists. Following this stage, specific policies must be formulated and implemented to combat the tendency of academic programs to become players in the conflicts themselves.

A code of conduct for peace studies faculty and students could provide an important step towards implementing this necessary goal. Such a code should include the following dimensions:

- 1) The academic discipline of peace studies should seek to encourage reading lists, lectures and related activities that fully present the different ideologically based depictions and paradigms regarding the sources of conflict. In particular, the literature presenting the realist perspective on conflict, beginning with Hobbes, should be included in addition to the Lockian and Kantian (idealist) approaches, allowing students to consider the different perspectives in the free market place of ideas.
- 2) In presenting the details of any conflict, it is important that academic standards of objectivity and non-intervention are scrupulously heeded.
- 3) Academic programs in general, and peace studies, in particular, avoid advocacy or any other actions that would constitute participation in a conflict, taking sides, or promoting the claims of any of the parties.

¹¹ Mohammed Abu-Nimer “Another Voice against the War” Newsletter, Peace Studies section of the International Studies Association, December 2001

The purpose of this approach is not to impose, in any sense, uniformity of ideas or to prevent free and open discussion, but rather to break the existing “politically correct” straightjacket that often characterizes peace and conflict studies in the university. Given the deviation from academic norms of open debate and the tradition that encourages questioning of accepted doctrine and orthodoxy in some peace studies programs, a wide discussion of the ideas expressed in this draft code of conduct would be beneficial, in and of itself.

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