

PEACE STUDIES IN THE US:

Five Reflections

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To start with, some words about how I conceive of peace studies. It is not the same as peace research: peace research is a research activity; peace studies is exactly that, peace studies. The first is research, the second is education. Peace studies may be defined as the teaching of the findings of peace research, including the teaching of how to do peace research. Which of course leads to the question "what is peace research"; and here I would answer with three points. It is research into the conditions of peace with peaceful means; done in a global (as opposed to national, regional, sexist, racist manner) and in a holistic (as opposed to uni-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary) manner. In other words, it is difficult. It requires that either the peace researcher as an individual or as a collectivity has perspectives from several disciplines and several parts of the globe, and some capability of integrating them, with a view to understanding the condition for peace, if only defined as abolition of war as a social institution (which is difficult enough).

Having been to close to 30 universities in North America where peace studies is being taught I would like to offer some reflections. The reflections are negative in the sense that I focus on what I find missing. In no sense does this mean that there are not excellent courses taught, in arms races, bargaining techniques, conflict resolutions studies, Middle East tension, race relations, gender relations and so on. There are also very

important inter-disciplinary committees all around the country trying to work out in academia a niche for peace studies, world order studies, and similar approaches. They often have great difficulties with colleagues and university administration, and also with the students who, not unjustifiably, would ask the question "where does this lead to in terms of degree", "in terms of job opportunities." By and large those questions are left unanswered, and not only because there is no answer to them. But the social energy behind these initiatives peters out, is spent at the lower level of exertion, just getting some courses started (which is difficult enough).

More particularly, I would like to point to four missing elements.

First, I have not so far in US peace studies found much about peace. In fact, I will even go so far as to venture a simple hypothesis: Americans in general do not have peace concepts that are anything like globally acceptable. The general peace concept in America is pax americana, that the US plays a leading role one way or the other, as the guiding light for other countries. Right wing America sees this in military and political terms, also with heavy economic underpinnings, as economic penetration bolstered with political and military means, deterrence and rapid deployment forces, destabilization, hiring of mercenaries to do the dirty job, and so on. The cultural assumption underlying all of this, that the US has a God-given role not only as the guiding light

of other nations but as the nation keeping some order in that jungle, the international system, is sometimes explicit, often not. What everybody believes nobody needs make explicit.

And left wing America has something very similar to this. How often have I not gotten as a response to, for instance, my own lectures on alternative defense: "gee Professor Galtung, a great idea! How can the US play a leading world role in promoting this idea!!" When I answer "what about just playing a normal role, as one nation among others" that candle of enthusiasm shining in the eyes of eager persons in the audience gradually disappears. Left wing shares with right wing the general assumption of hegemony, only want to build into the hegemony different values. Left wing values are generally, but not always, closer to peace as conceived of by, I would assume, most people in the world. Except for this particular point.

What is missing almost totally in any teaching I have found in the US, be that in (mainstream) international studies or in (countertrend) peace studies is an effort to develop the theory, or at least the concept of a more egalitarian world society where all nations enter as good world citizens. There are, of course, three relatively good examples around: the European Community, ASEAN, and the Nordic countries; together with well above 600 million inhabitants. Hence it is neither a utopia existing in the papers of some peace researcher only, nor an inconspicuous part of world reality. But it does not serve to inform the peace studies or peace research community in the US sufficiently. Because the US is absent?

Second, what I find missing is a study of that rather key actor on the world arena, the United States of America itself. It is much too much taken for granted. There will be studies, meaning courses, on US foreign policy, on US institutions and constitutionalism, US history, including diplomatic history. Maybe what is missing is an anthropological approach to the US, to the culture, the basic assumptions of the US as a civilization, its cosmology, its world views. But traditionally anthropology has tended to be about others, including native Americans-- not about Americans. To study them/us other concepts are used and the cultural/structural assumptions are less explored, more taken for granted, for axiomatic as a basis for "modern" society. Traditional society has to be understood from the bottom up, modern society not.

In a country like my own, Norway, I would even go as far as saying that people know more about the Soviet Union than about the United States although what they read about the former cannot be even as much as 10% of what they read about the latter. The reason: when anything is said about the Soviet Union there is always the suspicion "is that necessarily so?", asked from the right or from the left or from both. When something is said about the US the tendency to accept what is said is much higher, by no means 100% but much above the corresponding ratio for the Soviet Union.

As a result of this US students, even at the graduate level belaboring their Ph.D. theses become axiomatic, naive bordering on the helpless, when they try to come to grips with their own country. What is left out or at least left unquestioned looms like an elephant in the china shop, only that the elephant is not seen. That the result will not pass international standards of research but rather be seen as an apologia sua is difficult to communicate to US academics, particularly since they tend to associate with foreigners produced by themselves, through the cloning process associated with numerous and very generous fellowships to the US. World views, including epistemologies, flow along the channels of other types of penetration, be that economic, military, political or cultural in a more general sense, making for identical blind spots

Third, I am missing any attention to methodology and epistemology. The assumptions seem to be that the methodology of peace research is the sum of the methodology of the participating disciplines. This is not the case. To try to encompass much broader aspects of the human condition than can be seen by one discipline alone different approaches are needed. This is no longer a question of attitude surveys, or the calculation of elasticities. Deeper lying factors have to be explored, underlying in the culture and the structure of considerable chunks of humankind, in time and space. Structural analysis is needed. References to the "collective subconscious" become inevitable for the baggage carried by us humans and shaping us, later on to unfold in our various types of war and peace relevant behavior. I am not at

all sure that we have the methodology, yet, for such explorations. To put much emphasis on that which is not seen and is so subconscious that it is not necessarily registered even in depth interviews may seem risky, to say the least, for many. And yet it somehow has to be done. And the same applies to social structures that are not seen either, and harmonies/disharmonies of interest that nobody knows about, only the analyst. How do we know they are there?

The answer, is of course, that in crises all of these things come out, like the fault lines in the earth's crust when the pressure becomes too high, or the cracks in a human personality when that person is under stress. In order to see this for the whole society some knowledge of history is indispensable, and so far, unfortunately, only few historians have been seriously interested in peace research and peace studies in the US.

Fourth, there is generally insufficient attention to the holistic aspect of peace studies, whereas the global aspect is to some extent taken care of by doing what the US is very good at doing and also easily can do: having students, and staff, from various parts of the world. It is said that in many classes at the University of California, Berkeley at least three continents are present. But not three disciplines, I might add: the tendency at the graduate level is in the direction of relatively strict disciplinary sorting. In a sense this is only natural and derives already from the double meaning of the word discipline.

The holistic approach goes beyond a multi-disciplinary committee that puts together an information sheet about the courses of relevance for a student interested in peace studies. As a minimum there would be a thorough explanation of peace concepts around the world, perhaps with a background in the world's religions. As a matter of fact, I often find that the most trans-disciplinary approaches, bordering on the holistic, are found not in the social sciences where sorting and filtering already has gone on for a considerable amount of time, but precisely in such places as the departments of religious studies, or philosophy. The US has a great advantage over Europe in this regard. In many European countries the fascinating discipline of theology is put in a ghetto referred to as a divinity school, theological seminary, or faculty, or what not for the purpose of educating priests, in Europe meaning (close to) state functionaries. With the separation of state and church it was easier for the US to have strong departments of religious studies, particularly in a country where there is certainly no separation between state and religion (or Judeo-Christian faith, to be more particular). The interest is on religion, not in the church as institution.

Another approach would be that of systems studies, exemplified in North America by the approaches explored and developed by the two giants of peace studies on this continent: Kenneth Boulding and Anatol Rapoport. I find this valuable, except if it remains too general and does not come down to the concrete politics of



contemporary life. This is where peace researchers ultimately will be, and should be, tested.

Fifth, and very much related to this although it may sound like an administrative matter: peace studies have a tendency to remain at the inter-disciplinary level. This, of course, is the course of least resistance. All that is needed would be, a (part-time) secretary for an inter-disciplinary committee which meets once in a while, looks at what is being offered, puts together a list, identifies gaps, encourages the development of new courses within the established disciplines. In doing so the point of gravity of university studies at that university might be dislocated in a direction more favorable to peace studies.

But there is no point where all of this comes together. For instance, imagine a student interested in arms race and the east-west conflict. He can put into his study much of what he has learned in courses on US foreign policy, Soviet foreign policy, the dynamics of arms races, negotiation behavior, general formulas for conflict resolution, and so on. But there should be a seminar, or even a course where this is done so that he has shoulders to stand on when he tries to reach for new horizons. At the very least there should be an inter-disciplinary seminar in peace studies for graduate students discussing their research, and at least one faculty person sufficiently well-rounded and grounded to know how to conduct such a seminar.

And that, of course, is the second problem in this connection. The first problem is solved by not having to demand extra funding because the peace study curriculum is essentially financed within the framework of existing departments. The second problem is this: how do we identify a peace researcher? We know what the specialist in sociology, economics, political science looks like, and there is even a procedure for deciding whether the person is the right person: peer evaluation. How do we do that where there are practically speaking no peers, because the field is so new?

First of all, it is not true that the field is so new, nor that there are no peers. It is not that difficult to compose a committee for evaluation. The problem is rather that for political reasons that committee might not be trusted by those in power at the universities. And they would, essentially, be mainstream academics, who are teaching, knowingly or not, the type of thinking underlying mainstream politics.

One way out, of course, would be to offer the trans-disciplinary seminar within the discipline where the person best suited to do so (in the mind of the peace studies committee) is located. If he has tenure protection he might be able and willing to fight that struggle and get it through the course committee of the university.

But there is also another way out: to go outside the university. The peace study summer school is a very adequate solution in this regard, and should, in principle, be organized by a high

number of universities or colleges all around the country. The duration should not be too short because of the difficulty of the subject. The emphasis should both be theoretical and practical, both on general theories of factors that are productive and counter-productive of peace, and of conflict resolution, for instance, and detailed analysis of concrete cases, using the general theories. In a relatively short lapse of time it should be possible for such summer schools to generate a much higher number of people very knowledgeable of peace studies than is so far the case. Many of them would then teach in colleges, community colleges and high schools. Good standards are needed for this, much hard work.

However, there is no substitute for the essential battle inside a university in favor of a degree program, preferably at the master's level, leading to an MPS, a Masters degree of Peace Studies. But that battle can only be fought on the basis of a concrete curriculum, and one way of developing this concrete curriculum would be to have it as a discussion theme at one or more peace studies summer schools. Needless to say, this process is already on the way, but it is high time that it is sped up considerably.

Given the enormous resources of the country I am in no doubt that these problems will be solved. But it should be noted that the first four problems are quite tricky, and that the solution of the fifth is no automatic remedy for the first four deficits. They are intractable, being rooted deeply in the outlooks and

training of US social scientists, including those who refer to themselves as peace researchers. There is safety in the discipline of **origin**; including economic safety--a factor not to be underestimated given the economic constraints under which US universities are said to labor.

And yet these changes are bound to come. The 1980s have been/are difficult, for obvious reasons. But some of the more global and holistic spirit of the 1970s has survived the single-minded focus on national security and conventional, disciplinary training. The 1990s might recover the spirit of the 1970s--perhaps even in the late 1980s. And lift that effort up to a higher level, less naive and self-righteous, perhaps more in the spirit of making a real contribution both to peace studies, peace research and peace.