

Original Articles

Peace conceptualizations: From Galtung to Sen and beyond

Conceptualizaciones de la paz: de Galtung a Sen y más allá

Information

Dates:

Received: 22/09/2024

Accepted: 16/11/2024

Published: 31/12/2024

Correspondence:

bartoluc@di.unipi.it

Conflict of interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding:

No fundings received.

Authorships

Valentina Bartolucci¹  0000-0003-4909-9091

¹Università di Pisa, Italy.

How to cite this article

Bartolucci, V. (2024). Peace conceptualizations: From Galtung to Sen and beyond. *Revista de Cultura de Paz*, 8, 268–283. <https://doi.org/10.58508/cultpaz.v8.236>

RESUMEN

El debate académico internacional sobre la «paz» se ha articulado de diferentes maneras, pero inicialmente y durante mucho tiempo se centró en una idea de paz que se consideraba esencialmente como la ausencia de guerra (paz «negativa»). En el campo de los estudios sobre la paz, la atención se ha desplazado gradualmente hacia una conceptualización más amplia de la paz, conocida como paz «positiva». La noción de paz «positiva» de Galtung, a pesar de sus buenas intenciones, es bastante problemática. En este artículo, analizo primero las contribuciones seminales de Galtung sobre la conceptualización de la paz, subrayando sus deficiencias. Partiendo de una reconceptualización de la paz como un proceso asintótico de «construcción de», es decir, una tensión hacia un horizonte que podemos imaginar pero nunca alcanzar plenamente, propongo luego un replanteamiento del conflicto fuera de las lógicas de contención, eliminación o transformación.

Palabras clave: La paz de Galtung; libertad; reconceptualización de la paz; complejidad.

ABSTRACT

The international academic debate on "peace" has been articulated in different ways, but initially and for a long time remained focused on an idea of peace that was essentially seen as the absence of war ("negative" peace). In the field of Peace Studies, attention has gradually shifted to a broader conceptualization of peace, known as "positive" peace. Galtung's notion of 'positive' peace, despite its good intentions, is in fact quite problematic. In this article, I first analyze Galtung's seminal contributions on the conceptualization of peace, underlying its shortcomings. Drawing on a re-conceptualization of peace as an asymptotic process of "construction of", that is, a tension towards a horizon which we can imagine but never fully achieve, I then propose a rethinking of conflict, outside the logics of containment, elimination or transformation.

Keywords: Galtung' peace; re-conceptualizing peace; conflict; complexity.

Introduction

Traditionally, in mainstream international studies on the topic, peace is defined as the “absence of war” (Diehl, 2016; Gleditsch, Nordkavalle & Strand, 2014). In International Relations, peace is primarily understood as the absence of full-scale war in interstate relations and as the outcome of a policy (Waltz, 1979). According to this conception, war gives way to peace when the international system offers nothing to prevent it. Richmond (2006, pp. 367-8) notes that:

moving beyond a negative peace has generally been presumed to be over-ambitious and implausible given the assumed inherency of violence in human nature, society, and the international system. As a consequence, a “negative peace” has come to dominate the academic literature and to be the most immediately recognisable concept reflecting the situation in various conflict zones around the world. [...]. This means that peace is often characterised as a negative peace, with a positive peace logically following on from this at a far later date.

The concept of “democratic peace”, seen as depending on the absence of a *bona fide* war between two democracies, has also been extensively explored (Russett & Oneal, 2001). According to Rasmussen (2003, p. 8), “the notion of democratic peace is the contemporary incarnation of the Western style of peace. Democratic peace theory defines peace as the absence of war and explains war’s absence in terms of the peaceful ways of democracies”. Even those who are critical of the “democratic peace” conception tend to concentrate more on the absence of war than on broader conceptualizations of peace (Gibler, 2012; Schneider & Gleditsch, 2010).

According to the liberal tradition, peace results from the pursuit of other policies, such as international institutions or free trade.¹ The assumption here is that the management of war must be achieved *before* the institutions of peace can eventually operate. It follows that,

Making peace in the international system has mainly been conceptualized as Western activity derived from war, from grand peace conferences, and more recently, the sophisticated contemporary institutionalization of key norm and governance processes associated with the liberal peace (Richmond, 2005, p. 2).

The concept of peace has been under constant discussion in Peace Studies (PS) from the very start. In PS, peace is generally understood as being something richer and more articulate than the mere absence of war.² Yet, even in Peace Research, reflections on broader conceptualizations of peace

¹ The underpinning of the “liberal peace” conceptualization can be traced to Kant (1795) “perpetual peace”. For more on the concept of “liberal peace” see, among others, Duffield (2001), Richmond (2006); Oneal *et al.* (1996). For a more critical stand see Paris (2004), Richmond (2005); Cooper (2007), Chandler (2000); Zaum (2012). Other scholars maintain, that despite criticalities, the conceptual framework of the “liberal peace” is still the “best option” available (Paris, 2004).

² See, among others, Galtung (1969, 1985), Richmond (2008), Wallensteen (2015), Diehl (2016), Campbell, Findley & Kikuta (2017), Guarrieri, Drury & Murdie (2017), Joshi & Wallensteen (2018), Goertz (2020). On the different strategies deployed for the conceptualization of peace in the IR and Peace and Conflict Studies literature see Richmond (2006). In this article, “Peace Studies” and “Peace Research” are used interchangeably.

are scarce and relegated to the margins. Indeed, despite the fact that, in the last 50 years, many advocated a broad concept of peace, as encouraged by the definition of “positive peace” as the reversal of structural violence, PS has been primarily concerned with the analysis of “negative peace”, that is, the prevention of war and direct large-scale violence:

Almost all conflict scholars would agree with the statement “peace is not just the absence of war”, nevertheless, the peace science community has not acted upon this belief. In empirical as well as theoretical practice, peace is treated as merely the absence of war or militarized disputes (Diehl, Goertz & Gallegos, 2021, p. 606).

After having examined the debate on broader and narrower conceptions of peace and investigated empirical patterns in the first 49 volumes of the *Journal of Peace Research*, with comparisons with the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Gleditsch, Nordkavalle & Strand (2014, p. 155) concluded that:

Although there have been changes over time in the use of terms such as “peace”, “war”, “violence”, and “conflict”, there was no “golden age” of peace research which focused more clearly on peace. So, it appears that little has changed from the early days of Peace Research: Negative peace, in the sense of reducing war, has always been the main focus in peace research.

Already in the early 70s, Carroll (1972, p. 593) criticised the fact that the field was dominated by the study of major-power war and paid little attention to broader aspects like injustice, exploitation or oppression. At the end of the 80s, Wallensteen (1988, p. 8) admitted that Peace Research concentrated on the question of (organized) violence. More recently, sharing the same concern, Johansen (2006) urged for a reorientation of Peace Studies.

Brock-Utne & Garbo (2009, p. 3) expressed preoccupation for the growing tendency in PS to focus on security, which could provide an inadvertent excuse for militarization. Even Galtung (2009) has become increasingly critical of the focus on war and violence of what he claimed was his own “creature”. Diehl (2016) similarly pointed out that, “Scholarly emphasis remains on war, violence, and negative peace—as demonstrated by references to articles appearing in a leading peace-studies journal and to papers presented at International Studies Association meetings”. Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013, p. 768) registered a “tendency to focus on superficial issues and quick fixes or ideological goals with little regard for major structural matters or causes of conflict, or local everyday dynamics of peace”. Consequently, peace remains under-conceptualized (Gleditsch, Nordkavalle & Strand, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2006).

The call for more attention to peace does not imply an abandonment of concerns about war and violence but rather doing more research on peace. Re-conceptualizing peace should be seen as the first but necessary step to avoid PS self-marginalization as “a refuge for those good people who habitually support good (but lost) causes” (Neufeld, 1993, p. 171).

In this article, I first analyze Galtung's seminal contributions on the conceptualization of peace, underlying its shortcomings. Drawing on a re-conceptualization of peace as an asymptotic process of "construction of", that is, a tension towards a horizon which we can imagine but never fully achieve, I then propose a rethinking of conflict, outside the logics of containment, elimination or transformation.

Defining peace: Galtung's contributions

Gaddis (1987) used to call the post-World War II period the "Long Peace" because it was the longest period in history without war between superpowers. In *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, Steven Pinker (2011) argued that humans are currently living in the most peaceful era in the history of our species, largely because of the decline in violent behavior. In another prominent work on the decline of war, Goldstein (2011) argued that the world is more peaceful because the level of violence, especially that which results in combat deaths, has been steadily decreasing. But are we really living in the most peaceful era in history? The answer to this question depends largely on how we define *peace*.

Peace is an elusive concept. Traditionally, mainstream scholarship on the subject has defined peace as the absence of war. Although this concept is of limited value because it lumps together very different situations, it remains the dominant approach in theory, research, teaching and policy discourse.

According to many, such peace, seen as the antithesis of war, could have been (and many think it is still the case) made possible thanks to increasingly lethal arms. In 1886, for example, Alfred Nobel said to Bertha von Suttner: "My factories may end the war sooner than your congresses. The day when two army corps can destroy each other in a second, would not all civilised nations shrink from war and disband their troops?" (Nobel, 2001, p. 266). In 1941, the US chairman of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, Vannevar Bush, advised Roosevelt that the atomic bomb could be "a decisive instrument capable of winning the war and shaping the peace". If it could be built, he wrote, "it would be a thousand times more powerful than existing explosives, and its use could be decisive" (in Bernstein, 1975, p. 25). In reality, not only does the availability of very lethal weapons not make war impossible or more difficult, but this, in any case, has no effect on the level of violence (structural or otherwise) within societies.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has now degenerated into open warfare, and the other wars we are witnessing today show that the idea of peace, based solely on the presence or absence of warfare, remains the dominant one. The starting point of this concept is war. Peace, from this point of view, is achieved when war is overcome, with the military defeat of one of the bel-

ligerents, or with an agreement between the conflicting parties, even without reaching the level of violent confrontation. Such a conception of peace does not, of course, imply the rejection of war. It can only limit its use. The assumption remains that war as a means is functional to peace as an end: in this sense, wars are fought to achieve peace.

For scholars interested in the understanding the conditions that generate war and other forms of massive violence, conceptualizing peace as the absence of war makes sense. But for those who want to focus on the conditions that generate or maintain *peace*, such conceptualization does not suffice.³ Indeed, defining peace in “negative” terms can lead to perverse results for scholarly analysis and policy-making. For example, if we define peace as the “absence of war”, we can easily argue that North Korea is “at peace” with South Korea because there is no direct military confrontation. Similarly, we could argue that the situation in Cyprus is “peaceful”. States that are no longer involved in direct warfare would also be considered to be “at peace”, despite ongoing violence and widespread human rights abuses. Even internally, there are States that could easily fall into the category of “peaceful States”, given the relative scarcity of internal violence, but are very poor, experience persistent social polarisation and/or have negative human rights records.

In a similar context, Johan Galtung's much-cited attempt to arrive at an expanded concept of peace is particularly important. According to the Norwegian scholar, the absence of high levels of violent conflict is certainly one component of peace, but it cannot be considered the only one. He thus defines “negative peace” as the absence of war, and “positive peace” as the absence of violence and the integration of human society (Galtung, 1964, p. 2).

In his seminal article of 1969, in response to harsh criticism from within the peace research movement, Galtung redefines “positive peace” as the elimination of “structural violence”, distinguishing it from “direct violence” because it emanates from the structure of a social system. He also refers to “positive peace” as “social justice”. In his view, “positive peace” would require, among other things, the elimination of political oppression, gender inequality, poverty, hunger, exploitation, and limited access to health care and education.

Galtung chooses to define the concept of peace not in terms of war or conflict, but in terms of violence. A risky operation which, as he himself says, risks being “a clear case of *obscurum per obscurius*” (Galtung, 1969, p. 167). Now, the problem Galtung faces is to define what violence is, and this is what he attempts to do.

Galtung identifies three types of violence: direct violence, both physical and psychological; structural violence; and cultural violence. Violence in general is defined as any action or condition that causes a human being's “actual somatic and mental achievements to be below their potential achievements”

³ For a general discussion on the concept of peace see Richmond (2008).

(Galtung, 1969, p. 168). Holding a person captive, preventing him from having the freedom of movement that would be his potential, is an act of violence and a typical example of direct violence in which there is a subject, the one who perpetuates the violence, and an object, the one who suffers it.

A population with a life expectancy of 40 years in a world capable of guaranteeing life expectancies of the order of 80 years is an example of structural violence. In this case, there is no subject acting consciously to keep the life expectancy of the population low. It is the social, economic and political system that creates the situation of violence. Although many of those who live in and benefit from the system are in some way responsible for the situation, they are responsible in a very indirect and not necessarily conscious way.

Finally, it may happen that those who suffer violence accept it, considering it somehow in the natural order of things. This is, for example, what happens in a strongly patriarchal society in which the subjugation of women is not questioned even by the very women who suffer it. This is an example of "cultural violence" that Galtung defines as "every aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in a direct or structural form" (Galtung, 1990, p. 291).

Galtung defines violence as any act that causes a human being's "actual somatic and mental achievements to be below their potential achievements" (1969, p. 168). A risky operation that, as he himself states, risks being "a clear case of *obscurum per obscurius*" (Galtung 1969, p. 167). In fact, the concept of potential achievement remains somewhat undefined. Who establishes what level of achievement can be considered relevant and potentially achievable? There are types of achievements that are achievable, but not so relevant as to make the impediment to achieving them considered violence, and, on the other hand, there are achievements that are part of a person's desires, but that may not be achievable.

Galtung's attempt to define peace starting from violence was met with some perplexity. This vagueness of his definition lead Boulding to affirm that the breadth and generality of Galtung's concept of violence on the one hand makes one lose sight of the mechanisms and dynamics that lead to violence and on the other leads to not grasping

that there are in society perverse dynamic processes by which social systems go from bad (to worse rather than from bad to better, in spite of the great principle of decision that everybody does what he thinks is best at the time. The analysis of these processes of perverse dynamics is the key to successful intervention in human betterment (Boulding 1977, p. 84).

If it is true that Boulding apparently does not grasp the urgency of that radical social criticism that characterizes Galtung's discourse, it is however beyond doubt that the Norwegian researcher has remained stuck to a static and descriptive conception of reality, not grasping the importance of analyzing the mechanisms that lead social systems to evolve towards situations of greater

or lesser structural violence. Galtung's reconceptualization of peace does not convince Boulding (1977), according to whom his redefined "positive peace" seems to include "any state of affairs that scores high on his scale of goodness", so that "[positive peace] may have very little to do with peace".

Galtung's conceptualization of peace is undoubtedly more nuanced than previous ones, encompassing aspects that go far beyond war and violence to include elements such as justice, equality and development.⁴ However, reaching an agreement on its essential components remains problematic. Moreover, although the negative/positive framework of peace is a useful typology, it, nevertheless, tends "to obscure the complexity of patterns of thinking about peace because of its dependence upon a simple binary construction of peace" (Richmond, 2006, p. 386).

As it emerges from the above discussion, to conceptualize peace within the Galtung framework appears to be quite challenging. As pointed out by Svensson: "positive peace" is a "vague, aloof, multifaceted, and elusive" concept (2020, p. 704) that is difficult to operationalize. On the one hand the "negative peace" definition is so narrow that it can lead to perverse outcomes for scholarly analysis and policy making (as shown above), on the other hand, the "positive peace" definition can be so expansive to become useless.

Re-conceptualizing peace as an asymptotic process

Thomas Weber argues that Galtung's greatest contribution to Peace Studies was to state that "the opposite of peace is violence, not war" (2004, p. 205). This insight has enabled a conceptual broadening of peace that has been fundamental but not decisive because of the vagueness of Galtung's definition of violence. It is therefore worth trying to offer a better specification of violence. This can be done by combining Galtung's idea of violence with Amartya Sen's idea of freedom (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2022). This allows us to define violence as any action or condition that prevents people (individuals or groups) from enjoying substantive freedoms or "capacities" to "live the kind of life they value and have reason to value" (Sen 1990). According to Sen (2007, p. 21), it is precisely:

the expansion of those freedoms that we rightly value [that] not only makes our lives richer and less constrained but also allows us to be more fully social individuals, exercising our wills, interacting with and influencing the world in which we live.

An interesting aspect of the definition of freedom proposed by Sen is its procedural characteristic. Sen does not provide a list of freedoms, but the crite-

⁴ On the varying conceptions of "positive peace" see Diehl (2016). For attempts towards more multidimensional conceptualizations of peace see Richmond (2005), Mac Ginty (2006). In general terms, peace beyond the absence of war is not properly conceptualized (Davenport, Melander & Regan, 2018; Höglund & Söderberg Kovacs, 2010; Diehl, 2016).

tion for recognizing them, that is, that one gives value to the type of life that these freedoms allow and that one is able to explain the reasons for them. These freedoms, therefore, cannot be arbitrary, but there must be rational arguments to support their value and precisely for this reason, at least in principle, they must be generalizable, that is, recognizable to everyone. This allows us to take into account different cultures, different places and times, different living conditions, but also different tastes and aspirations, both at the individual and collective levels.

Freedoms for Sen can be positive or negative. Positive freedoms or "freedoms of", include:

1. Political and civil freedoms, which, in addition to the freedom to vote, speak and hold opinions, include the ability to lead one's own life and take part in fundamental decisions that affect public life;
2. Economic and social freedoms, that is, the freedom to access those basic goods and services, such as food, housing, education, health, without which the possibility of living life to the full is prevented;
3. Cultural and religious freedoms, that is, the possibility of forming one's own system of religious, philosophical, ethical and cultural beliefs, of expressing them freely and of living in accordance with them.

Negative freedoms or "freedom from", include freedoms from want, poverty, hunger, suffering, disease or premature death and from various forms of insecurity. Sen uses the term "unfreedom" in reference to those situations in which someone is deprived of specific freedoms. Extreme poverty is a case of unfreedom, as is the case of slave labor, still present in some countries, or even the impossibility of finding a job in the absence of a system of social guarantees.

Another concept necessary to complete the definition of freedom is that of equality. In principle, everyone must be guaranteed an equal right to the various forms of freedom. This does not necessarily mean that in every situation everyone should enjoy the same amount of freedom, but that as far as quality is concerned, everyone should be entitled to the same types of freedom.

This definition has the advantage of taking cultural diversity into account. In fact, rather than claiming to draw up lists of freedoms valid in every context, what is provided is a general framework within which each society, and each individual within a given society, is allowed to decide which freedoms are considered to have value, with the only limitation that the individual or society must have reasons for valuing the chosen freedoms, that these reasons are based on arguments of general validity, and finally that, at least in principle, there is within each society for each individual an equal capacity to access these freedoms. This last point, particularly important, excludes, for example, discrimination based on gender, sexual preferences, ethnic differences, religious affiliation or political opinions.

On the basis of these reflections, we could therefore define peace as the freedom for all "to live the kind of life to which they give value and have reason to give value" (Sen, 2007, p. 24). The freedom to live, in other words, "without 'domination' and 'command', which are very different things from 'organization' and 'government'" (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2022, p. 66). Peace is then "fullness of life for all" including the adversary (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2022, 2023) and the non-human.

In this perspective, "peace is achieved when a conflict is overcome while the adversary remains alive!" (Bianchi, 1991, p. 21). Since, as Bianchi (1991, p. 21) argues, "shalom is never a good for individual consumption, but a good promised to the poor, expected by the poor, understood by the poor", peace-shalom is not to be seen as a good for individual consumption, but as a global public good that necessarily implies the existential flourishing of each individual.

Peace is to be seen as a complex (dynamic) process in the making, in which individuals and communities can imagine alternative futures outside the logic of oppression and domination (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2023). Peace as such should not be seen as an item for individual consumption, but rather as a global public good that necessarily implies the existential flourishing of each individual and the upliftment of all.

This implies a radical vision of community life that ensures the full participation of all in decision-making processes for the common good and that values the material and non-material resources of society, outside a logic of oppression and domination. Peace, in this perspective, is not about "winning" the war, defeating the enemy, or completely eradicating violence from the world. It is about looking beyond violence and focusing attention, imagination and concrete efforts on the new society we want to build (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2023).

War is a "state". Peace is a (dynamic) process or a tension towards a goal that may never be fully achieved but must be constantly pursued. Given the highly contingent and endogenous nature of the dynamics of conflict escalation (Korf, 2006), it can progress or regress, passing through periods of violence that can be seen as moments of rupture that disrupt or divert the path that must then be restored. Peace, then, is not simply an "absence of" (violence and war), but rather an asymptotic process of "construction of", that is, a tension towards a horizon that we can imagine but never fully reach, but to which we could tend to get closer and closer (Bartolucci & Gallo, 2022).⁵

In mainstream public discourse on war, means and ends are usually conceptually separated: the means chosen may be more or less effective in achieving the end, but that does not change its substance. But if we look at peace as a process, we see that it unfolds in a complex and interconnected reality whose internal dynamics depend, often unpredictably, on our actions. This

⁵ On peace as a dynamic process rather than a fixed state see also Söderström & Olivius (2022).

conceptualization implies a radical paradigm shift that places peace at the centre of Peace Studies reflection. This also implies a rethinking of conflict beyond the logics of containment, elimination or transformation.

The “edge of chaos”: Rethinking conflict

Having clarified what peace is, the problem remains of how to set the peace-building process in motion. In this regard, it may be useful to recall a concept dear to complexity scholars, that of the “edge of chaos” (Waldrop, 1996). “At the edge of chaos,” explains Cohen (1997, p. 69), “the boundaries of change constantly fluctuate between a state of stagnation and the anarchy of endless destruction. It is precisely in this “middle ground” between order and disorder, which can quickly become a place of destruction and death (through fossilisation if there is too much order, or through disintegration if there is too much disorder), that new life can emerge. The “edge of chaos” is a very risky area because of the unpredictability and uncontrollability of the events and subjects found there, but it is also full of unexplored possibilities.

Of course,

Finding the balance point must be a delicate matter – if a living system drifts too close, it risks falling over into incoherence and dissolution; but if the system moves too far away from the edge, it becomes rigid, frozen, totalitarian. Both conditions lead to extinction. Too much change is as destructive as too little. Only at the edge of chaos can complex systems flourish. [...] And, by implication, extinction is the inevitable result of one or the other strategy – too much change, or too little (Crichton, 2012, pp. 2-3).

It is therefore necessary to learn to live with this complexity, that means, as Amietta (1991) writes:

the end of ‘black or white’, of ‘you are with me or against me’, of ‘I am in the truth and you are in the falsehood’, of ‘angel or demon’, of ‘damned or chosen’ [...]. Which means, in the final analysis, the end of the culture of the *or*, the beginning of the culture of the *and*.

In this area of dynamic equilibrium between processes of creation and destruction, there is conflict, which must not be seen as something to be feared, but as a necessary element to avoid “fossilisation” (the status quo), being careful that it does not degenerate into “destruction” (war). One way of dealing with this complexity is to embrace the conflict creatively, or to go through it, living the present (a present full of the future) in a new way to ensure that new unexplored possibilities can emerge.

The perspective of traversing conflict demands a change of logic that is necessary to live in a new way. It is an “interstitial transformation” that does not challenge existing relations of domination, but rather bypasses them and seeks to empty them from within. The perspective is radically different from that of domination, which seeks to mitigate or, worse, to eliminate conflict,

but also from that of transformation or, to use Galtung's terminology, transcendence.

Conflict, in this new perspective, is not an aberration to be brought back into the norm, nor something potentially positive to be transcended, but the engine of change towards a possibility that has not yet become, the possibility given to us to go beyond, to build the new reality little by little.

An example of this "interstitial transformation" can be found in the beautiful letter that Paul wrote to Philemon between 58 and 60 AD, while the apostle was in prison. In the letter, the apostle speaks of Onesimus, a slave of the rich Philemon, who had escaped from him, probably by robbing him. The slave had arrived in Rome and had somehow met Paul, whom he had told that he had wronged his master. The apostle had spoken to him of the saving grace of Christ, and Onesimus had converted to the Lord.

After meeting Onesimus, Paul writes to Philemon with an unprecedented request: not only does he ask Philemon not to punish his runaway slave, but also to welcome him as a brother. The apostle knows that according to the laws in force, the slave must be returned to his rightful owner, who can do whatever he wants with him, even condemn him to death. At that time, slavery was considered something perfectly normal, and Paul had neither the instruments nor the opportunity to change this state of affairs. In fact, the apostle does not question slavery as such, which was unthinkable at the time, but shifts the focus to a higher level, suggesting an alternative way of relating to one another, thus opening up the possibility of a "new world".

In other words, Paul does not remain "stuck" in the slave-master conflict but breaks the pattern from within by refocusing the issue on a different kind of relationship. The slave remains a slave, but when he is seen as a brother, the situation changes completely. What has just been presented is a typical example of "traversing" a conflict, which involves a change of logic necessary to live in a new way.

At the heart of this new posture towards conflict are: (1) a willingness to challenge predetermined paths by asking a different set of questions; and (2) the capacity to welcome the unexpected.

Two examples will be provided. The first example is about the entrenched border dispute between Ecuador and Peru. The conflict originated in the post-colonial period and led to numerous armed clashes between 1941 and 1995. The "golden paradigm" for all the years of the dispute was the classical one: a territory must necessarily belong to a single State. This binary logic offers only two options: "mine" or "yours". This seemingly intractable conflict was resolved thanks to a subversion of this logic.

In 1995, during a peace conference in Guatemala, Johan Galtung was invited to meet the chief negotiator for the Peruvian side on the border issue be-

tween the two countries. Galtung listened carefully to the negotiator's speech and noticed that the fact that the disputed territory had to belong to only one of the two States was taken for granted. He therefore asked the negotiator if he had considered the idea of transforming this disputed territory into a "bi-national area with a natural park" to be jointly administered by Ecuador and Peru (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p. 16). The negotiator replied that no one had come up with a similar idea in 30 years of peace negotiations and that he found the proposal interesting but probably *too* creative.

Few years later, surprisingly, both sides accepted the proposal with minor changes. This agreement led to the signing of the Brasilia Peace Agreement on 27 October 1998. The peace agreement reflects the desire to move away from "border obsession" in favour of improving the quality of life of all the populations involved. A new possibility was added to the range of options available to the conflicting parties: "ours".

Let us take another example. It's November 9, 1989. A press conference of the communist leaders of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is scheduled for that day. A reporter from the Italian news agency ANSA, Riccardo Ehrman, asks the government spokesman, Gunter Schabowski: "My name is Riccardo Ehrman from the Italian news agency ANSA. Mr Schabowski, you mentioned mistakes. Wasn't the draft travel law a serious mistake?" Schabowski is unprepared. He reads the leaflet with the party's instructions and replies: "Private journeys abroad will be permitted through all border crossings without any prior justification". Ehrman asks: "Does this also apply to West Berlin?" "Yes," replied the Party official. "When does this new regulation come into force?" asks a reporter from the West German tabloid *Bild*. "With immediate effect. Immediately," replied Schabowski. One of the GDR's top leaders had just said that Germans could leave East Berlin to join their loved ones in West Berlin. The journalist sent an urgent message to Ansa's headquarters in Rome: "The Wall is gone". Within hours, communist East Germany opened the Berlin Wall and thousands of East Germans streamed across.

Conclusive remarks

It is impossible to articulate a single, fixed definition of peace. However, we can try to overcome the rigid binarism of the "positive peace" - "negative peace" conceptualization by viewing peace not as binary (present or absent), but rather as a continuum. Approaching peace as a continuum allows us to focus on the degree to which peace is present. This perspective can also open up to a different understanding of conflict, outside the logics of containment, elimination or transformation, as a terrain to traverse and to transform, welcoming the unexpected.

References

- Amietta, P. L. (1991). *La creatività come necessità: Il nuovo manager tra creazione, complessità e carisma*. Etas.
- Bartolucci, V. & G. Gallo (2022). La pace come utopia necessaria. *Scienza e Pace*, 13 (2), pp. 65-86, <https://doi.org/10.13131/unipi/q241-ft94>.
- Bartolucci, V. & G. Gallo (2023). Ripensare la pace. *Scienza e Pace*, 14 (2), pp. 1-24.
- Bernstein, B. J. (1975). Roosevelt, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, 1941-1945: A Reinterpretation. *Political Science Quarterly*, 90(1), pp. 23-69, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2148698>.
- Bianchi, E. e A.A.V.V. (1991), *La Pace: dono e profezia*, Edizioni Quiqajon.
- Boulding, K. E. (1977). Twelve friendly quarrels with Johan Galtung. *Journal of Peace Research*, 14(1), pp. 75–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234337701400105>.
- Brock-Utne, B. & G. Garbo (2009). Language is power. In B. Brock-Utne & G. Garbo (eds.) *Language and Power: The Implications of Language for Peace and Development* (pp. 1-31). Mkuki na Nyota.
- Campbell, S. P., M. G. Findley & K. Kikuta (2017). An Ontology of Peace: Landscapes of Conflict and Cooperation with Application to Colombia. *International Studies Review*, 19 (1), pp. 92-113, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix005>.
- Carroll, B. A. (1972). Peace research – Cult of power. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 16(4), pp. 585–616, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002772016004>.
- Chandler, D. (2000). *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*. Pluto.
- Cohen, B. (1997). *The edge of chaos. Financial booms, bubbles, crashes and chaos*. Wiley.
- Cooper, N. R. (2007). Review Article: On the crisis of the liberal peace. *Conflict, Security and Development*, 7(4), pp. 605–616, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800701693025>.
- Crichton, M. I. (2012). *The Lost World*. Ballantine Books.
- Davenport, C., E. Melander & P. M. Regan (2018). *The Peace Continuum: What It Is and How to Study It*. Oxford University Press.
- Diehl, P. F. (2016). Exploring Peace: Looking Beyond War and Negative Peace. *International Studies Quarterly*, 60, pp. 1–10.
- Diehl, P. F., G. Goertz & Y. Gallegos (2021). Peace data: Concept, measurement, patterns, and research agenda. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 38(5), pp. 605-624.
- Duffield, M. (2001). *Global Governance and the New Wars*. Zed.
- Gaddis, J. (1987). *The long peace: Inquiries into the history of the Cold War*. Oxford University Press.
- Galtung, J. (1964). An editorial. What is peace research? *Journal of Peace Research*, 1(1), pp. 1–4.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, pp. 167-191.

- Galtung, J. (1985). Twenty-five years of Peace Research: Ten challenges and some responses. *Journal of Peace Research*, 22 (2), pp. 141-158.
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27, pp. 291-305.
- Galtung, J. (2009). (Interview) Johan Galtung – fredsråbulist i femti år [Johan Galtung – Peace agitator for fifty years]. *Perspektiv*, (3), 40–47.
- Galtung, J., Fischer, D., & Fischer, D. (2013). *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of peace research* (Vol. 5). Springer.
- Gibler, D. (2012). *The Territorial Peace*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gleditsch, N. P., J. Nordkavle & H. Strand (2014). Peace Research—Just the Study of War? *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(2), pp. 145–58.
- Goertz, G. (2020). *Social science concepts: A user's guide* (2nd ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Goldstein, J. (2011). *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide*. Dutton.
- Guarrieri, T., R. A. Cooper Drury & A. Murdie (2017). Introduction: Exploring Peace. *International Studies Review*, 19 (1), pp. 1–5.
- Höglund, K. & M. Söderberg Kovacs (2010). Beyond the absence of war: The diversity of peace in post-settlement societies. *Review of International Studies* 36(2), pp. 367–390.
- Johansen, J. (2006). Peace research needs to reorient. In A. Hunter (ed.), *Peace Studies in the Chinese Century* (pp. 31–38). Ashgate.
- Joshi, M. & P. Wallensteen (eds.), (2018). *Understanding quality peace: Peacebuilding after civil war*. Routledge.
- Kant, I. (1795). *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Korf, B. (2006). Cargo Cult Science, Armchair Empiricism, and the Idea of Violent Conflict. *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (3), pp. 459–76.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2006). *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes and Peace Accords, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mac Ginty, R. & O. Richmond (2013). The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace. *Third World Quarterly*, 34 (5), pp. 763–783.
- Neufeld, B. (1993). The Marginalisation of Peace Research in International Relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 22(2), pp. 165–184.
- Nobel, P. (2001). Alfred Bernhard Nobel and the Peace Prize. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 83(842), pp. 259-273.
- Oneal, J. R., H. Frances, Z. Maoz & B. Russett (1996). The Liberal Peace: Interdependence, Democracy, and International Conflict, 1950–85. *Journal of Peace Research*, 33(1), pp. 11–28.
- Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pinker, S. (2011). *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. Viking.
- Rasmussen, M. V. (2003). *The West, Civil Society, and the Construction of Peace*. Palgrave.
- Richmond, O. P. (2005). *The Transformation of Peace*. Palgrave.

- Richmond, O. P. (2006). Patterns of Peace. *Global Society*, 20(4), pp. 367–394.
- Richmond, O. P. (2008). *Peace in International Relations*. Routledge.
- Russett, B. & J. Oneal (2001). *Triangulating peace: Democracy, interdependence, and international organizations*. W. W. Norton.
- Schneider, G. & N. P. Gleditsch (2010). The Capitalist Peace: The Origins and Prospects of a Liberal Idea. *International Interactions*, 36(2), pp. 107–14.
- Sen, A. (1990). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (2007). *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. W. W. Norton.
- Söderström, J. & E. Olivius (2022). Pluralism, temporality, and affect – methodological challenges of making peace researchable. *Conflict, Security, and Development*, 22(5), pp. 411–433.
- Svensson, I. (2020). Emancipation and critique in peace and conflict research. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5(4), pp. 703–707.
- Waldrop, M. M. (1996). *Complessità: Uomini e idee al confine tra ordine e caos*. Instar Libri [original: *Complexity: the emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*, 1992), Simon & Shuster].
- Wallensteen, P. (1988). The origins of peace research. In P. Wallensteen (ed.) *Peace Research: Achievements and Challenges* (p. 7–29). Westview.
- Wallensteen, P. (2015). *Quality Peace: Peacebuilding, Victory and World Order*. Oxford University Press.
- Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Addison Wesley.
- Weber, T. K. (2004). J. Galtung: Peace Research moves beyond war. In Weber, T. K. (ed.), *Gandhi as disciple and mentor* (pp. 203–217). Cambridge University Press.
- Zaum, D. (2012). Beyond the 'liberal peace'. *Global Governance*, 18.