CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

1

What is peace?

Jesus said that peacemakers are to be blessed as children of God, but in the real world they are often dismissed as utopian dreamers or worse, quaking defeatists who live in denial of reality. Jane Addams was one of the most admired persons in the United States in the years before World War I, but when she opposed US entry into the war she was ridiculed and reviled.[1] Those who advocated peace during the 1930s were accused of helping Hitler and aiding appeasement. Disarmament activists during the cold war were sometimes considered dupes of the Soviet Union. Throughout history the cause of peace has been on trial, standing like a forlorn defendant before the court of established opinion, misunderstood and maligned on all sides. Peace is "naked, poor, and mangled," wrote Shakespeare.[2] To be called a pacifist is almost an insult, to be labeled cowardly or selfish, unwilling to fight for what is right. It is easy to arouse people to war, said Hermann Goering at the Nuremberg trials. "All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism . . ."[3]

This book is a response to the charges against pacifism. It is an attempt to set the record straight by exploring the history of movements and ideas for peace – an opportunity for the cause of peace to have its day in court. This is not an apologia for or paean to pacifism, however – far from it. I am often critical of peace advocacy, especially absolute pacifism, and I try to present both the strengths and weaknesses of the various movements and theories for peace that have emerged over the centuries. I write as one who has been engaged with these issues for decades. I strive for rigorous scholarly standards and objective analysis, but I am hardly neutral in this debate. Questions of war and peace intruded into my life when I was drafted for

[1] Victoria Bissell Brown, "Addams, Jane," February 2000. Available online at American National Biography Online, www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00004.html (accessed 22 November 2006).
[2] *The Life of King Henry V*, act V, scene ii, line 34.
[3] G. M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Co., 1947), 279.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

the Vietnam War, and they have remained with me ever since. I spoke out against that war as an active duty soldier, was the director of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) during the disarmament campaigns of the 1980s, and helped to found the Win Without War coalition to oppose the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. I have written about nuclear disarmament, economic sanctions, and nonviolent social change and have taught peace studies courses. I know only too well the many limitations of movements for peace and the inadequacy of theories on the causes and prevention of war. It is precisely because of my engagement with these issues that I feel qualified to offer this witness for the defense, to present the case of peace, and to examine its practices and principles.

IDEALISM AND REALISM

The book of Isaiah called believers to study war no more but offered little instruction about learning peace. The study of peace has been neglected over the ages and has emerged as a proper discipline only in recent decades.[4] The first academic programs and scholarly institutes dedicated to peace did not appear until after World War II, and refereed journals such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and the *Journal of Peace Research* did not begin publication until 1957 and 1964 respectively. Pioneers in the field included Kenneth and Elise Boulding, who helped create the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan in the 1950s; Johan Galtung, who founded the International Peace Research Institute in Norway in 1959; and Adam Curle, the first chair of a peace studies program in Britain, at the University of Bradford in 1973. Major studies and books about peace appeared in earlier decades, of course, but the systematic application of rigorous scholarship and empirical analysis to the problems of peacemaking did not begin until quite recently.

This partly explains the inadequacies of many of the theories of peace. For much of history the cause of peace has predominantly been a religious concern. Moral reformers embraced the teachings of love and compassion in religious doctrine, but they often overlooked the challenges of political realism. Classical liberals extolled the virtues of democracy and free trade, but they underestimated the virulence of nationalism and the power of imperialism. Immanuel Kant probably came closest to crafting a comprehensive philosophy of peace, but his theory did not address questions of

[4] See George A. Lopez, special editor, "Peace Studies: Past and Future," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 504 (July 1989).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

social equality. Socialists and feminists brought these issues to the fore and broadened the peace agenda to include problems of economic injustice and patriarchy. In recent decades social scientists and political theorists have made progress in verifying and explaining the components of the so-called Kantian triad – mutual democracy, economic interdependence, and international cooperation – as predicates of peace. Links have been discovered between gender equality and a lessening of violence. Unresolved political grievances and a lack of economic development have been identified as factors that contribute to armed conflict. Many questions remain unanswered, but progress has been made in understanding the causes of and cures for war.

Peace societies emerged in the nineteenth century, but it was only in the twentieth century that peace movements as we presently understand them came into existence. Large-scale mobilizations against war took place in the years before and after World War I, during the 1930s, and especially in response to the Vietnam and Iraq wars. These movements challenged government policy, particularly that of the United States, and were generally anti-imperialist in outlook. Mobilizations for disarmament occurred during the interwar years and re-emerged in the cold war as a response to the threat of nuclear war. Disarmament activism reached a peak with the massive nuclear freeze and disarmament campaigns of the 1980s. Some of those organizing antiwar and disarmament campaigns were absolute pacifists, rejecting the use of force for any purpose, but most were more pragmatic and conditional in their rejection of war. They opposed dangerous weapons policies and unjust wars, but not all uses of force. Still the purist position often predominated, conveying an impression of implicit pacifism that limited the peace movement's public appeal.

Many opponents of war have emphasized the need for constructive alternatives. During the 1934–5 Peace Ballot in Britain the League of Nations Union (LNU) organized an informal vote on British security policy in which 11.6 million citizens participated. Among the options presented and endorsed was the use of multilateral sanctions, economic and even military, to counter aggression by one nation against another. The ballot results pressured the British government to propose League of Nations sanctions against Italy. During the nuclear freeze campaign of the 1980s US activists urged a bilateral halt to the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons. European disarmament campaigners urged an end to both Soviet and US intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe, which NATO officials effectively adopted as the "double zero" proposal, with zero INF weapons in Europe on both sides. During the Iraq

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

antiwar debate many activists called for continued weapons inspections and targeted sanctions as alternatives to war and effective means of containing Saddam Hussein. In the debate over the so-called "war on terror" peace scholars and activists have insisted that terrorism as a tactic cannot be defeated by war. They have advocated alternative strategies for countering terrorism based on multilateral action, cooperative law enforcement, and the amelioration of political grievances.

The strategies and proposals of peace scholars and activists are often fully compatible with the requirements of sound security policy. Throughout the cold war disarmament advocates insisted that a nuclear war could never be won and must never be fought; this became Ronald Reagan's mantra during the 1980s. Those who opposed the Vietnam and Iraq wars did so not only on humanitarian grounds but on the basis of solid political reasoning. Hans Morgenthau spoke out against the Vietnam War because it was based on an erroneous theory of monolithic communism, was justified with false information, and ignored the history of southeast Asia.[5] John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt opposed the war in Iraq for similar reasons: it misjudged the terrorist threat, was based on deceptive claims about Iraqi capabilities, and risked eroding US power and prestige in the world.[6] Peace advocates warned that the invasion and occupation of Iraq would play into the hands of Osama bin Laden and lead to an increase in terrorist violence. Warmakers are often wrong – disastrously so in the cases of Vietnam and Iraq. Peace advocates are sometimes right, especially when their ideas are not only morally sound but politically realistic.

NEW WARS

The nature of war has changed dramatically in recent decades. The old paradigm of industrial interstate war "no longer exists," declared General Rupert Smith in 2006.[7] Raimo Väyrynen, John Mueller, and other political scientists have written of the "waning of major war."[8] No instances of full-scale war have occurred between major industrialized states since the end of World War II. This is in part because of the extreme lethality of all forms of

[5] Hans J. Morgenthau, "We are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam," *The New York Times Magazine*, 18 April 1965, SM25.

[6] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy* no. 134 (January–February 2003): 50.

[7] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 1–2.

[8] Raimo Väyrynen, ed., *The Waning of Major War: Theories and Debates* (London: Routledge, 2006).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

modern weaponry, nuclear and non-nuclear. It is also the result of the development of an integrated community of prosperous, secure, and interdependent nations in the heart of Europe where previous world wars originated. While interstate war has largely disappeared, intrastate conflicts have increased markedly. The new paradigm, wrote Smith, is "war amongst the people."[9] Of the thirty-one wars in the world in 2005 (as measured by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program), all were armed conflicts fought within nations between communities divided by ethnicity, language, religion, and/or geography.[10] Nearly all military deployments, UN peacekeeping operations, and peace-building missions in recent decades have taken place in settings of intrastate conflict.

This change in the nature of war has not meant an end to the scourge of deadly violence. On the contrary the number of people dying in war in recent years has been extremely high. Since the 1990s millions have died in the Congo, Sudan, and other African countries, and hundreds of thousands in former Yugoslavia and Iraq. In today's "new wars," to use peace scholar Mary Kaldor's phrase, methods of terror, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are deliberate strategies to target civilians. The result is that more than 80 percent of the casualties are civilian, and the number of refugees and displaced persons has increased sharply. "Violations of humanitarian and human rights law are not a side effect" of armed violence, wrote Kaldor, "but the central methodology of new wars."[11] The strategy of violence in the new paradigm utilizes terror and destabilization to displace populations and gain control of territory and sources of income.[12]

In response to the rise of intrastate war international humanitarian action and peace-building efforts have increased. Those who seek to prevent war have recognized the need to act in the midst of violent conflict to ameliorate its consequences and prevent its recurrence. The responsibility to protect civilians has emerged as a new principle of global action, part of what Kaldor has termed "cosmopolitan politics." The urgency of stemming genocide, oppression, and terrorism has sparked a new wave of action and inquiry, and has led to an intensified search for ways to resolve and prevent deadly conflict.

[9] Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 3.
[10] Lotta Harbom, Stina Högbladh, and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Peace Agreements," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 5 (2006): 617–31.
[11] Mary Kaldor, "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control" (essay prepared for the Nobel Peace Prize Centennial Symposium, 6–8 December 2001). Available online at the *Social Science Research Council*, www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor.htm (accessed 22 November 2006).
[12] Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 115.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

At the international level peacemaking programs have expanded and become institutionalized at the United Nations and in other multilateral and regional organizations. In the 1992 report *An Agenda for Peace* UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali identified four phases of international action to prevent and control armed violence: preventive diplomacy, which includes early warning, mediation, and confidence-building measures; peacemaking efforts such as arbitration and the negotiation of peace accords; peacekeeping, the deployment of impartial forces to monitor and implement peace settlements; and peace-building, which the UN defines as post-conflict efforts to rebuild war-torn societies and prevent the recurrence of violence.[13] These contemporary strategies correspond directly to peace principles and traditions in earlier periods of history.

DEFINING TERMS

At the outset we face definitional challenges and the need to differentiate among different terms and concepts. What exactly do we mean by peace? The term is highly emotive, historian Michael Howard wrote, and is often abused as a tool of political propaganda.[14] When peace is defined narrowly it can imply passivity and the acceptance of injustice.[15] During the cold war the word had subversive implications and was often associated with communism. Moscow sponsored ersatz "peace councils," which gave the word a negative connotation. Hesitancy about the meaning of peace existed long before the cold war. In the years before World War I Andrew Carnegie lavishly funded programs to prevent war and advance international cooperation, but he was uncomfortable with the word peace and wanted to leave it out of the title of the international endowment he left as his legacy.[16]

Peace is more than the absence of war. It is also "the maintenance of an orderly and just society," wrote Howard – orderly in being protected against the violence or extortion of aggressors, and just in being defended against exploitation and abuse by the more powerful.[17] Many writers distinguish between negative peace, which is simply the absence of war, and positive

[13] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-keeping*, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, A/47/277 – S/24111 (New York: United Nations, 1992).

[14] Michael Howard, "Problems of a Disarmed World," in *Studies in War and Peace* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 225.

[15] David P. Barash, *Introduction to Peace Studies* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1991), 6.

[16] Charles Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 23.

[17] Howard, "Problems of a Disarmed World," 226.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

peace, which is the presence of justice. "Peace can be slavery or it can be freedom; subjugation or liberation," wrote Norman Cousins. Genuine peace means progress toward a freer and more just world.[18] Johan Galtung developed the concept of "structural violence" to describe situations of negative peace that have violent and unjust consequences.[19] Violence in Galtung's expansive definition is any condition that prevents a human being from achieving her or his full potential. Leonardo Boff, the Brazilian priest and theologian, employed the term "originating violence," which he defined as an oppressive social condition that preserves the interests of the elite over the needs of dispossessed and marginalized populations.[20] Originating or structural violence can include impoverishment, deprivation, humiliation, political repression, a lack of human rights, and the denial of self-determination. Positive peace means transcending the conditions that limit human potential and assuring opportunities for self-realization.

Gandhi spoke of nonviolence rather than peace and emphasized the necessity of overcoming injustice. Gandhi's meaning was deftly summarized by Jonathan Schell: "Violence is a method by which the ruthless few can subdue the passive many. Nonviolence is a means by which the active many can overcome the ruthless few." Yet the word nonviolence is "highly imperfect," wrote Schell. It is a word of "negative construction," as if the most important thing that can be said about nonviolence is that it is *not* something else. It is a negation of the negative force of violence, a double negative which in mathematics would yield a positive result. Yet English has no positive word for it. Schell attempted to resolve this dilemma by defining nonviolence as "cooperative power" – collective action based on mutual consent, in contrast to coercive power, which compels action through the threat or use of force.[21]

Peace does not mean the absence of conflict, argued peace researcher and former Australian ambassador John W. Burton. Conflict is intrinsic in human relationships, although it does not have to be and usually is not violent. The challenge for peace practitioners is to find ways in which communities can resolve differences without physical violence. In this

[18] Norman Cousins, *Modern Man is Obsolete* (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 45–6.
[19] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–97.
[20] Leonardo Boff, "Active Nonviolence: The Political and Moral Power of the Poor," in *Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America*, ed. Philip McManus and Gerald Schlabach (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1991), vii.
[21] Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 144, 227, 351.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

Cambridge

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

context peace is understood as a dynamic process not an absolute end point. The goal of peacemakers is to develop more effective ways of resolving disputes without violent conflict, to identify and transform the conditions that cause war.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

The term "pacifism" especially needs deconstruction. It entered the lexicon at the beginning of the twentieth century as a general term to describe the stance of those opposed to war. After World War I the term became synonymous with an earlier, more specific tradition of religiously based refusal to condone or participate in war in any form, also known as nonresistance. This purist position was distinct from the more widely accepted traditions of pragmatic or conditional pacifism, which opposed war in principle but accepted the possibility of using force for self-defense or the protection of the vulnerable. It also contrasted with internationalism, which along with political realism traced the causes of war to the condition of anarchy among nations, and which advocated transnational cooperation and the strengthening of international law and institutions as the means of preventing armed conflict. Absolute pacifism also differed from "just war" principles, developed by Augustine in the fifth century and accepted by official Christianity, which set limits on war but gave it justification.

Pacifism existed as a movement and set of ideas long before the actual word was coined in 1901. The term emerged during the tenth Universal Peace Congress in Glasgow, at a time when organizations seeking to prevent war were spreading throughout Europe and the United States. Proposals for arbitration and the development of international law were gaining support among political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Bertha von Suttner's book *Lay Down Your Weapons* was an international bestseller, published in thirty-seven editions and translated into more than a dozen languages. The ideology of the peace movement was maturing. The narrow religious base of the early Anglo-American peace societies was giving way to more secular, humanitarian perspectives, especially in continental Europe.

Prior to the Glasgow congress members of the various peace societies and international organizations generally referred to themselves as "peace workers," "peace advocates," or, most commonly, "friends of peace." These were awkward terms that satisfied no one. Activists sought to develop a better term that would more effectively convey the growing maturity and sophistication of the movement. It was Émile Arnaud of France, president of the *Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté*, who first introduced the word

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

"pacifism." He and others used it in a generic sense to describe the broad international peace movement. It was meant to suggest a coherent body of thought and developed set of political beliefs and policies for preventing war and assuring peace. The term elevated the philosophy of peace into an official "ism." It had international appeal and could be integrated easily into different languages. The term was officially adopted at the Glasgow congress. Thereafter those who participated in the various peace organizations and societies around the world began to refer to themselves as "pacifists." It was a term of distinction and had a broad social connotation. It was meant to encompass all of those who worked to preserve peace and prevent war.

Pacifism also meant social action. It was not merely a philosophy but a political program and a commitment to social change. It was distinct from the quietist tradition of some religious sects, whose members tended to withdraw from public life and cede to the state the realm of practical politics. This was not what the early twentieth-century pacifists had in mind. Arnaud sought to distinguish pacifists from those who merely hope or pray for peace. "We are not passive types . . . we are pacifists."[22] Pacifism included a personal commitment to take action, to work for peace. It implied, historian Roger Chickering wrote, a "high degree of engagement in activity" to help reduce the level of violence in international relations.[23] The study of peace is thus a history of social action as well as of ideas, an examination of social movements and of intellectual development.

Soon after the term pacifism emerged debates developed over its exact meaning and application. Should it encompass the traditional peace societies, which were often quite conservative and in some cases supported military "preparedness?" Did it apply to internationalism, which tended to focus narrowly on promoting arbitration and international law and institutions? Internationalists could be either conservative or progressive, favoring the status quo (including the system of imperialism) or advocating greater equality of status among nations. Was the term pacifism appropriate for the socialist parties, which opposed imperialist war but were prepared to support the class war? What about the democratic nationalists who supported the use of force for the just cause of national liberation? Could all of these diverse approaches, each in its distinctive way claiming to embody the path to peace, fit within one broad pacifist movement? These differences

[22] Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60.
[23] Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World without War: The Peace Movement and German Society, 1892–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 16–17.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-85402-3 - Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas
David Cortright
Excerpt
More information

came to a head with the outbreak of war in 1914, when the peace movement collapsed and fractured. Most peace advocates, including internationalists and socialists, abandoned their commitment to transnational solidarity and marched off to war. Only a small remnant of the previously broad international movement stood apart from the nationalist frenzy and remained steadfast in opposing war.

In the years after World War I there was much recrimination and debate about the meaning of pacifism. The purists who had opposed the march to war claimed the term for themselves. They narrowed its definition to the unconditional rejection of war in all its forms. As revulsion at the horrific bloodletting of the war deepened, a growing number of people pledged never again to participate in or support war. These "pacifists" played a major role in the peace movement of the interwar era, which grew to unprecedented scale. Internationalists remained an important force, especially in Britain, where the LNU attracted widespread public support, but the influence of those who rejected war under all circumstances was substantial. The restrictive meaning of pacifism became the accepted standard and was adopted by A. C. F. Beales in his influential 1931 volume, *The History of Peace*.[24] Thereafter it became the standard in both scholarly and popular discourse.

This narrow definition of pacifism left most of the peace community out in the cold. Many of those who considered themselves pacifist were uncomfortable with the absolutist stand. As the menace of fascism mounted pacifism became increasingly marginalized and associated with isolationism. The term sank into disrepute and was largely abandoned, even by those who considered themselves advocates of peace. Many peace supporters, especially the internationalists, urged vigorous action to confront aggression. Some, such as Albert Einstein, tried to redefine pacifism to include rearmament and collective military resistance against Hitler. Others adopted a "peace with justice" perspective, arguing that the prevention of war depended on resolving political and economic grievances. The majority of peace advocates found themselves in a state of confusion and uncertainty. They were part of a broad social movement amorphously defined as for peace, but they lacked a coherent program for preventing the impending war and had no commonly accepted "ism" to describe the prevailing philosophy.

[24] A. C. F. Beales, *The History of Peace: A Short Account of the Organised Movements for International Peace* (London: G. Bell, 1931).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org