Peace, War, & Social Conflict

Newsletter of the Peace, War, & Social Conflict Section
of the American Sociological Association

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NEW! SECTION WEB PAGE

Watch for the unveiling of our Section web page that can be accessed soon through the ASA Web Page, which is found at http://www.asanet.org. Thanks to Lee Smithey (University of Texas at Austin) for his work to construct the Section’s home page.
SECTION NOMINATIONS

The nominations process has been underway, and a slate of candidates has been assembled from which we will choose our Section leaders for the coming year. At this printing, the candidates are as follows: Chair-Elect: Rob Benford, Sec/Treas: Morten Ender, Mindy Reiser. Council: Rabab Abdul-Hadi, Louis Hicks, Laura Miller, and Lynne Woehrle. Thanks to Amy Hubbard for chairing the Nominations Committee.

ELISE M. BOULDING STUDENT AWARD

The Student Award honors Elise M. Boulding for her contributions to the sociology of peace an war. Undergraduate and graduate students may submit papers related to the sociology of peace and war. Papers must have been written within the past two years, and they must be typed, double spaced (25 pages maximum), and should adhere to ASR or other academic format guidelines. Encourage your students to submit appropriate papers. Submission deadline 15 April (Postmark) to Lynn Woehrle (Dept. of Sociology; Syracuse University; Syracuse, NY 13244).

DISTINGUISHED CAREER AWARD

This award honors an individual with an outstanding scholarly career in the study of peace and war, a single outstanding work, important contributions to teaching the sociology of peace and war, or outstanding service to the ASA Peace and War Section. Send nominations to Jenny Turpin (Dept. of Sociology; University of San Francisco; 2130 Fulton St.; San Francisco, CA 94117-1080).

Why do Americans Love to Hate the United Nations?

Iain Guest, Senior Fellow,

U.S. Institute of Peace

Why do Americans love to hate the United Nations? Partly because they take their cue from politicians who have been talking down the UN for the better part of two decades. This is unwise and unfair. Few would deny that the UN has its share of deadbeats and needs a new sense of mission. But its shortcomings bear no resemblance to the grotesque caricature it has become in this country. They certainly do not justify the withholding of over $1 billion in U.S. dues, in violation of America's treaty obligations. This year, the UN will spend the equivalent of just four percent of New York City's annual budget. Any way you measure it, this is cheap at the price.

The United States exercises more control in the UN than ever before. And Americans have the top jobs at its two main aid agencies, UNICEF and the UN Development Program. As for talk about reform, the UN has been cutting costs for years in an effort to appease Congress. But none of this seems enough.

Why is Congress so implacable? Partly because it wants to be. Critics like Senator Jesse Helms have always viewed multilateral commitments as a threat to American sovereignty. But at least these critics are consistent. The same cannot be said of President Clinton who came into office in 1993 expecting the UN to solve every world crisis, and then swung to the other extreme altogether.

Instead of helping the UN to define a mission that makes sense in this confused, post-Cold War era, his first
administration ended up by hiding behind the hostility of Congress and joining the chorus for cuts. This obsession with cuts, combined with American withholding, is turning the UN into everything its critics say it is: inefficient, irrelevant, and increasingly anti-American.

The UN's critics in Congress may shed few tears at this. But if the Clinton Administration wants to preserve the multilateral option, it had better give Americans a reason to believe instead of feeding their skepticism.

It should not be that difficult. The UN system is pushing Washington's economic message in Eastern Europe and the Third World. It's trying to eliminate chemical weapons and child labor, which incidentally puts Americans out of work. And clean up the seas.

The United Nations is not a dangerous place for the United States. It's a good and loyal friend. This is the message President Clinton should be taking to Congress and to the American people. Let's just hope it's not too late.

This commentary aired on National Public Radio’s "All Things Considered" in January. It is reprinted here with permission from the author. Iain Guest worked for the United Nations in Cambodia and Haiti.

Name Change Update: An Interim Report

John MacDougall, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Our task force on a possible name change has had some lively discussions. We received responses from twenty section members outside the task force, and also from the section’s chair and chair-elect. Thanks to all who have contributed to this discussion.

Speaking for myself -- but not necessarily for the whole task force -- I am proposing renaming the section "Peace, War, and Conflict." This seems acceptable to a large minority of respondents. It also indicates that many section members have meso- and micro-level interests going beyond what might be called traditional "peace and war" areas (e.g., wars, military institutions, and peace movements). The addition of "conflict" to our name, I believe, would make our section more appealing to a wider constituency, hopefully without losing any of our traditional types of members. I recognize that "conflict" and "war" are somewhat synonymous, but the two terms clearly have different connotations.

A suggestion was made to have a special edition of this newsletter, where members expert in the various sub-fields write short pieces about their field as it relates to the themes of conflict, peace, and war. Such an issue could be used as publicity for the section, and it would also serve as a forum for discussion among current members to help us better understand how the tools of sociology are being used to analyze different types of conflicts and their transformation. If you are interested in writing such a summary, please contact Jackie Smith (jgsmith@vma.cc.nd.edu).

We on the task force recognize that unanimity on a name change is impossible, but we hope to reach a decision that everyone can live with and that keeps our section vibrant and congenial and that facilitates the recruitment of new members. Any name change will not be decided on without full discussion. To that end, we will hold a special meeting during the 1997 meetings in Toronto to decide on a possible name change. Whether or not you intend to come to Toronto, please keep letting us know your views. Send them to: ASA_NAME @VMA.CC.ND.EDU, or to: John MacDougall, Sociology Dept., University of Mass. S. Campus, Lowell MA 01854.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Re-Thinking the Role of Peacekeeping in Warzones

A. B. Fetherston, Department of Peace Studies University of Bradford; Visiting Fellow, The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame
As recently as three years ago the UN deployed a largely anonymous force of 10,000 "blue helmets" (military peacekeepers in their own country uniforms but with light blue, UN helmets or berets); today peacekeepers in the field number over 70,000. A great deal has been written about these "peace" armies, where and when they should be deployed, how they should be organized and overseen, what they should and should not be doing and so on. Even with all of this increased attention, however, little thought has been given to understanding the complexities of the warzone environments (psychological, social, cultural, and political) within which peacekeepers work. As a result little is known about the impact peacekeepers have on the people they are sent to "help" and on the conflict dynamics of the countries in which they operate.

One crucial problem with predominant approaches to international peacekeeping missions is that they are typically characterised by diplomatic compromise in which give and take amongst the elite leads to a peace agreement, followed, with increasing frequency, by a UN peacekeeping mission to implement those accords through 'free and fair' elections. Such an approach is based on attempts to 'control', 'manage' or 'contain' conflict and the aim is to establish 'political order' within a sovereign and internationally recognised state. This 'containment-to-vote' formula for conflict management may have been appropriate during the Cold War, but it no longer works.

Predominant approaches to international peacekeeping typically result in negotiated settlement packages that focus almost exclusively on the post-war democratic elections that re-establish political authority. It is then up to that political authority to contend with the deep social, cultural, economic, and political consequences of the conflict. These consequences are deemed beyond the purview of the international community even though they are more often than not the cause of recurring violence.

Why has international conflict management been so ineffective? First, our standards for measuring success have changed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various instruments that followed, combined with technological advances ensuring that the impact and scale of human suffering is immediately known, are two examples of greater interdependence in the world community. Second, the character and practices of war have changed significantly since the United Nations was founded in 1945, when wars were generally conducted between states. By 1994 34 major armed conflicts were in progress around the globe and not a single one could be described as a war between two states. In this post-Cold War world, characterised by complex, non-inter-state conflicts, fault lines are difficult to establish and many issues beyond relations between political elites are salient. Yet the international community has been unable to move beyond its traditional formula for conflict management and adapt to the immense challenges posed by this so-called 'new world disorder.' A closer examination of the range and severity of problems facing societies which have experienced protracted violent conflict suggests that this continuing emphasis on 'containment-to-vote' is wholly inadequate.

In 1950 civilians accounted for 50% of all deaths in war. Today, 90% of fatalities in violent conflict are civilian and some estimates suggest that up to 70% of those are women and children. These statistics reveal that in the post-Cold War world most violent conflict is not focused on the 'battlefield' where two opposing militaries fight conventional war. Instead, dirty warfare, which specifically targets civilians using torture, rape, and murder to create fear and, therefore, control, is widely practiced. With civilians as the principle targets of war, battlefields are no longer (if they ever were) distant and confined, but, rather, are set in the centre of civilian society. Because violence generates internally displaced people and refugees, warzones expand, not just physically, but mentally, socially and culturally. The battlefield where militaries fight is just one part of a much more complex zone of conflict marked by widespread instability and fear.

The traditional understanding of warzones as battlefields can be seen clearly running through the thinking of much of the international community. The focus on confined and delimited battlefields leads to emphasis on ceasefire agreements, peace accords and the reinstitution of political stability when the fighting ends. But a more complete understanding of the cost of war involves far more than counting 'battle-related deaths.' The Bosnian, Mozambiquan,
and Cambodian women who experienced and witnessed repeated rape, beatings and torture carry the warzone with them beyond any ceasefire, beyond the implementation of peace agreements and beyond the 'vote.'

The psycho-social scars of war last long after the physical fact of violence. This is true not only for each individual but for society as a whole when rape, torture, and brutality become part of everyday experience. What makes dirty war work, though, is not so much the acts themselves, but the fear and insecurity created in the wake of often deliberately public displays of extreme violence. This fear and insecurity goes beyond the individual and becomes embedded in social practices. Violence becomes part of the 'normal' and the 'sense of reality' becomes guided by a new 'set of limits' of what is socially acceptable behaviour. Some research indicates that for individuals who have experienced violence and deprivation it can take 15-20 years for problems even to surface. Even less research is available indicating how long it takes for communities and societies to begin to heal. Moreover, little is known about the impact peacekeepers have on the people they are sent to 'help.' Especially disturbing, in this context, are reports of sexual abuse, blackmarketeering, drug-dealing, gun-running, involvement in prostitution, and in the most extreme cases, torture, by UN peacekeeping personnel.

Peacekeeping continues to be a high use, high profile option for the international community. Yet its activities on the ground have been limited by 'containment-to-vote' policies which emphasise either holding operations or quick-fix political stability. The potential of peacekeeping as a means of moving beyond ineffectual conflict management towards facilitating transformation, by emphasising the long term and multi-faceted recovery of societies damaged by war, has been little exploited. Such potential will remain untapped unless consideration is given to issues such as the use of military personnel as agents of peace, the ethics of intervention, long term vs. short term aims, and the appropriateness of the threat or use of force -- all of which have important implications for recovery. Left out of the many analyses of peacekeeping are transformative perspectives which look to base activity in warzones on the needs of the people who live there. Peacekeepers, well-placed to carry out 'containment-to-vote' policies, are equally well-placed to begin to adapt this traditional formula to meet new challenges._

*Adapted from an article appearing in Parliamentary Brief (June 1995, p. 93).

**Announcements**


- **Paid Summer Internships:** "Social Movements and Strategic Nonviolence: An Experimental Inquiry into Environmental Justice" 21 May -1 August. Undergraduate credit and internship opportunities through Peace and Justice Studies, Tufts University. Application deadline, April 1. Contact: Dale Bryan, Program Coordinator; Peace and Justice Studies; Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155. E-mail: dbryan@pearl.tufts.edu.

- **9th Annual Peace Studies Association Meeting** 5-8 June, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. "New Directions in Peace Studies" For more information, contact: PSA, Drawer 105, Earlham College, Richmond, IN 47374-4095.

- **Call for papers: "Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker" Conference to honor the centenary of Dorothy Day’s Birth. 9-12 October 1997, Marquette University. Send proposals for papers and roundtables to: Phillip M. Runkel, Marquette University Archives, P.O. Box 3141; Milwaukee, WI 53201-3141; Fax: 414-288-3123; runkel@vms.csd.mu.edu. Deadline: 1 May.

- **Call for Essays: Peace Review,** a transnational, multidisciplinary quarterly, publishes essays on topics including war, violence, human rights, political economy, development, culture and consciousness, and the environment. Next Deadline 18 April for issue on "Democracy Beyond National Borders." Upcoming themes: Conflicting Identities, Third World Peace Perspectives. Essays on and off themes of 2500-3500 words, should be submitted on IBM or Mac disk to: Robert Elias, Editor. Peace Review. University of San Francisco; 2130 Fulton St. San Francisco, CA 94117 (eliasr@usfca.edu).

- **Call for Contributors:** Textbook on Introduction to Sociology: Race, Gender & Class. Reader emphasizes intersections of race, gender and class along traditional sociological themes such as culture, economy, environment, ethnicity, politics, work, etc. Contact: Jean Ait Amber-Belkhir; Michael Harrington Center;
Publications by Section Members