

Is There Room for Peace Studies in a Future-Centered War-Fighting Curriculum?

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Abstract:

Changing political, social, and economic realities in the United States, as well as the rest of the world, suggest that the Army will need to review how it accomplishes future military-centric missions. In a 2012 article in *Foreign Affairs*, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond Odierno argues that today's Army needs to transition in critical areas that affect the size of the force, material, and training.¹ Gen. Odierno also posits that the Army must assume a broader definition of battlefield. Future missions may involve, for instance, assisting victims of natural disasters, restoring order in collapsing or failed states, or confronting nonstate forces. For successful on-the-ground peace development, an expanded skill set is needed. This paper contributes to an emerging narrative about the proper role of conflict transformation and conflict management education within a military context.

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Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**

Is There Room for Peace Studies in a Future-Centered Warfighting Curriculum?

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A nation that draws too broad a difference between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards, and its fighting done by fools.

—Thucydides

CHANGING POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC REALITIES in the United States, as well as the rest of the world, suggest that the Army will need to review how it accomplishes future military-centric missions. In a 2012 article in *Foreign Affairs*, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond Odierno argues that today's Army needs to transition in critical areas that affect the size of the force, material, and training.¹ Gen. Odierno also posits that the Army must assume a broader definition of battlefield. Future missions may involve, for instance, assisting victims of natural disasters, restoring order in collapsing or failed states, or confronting nonstate forces. For successful on-the-ground peace development, an expanded skill set is needed. This paper contributes to an emerging narrative about the proper role of conflict transformation and conflict management education within a military context.

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The Field of Peace and Conflict Studies

As an academic field of study, peace and conflict studies is over 50 years old. The field has an active base of scholars, a growing body of disciplinary literature, an established curriculum, and a pedagogical tradition that includes classroom teaching, experiential learning, internships, and international study. Peace and conflict scholars and educators seek to understand the causes of conflict. They examine ways to prevent and transform conflict situations. They seek to build peaceful and just social systems and societies. They achieve these goals by educating specialists and engaging with policymakers and the broader community of governmental and nongovernmental organizations in creating the context for nonviolent conflict management. Peace and conflict studies primarily engages a practice-centered form of scholarship, with academics and students actively involved in numerous forms of fieldwork.

Peace science and peace research are rapidly growing fields of study oriented toward conflict management, peace building, and developing appropriate interventions. Peace and conflict scholars are united not by ideology or political perspective, but by a commitment to understanding the causes of violent conflict and finding effective and sustainable nonviolent solutions to world problems. Peace and conflict studies curricula cover a wide range of issues related to peace, conflict, violence, justice, inequality, social change, and human rights. The field of study and practice is now applied at all levels of conflict from interpersonal to global.² As an emerging field of study and practice, the shape and terminology of the discipline have expanded and transitioned from an amateurish to a professional framework. In fact, many practitioners now believe that conflict is not *resolved*; rather, it is *transformed* as part of a creative process. As a result, *conflict transformation* has moved forward as the core construct shaping the field.³

Formal conflict management as part of a deliberate peace development strategy can be traced to the Kingdom of Mari in 1800 BCE, when kings regularly employed mediation and arbitration to resolve conflicts.⁴ From that time forward, conflict management and conflict resolution have been employed as formal and informal

practices for addressing smaller disputes and broader conflicts.

In fact, peace and conflict studies prepares individuals for a wide variety of careers. Graduates become negotiators, mediators, government officials, educators, business managers, activists, and professionals in organizations focused on human rights, dispute resolution, environmental protection, international law, and human and economic development. Currently, programs are reporting, anecdotally, an increase in the number of military veterans enrolling in peace and conflict studies programs—graduate and undergraduate. Quantifying this trend, however, will require further research.

Contributions of Peace and Conflict Studies to Military Education and Development

Peace and conflict studies should be deliberately integrated into the Army's professional education curriculum at all levels. Peace and conflict studies, as part of professional military education and training, can reduce the size of forces needed by providing conflict transformation and management skills to military and civilian personnel. This can be a force multiplier. In an environment of shrinking resources, peace studies and conflict management training require little in the way of assets.

Gen. Odierno states that today's Army is positioning itself to respond to conflict as a flexible force based on the escalating complexity of contingencies worldwide.⁵ The force must be prepared to meet a range of challenges, including the increasing need for the prevention and management of regional conflicts. Peace and conflict studies is uniquely positioned to contribute to the development of a breadth of responses.⁶

As a continuum of approaches develops, a balanced narrative regarding military intervention is needed. It should include a discussion of policing and community development, with less focus on national security and more on human security and the protection of individuals.⁷ According to the *Human Security Report 2005*, 95 percent of violent conflicts are intrastate. The nature of intrastate conflict implies that military forces need to maintain proficiency in skills other than those used for large-scale, interstate warfighting.⁸

Creating room for peace and conflict studies in military professional development has numerous possibilities, such as the inclusion of military personnel in existing peace and conflict studies programs, and the inclusion of peace and conflict studies curricula within the Army's professional military and civilian education systems. We propose that processes that contribute to building the capacity for meeting human needs complement conflict prevention and management activities. The learning is multidirectional, with military professionals providing another dimension of understanding and critique to peace and conflict studies and its application as part of a broad peace-building and development strategy. In other words, military personnel have much to contribute to the field of peace and conflict studies.

Peace Building and the Military

Some will certainly disagree with our suggestion that there is a proper role for peace and conflict studies in professional military education. Civilians may judge it as a form of "sleeping with the enemy." We think this is a shortsighted view. If war is too serious a business to be left solely to the generals, we argue peace is too important to be left to those without military experience because members of the military can support informed decision making. Creation of a just, sustainable, and lasting peace is everyone's business; certainly, it is the business of those *on the ground*. All those involved in peace *making*, peace *keeping*, and peace *building* should be welcomed to the peace *development* table.

Louis Kreisberg notes that as "the conflict resolution (CR) field has developed, it offers many strategies and methods that are relevant for partisans in a fight as well as for intermediaries seeking to mitigate destructive conflicts."⁹ Conflict resolution, one component of conflict transformation and management, is more than negotiation and mediation. The focus is on responses to conflict that are contextually driven and grounded in theory and practical experience. When we discuss peace, we are talking about the study of conditions that are advancing inclusive, sustainable development within political, economic, and cultural contexts. Conflict management and conflict transformation address activities occurring on the ground that prevent peace from breaking out.

Peace development needs more than good intentions. Far too often, individuals believe their good

intentions alone are all that is required for success in resolving conflict and building peace. Experience proves otherwise. Effective peace development requires the participation of subject matter experts regarding conflict. A just, sustainable, and lasting peace is brought into existence through hard work. Skill mastery and individuals educated in transdisciplinary responses to conflict and violence are essential.

The approach outlined here for integrating peace and conflict studies into Army professional education is premised on a three-tier approach that

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correlates with the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Our definitions here do not mirror exactly those found in Army doctrine; rather, they are used to construct an approach that would complement existing doctrine.

Strategic peace building is grounded in the analysis of conflict. It is heavily weighted toward the understanding and development of the foundation of peace theory. Students follow an interdisciplinary approach to conducting analysis primarily at mega levels of conflict, toward societal and regional peace and peace operations.

Operational peace building encompasses the macro and meso levels and bridges the theoretical aspects of peace building found at the strategic level with tactical approaches to conflict transformation and management. Students at the operational level of practice integrate theory into practical responses to conflict. Theory translates into practice, and feedback from practice refines theory in a constant feedback loop. The focus at the operational level is construction of the institutions and structures of peace such as community justice centers, training programs in conflict transformation and management, and transitional justice activities.

Tactical peace building occurs mainly at the micro level. Tactical peace building includes the interpersonal, grassroots, and community contexts. This is where the rubber meets the road. Students gain hands-on experience in conflict transformation work and peace building. Skills such as mediation, negotiation, group problem solving, restorative practices, community building, and facilitation are major components of a conflict studies curriculum at the tactical level.

The Curriculum

Pursuing just peace connects to the military ethos captured in the United States Military Academy motto, “duty, honor, country.” We suggest a curriculum informed by this ethos. Peace and conflict studies can contribute to a new type of force based on Gen. Odierno’s suggestion that military units, in the near future, may need to be configured based on expertise.¹⁰ We ask, “Why not a unit schooled in conflict management? What might be included in a peace and conflict studies curriculum? What competencies might be addressed?” These questions can inform an expanded dialogue regarding peace building within an evolving military context.

Just policing introduces an approach to conflict transformation and management configured similarly to a methodology employed by the Metropoli-

tan Police Service in London. Unit members rely primarily on conflict resolution skills to confront issues within communities. The word *service* replaces *force* as a way of communicating a new role within a military context. Armed military forces can be held in reserve as a way of contributing to a graduated response to conflict. Gerald W. Schlabach suggests that Reserve Officer Training Corps programs could build closer relationships with justice and peace studies programs and that this collaboration can create “think tanks for transarmament from potentially lethal and military forms of defense to nonviolent civilian-based defense.”¹¹

Language and, perhaps most important, sustained dialogue are key. Developing a common language of peace and conflict studies can contribute to a seamless integration of humanitarian organizations in peace operations. Shared competency in a common language can help break down barriers of mistrust, which sometimes exists between military professionals and humanitarian organizations. Integrating peace and conflict studies into Army professional development can also contribute to an increased competency in working with the nongovernmental humanitarian organizations increasingly present in intrastate conflicts.



U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Paul Knudtson speaks to a Shah Joy village elder during a shura at the Shah Joy District Center in Afghanistan’s Zabul Province on 26 January 2011. (Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson, U.S. Air Force)

Skill Development

Connie Peck notes that knowledge and practice must inform each other, and that conflict resolution and management programs need to be constructed to assist conflict practitioners—not simply to add to theory development.¹² If peace is the desired outcome of any conflict, it must be achieved through conflict transformation and management. Therefore, it is critical to begin a discussion on how peace and conflict studies can be integrated into Army professional development and training by—

- Including peace studies and peace scholarship in the U.S. Army War College curriculum, with the focus of scholarship at the strategic level.
- Focusing on conflict management at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.
- Emphasizing conflict transformation skills training at branch qualifying schools and noncommissioned officer academies, with individuals concentrating on grassroots problem solving.

Too often, it is simply assumed that individuals possess the skills necessary to address conflict. In fact, multiple skill sets undergird the process of conflict transformation. Mediation and negotiation, nonviolence, restorative justice, and joint problem solving skills can be integrated into existing military education and training.

Mediation and negotiation. Skills that can be taught under mediation and negotiation include—

- Introduction to mediation and negotiation skills.
- Mediator as process expert.
- Negotiation skills: hard-bargaining and principled negotiation.

Nonviolence. Skills that can be taught under nonviolence include—

- Nonviolence as a peace-building tool.
- Just policing.
- Nonviolent communication.

Restorative justice. Skills that can be taught under restorative justice include—

- Community circles.
- Dialogue groups.

Joint problem solving. Skills that can be taught under joint (referring to all partners) problem solving include—

- Facilitation.
- Large-group problem solving.
- Integration of the curriculum.

Summary

Peace is a charged, contested, and often marginalized term. It can challenge the warrior ethos. However, we find ourselves in a period of significant change, and formal and informal institutions and systems of the past that support negative peace alone need modification to meet new demands. Tomorrow's battlefields still need warriors able to close with and destroy the enemy but also those proficient in conflict prevention, management, and transformation skills. Asymmetrical approaches to conflict management are the new norm.

An increasing focus is needed on preventing conflict.¹³ The desired end state of all military operations should be a durable, lasting, and just peace. Experience suggests that a tension can exist between the military and those in the field of peace and conflict studies. This seems an unnecessary tension. With fewer people having military experience, uninformed opinions regarding military culture are guiding the peace discourse.

Military professionals are often the strongest advocates for peace development and nonviolence. Professional soldiers must not be marginalized and left absent from the peace development table because of peace activist prejudices. Rather, the warrior ethos that embodies mission, selfless service, and physical and mental courage should be embraced. Professional soldiers who view themselves as peace builders can be counted upon to use force only when necessary, and judiciously. **MR**

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