

AFTERWORD

Reflection on the Cultural Causes of War. From the Perspective of Peace Studies

Liu Cheng and Egon Spiegel interviewed by Guido Abbattista

Abstract: Culture, in the broadest sense of the word, is defined as a common or similar form of thinking and acting. In the context of our understanding of peace studies, we are primarily looking for the challenging opportunities of globalisation and the positive possibilities that come with it. Above all, we accept globalisation as a reality – we will not, indeed, we cannot, negate or turn our backs on it. We appreciate the chance to think and act globally as a consequence of global awareness, responsibility and solidarity, regardless of local and regional affinities. Internet activities will develop a worldwide transcultural, transreligious and transnational network that human beings have been dreaming of for a long time. On this basis, the diminution of conflict through non-violence may finally lead to the elimination of war and the creation of a permanent peaceful human community.

Keywords: Culture of peace, Peace studies, Taboo of war, Human community

Introduction (by Guido Abbattista)

The following pages present a dialogue with two authoritative exponents of peace studies, Liu Cheng, professor of British History and holder of the UNESCO Chair on Peace Studies at Nanjing University, and Prof. Dr Prof. h.c. Egon Spiegel, theologian and political scientist, holder of the Chair of Practical Theology at the University of Vechta, Germany, a former professor at the Technical University of Dresden, Germany, and titular professor at the University of Olsztyn, Poland, and now an adjunct professor to the Chair of Peace Studies at Nanjing University. Liu Cheng and Egon Spiegel are among the world's leading exponents of contemporary peace studies and have devoted important initiatives and publications to illustrating the basic principles of peacebuilding methods, in particular the important bilingual synthesis *Peacebuilding in a Globalized World: An Illustrated Introduction to Peace Studies* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2015). Their collaboration and engagement are in themselves a demonstration of both the effort of dialogue between East and West and that, at the heart of the issues of peace, its construction, its protection, and the need for it to be taught at every level of education, is the historical problem of diversity. The issue of

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diversity and the problem of coexistence with and understanding and governance of diversity has accompanied the entire course of human history and, after centuries of intolerance, conflict, oppression and violence, it still continues to represent the most difficult problem for humankind to solve. The problem of diversity undoubtedly arose within the small communities in which the original human beings were gathered, but it has taken on ever greater proportions as the interaction between human groups, their internal organisation, their cultural development, their capacity to construct identities, but also their ability to «think», to «conceptualise» the issue of diversity, have increased. The current world presents a paradox that has accompanied the phenomena of globalisation over a long period of time. On the one hand, we have the increasing intensification of relations, exchanges, and the worldwide dissemination and sharing of material and immaterial goods, and, on the other, the occurrence of defensive reactions of closure and hardening around the interests and identity profiles of individual groups, peoples and nations. This has led to the emergence of conflicting forces: one tending to bring closer together, if not to homogenise cultures, while the other distinguishes, strengthens and opposes political, cultural and religious particularities. The values and influence of universalism and relativism have constituted two of the major factors capable of orienting human action in every sector of associated life and have posed the question of the capacity of human beings to find a common basis for peaceful coexistence, or to surrender to the prospect of the inevitable opposition between interests and identities incapable of either finding a point of convergence or ensuring the fundamentals for peaceful coexistence in diversity. The problem has been addressed historically in both the political and speculative arenas through multiple efforts to build an international community peacefully governed by shared rules, and through the efforts of a noble intellectual tradition aimed at constructing utopian designs and committed to imagining the conditions for realising projects of «perpetual peace» in practice. That all this has come up against seemingly irresolvable contradictions has not diminished the importance of pursuing such goals.

What peace studies addresses above all is the question of what the most effective methods and practices are for generating an ever-stronger awareness of the elements of affinity and interdependence between human groups, and making them prevail over the sense of diversity. UNESCO's approval of the Peace Studies programme presented by Nanjing University and the consequent opening of the Chair of Peace Studies, currently held by Professor Liu Cheng with the collaboration of Professor Egon Spiegel, has made Nanjing a world reference point for peace studies, with the establishment of specific courses, the organisation of conferences, research seminars, workshops and the production of publications.

It is only right that a conference dedicated to the cultural relations between the East and the West and the complex confrontation that has historically taken place between these two extensive cultural areas, understood in a very broad sense, should include a contribution capable of showing how peace studies can help to imagine a future in which that difficult confrontation, which for so long has generated collective violence with dramatically destructive consequences,

can be replaced by forms of coexistence between human groups that are increasingly marked by the values of peace, exchange and free intercourse. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, with its immediate effect of slowing down globalisation processes, has only strengthened the conviction that globalisation is now an irreversible dimension of collective life. Such a dimension forces us to think ever more creatively about the tools needed to govern it and to deal with phenomena such as pandemics, which are undoubtedly an unintended consequence of globalisation, but paradoxically also an opportunity to imagine a better future of global coexistence and cooperation.

What relationship exists between globalisation and the prospects for peace?

Our world is connected through a network comprising the same fashions, the same movies and the same music and video clips, common forms of consumption and similar lifestyles. What is hip in China is hip in Germany, and in Brazil and in USA and Korea and Nigeria and so on. Everywhere, young people hear and sing the same (Western) songs and nearly all T-Shirts worn by the youth in China are printed with English letters, not Chinese signs. At the same time, all over the world you can find tattoos of Chinese signs worn by young people on different parts of their body – on their face, their neck, their breast, their back, legs and arms. Not least, young people are connected through the worldwide web and in a vast network of mobile telecommunication. Technology, trade and tourism also have transnational dimensions. In terms of consumption, because exhaust fumes have to respect the same ecological conditions, the design of cars all over the world is becoming more and more similar. In this unified world, war has no place.

Do you think there are «cultural reasons» that tend to favour conflicts? And are there specific cultural attitudes that you would consider more or less prone to conflict?

There are four different constellations for understanding the relationship of cultures (religions) and nations. At the first level, the lowest level, it is the constellation of Ego. This describes the persuasion that your culture, religion or nation is the best and highest one. In this egocentric view, all other cultures, religions and nations are not comparable with your own. However, this archaic opinion is found increasingly seldom, especially among the young. The next constellation – under the term Multi – illustrates the ability for cultures and nations to live together side by side, a kind of coexistence that we find much more of nowadays. More often, we find constellations which are determined by various forms of Inter. For example, our cultural and national lives are defined by Inter-actions which involve communication and cooperation. Fortunately, in relation to religions, the development from Ego across Multi to Inter happens – however slowly – too (e.g. Religions for Peace, Parliament of the World's Religions). On the level of Trans – the highest level in our model – we feel we are all sitting in the same boat, living in one world, having the same experiences, sharing the same

wishes and also having the same troubles (e.g. ecological problems). From this perspective we are all connected and unified in a single global network.

Don't you think that historical, sociological, ethno-anthropological and cultural studies have usually focused much more on the problem of diversity than on the problem of common values and cultural affinities between societies? And haven't they rather thought in terms of separate and conflicting entities, such as nations, religions, cultures or even civilisations, than of a human community sharing common problems?

Academic discussions have been characterised by a focus on diversity (Smelser and Alexander 1999; Prentice and Miller 1999; Lederach 1995; Elmer 1993; Gressgard 2010; Camilleri and Schottmann 2013; Gay 2003; Abbattista 2011). This is good because it has been necessary. We need to have an awareness of people's different specialities, as this can bring acceptance of these and the understanding necessary to value them. But now that the process has been started by this awareness, we need to focus much more on unity, on universals and on universality, or on transversality. Because, if our discussions remain permanently concerned with diversity, they will engender the wrong impression: that the reality of our differences that such discussions highlight is the main reality. However, although it is no less important, these differences are peripheral to our main reality. In particular, the dense network of digital communication and economic relations (including their shadow, the ecological problems that we're now discovering) signifies that we now exist and live interdependently in a world we are characterising as transcultural, transreligious and transnational. These interdependencies demonstrate a unique drawing together of people that has not previously been experienced. Under these conditions, we need to discuss the possibilities of peacebuilding in a new way, especially its potential within the framework of social networking. Please note: in a world unified by common lifestyles, close economic ties and digital connectivity, we can expect that the basic phenomena of culture, religion and nationhood may continue to exist and function.

What do you think are the most important characteristics that can help to understand the human community in unitary terms?

Our existence is much more transculturally oriented than we usually believe. In fact, as the Olympic ideal shows, we have been transculturally oriented for a long time (International Olympic Committee 2020, 11-12). In arts, sports, and music we have a long tradition of exchange and meetings. Currently the East is much more influenced by developments in the West (for example in music). Basketball and football/soccer are increasingly becoming favourite sports around the world. Aerobics and Tai Chi, inline skating and breakdancing, disco fox and waltz, graffiti and punk – you can find all these in every corner of the world. The worldwide spread of common taste in fashion and food is largely rooted in the West and you can buy pizza as well as French-fried potatoes and

hamburgers in all countries. On the other hand, for a long time now, you could find Chinese restaurants all over the world. Similarly, there has been a tremendous global spread of Asian culture and a fascination for Asian traditions and customs. And of course, there is the distribution of products that are «Made in China». You can now get nearly every product all over the world. Amazon delivers books everywhere. A worldwide postal and parcel service ensures you get all you want wherever you are living or staying. Science, technology and travel have created a dense network of exchange and cooperation. One of the central visions of fairy tales is to go all over the world using seven-league boots, first here and then there. Similarly, the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous story can move his chair all over the globe 42 times a day. This is living in TRANS. It is today's reality.

But war and violence never disappeared from human history, never ceased to accompany human existence in any historical phase. What tools do we have to eradicate the evil of war from relations between peoples, nations and cultures?

Very often violence is culturally based. Many wars have been, and still are, fought for cultural reasons (not least religious ones). These are exacerbated because a lot of people are looking for an identity by having or finding a sense of cultural belonging. Clearly, they are afraid of the dissolution of culture through cultural unification and relativism. From a psychological perspective, some people argue that the reason for this may lie in an ego weakness, expressed as: «I need some form of cultural affiliation to offset my own feeling of ego weakness». But a further, important question could be: «Is the culture I'd like to belong to truly a culture and does it really provide a cultural reason for making war?» From one perspective, similarities between the rural people of one culture, A, and the rural people of another culture, B, are much stronger than those between the rural people and urban people of the same culture. In the same vein, the commonalities of the urban people of culture A and the urban people of culture B are much stronger than between the urban people of culture A and their rural counterparts, or between the urban and rural people of culture B. True culture is not a territorial, vertical phenomenon but a horizontal phenomenon relating to similar living places and their common typical conventions and structures. So, in reality, one cultural «layer» tends to be in opposition to the other, thus, the elites of each so-called culture are fighting against the people in the common layer of that culture, but should not encourage people to fight against those sharing the common culture of the common layer.

A (poor) member of the lower class of one culture is likely to live, think and act in a much more similar way to another (poor) person in another culture than to a (rich) member of the higher middle or upper class of his own culture (and vice versa with middle and upper class people). The same oppositions function between educated people and uneducated people or – in terms of gender – between women and men. In Johan Galtung's theory of imperialism, the similarities between the economic elites in the countries of the northern hemisphere

and those of the southern hemisphere and the invisible bridge between them are the basis of the exploitation of the people at the periphery of these (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 11). In fact, the so-called «clash of civilisation» simply hides the tension between the rich centres of the world and the poor periphery; as well as the patriarchal oppression of the women all over the world. In reality, a culture of powerful people exists on one side and one of powerless people on the other. One of the main problems with comparing cultures, religions or nations is our concentration on so-called «differences» and their excessive emphasis. However, if we take the whole statistical illustration into account, we will get a very different perspective. In fact, the opposite impression: the alleged data are relatively similar. That is to say, when so-called differences are emphasised (especially as arguments supporting war) the commonalities, although far bigger, are actually obscured. Peace Studies need to show how disproportionate this is and the consequences of this. It also needs to reveal how the interests of some groups or individuals can create an imbalance in perspective like that described above. Such people, who attach utmost importance to differences that may in fact be quite minor, are really pursuing their own interests (whether ideological, economic or personal). The consequences for the recipients are immense as they become unwittingly fixated on a way of looking at a specific situation or constellation that doesn't reflect reality. They are therefore ready to act in the interests of the difference-makers under conditions that don't exist.

What concepts, forms and mechanisms of political cooperation – regional, transnational, global – do you think can be relied upon in order to foster peaceful conditions of life all over the world?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the first Israelis went to Palestine to settle there, claiming legitimacy because of their Palestinian Jewish roots, Martin Buber, the famous philosopher of dialogue, insisted that they intersperse themselves among the Arab people already living there by choosing a federal system of living together (Susser 1979). Later, Joseph Abileah, argued the same from a geo-political viewpoint; namely, that in a non-federal system the Palestinians would always be denied access to the sea and therefore to the trade they depended on (Bing 1990). However, both Abileah and Buber argued without success. Since then, there have been many wars in Palestine, and future developments will also prove both men right: maybe the only solution to the Palestinian conflict is federalism. Through this structure, the different groups of people can rule the country together and remain autonomous at the same time. Federalism is the political ideal, not only as a possibility to structure a country of autonomous parts, but also as an underlying principle. Federalism is a way of thinking and a moral understanding. You cannot realise it by only being concerned with the relationships between provinces and maintaining a common political structure, if the principle of organising political unity at all levels is not fully respected. Federalism only functions as a bottom-up system, realised from the smallest societal unity up to the largest one. Its inner principles are partici-

pation, tolerance and a great ability for compromise. An amusing illustration of this is to compare federalism with a jigsaw puzzle, as both need to have all the individual parts in place for the whole picture to be complete.

We actually have only two possible ways of managing how we live together politically: *confederation* or *separation*. We can find both in the context of contemporary globalisation. On the one side, there is a tendency to join national structures together (an example of this is Europe). On the other, contrary to this, there are attempts at political secession backed by military activities (an example of this is the Russian minority in Ukraine).

Unfortunately, in the case of the Russian people in Ukraine, there are two influences for integration: one is that of the Ukraine government, which wants to keep the minority as part of Ukraine (but has not done enough to support its existence in a federal sense), and the other is the Russian interest in integrating the minority into the Russian Federation. The non-violent, sustainable solution would be for the Russian minority to develop its intra-Ukrainian federal existence with a link to a federally structured Russia (and, at the same time, to a federally structured Europe). On the border of Ukraine and Russia, the Russian minority could exist politically in a form of bilateral confederation or a «double confederation». Moreover, confederation is the only sustainable solution for the Palestine area. Inevitably, the future of the world will be (con-)federal. Against this, separatist processes lead to eternal conflicts and to attempts to solve them using military violence. The policy of separation is not appropriate to globalisation and its challenges; however, it does highlight the need for a federalism that is defined by respect for minorities.

Your peace studies approach is essentially determined by the assumption of globalisation. But isn't the world currently strongly determined by the opposite, namely de-globalisation?

No one today would reduce communication systems to the technical possibilities of television, broadcast, print media or telephone and correspondence, let alone smoke signals, now that we have discovered, without excluding the use of these, the possibilities of interaction on a digital basis and thus the internet. Comparable to this is the situation with globalisation. We can, will and should continue to cultivate regionalisms (including, for example, linguistic, national or religious characteristics) and use them for specific purposes. No one will or can want to deny their functions for the future. However, we cannot, will not and do not want to fall behind a development that we encounter conceptually in «globalisation». Brexit phenomena or «exit» fantasies emerging here and there are not suitable for questioning globalisation both in terms of its reality, which can no longer be denied, and its meaningfulness. Globalisation can no longer be reversed, but only responsibly and creatively shaped in harmony with regionalisms. All current attempts to deny globalisation as an irreversible reality – we are currently experiencing its culmination in Ukraine – and which seem to counteract it, will sooner or later lead themselves ad absurdum. We have emphasised in our publications that it may take one last great war before humanity comes to the re-

alisation that war in general must be taboo. We had thought this possible for the Arab region, there on the Israel-Iran axis, but now we see it demonstrated on the European continent in the previously unthinkable war in Ukraine, which is completely out of time. If we see this together with the one still smouldering in Syria and coming to its end in Afghanistan, then humanity – even if it seems otherwise at the moment – should be on the home stretch to the realisation that war is no longer possible and is yesterday's news. War as the most terrible extreme of separation, and with it the chaos of, say, economic sanctions, demonstrates once again that, in the interest of all, we have only one choice of shaping life and the world: consistent action under the conditions of globalisation. There is no doubt that we still have much to learn here. Further developments will show that we are in the painful process of «trial and error», for example with regard to Ukraine and the danger of a World War III. De-globalisation processes, such as we are currently experiencing, are caesuras that will be overcome in a very short time and will underline all the more strongly the need to put all our potential, i.e. our ability and willingness to «mutual aid» (Peter Kropotkin) in contrast to the Darwinist principle of «all against all», at the service of globalisation in the sense of a culture of peace. In terms of the world economy and world politics, we will come back extremely quickly and once and for all to the achievement of a «human web» (McNeill and McNeill 2004) under the sign of globalisation and appreciate its value once again. As we say, we still have a lot to learn here.

What are the practical instruments for carrying forward cooperation?

Conflict transformation depends both on structural measures and on actional ones. The so-called round table (RT) stands for both. Bringing people together, that is coming together instead of trying to solve a problem by a constellation, which is determined by the separation of the conflicting parties, is a first structural measure. We may solve a lot of problems by structural decisions. For instance, if your very young child is irritating you by insisting on playing with a sharp object on your damageable glass table, you could use an actional solution and continuously criticise the child and so make it permanently stressed. Alternatively, you could take the glass table out of the living room, probably only for a while, and replace it with a cheap less damageable table. In this case a structural decision dispensed with the need for actional measures. So the establishment of a RT is already half the solution, in itself. A round table is both a structure and a method. RT discussions and decision-making are defined by the participation of all persons concerned, or their representatives. They are also realisable for all levels of peacebuilding. In particular, RT is an efficient way to transform conflicts as an alternative to attempts by institutions and movements that are normally determined by exclusion and confrontation. We can imagine a kind of RT that is used alongside or within the UN, where principled and only non-violent solutions are worked out by persons affected by the conflict, for example in a situation when civil war seems imminent. As it is, the UN is too quick to believe that only violent solutions are viable.

Currently, life on our planet is dominated by (international) political conflicts. A lot depends on how these conflicts can be resolved. Indeed, politics is essentially «conflict politics». As such, politics will always be indispensable, now and in the future. Because we will always have conflicts, we need to have a balance of the political forces through political struggle. But, in the future, the fate of the globe may not depend on the free play of political or economic forces but on an unstressed, efficient worldwide administration. This one small planet needs, firstly, a highly professional, well-functioning administration to solve the economic and ecological problems of life and, supporting this, a sub-administrative ethics constituting a culture and practice of political struggle. Thus, the priority is administration, not politics. Politics is oriented to a common, globally and federally organised administration that is only thinkable in terms of domestic world policy. The global atmosphere, in which politics acts and administration handles the challenges of daily life, is mainly determined by common cultures of interpersonal dealings, such as non-violent conflict transformations, working and consuming, education and learning, music and sports. The youth of the world is not only connected by the same fashion and taste but also by the same distance from politics and the same orientation to culture.

What historical examples and principles can inspire the UN and what kind of action do you think the UN should take?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi formulated one of the most important laws of non-violent action: the causal connection between means and goals. He illustrated this by using the following metaphor: If you'd like to get a rose you must not sow a weed. And: The tree lies in the seed (Gandhi 2001, 10). Martin Luther King makes a similar point. If you want to create a non-violent society and world, you must not act violently. If you don't accept this principle, you will not achieve your goal (Carson 2000, 120-21). Violence leads to violence, non-violence to non-violence. Therefore, it makes no sense to mix non-violent means with violent ones. Whenever violence is included in the spectrum of non-violent means – even as a very minor part of the means – the goal and the power of non-violence are corrupted to their opposite. Non-violence only makes sense in its pure form. Obviously, this doesn't mean that people who act violently aren't allowed to use non-violent means. In order to explain it positively: the realisation of non-violence as a future goal depends on the realisation of non-violence today. Therefore, non-violence is a question of one's whole lifestyle. In our form of living and actualising the idea and practice of non-violence we anticipate non-violence as a goal. Non-violence is the result of our present doing. We have no influence on the outcome, but we do on the input. If we concentrate on a non-violent input, we may expect non-violence as the natural consequence. As Dom Helder Camara asserted, the most important question is not how to achieve success but how to act non-violently day by day, every hour and minute of our lives (Camara 1971; Salla 1993).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the United Nations started a decade with the precedent-setting title of Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the

Children of the World. The decade lasted from 2001 to 2010. Following on from this, the task is to continue and make deeper the progress achieved during these years, especially by developing peace science in the form of peace research, peace education, and peace activism. This involves motivating and initiating non-governmental peace movements, pressurising governments to support peace activities and to act in accordance with the principles of peacebuilding. To do this we need to offer peace studies and to study peace in all the complexity of a discipline linked with many other academic disciplines. Through all of these, the initiatives have to be internalised and to follow the understanding of peace in the meaning set out by the United Nations – and to develop it further. Peace, in the opinion of the UN is only thinkable as non-violence (General Assembly 2008). Indeed, it makes no sense to add non-violence after postulating peace. Non-violence is a tautological expression of peace. Obviously, in wording the aims of the decade, the UN saw a necessity to make sure that, in its perspective, peace can be understood only as non-violence. Therefore, the UN describes peace as non-violence and all activities working towards the global «culture of peace» have to recognise this. This postulate is a very high ethical standard, but based on our willingness and abilities, and – especially – on our daily experience, it is in fact very realistic.

What other sources of inspiration, secular or religious, can support efforts to build and spread a culture of peace?

Those who work towards a non-violent space and expect processes that deliver results all participants can accept to develop in this space believe in a power that is acting in the vacuum in the interests of both parties: a third, independent power, who both the non-violent agent and the conflict opponent or partner are subject to. If non-violence is to be more than merely a tactic or method to achieve an end, its agents have to believe in a power that is acting in the vacuum of non-violence, which the agent prepares through special non-violent actions. Thus, Gandhi's non-violent agents trusted in the power of truth (satyagraha): that there is a dynamic, a constructive potential that brings people together – a form of Third Power (Rogers 1989, 388; Thorne 2003, 113-15). In the biblical tradition, this is represented by the four letters, JHWH which means that there is something that exists in the interests of the people. In a South African theology, the name for this is MODIMO, which means that there is a God who collects friends and enemies within the same fence. There are many ways of naming it: Lao Tzu called it the Being beyond the whole being, Christians would say God, Muslims Allah, others believe in «Biophilia» as the centre of living together (Fromm 2010), or the Absolute Horizon of Being (Havel 1989). In a very original way, the Anglican theologian, Carter Heyward, signifies dealings that relate to the existence of such a Third Power, however it is named, by the verb «to god» (Heyward 1982; 1993, 247). From this perspective, every non-violent behaviour or dealing demonstrates an absolute trust in an inaccessible, in the between of all parties existing and acting Third. This spirituality is the core of a non-violence that is much more than only a method.

What do you see as the specific contribution, also in practical terms, that peace studies can make to the development of a culture of peace?

In the 1970s, peace studies developed non-military alternatives for military deterrence and defence (Barash and Webel 2018, 23-40; Wallensteen 2011; Webel and Galtung 2007). Military concepts are constructed as in wrestling, non-violent defence concepts are more like those in judo. In wrestling, one combatant makes a stand against the other; in judo, one gets the better of the other by letting him grasp at nothing. In the military system, a war starts whenever one party enters a foreign country with hostile intentions. The rulers of the country then react with a counterstrike at least as aggressive as the attack: if the country is bombed, the reaction will be bombs for the aggressor. So, the aggressor has to pay a high price for entrance when invading a country. In the concept of non-violent, social defence and deterrence the aggressor also has to expect a reaction. But not one of counterforce. Rather it would be by massive non-violent actions all over the occupied country (A), in the country of the aggressor (B) and in the world public (C). Thus, the aggression becomes undermined by consequent non-violent activities and the aggressor has to pay a high price for staying. These activities include many possibilities: making the injustices perpetrated («dramatising») by occupying forces publicly known; «fractionising» the people of B (enlarging the critical group which knows that its own country is doing anything wrong); and bringing the global public (C) on its side. Therefore, this concept is based on an approach that lets the enemy fall in his own strike, in the emptiness of non-violence. This is very different to a fatalistic acceptance of aggression and passivity; rather it is an endless abundance of efficient non-violent actions throughout the occupied country (A), including non-violent resistance (especially non-cooperation) and the establishment of alternate structures beside the structures the aggressor is trying to enforce.

Don't you think that a common feeling of rejection of death caused by intentional violence through war or any other kind of conflict between human beings should be established?

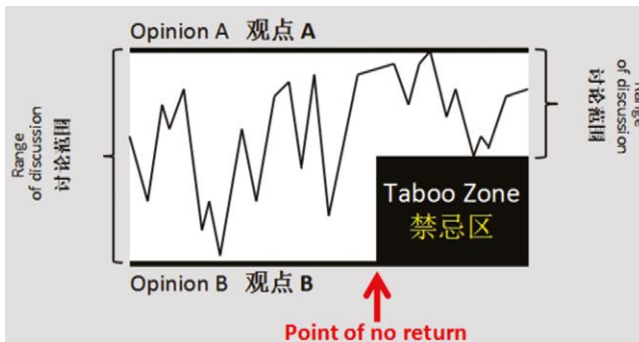
This is not the place to discuss how the humankind has dealt with the phenomenon of murder throughout history. But we may be sure that murder has always been a serious issue and has been punished everywhere and at all times. Murder is a worldwide taboo. Civilisation without this taboo is unimaginable. But if we could taboo murder, shouldn't we be able to do the same with war? By asking this, it's not our intention to claim that soldiers are murderers. What we are pointing out is only that, in both cases, killing other people seems the only or best way to solve a specific conflict (in their own interests). Nobody would argue that under special conditions murder is allowed, at least not publicly (although clearly sometimes people do allow it to happen). Obviously there are other possible means to solve problems than murder and moreover there must be a general acceptance of this. A theoretical parallel for political conflicts is obvious. And the time is ripe

to make all violence a taboo. The Viennese theologian, Kaspar Mayr, asserted this more than half a century ago, right after the Second World War (Solzbacher 1999).¹ He was right at the time. He is even more right today. And the conditions are on his side. Already at that time Mayr postulated the need to substitute war-orientated policies and military defence strategies with policies of conflict resolution using non-violent means and methods. Providing a wealth of information and special research, peace studies is working out how this substitution will work.

Are there examples to refer to of initiatives and practical methods to exclude and protect specific fields of action from the threat of war violence?

The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted at The Hague (Netherlands) in 1954 after that massive destruction of cultural heritage had occurred during the Second World War. And it was ratified by China in 2000. This Convention, «the first international treaty with a world-wide vocation focusing exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict» (UNESCO 1954), demonstrates that it is possible to create zones from which an ongoing war is excluded. Clearly, the establishing of keep-out-war zones is a realistic strategy to protect cultural property at least. Nevertheless, their existence proves that keep-out-war zones are possible.

Very often the public opinion-forming process proceeds between two extremes: between the two positions of extremely pro and extremely contra an issue. In the case of war and preparing for war, this means the plea for deterrence and defence on one side, and plea for non-violent conflict transformation on the other. All decision-making processes usually come to a point of no return when the question is decided. The process that leads to this point is described in the first, left-hand part of the graph below.



From a certain point on, the discussion carries on, but it is never allowed to run into the zone that was created by the previous discussion. The debate may

¹ Today: www.worldbeyondwar.org.

touch the border of this zone, but is not allowed to overstep the borderline of the taboo zone. Of course, the temptation of this exists for some people, but in public discussion this must be continuously resisted. Whether the once-achieved taboo zone cracks or remains resilient, and the possible impacts of this, depends on the discussion. The graphs in our model are created randomly. The curve of the line symbolises only the possibilities of movement between the two extremes of pro and contra, and later between the one extreme and the tabooed zone. The most significant point of this model is the beginning of the tabooed zone.

In the ancient world many people, especially philosophers, were convinced that the Earth is a globe and not a disc. But for the notion that the Earth is a globe to become accepted as common opinion, a great deal of time and many reflections, research and discussions are needed. Since the discoveries of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), we have been aware that the Earth is revolving round the Sun, and not the Sun around the Earth. However, because Galileo's books recognised this fact, they were put on the index of books that were forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church. First in 1992, when Pope John Paul declared that the ruling against Galileo was an error resulting from «tragic mutual incomprehension», Galileo Galilei was officially rehabilitated by the Church. This is a vivid example of how a public discussion can be brought to the «point of no return» by one side, and the entrenched ignorance of this by a specific group moving further in a direction of thinking that is already taboo. Similarly, shortly before 1865, there were numerous discussions in the USA that moved between approval and rejection of slavery. Consequently, since 1865 slavery has been forbidden by law. Since this time slavery is a taboo. Also, since 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has provided the reference point for dealing with human beings all over the world. At the beginning of 1970s, the Polish government started an initiative to record children's rights, and in 1989 this became officially enshrined in the United Nations' «Convention on the Rights of the Child». There are a lot of reasons for increasing understanding of the unsuitability of war. The danger, the psychological incapability of people and the emotional and economic costs are only the most important of these. All in all, we are becoming much more sensitive in relation to life and its violation by violence. And we increasingly don't like violence. From a local perspective, and from the perspective of outer space, we can state that there is the highest probability that, in huge areas, war will never happen again.

The recent Russo-Ukrainian conflict, originating from Russian aggression against a country looking towards the West under many respects, has radically changed the way we perceive war as a reality that can also affect the European continent. What does this mean from the point of view of peace studies?

We used to think that there were certain parts of the world where war was unlikely, such as the European continent. We also suspected that the world might need a major war to break out before people could truly realise that we humans could no longer bear the weight of war. Unfortunately, the recent Ukrainian-Rus-

sian war broke out. This war is similar to the beginning of the First World War. And the further development of the war is likely to trigger the Third World War. World War Three will be a nuclear war. We must replace war with non-violent ways to resolve conflicts, as peace studies advocates. We don't want the majority of the world, especially national leaders, to recognise this after this war, because it's too late and this Earth may not exist anymore. After World War Two, Albert Einstein warned people that: «We need an essentially new way of thinking if mankind is to survive. Men must radically change their attitudes toward each other and their views of the future. Force must no longer be an instrument of politics [...] Today, we do not have much time left; it is up to our generation to succeed in thinking differently. If we fail, the days of civilised humanity are numbered». It's clear that Albert Einstein cautioned a lot of people who didn't hear it. This shows the importance of the concept of peace that this paper emphasises, which is related to the life and death of human beings.

Do you think that peace studies could point anyway to a feasible way of ending the Russo-Ukrainian conflict with a non-violent solution? And, in your view, should the will of the Ukrainians not to give in to the violent aggression that is causing them so much destruction and suffering be taken into account when talking about peaceful solutions? In other words, how, by what means, could peaceful solutions have been sought in the face of so much violence?

Affected by the by-no-means-surprising expansion of the war in Ukraine that began with the occupation of Crimea, many have taken a position in favour of a military solution. System-transcendent (as opposed to system-immanent) peace and conflict research, which reflects on the phenomenon of war both generally and continuously and therefore does not have to react reflexively to concrete war events, has conflict resolution strategies ready, not only for wars in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Syria, in Mali and finally also in Ukraine, which differ considerably from the traditional, military ones. Within the framework of countless individual studies and overall studies, it has been able to work out the practicability and effectiveness of «non-violent action» and illustrate principles and practices of non-violent resistance. Historical studies, in particular, such as those by Gene Sharp, among others, show that the spectrum and reservoir of non-violent conflict resolution action is almost inexhaustible. In view of the large body of literature on successful attempts at non-violent resistance and its constructive side, it is neither understandable in terms of the theory of science nor in terms of the ethics of science that, in the search for the best of all conflict solutions, non-violent resistance strategies and techniques are not only left out of the considerations, but are usually not even rudimentarily taken into account. This is just as true for the war in Ukraine and those responsible for it as it is for wars and those responsible for them elsewhere. Here as there, and in general, it is overlooked that what Max Weber separated, namely ethics of responsibility and ethics of mind (or of principle or of conviction), can be brought into congruence in an almost ingenious way in active non-violence (not to be confused with passivity, cowardice or fatalism): the

non-violent person follows his moral mind (not to hurt or even kill others) and at the same time assumes political responsibility (by facing social challenges and actively participating in political shaping processes). While the CIA has systematically prepared the military and intelligence services in Ukraine since the seizure of Crimea in 2014 for military resistance in the event of the obvious expansion of Russia's occupation policy, the opportunity to practice non-violent conflict resolution techniques – there would be no shortage of advisory staffs and trainers internationally – has not even been rudimentarily seized, and the potential for non-violent action that appears in isolated spontaneous actions among the Ukrainian population remains untouched. Instead of spreading resistance in society across all conceivable shoulders (including those of senior citizens, women, children, and the disabled), it is left to the scarce elite of young men fit for military service. Didn't Belarusian railroad workers who prevented supplies from reaching the occupiers by destroying the rail connection in the border region with Ukraine, and didn't the elderly lady who courageously confronted a Russian soldier and asked him to return home or at least put a sunflower seed in his pocket so that a sunflower might grow from it after his death, point out of themselves the direction to take in order to resolve conflicts in a sustainable way?

What do you think are the different degrees of acceptance and coexistence between different cultures? And what do you consider to be a desirable end point in the processes of cultural rapprochement?

All cultures are realisations of the human longing for unification and community. The lowest step is one of mutual interest and understanding. Understanding does not mean agreeing, but at least avoiding the fierce conflict between them. The next step is characterised by mutual tolerance, the following one by mutual acceptance, which involves much more than simple toleration. Similarly, to value other cultures and their special traditions and treasures is an even greater step, whereas the highest and last step is for the cultures to join each other. Of course, the assumption of superiority that the major cultures have held for so long does not make it easy to abandon the claim of exclusivity that all cultures more or less have. However, there are some inspiring examples and models of unification in actualised forms. These include China's initiative of the Community of Human Destiny. The Covid-19 outbreak has also shown once again that humanity is a community and that we must work together to overcome difficulties. We must come together, regardless of our cultural background, because that is the only way we can have a better peaceful future. If we say YES to Peace, we must say NO to War! No way to peace, peace is the only way.

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