

Francisco Ferrándiz, Antonius C. G. M. Robben (eds.)

# Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Peace and Conflict Research

A View from Europe



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Development Studies



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Perspectives on Peace  
and Conflict Research  
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Editors

**Francisco Ferrándiz**  
**Antonius C.G.M. Robben**

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Illustration of front page: Detail of a replica of the monument to the 'Combatants for Democracy and Freedom' during the Spanish Civil War, a metal abstraction of a fingerprint by artist Juanjo Novella.

The original is located in Monte Artxanda, Bilbao. This photo was taken when the replica stood outside the Guggenheim Museum.

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# Critical Edge and Legitimation in Peace Studies

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## Abstract

Peace Studies, constituted historically as critical and, therefore, alternative knowledge to normal science in International Relations, had come, by the Nineties, to be co-opted by the regulating structures of the international system as the basis of many of the options put into practice, above all in the framework of the processes of post-war reconstruction. In this context, rescuing the critical heritage of Peace Studies implies two radical options today. The first is the qualification of intended peace as sustainable peace. The second is the epistemological decolonisation of Peace Studies.

## Introduction

Peace Studies are invariably seen as a detached element of the block of theoretical currents that comprise the post-positivist rupture in the field of International Relations — a field heterogeneous in itself, where feminist perspectives mingle with studies of critical theory, deconstruction and the new normative formularisations. What unifies this plurality of currents is the response of the normal science of International Relations and its positivist nature, where the retrospective validation of the respective internal “laws” and the pretension of objectivity of knowledge through its decontamination from any subjective prejudices, are assumed as axioms. In this direction, and on the plane of epistemological debate within this field of knowledge, the various post-positivist currents take on the same desire for a breach with the realist canon of the discipline of International Relations. However, this self-representation of Peace Studies as a critical edge is now submitted to severe scrutiny. In truth, constituted as a discourse based on the aspiration to a deep transformation of reality in view of the primacy of peace — physical, structural and cultural — Peace Studies see themselves becoming, since

the 1990s, a conceptual and analytical domain called to support public policy in great measure integrated in the conduct of the international system by its dominant actors (from the main funding agencies to the platforms of global governance, via the States that control the international mechanisms of decision-making). It is important, therefore, to survey the persistence of the alternative character of Peace Studies relative to the founding paradigm of this discipline.

We will do so with reference to three historical moments. First, we will follow the steps taken by this current to become one of the strongest expressions of the alternative paradigm sought since the 1980s for a discipline (International Relations) that was born with a vocation for the analytical legitimisation of the international order. In the second moment, we will try to locate the expressions of co-optation of Peace Studies, whether by its supposed theoreticians, or through its concretion in public politics, and the corresponding loss of critical intensity in the face of the reigning international disorder. Finally, in the third moment, we will analyse the theoretical and political retreat of Peace Studies that follows a resurgence of the realistic paradigm which appears on the horizon at the start of the 21st century.

### **Itinerary of a Rupture Foretold**

The formation of the discipline of International Relations constitutes an excellent illustration of the Kuhnian articulation between paradigm, as a matrical vision that the members of a scientific community share relative to the object of this field or discipline, and normal science, as one specific map of knowledge adopted by this scientific community.

The synthesis of the process of this disciplinary formation is expressed as an intense paradigmatic dispute centred on rival maps of knowledge and carried out by antagonistic scientific communities. Triumphant in the founding attack against idealism (Cravinho, 2002: 116), the realistic school placed itself in the defining canon of normal science in this area. As is told on other occasions, realism, "segregated in the process of affirmation and consolidation of the inter-state system [...] is a specific expression of the cultural climate of scientific positivism, which drinks in the radical contraposition between facts and values and attributes absolute epistemological priority to the first over the second" (Pureza, 2001: 9). Enshrining as laws the regularities observed in the flowing past of international reality, realism consecrated three patterns of normal science, three contours of the map of knowledge of International Relations: state

individualism, the anarchic nature of the international system, and the representation of the latter as the terrain of the crudest power politics.

The simplistic nature of this map and its conservative vocation have been denounced as challenges to the political and academic construction of an alternative paradigm. This challenge is taken very seriously in the present debate which places the positivist tradition up against a plurality of currents that oppose, in diverse ways, the epistemological and ontological assumptions that feature in the map of normal knowledge.

As a consistent variant of this alternative — which assumes a clear conceptual definition, a expressive body of teachers and investigators, and a solid institutionalisation — Peace Studies is not yet fifty years old. Although its remote origins long precede the twentieth century itself, the various proposals and initiatives towards the objective of global peace were too isolated and autonomous to be, at root, considered a distinct, organized and coherent field of study (Van den Dungen and Wittner, 2003: 363). The creation of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, in 1957, and, two years later, of *Center for Research on Conflict Resolution* of the University of Michigan, by Kenneth Boulding and his colleagues Herbert Herman and Anatol Rapoport, represented the first challenge to the predominance of the realistic paradigm as a model of interpretation of the phenomenon of peace and war. However, the search for recognition of the scientific nature of a discipline still in the process of formation — precisely at a moment when positivism reached its zenith in the social sciences — confined the North American school of behaviourism to the collection and quantitative and non-value-based analysis of data on conflicts (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 69). The inquiry was, thus, limited in its concept of peace — presented, in its negative formularisation, as absence of violence and war — and, consequently, in its agenda — determinedly minimalist, seeking only to reduce the incidence and extent of conflict.

As Martínez Guzmán affirms, until then, the main challenge confronting the new current of inquiry was necessarily to make peace into its object of analysis (2005: 49). The man who resolved this challenge — and who is, therefore, considered the founder of Peace Studies — was the Norwegian Johan Galtung. The new orientation of this field of studies — begun with the creation, in 1959, of the *Oslo Peace Research Institute* and, five years later, of the *Journal of Peace Research* — is based, unequivocally, on an original proposal by this author.

In characterizing Peace Studies, Galtung breaks drastically with the positivist distinction between theory and practice. Surpassing the false notion of neutrality of science (since it is recognized that all knowledge inevitably involves an evaluative view by those who analyse them), Peace

Studies are affirmed as a socially “productive” discipline — that is, one that produces consequences in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of societies. Consequences that are intended to be condign with the objectives of promoting cooperation, the peaceful resolution of disputes and social transformations and non-violent politics. In other words, Galtung protagonises the resurgence of the normative theory — which constitutes the great novelty of this social science — affirming the commitment to values, especially that of peace. According to Mcsweeney (1998), without this central normative claim, Peace Studies would certainly lose its *raison d’être* as a distinctive vision of the international order. Knowledge of the values of peace is not, therefore, sufficient: in particular, a “emotional adhesion to these values” is required (Martínez Guzmán, 2004: 412). In the framework of a close relation between theory and practice, the theoretical production is “prospective and prescriptive” (Pureza, 2001: 14): it is only complete when it actively promotes persistence in contributing to peace and if it translates into concrete strategies. Against the critiques of those who receive with scepticisms its objective to study peace scientifically through a normative theory, Galtung responds by using his well-known medical analogy: Peace Studies, ethically guided by peace (in opposition to violence and war), will not be less rigorous than medical inquiry, ethically guided by healing (in opposition to illness) (Galtung, 1996: 1).

One should emphasise that, inevitably, in this school of thought, the search for non-violent processes of political change implies deep transformations in existing power structures (Rogers and Ramsbotham, 1999: 753). Or, in other words, considering Peace Studies as a simultaneously analytical and normative instrument, the international system does not escape to the intention to change an unjust and inequality-promoting *status quo*. Galtung constructs, thus, a distinction in the conceptualisation of peace that will be fundamental for the development of this discipline — “negative peace” as the absence of war and “positive peace” as an integrated human community, social justice and freedom.

According to the author, Peace Studies would still have to be interdisciplinary, in the measure that the dialogue between international relations and the different focuses of political and social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology or psychology, contribute to the indispensable enrichment of the conceptual picture of interpretation of peace and violent conflicts, given its multifaceted nature (Rogers and Ramsbotham, 1999: 741).

This alternative focus of Peace Studies developed in Northern Europe turned out to be pivotal for the deepening of this area of knowledge, lending itself in support of an alternative orientation to that of the North

American school and providing, thus, a response to the critiques of this scientific field formulated meanwhile. These critiques had as a backdrop the accusation of the persistence of epistemological relics of realism in the theoretical framework of *peace research*, which is thus not free of the accusation of legitimising the power relations of the global system (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 70-71).

The recognition both of the reproduction of the hierarchisation between centre and periphery,<sup>1</sup> and of its legitimisation by the dominant paradigm in International Relations, and also of the insufficient capacity of Peace Studies to challenge both situations, had led to an important reconceptualisation of the discipline under the creative impulse of Galtung.

The Nordic author identifies the triangle of violence, to which he makes correspond the triangle of peace. The distinction between the three vertices is made in accordance with different times: direct violence is an act; structural violence is a process with highs and lows; cultural violence is an invariant, a permanence [...]. The three forms of violence include time in different ways, in an analogous way to the distinction, in seismic theory, between earthquakes as an act, the movement of the tectonic plates as a process, and the fault as a more permanent condition (Galtung, 1990: 294).

Thus, direct violence will be the intentional act of aggression; structural (indirect) violence will be part of the social structure itself between human beings or societies — repression, in its political form, or exploitation, in its economic form; and finally, cultural violence will be underlying the structural and direct types, constituting the system of norms and behaviours that socially legitimises them (Galtung, 1996: 2).

Traditionally, the pivot of Peace Studies has been direct (obvious and sudden) violence — which, eliminated, represents a negative peace — not structural or cultural violence (static and hidden) — which, eliminated, creates a positive peace. Peace in its broadest sense — direct peace + structural peace + cultural peace — corresponds, in the last instance, with Galtung's ambition, while the absence of war in itself can hide deeper injustices that, if not dealt with, may contain the seeds of potential violent conflicts (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 193).

With this trilogy, Galtung strips bare the global dynamic of exploitation, responding to the accusation that Peace Studies traditionally was in agreement with the dominant conception of power and widening

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<sup>1</sup> As recalled by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004: 8, 19), colonialism as a socio-economic relation survived to colonialism as a political relation, practically keeping unchanged the structural standards of oppression, discrimination and violence.

the scope of its investigation-action, previously centred on the strategic relation of superpowers and in the logic of dissuasion. Also the unit of analysis was amplified, to include, beyond the nation-state, class dynamics and power at the intra-state and trans-national levels - a significant change to the dominant post-1945 paradigm (*ibid.*: 193).

Materializing this normative reorientation of Peace Studies, the agenda structured during the 1980s, which was articulated with a solid institutional-academic base, showed clear attribution of priority to topics like disarmament, the transformation of the unfair global system, environmental questions and the analysis of processes of negotiation and conflict mediation (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 1999: 48-49). To accompany the central question of international politics of this decade — disarmament (in counterpoint to the arms race of the superpowers and the beginning of the “Second Cold War”) — Peace Studies showed an undiscovered capacity for theoretical production. But the great impact then achieved by this area was mainly in terms of the pacifist and antinuclear social movements. The campaigns for peace and the movement for nuclear disarmament, which expands and diversifies, illustrate the capacity for integration in the agenda of Peace Studies of topics traditionally kept out of society by the *mainstream* (Van den Dungen and Wittner, 2003: 365). and reflect, equally, the dialectical investigation-action that is so dear to this discipline, making evident its affinity with activism.

At the end of the 1980s, the community of Peace Studies found itself converted into a diverse, active school with effective international impact (Rogers and Ramsbotham, 1999: 749).

## **Emancipation or Standardisation?**

The end of the Cold War represented a critical point in the affirmation of Peace Studies. Opposing the fears of loss of relevance of this discipline in a world without bipolar confrontation, the 1990s offered a single chance to Peace Studies to contribute directly to the resolution of the increasing number of particularly long and violent civil conflicts that defied the stability of the new world order.

These “new wars” (Kaldor, 1999) demand the persistence of the international community and foment the emergence of a model of response that takes into account the sources, actors, dynamics, as well as consequences of the new forms of conflict — already visible since the Second World War, but which were clearly seen to intensify from the end of the bipolar system (Rasmussen, 1999: 43). In this context, the doctrinal and institutional positioning assumed by the United Nations at

the start of the Nineties turned out to be structural. Seeing the chance to expand the role of the UN and assuming the generalized expectations of a renaissance of the UN with the end of the bipolar confrontation (Roberts, 1998: 300), Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali considered that the action of the United Nations (and the international community in general) should centre on the phenomenon of the proliferation of internal conflicts in States at the peripheries of the international system, endemically fragile, involving the UN in the active promotion of the respective peaceful resolution, following closely the negotiation of the political agreements and committing to support the implementation of the peace processes resulting from these negotiated agreements.

The need to develop a framework of action to respond to this challenge opened the way to the assimilation and subsequent application of the theoretical assumptions that had been advanced for the discipline of Peace Studies. The first moment of approach between the discipline and the UN was necessarily the *Agenda for Peace* of 1992 (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 11), whose strategies of action — *preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding* — are copied from Galtung's conceptual formularisation of the 1970s. The exhaustive concretion of these strategies throughout the 1990s and all over the world, saw the arrival of Peace Studies in the so-called *policy-oriented mainstream*. From theoretical assumptions, it was transformed into authentic social norms accepted and reproduced by the community (Santos, 1978), indicating the entry of Peace Studies into a period of "scientific normalization" — whose concern, returning to Kuhn, was necessarily to defend, magnify and deepen the paradigm, resolving the problems in accordance with the newly assimilated means of solution.

This discipline benefited, therefore, from the new world order, assuming a protagonism in the decision-making of the international system that it did not have until then. Starting with the United Nations, the hegemony of its conception was received by the scientific community, multilateral organizations, government donors, ONGs, and was appropriated by these same actors to guide public policies of promotion of peace.

These internal conflicts of the post-Cold War period were concentrated in so-called failed States of the contemporary international system (Ayoob, 1996: 67) — States whose attempt at the centralization of power inherent to the construction of a State had failed — these fundamental policies based on Peace Studies had assumed a standardization translated in the transformation from a situation of anarchy into a situation of centralised and legitimate power, with effective capacity to deal with the quandary of security and the insufficiencies

in the political, economic and social plans of the country involved. In other words, the response to put into practice by the international community was to support post-war (re)construction of the State itself (*peacebuilding*).

Being the expression of a dominant scientific model in this area, post-war reconstruction propagates one definitive methodological conception, standardized rules and technical procedures to resolve the problems that confront States lacerated by internal wars. The model is inevitably divided into four dimensions — military and security; political-constitutional; economic-social; and psycho-social — independently of the context where it is applied; what Oliver Ramsbotham (2000) calls the *standard operating procedure*.

The negative evaluation that has had the greatest impact is, clearly, the one that relates to the standardized nature of the framework of action. As a single model generically applied, it sins by not leaving great breadth to local singularities nor to the resurgence of alternative solutions that are more appropriate to the different realities. This critique of standardization is still more incisive when we recall that this model, which has pretensions to universal application, does not take on board multicultural experiences, but limits itself to reproducing its clear Western matrix in countries, in their vast majority, non-Western. This practice, reflecting a pre-conceived Western scheme, led to varied critiques, from culturally insensitive behaviour by the troops on the ground to the rejection of the so-called internationalist liberal model (Paris, 1997), based on two pillars in particular — electoral representative democracy and the market economy.

The fact that this liberal prescription emerged victorious at the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist block meant that this approach was widely promoted, and even imposed, without rival, in the four corners of the globe (Clapham, 1998: 193-194). This makes comprehensible the reduced role of local agents in determining the agenda for the reconstruction of their own country. It has been an unequivocal failure in the wide exploration of the virtues of local capacities, to the extent that the model still praises extreme centralization of decision-making in the seat of the United Nations itself and in the small elites previously linked to the conflict. It has, in fact, a chronic lack of attention to what we could call the base of the pyramid, which will correspond to the bulk of the population. The idea of peacebuilding from below is hindered by the state-centric, top-down approach, adopted by the United Nations, which neglects local resources and agents, essential in the construction of a participative democracy and a more inclusive and, necessarily, more sustainable peace.



Critical feminists (authors such as Betty Reardon and Birgit Brock-Utne) have been particularly mordacious in the denunciation of this model of peacebuilding as a space that, in reality, reproduces the relationship between dominator and dominated. When questioning the stereotypes that give rise to these practices, such as the inherent passivity of women, in war as in peace, the critical feminists contest the secondary role of the women, invisibility or practically non-existent, systematically relegated to the sphere of the informal one and the psycho-social dimension of peace-building. Their contributions have been extremely useful in rejecting the public belief that women are absent — save for honoured exceptions - in the negotiation, signing and implementation the peace accords and that this condemns them to have quite limited access to the decision-making process in post-conflict circumstances (Moura, 2005).

These critiques show the concentration of knowledge produced in the hands of the mechanisms that strengthen domination and the instruments of control. The pre-determination of an institutional framework as if it were to automatically materialize horizons of pacification had unquestionably shown the lack of openness of Peace Studies to the concretion on the ground of new *inputs* — creative, critical and constructive — from such perspectives as the theory and practice of development, critical social theory, cultural analysis and sexual identity, etc.

The experience of the 1990s seems, therefore, to represent the maximum exponent of the institutionalisation of disciplines: Peace Studies offer the hegemonic models and the dominant institutions impose them. As underlined in the collective work *Security Studies Today*, in reference to the post-WWI period, “peace fell into the domain of *high politics*, imposed on States by supranational institutions as the product of a hierarchical relation of power and consonant with an external and categorical notion of ‘good’ formulated by international actors” (Terriff *et al.*, 1999: 68).

The new circumstances meant the most ambitious concretion of investigation-action as the identity of Peace Studies, allowing that much of the theoretical production was translated into public politics of peace promotion. However, the 1990s served to test the veracity of the post-positivist formulation that this field of study had tried out and, in some ways, let fall by the way. Research for peace placed itself at the service of the freeze-dried universalisation of the institutional and political models produced by Western modernity, proving that it had not yet managed to escape this domain (Santos, 2004: 16). In this sense, with the experience of the post-Cold War period, Peace Studies had shown how much they were still lacking to fulfil the paradigmatic transition in epistemological, but, mainly, in social and political terms.

## Highways and Byways of a Return to the Critique

As an institution, Peace Studies currently seem to have lost a little of their rhetorical attraction (Patomaki, 2001: 734). The end of the Cold War, its association with the neo-liberalism linked with the models of post-war reconstruction imposed during the 1990s or the failure of the original conceptual formulation, when compared with the 1970s, can have motivated this decline of disciplines. Born as a form of critical knowledge — committed to the realization of a normative and emancipatory project — Peace Studies had shown itself, after all, easily co-opted to integration in the discursive and ideological hegemonic block.

Denaturing the project that its *founding fathers* intended as making a drastic break with the positivist-realist tradition in International Relations, Peace Studies is still not only not presented as an alternative to the viewpoint and discourse legitimating the practices of domination hidden by the dominant paradigm, but runs the risk of in fact becoming an instance of legitimisation and sophistication of this system of power. It is certainly the case that the main centres of research in this field have gone from a profile of work almost exclusively centred on theoretical development to an increasing use as platforms for rendering consulting services in the ambit of international operations “on the ground”.

The radicalism of the alternative tends to be confined to the conceptual plane, not becoming materialized in the drawing up and implementation of the policies. The risk of instrumentalisation is, therefore, great, which is facilitated to the extent that Peace Studies becomes explicitly a field for *policy-oriented* investigation-action. However, what it is in question is not the abandonment of “theoretical purity” but the loss of critical capacity in the face of the emergent systems of international domination. In these circumstances, the marriage between academic theory and community practice may become counter-productive, strengthening the structural, relational and cultural contradictions that provoke the conflict.

In a way, Peace Studies are today, in our opinion, faced with a challenge identical to that which was found in the reflection on processes of economic development since the 1980s. In the same way that it was becoming evident that the continuation of politics of development submerged in a deliberate myopia as regards the exhaustion of the physical resource base, would result in catastrophe during the stated period, it also becomes clear today that the objective of building a solid peace requires a critical distancing relative to all the sources of violence, even (and especially) when these appear under the disguise of instruments normalizing or reducing the epidemic violence. But the challenge does not end here. It

has parallels with the way the sustainability requirement was assimilated by development policy. What would have been, originally, a base for radically different policies, became, with the concept of sustainable development — or, at least, with the dominant practices associated with it — a way of saving *business as usual* by painting it light green.

The challenge of a sustainable peace cannot, in our understanding, mean less than an unequivocal distancing from institutional prescriptions, power relations and the codes of social relations that neo-liberalism carries with it. What it means, very concretely, is that to place the objective of a sustainable peace on the horizon of the processes of peacebuilding means, not only the eradication of immediate war and its sequels, but the creation of conditions to prevent military violence from being substituted, in the short or long run, by social violence increasing in intensity, translated into exponentially increasing indices of domestic violence and crime, or the reconfiguration of the relationship between political forces and the population in general in terms directly cloned from the relations that had propitiated and perpetuated the war. These are the two most perverse results of a mechanical application of the *standard operating procedure* and the centrality it confers to the union between low-intensity democracy and structural economic adjustment of neo-liberal type.

In this context, Peace Studies lacks a profound decolonisation. What was, so far, a solid conceptual elaboration from the North, has ever more to learn about the South and its singularities. The materialization of this learning will allow them to reinvent their emancipatory text and to free themselves from the social and political praxis that they have subscribed to so far (Santos, 2004: 6). To start with the proper designation of war as the structural social condition of the periphery, which necessarily compels the opening of this field of study to the formulas and experiences of peace that are rooted in the very ground of violence and conflict. The most appropriate institutional framework for the objective of sustainable peace must be supplied by the context in each case, aiming to satisfy the needs and to correspond to the most genuine local aspirations. To learn about the South means, more specifically, that public policies based in the conceptual universe of Peace Studies, supposedly in the name of post-conflict reconstruction or prevention of conflicts and management of crises, need to get more distance from the recipe-book formulated in the academies and chancelleries of the North and confer a more central place to local actors, either giving to more attention to practices rooted in local customs and in regional cultural and social contexts, or giving the capacitation of local societies the status of an absolute priority in these politics.

But this necessity for critical recentralisation of Peace Studies is currently faced with an adverse climate. In the international system after 11th September 2001, the realistic paradigm is resurgent, demanding a world vision more suitable to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The emergency of the “war against the terrorism,” as an orienting principle of the response to the new threats to world-wide security and stability, imposed a dramatic narrowing of the international agenda that Peace Studies has not succeeded in preventing or, so far, reversing.

Similarly to what happened in the ten years following the Second World War, where the realistic current dominated without rival the analysis of international relations, now also Peace Studies is taken hostage by the idea of the inevitability of conflict. The consideration of the attacks of 11th September 2001 in an isolated way and their simplistic analysis without questioning their relations with the disorder or the power relations of the current international system, silenced what should have been the contribution of this discipline. In this context, Peace Studies risk a marginalisation that places them in definitive “agenda niches” — like post-war reconstruction, environmental questions or nuclear disarmament — amputating their true emancipatory vocation.

Disarmament will remain, without doubt, a pressing question in the agenda of Peace Studies, especially in this new post-Cold War nuclear era. The risks of use of nuclear weapons that has represented, since 1945, a continuous threat to world-wide stability, remains - now in a scene of insecurity marked by horizontal proliferation and by tension between the desire of new States to join the nuclear club and their respective repression by the current possessors. However, Peace Studies are far from managing to mobilize the pacifist and antinuclear movements in numbers comparable to the last years of the Cold War, whose activism contributed so much both for the projection of the cause as for the discipline itself.

There exists yet another scene, whose concretion could be particularly penalizing for Peace Studies: the “originality” of the realistic paradigm in this, its second life, initiated since 11<sup>th</sup> September. If the resurgence in itself is configured as a *déjà vu* — in the emphasis placed on military promptitude, in the discourse on the inevitability of clashes between States or in the prosecution of the national interest —, it also involves particularities that lead to the assumptions that we customarily associate with this traditional conception of International Relations. As the war against Iraq shows, it is today about a disguised realism of missionary democracy, which appropriates the normative discourse that it was traditionally alien to it and invokes the commitment to definitive values to legitimise the war. The same people who defended “anarchy”

now take advantage of the image of “community.” Using the very bases of the critique of violence but in the service of the moral legitimisation of war, they are gradually occupying the ethical and normative field of Peace Studies.

## Conclusion

The transforming promise borne in Peace Studies was deprived of its characteristics in the standardization of policy of *peacebuilding* in the 1990s, and today is shown in the polyfacetic re-emergence of realism as a discourse allegedly more appropriate to the circumstances of the system of international relations. The political contraction of Peace Studies, which puts them in a position of instrumental utility in the management of the peripheries of the global system, carries with it a theoretical contraction. However, the genetic identity of Peace Studies is located, necessarily, in its radicalism. It is this radicalism that will stop its imprisonment in the place of normal science — science that canonizes the future in function of the past, closed to innovations.

Therefore, to be fully marked as post-positivist expression, Peace Studies now have to radicalise their critical approach, assuming the partiality and imperfection of the concepts that underlie Western modernity and opening up, consequently, to heterogeneity, plurality, the periphery and the contributions of the feminist, environmental and cultural-studies epistemologies. The decolonisation of its knowledge and the horizon of sustainable peace are announced as the necessary mediators of this return to the critical vocation. Only thus will Peace Studies be a vehicle to overcome the conceptions of power and dominion whose denunciation and deconstruction determined its birth and affirmation. Only thus will its emancipatory objective of social transformation materialize, and its conversion into a new form of social oppression be prevented.

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