

**Editorial****Claude Perrottet***Editor-in-Chief**International Journal for Peace and Public Leadership*

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The publication of this first issue of the *International Journal for Peace and Public Leadership* is an appropriate occasion to ask ourselves: why pursue peace in a world rife with division and conflicting agendas? When an immigration officer recently asked me the standard question about my occupation, I candidly responded that I was a professor of Peace Studies. The uniformed gentleman almost shouted at me: “You people are doing a terrible job!” To try to explain to him that, without people like us, things would be even worse did not feel like an appropriate response. I nodded but was left to ponder: “Is damage control my only ambition? Is that all that I can hope for?”

As a Kantian scholar, I was naturally reminded of his 1795 *Perpetual Peace* that offers helpful approaches to this question. At the very end of this short volume, Kant admits that a world of permanent peace can only be reached through endless approximation.<sup>1</sup> An ideal world of perfect peace will forever elude us because of the selfish, hence mutually exclusive, nature of our individual desires.<sup>2</sup> Very few will disagree with him on that sobering assessment. But, Kant adds that there is something we can nevertheless look forward to: arriving at a point of no return, where we have made irreversible progress toward the goal of peace. This notion of irreversible progress towards peace, however, deserves deliberative attention and introspection.

For example, the question arises as to whether any efforts made towards peace can be expected to lead, though only incrementally, to lasting change for the better. Just a few years ago, it was possible to affirm that, in spite of widespread violence around the globe, the number of wars and war casualties had been in steady decline, and that territorial conquest had come to be seen as illegitimate. As the Cold War came to a close, Francis Fukuyama and others speculated about whether our descendants would, perhaps, live in a world free of war.<sup>3</sup> And yet such speculation would quickly be invalidated as new causes and threats emerged to challenge the anticipated fulfillment of *pacem in terris*. Today, stating that “the present era marks a set of conditions further removed from lasting peace than ever before”<sup>4</sup> can seem to make more sense. This leads to another question: “Is it enough, in the spirit of Kant, to dedicate oneself to ‘perpetual peace,’ when the fruits of this peace will at best only be enjoyed by people living much later, if by anyone at all?”<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say, the optimism of the celebration of the End of the Cold War and a New World Order of the 1990s already needed qualification prior to the breakout of the recent hostilities in Europe and the Middle East. The admission that intra-state war, civil war and violence by non-state actors had largely replaced the negatives of traditional warfare reflects our reality. However, it leaves unspoken the developments outside of military violence that are a direct threat to peace: all the conditions summarized under such names as social injustice, pollution, and climate change. Even though war itself has become less prevalent (on the face of it, a nearly miraculous development), the conditions for future outbreaks of violence remain with us.

The resurgence of war leads scholars and practitioners of Peace Studies to renew their efforts towards the substantive removal of hidden causes of conflict and to speculate on the potential of transcending previously irreconcilable oppositions. This, of course, requires the parties to engage each other, something that often begins within the confines of civil society, rather than in formal political arenas.

Accordingly, *IJPPL* focuses on the role that civil society and NGOs play within the framework of global forums and local field activities. But it is equally dedicated to the discussion of geostrategic issues of war and peace. Discussing the impact of *realpolitik* on policy, including peace efforts, is a legitimate part of the context and it does not imply cynicism. It provides a necessary reality check and needs to be part of the discussion. Nancy Wei's article in this first issue of *IJPPL* presents an application of Sun Tsu's *Art of War* to the situation in Ukraine and offers a unique perspective on one of today's most consequential conflicts.

In his article, James R. Fleming, a leading expert on climate change, offers a rarely discussed historical perspective ranging over a period of more than two thousand years. At least as important is its effort to apply Johan Galtung's famous slogan, *peace by peaceful means*, to the often contentious discussion of peace-related topics, such as climate change and global warming. Civil discourse should be more than politely discrediting views one does not agree with.

Joseph DeTrani's "Why We Should Care" is a *cri du cœur* by one of the historical actors in the ultimately unsuccessful Six Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear program. Beyond providing the views of an insider, it makes a strong case for not giving up on that country – for strategic reasons, but also for humanitarian ones.

The human aspect is further central to the article by Beth Fisher-Yoshida and Joan Camilo Lopez on peace professionals' experiential learning. The article emphasizes the need to combine peace studies as an academic pursuit with field experience, because the field is where conflict concretely occurs. The authors also introduce circumstances and an ambiance that allow students of peace from various origins to forget their differences when they meet under favorable conditions – prioritizing their common human identity over divisive subcategories.

This transformation can extend to inimical relations. Long ago, Georg Simmel had already recognized that, in relationships, the only real negative is indifference. Conflict brings together different parties and, on occasion, can turn previous opponents into friends.<sup>6</sup> More recently, and perhaps over-optimistically, Lewis Coser affirmed that "hostile interaction thus often leads to subsequent friendly interaction, conflict being a means to 'test' and 'know' the previously unknown. The stranger may become familiar through one's struggle with him."<sup>7</sup>

Edmond Charley's article on the role of women as peace mediators in Africa brings together two long neglected but currently central themes: the African continent and the irreplaceable role of women in peacemaking. No single article can answer our question about the future of peace studies. But addressing something that has not been seriously and systematically tried in the past and, at the same time, has obvious potential for being a game-changing component is a promising step. One central conclusion of Edmond Charley's article is that women in Africa have shown a fortunate ability to

produce near-miracles on the grassroots level where previous efforts had been in vain, but that often they are still absent when formal peace deliberations take place.

The insightful articles that constitute this first issue of IJPPL serve to offer welcome perspectives that are not unrelated to the question posed at the outset of this editorial. Moreover, I remain confident that few among those who are seriously involved in peace work will abandon their calling due to disappointing world events. And few will even ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing. The answer comes to each of us, with undeniable immediacy, in every step taken to bring a situation – large or small – into greater conformity with that most legitimate of all aspirations: the desire to share happiness and community with others in a safe and peaceful environment.

Claude Perrottet, Editor-in-Chief

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), Yale University Press, 2006 [1795], 109.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. Raleigh, NC: Alex Catalogue, 1998 [1788], 72.

<sup>3</sup> Siniša Malešević, "Is war becoming obsolete? A sociological analysis," in *The Sociological Review*, 62:S2,. 65–86 (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Bert Olivier, "Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and the Russia-Ukraine/NATO Conflict," *Phronimon* 25 (2024): Article 14.

<sup>5</sup> Burkhard Liebsch, "War as an Anachronism and apparently unavoidable Threat," in *War and Peace*, Bernardeth Caero, Luca Ferracci, Danny Pilario, and Michelle Becka (eds.), *Concilium* 60:1 (2024), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Conflict: I," in *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (1903): 490-525.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, The Free Press, 1956, p. 122-123.