



Citation for published version:

Kivimaki, T 2016, *Paradigms of Peace: A Pragmatist Introduction to the Contribution to Peace of Paradigms of Social Science*. Imperial College Press, London, U. K. <https://doi.org/10.1142/p1080>

DOI:

[10.1142/p1080](https://doi.org/10.1142/p1080)

Publication date:

2016

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

This is the author accepted manuscript of a chapter published in final form in Kivimaki, T 2016, *Paradigms of Peace: A Pragmatist Introduction to the Contribution to Peace of Paradigms of Social Science*. Imperial College Press, London, U. K. <https://doi.org/10.1142/p1080> and available via: <https://www.worldscientific.com/worldscibooks/10.1142/p1080>

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This volume is a study and a textbook that presents five paradigms of social sciences as logical progressive steps in the field of peace and conflict studies. It is intended to facilitate learning for advanced students and scholars of peace studies and international relations by presenting the premises and the historical development of critical, pragmatic perspectives to problems of peace and war. The book contains text boxes that explain the key concepts, especially those that the literature of peace research uses with confusingly different meanings.

This book is not written in a traditional style educational material, giving shallow, neutral overviews of all and everything and without committing itself to any theoretical positions. Instead, it is written as a study that employs a meta-theory that guides the assessment of the merits of different social science approaches to peace in a novel way, suggesting completely new ways of looking at peace and the theory of peace and war. It presents strong arguments as well as various scholarly positions arguing against their alternatives. Thus, instead of just repeating the arguments of the five paradigmatic steps – positivism, anti-determinism, symbolic interactionism, social constructivism and critical theory – this book assumes a pragmatist meta-theoretical criteria for the assessment of theoretical paradigms and shows, by means of numerous real-life examples what happens to peace research and peace and conflicts when each of these steps are taken, and what could happen if the wisdom of these paradigmatic approaches is not accepted.

The meta-theoretical pragmatism of the book is appealing as it takes its rationale from real life rather than emerging from inside an existing or newly invented “-ism”. In this way the book avoids the tautology of first presenting a philosophical meta-theory with criteria for theories and then showing the merits of the meta-theory by using its own criteria.

As a pragmatist analysis of approaches to peace and conflict research this book poses the pertinent question “What should we know and consider as real in order to end wars?” and follows

that question into the depths of philosophy of social sciences and theories of peace and conflict. Yet true to the ideals of pragmatism the theories presented in this book are kept in touch with praxis by presenting a variety of examples in which the theory materializes in conflict situations. If a theory cannot be related to real-life examples, it does not relate to real life itself and thus it is useless. And usefulness for the real-life problem of conflicts and violence is what this book is all about. Instead of considering relevance as *one* of the objectives of peace research, this research program serves praxis and nothing else.

Pragmatism in this book takes off from the idea of classical pragmatists, Peirce, James and Dewey. However, the book updates the pragmatist meta-theoretical program by offering a constructivist twist to classical pragmatism. Knowledge, theories, concepts and paradigms will not only be assessed for their instrumental value for peace action. Instead, ideas are also assessed for the peacefulness of the realities they themselves constitute. The pragmatic meta-theory that will be used for the assessment of ideas, theories and paradigms will be built in Chapter 2. After that the book walks the reader through some of the main developments and paradigmatic changes in social sciences in the past fifty years. All through the process theories and paradigms will be assessed for their value for peace and peace research. The assessment of paradigms will start from positivist peace research, which from the pragmatist perspective offers a way for “peace engineering”, i.e. fixing conflict relations much the same way as engineers fix bridges. From there the journey continues, through many revolutionary innovations to approaches that are available for peace research, but rarely used. These intellectual starting point and the newer innovations treated in this book are:

1. *Positivism: Social engineering of peace.* The book takes a standard positivistic peace research as the point of departure for its analysis, and develops positivistic peace and conflict research from the point of view of pragmatism. While later showing many of the problems of this approach, this section of the book will also acknowledge the merits of the traditionalist approaches to peace research.

2. *Anti-determinism: Inventing the social science of peace.* As the next step the book complements the empiricist classical pragmatist ideas, common for much of mainstream peace research, with the idea of alternative futures that people have for themselves as individuals, groups and as human beings. In addition to what we can empirically observe there is the reality of possibilities that never materialized, but which are nevertheless real as a possibility (Kurki, 2008; Patomäki & Wight, 2000). While some of these possibilities are based on coincidences, some are due to the opportunities for purposive actors to choose between alternative futures. The discovery of a purposive subject, the free will, has implications for peace research and pragmatist modeling of conflict and peace that classical pragmatists could not imagine. Following the implications of possible futures available for purposive actors as opportunities fundamentally changes the way in which science is made by separating social sciences from natural sciences: people decide to go to war, while water cannot decide to boil, it just reacts to conditions that make it boil. The book follows phenomenism, hermeneutics and various post-positivist approaches by suggesting that deterministic treatment of conditions around human beings shrinks the “human” side of people (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1962; Arend 1970) and deprives us of our freedom if we think that our choices are nothing but reactions either to our instincts or to our environment (Fromm, 1973).

3. *Interpretationism: The discovery of the value of perceptions and interpretations.* The discovery of the meanings that actors involved in conflict give to their environment, the actions of their enemies or their own actions further separates natural sciences from social sciences: water does not have a reason behind its boiling, while for a fighter an act of violence can be revenge, the enforcement of law, a fight against terrorism or any number of things that a scholar of conflicts has to be able to reconstruct in order to understand the actions of the fighter. Meanings and interpretations also broaden our understanding of the reality as in addition to empirically observed opportunities and potentials also the world of meanings is real. In order to advise peace actors on how conflict situations can be transformed, how conflicts can be resolved and how violence can be managed, peace researchers need to problematize and interpret the meanings that people give to different policies and elements of their environment. It is important to understand how

conflicting parties tick, but also to know how conflict situations can be reinterpreted (critical meaning-giving) and framed in a way that is more conducive for peace (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1995).

4. *Social constructivism: From transformation by innovative peace action to transformation by ideas.* Interpretationism easily leads to the discovery of “institutional facts” (Searle, 1976) and social constructs that exist as interpretations, conventions and mindsets of conflicting parties and societies. Collective agents in conflict, including nations or races or political groups exist only in the imagination of the fighters while their actions, such as revenge, religious war, appeasement, pre-negotiation and mediation exist as action categories only because people have a common understanding of their meaning, and sometimes because they have a name in the dictionary (Dessler, 1999; Hopf, 1998; Wendt, 1998). The fact that these meanings actually create or constitute social realities, further distances neo-pragmatic, post-positivist peace research from the empiricism that classical pragmatists saw as the common scientific approach both for social and natural sciences (James, 1977).

5. *Critical perspectives: The denaturalization of violent constructions:* The fact that conflicting parties, just like classical pragmatists, failed to realize the social origin of many of the constituting elements of war and peace often leads to situations where people are unable to change social structures. The relevance of ethnic origin as an identifier in conflict, the fact that offenses need to be avenged, and the fact that national interest is the foundation of a state’s foreign policy is often taken as a natural given, while in reality, in order to resolve conflicts, one needs to be careful with “realities” and “natural” phenomena in wars. From the point of view of pragmatist knowledge production the idea of constructivism automatically leads to the need to reveal naturalized constructs so that it would be possible for a peace researcher to see all the opportunities for the deconstruction of knowledge that is harmful for peace or unfair and violent for part of the population. It is, therefore, the task of neo-pragmatist peace research to reveal and denaturalize harmful social constructs, which as “false consciousness” legitimize direct and structural violence (Booth, 1991a; Krause & Williams, 1997; Marx, 1990).

In addition to assessing different ways of doing peace research and indicating the progress peace research could follow, this book also applies the progress of paradigms it explicates in an analysis of the current mega-trends in the development of peace and order in the world. By reviewing the long history of violence available in the analyses by Anthony Giddens, Norbert Elias, Charles Tilly, Mohammed Ayoob, Mary Kaldor, Steven Pinker and Frances Fukuyama the book reveals the long-term mega-trend the world is facing with its transformation from a national state-based order into an order beyond such a basis (Ayoob, 1991; Elias, 1939, 1982; Fukuyama, 2000, 2011; Kaldor, 1999; Pinker, 2011; Tilly, 1990, 1993). While revealing the opportunities involved in the emergence of a cosmopolitan solidarity towards all civilians regardless of their nationality and the expansion of security communities, the book will also show that this transition from national to cosmopolitan order has two challenges that cause the rise of what could be called International Protection Wars that result in more than half of all conflict-related fatalities in the world.

The first of the two challenges to the cosmopolitan agenda is the asymmetry between cosmopolitan loyalties and nationalist agency in the protection of global civilians: the willingness to protect globally, but the unwillingness to allow global participation in the production of global security. The second is the asynchrony of the global south and the global north in the preparedness for cosmopolitanism in security affairs. Asymmetry and asynchrony will be the main challenges to peace research and peace activism in the forthcoming decades if not centuries.

Paradigms in this book mean approaches to research, or research programs that like theories have some views about reality (ontology), but unlike theories, these views about reality have important implications concerning what we can know and what we should study (epistemology), as well as how this knowledge relates to reality and how it can be used for our projects (praxeology). The positivist paradigm, for example, has a view of reality according to which even social reality is ultimately materially constituted, and thus it is possible for a scholar to know social realities just as she knows realities of natural sciences (epistemology), and thus she can also manipulate social realities as an engineer manipulates physical reality (praxeology).

Most theories can be placed into paradigms on the basis of what they claim of reality, what kind of knowledge they seek and sometimes implicitly how this knowledge is to be used. Pragmatism in this study is called a *philosophy* or a *meta-theory*, which is an approach to the assessment of theories or paradigms. Instead of claiming something about reality, this meta-theory contains value judgments that will be presented and argued for in Chapter 2. These value judgments are then used to assess how valuable the different paradigms and the theories presented with the paradigms are.