
CONFLICTS IN THE XXI CENTURY

Interview with Professor JOHAN GALTUNG

Johan Galtung, professor of Peace Studies, was born in 1930 in Oslo, Norway. He is a mathematician, sociologist, political scientist and the founder of the discipline of Peace Studies. He founded the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO, 1959), the world's first academic research center focused on Peace Studies, as well as the influential *Journal of Peace Research* (1964). He has helped to found dozens of other peace centers around the world. He is currently the president of the Galtung-Institute for Peace Theory & Peace Practice.



He has mediated in over 150 conflicts between states, nations, religions, civilizations, communities, and persons since 1957. His contributions to peace theory and practice include conceptualization of peace-building, conflict mediation, reconciliation, nonviolence, theory of structural violence, theorizing about negative vs. positive peace, peace education and peace journalism.

In his interview, he speaks about today's conflicts, the sources of cultural violence and the golden rule of mediation. He also touches the problem of regional security in Europe and Asia, development of Peace Studies and the greatest challenges facing the world today.

Key words: Peace Studies, conflicts, mediation, regional security, US Empire, global challenges.

— **Conflicts are an integral part of the modern international system. Why the aggression and violence are so actively manifested and reproduced in our society? What are the specific characteristics of today's conflicts? In what way and why conflicts have been changed over the past decades?**

— Conflict, meaning incompatible goals, is an integral part of all levels of human organization — from individuals to regions. The closer we come to each other, like now, the more incompatibilities appear. We may change the goals or make them compatible in a new reality. Or, else: get frustration and aggression, violence. Or else, get apathy, giving up, resigning. Conflicts matter, and deeply!

— **Distinguished professor Galtung, you have greatly contributed to the development of the sociology of IR and conflict resolution. You have a huge personal experience in mediation of extremely complicated international conflicts. You have got an international experience, working in many IOs, including the UN. You managed to found SIPRI, the *Journal of Peace Research* and, finally, *Transcend*. What are**

the proper conditions for a good conflict resolution and stability in international relations? What is your personal golden rule in conflict prevention and mediation?

— Golden rules: talk with all the parties to understand what they want, test what they want against law/human rights/basic needs for legitimacy, try to bridge legitimate goals or to change illegitimate goals. Do all that through dialogue, questioning, searching!

— In your papers you stress the existence of economic and social inequalities, “asymmetrical interdependence”, when more developed world centers suppress and exploit the periphery. This process is characterized by the so-called cultural violence. What is the role it plays in the emergence and development of current conflicts?

— Nowadays the cultural violence comes basically from the “science” of economics, accepting inequality as compensation for taking risks. Economics has to be revised from the very basis, bringing into it the supremacy of nature and humans, with their needs, but not the supremacy of capital and growth.

— You have worked in many countries, being engaged in research projects and teaching activities, including India. You are familiar with the philosophy of Gandhi. What impact has philosophy of Gandhi's non-violence had on you and on your theory of peaceful conflict transformation?

— Above all Gandhi's concrete action as opposed to general values, his achievements as opposed to goals only, his optimism as opposed to resignation.

— Conflict solution as a science has got a huge development mostly in the West — the United States and Scandinavian countries. What schools of conflict solution you might identify as the most contributing? What are their priorities in terms of research areas? Who has made, in your opinion, the greatest success? Are there any new prospective national schools of conflict resolution?

— Not conflict solution, but Peace Studies are found in the places you name. Conflict solution is built into Chinese civilization, itself as eclectic combination of daoism, confucianism and buddhism. In the West being Right, having Right, is more important than acceptable (to all) and sustainable solutions.

— A great success was the French initiative to invite post-Nazi Germany to join the “European family”, and then starting it in 1950.

— XXth century is a bright period of the emergence and flourishing of Western schools of international relations theory, which finally had a tremendous influence on other theoretical traditions. Will we witness in the XXIst century the rapid development of non-Western IR theories that are still underway? Or do you share the opinion that globalization contributed to the erosion of national specificities of scientific schools and they have lost the “binding” to the national borders?

— I do not see it that way. First of all, the name is wrong; they are not inter-nation but inter-state, the nation being cultural, the state territorial. Second, their inter-state theory is very static, based on laws of the past. Third, it is hierarchic, vertical, very weak on equitable relations. Fourth, the USA are over-accepted by others which see its hegemonic belligerence as “normal”. All that has to go in favor of better theories. My book *A Theory of Peace* [Galtung 2012] is an effort.

We do not have globalization, except as the US effort to dominate the world economy, but we do have several regionalizations with the effects you mention.

— **It is well known that “in its own country — there is no prophet”. But this statement is obviously not about you. In 1980 you predicted that the end of the Soviet empire would come ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall, highlighting its 6 destructive contradictions. In 2009, you made your second bold prediction, announcing the collapse of the American empire by 2020, based on 15 interrelated contradictions. Today's world and international system are evolving and transforming under the conditions of chaos and uncertainty. Until a landmark date are still 4 years to pass. Perhaps you have some adjustments to add to your forecast and to the list of current contradictions of the American empire?**

— I think the US empire, in the sense of making elites in peripheral countries, killing and ruling for them, is rapidly disappearing, much before 2020. The USA increasingly has to kill alone, like Obama does, with drones and SEALs. They will wake up one day, leading politicians like Cruz and Trump already question the belligerence, Hillary Clinton not — she may become a disaster for the world.

— **In recent years, unfortunately, we have been witnessing a certain degree of deterioration of relations between Russia and the West, which evidently has a negative impact on the international climate. In addition, these tensions prevent or, at least, do not contribute to the conflict resolution in “hot spots”, such as the Middle East. What is the practical way out of this situation?**

— An old Western tradition from the split of the Roman empire in 395 in Catholic and Orthodox, confirmed in 1054, with West spreading its Christianity, attacking, or provoking eastward like the Templars, Napoleon and Hitler, like WWI and WWII, like in the Cold War. A smart Ukrainian federation between the two parts, cooperating, would help. So would recognizing Palestine, with a two-states solution inside a six states community of Israel with its five Arab neighbors inside a 20 states Organization for Security and Cooperation in West Asia. Syria is very complex, but a loose federation with protection of minorities might help.

— **I would like to know your personal opinion — what would be the XXIst century? What are the great challenges facing the world today? What is your personal most challenging concern about today's world?**

— Most serious: economically rampant capitalism with built-in inequality and suffering at the bottom, militarily NATO vs SCO; politically 2000 nations inside 200 stated wanting equality with the dominant nations, culturally West vs Islam, socially the many fault-lines, with nature, gender, generation, race, class, nation, territory. For me right now the priority is: East Asia: USA-Japan against Russia, the two Chinas, the two Koreas, proposing solutions for contested islands, a Northeast Asia Community, Association of Northeast Asian Nations.

Interviewed by Elena SAVICHEVA

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КОНФЛИКТЫ В XXI ВЕКЕ

Интервью с профессором ЙОХАНОМ ГАЛТУНГОМ

Йохан Галтунг, профессор исследований по проблемам мира, родился в 1930 г. в Осло, Норвегия. Он математик, социолог, политолог и основатель дисциплины исследований по проблемам мира. Он основал Международный институт исследований проблем мира, Осло (PRIO, 1959), первый в мире академический научно-исследовательский центр, ориентированный на изучение конфликтов, а также влиятельный Журнал исследований мира (*Journal of Peace Research*, 1964). Он помог основать десятки других аналогичных центров по всему миру. В настоящее время он президент Галтунг-института по теории и практике мира.

С 1957 г. он выступал посредником в более чем 150 конфликтах между государствами, нациями, религиями, цивилизациями, сообществами, а также лицами. Его вклад в теорию и практику мира включает в себя концептуализацию миростроительства, урегулирования конфликтов, примирения, отказа от насилия, теории структурного насилия, концептуализации негативного и позитивного мира, образования и журналистики в области исследования мира.

В своем интервью он говорит о современных конфликтах, источниках культурного насилия и золотом правиле медиации. Он также затрагивает проблемы региональной безопасности в Европе и Азии, развития исследований по вопросам мира и самые большие вызовы, стоящие сегодня перед миром.

Ключевые слова: исследования мира, конфликты, посредничество, региональная безопасность, США, глобальные вызовы.

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