

# Positive and Negative Peace

By Benjamin Jakubowski

'Peace' is often overused, regarded as a mere buzzword, worn hollow of meaning. Some claim it is unattainable. The truth is that peace is a complex topic, much like justice or equity. To help make sense of the complexity, Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) offers diverse insights that can be helpful to anyone interested in creating a more peaceful world.

While 'peace' is commonly understood as a static state of being, PCS scholars and practitioners propose that peace is an on-going process that includes taking action to prevent future conflict or violence. The dual concepts of Positive and Negative Peace are useful for understanding peace as a process. The idea of **Positive and Negative Peace** is foundational to modern peace theory and practice.

## Definitions:

**Negative Peace** is a state in which there is an absence of violence and war; a state that can be achieved by violent means and still have unrest. **Positive Peace** is the absence (or reduction) of violence and war *and* the presence of "positive components" that enable and sustain peaceful growth and peaceful change.

Johan Galtung coined the terms. He identified "positive components" as the presence of equity and harmony, including the presence of restorative relationships, social systems that serve the needs of society, and the elimination of structural violence. Galtung called Positive Peace the "integration of human society," because it embraces harmonious social existence. Positive peace is peace by peaceful means; it also serves to prevent future violence. As more scholars have engaged with this concept, Positive Peace has grown to include environmental/ ecological justice perspectives.

## Examples of Positive and Negative Peace:

**Negative Peace** might be a ceasefire agreement during a war, or the presence of an armed force to dissuade violence in a situation.

**Positive Peace** might be education of the masses on human rights, disarmament efforts, or the presence of programs that offer informal conflict resolution between community members (all, of course, coexisting with an absence of violence and war).

## Significance:

The terms Positive and Negative Peace first appeared in the founding edition of the [Journal of Peace Research](#) in 1964, in an editorial by Johan Galtung. Several years before, Johan Galtung had proposed several new concepts that expanded the definition of peace and violence, and with this editorial, he continued to expand on how peace was and is understood. Since then, Johan Galtung's ideas have been integrated into the foundations of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS), and he is credited as being the "principal founder" of the field.

Further, these concepts are important, because they remind people that there is more than one kind of peace, and that peace can be more than merely an absence of violence.

Lasting peace is a process, not just an enforced state that stops physical (direct) violence. This is an important lesson for any criminal justice system or those interested in human security to take to heart.

### **Resources:**

Original Appearance of the Terms:

Galtung, Johan. 1964. An Editorial. *Journal of Peace Research*  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002234336400100101>

For further reading: [https://www.activeforpeace.org/no/fred/Positive\\_Negative\\_Peace.pdf](https://www.activeforpeace.org/no/fred/Positive_Negative_Peace.pdf)

### **Websites:**

Teachers without Borders:

[http://twbonline.pbworks.com/w/page/33969215/Negative%20Positive%20Peace#:~:text=Positive%20peace%20is%20the%20presence,%E2%80%9D%20\(Galtung%2C%201964\).](http://twbonline.pbworks.com/w/page/33969215/Negative%20Positive%20Peace#:~:text=Positive%20peace%20is%20the%20presence,%E2%80%9D%20(Galtung%2C%201964).)

Irenees.net:

[http://www.irenees.net/bdf\\_fiche-notions-186\\_en.html#:~:text=Negative%20peace%20refers%20to%20the%20absence%20of%20violence.&text=Positive%20peace%20is%20filled%20with,totl%20absence%20of%20any%20conflict.](http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-notions-186_en.html#:~:text=Negative%20peace%20refers%20to%20the%20absence%20of%20violence.&text=Positive%20peace%20is%20filled%20with,totl%20absence%20of%20any%20conflict.)

### **Academic Resource:**

Violence, Peace, and Peace Research:

[http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015\\_7/Galtung\\_Violence,%20Peace,%20and%20Peace%20Research.pdf](http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015_7/Galtung_Violence,%20Peace,%20and%20Peace%20Research.pdf)

### **Books:**

Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research by Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer -  
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-642-32481-9#about>

### **Videos:**

Johan Galtung defines Positive Peace:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyFn\\_hSF3wQ&ab\\_channel=EnvisionPeaceMuseum](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyFn_hSF3wQ&ab_channel=EnvisionPeaceMuseum)

Teaching Video on Johan Galtung Concepts:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpw6ypVg0qE&ab\\_channel=Korczyk%27sClass](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpw6ypVg0qE&ab_channel=Korczyk%27sClass)

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