

# Towards a Science of Peace

Prof. Christopher Mitchell

November 21st, 2018

Imperial Palace Innsbruck, Rennweg 1/3, 6020 Innsbruck

The talk will begin by discussing the idea of a number of academics, Theo Lentz, Kenneth Boulding, Norman Alcock - in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, that the academic study of peace and conflict - and even a "science of peace" - was possible, desirable and even useful. It will talk about two possible objections to the idea of a peace science and conflict research - ideas about "human nature" and about the impossibility of any objective study of peace. It will suggest a few basic criteria for any study being "scientific" - asking answerable questions, seeking to generalize through careful comparisons, and trying to measure key phenomena. It will conclude with some examples of useful findings clustered around the question of conflict perpetuation - what keeps a conflict going and what might be done to stop or reverse it.



**Christopher Mitchell** was born and educated in London. He has held academic positions at University College, London, the London School of Economics, and the University of Southampton. He is currently Emeritus Professor of Conflict Research at George Mason University. He continues to work on practical and theoretical aspects of peace-making processes and has recently published articles on the theory of entrapment, on ending asymmetric conflicts and on a multi-role model of mediation. He has co-edited three books about grassroots peacebuilding with Landon Hancock, the latest of which, *Legitimacy and Local Peacebuilding* [Routledge] was published in Spring 2018. His retrospective text book, *The Nature of Intractable Conflict*, was published by Palgrave in December 2014.

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