

Introduction

Both Europe and the US have a long history of immigration and emigration. The movement of people has been part of human existence since the earliest times. While migration has sometimes been a traumatic experience for those experiencing it, it has brought many benefits to migrants and the countries they have travelled to, as well as, often, the places they have come from. The violence that many who move from one place to another continue to experience is not inevitable. The trauma it causes is in no-one's interest, neither the migrants themselves nor the communities they interact with on their journey and when they reach their destination. Safe ways to migrate, policies and practices that address violence and promote peace are beneficial to all.

Though the politicisation of migration has always been significant, it is currently increasing to alarming levels. From the UK to Hungary, Poland and Austria, opposition to welcoming migrants has become an important part of the national and international agenda of political parties otherwise considered mainstream. This tendency is also visible in countries such as Germany and Sweden that used to be considered migrant-friendly. In 2022 the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats party gained more than 20% of the votes in the national elections¹. In the 2025 EU elections, the anti-immigration party Alternative for Germany gained 20.8% of the vote². At the same time, misinformation about the identity of the perpetrator of the fatal stabbing of three young children led to violent riots across England and Northern Ireland fuelled by far-right and anti-immigration sentiments³.

This has led to a focus on curbing migration by strengthening external borders. States have also cracked down on so-called illegal immigration through measures such as allowing violent pushbacks on borders, and threatening the deportation of migrants who use irregular routes to enter their countries to third countries. Similarly in the US, limiting immigration by strengthening security on the border with Mexico and returning illegal migrants has become an important issue in political debates⁴.

The hardened stance against migration has also resulted in a reduction of regular pathways into Europe. Despite the United Nations Refugee Convention (1951) requiring states to provide legal protection, rights and assistance to all refugees, European countries have only set up protection schemes covering people from particular countries, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. This has excluded people in similar circumstances from many other countries, leaving them to attempt entering Europe through irregular and dangerous routes upon which many encounter violence, exploitation and death. Moreover, many women and girls have been victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

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The internationally recognised definition of a refugee is also narrow. For example, it does not consider the negative impact of climate change on people's living conditions, leaving those affected without the right to international protection. The international protection of migrants is even worse, partly because a shared definition of the terms “migrant” and “international migrant” is yet to be adopted under international law. This leaves only certain subcategories, such as migrant workers and trafficked migrants, with some rights under international law. These categories and the protections and rights ascribed to them often obscure the complexity of migration. They do not adequately consider the often-multiple reasons why people decide to migrate and their changing circumstances before they reach their destination country. These limitations have left some politicians, and many migration and integration practitioners and human rights activists, calling for an overhaul of the current international migration system. Millions of people have also taken to the streets to protest to demand a more welcoming approach to migration.

Definitions used in this Handbook

(All adopted from International Organisation of Migration 2019)⁵.

- **A refugee** is: a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”
- **An asylum-seeker** is: “an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it.”
- **Internally displaced persons** (also known as “IDPs”) are: “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.”
- **A migrant** is: “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.”
- **A country of origin** is: “a country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.”
- **A country of transit** is: “a country through which a person or a group of persons pass on any journey to the country of destination or from the country of destination to the country of origin or the country of habitual residence.”
- **A country of destination** is: “a country that is the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.”

The Aims and Intended Audiences of this Handbook

This handbook demonstrates that the current international approaches to migration can be significantly improved by incorporating aspects of positive peacebuilding into practice and policy. It will explore how a new approach, informed by the groundbreaking work of the peacebuilders Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, Leymah Gbowee and Heidi Hudson, can offer innovative and more humane responses to the different stages and contexts of international migration. It aims to articulate what such an approach could look like in practice. It will highlight the benefits for all people affected by migration, including people considering migration, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and returning migrants as well as all the people in the communities migrants come from, transit through, settle in or return to. More importantly, it equips key stakeholders, such as migrants, national and international politicians involved in policymaking and civil society actors involved in migration-related practice and advocacy, with ideas and knowledge to play active roles in the implementation of positive peace-informed approaches to each stage of migration.

All the suggested practices in the book are currently being used somewhere in the world. The handbook identifies these many promising practices and shows how they can fully embody the positive peace approach. It also provides examples of limitations and challenges that might be encountered when seeking wider application. It is anticipated that, using this information, all participants in migration related policymaking processes, projects and practices will be better equipped to make informed decisions about how a positive peace approach to migration can influence their work. This will help ensure that future migration related processes, practices and projects have a positive impact not only on migrants but also on people in the communities they interact with.



The Quaker Council for European Affairs' previous publication **Building Peace Together** is an important companion to this handbook as it provides many nonviolent tools for addressing conflict.

Positive Peace Approaches

In the following section, the ideas of the four peacebuilders – Galtung, Lederach, Gbowee and Hudson – are explained. These will be referred to throughout the handbook and therefore it is recommended that, whichever aspect of migration you are interested or involved in, you read this section. This will enable you to better understand what is being proposed.

The key texts in which they introduce and expand on these ideas can be found in Appendix Two.

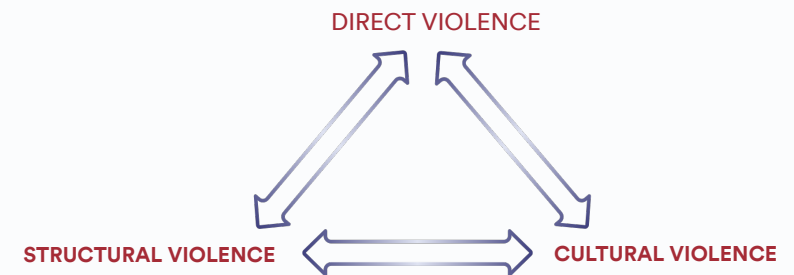
Johan Galtung's Key Ideas

Johan Galtung was an international mediator who became known as the father of peace studies. He established The International Institute of Peace Studies in Oslo in 1959 and he was a prolific writer of many books and articles. Much of his work focused on developing his ideas about direct, structural and cultural violence as well as negative and positive peace concepts that are all still central in current peacebuilding research, practices and processes.

According to Galtung (1964), direct violence is visible and either physical or psychological in nature. Examples include murder, torture, assault, verbal abuse, humiliation and bullying. In contrast, structural violence is invisible since it is embedded in social systems and structures in ways that disadvantage certain people and prevent them from fulfilling their basic needs. Examples include unequal access to resources such as food, education, healthcare, employment and political power. Cultural violence is also invisible since it consists of norms, values, ideologies and beliefs that are used to justify and legitimise direct and structural violence. Examples include biases, prejudices and stereotypes based on ethnicity, religion, race or gender. Galtung (1990) emphasised that the three types of violence are interlinked. For example, cultural violence can increase structural violence that can then lead to direct violence.

Galtung originally defined negative peace as the absence of war and human violence (1964) but later refined it to mean the absence of direct organised and collective violence between large groups of people (1967). Likewise, Galtung originally defined positive peace as the absence of direct and structural violence (1964) but later added the absence of cultural violence, which can be used to justify direct and structural violence, to his understanding of positive peace (1990).

Figure 1: Johan Galtung's Triangle of Violence





John Paul Lederach's Key Ideas

John Paul Lederach, Professor Emeritus of International Peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, is a renowned peace practitioner and scholar known for his work on local and culturally sensitive peacebuilding. Based on his work with non-governmental organisations in local communities experiencing cycles of violence in Asia, Africa and Latin America, he developed strategic, inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to local peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Lederach (1997) has drawn attention to the importance of actions being locally-led. He has argued that local people have vital and unique knowledge, skills and visions and hence all actions should not only include, but also be led by, people affected by the issues. Their unique knowledge should be used to ensure that all actions are sensitive to their particular context.

Secondly, his approaches highlight the centrality of human relationships in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. According to Lederach (2014), relationships form a web of connections that constitute the broader context that affects the ways arising issues are addressed, and thus impact whether they are promptly resolved, ignored or even become explosive. Therefore, it is important to focus on interpersonal and intercommunity relationships.

Thirdly, Lederach (2007) has emphasised the importance of reflective practice in positive peacebuilding work. This involves reflecting on how and why certain things work, using lessons learnt to inform practice, and critically questioning the underlying assumptions of policies and practices.



Heidi Hudson's Key Ideas

Heidi Hudson was Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa until 2017 and the co-editor of the International Feminist Journal of Politics. Using a post-colonial lens, she focuses on gender and peacebuilding to critically examine power structures and identities in peace processes.

Hudson (2009; 2012), like Lederach, emphasises the importance of agency in peacebuilding. However, she has developed a more complex understanding of agency, exploring how it is impacted by intersectional identity constructions based on characteristics such as gender, class and race. These personal characteristics determine the agent's positionality, i.e. how they understand the world and how that influences their actions, and thereby also their power in particular contexts. A person's personal characteristics impact the roles they can play and the power they have in different processes and projects, significantly disadvantaging some while favouring others. She has also drawn attention to the importance of focusing on the everyday gendered and racialised experiences of individuals to better understand structural inequalities (Hudson, 2021).

Secondly, Hudson (2016) has argued that current peacebuilding analysis and practice are situated in an entangled global coloniality. This global coloniality is hetero-normative, patriarchal, racialised and centred on the perspectives of the Christian and Western parts of the world. Hence, it favours and normalises Western knowledge, concepts, being and power. Using a postcolonial lens means challenging this domination and developing decolonial policies, practices, projects and processes instead.



Leymah Gbowee's Key Ideas

Leymah Gbowee is a Liberian peace activist, social worker and advocate for women's rights. In the early 2000s, she led a movement named the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace that brought Christian and Muslim women together in public protests against the continuation of the civil war in Liberia. These protests played an important role in the initiation of negotiations that led to the signing of the peace agreement that ended the war. Since then, she has played a pivotal role in the development of many women's organisations and networks. She is also the founder and president of the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa, which delivers educational and leadership knowledge and skills for girls, youth and women, and is moreover a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Leymah Gbowee has highlighted the importance of recognising the devastating impact different kinds of violence have on women and girls. She has also emphasised the importance of seeing women and girls not just as victims but also as active and effective participants in ensuring security and peace.

Secondly, she advocates for the importance of using nonviolent means to bring about change.

Thirdly, she has emphasised the importance of faith in peacebuilding. According to her, faith can inspire people to participate in peacebuilding, and faith-based values, such as compassion, can inform peacebuilding practices. She has also emphasised the importance of building relationships within and across faiths to strengthen collective peace efforts.

The Structure of this Handbook

This handbook is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One sets out the current context of migration, and Chapter Two challenges the current dominant approaches to migration, identifying seven problematic and harmful practices. Chapter Three introduces a new approach to international migration informed by the work of Galtung, Lederach, Hudson and Gbowee. It outlines ten key practices that policymakers, practitioners, migrants and those who interact with migrants could follow to implement a positive peace approach and end all kinds of violence that force people to migrate and are inflicted on migrants and others in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Chapters Four to Eight focus on the different contexts of migration, including before, during and after violent conflict in the country of origin, in countries of transit, and in countries of destination. Each chapter identifies promising practices that address the different kinds of violence in that specific context and discusses why they work and what the limitations are. They also outline what needs to be considered when implementing such approaches, based on the insights of the four peacebuilders. This selection is by no means exhaustive, nor does it cover every possible field of action. However, the practices illustrate the transformative potential of peace approaches and offer practical examples that actors can learn from and use to make their own contribution to peaceful migration.

We hope this handbook can bring to light a peaceful way forward for all people involved in migration processes across the world.