

# INTERNATIONALE SICHERHEIT

Herausgegeben von Heinz Gärtner

## Mediating Security

Comprehensive Approaches to an Ambiguous Subject

Festschrift for Otmar Höll

Edited by Alexander Klimburg and Jan Pospisil

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# Otmar Höll

*Heinz Gärtner*

The name Otmar Höll has been linked to the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) since its foundation. The institute's first academic activity was based on a project that Otmar Höll and Helmut Kramer transferred from the Institute for Advanced Studies to the oiip in 1978. The project was about "Austria in the International System". Including scholars from Latin America (who happened to be Chilean emigrants), the project group at the oiip developed in an academically innovative way. On the one hand, it applied the rather new small states theory to Austria; on the other hand, it used the concept of dependence which was derived from the dependency theory. The topic of the project was an early recognition that the process of interdependence and the emergence of globalization had an influence on every single part of the world. The outcome of the study was evidence that the degree to which globalization impacts on an economy and on a society depends on the policy of each single state.

The project combined Otmar Höll's interests with his skills, which comprise development policy and theory, Austrian foreign policy and the analysis of small states' behaviour. This combination also reflected the new approach of the project. Linking small states research to dependency was unexpected for the international academic audience. Even the founder of the oiip, chancellor Bruno Kreisky, was critical about the term "small states" and adapted it to "smaller states" to express that there can be some greatness in small states' foreign policy. This new academic approach opened up a further debate on how dependence has an impact on the internal structures of small states. Together with some other project members, Otmar Höll published several articles on the internal social division of societies through external pressure. The book "Small States and Dependence" that Otmar Höll edited in 1983 is one of the most quoted sources of all small states literature.

It was Bruno Kreisky who gave the oiip the platform for research on global topics, however. It also was his initiative to establish a programme on the Middle East, which has been excellently implemented by John Bunzl. This research area has been gradually broadened from the Israel-Palestine conflict to the Gulf region and comparative studies on North Africa and Islam.

Otmar was fascinated by new developments in the Africa. For example, he had hoped that the social experiment of Tanzania's president, Julius Nyerere,

“*ujamaa*” in the early 1980s would succeed. It was a policy of self-reliance that was intended to overcome the colonial structures peacefully. Otmar went to Tanzania to study this social model.

Influenced by the Brandt and the Brundtland Reports, Otmar Höll included environmental policy in his research. As an external researcher, he edited Austria’s report on the Earth Summit in Rio 1992. Here, he learned also about the limits of academic influence on policy processes. The report that was eventually presented did not meet Otmar’s expectations, although many of Otmar Höll’s ideas on environmental issues and sustainable development emerged in subsequent summits. Nevertheless, Otmar remained optimistic despite the turbulent political reality.

However, Otmar was always looking for new ground where he saw a potential for political progress. He found it in the Helsinki Process. The “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe” (CSCE), founded in 1975, was designed to develop structures of cooperation in the fields of security, human rights and economy beyond the ideological East-West divide. The first director of the oiip, the Swede Karl Birnbaum, strongly supported the CSCE concept. This idea had a strong and lasting impact on Otmar Höll’s thinking. One can say that ever since this period, Otmar has tried to find possibilities for cooperative behaviour in international and domestic politics. Hence, Otmar has always remained optimistic about conflict resolution. This was not only true for the East-West conflict, but also for the North-South divide. He applied the multilateral-cooperative approach to regional conflicts in the Middle East and East Asia. Consequently, Otmar Höll became a preferred advisor, consultant and speaking partner for almost all parties of conflicts. From Otmar Höll’s perspective, obstacles were always smaller than opportunities. In the 1990s, Otmar Höll saw in the European Union a new project of cooperation and integration which, in his view, did not progress quickly enough. Otmar tried hard to incorporate the oiip into European research networks such as the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA). He shared this view with Paul Luif, a dedicated researcher at the oiip in this field.

Otmar was enthusiastic about the concept of comprehensive security that had been developed by the Copenhagen School in the late 1980s and he made this a main topic of the oiip’s research programme. The oiip itself published a thousand-page report on “Comprehensive Security” in the late 1990s. The idea was picked up by various security institutions in Europe such as the OSCE, the EU and NATO as a “comprehensive approach” about 15 years after its academic birth. It was not implemented the way many, including Otmar Höll, had hoped for, however. Cooperation between institutions and even ministries in one single country (including Austria) was cumbersome and not sufficient. Otmar Höll saw

the oiip also as a facilitator for cooperation and as a place for mediation. One of the first attempts of the oiip to provide a meeting place for researchers of East-Central Europe was the 1998 “NATO-Manfred Wörner Fellowship” on NATO-enlargement.

Otmar Höll lived the idea of cooperation. When he became director of the oiip in 1996, he believed in the good will of all the political-administrative bodies. Under director Otmar Höll, the oiip reached out to academics and officials all over the world. The oiip invited speakers and discussants from various countries and institutions. For example, he established cooperation agreements with universities in South Korea and Taiwan. The oiip organized events together with various embassies; this included not only the big democratic states, but also internal meetings with representatives of the DPRK (Democratic People’s Party of Korea). It goes without saying that this entailed criticism from opposition groups, for example when an official from Iran took part in a panel discussion on the Iranian nuclear programme. The oiip stressed, however, that it is not ready to suppress voices – which are also sources – in this debate. Höll supported the idea that the oiip is not a secret service organization, nor an instrument of one country or political group, but rather that it stands for openness, debate, and transparency. Not without irony is it noted that in the past there had been attempts to use the oiip as an espionage platform.

It is fair to say that he and the institute had to go through several phases of disappointments and setbacks. Some critics did not recognize the value added by the oiip to Austrian foreign policy; some saw it as dangerous competition. There have always been practitioners who seem unable to accept that the oiip has a role not only as policy adviser but also as an academic critic and will not share every assumption with them. In the 1980s, there were suggestions that the oiip should not be allowed to publish its studies. With time, the vast majority of the policy community accepted and learned to appreciate the oiip’s role and even duty to stimulate public debate on foreign policy issues, however. This was mainly due to Otmar’s painstaking efforts to build trust and confidence. Especially the Ministry of Defence is always looking for new solutions to new challenges; it is interested to address not only today’s but also future problems. It is therefore open to including external experts and viewpoints.

Even though the board of the oiip has always consisted of representatives of the main political parties, the institute was never free of political disputes. One of Otmar’s most significant merits in the eyes of the scholars at the oiip was that he always, always supported the freedom of the researches of the oiip against political pressure, no matter whether he agreed with the researcher entirely or not. This was not always easy because the oiip did not necessarily support the government’s positions on foreign policy. Otmar, for example, stood behind the

study of a researcher who was heavily criticized because he found that Austria's membership of NATO would be too expensive.

For the oiip, the balance between independent research and political influence was delicate because the oiip was dependent on government funding. Otmar Höll tirelessly tried to find new ways to finance the institute. Unfortunately, he and the oiip were not always successful. Consequently, the oiip remained smaller than Otmar had hoped, but it has survived through some very difficult times despite government funding from some ministries being gradually reduced over time. The institute had to find new and alternative financial sources. There were some surprising twists and turns by civil servants along the way. In the early 1990s, oiip scholars had to conceal the fact that they were also teaching at the University; after 2010, the professors at the oiip have been employed by the University. Otmar was and is a beloved teacher at the University and other teaching institutions. He always leaves the students vast room to develop and express their own opinions and ideas. He is open-minded and has an open ear for their problems. At a large university, or a large department like the Institute of Political Science in Vienna, this can be very time consuming.

Despite his substantial administrative work as director, Otmar Höll has never lost his interest in African countries and in development policy. For example, he was very concerned about the developments in the Sudan and about the separation of South Sudan in 2011. He made several trips to the Sudan and thought about models of cooperation and mediation.

Otmar Höll made and continues to make an indelible contribution to foreign policy research in Austria, both as the director of the oiip and as an individual. The members of the institute are extremely grateful for his work and his human leadership.

# **Mediating Security: Comprehensive Approaches to an Ambiguous Subject**

*Alexander Klimburg and Jan Pospisil  
(with a section by A.J.R. Groom)*

In over four decades of scientific exploration, Otmar Höll has approached the question of international security from often unorthodox and unconventional perspectives. Starting with the issues of development and environmental policy, the challenge of an enlarged and more comprehensive notion of “security” has become a primary focus not only in his research, but also within the institute of which he was director for 16 years – the oiip, the Austrian Institute for International Affairs.

While originally a marginal topic at best, the (re-)definition of international security rapidly gained in importance with the end of the Cold War. The implications associated with the notions of a “Comprehensive” and later “Networked Security” became internationally commonplace, both at the scientific and the political level. Otmar Höll accepted these challenges and sought to combine them with his interests in the theory of political psychology, the practice of psychotherapeutic and mediated approaches to conflict resolution. “Comprehensive Security” was therefore not just a particular way to deal with questions like the notion of “new threats and challenges” in the context of global governance; in addition, it became a concept with particular personal relevance.

Bringing together various state and non-state actors in the field of foreign and international affairs has thus become an important part of Höll’s work, in the best sense of what is now called a “comprehensive” or “whole-of-nation” approach. In this introductory article, we will shed more light on the main topics of Otmar Höll’s research activities, put them into historic perspective and discuss their relevance for current discussions on security and security policy. Finally, we will give a brief overview of the other papers in the book.

## **Comprehensive Security as a Mediated Endeavour?**

It was in the year 2000 that, under Otmar Höll’s directorship, the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, the oiip, received a large project contract from the then Austrian Ministry for Science and Education to elaborate on new discus-

sions, frameworks and notions of security and security policy.<sup>1</sup> This project, which involved all researchers at that time at the oiip, was not the beginning of the comprehensive security agenda at the institute, but it certainly represented the breakthrough, in research as well as in policy consultancy. The move to “comprehensiveness” was considered a result of three historic processes and events: the end of Cold War bipolarity, the deepening and widening of European integration and as a consequence of the impacts of globalization and regionalization. Very much based on the innovative thinking of the Copenhagen School, comprehensive security – defined as encompassing a military, political, economic, societal and ecological dimension<sup>2</sup> – was rendered as a process of shared values and preferences and, furthermore, as a product of perceptions. If, as the project framework said, the assumption holds true that such values and preferences lead to or even produce security, these values and preferences must be defined in the first instance.<sup>3</sup>

Interpreting security and security policy as a dialogue of values and preferences that comes along with a variety of perceptions and representations (in that regard, the role of the media was particularly highlighted) showed not only remarkable vision. At that particular time, in a security policy environment that was still very much at a stage of “missing the Cold War”, as John J. Mearsheimer has put it<sup>4</sup>, it also needed courage. Such courage is also to be found in the consequences that were taken regarding the scientific dimension of comprehensive security: not only the reference object needs to be comprehensive; the referers also had to be as well. Necessarily, the report states, comprehensive security as a subject never can be successfully tackled by a “one-dimensional and ghettoised scientific approach”.<sup>5</sup> More than anybody else at the oiip at that time, Otmar Höll with his strong linkages to environmental research and economy (as well as law, which he had studied initially) represented such interdisciplinarity in security research.

His particular contribution to the subject resulted from his personal interest in social psychology and psychotherapy, especially Gestalt therapy. Thus, Höll put his focus within the comprehensive security project on methods of conflict resolution by non-violent and civil methods of mediation on various levels, from the personal to the systems level. He criticizes the traditional so-called Grand Theories of International Relations for having a blind spot in that regard. Em-

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1 Heinz Gärtner and Otmar Höll (eds.), *Comprehensive Security*, Vienna: oiip, 2001.

2 Gärtner and Höll (see n.1 above), p.5.

3 Gärtner and Höll (see n.1 above), pp.119-125.

4 John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Why We Will Soon Miss The Cold War’, *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No.2, 1990, pp.35-50.

5 Gärtner and Höll (see n.1 above), p.119.

phasizing the highly relevant psychological dimension of war and peace and the necessity to take this dimension into account by engaging, scientifically or practically, with any kind of international conflict resolution, he argues for a strong interlinkage of political and economic approaches with contributions of social psychology and communication science.<sup>6</sup> Hence, security in this framework necessarily becomes a mediated endeavour insofar as narration and perception, but also self-reflexivity, are indispensable in dealing with this subject.

There is no self-reflexivity without openness and, furthermore, without the permanence of this openness for dialogue. Talking with one another is the main methodology of this psychosocial approach of mediating international security. Often, this readiness to talk was and still is highlighted as one of the specific strengths of the oiip and Otmar Höll in particular, and sometimes even cause for critique. Not surprisingly, the critique focused on its engagement with the rogues of the international system: be it North Korea, be it Sudan, be it Iran. It was long-term strategic thinking but also a principal stance that made and still makes Höll open for dialogue.

Without critically, but also emphatically, knowing oneself and the other, no security policy will lead to any kind of “security”, regardless of how comprehensive its conceptions and definitions might be. Still, traditional components like institutions have a role to play in Otmar Höll’s conception: comprehensiveness also needs a comprehensive framework, for discussion, engagement, but also for norm production. Accordingly, one could call his approach that of an – in the best possible way pragmatic – Austrian School: a strong mix of the English and Copenhagen Schools, with a certain dash of liberal institutionalism, and (although Höll’s personal origins are in Linz / Upper Austria) with a particularly Viennese focus on psychology.

## **A Comprehensive Approach to Mediated Security**

This “Austrian School” was, however, immensely practical in his application. A large part of Höll’s career had been spent interacting with governments and government actors. Often this interaction was deeply personal – many of the leading governmental and political figures in Austria were once students of Höll’s, and the relationships formed here lasted throughout his career. It was natural for some of these former students to turn to their former thesis adviser to request more direct support. This support – in reality, government advisory work – was always a key feature of the oiip, and also helped define Höll’s view not only

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6 Otmar Höll, ‘Konfliktlösung durch zivile Vermittlungsverfahren im internationalen System’, in Heinz Gärtner and Otmar Höll (eds.), *Comprehensive Security*, Vienna: oiip, 2001, pp.225-246, p.227.