



PEACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Second Edition

OLIVER P. RICHMOND

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION



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Theories of international relations have largely been preoccupied with understanding the causes and patterns of conflict. The notion of peace, by contrast, has lingered relatively under-theorized at the margins of disciplinary debates. Rectifying this shortcoming, and drawing on a range of interdisciplinary sources, Oliver Richmond offers an ambitious tour-de-force that examines how often implied notions of peace shape approaches as diverse as realism, liberalism, critical theory and post-structuralism. Although acknowledging its inherently contestable nature, Richmond argues convincingly that the notion of peace ought to be at the center of scholarly debates and policy deliberations.

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Oliver Richmond's interrogation of the discipline of International Relations and its treatment of 'peace' is an excellent achievement.... Richmond's timely intervention reveals peace not simply as a contested concept, but one that is always politically charged in its instrumental invocations. The book is thoroughly useful for students and researchers alike.

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PEACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This updated and revised second edition examines the conceptualisation and evolution of peace in International Relations (IR) theory.

The book examines the concept of peace and its usage in the main theoretical debates in IR, including realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical theory, and post-structuralism, as well as in the more direct debates on peace and conflict studies. It explores themes relating to culture, development, agency, and structure, not just in terms of representations of IR, and of peace, but in terms of the discipline of IR itself. The work also specifically explores the recent mantras associated with liberal and neoliberal versions of peace, which appear to have become foundational for much of the mainstream literature and for doctrines for peace and development in the policy world. Analysing war has often led to the dominance – and mitigation – of violence as a basic assumption in, and response to, the problems of IR. This study aims to redress this negative balance by arguing that the discipline offers a rich basis for the study of peace, which has advanced significantly over the last century or so. It also proposes innovative theoretical dimensions of the study of peace, with new chapters discussing post-colonial and digital developments.

This book will be of great interest to students of peace and conflict studies, politics, and IR.

Oliver P. Richmond is a Professor in IR, Peace, and Conflict Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. He is also International Professor at the College of International Studies, Kyung Hee University, Korea, and Visiting Professor at Dublin City University, Ireland.

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Oliver P. Richmond

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Sapere Aude

“There is scarcely any peace so unjust,
but it is preferable, upon the whole, to the justest war.”¹

¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *Querela Pacis [Complaint of Peace]*, Chicago: Open Court, 1917 [1521].

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ABSTRACT

This study updates my previous examination of the different accounts of peace in International Relations (IR) theory, first published in 2008. Since then, much has changed. Realism has returned in several newer forms, from offensive to 'critical.' Liberalism has lost its way, along with neoliberalism, global governance, and more critical, cosmopolitan theories and aspirations. Constructivism has 'taken over' critical theory, in the guise of convening critical, liberal, and realist theory into an incoherent mass. Post-structuralism has fallen out of favour and found it difficult to respond to the constructive challenge of charting a course forward. New interventions from post-colonial, new materialist, gender, and environment theories have become even more significant. Interdisciplinary perspectives have unsettled the 'great debates' perspective and brought in new avenues and methods. Yet, though progress has been made, as argued in the previous edition, peace is assumed to be normatively irreproachable, formative in the founding of the discipline, central to the agendas of liberal states, but it has rarely been directly approached as an area of study within IR. In the last decade, new energy has been devoted to this gap, however, particularly by a growing group of younger scholars, who possess more sophisticated theoretical, historical, empirical, and methodological knowledge and skills than ever before. The recent reduction of the obstacles of data, mobility and space and the emergence of new technologies have allowed this sort of research – grounded, theoretically sophisticated, with a normative or even progressive foundation – to gain new traction, generating important insights.

This was made possible originally by critical work in various sub-disciplines and alternative methodologies, which were responding to the limits of orthodoxies and took on the critical challenge (often without much close association with IR theory). The surprising lack of an explicit debate on peace, noted early on in the discipline's life by many thinkers, has motivated this endeavour to

advance the conceptualisation of peace as a research agenda. Indeed, this task is both long overdue and vital in international environment in which major foreign policy decisions seem to be taken in a mono-ideational environment where ideas matter, but only certain ideas.

Developing accounts of peace helps chart the different theoretical and methodological contributions in IR, in connection with peace and conflict studies, in terms of their own objectives, interests, and potential. It contributes to IR's envisaged mission by highlighting complex issues that then emerge from these perspectives of IR theory and the interdisciplinary debates that surround it. These include the pressing problem of how peace efforts become both globally and locally legitimate and sustainable rather than merely inscribed in international- and state-level diplomatic and military frameworks, supporting neoliberal capitalism and new technologies of governmentality. This also raises issues related to culture, development, the environment, agency, and structure, not just in terms of the representations of the world, and of peace, presented in the discipline, but terms of the discipline itself. It also enables a clearer evaluation of the recent mantras associated with the 'liberal peace,' or the neoliberal version now predominant, which appear to have become a foundational assumption of much of mainstream IR and the policy world. This study aims to help to redress the balance in IR, where an obsession with analysing war and violence has often led to the dominance of violence as a basic assumption in, and response to, the problems of global politics and everyday life therein. In an interdisciplinary and pluralist field of study – as IR has now become – concepts of peace and their sustainability are amongst those that are central. Indeed, as this study shows, IR now offers a rich and expanding basis for the study of peace.

INTRODUCTION

Peace in IR

“You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war”¹

Introduction

Mainstream IR theory has been in crisis for some time, specifically when it comes to questions relating to the nature of legitimate political authority and the relationship between its re-establishment after war and global norms. In general, peace in the 19th century was connected to national sovereignty or liberal imperialism, then with a clashing range of ideologies in the 20th century, culminating in its connection to liberal peace, human rights, capitalism, and democracy. Critical thinking has always connected peace to much more ambitious agendas, however, connected to expanding and development conceptions of justice, local and global. Tame versions of critical theory have sought to connect an ever-deepening global integration, perhaps leading to a loose form of global government, whilst radical versions have envisioned very high levels of decentralisation, autonomy, and localised authority emerging via a dismantling of state-centric, Western, or neo-imperial forms of authority.

Examining the discipline though, the lens of a search for peace (one or many) underlines the paucity of its historical engagement with peace as a complex concept. Partly because of this, IR has found it very difficult to attract the attention of those working in other disciplines, though increasingly IR scholars have themselves drawn on alternatives.² Even those working in the sub-disciplines of peace and conflict studies for example, an area where there has been a long-standing attempt to develop an understanding of peace has often turned away from IR theory – or refused to engage with it at all – because it has failed to develop an account of peace, focusing instead on the dynamics of power, war, and the state,

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assuming the realist inherency of violence in human nature and international relations, or liberal supremacy. Utopian and dystopian views of peace, relating to contemporary and future threats calculated from the point of view of states and officials, often delineate the intellectual extremes of a linear typology of war and peace inherent in mainstream international thought. The peace inferred in this typology is concerned with a balance of power between states or the exemplars gleaned from the development of democracy, law, and capitalism, rather than the subtle texture of everyday life of people in post-conflict environments. Even the ambitious peacebuilding efforts of the post-Cold War environment in places as diverse as Cambodia, DR Congo, the Balkans, East Timor, and Afghanistan amongst many others testify to this shortcoming. From an everyday perspective, the large-scale violent events of 'war' may not be present in such contexts, but the structural, cultural, and environmental aspects of violence continue. As Erasmus and Einstein famously pointed out, peace was both separate and preferable to war. Peace and war should be held apart decisively, and yet, violence is an integral part of the lives of modern conflict-affected citizens in post-war arenas as well as in contexts where public security and urban violence are a concern (as in large parts of South America).³ Violence continues in direct, structural, cultural, and many other forms.

This raises the question of what the discipline of IR is for, if not for peace? For many, IR theory simply has not been ambitious enough in developing an 'agenda for peace' in addition to investigating the causes of war. Axiomatically, Martin Wight once wrote that IR was subject to a poverty of 'international theory.' He also argued that its focus is the problem of survival.⁴ Such arguments are commonplace even in the context of more critical theoretical contributions to IR theory.⁵ Today, survival is not everybody's concern, especially those in the developed world. Such arguments usually support the position that liberal or neoliberal polities, notably in the Western developed world, or closely related to its economy (such as China, or the Gulf states) are domestic oases of democratic and/or capitalist peace. They obscure the possibility that such polities are also likely to be engaged in a constant struggle for survival, or a war for 'peace' on a systemic or ideological level. Thinking about peace opens up such difficult questions. Yet, many approaches to IR theory routinely ignore the question – or problem – of peace: how it is constituted and one peace or many? Even 'successful' empires have developed an interest in an ideological and self-interested version of peace,⁶ whether it was a Pax Romana, Britannia, Soviet, American, religious, nationalist, liberal, or neoliberal peace.

Many scholars have hoped that science would, as Hobbes wrote, open the way for peace.⁷ Hobbes, writing in the aftermath of a bloody English Civil War, wrote *Leviathan* (often held up to be the epitome of tragic realism in IR) to illustrate that peace was plausible in spite of hatred, scarcity, and violence. Of course, he also developed the notion of the Leviathan as a way to moderate the 'natural state' of war. IR has instead focused on the latter (war as a natural state) rather than the former (peace as a natural state), despite the fact that so much of the

ground work has been done in peace and conflict studies, anthropology, sociology, law, philosophy, archaeology, in the arts, in branches of several other disciplines, such as economics or psychology, and via the more critical approaches to the discipline of IR. The supposed Freudian death instinct has seemed to resonate more powerfully through the discipline than notions of peace.⁸ Yet, as Fry has argued, a vast range of anthropological and ethnographic evidence shows that peace, conflict avoidance, and accommodation are the stronger impulses of human culture.⁹ War is a significant part of Western culture as well as others, but not of all cultures.¹⁰ Indeed, it is notable that in Western settings, war memorials are frequent, particularly for WWI and II, but peace is rarely represented in civic space unless as a memorial of sacrifice during war. Similarly in art, aspirations for peace are often represented through depictions of war and violence, such as in Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) or Goya's *The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid* (1814). Lorenzetti's *The Allegory of Good Government* (1338–40) and Rubens' *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars* (1629–30) are notable exceptions. Further afield, one could point to the Ottoman Topkapi Palace's *Gate of Peace* in Istanbul, and the *Gate of Heavenly Peace* leading into the Imperial City in Beijing (though these were, of course, associated with both diplomacy and imperial wars).

Peace can be seen in more critical terms as both a process and a goal, but following multiple paths simultaneously, always unfinished and unlikely to converge on a single outcome. Hybrid forms and processes fit best with the indicators developed by critical discussion of peace. This opens up a particular focus on the processes by which peace as a self-conscious and reflexive goal may be achieved. If peace is taken as a strategic goal, it would tend towards a focus on mutual preservation and never move beyond preliminary stages relating to security, but there are further, more inspiring, possibilities.

This book examines the implications of the multiple understandings of this underdeveloped, but heavily contested concept from within the different accounts of IR theory. IR theory is deployed in this study through fairly crude representations, using rather unashamedly the orthodox approach of separating IR theory into 'great debates,' and into separate theories of realism, idealism, pluralism, liberalism, Marxism, critical theory, constructivism, and post-structuralist approaches, as well as various connected or sub-disciplines, such as IPE, anthropology, sociology, or peace and conflict studies. It is clear that there is much that is problematic with this Eurocentric approach, but it provides a mechanism through which to view the implications for a concept of peace, and the theorisation, ontology, epistemology, and methodology, suggested by each. This connection between theories, the way of being, the knowledge systems, and research methodologies they suggest allows for the possibility of evaluating each theory in terms of the notions of peace they imply.

This is certainly not to dismiss the importance of mainstream IR, but to caution against its representation as a 'complete' discipline, which it clearly is not. Indeed, there is a serious question as to whether aspects of orthodox

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approaches (by which I mean positivist debates derived from realism, liberalism, and Marxism) to IR are anti-peace, sometimes purposively, and sometimes carelessly. War, competition, trade, class, Euro-centricism, patriarchy, individualism, extraction, and imperialism are their main engines. The three main orthodox theories are often taken to offer determinist grand narratives: realism offers an elite and negative inter-state peace based on inherency; liberalism offers a one-size-fits-all progressive framework of mainly elite state and international governance with little recognition of difference; and Marxism offers grass-roots emancipation from determinist structures of the international political economy via violent state and global revolution. Yet, as this study shows, in the context of peace, other possible narratives emerge.

This study is informed by an attempt to establish a broader, interdisciplinary reading of peace and to embed this within IR. It is worth noting that peace has preoccupied a broad range of thinkers, activists, politicians, and other figures, in various ways often to do with an interest in, or critique of violence, influence, power, and politics. These include, to name but a few, Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Kant, Locke, Paine, Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Gandhi, Freud, Einstein, Lorenz, Mead, Arendt, Martin Luther King, Thoreau, Foucault, Galtung, Boulding, Freire, Tolstoy, Camus, and more. Many other public figures, religious figures, cultural figures, politicians, and officials, as well as many obscured from Western post-Enlightenment thought by their linguistic or cultural difference, and also turned their hands to describing peace.¹¹ Yet, there remains a surprising lack of an explicit debate on peace in IR theory.

This study does not claim to cover or explain IR theory comprehensively – it is already perhaps overambitious – or to move beyond its Western corpus (as it should) but it endeavours to be particularly sensitive to the claims of IR theory about the pros and cons of even having a debate about peace. It is inevitable in a study such as this that much emphasis is on ‘great texts’ and key concepts and theoretical categories (though this is a syndrome that the author would prefer to refute). Later chapters do try to avoid this, in the context of establishing critical ground to make this move. What is important here is the attempt not to reject IR as a discipline, as some critical thinkers do in the extremes of their frustration with its limitations, but to redevelop it to reflect the everyday world, its problems, and opportunities for a wider peace in everyday life. This endeavour is a crucial part of the attempt to escape mainstream IR’s rigid and narrow, post-Enlightenment representation of specific reductionist discourses as reality, rather than exploring contextual and contingent interpretations. Theory indicates the possibility for human action and ethical and practical potential,¹² meaning that the study of peace must be a vital component of engagement with any theory. The focus on peace and its different conceptualisations proposed in this study allows for the discipline to redevelop a claim to legitimacy which had long since been lost by its orthodoxy’s often slavish assumptions about power, war, strategy, and conflict, and their origins. It seeks to go beyond the objectivist and linear display of knowledge about who and what is important in IR (international elites, states,

policymakers, and officials (normally male), the rich, the west) and reintroduce the discourses of peace, and its methods, as a central research area, specifically in terms of understanding the everyday individual, social, and even international responsibilities that orthodox IR has generally abrogated.¹³ In particular, peace in everyday terms requires an understanding of the hidden and long-term workings of power in political, economic, and social terms. This requires engaging with the consequences of imperialism and colonialism, capitalism and extraction, patriarchy, state formation and state power, and class.

More than ever, research and policy informed by a contextual understanding of peace are needed, rather than merely a focus on fear reproduced by worst-case security scenarios stemming from a balance of power or terror derived from military, political, or economic analytical frameworks that assume violence and greed to be endemic. This contextual understanding needs to become far better accommodated in what has now come to be called the international peace architecture: that is the international framework of law, institutions, agencies (covering security, development, refugees, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, culture, and others), INGOs, and NGOs, social movements, and all of their partners. Indeed, in the contemporary context, it is also clear that any discussion must also connect with research and policy on development, global and local justice, and on environmental sustainability. These are the reasons why the liberal peace (comprising law and human rights, democratic institutions, trade, and a vibrant civil society) and its more recent neoliberal derivation (security, trade, and capital are its main priorities) – the main concepts of peace in circulation today – are in crisis.

Much of the debate about war that dominates IR is also indicative of very unambitious and sometimes insensitive assumptions about what peace is or should be. This ranges from the pragmatic sole focus on the removal of overt violence, an ethical peace centred on a certain “centricism,” an exclusive ideology, to a debate about a self-sustaining peace within a certain set of boundaries. Anatol Rapoport conceptualised ‘peace through strength’; ‘balance of power’; ‘collective security’; ‘peace through law’; ‘personal or religious pacifism’; and ‘revolutionary pacifism.’¹⁴ Hedley Bull saw peace as the absence of war in an international society,¹⁵ though, of course, war was the key guarantee for individual state survival. State formation and survival are thus central to such thinking about peace. These views represent the mainstream approaches and indicate why the creation of an explicit debate about peace is both long overdue and vital in an international environment in which major foreign policy decisions seem to be taken in mono-ideational environment where ideas matter, but only certain, hegemonic ideas. To investigate the concept of peace more precisely, it needs to be thought in the context of these different theories, in the context of other disciplines, as well as from other positionalities or through other methodologies. The latter imply the possibility of a radical break from perspectives reliant on traditional or even critical IR theories.

With the exception of orthodox versions of realism and Marxism, approaches to IR theory offer a form of peace that many would recognise as personally

acceptable. Realism fails to offer much for those interested in peace, unless peace is seen as Darwinian and an unreflexive, privileged concept only available to the powerful and a bounded commonwealth they may want to create. Most realist analysis expends its energy in reactive discussions based upon the inherency of violence in human nature, now discredited in other disciplines,¹⁶ which are ultimately their own undoing. This is not to say that other approaches do not also suffer flaws, but the focus on individuals, society, justice, development, welfare, norms, transnationalism, institutionalism, or functionalism offers an opportunity for a form of peace that might be more sustainable because it is more broadly inclusive of actors and issues. In other words, parsimony, reductionism, and utilitarian rationalism run counter to a peace that engages fully with the diversity of life on this planet and its experiences.

Methodological considerations

Any discussion of peace is susceptible to universalism, idealism, communitarianism, exceptionalism, and even rejectionism. A minority think that war is the engine of progress and peace encourages sloth, though this ignores the vast majority of evidence pointing to the gigantic losses and costs of war. Yet, peace as a concept can easily collapse under the weight of its own ontological subjectivity. This study is indebted to a genealogical approach that can be used to challenge the common assumption of IR theorists that peace as a concept is ontologically stable, in terms of representing an objective truth (plausible or not), legitimating the exercise of power, and representing a universal ethic.¹⁷ To rehearse this, a genealogical approach allows for an investigation of the subject without deference to a meta-narrative of power and knowledge in order to unsettle the depiction of a linear projection from 'origin' to 'truth.' The camouflaging of the subjective nature of peace disguises ideology, hegemony, dividing practices, and marginalisation. In addition, it is important to note the framework of negative or positive epistemology of peace, as developed by Rasmussen, which indicates an underlying ontological assumption within IR theory as to whether a broad or narrow version of peace is actually possible.¹⁸ Many of the insights developed in this study of IR theory and its approaches to peace arise through the author's reading of and about, and research in, conflict management, resolution, transformation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding in the context of many conflicts of the post-war world, the UN system, and the many subsequent 'operations' that have taken place around the world.

The investigation of discourses indicates the problematic dynamics of positivist approaches¹⁹ and allows for a deeper interrogation reaching beyond the state than a traditional positivist theoretical/empirical approach.²⁰ This enables an examination of competing concepts and discourses of peace derived from IR theory rather than accepting their orthodoxies. Peace, and in particular the liberal and realist foundations of the liberal peace, can be seen as a result of multiple hegemonies in IR.²¹ Deploying these approaches allows for an identification of

the key flaws caused by the limited peace projects associated with peace in IR, and for a theoretical and pragmatic move to put some consideration of peace at the centre of what has now become an ‘inter-discipline.’

For much of the existence of IR, the concept of peace has been in crisis, even though on the discipline’s founding after WWI, it was hoped it would help discover a post-war peace dividend. In this, it failed after WWI, which indicated yet again the limits of the victor’s peace, but it has been instrumental in developing a liberal discourse of peace after WWII, though this, in itself, has become much contested (as it certainly was during the Cold War). Even peace research has been criticised for having the potential to become ‘a council of imperialism’ whereby telling the story of ‘power politics’ means that researchers participate and reaffirm its tenets through disciplinary research methods and the continuing aspiration for a ‘Kantian University.’²² This effectively creates a ‘differend’ underlining how institutions and frameworks may produce injustices even when operating in good faith.²³ This requires the unpacking of the ‘muscular objectivism’²⁴ that has dominated IR in the Western academy and policy world, allowing an escape from what can be described as a liberal-realist methodology and ontology connected to positivist views of IR. The demand that all knowledge is narrowly replicable and should be confirmed and implemented by “re-search” in liberal institutions, organisations, agencies, and universities without the need for a broader exploration is not adequate if IR is to contribute to peace.²⁵ Thus, underlying this study is the notion of methodological pluralism, which has become a generally accepted objective for researchers across many disciplines who want to avoid parochial constraints on how research engages with significant dilemmas, and who accept the growing calls for more creative approaches to examining the ‘great questions’ of IR.²⁶ To gain a multidimensional understanding of peace as one of these great questions, one needs to unsettle mimetic approaches to representation that do not recognise subjectivity, rather than trying to replicate an eternal truth or reality.²⁷ IR theory should fully engage with the differend – in which lies its often unproblematised claim to be able to interpret the other – that its orthodoxy may be guilty of producing, and open itself up to communication and learning across boundaries of knowledge in order to facilitate a ‘peace dividend’ rather than a ‘peace differend.’

The critique developed here is not ‘irresponsible pluralism’ as some would have it,²⁸ but an attempt to contribute to the ongoing repositioning of a discipline now increasingly concerned with IR’s connections with everyday life and agency. In this context, each chapter of this book interrogates the theoretical debates in IR as well as their theoretical, methodological, and epistemological implications for peace. The nature of international order is heavily contested in theoretical, methodological, ontological, and epistemological terms, meaning that the Western consensus on the contemporary liberal peace, and the emerging regional forms of a more authoritarian and neoliberal peace, represents anomalous, state-centric, coincidences of interests rather than a broad-ranging consensus.

Rather than support these compromised patterns unquestioningly, IR requires a research agenda for peace if its interdisciplinary contribution to knowledge – and speaking truth to power,²⁹ foregrounding the needs and rights of the subaltern,³⁰ within the possibilities of capacity and the expanding terms of global justice – is to be developed. IR needs to engage broadly with interdisciplinary perspectives³¹ on peace if it is to contribute to the construction of a framework that allows for the breadth and depth required for peace to be accepted by all, from the local to the global, and therefore to be sustainable. Like social anthropology, IR needs to have an agenda for peace, not just to deal with war, violence, conflict, terrorism, and political order at the domestic and international levels within the confines of geopolitics and liberal internationalism, but also incorporates the interdisciplinary work that has been carried out in the areas of transnationalism and globalisation, political economy, development, identity, culture and society, gender, children, and the environment, for example. Yet where social anthropology, for example, has elucidated this agenda clearly, IR has been more reticent, despite the claims about peace made on the founding of the discipline.³² As with anthropology, IR should ‘...uncover counterhegemonic and silenced voices, and to explore the mechanisms of their silencing.’³³ Of course, this happens in the various areas, and especially in the sub-disciplines of IR. While there have been efforts to develop peace as a concept, this is by far counterbalanced by the efforts focused on war, terrorism, or conflict. Concepts of peace should be a cornerstone of IR interdisciplinary investigation of international politics and everyday life. This is a perspective I call ‘eirenist,’³⁴ which stems from a subaltern positionality, when looking up at power structures and power relations, which helps to formulate new political claims for rights. In turn, these are connected to peace settlements and peacebuilding, shifting them from an association with the balance of power, social justice, or liberal peace, and towards newer conceptions of global justice.

For the purposes of this study, peace is viewed from a number of perspectives. It can be a specific concept (one amongst many): it infers an ontological and epistemological position of being at peace, and knowing peace; it infers a methodological approach to accessing knowledge about peace and about constructing it; and it implies a theoretical approach, in which peace is a process and outcome defined by a specific theory.

The concepts of peace

What is peace? This would seem to be an obvious question deserving an obvious answer. Yet, the reluctance to open this debate could be merely an oversight; it could be because the answer is too obvious to waste time upon it, or it could be because once opened up, the debate upon peace offers all kinds of possibilities: liberal, illiberal, or radical, and possibly subversive. This is not to say that there is a conspiracy of silence when it comes to peace, because two World Wars and the Cold War would seem to have settled this basic question of modernity in favour of the ‘liberal

peace,' made up of a victor's peace at its most basic level, an institutional peace to provide international governance and guarantees, a constitutional peace to ensure democracy and free-trade, and a civil peace to ensure freedom and rights within society.³⁵ This, in Anglo-American terms, places the individual before the state, though in Continental varieties, it sees the individual as a subordinate to the state (a little noted, but significant point).³⁶ Both variations rest upon a social contract between representatives and citizens. Yet, events since 1989 indicate that peace is not as it seems. There may be a liberal consensus on peace, but there are many technical, political, social, economic, and intellectual issues remaining, and the very universality of the post-Cold War liberal peace is still contested in terms of components, and the methods used to build it (from military intervention to the role of NGOs, international organisations, agencies, and international financial institutions).

One approach to thinking about peace that is commonly used is to look back at its historical, international, uses. These generally include the following: an Alexandrian peace, which depended upon a string of military conquests loosely linked together; a Pax Romana, which depended upon tight control of a territorial empire, and also included a 'Carthaginian peace' in which the city of Carthage was raised to the ground and strewn with salt to make sure that it would not re-emerge; an Augustine peace dependent upon the adoption and protection of a territorial version of Catholicism, and the notion of just war; the Westphalian peace, dependent upon the security of states, geopolitics, and the norms of territorial sovereignty; the Pax Britannia, dependent upon British domination of the seas, on trade and loose alliances with colonised peoples, or more broadly dependent on imperialism; the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919, dependent upon an embryonic international organisation, collective security, the self-determination of some populations into territorial entities, and democracy; the United Nations system, dependent upon collective security and international cooperation, a social peace entailing social justice, and the liberal peace, including upon democratisation, free markets, human rights and the rule of law, development, and perhaps most of all, the support both normative and material, of the United States and its allies. Finally, two new versions have appeared on the landscape: a neoliberal peace thought states focused on security and trade; and a digital form of peace aimed at the tensions arising with the shift from analogue to digital processes and capacities and the radical changes this are engendering for society, the state, the global economy, and political life.

Though peace was supposed to be one of IR's key agendas when the discipline was founded in 1919, and certainly was explicitly part of the main institutional frameworks of the modern era, IR as a discipline has tended to deal with peace implicitly, through its theoretical readings in international order, of war, and history. It has done so in the light of assumptions about analogue forms of IR: face-to-face diplomacy and everyday life, moderated through human institutions at a certain speed, traditional forms of military, and the control of political discourse and law by key institutions such as certain states, or institutions of global governance, as well as fairly static forms of citizenship attached to a specific territory

and state. The growth of global trade was connected with human development, understood as a numerical indicator. This form of peace was slowly shifting away from its humanist components. Furthermore, the empirical events that mark IR tend to be associated with violence, rather than peace. As we move from the analogue to the digital, there is a little reason to think that matter will change. Even such an attempt as this study, ambitious though it might seem in its attempt to recast IR theory, is indicative of further and perhaps crucial weaknesses in both the discipline and its author's capacity to speak on behalf of anything other than the developed, Eurocentric, and enlightened discourse of IR, increasingly shifting from governmentality to digital biopolitics. To attempt to speak on behalf of those from other cultures, religions, and the so-called underdeveloped regions would assume the viability of sovereign man's discourse of the liberal peace, and its newer, neoliberal, and technological twists and turns, which are exactly what is thrown into doubt by a consideration of peace from a conflict-affected positionality.

The following dynamics are characteristic of the way in which peace is often thought of and deployed in IR:

- i Peace is always aspired to and provides an optimum, though idealistic, point of reference;
- ii It is viewed as an achievable global objective, based on universal liberal norms presented as an objective truth, associated with complete legitimacy (e.g. peacebuilding);
- iii It is viewed as a geographically bounded framework defined by geopolitics, territory, culture, identity, and national interests (a realist perspective);
- iv It is related to a certain ideology or political or economic framework (liberalism, neoliberalism, democracy, communism or socialism, etc.);
- v It is viewed as a limited temporal phase;
- vi It is based upon state (via statebuilding) or collective security (e.g. through NATO or the UN);
- vii It is based upon local, regional, or global forms of organisation and governance, perhaps defined by a hegemonic actor or a regional and multilateral institution;
- viii It is viewed as a top-down institutional framework or a bottom-up civil society-oriented framework;
- ix The environment, gender, identity, legitimacy, and justice are either ignored as being too complex or viewed to be essential;
- x Most thinking about peace in IR is predicated on reacting to conflict, and at best creating an externally supported peace, not on preventing or creating a self-sustaining peace;
- xi Once military security has been achieved, peace is built through trade and interdependence (the neoliberal view);
- xii Technology in a digital and neoliberal world opens up new questions about peace.

Despite these potential versions, the most important agenda in IR has not been subject to a sustained examination. Even in the realms of peace and conflict studies, the focus has been on preventing violence rather than on a sustained attempt to develop a self-sustaining order. One has to draw a range of different disciplines, where fragments of knowledge are available to help us understand this complex area. While attempts have been made to reflect a viable world order in a number of different quarters, the liberal peace often emerged as the main blue-print approach after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of socialism. Neoliberal versions of peace focused on limited state agency and maximum trade have most recently been foremost. What is most important about this treatment is that as an objective point of reference, it is possible for the diplomat, politician, official of international organisations, regional organisations, or international agencies and NGOs to judge what is right and wrong in terms of aspirations, processes, institutions, and methods, in their particular areas of concern. The liberal peace briefly became the foil by which the world was after 1990 until attention in the 2000s turned to a model based upon security and prosperity rather than rights and democracy (pointing to a comparison say between Denmark and Singapore as possible versions).

How does international theory develop concepts of peace? This happens only indirectly in most cases. Implicit in thought and practice relating to the international are multiple perspectives on the nature, scope, and plausibility of certain kinds of peace. What is more, in this age of globalisation, networks, and localisation, mobility, expanded rights, and technology, the deferral of a debate on peace in favour of reductive and expedient debates on war, power, conflict, and violence is dangerously anachronistic if IR theory is to be seen as part of a broader project leading to viable and sustainable forms of peace.

Perspectives on peace in IR theory

Realism implies a peace found in the state-centric balance of power, perhaps dominated by a hegemon. Peace is limited to a balance of power and power-sharing, if at all possible. Research is required to understand how this operates. Idealism and Utopianism claim a future possibility of a universal peace in which states and individuals are free, prosperous, and unthreatened mainly because they adopt the same norms and identities. Research is required to base this future system on. Pluralism, liberalism, internationalism, liberal institutionalism, and neoliberalism see peace as existing in the institutionalisation of liberal norms of economic, political, and social institutionalisation of cooperation, regulation, and governance. Thus, research focuses on the conditions and processes of such governance. These approaches offer functional networks and organisation, and transnationalism, between and beyond states, and the ensuing liberal peace is believed not to be hegemonic, but universal. The latter points allow the liberal peace to be constructed on behalf of conflict-affected societies by external actors. Structuralism and Marxist approaches see peace as lying in social justice,

solidarity, and international cooperation along socialist lines, together with the absence of certain types of structural violence, often in structures which promote economic and class domination. Research is required for undercover power relations and their contradictions, stratification, and injustice, in order to perfect a response. Cosmopolitanism extends the liberal argument to include the development of a universal discourse between states, organisations, and actors for mutual accord. Constructivism combines these liberal and cosmopolitan understandings, allowing identities and ideas to modify state behaviour but retaining the core of realism which sees states as underpinning order and peace as limited to institutional cooperation and a limited recognition of individual agency. Neoliberalism is also connected to these dynamics, shifting to the political benefits of market 'authority' at the global, state, and social levels, indicating that trade promotes cooperation at all levels (rather than extraction and exploitation). The neoliberal peace, meaning a light touch system of state and global governance focused on producing resilient and self-supporting populations, has become the most recent iteration of a global model for peace, for better or worse. Research focuses on these dynamics and their interactions.

Critical approaches also see peace as a consequence of a cosmopolitan, communicative transcendence of parochial understandings of global responsibility and action. Research needs to uncover its parameters to establish such global frameworks. More radically, post-structuralism represents peace as resulting from the identification of the deep-rooted structures of dominance and their revolutionary replacement as a consequence of that identification by multiple and co-existing concepts of peace which respect the difference of others. It does not offer a notion of state of global governance, however, warning instead of the risks of centralised power. Research thus must uncover power relations, but refrain from any form of prescriptive behaviour hence forth. Post-colonialism offers a notion of peace in which the global north and south achieve material equality as states through self-determination and equalisation, or in which the southern subaltern defines the nature quality of peace – upon which research focuses.

These research agendas are also clearly connected to ideological understandings of human history and society (left and right): none can claim to be purely scientific because in many ways, they involve political discussions about how power and resources are and should be distributed.

Further areas have also opened up as a result of more critical understandings of power and politics: gender approaches indicate the deep and historical power relations underlying patriarchy and the very subtle ways in which this connects to geopolitics, authoritarianism, anti-democratic practices, capitalism, and social patterns of power. It offers a more complex and sensitised approach to the nature of inter-generational human society, and the damage caused by war, pointing to far more complex understandings of peace. Environmental approaches also connect to this in that the misuse of resources underpins power in geopolitical, geo-economic, authoritarian, and patriarchal frameworks, exhausting or ruining the biosphere in the process. Also following the same logic is the way geopolitics

and geo-economics have now expanded into a digital and technological terrain, which, however, also raise new critical possibilities. This underlines a shift not just away from centralised forms of state or imperial power and radical thought, post-colonialism, and anarchism might have it, but also a shift away from the centrality of humans – and their states or institutions – in global politics (recently explored in the so-called new-materialist literature).

This brings the debate to a crucial point. In the past, war and peace were thought of in what might be called ‘analogue’ modes: determined by material factors, geography, distance, time, and so forth. New technologies, with their impact on knowledge, communication, mobilities, and the amplification of power – indeed, the very nature of power – give rise to a very changed environment and what might be called ‘digital’ modes of war and peace. Old constraints for both, related to power, distance, geography, and human interfaces (diplomacy, borders, boundaries, institutions, etc.), now no longer apply. This risks conventional modes of violence being made far more dangerous in the collusion between violence, the state, capital, and technology. It requires a digital peace in response.

Such an analysis, by the way, rests on a much longer perspective than social sciences traditionally permit. In geological time, archaeological, historical, philosophical, and anthropological literature suggests that the stimulants for political violence and war run far ahead of social, state, or international capacities for peacemaking, but in the very long term, and despite terrible disruption, peace re-forms and re-emerges, drawing on social networks, transnational capacity, institutions and underground movements that seek to dismantle and reform power and conflict practices. The literature on the collapse of complex societies amongst others points to the way in which war and crisis go hand in hand with peace and order building in the long term.

One common thread within many of implicit debates about peace is its use as something close to the Platonic ‘ideal form.’ In *The Republic*, Socrates argued that truth is found in an ideal form, associated with ‘goodness’ rather than in subjective perceptions and interests. This type of thinking indicates that there could be an objective reality of peace, but because it is an ideal form, it is probably not fully attainable.³⁷ Yet, it is often assumed that history is driven by a linear, rational, progression towards that ideal form. The notion of peace as an ideal form has different implications for different approaches to IR theory, spanning the implicit acceptance that peace is a guiding objective even though it cannot be achieved to a belief that rational progress will lead to peace. Critical debates since the 1990s have attached this idea of the existence of an ideal form, and of linear progression, especially of the ends justifying the means to achieve it (which has become connected with fascism, in particular). Recent counter-actions have placed the state and the market at the centre of peace and order, once again, replicating earlier debates between realists and liberals (or idealists) and seeming being condemned to repeat the past failure of nationalism and inequality.

Debates about peace thus span both classical and contemporary literatures, and a range of intellectual debates. These include what modern realists often described as the realism of Thucydides, Augustine, Hobbes, and Schmitt, in which peace was to be found in bounded and often tragic strategic thinking in which unitary actors delineate their own versions of peace within the framework provided by sovereign states. These approaches' tragedy lies in their unitary internal assumptions of a shared peace within political units based upon common interests and values, and the difficulties in maintaining peaceful relations with other external polities that have their own notions of peace. Peace in these terms is derived from territorial units determined to protect their identities and interests, and is therefore extremely limited. For this reason, an international system comprising states and pursuing their interests is said to exist, which denotes few shared values beyond domestic politics, and rests upon the hierarchical ordering of international relations. This based upon relative power and alliances derived from shared interests rather than shared values. Peace is conceptualised as very basic, or as a utopian ideal form, which is unobtainable.

A less harsh version of peace is to be found in the idealist, liberal, and liberal interventionist strands of international thought. These also focus on territorially bounded identity and interest units – mainly states – but see their interests defined in terms of cooperation and shared norms rather than power. Consequently, these approaches engender a concern with the nature of the domestic polity and the best way of creating domestic political harmony to ensure peaceful relations between polities at the same time. This type of thinking has given rise to major projects to construct international regimes, laws, and norms to limit war and engineer peace between polities, including states via multilateral organisations. Here, questions of justice begin to emerge at a normative level in relation to peace between and within political units. Subsequent debates about justice revolve around the discovery and construction of legal frameworks based upon universal norms and so acceptable to the majority of states within an international society or community. The latter concept denotes the liberal belief that shared values at the international level indicate a community of states rather than merely a system of states as realists would have it. For those interested in what happens inside states rather than between them, peace may rest upon the preservation of a socio-economic order, or the use of a particular type of constitution, or the construction of an equal and just society. Democratic peace theorists are able to extend this domestic peace to an international community. The liberal peace is the widely used term to describe this broad framework.

Lying behind such thinking is one of the core implicit debates in IR theory. Peace is seen to be something to aspire to though it is perhaps not achievable. This failure rests on human nature for realists, or the failure of institutions for liberals, and is reflected in the nature of states and organisations, which at best can attain a negative peace. This is the hallmark of conservative and realist thought, though for liberals, a positive peace is plausible through the adoption of certain domestic and international practices that are aimed at guaranteeing the rights

and needs of individuals. For some, idealism could also be pragmatic, and merely rest upon the discovery of the obstacles to peace, and then upon the deployment of the correct methods required to overcome these obstacles. The Westphalian international system represents a compromise upon both positions. This is indicative of Galtung's negative and positive peace framework, which is the most widely used conceptualisation of peace.³⁸ This can be extended, as Rasmussen has indicated, into a negative and positive epistemology of peace, meaning that ontological assumptions are made about whether a negative or positive peace can exist.³⁹ The dominant mode of thought, however, which informs most IR theorists and policymaking today is that '... the logic of strategy pervades the upkeep of peace as much as the making of war...' ⁴⁰ In other words, a negative epistemology of peace arises from strategic thinking, and even the application of force or threat. War can even therefore be seen as the 'origin of peace' by exhausting opponents and their resources.⁴¹

The Marxist-derived orthodoxy offers a concept of peace relating to the international political economy, the problem of economic exploitation of its weakest actors, and the subsequent need for radical reform. It posits that the international economic system defines the behaviour of its key actors. From this perspective, peace can be seen in terms of development and the just division of resources. Social and economic justice provides the dominant focus of significance for peace within Marxist-influenced approaches in IR. This raises the issues of the emancipation of the individual, the provision of welfare, and the sharing of resources equitably across society without regard to political, economic, or social hierarchies. Beyond the state, Marxist-inspired approaches focus on the division of resources through an equitable international economy and the reform of neoliberal strategies of trade and development, as well as transnational approaches to global political and social communication designed to produce fairer communication, dialogue, and interaction.

For contemporary realists such as Waltz or Mearsheimer, peace is very limited, delineated by a natural confluence of interests rather than a mechanistic reform or management of interests or resources. For contemporary and broadly liberal thinkers like Falk or Keohane, or pluralist thinkers like Burton, the latter provides the basis for a more humane peace guided by liberal norms and human needs. For English School thinkers, and for constructivists, peace is equated with the liberal nature of the state, which provides security and manages equitable and transparent transnational mechanisms of exchange and communication. In terms of social constructivism, peace could be both pragmatic and ideational, and constructed by actors with the resources and broad consensus to provide both social legitimacy and material value. To some degree, critical theorists and certainly post-structuralists see more ambiguity in peace and war and recognise that peace would only be achieved in pluralist forms by uncovering the relationship between power and discourse, and the ways in which behaviour is constrained and conditioned by the hidden exercise of hegemonic power. Peace is impeded by hegemony, 'Orientalism,' or by methodological, ontological barriers erected

by the tradition of liberal-inspired post-Enlightenment rationalism and institutionalism. Critical theorists and post-structuralists are interested in identifying the structures of hegemony and domination, perhaps embedded in universal programmes and providing a cosmopolitan response. Newer critical debates push these intentions even further, identifying new and hidden power structures and dynamics, taking the autonomy of the subject ever further, pointing to environmental and methodological constraints, and questioning the nature of human society.

A major criticism of the 'agenda for peace' in IR has been that it has been strongly influenced by idealism or utopianism, rather than reflecting a pragmatic engagement with the problems of IR, power and structure, or the failings of human societies. However, the democratic peace project and the broader forms of the liberal peace illustrate that this is not the case. The concept of liberal peace has practical implications, and can be conceptualised without necessarily entering into the realms of fantasy. Yet, this concept is also subject to significant problems. Because thinking about peace is dominated by a set of key assumptions, most theorists, policymakers, and practitioners assume that the concept of peace they deploy is ontologically stable. By extension, this means that peace can be engineered in environments where it may not yet be present. As a result, peace is constructed according to the preferences of those actors who are most involved in its construction. This confirms the pragmatism inherent in an agenda for peace, but also the interests that may lurk behind it.

For a complex set of reasons, it has become the orthodoxy that attaining peace is a long-term process, which is probably not achievable but is worth working towards. As a result, intellectual energy tends to be focused upon problem solving from the perspective of achieving a minimalist version of peace in the short term. This then provides the basis for a longer term refinement of the concept. In the short term, stopping violence and providing basic security is often the focus, with more sophisticated attempts to provide rights, resources, and democratic institutions seen as a longer term process. The hope is that the short-term peace will be superseded in the longer term by a self-sustaining peace according to a universally agreed formula. International theorists, political scientists, diplomats, officials, politicians, and citizens rarely question whether they understand these short-term and long-term concepts of peace, but instead take them as pre-determined givens, which should simply be implemented when the opportunity arises. Certainly, amongst groups united by common interests, this appears to be a plausible position. What becomes clear when one examines the views of actors that are divided by interests, culture, conflict, ideology, religion, or other forms of identity is that these assumptions of peace break down very easily. An assumption of peace tied up in the framework of a group's position on a particular piece of territory, or the superiority of one culture, identity, or religion over another, can easily become a source of conflict. One could make a strong argument that IR is actually about conflicting images of peace, as opposed to conflicting interests. Some of those images are based on hierarchical views, others on conceptions

of justice and equality. Furthermore, it has recently become clear that realist, liberal, Marxist, and various critical concepts of peace have not been developed in view of the full set of dynamics peace needs to engage with. They are still very much preliminary theories.

War and peace are seen as separate concepts, which are the antithesis of each other, particularly for pluralists, liberals, constructivists, and critical theorists. Peace may masquerade as war for some post-structuralists. For the new wave of radical thinkers, peace cannot be seen merely in political, economic, and social terms, however, but involves questions related to a much more holistic perspective of the global environment, non-human affairs, the Anthropocene, and the directions that new technologies take us in.

Yet, this separation has always been weak. For example in the debate, on peace enforcement or humanitarian intervention, and on statebuilding, there has been much tension because their methods often rest on coercion and even violence. This is partly why the debates over statebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s have been so controversial. The lack of intervention aimed at peacebuilding or statebuilding has also been controversial, however, most notably in the case of Syria after 2011. This separation in part rests on the notion that sovereignty is the organising system of the international system. A lack of separation, on the other hand, suggests that the international system is not made up of sovereign states, but of constant interventions, whether multilateral, unilateral, or increasingly governmental or even automated, built into the very fabric of an interventionary rather than international system.

The contemporary concept of the liberal peace, which is expressed in different ways throughout much of IR theory, also makes this separation. The liberal peace provides the 'good life' if its formulas are followed, for all, and without exception, and even if it rests on a coercive introduction through invasion or peace enforcement or is a legacy of war in the historical international system. But it is organised around states, themselves often shaped by historical violence, with some international coordination, rather at a global level and ignores the equalisation of and between societies. This has mainly supported Western hegemony, which immediately points to a major flaw in thinking about peace (and indeed in the capacity of this study), which is firmly rooted in a critique within this Western, secular context. It suggested a hierarchy of states with the west leading the rest, rather than a system engaging with global justice and equality as its eventual goal.

Furthermore, this version of peace rests upon a set of cultural, social, and political norms, often dressed up as being secular, though closely reflecting non-secular religious writings on the issue. The Christian notion of crusades for peace, or the use of force to construct peace, is taken for granted in this context. Lawful self-defence and just war remain integral to the preservation of this 'tranquil' order, once all peace efforts have failed. From this have sprung the great peace conferences that marked the 19th and 20th centuries, and which contributed to the emergence of the United Nations. Also visible have been the various social movements, charities, and NGOs campaigning for human rights, voting rights, the banning of certain weapons, and more recently multiple forms

of humanitarian assistance in conflict and disaster zones. Yet, where and when IR theorists do attempt to engage with peace as a concept, they often focus upon ending war, or preventing war, and in the context of units such as states, IOs, or even empires. The role and agency of individuals and societies in the creation of peace tend to be less valued, the focus instead being on grand scale and top-down political, economic, military, social, and constitutional peace projects undertaken beyond the ken and capacity of the individual.⁴²

The liberal peace is closely associated with the orthodoxy of IR theory, and can be seen as an outcome of a hybridisation of liberalism and realism. This can be described as *liberal-realism* in which force, controlled by states, underpins the democratic and liberal political, social, and economic institutions of a liberal polity. Liberal-realism explains both violence and order, and how they are related in the maintenances of domestic and international orders. Structural thinking adds to this a concern with social justice and legitimacy, but this is mainly dealt with in a liberal-realist context by democratisation rather than the promotion of social justice. So while the structuralist or Marxist agenda has been partially incorporated, it lacks the affinity of liberal-realism, where hierarchies, states, and groups accept certain levels of dominance and intrusive governance in order to also receive related, progressive freedoms. Equality or environmental sustainability is not a key issue; rather, security and stability discursively construct international life.

A number of strategies for the conceptualisation of peace can be identified in the literature on IR, and its sub-disciplines. These can be summarised as follows:

- i Idealism depicts a future complete peace incorporating social, political, and economic harmony (of which there are no clear examples) represented by internationalism, world government, and federation. This type of peace is represented as desirable but effectively unobtainable. It is an 'ideal form,' though for idealists this does not mean that attempts to achieve it should be abandoned. Some idealists saw the League of Nations, and later the UN, attempts at disarmament, and the outlawing of war, as an attempt to attain this peace.
- ii Liberalism, liberal internationalism/institutionalism, neoliberalism, and liberal-imperialism, and ultimately *liberal-realism* depict an achievable general peace derived from international institutions and organisations representing universal agreements and norms. This provides a basis for individualism, and social, political, and/or economic rights and responsibilities, based upon significant levels of justice and consent. It is generally acknowledged that this form of peace will probably be marred by injustice, terrorism, secessionism, or guerilla warfare perpetrated by marginalised actors which do not accept the norms and frameworks engendered in such universal agreements. Still, this represents a form of peace that is believed to be plausible, achievable, though often geographically limited by boundaries that exclude actors who do not conform to such a view of what is essentially an international society.

Peace in this framework can be constructed by actors with the necessary knowledge and resources, probably resembling a Kantian Perpetual Peace. This is commonly referred to as the liberal peace, embodied in the UN system and a post-Cold War 'international society.' In the early post-Cold War period, human rights and democracy were its most prominent features. Post-2001, state security and openness to global trade have presented a different character – a neoliberal peace.

- iii Realism (and other power/interest-focused theories) represents IR as relative anarchy managed by a powerful hegemon or an international system, which produces a basic international, though not necessarily domestic, order. This imposes a limited temporal and geographically bounded order, which attempts to manage or assuage border conflicts, territorial conflicts, and ethnic, linguistic, and religious (and other identity) conflicts. The resulting type of peace rests upon the balance of power, or domination, perceptions of threat, and the glorification of national interest in relation to military might. There have been many examples of this type of peace, from Alexander's conquest of the ancient world, the Pax Romana (and the destruction of Carthage), the Pax Britannia, and the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919. Neo-realism extends this analysis into a discussion of unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar systems of power, but the focus is still on how geopolitics underpins the international system, how war is part of that system, promoted by the structural conditions of international anarchy.
- iv Marxist-inspired structuralist insights into peace represent it as resting on social justice, equality, and an equitable system of international trade, where states and actors are not hierarchically organised according to socio-economic class indicators. Peace in these terms is achievable, but probably only after massive, and probably revolutionary, upheaval in the international economy, in traditional class and economic hierarchies, and systems based upon imperialism. The goal is to reorder states and the international in a way which better represents the interests of workers and society, rather than wealthy elites.
- v Critical theory and post-structuralism, resting to some degree upon the intellectual legacy of (i), (ii), and (iv), depict an emancipatory peace, in multiple forms, in which consideration of forms of justice, identity, and representation allows for marginalised actors (such as women, children, and minorities) and environmental factors can be considered. Critical theory seeks a universal basis to achieve such an outcome through ethical forms of communication, whereas post-structural approaches are wary of accepting its plausibility in the light of the dangers of universalism, the problem of relativism, and the genealogical scale of the obstacles to emancipation. Hypothetically, both approaches concur that marginalised actors and discourses should be recognised, and discourses and practices of domination should be removed through radical reform. Whether there can be a universal peace or multiple states of peace, reflecting pluralism/relativism and even

anarchism is heavily contested. However, there is still a strong sense that peace as an ideal form – or multiple ideal forms – could be achieved within critical theory. Post-structuralism certainly does not deny the possibility of peace, but sees it reflecting difference, autonomy, everyday life, hybridity, and personal agency.

One peace or many peaces?

One of the ways in which IR theory and international practices related to the ending of war can be evaluated is by opening up the conceptualisation of peace by asking the question: one type of peace or many? Clearly, the liberal peace has been the dominant conceptualisation deployed in these processes, and represented an amalgam of mainstream approaches to IR theory. The shift towards a neoliberal form of peace, connected closely to security and capital, to which the state is subservient, as opposed to rights, welfare, and democracy, has been strongly critiqued for decades. This makes it all the more surprising that the neoliberal peace became the next stage in the development of the concept. IR theory and associated debates also offer a powerful critique of both conceptualisations, and offer a glimpse of alternatives.⁴³

These alternatives are as yet not comparable to the liberal/neoliberal peace in their intellectual conceptualisation, and have had a little impact on the policy world. A debate about other forms of peace, and a negotiation between the different actors, levels of analysis, and many issues involved are necessary. Indeed, for IR to contribute to its original promise (even if weak) of peace, it must become more fully involved in this process of theorisation of peace and a negotiation between its possible concepts. By developing a clear idea of the type of peace that each theoretical perspective envisages, and also developing theoretical approaches in the light of this debate, this process of evaluation and development could begin, setting peace and its variants at the centre of IR theory rather than as is currently the case, at its periphery. For this process to be meaningful, however, there also needs to be a debate about what basis such evaluation would rest on. Would it aspire to a cosmopolitan and universal set of basic norms? Would it aspire to a communitarian version of peace? Would it give rise to one peace or many peaces? If the latter, how would the *via media*, or process of negotiation and mediation, between them operate? Would peace be limited simply to the prevention of open violence, or would it aim to respond to structural violence, inequality, domination, and marginalisation? What are the factors that create a sustainable peace in this case, how might such a peace be theorised, and then constructed? Or, perhaps, even more ambitiously, how can a self-sustaining peace be created?

As shall be seen during the course of this study, IR theory, conflict theory, and indeed, policy debates often make the mistake of assuming that the project of peace is so apparent as to not require detailed explanation. This is part of the problem of peace. What is peace, why, who creates and promotes it, for what

interests, and who is peace for? IR theory makes a number of key assumptions across its spectrum of approaches. The essentialisation of human nature regardless of culture, history, politics, economy, or society is common. The extrapolation of state behaviour from a flawed view of human nature as violent assumes that one reflects the other. This also rests on the assumption that one dominant actor, in this case often the state, is the loci around which power, interest, resources, and societies revolve. In this sense, IR is often perceived to be immutable, reflecting the forces which drive it and their permanence, ranging from structures, the state, IOs, and other key influences. Alternatively, these immutable forces may simply disguise an intellectual conservatism in which individuals as agents simply repeat the errors of old as they believe that nothing can change. This 'self-fulfilling prophecy' argument is often reflective of both an acceptance of the key difficulties of IR and a reaction against them. Furthermore, all of this assumes that there can be a value-free investigation in the discipline. Or is all knowledge effectively discursive and ideational? By attempting to understand and interpret peace, are we empowered to bring about change, or destined to be confronted only by our inability to do so? Furthermore, much of this debate (or uncertainty) is couched in a conceptual framework that was pertinent for an industrialised modernity in the 20th century. The digital shifts of the 21st century introduce new dimensions that must also be thought through.

This study underlines the view that a universal, single form of peace, will inevitably be seen by some as hegemonic and oppressive, and though there may indeed be a dominant version or agenda for peace in IR theory and in practice (currently the liberal peace), this reflects the intellectual limitations of the orthodoxy of the discipline, its culture, ontology, and methods, rather than its achievements. It is clear that peace is essentially contested as a concept. Inevitably, and following on from this, it is a subjective concept, depending on individual actors for definition, different methods and ontologies, and indeed different epistemological approaches. Its construction is a result of the interplay of different actors' attempts to define peace and according to their relative interests, identities, power, and resources. For this reason, different approaches to IR theory produce different discourses about peace, some within the liberal peace framework, and some outside of it both as rhetorical devices and as practices.⁴⁴ In the context of such inter-subjective concepts, theory is inevitably intertwined with practice, and cannot merely be read as representing an orthodoxy, hegemonic or otherwise. In practice, in different political, social, and economic environments around the world, there are rich variants of peace known to other disciplines or perhaps awaiting discovery. Yet, the liberal and later neoliberal peace have become hegemonic concepts.⁴⁵ They are wedded to a contradictory mix of territorial sovereignty, the democratic state, global governance, rights, and economic trade and extraction. The shift into more complex and technological forms of politics (a digital international relations) may advance rights and democracy, but it is perhaps more likely that it will facilitate the advance of neoliberalism over the liberal state.