

3 Peace in international relations

Oliver P. Richmond

Peace can be seen in more critical terms as both a process and a goal. This opens up a particular focus on the process 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 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 approaches (by which I mean positivist debates derived from realism, liberalism and Marxism) to IR are anti-peace, sometimes purposively, and sometimes carelessly. The three main orthodox theories are often taken to offer determinist grand narratives: realism offers an elite and negative peace based on inherency; liberalism offers a one-size-fits all progressive framework of mainly elite governance with little recognition of difference; and Marxism offers grassroots emancipation from determinist structures of the international political economy via violent 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, Martin Luther King, Thoreau, Foucault, Galtung, Boulding, Freire, Tolstoy and Camus. 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, also turned their hands to describing peace. Yet, there remains a surprising lack of an explicit debate on peace in IR theory.

More than ever, research and policy informed by a contextual understanding of peace is 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. Indeed, in the contemporary context it is also clear that any discussion of peace as opposed to war and conflict must also connect with research and policy on development, justice and environmental sustainability. These are the reasons why, for example, the liberal peace – the main concept of peace in circulation today – is in crisis.

Much of the debate about war that dominates IR is also indicative of assumptions about what peace is or should be. This ranges from the pragmatic removal of overt violence, an ethical peace, ideology, to a debate about a self-sustaining peace. Anatol Rapoport

conceptualised 'peace through strength'; 'balance of power'; 'collective security'; 'peace through law'; 'personal or religious pacifism'; and 'revolutionary pacifism'. Hedley Bull saw peace as the absence of war in an international society, though of course war was the key guarantee for individual state survival. 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.

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 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, 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 negotiation of 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 rationalism run counter to a peace that engages fully with the diversity of life and its experiences.

Methodological considerations

Any discussion of peace is susceptible to universalism, idealism and rejection-ism, and to 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. 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. Concepts of peace should be a cornerstone of IR interdisciplinary investigation of international politics and everyday life.

For the purposes of this study, peace is viewed from a number of perspectives. It can be a specific concept (one among 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 kind 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. This, in Anglo-American terms, places the individual before the state, though in Continental varieties it sees the individual as subordinate to the state (a little noted, but significant point). 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 razed to the ground and strewn with salt to make sure 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 and the norms of territorial sovereignty; the Pax Britannia, dependent upon British domination of the seas, on trade and loose alliances with colonised peoples; the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919, dependent upon an embryonic international organisation, collective security, the self-determination of some, 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.

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 tends to deal with peace implicitly, through its theoretical readings of international order, of war, and history. The empirical events that mark IR tend to be associated with violence, rather than peace. Most thinkers in a Western, developed context assume that they know peace and would never take on an ontological position that violence is a goal, though it may be an acknowledged side-effect. This adds the sheen of legitimacy, not to say legality, in both a juridical and normative sense to the discipline, despite its very limited engagement with peace.

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

- 1 peace is always aspired to and provides an optimum, though idealistic, point of reference;
- 2 it is viewed as an achievable global objective, based on universal norms;
- 3 it is viewed as a geographically bounded framework defined by territory, culture, identity and national interests;
- 4 it is presented as an objective truth, associated with complete legitimacy;
- 5 it is related to a certain ideology or political or economic framework (liberalism, neo-liberalism, democracy, communism or socialism, etc.);
- 6 it is viewed as a temporal phase;
- 7 it is based upon state or collective security;
- 8 it is based upon local, regional or global forms of governance, perhaps defined by a hegemonic actor or a specific multilateral institution;

- 9 it is viewed as a top-down institutional framework or a bottom-up civil society-oriented framework;
- 10 there needs to be little discussion of the conceptual underpinnings of peace because it is one ideal liberal form;
- 11 most thinking about peace in IR is predicated on preventing conflict, and at best creating an externally supported peace, not on creating a self-sustaining peace.

These dynamics have meant that 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. Where attempts have been made to reflect on a viable world order in a number of different quarters, the liberal peace has often emerged as the main blueprint approach. 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, to judge what is right and wrong in terms of aspirations, processes, institutions and methods, in their particular areas of concern. The liberal peace is the foil by which the world is now judged, in its multiple dimensions, and there has been little in terms of the theorisation of alternative concepts of peace.

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 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 if at all possible. Idealism and utopianism claim a future possibility of a universal peace in which states and individuals are free, prosperous and unthreatened. Pluralism, liberalism, internationalism, liberal institutionalism and neo-liberalism see peace as existing in the institutionalisation of liberal norms of economic, political and social institutionalisation of cooperation, regulation and 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. Structuralism and Marxist approaches see peace as lying in the absence of certain types of structural violence, often in structures which promote economic and class domination. Cosmopolitanism extends the liberal argument to include the development of a universal discourse between states, organisations and actors for mutual accord. Constructivism combines these 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. Critical approaches see peace as a consequence of a cosmopolitan, communicative transcendence of parochial understandings of global responsibility and action. 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 coexisting concepts of peace which respect the difference of others.

One common thread within many of the 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

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. 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. 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'. 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.

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 neo-liberal 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 Mearshimer, 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 recognised 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 and, in the case of the former, neo-liberal creating universal programmes providing a cosmopolitan response.

A major criticism of the 'agenda for peace' in IR is that it has been strongly influenced by idealism or utopianism, rather than reflecting a pragmatic engagement with the problems of IR. However, the democratic peace project, and the broader forms of the liberal peace, illustrate that this is not the case. The now dominant concept of liberal peace has practical implications, and can be conceptualised without necessarily entering into the realms of fantasy. Yet this has occurred without much debate about the possible variants of the concept of peace. 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

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. 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.

Debates about peace 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. The tragedy of these approaches 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 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 is 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 and 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. This latter concept denotes the liberal belief that shared values at the international level indicates 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 socioeconomic 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

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 a predetermined 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.

War and peace are seen as separate concepts, which are the antitheses of each other, particularly for pluralists, liberals, constructivists and critical theorists (peace may masquerade as war for some post-structuralists). Yet, this separation has always been weak. For example, in the debate on peace-enforcement or humanitarian intervention, and on state-building, there has been much tension. This is partly why the debates over state-building in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s have been so controversial. 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. This has occurred within a Western context, 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. Peace rests upon a set of cultural, social and political norms, often dressed up as being secular, though closely reflecting the 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 nineteenth and twentieth 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 advocating and practising 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 tends to be less valued, the focus instead being on grand scale political, economic, military, social and constitutional peace projects undertaken beyond the ken and capacity of the individual.

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 axis denoting *liberal-realism* in which force, controlled by states underpins the democratic and liberal political, social and economic institutions of a liberal polity. This axis explains both violence and order, and how they are related in the maintenances of domestic and international order. 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 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:

- 1 Idealism depicts a future, complete peace incorporating social, political and economic harmony (of which there are no 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.
- 2 Liberalism, liberal-internationalism/institutionalism, neo-liberalism and liberal imperialism, and ultimately *liberal-realism* depict an achievable general peace derived from international institutions and organizations 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 and achievable, though often geographically limited by boundaries that exclude actors who do not conform to such a view of what is essentially an inter national 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'.
- 3 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, ethnic, linguistic, 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.
- 4 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 socioeconomic class indicators. Peace in these terms is achievable, but probably only after massive, and probably revolutionary, upheaval in the international economy and in traditional class and economic hierarchies and systems which reorder states and the international in a way which better represents in the interests of workers and society, rather than wealthy elites.

- 5 Critical theory and post-structuralism, resting to some degree upon the intellectual legacy of points 1, 2 and 4, depicts 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 to 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 is heavily contested. However, there is still a strong sense that peace as an ideal form could be achieved within critical theory. Post-structuralism certainly does not deny the possibility of peace, but sees it reflecting difference, 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 peace or many? Clearly, the liberal peace is the dominant conceptualisation deployed in these processes, and represents an amalgam of mainstream approaches to IR theory, though IR theory and associated debates also offers a powerful critique of this conceptualisation, and offers a glimpse of alternatives. These alternatives are as yet not comparable to the liberal peace in their intellectual conceptualisation, and have had little impact on the policy world. However, the liberal peace is far from being uncontested and indeed is theoretically rather incoherent. A debate between it and other forms of peace, and a negotiation between the different actors, levels of analysis and many issues involved is necessary. Indeed, for IR to contribute to its original agenda for 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 at its periphery, as is currently the case. 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?

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, as well as a reaction against them. Furthermore, all of this assumes that there can be 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?

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. 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, hi 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 peace has become a hegemonic concept.

To counter this universal and hegemonic discourse, peace might instead be contextualised more subtly, geographically, culturally, in terms of identity, and the evolution of the previous socioeconomic polity. This means that one should be wary of a theoretical approach, or an empirical analysis, or a policy, which suggests that the institutions, norms, regimes and constitutions associated with peace can be applied equally across the world. There needs to be a differentiation between international order and peace in a global context, as well as local order and peace in a local or indigenous context. This means that peace as a concept can be subjected to very specific interpretations, determined by politics, society, economy, demography, culture, religion and language. It should not merely be a legitimating trope applied to bolster a specific theory, policy or form or organisation, but conceptually and theoretically, should represent a detailed engagement with the multiple dynamics of conflict, war and disorder as well as the social, political and economic expectations, practices and identities of its participants. Engaging with the multiple concepts of peace forms the heartland of IR's quest to contribute to an understanding of stability and order and the 'good life'.