PEACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

OLIVER P. RICHMOND

Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution
Peace in International Relations

This book examines the way in which peace is conceptualised in International Relations (IR) theory, a topic which has until now been largely overlooked. It explores the way peace has been implicitly conceptualised within the different strands of IR theory, and in the policy world as exemplified through practices in peacebuilding efforts since the end of the Cold War. Issues addressed include the problem of how peace efforts become sustainable rather than merely inscribed in international and state-level diplomatic and military frameworks. The book also explores themes relating to culture, development, agency and structure, not just in terms of the representations of the world, and of peace, presented in the discipline, but in terms of the discipline itself. It explores the current mantras associated with the ‘liberal peace’, which appears to have become a foundational assumption of much of mainstream IR and the policy world. Analysing war has often led to the dominance of violence as a basic assumption of, and response to, the problems of IR. This book aims to redress this balance by arguing that IR now in fact in a position to offer a rich basis for the study of peace.

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

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Oliver P. Richmond
Sapere Aude
‘There is scarcely any peace so unjust,
but it is preferable, upon the whole, to the justest war.’¹
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Introduction
Peace in IR

\[\text{‘You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war’}^{2}\]

Introduction

Mainstream IR theory has been in crisis, if not anomie, for some time. Looking at the discipline through the lens of a search for peace (one or many) underlines this state. 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 other disciplines.\(^3\) Even those working in the sub-disciplines of peace and conflict studies, for example, an area where there has been a longstanding attempt to develop an understanding of peace, have 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 assuming the realist inherency of violence in human nature and international relations. 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 rather than the everyday life of people in post-conflict environments. Even the ambitious peace-building efforts of the post-Cold War environment in places as diverse as Cambodia, DR Congo, the Balkans, East Timor and Afghanistan among many others testify to this shortcoming. Yet, as Erasmus and Einstein famously pointed out, peace is both separate and preferable to war.

This raises the question of what the discipline 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.\(^5\) These usually support the argument that liberal polities, notably in the Western developed world, are domestic oases of democratic
peace, and obscure the possibility that such liberal polities are also likely to be engaged in a constant struggle for survival, or a war for ‘peace’. How might war and peace coexist and why such a singular lack of ambition for peace? 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? Yet, even ‘successful’ empires have developed an interest in an ideological and self-interested version peace, whether it was a Pax Romana, Britannia, Soviet, American, religious, nationalist, liberal or neoliberal peace.

Many hoped that science would, as Hobbes wrote, open the way for peace. Hobbes wrote, in the aftermath of a bloody civil war, *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, in the arts, in branches of several other disciplines, such as economics or psychology, and via the more critical approaches to the discipline. The supposed Freudian death instinct has seemed to resonate more powerfully through the discipline than notions of peace. 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. War is significant part of Western culture as well as others, but not of all cultures. Indeed, it is notable that in Western settings war memorials are frequent, particularly for the First and Second World War, 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. 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 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 or peace and conflict studies. It is clear that there is much that is problematic with this 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 approach. This connection between theories, the ways 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 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.

This study does not claim to cover or explain IR theory comprehensively – it is already perhaps over-ambitious – or to move beyond its Western corpus (as it probably 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 the critical ground established to make this move in earlier chapters. 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 then exploring contextual and contingent interpretations. Theory indicates the possibility for human action and ethical and practical potential, 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 has long since been lost by its orthodoxy’s often slavish assumptions about 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.

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 rejectionism, 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. 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. 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 resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the context of the 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 approaches and allows for a deeper interrogation reaching beyond the state than a traditional positivist theoretical/empirical approach. 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. 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 the First World War it was hoped it would help discover a post-war peace dividend. In this it failed after the First World War, but it has been instrumental in developing a liberal discourse of peace after the Second World War, 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’. This effectively creates a ‘differend’ underlining how institutions and frameworks may produce injustices even when operating in good faith. This requires the unpacking of the ‘muscular objectivism’ 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 ‘research’ in liberal institutions, organisations, agencies and universities without need for a broader exploration is not adequate if IR is to contribute to peace. 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. 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. 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, 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 consensus on the contemporary liberal peace represents an anomalous agreement rather than a broad-ranging consensus.

Rather than support this unquestioningly, IR requires a research agenda for peace if its interdisciplinary contribution to knowledge – and speaking truth to power – is to be developed. IR needs to engage broadly with interdisciplinary perspectives 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 level, but also incorporating 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. As with anthropology, IR should ‘uncover
counterhegemonic and silenced voices, and to explore the mechanisms of their silencing. Of course, this happens in the various areas, and especially in the sub-disciplines of IR. Where 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.

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. 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. To attempt to speak on behalf of those from other cultures, religions and so-called underdeveloped regions, would assume the viability of sovereign man’s discourse of the liberal peace, which is exactly what is thrown into doubt by a consideration of 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 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 pursing 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 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.36 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.37 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’.38 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.39

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 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