

Peace: A Very Short Introduction

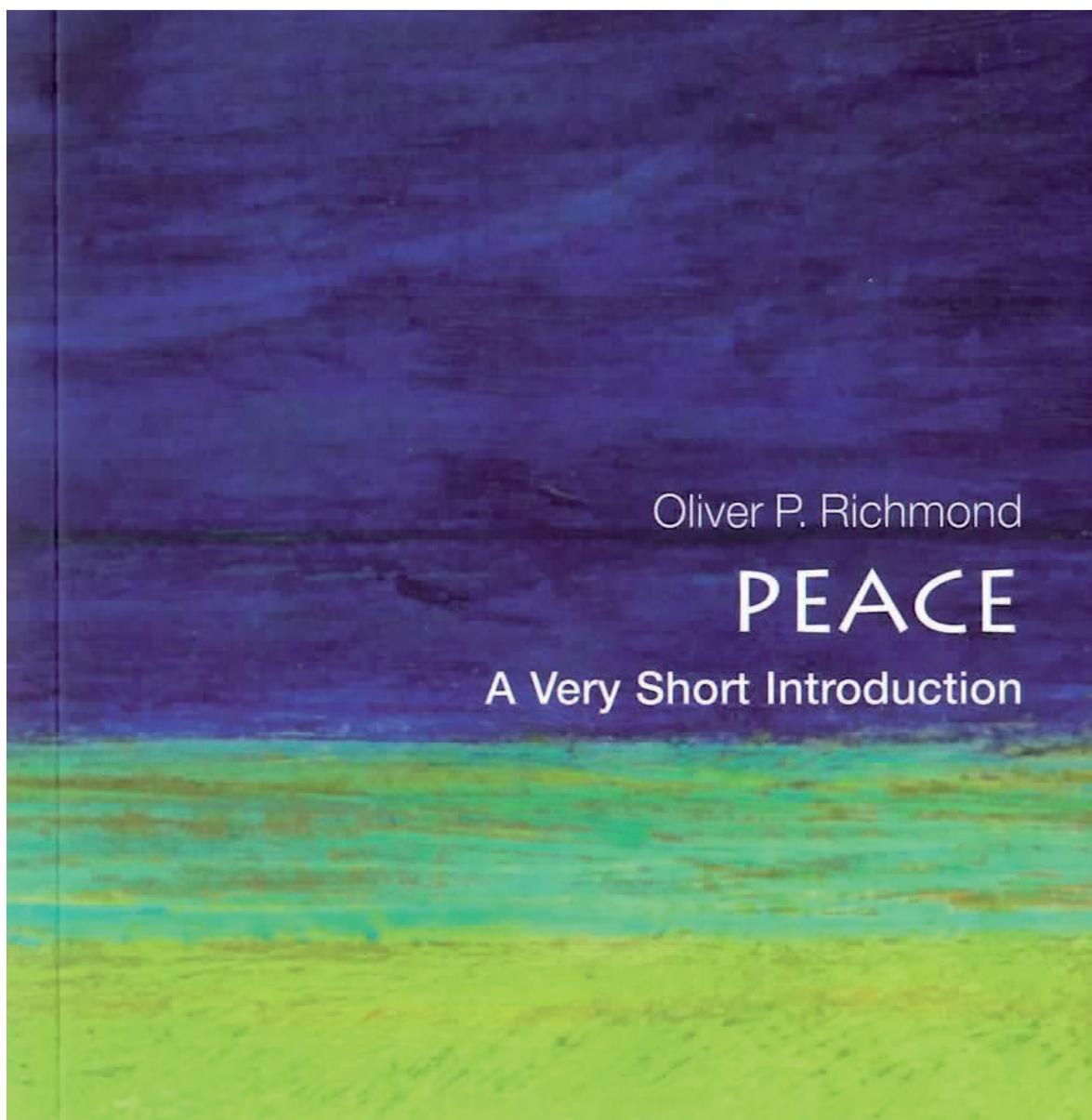
Paz: una breve introducción

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Richmond, Oliver P. (2014) *Peace: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.



Peace is a broad and elusive concept and a subjective or intersubjective one, always depending on individual actors or groups of individuals to define and to achieve it. There is no ontologically pre-determined or universally-agreed idea of peace. Rather, it is a contested discourse that is always to open revision with no closure. In other words, peace is what has been constructed in multiple ways throughout human history and keeps evolving and expanding.

This book by Oliver P. Richmond insightfully shows the diversity and multiplicity of the concept of peace. Nine chapters constitute the analysis of peace apart from introduction and epilogue. In the first chapter, as a warm-up for a comprehensive analysis of peace in the following chapters, Richmond shows an overview of the book. There are two main points in the chapter. Firstly, he introduces the concepts of negative peace and positive peace proposed by Johan Galtung. Negative peace is defined as a short-term ceasefire or a power-sharing agreement. The problem with it is that structural inequality or social injustice remains unaddressed, and as a consequence the potential for a relapse into conflict lingers. Positive peace refers to a broader view of peace – resolving structural causes of conflict to create the conditions for every citizen to live without fear or poverty undergirded by a broadly-agreed political system. The second thrust of the chapter is the introduction of the liberal peace theory. Theory claims that democratic states are more peaceful than non-democratic ones and do not go to war with each other. Richmond states that the liberal peace theory has predominated the contemporary peace debate. He finishes the chapter by showing the elements that underlie the liberal peace – the victor's peace, the constitutional peace, the institutional peace, and the civil peace – each of which is expounded in the following chapters.

The second chapter makes a historical analysis of the evolution of peace. Drawing on religious and philosophical insights, the chapter illustrates how the meaning of peace has been broadened. The chapter claims that the most significant epoch for the modern view of peace was the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 that brought a cycle of European wars to an end as it created a political order of sovereign states in Europe with the right of territorial integrity, which is a fundamental principle of UN Charter. That is to say, the Treaty of Westphalia was a precursor to the development of international law and the principle of self-determination.

Following the historical analysis of the evolution of the concept of peace, the third chapter focuses on how liberal conceptions of peace came to the fore as the foundation of peace in the post-World War Two era. Liberal ideas of peace entailing security, political institutions, democracy and human rights, development and trade as the driver of peace were integrated into international organizations and institutions as their foundation for peace operations.

The main focus in the fourth chapter is the victor's peace. In his analysis, Richmond argues that the victor's peace refers to military control or occupation. The victor's peace has historically relied on the argument that power can be exercised by the hegemon and driven by the strategic interests of imperial or colonial states. Further, he claims that the

victor's peace is exploited to maintain Western supremacy and asymmetric power relations in a global arena.

The fifth chapter examines the constitutional peace. As the Enlightenment progressed and liberalism emerged, the conventional view that violence and war are part of human life was called into question. Instead, it came to be assumed that peace could be built through law, institutions, rights and prosperity. Peace needed to be established upon the creation of both a domestic political and legal architecture and an international architecture designed to balance the interests, needs, and rights of the population. In other words, making international treaties and alliances would manage a balance of power between states and common values and certain differences constructively and consequently maintain international order. However, Richmond critiques that, as the constitutional peace tends to be focused on an elite-level official discourse by state and government, political elites can exploit their citizens while they claim they act to maximize their interests.

Chapter six discusses the institutional peace. The aim of the institutional peace is to anchor states within a specific set of values and a shared legal context through which they agree multilaterally how to behave. Starting with the cosmopolitan view of Diogenes the Cynic, Richmond looks at how the institutional peace has been evolved throughout human history. He claims that the development of international institutions to stabilize international order went hand-in-hand with the growing belief in liberal democratic peace. The idea is that if states with democratic constitutions share common goals of peace, free trade, human rights and so on, human beings as a whole could enjoy international peace and order. And this bore fruit in the establishment of a variety of international organizations, international laws and conventions.

The seventh chapter analyzes the civil peace. The thrust of the civil peace is that every individual in society is capable of mobilizing for peace from a variety of distinct perspectives, whether for disarmament, for international cooperation, or against violence, discrimination, and oppression. While previous chapters emphasize state and elite-oriented natures of peace, the focal point of the seventh chapter is that it came to be recognized that individuals and local communities have legitimate rights for security, justice, basic needs, and autonomy. Stated otherwise, the rise of the civil peace helped to promote everyday life peace of citizens.

Chapter eight discusses liberal peacebuilding, which is one of the most important but also controversial topics in contemporary peace and conflict studies. Being influenced by conflict transformation theory that argues what is required to make a peace is a multi-dimensional process that transforms the relationships, interests, nature of state and society which feeds and protracts a conflict, liberal peacebuilding connects peace and security with development, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vigorous civil society in a modern state framework. According to Richmond, peacebuilding was initially theorized in peace studies as a grassroots, bottom-up process that empowers a local community to achieve a sustainable peace. However, he argues that, as the concept evolved, it came to represent a convergence with the agendas of human rights, development, democratization and brought together divergent interests of major states in the UN

Security Council. Further, in liberal peacebuilding approaches based on liberal norms to create a liberal state, external actors such as the UN, donors, NGOs, powerful states – rather than local actors – have assumed the central roles.

As liberal peacebuilding predominated the peacebuilding approaches, a doctrine called «statebuilding» also emerged. The thrust of this doctrine is that weak states failing to guarantee security, control crime and terrorism and deviating from the liberal norms of the developed north and west are a threat to international peace and security. Founded upon this idea, statebuilding aims to build prosperous and stable liberal states shaped by a good governance agenda via external intervention. Post-conflict states emerging from statebuilding based on liberal norms are empowered to facilitate democracy, human rights, social justice and rule of law and consequently achieve a lasting peace. However, liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding invite criticisms. Major critiques are: that they downplay the local capacity, skills, participation and consent; that the process is controlled mainly by international actors rather than by local actors; that local cultures and traditions are romanticized as inferior and obstacle to peacebuilding; that local everyday welfare and justice are greatly ignored; and that the approach perpetuates local and international inequality and asymmetric power relations. Based on these critiques, Richmond proposes need for a hybrid form of peace, which is the main subject of chapter nine.

Following the critique of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, the ninth chapter explores hybrid forms of peace. According to Richmond, at the core of hybrid forms of peace or post-liberal peace should lie more localized and contextual traditions and approaches rooted in each post-conflict society. However, post-liberal peace does not reject external actors or western/north ideas of peace related to democracy, human rights, rule of law, and resilient civil society. What we need to construct is neither strictly a liberal peace nor a local form of peace, but a hybrid peace that integrates both. Namely, a post-liberal hybrid peace is where international norms and institutions engage in dialogue with different, contextual, and localized realities in order to address everyday social justice and connect external knowledge and approaches with culturally and locally recognizable legitimate agendas and empower the most marginalized members of post-conflict polities to become a viable actor for a sustainable peace. Some might find his proposition to be somewhat utopian. However, as the contemporary world has seen failures in peacebuilding missions in Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq to name but a few, a post-liberal hybrid peace process wherein international organizations and NGOs and other external actors with distinct objectives and principles and local actors engage in dialogue and self-critique to create mutually satisfactory approaches to peace reflecting contextual reality and creative modification of international norms according to cultures and traditions must be a possible reality.

There are two critiques of the book. Firstly, though the book illustrates a multiplicity and multi-faceted nature of peace, the analysis lacks the religious dimensions of peace. Although some parts briefly mention the religious origins of peace, given that contemporary world suffers from religious terrorism and that the analysis of religion, peace and conflict has become one of the urgent themes in peace and conflict studies, critical anal-

ysis of how religious dogma can turn into a root cause of violence and discrimination is crucial. An in-depth analysis of the visions of peace religious traditions have nurtured their implications for contemporary globe in which a rather negative view is cast upon religion is crucial to achieve a sustainable peace undergirded by unity in diversity of values and cultures.

A second critique is that the book lacks an analysis of peace from non-Western perspectives. Though peace research was created as an interdisciplinary academic field in North America and Western Europe with the aim of examining the causes and dynamics of conflict, violence and peace, as the discipline has become a global concern, spreading throughout the world, peace research has entered the phase wherein various values and wisdom from around the globe should be appreciated and, if necessary, a complementary relationship between/among them needs to be explored to promote shared understanding of the virtue to address unjust social/global structure and transform violent and antagonistic human relationships into harmonious and constructive ones. It seems that the book has ignored this trend.

However, despite these critiques, this book is highly recommended for its excellence in highlighting a comprehensive and thorough examination of the evolution of the concept of peace.