

Richmond, Oliver P.: *The Transformation of Peace*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2005. ISBN: 1403921091; 286 Seiten

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This book aims to transform the concept of peace found in philosophical works as an ideal type, into more tangible perspectives on how to conceptualise peace and on how this would influence the practical efforts to achieve this elusive state. With a whole chapter devoted to nine different models of the concept of peace, this book, a contribution to the fields of both International Relations, conflict studies and peace studies, is a good theoretical starting point for any student or professional looking for operational conceptualisations of peace. The other chapters are a veritable tour de force through the familiar British curriculum for students of international relations. But the book is also a call for a research agenda into the concept of peace and its nature, to „clarify the contestation of the concept of peace,“ and to break or do away with the „silences and assumptions“ which - as Richmond argues - plague this field today (p. 6).

An impressive range of material is included in this rather short book, both from theoretical works and from organisations like the United Nations. Richmond had chosen to limit his study to the liberal tradition on peace, based on the argument that firstly, liberal peace has been historically the dominant concept of peace, and secondly, other conceptualisations would need more space than available in this volume to do them full justice. He emphasises that another goal is to focus on how we understand the term peace, rather than to describe what hindered the world community so far from achieving it. The latter approach has already been practised many times, and is, according to Richmond, problematic, because it means that those striving for peace are not sure what their goal entails. The book is thus an attempt to outline and assess the political and academic discourse on this topic. Inevitably, the book itself is also a part of that discourse, and the author shows scepticism whether a „liberal“ peace is indeed peaceful.

Richmond's broad definition of peace

might make his research agenda accessible and attractive for contributions from historians. He states that, „peace always has a time and a place, as well as representatives and protagonists in diplomatic, military, or civilian guise, and exists in multiple forms in overlapping spaces of influence“ (p. 16). For historians this might suggest to start looking for those particular times when 'peace' has been defined, the concepts used in this process and whether in the context of, for example, popular movements or foreign policy. Having said that, there are few references to the work of 'peace historians' in Richmond's book. But the field of Peace History, revived in the 1970s, but with its origins in the inter-war period, has contributed to peace research from its start.

The Transformation of Peace is one of many contributions in the academic debate on the concept of liberalism as the path to peace. It is written from the perspective of a well-established scholar in the disciplines it discusses. A historical narrative is perhaps not expected, and, indeed, Richmond points out that he only seeks to establish a genealogy of the concept peace. Based on this genealogy he then introduces his nine models of peace. But he does not take the next step, to establish a historical semantics of the concept of peace, to explain the changes in its substance over time, to accompany these nine models. They become timeless. As abstractions or models they become a-historical, whereas the concept peace - like any other concept - always has its specific temporal and social setting. For the historian, this is problematic.

No outline or programme to fulfil the research agenda he calls for is included, nor indeed suggestions for other conceptualisations to be investigated than the liberal ones he himself include. An implicit reference is made to non-liberal and non-Western concepts of peace, but not in the context of the research agenda he wants to put in place. To study what peace means and has meant within other ideologies or political systems and in societies outside the 'West' would be necessary for this agenda to go beyond what already exists in most of the literature.

After pointing out some of the weaknesses of Richmond's approach as seen from a histo-

rian's point of view, it is necessary to recognise that great efforts have been put into this work. The conceptualisations presented in chapter 6, although missing time as a factor, are good models for the introduction of various concepts of what peace is or can be within liberal thought and practice. They are generally clear and easy to understand. However, students in their first years of study might struggle to digest this book, since some of the chapters and models are presented in a rather verbose prose. Nonetheless, for those who are familiar and engaging with the Anglosaxon literature in the field of International Relations, Peace Studies or Conflict Studies, this book might be a worthwhile addition to their curriculum and a thought provoking reading.

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