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978-0-521-73193-5 - The Making of Peace: Rulers, States, and the Aftermath of War

Edited by Williamson Murray and Jim Lacey

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Introduction: searching for peace

WILLIAMSON MURRAY

War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern invention.¹

The earliest of historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, provided Greek and Western thinkers with the first efforts to record, examine, and analyze human events. As the latter explicitly stated at the beginning of his history of the Peloponnesian War, “It will be enough for me . . . if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future.”² Herodotus and Thucydides were indeed the “fathers of history” and, like so many who have followed in their footsteps, their histories focused on war – specifically, the origins and course of the two great wars that buffeted the world of fifth-century B.C. Greece. The first involved the epic struggle of the Greek city-states against the Persian Empire (490–479 B.C.); the second, the terrible, debilitating Peloponnesian War between the alliances of Greek city-states led by Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.).

Yet, neither historian involved himself much in discussing the peace making that came afterwards, for reasons which in retrospect are understandable: Herodotus, perhaps because the struggle against the Persians continued well after the defeat of the Persian Army at Plataea in 479 B.C.; Thucydides, because death robbed him of the opportunity to complete his history of

¹ Sir Henry Maine quoted in Sir Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and the International Order* (New Haven, CT, 2000), p. 1.

² Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Rex Warner (London, 1954), p. 48.

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the Peloponnesian War.³ And, to a considerable extent, what perhaps they could not control – their own fate – set a pattern that virtually all military histories have followed over the succeeding twenty-five hundred years: namely, to describe in great detail the course of military events while leaving the making of peace largely unexamined.⁴

Moreover, most historians of earlier centuries had no expectation that there was any such thing as a lasting peace, or even that such a goal possibly existed. In the world that existed until the nineteenth century, conflict was not only endemic, it was expected. Times of peace were so few and far between that observers of events could hardly examine, much less understand, what peace might look like in the real world, as opposed to the world of theory.

In his description of the great war between the Athenians and the Spartans, Thucydides more than lived up to his promise to write an history that would be deeply relevant to future generations.⁵ Yet, what transpired after the defeat of the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami was a theme worthy of Thucydides' analytic abilities: the complete failure of the Spartans to shape anything like a lasting peace or, for that matter, even a temporary cessation of hostilities, and the continued descent of the Greek city-states into the nightmare of endless, internecine warfare that was to last until the Macedonians appeared on the scene. It would have made an even more depressing tale than that of the Peloponnesian War.

There is little in the history of the intervening twenty-five hundred years to suggest that Thucydides' cold, dark view of the arena of international affairs has changed significantly. As the Athenian negotiators at Melos suggest to their opposite numbers,

So far as the favor of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have. Our aims and our actions are perfectly consistent with the beliefs men hold about the gods and with the principles which govern their

³ Thucydides' account breaks off in 411 B.C. as the Athenians were desperately attempting to recover from their disastrous defeat in Sicily and as they were confronting, at the same time, revolution throughout their empire and an oligarchic coup at home.

⁴ There has been some interest among political scientists and others about the difficulties involved in peace making in areas where civil wars, such as in the Balkans, have created deep rifts between communities. Yet, even the most sophisticated have largely focused on recent events and relatively small conflicts, rather than the great sweep of history. Among others, see Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge, 2004). The great difficulty that most such academic exercises have in their examination of the making of peace is the almost complete absence of a discussion of the nature of war and its impact on the deliberation of the peacemakers. In this regard, see particularly G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).

⁵ For discussions of what makes history so difficult for officers (and others) to acquire and then use, see Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, eds., *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession* (Cambridge, 2006).

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own conduct. Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule wherever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way.⁶

Such a view of the world seems alien to those who live in the comfort of the First World at the onset of the twenty-first century. Yet, is it so foreign to what history suggests about the nature of the world, including much of the world that has existed in our own time? In fact, the relationship between peace and war finds itself entangled to a considerable extent in how the modern world defines peace. The modern belief, at least in most of the First World, appears to be that peace is the normal order of human affairs, a concept that began to emerge in the liberal consciousness of Victorian Britain.⁷ This conception has persisted since then in much of the First World, despite the experiences of two world wars and the innumerable conflicts that marked the course of decolonialization during the Cold War, as well as the conflicts among the locals squabbling over the wreckage left by the withdrawal of the European powers.⁸ Yet, the irony of such hopeful expectations lies in the fact that within living memory, the catastrophe of the Second World War spread horror, murder, and destruction across the face of the world in a fashion and to an extent that had never occurred before in all of history and that came frighteningly close to achieving Clausewitz's theoretical concept of "total war."⁹

⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 404–5.

⁷ For a brilliant dissection of this emergence, see Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience: The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures in the University of Cambridge*, 1977 (New Brunswick, NJ, 1978).

⁸ Among the conflicts in the first category, one might count Malaya, French Indo-China, Korea, and Algeria; among the conflicts in the latter case, one might number the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1947–1948, 1967, 1973, and 1982; the India-Pakistan Wars of 1948–1949 and 1972; and the interminable conflicts throughout Africa. In addition, there were the conflicts that the United States found itself involved in: namely, the Korean War and the Vietnam War – both of which involved conflicts sparked by the collapse of colonial empires (in this case, Japan and France) with an admixture of the ideological.

⁹ Moreover, the revealed wisdom of all too many is that the strategic bombing of Germany or the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki represented inexcusable acts of barbarism as evil as the terrible acts committed by the Nazis or the Japanese. The historical record of the war, however, underlines that both of those military operations were absolutely essential to bring the Second World War to a successful conclusion by spring–summer 1945. Among others, see Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2000). For a careful examination of why it was necessary to drop the bombs on Japan, see Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York, 1999); for the implications of a continuance of the war for China and Southeast Asia had the war continued, see Max Hastings, *Nemesis: The Battle for Japan, 1944–1945* (London, 2007).

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Perhaps the only change – and it is a major one – that occurred in the period after the Second World War lay in the fact that the members of the First World did not engage in direct conflict with each other but instead conducted political and ideological battles through proxies, many of whom still struggle with the consequences. Nevertheless, as Colin Gray points out in his chapter in this volume, there was a considerable chance throughout that period that the United States and the Soviet Union might have settled matters as had the ideologically opposed powers in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Moreover, the processes of making peace after the innumerable small wars of the Cold War proved as messy and entangled with ideology and other factors as the making of peace after the great world wars.

As Sir Michael Howard has suggested recently, the First World's conception of peace is a construct of middle-class, intellectual societies determined by the economic and political context within which those, who believe in it, reside¹⁰:

Peace, as we have seen, is not an order natural to man; it is artificial, intricate and highly volatile. All kinds of preconditions are necessary, not the least a degree of cultural homogeneity (best expressed through a common language), to make possible the political cohesion that must underlie a freely accepted framework of law, and at least a minimal level of education through which that culture can be transmitted. Further, as states develop they require a highly qualified elite, capable not only of operating their complex legal, commercial and administrative systems, but of exercising considerable moral authority over the rest of society.¹¹

Such conditions, first noticeable in the Anglo-American world of the early to mid-nineteenth century and then spreading at times to Europe and beyond, have required decades if not centuries to emerge. Nothing better suggests the gulf between those who currently inhabit the industrialized, global First World and those in the world beyond than the bizarre belief

¹⁰ Perhaps the silliest notion to emerge in the last two decades from modern-day American political science is the idea that globalization has rendered the modern state obsolete and that it will therefore disappear. Indeed, the modern state will mutate, as it has been doing over the past three and a half centuries, but it will not disappear. A few simple examples from the real world of Somalia, Panama in December 1989, Los Angeles in the early 1990s, and Iraq after April 2003 underline what happens when the state is no longer around to provide internal and external security to its citizens. There is simply nothing to protect civilization, and globalization would simply disappear from the threats that abound; without states, the world would then descend into a nightmare Hobbesian universe governed by the most ruthless and powerful, while in the words of Thucydides, “the weak [would have to] accept what they have to accept.” Such a world would contain none of the protections and framework that Michael Howard has suggested are required for peace. Quotation from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 402.

¹¹ Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order* (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 104–5.

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of American military and political policy makers in early 2003 that the emergence of a Western-style democracy and rule of law would quickly and inevitably follow the fall of Saddam Hussein's brutal and incompetent regime.¹² Some even went so far as to imagine they could mold that "instant democracy" with an American-style icon of free-market capitalism.¹³

But, then, ahistoricism lies at the heart of the modern world's *Weltanschauung*, especially that of Americans.¹⁴ The comforts of modern life allow for a deep-seated belief that the past has little relevance for understanding the modern world, where history has ended. And even those who do recognize the value of history all too often assume that their own particular history provides the model for all situations, no matter what the political, cultural, geographic, or religious contexts within which they find themselves.¹⁵

The making of peace, both historically and in our era, however, has taken place in entirely different contextual frameworks, which seemingly makes comparisons difficult. Yet, the making of peace after the two great world wars of the twentieth century proved to involve the same complex mix of honor, expediency, and morality that has marked other efforts through the ages. In fact, understanding the difficulties involved in the making of peace requires that one have a general as well as a specific understanding of the actual conditions of the war that has occurred. Without the former, the latter is impossible.

For example, those who argue that the peacemakers at Versailles in 1919 should have displayed a kinder, gentler approach to the defeated Germans in order to make a more lasting peace miss entirely how the Germans had conducted the First World War against their enemies – with a level of brutality that would outrage modern twenty-first-century sensibilities – as well as how the war had ended.¹⁶ In other words, the smooth, seemingly sensible arguments about how a "kinder, gentler" peace could have saved Europe from another world war are both irrelevant and nonsensical – removed

¹² For discussions about the planning for the making of peace in Iraq, see particularly Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York, 2006).

¹³ For an excellent discussion of this phenomenon, see Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York, 2006).

¹⁴ Astonishingly, this is true even among a considerable number of those who call themselves conservatives. In particular, the "neo-cons," who inhabited the Department of Defense in 2003, could not recall major historical events which had occurred as recently as December 1989, when the destruction of the Panamanian government, military, and police forces occasioned massive looting and the general breakdown of civil society.

¹⁵ Thus, the American belief in 1964 and 1965 among policy makers in Washington that a refusal to stand up to the Communists in Vietnam would be similar to the surrender of Czechoslovakia at the Munich Conference in late September 1938 with similar long-term results.

¹⁶ For how the Germans waged the First World War, see particularly Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2006).

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entirely from the context and realities of the time that so entangled the efforts of the peacemakers at Versailles.

The chapters in this volume do not attempt to present a clear, unambiguous road map toward the making of peace. Rather, they seek to delineate the general complexities and ambiguities that have confronted statesmen, nations, and politics in the making of peace through the ages. The making of peace, like the making of strategy, is a messy, complex, and uncertain process that suggests few, simple, clear directions for the future. At best, these chapters constitute a first draft to guide those charged with the making of peace in the future and who will confront the equally difficult task of maintaining the peace once achieved. They reflect the conviction that historians need to address this subject with as much care and detail and with the same enthusiasm that they have heretofore dedicated to the study of wars, military organizations, campaigns, battles, and military victories. Only when the historical record provides greater clarity can there be some hope of avoiding, or at least assuaging, the egregious errors of the past.

Some may criticize this volume and its chapters for failing to provide case studies that involve other cultures and civilizations in the making of peace. Our only reply is that we have spread our net as widely as limitations of time and resources would permit. Moreover, we also contend that wandering off into the experiences of other civilizations without seriously analyzing the difficulties the West has confronted in the making of peace is simply to cater to the intellectual prejudices of irrelevant academic fashion. It might be politically correct to have a chapter on how the Ottomans, or the Mayans, or the Chinese have made peace, but to what purpose, if we do not understand how the West has made peace – especially since it is our past that we need as a starting point for understanding the options open to us in the future? If we cannot understand ourselves, how can we possibly understand others?

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

It is well to remember where humanity has been and its attitudes toward war through the ages before attempting to understand the problems involved in the making of peace. History does suggest that there have been periods of peace in which war has been a distant rumble away from the centers of civilized life. The Romans certainly managed to create an empire where, for nearly three centuries, from 30 B.C. to 250 A.D., the *Pax Romana* provided the citizens of the Empire a period of extended peace, broken only rarely by civil war, barbarian invasion, or rebellions.

This period of peace stretched all the way from the deserts of Arabia and the Upper Nile to northern Britain and the Straits of Gibraltar. The

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great eighteenth-century historian of the Empire's decline, Edward Gibbon, eloquently described this period of prolonged peace in the following terms:

In the second century of the Christian era, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantage of wealth and luxury. . . .

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which had elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.¹⁷

Yet, the Romans paid a price for that peace: They created and lived under a system of tyranny, which, if in some periods it provided a modicum of good government under emperors like Trajan or Marcus Aurelius, in others it witnessed the murderous, monstrous rule of the insane or the criminally demented, like Tiberius or Caligula, so acidly chronicled by Tacitus.¹⁸ Nevertheless, unlike the present era, the behavior of the worst tyrants touched the lives of only the senators and upper classes in Rome, while rarely disturbing the peace of the provinces or even of Rome's urban plebes.¹⁹ As to the barbarian threat on the frontiers, which at least until the end of the second century largely consisted of small raids, approximately 150,000 legionaries in 30 legions, supported by 150,000 auxiliaries, sufficed to protect the vast empire with its approximately 60 million-plus inhabitants.

However, Rome – and China – appear as anomalies on history's landscape. In China's case, the extent of its empire, the size of its population, and the allure and strength of its culture served to mitigate internal strife while absorbing even the most ferocious of invaders. In the case of Rome, it took three centuries of ferocious wars, external and civil, to create the empire that at last brought peace to the Mediterranean world. In effect, Rome created peace by destroying all her immediate threats and then walling the Empire

¹⁷ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York, 1946), pp. 1, 61.

¹⁸ The *Annals* and the *Histories* of Tacitus recount the crimes and follies of the emperors from Augustus through Nero and then the blowup in 69 A.D. with Nero's fall. For a brilliant dissection of the destruction of the last vestiges of the Roman Republic, the rise of tyranny, and the creation of the Empire, see Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939). In the early third century, Emperor Caracalla, one of the worst of a bad lot, is reputed to have considered slaughtering the entire population of Alexandria, only to be persuaded against such a decision by his advisers, simply because it was too great a task for the number of soldiers available.

¹⁹ In Tacitus' eyes, Domitian was one of the worst Roman emperors; modern historians, looking at Domitian's reign from the point of view of the provinces and administration of the Empire, have developed a different and more favorable view of the emperor's reign.

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off from the barbarian world. But when demographic, economic, and civil problems debilitated the Empire in the third century, the structure proved incapable of standing. Even then, the persistence of Latin-based languages, as well as the myth of the Empire, succeeded in eventually absorbing the barbarian invaders in Western Europe.²⁰

In both cases of enduring peace, the fact that an overarching power possessed the resources, manpower, military forces, ruthlessness, and economic viability to *enforce* its concept of peace against all comers suggests that these two examples are anomalies, which cannot speak to the world of the twenty-first century. They certainly cannot speak to the present with its globalized world of European states, which lacked the will to intervene even against a murderous petty tyrant like Slobodan Milosevic, despite the fact that his actions were threatening to destabilize the entire Balkans, their immediate neighborhood.

In the interactive world of the twenty-first century, the problem is three-fold: How are those who have successfully embraced globalization going to maintain peace? When that fails, how will they limit the conflicts that occur? And, finally, how will they then make a more lasting, inherently more stable peace in war's aftermath? The first and the last of these three problems present the most difficult of challenges because they inevitably involve human emotions.

In the period that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, peace as the Romans – or the moderns – conceived of it simply ceased to exist. The *Pax Romana* collapsed in the third and fourth centuries, never to be restored. What followed the fall of the Roman Empire in the west was a series of ferocious barbarian invasions that lasted for more than six centuries, culminating with the Viking raids of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Moreover, from the seventh century on, the Europeans confronted constant pressure from Muslim invaders on the frontiers of the Balkans, Sicily, and particularly Spain. But the war against the outsiders represented only a portion of the wars in Europe. From its inception, the medieval world of Western Europe presented a scene of constant conflict. Internecine wars among kings and great nobles, among the great nobles themselves, and among what one can best describe as marauding knights and mercenaries fell on the backs of peasants and emerging towns.

Admittedly, all was not war, at least among monarchs. The Hundred Years' War between France and England did see truces between the major contestants, the kings of England and France and the Duke of Burgundy. After all, there were only three great battles: Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt. But the problem for the peasants and villagers of France was the fact that

²⁰ Rumania is the exception in the Balkans.

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even then there was scarcely what we might regard as peace. Truces among the great had little impact on the local nobility, much less the unemployed soldiery. Bands of marauders and mercenaries kept the countryside in a constant state of turmoil, which at times was all too much for an enraged peasantry, which resorted to murderous rebellion against its lords and masters, who had not only refused to keep the peace but gloried in war against their neighbors.²¹

There were efforts to bring some order out of this Hobbesian world. In 1095, Pope Urban II preached a crusade against the Moslem infidels who held Christ's city, Jerusalem. His aim seems to have been twofold: obviously, to regain Jerusalem, but also to persuade a substantial portion of Europe's fractious noblemen to focus their constant state of war against Christianity's external enemies rather than their fellow Christians. But others, particularly within the church, saw peace as "resulting not from some millennial divine intervention that would persuade the lion to lie down with the lamb, but from the forethought of rational human beings who had taken matters into their own hands."²² Out of that sustained effort that begins with St. Thomas Aquinas emerged eventually the doctrine of "just war" – a concept that concerned war between Christians and left the world outside Christianity beyond the pale. Unfortunately, such efforts largely foundered on the nature of Europe's politics and standards of behavior. Quite simply, at every level, Europe's rulers had no desire to give up wars of aggression against their neighbors.

When the monarchs of early modern Europe were finally able to bring their fractious, quarrelsome, and ferocious nobility to bay in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, they replaced the conflicts of earlier ages with a greater willingness and ability – the latter being the crucial factor – to engage in wars against each other. The Italian city-states set the stage for inter-state conflict in the fifteenth century with a constant series of wars against each other, conflicts largely conducted by trained and highly paid mercenaries. The results were hardly impressive in terms of great battles. The mercenaries, who were in it for the money rather than the glory, earned Machiavelli's undying scorn by their efforts to limit both the damage and casualties involved in their campaigns. But at least their selfish motivations placed some constraints and limitations on the level of conflict and violence among the complex web of relations among the Italian city-states. However, those limitations were to last no longer than the time it took the major European powers to intervene in the affairs of the peninsula.

²¹ The *Jackerei* is the term used to describe these outbreaks, *Jacque* being the contemptuous name for the French peasantry given by their masters. For a discussion of these rebellions, see Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. by Geoffrey Brereton (London, 1978).

²² Howard, *The Invention of Peace*, p. 6.

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Thus, at the end of the fifteenth century, such efforts to constrain war ended with the intervention of first the French and then the Spanish in the Italian wars. The Italian wars soon assumed the ferocity that marked conflicts outside the peninsula. Moreover, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with the advent of the Reformation, religious quarrels further exacerbated the ferociousness as well as the pervasiveness of conflict throughout Europe. Nothing better illustrates the lack of peace and the consequences of constant war than the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which wrecked the Germanies from the Mark of Brandenburg-Prussia to Alsace. The sack of Magdeburg, in which the attacking Habsburg armies slaughtered the city's thirty thousand inhabitants, suggests how far the parameters of human behavior had sunk toward barbarity. There was no question of peace.

So disastrous were the wars of religion, especially the Thirty Years' War, that Europe was able to break loose from the dark incitement of religion to unlimited violence – at least until the appearance of religion in its modern garb of ideology in the first half of the twentieth century. With its removal of the religious factor from international conflict, the Treaty of Westphalia represented a significant break with the past thousand years of European history.²³ Moreover, not only did the treaty remove religion from the context of European war, it also established the state and its representatives as the arbiters of peace and war. The emergent modern state of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may have had little interest in what its citizens thought, but it also had little interest in waging unlimited conflict against its neighbors, since the territories thus ravaged might well be under its control with the making of peace. Thus, even if they had no vote in the waging of war or the making of peace, most Europeans benefited because war remained limited in its goals and conduct and in the damage it inflicted on the landscape.²⁴

For the most part, European monarchs waged war for relatively small territorial gains, such as Frederick the Great's seizure of the province of Silesia, an action which kicked off the War of Austrian Succession and indirectly contributed to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. Moreover, the establishment of disciplined, organized military forces, subordinate to sovereign authority, provided the means to project military force without doing irreparable damage to the territory crossed. The downside was that the making of peace in the eighteenth century rarely, if ever, aimed at the creation of a lasting settlement and instead concentrated on preparation for

²³ For the complexities of the making of peace in the mid-seventeenth century, see Derek Croxton and Geoffrey Parker's chapter in this volume.

²⁴ It is worth noting that none of this applied in the Balkans in the contest between the Austrian and the Ottoman Empires, where religion remained very much on the table.