

Peace perpetually reconsidered

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In his analysis of the literature on peace initiatives from the Middle Ages to the current day, B. Arcidiacono documents the different notions of peace that have guided the human race in its attempts to end conflict between nations.

Reviewed: Bruno Arcidiacono, *Cinq types de paix. Une histoire des plans de pacification perpétuelle (XVIIe-XXe siècles)* [Five Types of Peace. A History of the Plans for Perpetual Peace, 17th - 20th centuries], Paris, PUF, 2011. 465 p., 32 €.

Everything evolves over the course of history, including the way in which history itself is written. A long tradition of self-documentation by the defenders of the 'great nations' has lent a certain warlike quality to our history books, full of battles, generals and the exaltation of past wars. The Franco-German reconciliation has certainly left its mark, but a cursory glance at current literature should suffice to show that the manly glory of war, whether it be fought is still most prominent in the national imagination, with its fanfare, military parades and flags. The cult of Mars, the Roman god of war, that is to say the cult of organised violence amongst States, remains a popular topic with the general public.

What then could be the point in writing a book about that most modest of historical figures, international peace? Often thwarted in the name national interest, peace continues to persevere, earning a somewhat heroic quality considering its more obvious weaknesses. It reappears after each great war has devastated our continent, and has been the discreet companion of Western Europe for almost 70 years. It even enjoyed a brief moment of glory at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, when it became the keystone to a European Union soon to include twenty-seven members¹.

Historian of international affairs Bruno Arcidiacono offers some original insight on the subject by exploring how the *idea* of peace between States has developed. Before mankind could declare peace amongst nations, the very idea of such a peace had to first take root in their mind. In other words, this idea needed to be carefully developed by a group of individuals sharing a common dream of a better world. The author draws in depth from around a hundred different texts taken from existing literature *peace plans*, summarizing them whilst also emphasizing the importance of the men and the ideas who stood behind them.

¹ Already set out in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, peace has been the European Union's primary objective since the failed attempts at creating a Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and the Lisbon Treaty which was later ratified in 2007. See Stella Ghervas, 'Les valeurs de l'Europe, entre l'idéal, le discours et la réalité', *Rethinking Democracy*, February 2012 (http://rethinkingdemocracy.org.ua/themes/Ghervas_fr.html).

Returning to the origins of these intellectual compositions, the author covers a wide spread of history, from the Middle Ages right up to the twentieth century. The book is not, however, to be read as a purely theoretical essay; starting from the conventional standpoint of history of international relations, the author refers as much to philosophy of law and to general history as he does to the political sciences.

From Universal Monarchy to the United Nations: Continuity and Rupture

Bruno Arcidiacono develops his argument around one central question: how did men envisage the advent of peace on earth? (p. 433). In order to answer this question, he studies a range of ancient and modern texts which all develop from the same two assumptions: *peace* between nations (by which he means a lasting absence of armed conflict) must be *established*, that is, it cannot realise itself independently, and that this can only be achieved through ‘radical reform of the system of international relations’ (p. VII). The next question is thus how to conceive such a type of peace, and what might be the best organisational model with which to ‘keep international anarchy under control’.

From the offset the author takes the opposing view of that put forward by two historiographical traditions, the first which consists in treating all peace plans independently, working from the idea that there are as many plans as there are authors,² and the second according to which they all follow a single identical linear development towards a perfect model such as federalism³ (p. XV-XVI). Reality is to be found somewhere in between these two extremes. Arcidiacono thus classifies peace according to *five* ideal models (or traditions of thought), with a chapter on each. Below is a brief description of these five models:

1. The first tradition is the oldest; that of *hegemonic, or hierarchic, peace*. Dating from the Middle Ages, it advocates a social order lead by a supreme entity such as the Roman Pontiff or the King of the Romans, according to different authors, and sometimes by both simultaneously, whose will would rule over all sovereigns and their subjects in a type of ‘Universal Monarchy’. This tradition takes its inspiration from the Augustinian notion of a universal pyramid-shaped order, according to which there is ‘no peace without order and no order without hierarchy.’ The monarch is thus seen to be the best possible ‘dispenser’ of gifts of peace and law (p. 7, 437). In referring back to medieval writers such as Dante, as well as to Campanella, Erasmus and Leibniz (to name only the most familiar), the author provides a sweeping overview of both the advocates and the detractors of this hegemonic notion of peace, amongst which Charles Quint was one of the strongest champions in the 16th century. Arcidiacono traces its development through Napoleon’s apologues under the First French Empire (*pax napoleonica*) right up to the Romantics of the 19th century, such as Novalis, who dreamt of reestablishing a medieval golden age under a secular government of the Pope. The author guides the reader right up to the American analysts of the 1990s, at the end of the bipolar world of the Cold War: when, according to Charles Krauthammer, ‘unipolarity, *managed benignly*, is far more likely to keep the peace’.⁴

² Two fundamental works are cited: Christian Lange and August Schou, *Histoire de l’internationalisme*, Oslo, H. Aschehourg, 1919-1963 (3 vol.) ; Théodore Ruysen, *Les sources doctrinales de l’internationalisme*, Paris, PUF, 1954-1961 (3 vol.)

³ The best known work being Denis de Rougemont, *Vingt-huit siècles de l’Europe*, Paris, Payot, 1961.

⁴ Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Unipolar Moment Revisited’, *National Interest*, 2002, p. 14 : see Bruno Arcidiacono, p. 66-67.

2. A second model for peace, rooted in the traditions of the Renaissance and in particular the works of the Florentine authors Machiavelli and Guicciardini, evolved in the 17th century with the *balance of power*. This term describes a group of entirely sovereign States who form a circumstantial alliance, with the aim of ensuring their security or of resisting any attempts at outside hegemony. Advocates included the Englishman Charles Davenant and Irishman Jonathan Swift, as well as François Fénelon and later, Vattel and Baron d'Holbach in France. The model was particularly suited to the bipolar Europe of the time, dominated as it was by the two great powers of the Austrian House of Hapsburg and of France, the latter seeking to escape the control of the former. The development of such a model seems 'natural', since it emerged from a desire to avoid descent into a system of hegemony. With the decline of Spain in the 18th century, and the consequent absence of dominant power in Europe, the idea becomes progressively more *multipolar* - closely tied to the concept of *balance of power* still extant in contemporary theory.

3. As a result of the objection that *balance of power* inevitably leads to perpetual war, whether openly declared or not, a new tradition developed which was simultaneously anti-hegemonic and dismissive of the *balance of power*. The author refers to this model as *federal peace* (or peace of *political union*), by which sovereign States voluntarily create a superior entity capable of imposing and maintaining peace. The two major pioneers of this model were William Penn at the end of the 17th century and Charles Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre at the beginning of the 18th century - the latter initiating a true 'literary genre', the *project for perpetual peace* [*projet de paix perpetuelle*]) with considerable success during the Enlightenment period. In the same vein, Rousseau developed the idea of a federative pact assimilated to a universal social contract establishing a supreme authority to guarantee peace, an idea which Henri de Saint-Simon would later go on to adjust to early 19th century taste.

4. It was Kant (1795), with his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, who introduced the idea of a *confederation* of peaceful states, a type of peace without constraint, which would be maintained solely through the free will of those States within the confederation to respect the laws under which they were united. It was a question of showing nations how to 'establish international peace without undermining civil liberties' (p. 439), an idea which was to be put into practice in the peace of international law and the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919.

5. It was at the beginning of the 19th century and after the Napoleonic Wars that the fifth and final model of peace was developed. Arcidiacono refers to this final model as *directorship peace*, in which a small number of powers guarantee the smooth running of cooperation between States. Proposed by Friedrich von Gentz, the right arm of the Austrian Chancellor Metternich, in 1818, it formed the basis for the system known as the Quadruple Alliance between Russia, England, Austria and Prussia at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, which went on to later include France under Louis XVIII. It is an oligarchic model for peace, based on a convention agreed upon by a few major powers rather than by all States, the former imposing peace on the rest of the world. This is precisely what took place in the Yalta conference of 1945, when Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin positioned themselves as the main advocates of a governing body of victorious nations from World War II, that of the United Nations Security Council.

A Systematic Attempt to Define and Conceptualise

What should we make of these classifications for peace? However much one agrees or disagrees with them, they are a useful tool which should be employed by analysts of international relations, both past and present. It would be superficial however to stop at this, since Arcidiacono's text is precisely one which pushes towards further analysis. Its novelty lies not so much in its originality nor in the radical nature of the theories put forward by the author, but in its methodology.

The categories of peace outlined above are not a *theory* of the author's, where attempts would be made to pin predefined general concepts on to a specific subject of study. On the contrary, Arcidiacono chooses an inductive method, that is to say, he starts with the specific (the various individual peace plans) in order to arrive at the general (general types of peace).

To identify the features which unite and distinguish the various texts from each other, the author takes great care in formulating precise definitions, explicitly rejecting the 'conceptual promiscuity' which has been a recurring feature of this debate, largely due to a standardised vocabulary and in spite of its evolution over time. Arcidiacono believes this to be the reason for most misinterpretations of texts and of events (p. XVI). His close analysis of terms is in keeping with the recent historiographical current referred to as *Conceptual History*, the aim of which is to study the construction and progressive evolution of political concepts.

After having covered the potential pitfalls of vocabulary, Arcidiacono systematically researches the different criteria which might unite or distinguish the various peace plans. Only after having pushed his experimental reasoning to its logical conclusions is he able to extract a system of classification for the five mutually exclusive categories of peace - obviously only in theory, since in practice, international organisations such as the League of Nations, the U.N. or the European Union are clearly hybrid and complex in nature. This veritable *taxonomy* which takes into consideration the genealogy of ideas is in itself a mental tool which could usefully be compared to the phylogenetics of biology.⁵

Instead of merely presenting the reader with his conclusions, Arcidiacono prefers to involve us in the construction of his argument. The structural use of five chapters, each dedicated to a separate peace model, indicates the author's desire to create a didactic reference book. Each peace theory is first analysed according to a historical perspective (examining context, individuals, ideas, objections etc.) and concludes with a summary of the general concept. Such methodology and depth of reflection remind us that it is indeed possible to be 'scientific' within the human sciences.

As shown, Arcidiacono thus disqualifies the reductive theories which, in the name of a dogmatic notion of 'progress', seek to reduce all peace systems to one identical method; notably the idea that the major peace settlements of history (the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the treaty of Vienna in 1815, the League of Nations between the two World Wars and the United Nations in 1945) were part of the natural evolution of humanity towards an improved system and better institutions.⁶ Any attempt to grade these structures would have to be done through

⁵ A study of the evolution of plant and animal species which considers genetics.

⁶ In reference to this theory, the author turns to the work of G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001. On this subject, see Hudson Meadwell, 'The long XIXth century in Europe: Reinterpreting the Concert System', *Review of International Studies*, XXVII, December 2011, p. 165-189.

grading of the five identified traditions.⁷ There may not be, in the end, a ‘one size fits all’ for the various peace models discussed; each might be better suited to responding to a specific set of circumstances. Which criteria should designate the most appropriate model? This question is not dealt with directly, but opens up new possibilities for reflection in the field of international relations.

From Western peace traditions to *Pax Europea*

It should be noted that the book deals exclusively with Western philosophical traditions stemming from Roman Christendom, and this is a methodological choice on the part of the author. Could these five categories be extended to all civilisations? Other intellectual concepts of peace undoubtedly exist elsewhere in the world, and it could have been interesting to look for further categories in, for example, Chinese or Indian notions on the subject.

There is one cultural tradition in particular which is distinct from that of the West, yet which remains close to it since it also stems from the same Greco-Roman heritage. The Byzantine Empire had in fact already propagated a very different vision of peace during the entire period of the Middle Ages, one which distinguished itself significantly from its Latin counterpart in its lack of a worldly religious figure comparable to the Pope. Internally, the Empire applied the principles of *caesaropapism*, which went on to serve as a model throughout the Orthodox world. The Emperor was considered the highest representative of Christ on earth and thus placed at the top of the hierarchy, with the Pope below him, although not subordinate in religious matters. However, externally, the relative weakness of the Roman Empire in the East had forced it from an early stage to integrate principles of *balance of power* into its diplomatic practices. The Empire was thus constantly forced to compromise with barbarian and Muslim states and to recognise the authority of *emperors* from other powers such as the Bulgarian and Russian Tsars or the Germanic Kaisers. Regarding ecclesiastical matters, plurality was also largely dominant since the patriarchates of Eastern Christendom remained mostly independent amongst themselves. This brought about a tradition of international pluralism which has profoundly shaped contemporary political theory in countries such as Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia.⁸

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire, such historical context did not however provide the necessary conditions for a *balance of power* to be established in South-Western Europe, and neither did it lead to any long-lasting *hegemonic peace* under the rule of a single European power. On the contrary, regular antagonism led to particularly unstable and incendiary conditions in that part of the world, where the term *balance* was more likely to denote unending war than long-lasting peace (until the European Union was able to bring relative peace by transcending national rivalries). As for Russia, its international policy continues to be shaped by dualism: Western-looking, even liberal in 1815 and during the period of Gorbachev’s *Perestroika*, while still clearly remaining hegemonic. On the Eastern margins of ‘gothic Europe’ Southern Europe and Russia harbour a fascinating complexity which would be an interesting case study for the five models for peace discussed in the text.

⁷ It is particularly important to avoid attempts to compare the respective merits of the League of Nations (*confederate peace*) to the United Nations (*directorship peace*) (p. 423-424).

⁸ See in particular Alexandru Dutu, *Political Models and National Identities in ‘Orthodox Europe’*, Bucarest, Babel, 1998; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, 1997; Stella Ghervas, *Réinventer la tradition. Alexandre Stourdza et l’Europe de la Sainte-Alliance*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2008.

The European Union does not feature in Arcidiacono's analysis either, although this is no doubt intentional. Brought into existence in 1957, and now including twenty-seven member states, the European Union poses an interesting problem for the five proposed peace theories. It neither denies nor lends support to any of the theories. While at first glance it may seem to subscribe to the *federal* model of peace, it differs, as it does from the remaining four types, in its radical choice of opting for *functionalism*. This is both what makes it so original and is also perhaps the key to its success. In simple terms, this has meant disregarding all preconceived notions on how to best formulate peace settlements, in order to keep to the clearly identified objective of 'the shared pooling of our resources, which will guarantee prosperity, power and peace' according to the terms used by Robert Schuman, former French minister for Foreign Affairs. Such a process is thus 'free from all ideology and is essentially practical in aim and empirical by method'⁹. Also inductive, it has created a European order of peace out of a succession of specific technical agreements. Its relative dismissal of existing traditions is a leap into the unknown and hence into a troubling 'modernity', contrary to the founding texts on the subject which have always been based on widely-shared homogeneous principles (notably all national constitutions as well as the Charters of the League of Nations and of the United Nations). What type of peace does the European Union stand for? The question remains open, and our EU rulers - that *sui generis* entity - know no better themselves whither this will lead them.

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⁹ Robert Schuman, 'Rapport relatif à la défense européenne', Council of Europe, 24 November 1950.