Antony Adolf, *Peace: A World History*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2009.

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Reviewed by Stephanie Rocke

(Monash University)

Peace: A World History is a densely written survey of humanity's pursuit of world peace throughout time. Accepting the biological imperative that humans are genetically inclined towards peaceful co-existence as fact, Adolf chronicles the methods humanity has devised to prevent conflict within all levels of societal existence, from the individual to the global. Adolf's contribution both benefits from and contributes to the work of historians and others who have industriously filtered, distilled, re-interrogated, summarised and presented information from multiple disciplines over the past century on the topic of peace; however the scholarly filter necessarily becomes less efficient the closer Adolf's narrative comes to contemporary times.

Adolf adopts a primarily chronological approach, with religion and other ideologies being subsets within the chronology. He begins in typically positive fashion by stating that the first signification of a stable environment having been achieved by prehistoric mankind – the smaller molar teeth of *Homo habilis* compared to those of primates – predates the first precursor to organized warfare – the upright stance of *Homo erectus* – by 1.5 million years. Adolf traverses both time and ideologies; noting along the way that peace is biologically natural but socially difficult. Pointing to the human propensity for sympathy, for mutual aid, and social cohesion, and drawing upon the support of biologists, he coins a neologism 'survival of the peaceful' to describe evolutionary peace processes that mirror physical evolutionary processes, and that are ongoing (p.17).

Without denying the reality of small-scale human conflict, Adolf supports the argument that it was not until the refinement of agricultural processes 5,000 years ago, specifically the development of irrigation and the resulting trade of surpluses, that the first organisations of warfare and peace – standing armies and police forces

– were established. In one instance, Adolf acknowledges that war permeates Ancient China's historiography. However, he counterbalances this negative claim with an exegesis of the Confucian adage 'from agriculture social harmony and peace arise'. The cultivation of China's preeminent crop – rice – requires 'co-operation, co-ordination, and social cohesion'; thus its cultivation both requires peace and helps to bring it about (p.64).

Similarly, harmony was a 'core strand' throughout the ancient history of India. Despite the disharmony imported by nomadic Aryans during the drought-stricken times around 1500BCE, the tenets of the two major religions that emanate from India uphold the value of harmony: as Adolf notes, the polytheism of the Hindu religion 'presupposes tolerance' (p.59) and 'The Path' of Buddhism 'has not once been used to justify war or conflict' (p.61).

While I have concentrated upon the peaceful aspects of Adolf's narratives, this is not to imply that he is blind to the realities of humanity's violent past. In one example he admits peacemakers during Roman rule 'almost always played second fiddle to warmongers' (p.46); however, his book *is* a history of peace, and while conflict must necessarily be dealt with it is not the primary focus. Rather, Adolf tracks developments in peace strategies. From the innovations in medieval treaty-making which saw the establishment of the *Pax Dei* (Peace of God) by a Clergy bent on curbing the pervasive violence of the feudal system, to an early instance of non-violent protest by the Renaissance theologian, Luther, to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648; a document that codified the principle that the (newly established) nation states are equals in legal and diplomatic terms regardless of their relative weaknesses or strengths, Adolf continues through the centuries. He explicates the impacts upon peace of (amongst many others) capitalism, socialism, and democracy; of Trade Unionism with its trajectory towards the negotiation principles of collective bargaining rather than its precursor of advocacy; of the *Satyagraha* or 'truth force' of Mohandas Ghandi that involved an 'innovative combination of ahisma, civil disobedience, non-cooperation, ascetic self-discipline and selective non-resistance' (p.186), and culminating in the development of global governance and global peace strategies. Adolf concludes the historical section of his book with the words

> What remains to be seen is whether [peace professionals] will meet the fragmented fate of the nineteenth-century organized peace movement or collectively rise to meet the challenges of a new millennium and make it one in which the final chapter of this world history of peace can serve as an introduction to a history of world peace (p.233).

From this he leads into a single, final chapter titled 'Conclusion, the Pyramid of Peace: Past, Present and Future.' Whereas the bulky pre-cursor to this chapter is written with assured confidence, the brief conclusion, in its speculative and tentative stance, is an invitation for critical dialogue. It contains the draft of a model for understanding peace.

Adolf argues that peace is best understood if broken into three heuristic categories: individual, social, and collective, with war being relevant only to the final category. Further, Adolf suggests, to achieve world peace each individual must find peace within themselves first. However, he cautions, this is not possible prior to three other levels of peace being first attained, each level relying upon societal organisation.

Starting from the base and moving upwards, the three levels Adolf proposes are: corporeal peace, or the wellbeing of mind and body; sanctuarial peace, or the freedom from fear of intentional harm; and socio-economic peace, encompassing such things as full and free employment, elimination of discrimination, and a limitation on wealth disparities. However, as noted above, according to this model world peace is only possible once all individuals first achieve inner peace.

But what does 'inner peace' actually constitute? Adolf identifies three distinct facets of this state of being. The first is 'quietude and plenitude' – a feeling of 'tranquility, calmness and stillness'; the second is receiving 'recognition and respect' from others, and the third is 'spiritual and intellectual attainment'. This is a thought provoking model, but seems to lack coherency. It could perhaps be improved by placing the three facets within their own hierarchy, although the structure would need to be fluid. Recognition and respect coupled with intellectual attainment, although not necessary to achieving quietude and plenitude, do make its attainment more

possible and so could form the base level. Similarly, although not necessary to spirituality, the experience of quietude and plenitude can render spiritual attainment more achievable (if indeed there is actually any difference between spirituality and quietude); however, over and above these modifications, I find the inclusion of 'recognition and respect' problematic as it can only be obtained from others; the self cannot dictate whether or not recognition and respect is received. This being the case, I would suggest it would arise naturally from within a society that had achieved socio-economic peace; a society that valued each human life equally and desired each to fulfill their potential and to be rewarded commensurately. In this scenario, 'recognition and respect' are superfluous to the definition of the nature of 'inner peace' because they would be a prerequisite that had already been granted at the lower level.

Also problematic is Adolf's rather structured representation of spirituality which, in his admittedly sketchy outline, is grounded in the practices and teachings of the world's main religions. A more revelatory and less constrained concept of the nature of spirituality, one that incorporates the possibility that spirituality is transient and of the moment would represent a more inclusive conception than the regulated and defined methods of encountering spirituality that are promulgated by religious organisations.

Drawing upon the often tortured, but always enlightening thoughts and writings of the contemporary French philosopher, George Bataille, an alternative conception is that spiritual experience need not be actively sought to be experienced. Nor is one spiritual experience necessarily indicative of how, when, why or what the next encounter with spirituality will be made manifest. For some, spiritual fulfillment is a temporary gift that arrives serendipitously and departs on its own terms. As such, it cannot be an instrument wielded by peacemakers. And yet such an experience or conception hints at another pathway to inner peace; a pathway that can only be explored by those who comprehend it as a new way forward in humanity's trek towards full knowledge.

At this stage in humanity's development, such a pathway lacks the cogency attained through lengthy discourse and multiple experience, and so must remain an elusive option. Adolf, however, contributes to peacemaking in the tradition he attributes to

Jean Baptiste Say: the scientific method. While Adolf does not – as the economist, Baptiste, recommended – *quantify* 'the conditions, causes and attributes of peace and its absence [that] makes peace measurable'; Adolf does, however, *describe* the 'conditions, causes and attributes' and, in so doing, facilitates 'evaluations and continual improvements of policies and their implementations' that can assist the attainment of world peace (p.169).

'World peace', Adolf states, 'cannot be this book's subject… it is the objective' (p.11). If his understanding is correct, it is also the objective of all humans who accept – rather than deny or fight – their genetically dictated inclination for peace.