Book Reviews

‘Peace Angel’ of World War I: Dissent of Margaret Thorp

Hilary N. Summy, (Brisbane: Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2006), 140 pp.

In her foreword to Hilary Summy’s account of Margaret Thorp’s role in the anti-conscription campaigns in Brisbane during World War I, Elise Boulding, Professor Emerita at Dartmouth College, begins with the lament that ‘History has gone out of fashion’. Fortunately biography has not. And the lessons of history may well travel further fleshed out by the rich detail of an individual life. Summy set out to write her honours thesis on the Women’s Peace Army, a worthy subject, but already quite well covered in the scholarly literature. How ever well researched, such a study could not have translated into a publication with the wide appeal of ‘Peace Angel’ of World War I. Thorp would certainly have approved. She instinctively understood the power of anecdote to connect in circumstances where preaching, or even reasoned argument, would provoke resistance.

Margaret Thorp was a 22-year-old Quaker immigrant to Australia when the war broke out. Educated and articulate, she was already an experienced activist in opposition to militarism and conscription. Sent to Brisbane by the Quaker Peace Board in late 1915, Thorp threw herself into every aspect of the anti-war campaign with persistence, ingenuity and great personal courage. She worked firstly to establish a branch of the Women’s Peace Army in Queensland and the Children’s Peace Army. The socialist women she met in this work drew her into deepening association with the labour movement. She stumped the hustings from one end of Queensland to the other. Never afraid to venture into hostile territory, if only to raise objections from the floor, on one famous occasion Thorp was attacked viciously, rolled on the floor and thrown out of the hall by a ‘seething mass of struggling woman’. Three times she returned in an attempt to be heard.

Thorp’s was not the quiescent pacifism usually associated with Quakers. It was broadened and tempered by a powerful commitment to social justice. Once the anti-conscription campaigns got underway, she proved as comfortable with trade unionists, and groups like the...
modernist association, as feminists. Her blend of spiritual and rational argument, and sheer stamina in debate, challenged the prevailing stereotypes of Quakers and of women. It won her grudging respect in unexpected places, while striking fear into the hearts of others.

Dubbed the ‘peace angel’ by the *Brisbane Worker* following the massive rally in Brisbane just before Referendum Day in 1916, she was undoubtedly the embodiment of Liberal Quakerism in action, but she was much more than that. As Summy observes, ‘her ability to make a bridge between diverse groups’ was an important element in the diversity and strength of the campaign in Queensland. Thorp’s personal journey towards Christian socialism in the course of the anti-war campaigns is one of the most engaging aspects of this biography.

It seems that the appetite for books about World War I has not diminished, but it is the story of the fighting, not the opposition to it, that still commands the most attention. As Thorp herself observed in 1919, ‘History is presented from the . . . standpoint of conquest and power, of kings and bloody wars, whereas emphasis should be laid upon the great struggling movements of the people towards social justice and economic freedom’ (p. 107).

Yet, Thorp was no less a warrior than those at the front whose lives she battled to save by bringing an end to war. And this chapter in her long and active public life is worth reading.

Firstly, as biography. Thorp kept a detailed journal, and towards the end of her life wrote an autobiography. She kept other records. Summy has deepened and shaped this material into an engaging analytical narrative. It shifts easily between Thorp’s lived experience, reflections on that experience, and Thorp as others, both supporters and detractors, saw her.

Secondly, this book is worth reading as history. Positioning Thorp firmly in her historical and philosophical context, Summy’s subtle analysis suggests ways in which her activities confound or confirm prevailing interpretations among historians. Thorp defies easy characterization. A case study of the interaction of beliefs and ideas with individual temperament and the life lived in action, this rich episode in Thorp’s life suggests new insights into the complex intersection of feminism, socialism and Christianity that was the lived experience of many women in Australia at that time. Among the more important of these insights is the extent to which it was Thorp’s Quaker heritage which underpinned her unusual confidence as a woman in the public sphere, and the way that experience of the public sphere deepened and broadened her commitment to social justice and strategies to promote change.

Finally this biography is worth reading as inspiration. There is a lot of detail here about Thorp’s work and campaign style—a particularly effective amalgam of conviction and pragmatism. Summy’s biography is undoubtedly a parable for peace workers, but one that deserves the attention of a wider audience. There is much more to this life, though. Perhaps Summy can be persuaded to continue the story in the same depth into the rest of Thorp’s life (as Margaret Watts) of commitment to peace and social justice.

Carolyn Rasmussen © 2007

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**Unexpected Power—Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists**


This book is part of a new generation of research on the role of transnational non-governmental activism, which has moved beyond showing that non-state actors are a significant force in shaping global politics as well as domestic change. This new generation shares a few common traits, including a focus on internal conflicts within transnational campaigns (p. 5), a desire to push beyond a distinction between norms and material interests, (p. 7), a
growing awareness of so-called ‘new rights’ campaigns beyond traditional civil and political rights (p. 18), and a shift of attention towards the agency of domestic activists at the ‘receiving end’ of transnational campaigns.

Hertel compares two transnational campaigns of the 1990s targeting child labour in Bangladesh and gender discrimination in the \textit{maquiladoras} in Mexico. Theoretically, she relies on the language of framing and opportunity structure derived from traditional social movement theory as well as the more recent emphasis on mechanisms and processes as it has been promoted by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly in their collaborative work \textit{Dynamics of Contention} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Similar to Tarrow’s recent book \textit{The New Transnational Activism} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Hertel introduces new patterns of transnational interactions which are designed to complement the boomerang pattern originally introduced by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink in \textit{Activists beyond Borders—Advocacy Networks in International Politics} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). Hertel argues that in the Bangladeshi case the mobilization was initiated by external actors (outside-in pattern) while in the Mexican case the campaign focused on changing behaviour in two nations at the same time (dual target pattern). At the core of the argument are choices made by domestic activists, which Hertel identifies following the contentious politics literature as mechanisms (p. 23). In the case of Bangladesh, local groups chose a strategy of blocking the transnational campaign aimed at ending child labour because the campaign failed to provide viable educational or other alternatives for the children. In the Mexican case, local activists used a more reformist strategy of backdoor moves which ultimately allowed them to broaden the transnational campaign led by Human Rights Watch (HRW) to reflect a larger set of local needs. As HRW mobilized primarily around the issue of pregnancy tests as a case of gender discrimination in the workplace, local labour groups perceived the transnational focus to be too narrow and focused on the right to work and conditions in the workplace broadly defined.

While Tarrow identifies six mechanisms of transnational contention (global issue framing, internalization, diffusion, scale shift, externalization, and coalition-forming), Hertel focuses only on two (blocking and backdoor moves) and argues that domestic activists pick one strategy over the other based on ‘(1) the manner in which the campaign emerges; (2) the nature of threats, if any, issued by the initiating “sender” of the campaign; and (3) the degree to which receiving-end activists share an interests with senders in the overall success of a campaign’ (p. 6). In Hertel’s words, dual target campaigns, non-threatening mobilization and a sincere effort to discuss and develop shared interests within a campaign (rather than assume them) will likely avoid resistance on the local level. While this framework provides some insights into the role and autonomy of local activists, it does not shed much light on the conditions under which those local groups succeed in changing the content and direction of a transnational campaign. Hertel’s focus on mechanisms distracts from systematic differences among local groups (e.g. based on domestic resources, popular support, or principles promoted) and the effects of the transnational discourse on each participant. The core claims of the book focus on the interactions within the networks driving those campaigns, but the evidence presented primarily states the policy positions taken by different groups within the campaigns. It is not clear if and how the participants in those networks interacted with one another and what each side took away from those instances of discourse among transnational activists.

In this sense, the Mexican case seems less about backdoor moves designed to change a transnational campaign and more about how three different participants (Human Rights Watch, labour groups and feminist organizations) define a lowest common denominator to bring transnational pressure on a government and the garment industry. Human Rights Watch used its legitimacy and power to ‘crack the door open’ (p. 57) for the subsequent
domestic mobilization. However, HRW never accepted the much broader local frames of the conflict and remained largely unaffected by the principles advanced by Mexican activists. Similarly, the campaign on child labour in Bangladesh turned only when new, principled actors (primarily from Europe) became involved and highlighted the likely dire human rights consequences of banning imports. Hence, Hertel succeeds in showing that local activists frequently have different interests and often more autonomy than assumed in the existing transnationalist literature. It remains to be seen if those local groups actually have the power to change the interests and principles advanced by powerful external groups and organizations.

Hans Peter Schmitz © 2007
Syracuse University

Liberalism and War: The Victors and the Vanquished


It is frequently argued that ‘realism’ is dominant in both the theory and the conduct of international relations, especially in times of war. Yet this book suggests that even in the 20th century liberalism was perhaps as influential, if not more so. That conclusion may strike some as odd, even paradoxical: in an age of unprecedented violence one might not expect a doctrine broadly ‘pacificist’ in character—one that aims to avoid conflict and put ‘an “end” to war’ (p. 2)—would prevail, but Liberalism and War gives good grounds for that argument. Applying the methods of ‘the historian of ideas and of the comparative historian’ (p. 7), Andrew Williams sets out the story of how this happened, of the changing ways in which liberals have thought about international politics and how they have shaped the international system.

Williams begins this timely reassessment by noting the apparent triumph of the ‘democratic peace thesis’—the broad acceptance, by contemporary academics and policymakers alike, of the argument that draws inspiration from Immanuel Kant’s plan for perpetual peace, that democracies are less prone to go to war with each other. Excoriated by realists and once the preserve of beleaguered liberal ‘idealists’, this thesis has now been endorsed by American neo-conservatives, themselves imbued with a ‘Wilsonian desire to change the world’ and, in particular, the Middle East (p. 4). Williams—a liberal of the ‘centre’ (p. 215)—is troubled by this appropriation of a liberal argument in defence of such ends. The aim of his book, therefore, is to distinguish that ‘centre’ from what he calls the ‘more militant strain of liberal interventionism’ (p. 4).

He proceeds in three stages. In the first two chapters he lays out what he takes to be the main elements of liberal international thought. The body of the book addresses six aspects of peace-making: reparations, reconstruction, retribution, restorative justice, reconciliation and conflict resolution. The conclusion considers the predicament of liberal international thought amidst the ‘war on terror’.

The result is an episodic and revealing account. Williams moves quickly, backwards and forwards, between the peace settlements of the past century, drawing parallels and observing contrasts. The chapters on the roots of liberal thought will not please some intellectual historians, and, though allowance must be made for the pressure of space, Kant probably does deserve more than two pages of analysis. But Williams rightly paints liberalism as ‘vibrant and adaptable’ (p. 215): essentially individualist, universalist, meliorist and egalitarian (in moral terms, at least), with a distinct distaste for war and intervention that sometimes sits uneasily with its moral conscience (pp. 14–21).
In general, however, this is a book that says much more about liberalism and peace than liberalism and war. That focus is a function of Williams’s opening, contentious premise, namely that liberal understandings of war are best approached by the examination of peace settlements. He argues that ‘[t]he beginnings and ends of wars are totally linked . . . War aims have no sense unless you have some idea about what you want the post-war situation to look like’ (p. 11). It is hard to argue with this last suggestion—at least, in theory—but there are two problems here. The first is historiographical: can we establish, by examining the outcomes of actions, what agents intended to do? And the second is philosophical: can we then judge the intentions of actors on the outcomes of events? Neither question has a straightforward answer. In the 20th century liberal democracies often went to war without clear war aims, took time to work them out and changed them as they went along. The outcomes of war are not always related to the intentions of the combatants. Britain entered the Second World War because of a treaty obligation to Poland and a strategic decision to prevent the establishment of a continental empire. Only in 1941 did Britain commit itself in the Atlantic Charter, with the United States, to a set of declared principles and post-war aspirations. Only in 1943 was Germany’s ‘unconditional surrender’—rather than any compromise capitulation—made the declared objective of the Allies. Britain’s war aims, in other words, evolved, and, as Williams himself shows, whatever Britain’s initial or later intentions, the peace settlement that followed was the product of power and threat, negotiation and compromise between the various protagonists.

It is a measure of the value of this book that it raises such intriguing questions. Yet it is hard not to speculate on what a companion volume about liberalism and war—rather than this one about liberalism and peace—might look like, not least because it would further Williams’ effort to establish the roots of the doctrine’s present crisis. How liberals fight is as important as why, though on this issue opinion is sharply divided. There are those who argue liberals are slow to go to war, but ruthless in the pursuit of victory—a source of great concern to 20th-century realists and of considerable pride for some contemporary commentators. There are those who argue that liberals are risk averse, concerned to save their own lives and sometimes careless when it comes to others. Max Hastings has pointed to the ‘collateral damage’ that can result as liberals opt for technological fixes and firepower to avoid closer engagement; Christopher Coker implies such attitudes undermine the mutual respect that ought to exist between enemies. And there are many who point to the efforts liberals make to limit the effects of the wars they wage. For the critics of liberalism, these are issues of paramount importance—for how the soldiers of liberalism fight matters just as much as why they are ordered to do so—and liberals avoid them at their peril. It will not suffice to blame the abuse of prisoners or the bombing of civilians on poorly led and trained troops or the quality of technology and intelligence. There is another question, once raised by the realists: whether there is something intrinsic to liberalism, to its all-too-clear moral vision, that can encourage brutality and excess, even when unintended.

Ian Hall © 2007
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US–China Relations in the 21st Century—Power Transition and Peace


This book closely examines a potential power transition in the future from the United States to China as the dominant international power. Zhu’s central argument is: China will keep
developing economically, militarily, politically and socially, and in two to three decades such a power transition will take place and it will be peaceful if managed well. While only time will tell whether the United States will be replaced by another power as the global hegemon in this broadly specified timeframe and whether that power will be China, this does not detract from the book’s significance in exploring a widely recognized central issue in world politics in the new millennium. Zhu’s policy recommendations on how the US and China should manage contentious issues such as human rights and Taiwan should be carefully read by decision-makers. Interestingly, the release of this book coincides with the airing on Chinese national television (CCTV) of The Rise of the Great Nations (daguo jueqi), a government-sponsored documentary series of 12 episodes which analyses the rise and fall of major Western powers and draws lessons for China’s own rise. Therefore, not only has Washington been conscious of the challenge or even threat posed by China’s surging international influence since the mid-1990s, but also Beijing itself has become aware of its diplomatic weight. US–China Relations in the 21st Century is a timely and valuable contribution to a global debate.

Zhu first critiques theories of power transition and establishes his own original model to explore power transition and predict its peaceful or violent nature by interrogating bilateral relations on international, domestic, societal and individual/leadership levels. Following this model, he explores two important historical cases of power transition as the background for the China/US project. Thus he convincingly analyses why power rivalry between Great Britain and Germany (1871–1914) led to World War I, and yet the world witnessed a peaceful power transition from Great Britain to the United States between 1865 and 1945. Bearing those lessons in mind, Zhu extensively examines China–US relations between 1990 and 2005, and argues that a peaceful power transition is a most likely scenario in an era of globalization, interdependence and ever thickening multifaceted bilateral relations. Overall, his cautious optimism is supported by meticulous historical case studies, a rigorous analytical framework and in-depth research of very broad primary and secondary sources.

However, improvement could be made on a number of issues. For example, while he repeatedly emphasizes that how to manage the issue of Taiwan is most crucial for the future of Sino-US relations, Zhu has proposed no specific model to tackle this thorny problem. He believes that there should be ‘a loosely formed “one China” which satisfies the PRC’s “one China” bottom line without sacrificing Taiwan’s separate political status and way of life’ (p. 128). This is not a new notion. Many proposals to improve cross-strait relations which have been rejected by either Beijing or Taipei precisely have this grand notion as a guiding principle. Thus one wonders what idea Zhu has in mind exactly under this principle.

Zhu rightly argues that political systems and transformations affect bilateral relations (as he proves in the historical case studies), and believes that China may democratize in a few decades. Thus it is surprising that he has failed to fully explore what a democratic system in China means for the investigated power transition. How will a Chinese system, featuring freely contested open elections, multiple political parties and fully protected civil and political rights, influence popular and elite perceptions of and relations with the US, for better or worse? Zhu’s future China does not seem to incorporate fundamental political changes and their implications for China’s international relations.

Zhu has made a good point by referring to ‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’ power (pp. 154–155) when comparing and contrasting great nations’ strength. Indeed, the US enjoys a superpower status due to the global influence of its political values, socio-cultural norms, sports and media as well as its military and economic prowess. For any power transition to take place from the US to China, one needs to measure the latter’s evolving ‘soft’ power in addition to checking its gross domestic product (GDP) and defence budget. However, Zhu identifies
China’s foreign policy behaviour as the source of its ‘soft’ power, rather than investigating the international influence of Chinese traditions, values and socio-political systems. One would expect him to explore to what extent China’s cultural and social influence is going beyond global ethnic Chinese communities and becoming popular for peoples of all cultural backgrounds, something US ‘soft’ power has achieved (even in China itself).

It is insightful of Zhu to mention ‘transnational social movements’ (p. 156) as part of the community of non-state actors influencing international relations in an era of globalization. However, this is a one-off fleeting reference, and he ignores transnational social movements (namely networking and solidarity across national borders among civil society non-governmental organizations [NGOs]) when he actually discusses the role of non-state actors in general and in Sino-US relations, by only focusing on terrorist networks and multinational corporations. In his analysis of societal relations, he refers to Chinese students in the US, the US students in China and even adopted Chinese children, but does not discuss the burgeoning links forged by NGOs and the important roles of the US-based advocacy NGO networks in the fields of environment, human rights and gender. In fact he has even failed to mention the ever expanding Chinese community in the US and its impact on bilateral relations.

Scholars in the future will be in a better position to judge the credibility of this book’s arguments. However, if the sound advice made in this book is keenly heeded by both Washington and Beijing, their relations will be smooth, with or without a power transition in due time.

Jie Chen © 2007
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The Globalizations of Organized Labour: 1945–2005


Presently, world relations are undergoing continual transformation, as rapidly changing technology is linking people across ever greater distances and ever more rapidly. In response there is a growing literature on roles played in ‘globalization’ and emerging ‘global governance’ by states, civil society and business, but relatively little attention has been given to labour, considered to be one dimension of civil society. This volume makes a significant contribution to this literature by its broad analysis of changes taking place in the ‘transnational network of labour organizations’. Its value is enhanced by the careful comparative analysis of three time periods in the last sixty years, and insightful analysis of labour’s relations with states and civil society.

George Myconos summarizes this book very succinctly: ‘we address the following question: how and to what extent, has the transnational network of labour organizations globalised since 1945? ... The most important finding to emerge ... is that even though this network has grown more integrated and globally oriented by the decade, it has remained in many ways wedded to forms of political organisation premised upon the authority of the state. ... Indeed, organised labour remains preoccupied with what will be referred to as the state-mediated political realm ... the trade union movement has always been global. Since the 1860s it has sustained a network of confederations—purporting to represent millions of trade unionists—that have traditionally extended their reach across continents, state boundaries, and industrial sectors. In this sense the movement was “globalised” well before the term became fashionable’ (p. 1).
International trade secretariats began to emerge in 1889, linking workers in specific crafts or industries, such as printing workers, miners, boot and shoe workers, transport workers, clothing and metal workers, textile workers and transport workers. There were 17 secretariats in 1900 and 27 in 1914.

The book is divided into three time periods: 1945–1972, 1972–1989 and 1989–2005. The analysis of each time period is divided into the same three topics. The first topic is a discussion of three ‘forces shaping labour’s landscape’ (p. 12): the structure of production, of organization and of ideology.

‘Production structure’ ‘refers to the processes used to produce and distribute goods and services . . . Of relevance here . . . is the growth of offshore production, capital mobility, the shift in the West from labour-intensive to capital-intensive methods, and the emergence of finance and service sectors’ (p. 11).

‘Organization structure’ is ‘the prevailing administrative and authoritative forms through which [governance] power is exercised and through which relationships are mediated’ (p. 11). It includes forms of national, regional and intergovernmental governance, and the dynamics of interstate rivalry. This includes the impact of issues such as the Cold War, decolonization, the rise of the welfare state and the proliferation of UN system agencies and other intergovernmental organizations.

‘Ideological structure’ refers to ‘the ideological tendencies of the time—worldviews that are here classified under . . . the categories: conservative, instrumental, developmental and emancipatory’ (p. 22). ‘Conservative’ refers to system-maintaining worldviews that support traditional centres of authority such as the state or the church. ‘Instrumental’ refers to forms of economic liberalism that promote limitless economic expansion and productivism. ‘Developmentalism’ includes notions such as modernization, commitment to progress, and growth. ‘Emancipatory’ includes ‘such radical class-based doctrines as anarchism, socialism, syndicalism, anti-imperialism and communism’ (p. 9).

The second topic is an analysis of ‘internal change’, which means ‘the organisational shape of the network of labour bodies that purport to represent trade unionists of all cultures and continents’ (p. 6). This includes struggles between transnational federations, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions for the position of the network’s principal organ, and their relations with their national affiliates. Also involved are regional trade organizations and industry-specific international trade secretariats.

The third topic is an analysis of ‘external change’, which means external political change that ‘encompasses individual states as well as those intergovernmental organizations and assemblies that are invested with the legal–rational authority of the community of states’ (p. 10). The analysis of ‘external change’ in each of the three time periods focuses first on ‘the national’ and then on ‘the global’. Discussion of the national, primarily focused on labour relations with states, reveals great diversity in the nature of these relationships around the world.

The discussion of these topics in each time period is very detailed and linked to relevant literature by 308 notes and 11 pages of references printed in small type. Those reading this book without some background in the subject may find it useful to first read one or more of the brief overview references provided in the first several notes.

By comparing these three time periods Myconos reaches an array of conclusions about the evolving nature of the transnational network of labour organizations. It has become more globally oriented and a more outspoken advocate for trade unionists worldwide, but maintains close relations with ‘the state across national, regional, and global levels. In other words, this has not been a globalisation of detachment from traditional forms of governance and authority’ (p. 148). Its transnational bodies with widespread members have consolidated
in numbers and have been joined by a myriad of regional bodies. ‘While this network is more integrated than ever it continues to represent a very loose ensemble of actors’ (p. 149).

A significant change has emerged in labour’s relations with other civil society organizations. ‘Leaders of peak confederations had long considered the encroachment of non-governmental organisations into labour’s spheres of influence as at best a nuisance. [But] Labour’s estrangement from oppositional civil realm actors began to give way throughout the 1970s and 1980s’ (p. 150). This occurred with respect to issues such as opposition to the Vietnam War, unease with American intervention in Latin America, and the struggle against apartheid. Collaboration has recently occurred with movements opposing the spread of export-processing zones, the harm inflicted by TNCs (Trans National Corporations), and child labour. By 2000 World Confederation of Labour’s reports and publications were peppered with references to nongovernmental organizations and ‘peoples organisations’ (p. 151).

The volume concludes with labour’s response to the recent growth in regional and bilateral free trade agreements that are either in operation or under negotiation, 265 by mid-2003, and proliferation of regional intergovernmental organizations developed to facilitate trade liberation. ‘Thus the free trade agreements may come to represent an important site at which the struggle for greater control of the state takes place’ (p. 156). Myconos concludes this analysis of the globalization of organized labour with this sentence: ‘this remains a globalisation of a peculiar kind. This is so because it is driven in large part by statism, albeit a statism premised on a commitment to a progressive and civically informed communitarianism’ (p. 157).