WORKING PAPER*

# Pathways to Post-Liberal Peace:

## Perspectives on the 'Common Good' in Peace and Statebuilding

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Historically, the issue of transition from violent conflict has always been linked to questions of the common good. Yet, priorities and definitions have significantly changed over time, as has the way the interlinkage of conflict transformation and its normative foundations been understood. Despite different strands of academic research, which can be distinguished along the broad categories of conflict studies, peace studies and development studies on the one hand, and more traditional approaches in law and political science on the other, a common language has developed over time. However, this process was not a linear one. It progressed in phases, each with its respective focal points (regarding peacebuilding cf. Richmond 2001, 2011, regarding statebuilding cf. Pospisil and Kühn 2016). I argue in this paper that the current debate, with its emphasis on notions such as the resilience of the local and its explicit use of post-liberalism (cf. Gray 1993) represents not just another phase, but a change of paradigm that fundamentally challenges the way the common good and its normative underpinnings have been debated over the last two decades.

Against this background, I argue that the question of the common good is fundamentally tied to the process of searching for and negotiating it. This process dependency is the main consequence of the insights that the current, "post-liberal" debate in peace and state-building has brought forward. To develop this argument, the paper first looks at the historical, theoretical, but also pragmatic foundations of liberal interventionism, and the broad changes this interventionism has undergone since the 1990s. The second part debates three lines of key criticism against liberal interventionism in building peace: the hypocrisy allegation; the political marketplace claim; and the assessment that its ontological conditions have fundamentally changed. The third part discusses the three main suggestions developed by these critiques: pragmatically saving liberal peacebuilding as part of (and along the norms of) global liberal governance; the hybridity/local turn suggestion; and the post-liberal resilience approach. Finally, the paper suggests some potential lessons for the debate on negotiating inclusion and the common good in times of transition.

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# The liberal promise in peacebuilding: human rights, democracy, progress

## The early years: anti-communism and post-colonial development

In one way or the other, all post-colonial forms of development were based upon assumptions of the common good, in most instances even in the sense of a global common good. In the same way, development and the external support of building states and societies was always linked to politics as well. An often-cited example is US President Truman's inaugural address from 1949, where he laid out the programme of international development. In this speech, he introduced three important propositions that should shape the thinking about development and conflict for decades to come.

First, he creates the linkage between national and international interests based on the fundament of individual liberal freedom: "Above all else, our people desire, and are determined to work for, peace on earth – a just and lasting peace – based on genuine agreement freely arrived at by equals". Second, he ties this desire to a clear political goal, which is anti-communism: "In the pursuit of these aims, the US and other like-minded nations find themselves directly opposed by a regime with contrary aims and a totally different concept of life. That regime adheres to a false philosophy which purports to offer freedom, security, and greater opportunity to mankind. Misled by that philosophy, many peoples have sacrificed their liberties only to learn to their sorrow that deceit and mockery, poverty and tyranny, are their reward. That false philosophy is communism." Finally, in order to implement this programme, he constructs and utilises the idea of "under-development": "More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. [...]Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens."

Hence, from the very beginning, the idea of liberal interventionism in terms of underdevelopment and violent conflict has been tied to a political interest and global power configuration: anti-communism, and soon thereafter the shift from colonial to post-colonial control. It is impossible to think about globally imposed norms outside of this particular context. Many of the current debates about – and the resistance against – institutions of global justice and norm promotion can be understood against this background.

From the outset, the international project of development policy interpreted Truman's vision (that very much translated into the United Nations' mission) in an economic sense. Rostow's (1960) "stages of economic growth" was probably the most influential work in shaping the World Bank's and broader development thinking in the 1950s and 1960s, along the main idea that economic progress and catch-up development

would eventually lead to liberal democracy. It was not by chance that Rostow's book was subtitled "a non-communist manifesto".

This economistic and top-down understanding of "common good" creation – besides the epistemological problem of expanding the Western liberal understanding of a "common good" to a global scale – soon resulted in a practical impasse. In order to achieve development success in the sense of broad-scale modernisation, the multilateral development institutions and the big bilateral players, in particular the US, were more than willing to accept authoritarian partners and to supply them with international legitimacy. In this context, it is important to underline that the "bastard, but our bastard"–rhetoric of US diplomacy Kissinger-style[1] was an outcome not just of anti-communist political powerplay: it was also a logical and almost necessary consequence of the growth-focus by international development. Chile under Pinochet, and the heavy engagement of neoliberal Chicago economists in support of that regime and its economic policies, is perhaps the most striking case in point. While, for example, Milton Friedman explicitly disliked the Pinochet regime, he very much supported its economic policies (even practically on the ground) along the perspective that economic liberalisation sooner or later would end up in a liberal society.

## Democracy building

For reasons that are still not fully understood academically, the US moved away from this approach in the second term of the Reagan presidency. The shift from promoting economic development and anti-communism at whatever cost (from Somoza in Nicaragua to Marcos in the Philippines) during Reagan's first term, to democracy promotion in his second term, was a fundamental strategic and paradigmatic shift. Even more so, as this move happened not after the end of the cold war and Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis, but several years before that.

The apparatus set in place by the Reagan administration still very much dominates the way peace- and statebuilding is thought about and constructed today. Highly influential organisations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (founded in 1983) and the United States Institute of Peace (founded in 1984) are inventions of this particular period. Supported by considerable funding, also coming from the US intelligence services, a whole strand of democracy promotion research was created – in the form of a normative undertaking supporting the agenda for building democracy. Larry Diamond (Stanford University and Hoover Institution) acted – and, to a certain extent, still acts – as a crystallising figure of high international significance (cf. Robinson 1996: 45–55). Important practical steps were taken as well: the fall of Marcos, with the explicit approval from the US that over decades supported him without any strings attached, turned into the catalysing event of democracy promotion, with Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti as other important cases of regime change in the latter half of the 1980s. Samuel Huntington's famous book about the democracy's "third wave" is the main account processing this change (Huntington 1991: i.p. 92–97).

The main seminal work critically scrutinising the shift to democracy promotion, William I. Robinson's *Promoting Polyarchy*, interprets this process as an attempt,

ultimately successful, to stabilise international political control in preparation for a post-communist era. In his view, the bold move from supporting authoritarianism to building democracy was rather aimed at promoting polyarchical political settlements that would be easier to control along the interests of a global power. This view was later supported by Beate Jahn (2007a), who, in her historical overview about liberal diplomacy, denied the idea of honest interest, and instead supported the assumption of liberal interventionism being a structural component of international powerplay. David Chandler (2006) later interpreted statebuilding interventions as products of an "empire in denial", using the Dayton framework in Bosnia as the main example.

Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the democracy promotion approach has deep ontological roots that reach beyond mere power interests. Rather, it is a consequence of the application of the democratic peace theory from the international realm to the national level (Newman et al. 2009: 11; cf. Lemay-Hébert 2013). The belief that integration and institutionalist neofunctionalism are instrumental in gradually building peace and promoting liberal democracy was one of the main cornerstones the European Union was built upon (Rosamond 2000: 51–73) – and is still very much the driver of its external policies (Pospisil 2016). Accordingly, ideational reasoning has informed the shift to democracy promotion as well, and there is reason to believe that the approach the Reagan administration took – taking with it the whole international apparatus of multilateral and bilateral development – is also due to a predominant belief within this administration that the "common good", still perceived in Truman's terms as individual political freedom, would not come about as a necessary consequence of economic take-off (as Rostow and his successors, particularly in the World Bank, firmly believed).

The end of the cold war reinforced this new thinking along the consequential perception of an "end of history" due to the convincing and irrevocable win of liberalism:

> *"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government"*
> (Fukuyama 1989: 1).

Democracy promotion thus seemed the obvious way to go, at least as an accompanying element along the still influential framework of economic development (which shifted from pure growth-related approaches to an approach based on basic needs). The World Bank's "good governance" agenda translated this approach into technocratic policy terms (Doornbos 2001).

## Institutionalisation before democratisation

Democracy promotion soon showed significant problems. These problems reflected the flaws that have already been identified in the theory of the democratic peace:

> *"Democracies do not reliably externalise their domestic norms of conflict resolution and do not trust or respect one another when their interests clash. Moreover, elected leaders are not especially accountable to peace loving publics or pacific interest groups, democracies are particularly slow to mobilise or incapable of surprise attack, and open political competition does not guarantee that a democracy will reveal private information about its level of resolve thereby avoiding conflict"*
> (Rosato 2003: 585).

Similar issues come into play during democracy promotion, particularly in divided societies (Snyder 2000). Other, more sociologically oriented accounts highlight the actual functionality of dysfunctionality, in particular the amazing ability of national elites to exploit whatever political system for their particularistic interests (Migdal 1988; Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Along with an increasing perception of the potential dysfunctionality of electoral democracy depending on context, international policy became concerned with the issue of violent internal conflict. Somalia, Rwanda, and later the post-Yugoslav wars acted as the trigger factors (Duffield 2001). These wars turned existing ideas of warfare upside-down. Kaldor (1999: 2) and others argued that these "new wars" would blur lines between warfare, crime, and organised violence against human rights. This claim supported the pathway to "unbound security" (Huysmans 2014) in the global arena, which was catalysed further – and then canonised – by the "human security" concept (Kaldor 2007). Despite some claiming it was not much more than "hot air" (Paris 2001), human security's uptake at the UN level, particularly in the *In Larger Freedom* report, made the concept essential in the establishment of the so-called development-security nexus (Duffield 2010). This nexus streamlined the highly securitised, but also de-politicised (Chandler 2007) international handling of violent conflict.

With democracy not being able to sufficiently address this security concern, institutions were seen as the main "fix" to violent conflict. Building and strengthening functioning state institutions was predominantly interpreted as a sequential process, where participatory processes needed to be postponed after once the threshold to guarantee peaceful political competition has been reached. In contrast to the heyday of development authoritarianism, however, this was not just claimed by development economists or cold war veterans, but by proponents of liberal peacebuilding as well, such as Roland Paris (2004). Some, like Mary Kaldor (2013), even explicitly linked this to the use of force, effectively referring to military interventionism:

> *"If we are to reconceptualise political violence as 'new war' or crime and the use of force as cosmopolitan law enforcement rather than war-fighting, then we have to be able to challenge the claims of those who conceptualise political violence as 'old war', and this can only be done through critical publicly-engaged analysis".*

The resulting contradictory assemblage of externally supported institution building, the promotion of global rights, international powerplay and colonial legacy soon became a problem:

> *"Countries have to be able to construct state institutions not just within their own borders but in other more disorganised and dangerous countries as well. In years past, they would have done this simply by invading the country and adding it administratively to their empire. Now we insist that we are promoting democracy, self-government, and human rights, and that any effort to rule other people is merely transitional rather than imperial in ambition. Whether the Europeans know significantly more than Americans about how to square this circle remains to be seen"*
> (Fukuyama 2005: 164).

The post-colonial accusation "empire in denial" returned, and much more radical critiques than Fukuyama's challenged the idea that international support could help in strong and functional state institutions, eventually leading to democracy and human rights. Furthermore, these critiques raised considerable doubts regarding the intentions of such interventions, as the next section will show.

# The critique

It is telling that the term "liberal peacebuilding" was predominantly coined by the numerous critics who argued against it. Very few of those who were actually supporting the approach used this label (Paris 2009; 2010). The range of critiques against liberal peacebuilding is broad and engages with a variety of concerns and problems. From the aspect of the normative underpinning of the liberal peacebuilding project, three strands require particular attention: the accusation that liberal peacebuilding was hypocritical, that it had a limited future due to changing international conditions, and that its ontological foundations had vanished (if they had not always been an illusion).

## Liberal peacebuilding is hypocritical

The claim that liberal peacebuilding would be hypocritical continues a line of thinking that has always accompanied development policy and international intervention. It reflects Robinson's above-cited assumptions about democracy promotion as a prolongation of US global powerplay and shares viewpoints with those seeing development policy as a mere continuation of colonial interest, as has been raised, for example, by post-colonial studies (e.g. Dossa 2007). A distinction can be drawn between accounts that accept the aims of liberal peacebuilding, but which understand them as overwhelmed by conditions, context and policy pragmatism, and others that interpret the hypocrisy founded in structural problems attached to the principles of liberal interventionism.

Barnett and Zürcher's (2009) notion of "compromised peacebuilding" exemplifies the pragmatist perspective. They explain the failure to implement global liberal standards by the limits of international intervention that are predominantly set by national and local elites. A tacit pact would be the most likely result of this encounter, as usually neither of the sides wants to get involved in confronting power politics. By enabling constructive ambiguity, such compromised peacebuilding may not be the worst outcome, however. With respect to the question of the common good, this opens up a rather powerful argument: people could be worse off if international norms and standards are implemented with full sincerity and force. From a normative perspective, such an approach remains not just ambiguous, but ambivalent: while it subscribes to international legal norms, it accepts their limitations – in particular in their implementation – and looks for the best possible (or "good enough") solution instead. Certainly compelling in its pragmatist stance, this strand of critique, interprets the common good in the sense of the smallest common denominator which, in a considerable number of cases, may be rather small indeed.

The second strand also starts from the observation that liberal interventionism fails to take into account the local historical and political conditions it has to operate in (Jahn 2007b; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Yet, in contrast to liberal self-critique, it aims at the normative foundations: as Jahn (2007b: 221) argues, the "crucial role given to elections and civil society associations in the transition paradigm indeed entails a 'romanticisation' of the Western model." The fundamental problem raised here is not a simple relativist claim, which would argue that human rights or liberal democracy are contextual concepts that cannot be applied globally. Instead, the critique focuses on the difficulty of synchronising a developmental approach with the aim of liberal freedoms: "the universalist claim that all peoples are free and able to govern themselves, and the particularist philosophy of history which posits a developmental inequality between liberals and nonliberals and thus denies the latter these rights" (ibid: 224). According to this view, there is a tautological quality inherent in these liberal values that makes them unable to fail and, for this reason, impossible to succeed. Especially in humanitarian interventions, Jahn (ibid: 226) claims, the impossibility of the application of global liberal norms becomes obvious, but "failure just confirms liberalism's basic assumptions – of its own superiority ... – and leads logically to the pursuit of the already failed policies with renewed vigour and conviction."

This can be exemplified by a speech given by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair in response to the Chilcot report, which scrutinised his decision to go to war with Iraq under Saddam Hussein: "We need an honest debate in the West about our own values and level of commitment to them. The West has a big decision to take: does it believe it has a strategic interest in the outcome of the struggle in the Middle East and elsewhere around the issues of Islamist extremism? And if so, what level of commitment is it prepared to make to shape the outcome? My view obviously is that it does have such an interest and should make the necessary commitment."

We could call this approach "militant liberalism", a liberalism in the sense of an honourable fight by "us" (the West, the "international community", a "coalition of the willing") against "them", with the aim that "they" shall take over what the respective

invader thinks is rightful and just. It is not just the immediate consequence of such an approach that is unfortunate, as it remains an act of war, in whatever ways it may be legitimised by the UN or other forms of legal underpinning. The consequences of militant liberalism range considerably wider: by taking liberal values as a tool to justify warfare, these values are sustainably delegitimised as offerings in any negotiation about the common good. The unsettling claim of critics such as Jahn or Chandler (2010) is that it may not be possible to induce liberal rights and freedoms in times of transition from conflict without anti-liberal and violent policies.

## Liberal internationalism loses purchase due to changing international conditions

Several recent accounts assess a loss in purchase of normative elements, such as ideologies, philosophies and traditions in the shaping of transformative political processes. Thomas Carothers and Oren Samet-Marram (2015) argue that a "new global marketplace of political change" would emerge. This is happening against the background of a broad range of support offers in the global arena that are not just based on material means, but also involve a new quality of normative selectivity. This global marketplace is not just relevant for the traditional elements of diplomacy and conflict mediation, but it "is also making itself felt in the traditionally quieter arena of democracy aid" (ibid: 30). Drawing on Carothers' seminal work on the "end of the transition paradigm" (Carothers 2002), they argue that the increasing competition to the West in the quest for global democracy has to move away from the longstanding idea of inducing system change. "The assumption that the established Western democracies are the dominant actors working across borders to affect the political direction or outcome in countries experiencing fundamental political change" would be no longer valid (Carothers and Samet-Marram 2015: 29).

The argument of a marketplace-like approach to political identity is radicalised and extended to the local level by Alex de Waal (2015). What can be the role of international and other contractual rights and obligations in contexts where every form of political identity remains fluid, and where political loyalty can be bought and sold just like any other commodity? De Waal underpins his argument with the example of the Darfur peace negotiations, in which none of the included militant groups seemed to be interested in what was discussed about and stated in the peace agreement, but in what amount of money and other means they were going to get from this "peace process". In drawing on a commodity-like understanding of political interest, accounts like de Waal's and Carothers' are following the lines put forward by Collier and others in their World Bank-commissioned work on greed and grievance (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The greed and grievance debate was instrumental in shifting the focus from the potential reasons of rebellion (in conflict studies often called "structural causes") to the opportunities of rebellion, in particular the relation between costs and (potential) benefit, and the availability of financial and military means.

The tone of this critique is pessimistic, and overly rationalist suggestions may emerge from it – such as the potential idea to pay off actors in order to achieve short-term stability. Yet, the marketplace claim does not necessarily result in a refusal of the normative elements of liberalism. It contains, however, a serious challenge on how to proceed with liberal values. If the marketplace assumption proves to have explanatory value, even partially, the historic moment of global liberal governance may well be over. Indeed, a liberal overstretch can currently be observed in the increasing rejection of the International Criminal Court, which has turned into a symbol of unwanted interference of liberal power – a symbol not just rejected by a substantial and ever-growing number of governments in sub-Sahara Africa, but also in public perception. While no reliable cross-country data exists, recent moves such as the attempted retreat of South Africa, arguably one of the most liberal countries in sub-Sahara Africa, from the International Criminal Court resulted in no public outcry in the country.

When the defenders of global liberal governance become overwhelmingly centred on the OECD and its multilateral organisations situated therein, the backlash caused by the global marketplace is in full swing. Consequently, the question of whether liberal values or associated ideas such as international criminal law are ethically right or wrong loses relevance. What remains is a problem of international power – but very different from the one highlighted by critical approaches of the 1980s and 1990s, such as post-colonialism and anti-Eurocentrism. Colonialist and Eurocentric thinking may not be completely gone – the institutions of global liberal governance certainly are one substantial retreat – but these ideas have substantially lost international purchase.

Against this background, the marketplace critique is certainly not to be understood in the sense of a value relativism, but rather as a rational assessment of the globally diminishing ideational power of these values (cf. Newman et al. 2009: 12). This has important strategic consequences, since any further attempt to establish liberal values – via the enlargement of international organisations, UN resolutions, in-country consultancy or the like – is not only bound to fail in these conditions, but likely to decrease the global purchase of liberal values even further.

## The ontological foundations of liberal interventionism have vanished (or were flawed from the outset)

Accounts such as Collier's or de Waal's can be interpreted in an even more radical way, as signposts of an ontological critique of the very foundations of liberal interventionism in an age of global complexity. The key assumption made in this sense is that the ontological underpinning necessary for the autonomous liberal subject disappears with globalisation. While a fully autonomous liberal subject has always been an ideal-type figure, comparable to the infamous *homo economicus*, the transformation discussed here is not about diminishing or shifting space, but about a fundamental change of ontology. Just as even the ideal-type figure of the *homo economicus* would be obsolete outside of the conditions of market economy, the autonomous liberal subject ceases to exist

when its structural foundations no longer exist, in particular the ability to be responsible (and to be held responsible) for actions and respective outcomes.

As Chandler (2014) argues, globalisation transcends the traditional agent-structure-divide as well as the divide between the international and the local. Globalisation creates structural linkages encompassing the global and the local, linkages some would understand as "hybrid" in the sense of an "interaction between cultures attend contexts undergoing international ... operations" (Mac Ginty 2011: 72; cf. Richmond 2009: 55). Yet, the ontological argument reaches significantly beyond the idea of hybridity. It claims that, by introducing complexity as the ontological condition of life, globalisation needs to be understood "as removing the fixed or 'organic' nature of political communities and ties between states and societies", hence it "problematises the possibility of fixed moral frameworks of judgement" (Chandler 2014: 443).

As a result, a relational ontology emerges in which individual responsibility is no longer possible due to the impenetrability of causes and consequences of actions. The conditions of personal accountability are gone in such a setting, since any clear and causal relation between actions and outcomes is impossible to construct (ibid: 444). Indeed, this ontological shift requires us to think beyond liberal norms, as a loss of the fundamental conditions of individual autonomy renders its claims along the lines of rights and obligations obsolete.

In their radical interpretation, new institutional economics (NIE) take over a theoretically explaining role of such an ontology of complexity. By transmuting the focus from economy or ideology to institutions and their contextuality, NIE neglects the possibility of success of external interventions in institutional settings. Intentional systemic change becomes impossible, systemic critique pointless (Chandler in Chandler and Richmond 2015: 17). The agent-structure distinction transcends. The political settlements approach, an outcome of NIE-based thinking, reflects this problem, in particular with the (analytically correct) focus on the elite level, but its necessarily weak capacity to navigate the bargaining of inclusion (Bell and Pospisil 2017). On the other hand, the convincing ability of NIE to demonstrate the failure of policies of peacebuilding and statebuilding, and development in general, cannot be underestimated.

## The suggestions

What are the potential suggestions evolving from these critiques on how the common good in transitions from conflict may be constructed? As expected, there is a wide range of approaches that range from "saving" what is left as common international practice to a radical shift towards embracing the "everyday". For the question of how to navigate inclusion, the comparison reveals that the issue is not so much a matter of "negotiation", but what is actually meant by inclusion.

## Saving liberal peacebuilding

The first proposition is brought forward by proponents such as Roland Paris and Mary Kaldor. It is a very simple one: save liberal peacebuilding (Paris 2010). The main reason for this is the alleged lack of any other viable alternative. The downsides of the, partly necessarily violent, global imposition of liberal norms in this logic thus have to be counterbalanced with the bleak alternatives. "The simple answer is that alternative strategies – that is, strategies not rooted in liberal principles – would likely create more problems than they would solve" (ibid: 357). Either such strategies would risk turning into violent authoritarianism, or they could reinforce local rifts and divisions that further undermine the rule of law.

The approach suggested nowadays is much more nuanced compared with early liberal interventionism post-cold war. On the one hand, the proposed changes concern tactics: here, a shift from a principle-based approach (such as in democracy promotion) to a sequenced approach (institutionalisation before democratisation, cf. Paris 2004; Ghani and Lockhart 2009) is suggested. Nonetheless, as shown above, such sequencing echoes the substantial conceptual problem any attempt of liberal peacebuilding has to face: in order to work, it has to rely on illiberal, and at times violent, methods, and so is undermining its own ethical foundations (Newman 2009: 30–31; Jahn 2007b). Therefore, Paris (2010: 359) adds a substantial self-reflexive and self-constraining component: "No society has a single, unambiguous set of governance structures (traditional or otherwise) that can be automatically activated. Consequential decisions must therefore be made to privilege some structures and not others – and, as much as peacebuilders might view themselves as referees in such decisions, in fact they will always be 'players' simply by virtue of their relative power in the domestic setting of a war-torn state." Such thinking very much resonates with current international strategies, such as the EU's Global Strategy: "It [the EU's engagement] entails having more systematic recourse to cultural, inter-faith, scientific and economic diplomacy in conflict settings" (EUGS 2016: 31).

Yet liberal values are reinforced as the guiding principles that have to shape intervention: "The key principles of liberalism – individual freedoms, representative government, and constitutional limits on arbitrary power – offer a broad canvas for institutional design and creative policymaking" (Paris 2010: 360).

"Inclusive politics", as used in the US National Security Strategy (NSS 2015: 10–11), or the "inclusive political settlement", as used in the EU's Global Strategy (EUGS 2016: 31), have emerged as the internationally digestible language of this "broad canvas". Despite the inclusive tone, however, the logic of these international strategies remains tied to the language of security, democracy and effective service delivery. Further, these notions are increasingly augmented with a discourse of securitisation and delegitimisation: the EU Global Strategy, for example, explicitly refers to the promotion of a "legitimate economy" when speaking about issues of inclusive politics (EUGS 2016: 31), the US National Security Strategy highlights "combating corruption and organised crime" in the same sentence in which "inclusive politics" are referred to (NSS 2015: 10–11).

These two examples demonstrate why the "broad canvas" that liberal values may provide conceptually is bound to fail in peacebuilding practice: there is no way *not* to tie

liberal values to the consequences of illiberal behaviour. Since such illiberal behaviour is the norm in the context of liberal peacebuilding intervention (otherwise the intervention would not be necessary in the first place), it brings along the language of security, threat and interest. It is important to underline that this is indeed a structural problem of any peacebuilding strategy. It could well be that the notion and the understanding of "strategy" – something purposefully designed to achieve certain aims with certain means – is in itself what shrinks the "broad canvas" of liberalism to the narrow and rather violent path of liberal peacebuilding.

## Hybridity and the local turn

The most prominent counter-argument against the liberal peacebuilding approach is presented by the so-called "local turn" (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Against the background of older ideas by Lederach (2005) and others about the necessary subjectivity and inter-personality of any peacebuilding engagement, the "local turn" aims to reflect the "inter-subjective nature of the relationship between projectors and recipients of the rapidly hybridising liberal peace" (Richmond 2009: 55). The "everyday" becomes the primary locus of any engagement, the knowledge of the "everyday" its indispensable requirement: "The everyday is the space in which local individuals and communities live and develop political strategies in their local environment, towards the state and towards international order" (Richmond 2010: 670).

The principal claim upon which the local turn rests, however, has a substantial problem: there is the need to introduce the distinct realms of the "international" and the "local" or "everyday", whereby the latter is understood as a non-liberalised (or not yet liberalised) sphere. "Often this contrast, between the 'reality' of the everyday and the formal framework of law, was understood in terms of two – opposing – spatially-constructed rationalities: that of the 'international' and the 'local'" (Chandler 2015: 33).

The problem between these two spheres is not their disconnection: liberal tools such as human rights or the rule of law have succeeded in normatively connecting the international and the local (Richmond 2010: 673). This connection is the background of the above-mentioned "hybridity" (Mac Ginty 2011), a process that hybridises interveners and recipients and concepts alike. Yet, the problem is with representation, as the big liberal concepts "have failed to represent the everyday" (Richmond 2010: 673). Therefore, "while liberalism encourages us to look forward towards progressive goals, hybridity demands that we look backwards and ask questions about origins and antecedence" (Mac Ginty 2011: 76)

The consequences that follow from such thinking reveal the major problem of the local turn. In his attempt to construct "everyday peace indicators", Mac Ginty (2013) speaks about a "textured 'hidden transcript' found in many deeply divided societies", a transcript that "could allow for better targeted peacebuilding and development assistance". Contradicting his own hybridity claim, Mac Ginty, in so doing, returns to the old days of social anthropology and its quest to reveal indigenous knowledge. This is a positivist and rather naive attempt: as the hybridity notion highlighted, knowledge is constructed in interaction and communication, particularly in transitionary processes

with international intervention, in which global, national and local levels are intertwined to an extent that they become indistinguishable. Thus, there is no hidden knowledge "out there" that can make intervention better, but a complex amalgam of opinions that may vary along the subject positionality of the counterpart. Essentialism is the big seduction of the "everyday".

Many critics see the lack of applicability as the main shortcoming of the local turn. However, such an assessment depends on perspective. Sure enough, from the standpoint of liberal strategy building and "results-based management", there is not much to gain besides Paris' above-cited reflections about context-sensitivity. Nonetheless, the insight that peace neither is a *result* nor can be achieved by means of a strategy may be one of the most important insights the local turn has provided so far.

Consequently, the most recent suggestion is the substitution of the term "peacebuilding" by the notion of "peace formation": "Peace formation is heavily implicated in growing agency, mobility, and networks, which are aimed at deeper political and justice claims now being made by the subaltern. It is a crucial part of the struggle for more sophisticated, emancipatory forms of peace" (Richmond 2016a: 190). Such an approach reflects the long dialogical tradition in critical peace research, as it is represented by Herbert Kelman or John Paul Lederach, and marries it with post-colonial approaches of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak.

However, the local turn struggles to conceptualise this emancipatory endeavour. Richmond (2009: 73) resorts to the abstract idea of a "global social contract" that would combine cultural pluralism and the underlying shared values of humanity: "the right to the opportunity for a productive life, with respect not just to labour but to emotions, culture and learning, must be expressed as a basic human right" (ibid: 74). This catalogue reads like human rights "plus", and, as a result, in the realm of "peace formation" translates into a rather mundane programme that resembles the traditions of liberal peacebuilding: human rights, democratisation, political autonomy and the protection of vulnerable subjects (Richmond 2016a: 190). This leaves the "local turn" at not much more than a widening of the liberal peacebuilding perspective.

## Post-liberalism and its limits

There is another fundamental issue with the "local turn" approach. As Chandler highlights, and echoed by Richmond's recourse on liberal core values, the local turn is not able to escape the "binaries of liberal universalism and cultural relativism" (Chandler 2015: 27). The universalist/relativist distinction, however, itself emanates from liberalism, and cannot reflect the (at least potential) ontological shift away from individual autonomy to complexity as the foundation of global social order.

Chandler interprets the advent of resilience as a consequence of this shift, and sees it as a solution to move beyond the binaries of international/local, universalist/relativist and agent/structure. In line with this logic, resilience offers a counter-concept to a society ruled by law, as it relies on "reflexive law" (Stockholm Resilience Center, quoted in ibid: 42): "Law follows society but not because there is a clash between liberal universalism and cultural relativism but because liberal frameworks of law are understood

to be the barrier to governing complexity rather than a solution" (ibid: 43). Post-liberal approaches, therefore, do not ask the question of what the common good is or may be, but rather look at the process dimension of how governance can work: resilience governance thus is governance that "operates through societal processes rather than over or against them" (ibid: 43). Inclusion becomes a matter of social engagement and normalisation.

The downside of this perspective, however, is that fundamental aspects of liberal freedoms need to be sacrificed: "The post-liberal subject is no longer a subject in the liberal sense of the term: accorded with the rights of moral autonomy and political equality" (Chandler in Chandler and Richmond 2015: 14). The realm of intervention moves away from the political, and, while rejecting liberal hierarchies, relies on the governmentality of the social. This leaves hardly any room for emancipatory approaches to inclusion: "When law is harnessed to the governmentality of the social, the contingent sovereign decision is withdrawn under the 'weight' of concrete descriptions and spatial distributions" (Aradau 2007: 499). Consequently, far from embracing the post-liberal rationality of resilience that he is analysing, Chandler sees it as the end of liberalism, as an emancipatory project (Chandler and Richmond 2015: 20). This notwithstanding, the post-liberal condition quite possibly will shape the conditions of negotiating inclusion for the upcoming future.

## The common good as relational engagement

What are the consequences of these critiques of the liberal approach in peacebuilding and statebuilding, and the proposals on how to move forward? First, most accounts suggest that the era of global liberal governance is under severe pressure. It may no longer be possible to design internationally valid normative values and implement them with external support, or to politically design state-like entities and subsequently work to externally construct a social contract. While the accounts are divided in their assessment if such attempts have been promising or successful, there is a strong sense that the current "era of disillusionment" (Bell 2015) is not to be interpreted in a sense of trying harder and better, but in order to think differently.

This does not mean the indispensable end for liberal values per se. Human rights, electoral democracy, and individual freedoms have to play their part when negotiating inclusion in times of transition, although certainly not in the sense of global norm entrepreneurship as it is pursued by the United Nations or the European Union in their common practices of drafting resolutions, strategies or treaties and top-down implementation. It is also important to understand that the current backlash against liberalism is not caused by technical problems or a lack of capacity – rather, it is due to either a sustained de-legitimisation or a change of ontological conditions, or both. This cannot be "fixed" by better consultancy or support.

The most important lesson from all issues raised in the debate is that the question of a common good in negotiating inclusion is intrinsically linked to the process of how it is searched for and constructed. This is a direct consequence of the question of what "inclusion" as a way to conceptualise the common good shall actually mean. The liberal promise of equal rights and obligations for all, guaranteed under one particular, nationally organised social contract, fails at this procedural necessity. Although statebuilders, constitution-builders and democracy promoters alike, in theory, subscribe to the process component, they nonetheless, have the blueprints of such an undertaking in mind (rule of law-based state institutions, constitutional assemblies, and electoral processes). In the same way, they envision a needed outcome, which is modelled along the ideas of liberal, OECD-like statehood.

What follows from most of the accounts, even from those sympathetic to liberal values per se, is that it is necessary to overcome such an approach. Where the critics come short, however, is in proposing credible alternatives that could pave the way for what I would call a post-liberal engagement for a common good. While it is impossible to know what a common good should look like in each circumstance, as this is without doubt a contextual question, certain principles on how to proceed can be derived from the suggestions.

First, we may want to think of external involvement in processes of negotiating inclusion as a process of relational engagement (cf. Chadwick et al. 2013). Such an approach not just respects, but rests on the idea of difference and diversion. Relational sensitivity is not the same as relativism, yet it involves the need of putting first not claims for justice, rights, or equality, but self-reflexivity. To avoid the potential (and perhaps even likely) problem that such a relational approach will not be able to overcome the issue of

global hierarchy and power relations (as Chandler highlights in Chadwick et al. 2013: 25), normative inputs at whatever level (politics, law, economy) need to be understood as mere offers. There is an urgent requirement for internationals to accept the potential flipside of any offer: that it may be rejected. Without doubt, such rejection can lead to a serious, unsolvable, moral impasse – if it is attempted to be solved, as it is suggested by Jahn and others, aggravated even further.

The post-liberal critique offers an important lesson in that regard: by conceptually denying the liberal potential to overcome identity politics by means of individual rights, it is a warning sign to handle with care representational politics based on identity – be it national, ethnicity, or gender. The outcome of such approaches is very likely to be context-dependent, and certainly hardly ever playing out in the way it was meant to be by external requesters and internal proponents alike, with formalised political unsettlement (Bell and Pospisil 2017) as the most likely outcome. Further, if the complexity approach and the basic insights of NIE hold true, any structural approach bares more risk than potential gain: this challenges the very idea of "statebuilding", not just empirically, but ontologically. The common good cannot be constructed by the means of crafting institutions.

There is considerable space between the extreme avenues of value relativism and norm entrepreneurship, space for which Richmond uses the very old-school term of "humanity". This space has to be explored further, actively, by means of mutual engagement. This necessarily comes down to very basic fundamentals: mutual engagement means mutual learning. While mutual learning is certainly helped by a firm normative stance and comparative as well as contextual knowledge, it first of all requires self-restraint. The era of the international "thou shalt", for which, in the last instance, liberal interventionism stands, is certainly over. This is also true for a "thou shalt include". How inclusion works and needs to be navigated is a relational exercise of dialogue and learning. To keep a dialogue going (but also knowing when to end it) hence is the task of the day. "The need to mediate difference, interests, and norms, still remains" (Richmond 2016b: 13), but in so doing, there is the "need for pluralism across widely divergent normative and identity frameworks" (ibid: 14).

# Endnotes

1 Although, the quotation goes back to Franklin Roosevelt referring to Nicaraguan dictator Somoza (the elder brother): "He may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch".

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the British Academy, but are commended as contributing to public debate.

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