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Saving liberal peacebuilding

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Abstract. Liberal peacebuilding has become the target of considerable criticism. Although much of this criticism is warranted, a number of scholars and commentators have come to the opinion that liberal peacebuilding is either fundamentally destructive, or illegitimate, or both. On close analysis, however, many of these critiques appear to be exaggerated or misdirected. At a time when the future of peacebuilding is uncertain, it is important to distinguish between justified and unjustified criticisms, and to promote a more balanced debate on the meaning, shortcomings and prospects of liberal peacebuilding.

Introduction

The global experiment in post-conflict peacebuilding, underway since the end of the Cold War, has arrived at a crossroads and it is uncertain how it will proceed.[1] While the United Nations (UN) and its member states continue to reaffirm their support for peacebuilding and to mount new missions aimed at helping countries emerging from civil wars, observers have questioned the effectiveness and legitimacy of these missions. Many of these criticisms are warranted: the record of peacebuilding has indeed been disappointing. Efforts to promote liberal democratic governing systems and market-oriented economic growth – both core elements of the prevailing liberal peacebuilding model – have been more difficult and unpredictable than initially expected, in some cases producing destabilising side effects.[2] It is crucial for scholars and practitioners to gain a better understanding

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[1] In this article, 'peacebuilding' refers to efforts 'to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace', UN document A/47/277-S/24111 (17 June 1992), para. 21). For different definitions, see Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O'Donnell and Laura Sitea, 'Peacebuilding: What's In a Name?', *Global Governance*, 13:1 (January–March 2007), pp. 35–58; and Vincent Chetail (ed.), *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[2] For evaluations of the mixed record of these missions, see Mats Berdal, *Building Peace After War* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009); Lise Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Nicholas Sambanis, 'Short- and Long-Term Effects of UN Peace Operations', *World Bank Economic Review*, 22:1 (2008), pp. 9–32; Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens, 'Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies', *International Studies Perspectives*, 9 (2008), pp. 1–21; and Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: UN Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

of the underlying tensions and contradictions of peacebuilding,[3] including by using 'critical' methods of enquiry that dissect the assumptions of these operations.[4] But recent years have also witnessed the emergence of what might be called a 'hyper-critical' school of scholars and commentators who view liberal peacebuilding as fundamentally destructive or illegitimate. Some of these critics maintain, for example, that the post-conflict operations of the past two decades have done more harm than good. Others go further, portraying these operations as a form of Western or liberal imperialism that seeks to exploit or subjugate the societies hosting the missions.

In this article, I shall argue that such claims tend to be just as exaggerated as the rosy pro-liberalisation rhetoric that dominated the peacebuilding discourse in the early-to-mid-1990s, when democratisation and marketisation were portrayed as almost magical formulas for peace in war-torn states. To borrow a phrase from Alan Greenspan, former chair of the US Federal Reserve, early peacebuilding commentary was 'irrationally exuberant' about post-conflict liberalisation strategies. The problematic record of peacebuilding in subsequent years chipped away at this enthusiasm as scholars began to dissect the assumptions and challenges of consolidating peace after civil wars,[5] including assumptions about the relationship between liberalisation and peace in post-conflict settings.[6] Like a swinging pendulum, however, criticism of peacebuilding has recently carried past the point of justified questioning and, in some quarters, now verges on unfounded scepticism and even cynicism. Careless conflation of multilateral peace operations with the US-led 'war on terror' has accelerated this pendulum swing, as I shall argue below, but whatever the explanation may be, such denunciations of liberal peacebuilding are both unwarranted and imprudent. They are unwarranted because such missions, in spite of their many flaws, have done more good than harm; and they are imprudent because the failure of the existing peacebuilding project would be tantamount to abandoning tens of millions of people to lawlessness, predation, disease and fear. In short, there is a need to clarify and rebalance existing academic debates over the meaning, shortcomings and prospects of 'liberal' peacebuilding.

[3] Recent works exploring these tensions and contradictions include: Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009); Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Stephen Baranyi (ed.), *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post-9/11* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

[4] On the distinction between 'critical' and 'problem solving' approaches, see Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 204–54. On the importance of critical analysis in the study of peace operations, see Oliver P. Richmond, 'Critical Research Agendas for Peace: The Missing Link in the Study of International Relations,', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 32:2 (April–June 2007), pp. 247–74; Alex J. Bellamy and Paul Williams, 'Conclusion: What Future for Peace Operations? Brahimi and Beyond', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:1 (Spring 2004), pp. 183–212; and Roland Paris, 'Broadening the Study of Peace Operations', *International Studies Review*, 2:3 (Fall 2000), pp. 27–44.

[5] Recent surveys of the literature include Paul D. Williams, 'Peace Operations', unpublished essay prepared for the International Study Association's Compendium Project volume on security studies (forthcoming); Virginia Page Fortna and Lise Morjé Howard, 'Pitfalls and Prospects in the Peacekeeping Literature', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11 (June 2008), pp. 283–301; and Catherine Goetze and Dejan Guzina,'Peacebuilding, Statebuilding, Nationbuilding – Turtles All the Way Down?', *Civil Wars*, 10:4 (December 2008), pp. 319–47.

[6] Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

In 1993, Gerald Helman and Stephen Ratner wrote a seminal article titled 'Saving Failed States' in which they identified collapsing states as an emerging international security and development priority, and called for new multilateral method to assist such states.[7] Nearly two decades later, the challenge of aiding countries beset by internal unrest and instability remains urgent – as regional conflicts centred in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and elsewhere attest. But whereas a few years ago it was irrational exuberance about liberal peacebuilding that needed tempering, today the entire peacebuilding enterprise is being called into question. If the practice of providing large-scale assistance to post-conflict societies is to continue, peacebuilding will need to be "saved" from this exaggerated backlash.

Saving peacebuilding does not mean blindly defending current international practices. On the contrary, the principles and methods of these missions need to be challenged and analysed continuously. Scholars have an important role to play in this process: their writings help to inform debates, to confirm or to disconfirm assumptions, and to frame understandings about what these missions are and what they do. But not all criticism is equally valid or sound. Critical perspectives themselves need to be subject to ongoing scrutiny and review. As it turns out, many hyper-critical writings have been based on questionable logic and evidence. Saving liberal peacebuilding thus involves both: (1) continuing to press forward with efforts to dissect and understand the paradoxes and pathologies of peacebuilding, and (2) ensuring that this critical enterprise is well-founded and justified.

Critical studies of peacebuilding are 'critical' in the sense that they ask probing questions about underlying assumptions that might otherwise be taken for granted. However, this deeper questioning does not, in itself, lead to any particularly conclusions about the merits, morality or advisability of given peacebuilding paradigm. More precisely, nothing in critical theory or critical scholarship *per se* implies that liberal peacebuilding, broadly defined, should be rejected. Nevertheless, for one reason or another, critical peacebuilding studies have come to be associated – if not equated – with sweeping rejections of liberal peacebuilding. This is unfortunate, because the tools of critical analysis could just as easily be used to explore alternatives *within* liberal peacebuilding. It is also puzzling because some of the strongest critics of liberal peacebuilding appear, on close examination, to be arguing from liberal principles themselves.

The persistent appeal of liberal peacebuilding, even among many of its purported challengers, reveals two things. First, there is greater potential for conceiving of reforms within the liberal approach to peacebuilding than some of its critics seem to concede. If many of the proposed 'alternative' strategies (such as increasing the ability of local authorities to challenge the decisions of international officials) are themselves based in liberal principles, it follows that much of the critical literature is actually espousing variations within, rather than alternatives to, liberal peacebuilding. Liberalism is a broad canvas that can accommodate a wide range of political and economic structures as well as diverse methods for engaging with the inhabitants of war-shattered societies. Indeed, I shall argue

[7] Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, 'Saving Failed States', *Foreign Policy*, 89:92–93 (Winter 1993), pp. 3–20.

below that there is no realistic alternative to *some form* of liberal peacebuilding strategy.[8]

Second, the apparent disjuncture between the discourse and content of many liberal peacebuilding critiques raises troubling questions about the current critical scholarship in this field. Is the rejection of liberal peacebuilding substantive or ritualistic? Is this rejection now considered a prerequisite of any 'genuinely' critical peacebuilding analysis? One hopes not. Critical scholarship is crucial to helping us understand the 'prevailing order' and how this order is reproduced,[9] including in the realm of peacebuilding. But in the absence of self-criticism, critical theory can devolve into dogmas that can be just as unthinking as other unquestioned orthodoxies.

While the turn to critical theory in this field has generated important insights over the past decade, nothing in the recent critical literature provides a convincing rationale for abandoning liberal peacebuilding or replacing it with a non-liberal or 'post-liberal' alternative. The literature does, however, reinforce the case for reforming current approaches to peacebuilding, without disavowing the broadly liberal orientation of these missions. Clarifying these points seems important – both for scholars of peacebuilding, and for broader debates about the future of international assistance to war-torn states.

The pendulum swing: from exuberance to denigration

At the end of the Cold War, there was a widely shared conviction that political and economic liberalism offered a key to solving a broad range of social, political and economic problems from under-development and famine, to disease, environmental degradation and violent conflict. A record number of countries held elections during this period, and a broad ideological shift took place in the world's leading international organisations towards more open and enthusiastic support for liberal forms of government (based in the idea of elections, constitutional limits on governmental power, and respect for civil and political rights). For example, many international organisations, including the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) created specialised democracy-promotion and electoral-assistance offices at this time. Such changes reflected the spirit of liberal triumphalism echoing in the pages of academic and popular publications, and perhaps best symbolised by Francis Fukuyama's claim that humankind had reached the (liberal) endpoint in its ideological evolution.[10]

It was during this period that the UN launched its first flurry of peacebuilding operations to help implement peace settlements in war-torn countries, including Namibia, El Salavador, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Cambodia. Not surprisingly,

[8] I make this argument on prudential grounds: that the principal alternatives examined in this article are less likely to yield lasting peace than some version of liberal peacebuilding. While I also believe that liberal political and economic principles are *normatively* preferable, this belief is not the foundation of my argument below.

[9] Cox 1986, p. 208.

[10] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

given the prevailing *zeitgeist*, these missions pursued a strategy of promoting peace by encouraging political and economic liberalisation of the host states. The intellectual origins and theoretical foundations of international peacebuilding in the 1990s have been described in detail elsewhere, including a key assumption that informed these missions: that rapid liberalisation would create conditions for stable and lasting peace in countries emerging from civil conflict.[11] Like modernisation theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, the practitioners of peacebuilding in the 1990s seemed to think that 'all good things go together'[12] – that democratisation and marketisation were mutually reinforcing and that, once these processes were initiated, they would be largely self-perpetuating.

As the years went by, however, the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction – and the limitations of rapid liberalisation strategies – became increasingly apparent. Rather than creating conditions for stable and lasting peace, efforts to hold a quick set of elections and economic reforms did little to address the drivers of conflict and in some cases produced perversely destabilising results. Peacebuilding missteps in the early 1990s were well-documented: In Angola, for example, the UN oversaw postwar elections in 1992 that provoked one of the former belligerents to resume fighting, in part because there were no institutional mechanisms established to resolve disputes over the election, inadequate international and local forces to uphold the results, and no serious measures to disarm the factional forces before the elections took place. In Rwanda, plans for power-sharing and democratic elections were scuttled in 1994 when extremist members of the Hutu government orchestrated genocidal violence against their political and ethnic enemies, the Tutsis. In Cambodia, international peacebuilders organised a relatively successful set of elections in 1993, declared the mission a success, and left the country, only to watch from a distance as the results were subverted by the country's long-time strongman, Hun Sen. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, political reforms were largely effective but the economic dimension of the peacebuilding mission, which prescribed far-reaching economic liberalisation, served to exacerbate socio-economic distributional inequalities that had been among the causes of the conflict in the first place. In Bosnia, the 2005 Dayton Accords prescribed a quick set of elections which reinforced the power of the most nationalist elements in the society who were least committed to pursuing inter-ethnic reconciliation. Economic liberalisation in Bosnia also produced unexpected problems: in the acute institutional vacuum of that country after the war, internationally-mandated privatisation efforts reinforced war-time black markets and enriched extremist groups. Meanwhile, in Liberia the outcome of peacebuilding efforts paralleled those in Cambodia: post-conflict elections were held successfully in 1997, the peacebuilding operation declared success and wrapped up, but the winner of the election, Charles Taylor, immediately began to dismantle the democratic elements of the state and repressed his political rivals, which triggered a new round of fighting.

Although most of the countries hosting operations in the 1990s did not experience a return to large-scale conflict, searching questions were rightly raised about the sustainability of the results, including the degree to which rapid

[11] Paris, 2004.
[12] This quote is from Robert Pakenham's critique of modernisation theory in *America in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

liberalisation could produce the conditions for durable peace. These questions appeared not only in academic publications but also in the internal deliberations of major peacebuilding agencies including the UN, and served to temper earlier excitement and optimism about the peace-producing effects of liberal peacebuilding strategies. By the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, the UN itself was acknowledging the need for more comprehensive and longer-lasting approaches to peacebuilding, based on the principle of 'no exit without strategy' and on the need to pay greater attention to building or strengthening governmental institutions in the host countries as a means of consolidating, or 'locking in', postwar political and economic reforms.[13] This emphasis on institutional strengthening came to be known as 'statebuilding'.[14]

In 1999, three more operations were launched in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor, this time with more explicit statebuilding mandates and more open-ended timeframes. Rather than holding an election and then concluding the mission within the first two or three years, these new missions embraced a broader set of goals, including more extensive efforts at disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of factional forces, establishing functioning judicial and administrative structures within the host state (structures that have always been necessary for the functioning of democratic governance and a market economy) and promoting the growth of civil society groups within the state including human rights NGOs and political party organisations. But whether these measures went far enough remained a matter of disagreement. In East Timor, for example, the peacebuilding mission ended in 2002 and was widely touted as a resounding success, even though several observers warned at the time that the job of reforming the judicial sector and police had only just begun and that continued weakness in these sectors posed a threat to the stability of the country. As it turned out, fighting between elements of the security forces triggered a new round of violence in 2006, prompting then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to acknowledge that the earlier peacebuilding mission had been terminated prematurely and to recommend the deployment of a new mission to East Timor.[15]

As peacebuilding strategies evolved and reflected more realistic understandings of the limitations of existing approaches (including the faulty assumption that peace-through-liberalisation could be easily achieved) a different set of critiques gained attention. For some observers, the principal problem in peacebuilding was not its brevity or superficiality, but quite the opposite: that peacebuilders exercised

[13] 'No Exit without Strategy: Security Council Decision-Making and the Closure or Transition of UN Peacekeeping Operations', Report of the Secretary-General, UN document S/2001/394 (20 April 2001).

[14] On the idea of statebuilding and its relationship to the broader goals of peacebuilding, see Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, 'Introduction: Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar Statebuilding', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–20. Other works that focus on statebuilding include: Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles T. Call and Vanessa Hawkins Wyeth (eds), *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008); and Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[15] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Timor-Leste Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1690 (2006)', UN Security Council document S/2006/628 (8 August 2006), paras. 40 and 142.

such expansive powers that they effectively squelched genuine political participation and locally-driven reforms. David Chandler's analysis of the Bosnia mission offered a good example of this argument. Chandler maintained that extensive decision-making powers of international officials were 'undermining Bosnian institutions and creating relations of dependency' and consequently 'had done little to facilitate democracy and self-government in Bosnia'.[16] Similar criticisms leveled at international peacebuilding efforts elsewhere (including East Timor[17] and Afghanistan[18]) contributed to a growing belief, both inside and outside the UN, that greater 'local ownership' of peacebuilding processes was needed.

These observations raised difficult problems for peacebuilding practitioners, who were confronted by two competing imperatives. On one hand, for reasons outlined above, they were under pressure to expand the scope and duration of operations in order to build functioning and effective governmental institutions in war-torn states, and to avoid problems of incomplete reform and premature departure seen in East Timor and elsewhere. On the other hand, they were also under pressure to reduce the level of international intrusion in the domestic political processes of the host states. Achieving the first goal seemed to require a relatively 'heavy footprint', or a large and long-term international presence with extensive powers, particularly in cases where governmental institutions are dysfunctional or non-existent; whereas the second goal seemed to require a relatively 'light footprint', a small and unobtrusive presence that would maximise the freedom of local actors to pursue their own peacebuilding goals. Squaring these two objectives became – and remains today – a crucial conceptual and strategic challenge for practitioners. Simply put, if both the heavy footprint and the light footprint are problematic, what is the 'right' footprint?

Other commentators, however, were more deeply sceptical about the prospects for peacebuilding reform, and some opposed the very idea of deploying international missions into war-torn countries. Jeffrey Herbst, for instance, argued that seeking to restore war-torn states in parts of Africa could backfire by freezing in place political arrangements that did not reflect underlying social patterns and were therefore unsustainable. His advice was to 'let states fail', in some cases allowing new forms and centres of political authority to emerge through conflict and cooperation, without outside direction or intrusion, and then to redraw national boundaries where necessary to reflect these new arrangements, rather than seeking to perpetuate the untenable fictions of many existing states.[19] Pierre Englebert and Denis Tull made a related argument with regard to Somaliland and Uganda, which, in contrast to countries hosting major peacebuilding operations, underwent

[16] David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), pp. 3 and 154.

[17] Jarat Chopra, 'The UN's Kingdom in East Timor', *Survival*, 42:3 (2000), pp. 27–40; and Jarat Chopra, 'Building State Failure in East Timor', *Development and Change*, 33:5 (2002), pp. 979–1000.

[18] Astri Suhrke, 'The Dangers of a Tight Embrace: Externally Assisted Statebuilding in Afghanistan', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 227–51.

[19] Jeffrey Herbst, 'Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice: Implications for Policy', in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 302. See also Jeffrey Herbst, 'Responding to State Failure in Africa', *International Security*, 21:3 (Winter 1996–97), pp. 120–44; and Boaz Atzili, 'When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Fixed Borders, State Weakness, and International Conflict', *International Security*, 31:3 (Winter 2006–07), pp. 139–73.

their own largely 'indigenous state reconstruction efforts' and 'have fared better than their externally sponsored counterparts'.[20] Similarly, Jeremy Weinstein endorsed a strategy of promoting 'autonomous recovery' that would allow states to achieve 'a lasting peace, a systematic reduction in violence, and postwar political and economic development in the *absence* of international intervention'.[21] He maintained that international efforts to end wars through negotiated settlements, and to rebuild states on the basis of these settlements, could 'freeze unstable distributions of power and to provide a respite from hostilities for groups that are intent on continuing the conflict when the international community departs'.[22] Instead, allowing conflicts to take their natural course (which would sort out the winners from the losers) would sometimes provide a surer basis for a lasting peace.[23] This argument also built on other researchers' findings that civil wars ending in military victories tend to produce longer-lasting peace than those ending in negotiated ceasefires.[24]

Herbst and Weinstein questioned current approaches to peacebuilding on the prudential grounds that such missions were unlikely to succeed, and that allowing conflicts to burn themselves out might, in some circumstances, offer a better strategy for achieving lasting results. Others, by contrast, have based their objections on moral criteria – arguing, for example, that peacebuilding is a form of Western or liberal imperialism. One such writer, William Bain, denounced international administration as 'alien rule' that denies the 'human dignity' of the people who live in these countries.[25] David Chandler, extending his earlier work on Bosnia, characterised international statebuilding missions as the practice of 'empire in denial' in which external actors 'colonize' non-Western state institutions.[26] Michael Pugh criticised liberal peacebuilding on the grounds that it is part of a larger 'hegemonic' project whose 'ideological purpose' is 'to spread the values and norms of dominant power brokers'.[27] According to William Robinson, peacebuilding activities in countries such as Nicaragua and Haiti represent an effort by 'the

[20] Pierre Englebert and Denis M. Tull, 'Postconflict Resolution in Africa: Flawed Ideas about Failed States', *International Security*, 32:4 (Spring 2008), pp. 111 and 135.

[21] Jeremy Weinstein, 'Autonomous Recovery and International Intervention in Comparative Perspective', (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, Working Paper no. 57, 2005), p. 5; emphasis in original.

[22] Ibid., p. 9.

[23] However, Weinstein also noted that 'the conditions under which autonomous recovery is likely to occur are rare and difficult to create'. Ibid., p. 5.

[24] For example, Edward Luttwak, 'Give War a Chance', *Foreign Affairs*, 78:4 (July/August 1999), pp. 36–44; Monica Duffy Toft, 'Peace Through Victory?', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 27–31, 2003, Philadelphia, Penn.; and Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009). For a critique of this finding, see Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, *Crafting Peace: Power Sharing and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars* (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 2007).

[25] William Bain, 'In Praise of Folly: International Administration and the Corruption of Humanity', *International* Affairs, 82:3 (2006), pp. 525–38.

[26] David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of Statebuilding* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); and 'The Other Regarding Ethics of "Empire in Denial"', in David Chandler and Volker Heins (eds), *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy: Pitfalls, Possibilities and Paradoxes* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 176.

[27] Michael Pugh: 'Corruption and the Political Economy of Liberal Peace', paper prepared for the International Studies Association annual convention (San Francisco, 26–28 March 2008); 'Peacekeeping as Constant Gardening by Other Means', paper prepared for the British International Studies Association conference (Cork, Ireland, 18–21 December 2006); 'Towards a New Agenda for

core regions of the capitalist world system' to maintain 'essentially undemocratic societies' which facilitates the continued exploitation of the global poor by the global rich.[28] For all of these commentators, liberal peacebuilding was hiding a deeper and more destructive purpose: imperial or quasi-imperial domination.

The reaction of the US to 9/11 – including the declaration of a 'war on terror' and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq – added fuel to these peacebuilding-as-imperialism arguments. After all, the Bush Administration justified its invasions partly on liberal grounds: as a means of providing the benefits of democracy and freedom to oppressed societies. Efforts to stabilise Iraq after the invasion also bore at least a partial resemblance to liberal peacebuilding strategies pursued elsewhere by the UN and by other international agencies in countries emerging from civil wars. Elections, constitutional processes, market-oriented economic adjustment and institution-building were central to the US plan in Iraq and also part of the standard formula for UN-mandated peace operations. Given these apparent similarities and the disastrous effects of the Iraq invasion, it was not long before commentators began equating the Iraq war and international peacebuilding missions as a part of an abhorrent phenomenon of 'democratic imperialism'[29] or 'imperial nation-building'.[30] In the words of Wolfram Lacher, 'Statebuilding and reconstruction practices in Iraq are in continuity with international operations during the post-Cold War era and beyond' because they have all involved 'the reproduction and expansion of hegemonic international order'.[31] Alejandro Bendaña also portrayed the Iraq war as a natural extension of 1990s-era peacebuilding operations, which had promoted the 'external economic and strategic interests' at the expense of such principles as justice and self-determination, thereby 'opening the door to Washington's subsequent savagery' in Iraq.[32] Similarly, John Gray insisted that liberal peacebuilding and the Iraq invasion were based on the same flawed methods and assumptions: the 'liberal interventionism that took root in the aftermath of the Cold War was never much more than a combination of post-imperial nostalgia with crackpot geopolitics', as events in Iraq definitively demonstrated, in his view.[33]

Frustration at America's 'regime change' invasion of Iraq thus seemed to contribute to a mounting backlash against *all* forms of liberal interventionism including UN-sponsored peacebuilding. It also deepened scepticism about the

Transforming War Economies' (co-authored with Mandy Turner), *Conflict Security and Development*, 6:3 (October 2006), pp. 471–9; and 'The Political Economy of Peacebuilding: A Critical Theory Perspective', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10:2 (Autumn/Winter 2005), pp. 23–42.

[28] William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 6–7.

[29] Omar G. Encarnacion, 'The Follies of Democratic Imperialism', *World Policy Journal*, 22:1 (Spring 2005), pp. 47–60.

[30] Alejandro Bendaña, 'From Peacebuilding to Statebuilding: One Step Forward and Two Steps Back?', *Development*, 48:3 (2005), pp. 5–15.

[31] Wolfram Lacher, 'Iraq: Exception to, or Epitome of Contemporary Post-Conflict Reconstruction?', *International Peacekeeping*, 14:2 (April 2007), p. 247.

[32] Bendaña, (2005), p. 6.

[33] John Gray, 'The Death of this Crackpot Creed Is Nothing to Mourn', *Guardian*, (July 31, 2007). For similar arguments, see also Tim Jacoby, 'Hegemony, Modernization and Post-war Reconstruction', *Global Society*, 21:4 (October 2007), pp. 534–5; Mark Duffield, 'Development, Territories, and People: Consolidating the External Sovereign Frontier', *Alternatives*, 32:2 (April–June 2007), pp. 225–46; and John Heathershaw, 'Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses', *Millennium*, 36:3 (May 2008), p. 620.

legitimacy and feasibility of promoting democracy and market-oriented economics as a remedy for civil conflict. Instead of simply critiquing the manner by which international agencies support liberal democratic transitions in war-torn states, some commentators began to dismiss the entire enterprise as 'futile',[34] 'folly',[35] 'delusional',[36] 'hubristic',[37] and destined to produce 'enemies instead of allies and [to heighten] insecurity instead of enhancing security'.[38] Similarly, rather than simply examining the similarities between old-style colonialism and modern peacebuilding, some commentators went further and claimed that liberal interventionism *was* colonialism or imperialism, now 'comprehensively discredited in the killing fields of Fallujah and Samarra'.[39] Thus, measured scepticism about the difficulties or appropriateness of promoting liberalisation in specific postwar circumstances gave way, in some quarters, to an almost indiscriminate indictment of such efforts, which contributed to what Neil Cooper has called a "crisis of confidence and credibility ... in the Western liberal peace project."[40]

In summary, the pendulum of peacebuilding analysis swung from one extreme to another. After a period of irrational exuberance about the almost magical effects of liberalisation, the study of this field entered a phase of constructive scepticism about the effectiveness or propriety of liberal peacebuilding strategies, but the pendulum kept on swinging, driven in part by 9/11 and the Iraq war. Today, expressions of distrust, pessimism and even cynicism about liberal peacebuilding have become more common.

There are interesting parallels between the heady optimism of the early 1990s and the current 'crisis of confidence' in the strategy of promoting peace through liberalisation. Both of these positions can be viewed as reactions to major opinion-shaping events in international affairs. In the former instance, it was the end of the Cold War and the apparent 'victory' of liberalism that informed the early optimism about liberal peacebuilding. In the latter period, it was the Bush Administration's actions (and its appropriation of the language of liberalisation to rationalise and justify its own destructive unilateralism) that contributed to a turn towards pessimism. Both positions, moreover, reflected the *zeitgeist* of their respective times. In the early 1990s there was a widely shared view that liberal democracy had emerged 'the only model of government with any broad legitimacy and ideological appeal in the world' (as evidenced by the more than three dozen countries that adopted liberal democratic constitutions for the first time between 1990 and 1996),[41] whereas the 2000s witnessed democratic reversals in Africa, South America and elsewhere, leading many to lament the 'sobering state' of democracy in the world.[42]

[34] Michael Scheuer, *Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2008), p. 37.
[35] Bain, (2006); and Encarnacion, (2005), p. 47.
[36] Gray, (2007).
[37] Neil Cooper, 'Review Article: On the Crisis of the Liberal Peace', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 7:4 (December 2007), p. 610; and Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', *Security Dialogue*, 38:1 (March 2007), pp. 27–48.
[38] Beate Jahn, 'The Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy: Democratization, Intervention and Statebuilding (Part II)', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:2 (June 2007), p. 212.
[39] Seumas Milne, 'A System to Enforce Imperial Power Will Only be Resisted', *Guardian* (28 February 2008).
[40] Cooper, (2007), p. 605.
[41] Diamond, Linz and Lipset, (1990), p. x.
[42] Thomas Carothers, 'Democracy's Sobering State', *Current History* (December 2004), pp. 412–6.

However, both of these extremely positive and extremely negative views of liberal peacebuilding have been based on exaggerated claims about the benefits (in the early 1990s) or the liabilities (in the late 2000s) of these missions. While the mixed record of more than 20 operations to date has shown that democratisation and marketisation are not all-purpose elixirs for societies emerging from civil conflict, the recent backlash against liberal peacebuilding is just as immoderate and mistaken as the earlier optimism. It is also reckless, as I shall argue below.

Critiquing the critiques

The real shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding have been widely discussed. They include: inadequate attention to domestic institutional conditions for successful democratisation and marketisation; insufficient appreciation of the tensions and contradictions between the various goals of peacebuilding; poor strategic coordination among the various international actors involved in these missions; lack of political will and attention on the part of peacebuilding sponsors to complete the tasks they undertake, and insufficient commitment of resources; unresolved tensions in relations between the military and non-military participants in these operations; limited knowledge of distinctive local conditions and variations across the societies hosting these missions; insufficient 'local ownership' over the strategic direction and daily activities of such operations; and continued conceptual challenges in defining the conditions for 'success' and strategies for bringing operations to an effective close. This is just a sampling of the serious challenges that continue to face the practitioners of peacebuilding.

But some critiques – including claims that peacebuilding missions have done more harm than good, or that they are essentially exploitative or imperialist – have gone too far. Many of these arguments rest on flawed information and fail to make important distinctions between different forms of liberal intervention. In what follows, I describe five mistakes that underpin several such analyses.

Mistake 1: conflating post-conquest and post-settlement peacebuilding

As noted above, several commentators have characterised the US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq as equivalent to, or a natural extension of, the multilateral peacebuilding missions of the post-Cold War era. According to this perspective, supporters of liberal peacebuilding as well as US neoconservatives who pushed for 'regime change' in Iraq have all suffered from the same delusions and hegemonic impulses, which have led to dangerous and futile efforts to impose democracy by force. Less extreme versions of this argument make distinctions between UN-sponsored and unilateral types of intervention, but nevertheless suggest that the practice of postwar peacebuilding 'open[ed] the door' to American liberal imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan.[43] Given the dreadful effects of the Iraq

[43] Bendaña, (2005), p. 6.

war, such assertions have the effect of raising serious doubts about the entire peacebuilding enterprise.

Although the post-conflict stabilisation mission in Iraq and other peacebuilding missions share some characteristics in common, including a sometimes naïve belief in the salubrious effects of holding quick democratic elections, their differences should not be ignored. Most importantly, the US operation in Iraq began with an external invasion – a war of conquest – followed by peacebuilding and counter-insurgency efforts, whereas most peacebuilding missions since the end of the Cold War have been deployed at the request of local parties after the negotiation of peace settlements to civil wars.[44] These 'conditions of birth' are important. When peacebuilding follows conquest, foreign peacebuilders are more likely to be viewed as occupiers, particularly when they are the same parties that invaded the country in the first place; and any new governing arrangements established during this period are more likely to be viewed as external impositions.[45] Although all peacebuilding missions involve a measure of foreign intrusion in domestic affairs, destroying a regime through external invasion is hardly equivalent, in degree or kind, to deploying a mission at the request of local parties with the goal of helping these parties to implement a peace settlement.[46] To be sure, there are examples of post-Cold War peace operations that began in less-than-consensual conditions – most notably, the mission in Kosovo, which followed NATO's bombing of Serb targets in that territory – but the vast majority of missions have not involved forcible entry: they have been examples of post-settlement, not post-conquest, peacebuilding. Blurring this distinction invites false analogising between UN peacebuilding and the American-led 'war on terror'.

Mistake 2: equating peacebuilding with imperialism or colonialism

Although there are similarities between European colonialism and today's post-settlement peacebuilding operations, such comparisons should also not be taken too far. To be sure, both types of intervention have involved powerful external actors seeking to refashion the domestic structures of weaker societies in accordance with prevailing notions of good or 'civilized' governance. In this sense, today's post-conflict missions may be viewed as a modern version of the old *mission civilisatrice* – or the belief that European colonial powers had a duty to improve the people living in their overseas possessions – now translated into contemporary parlance of 'capacity building' and 'good governance'. Furthermore, as many have pointed out, international administrators have exercised extraordinarily broad powers in several modern missions, including the right to dismiss local officials from office who allegedly violate the terms or spirit of a peace agreement.

[44] It is also worth noting that the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq was initially justified on the grounds of pre-emptive self-defence. Only later, when weapons of mass destruction were not discovered in Iraq, did the Bush Administration rationalise the invasion as a means of 'liberating' the Iraqi people and spreading democracy to the Middle East.

[45] Suhrke, 'The Dangers of a Tight Embrace' (2009).

[46] David Edelstein, 'Foreign Militaries, Sustainable Institutions, and Postwar Statebuilding', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 81–103.

To some commentators, these powers resemble the far-reaching authority of colonial administrators and create similar relations of dependency and domination.

However, the old and new versions of civilising mission also differ in important respects – differences that are often elided by those who portray peacebuilding as a form of imperialism.[47] First, colonialism was practiced largely to benefit the imperial states themselves, including through the extraction of material and human resources from the colonised society.[48] In spite of the self-proclaimed civilising mission including the purported benefits of colonialism for the colonised, the most enduring and 'unquestioned' assumption of French colonial policy, for instance, was that colonies must benefit France itself – both materially and strategically.[49] The same was true of Britain, where 19th century debates over the costs and benefits of colonialism focused not on whether to get rid of the colonies, but rather, on 'how to organize them so as to make the best use of them with a minimum of effort and expense'.[50] While modern UN-sponsored missions still reflect the interests of the world's most powerful countries – and therefore cannot be viewed as 'innocent assistance'[51] – they have not principally been motivated by efforts to extract wealth from their host societies.[52] On the contrary, the predominant flow of resources in contemporary peacebuilding has been in the opposite direction: from international actors to the host state. Moreover, those who claim that post-settlement peacebuilding serves the interests of 'transnational capitalism' have yet to demonstrate that either the expectation or the desire for economic gain has driven the decision to launch any such operations.

Second, although the various European colonial powers differed on the prospects and desirability of their respective colonies moving towards independence, it was not until the 20th century that the ethic of 'national self-determination' fully discredited the traditional view of colonies as imperial possessions. Put differently, shifts in the normative environment of international affairs gradually made colonialism impossible to justify or continue. As Neta Crawford points out, 'Colonialism – the political control, physical occupation, and domination by one group of people over another and their land for purposes of extraction and settlement to benefit the occupiers – was considered a "normal"

[47] Roland Paris, 'International Peacebuilding and the "Mission Civilisatrice"', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2002), pp. 637–56. Marina Ottaway and Bethany Lacina make a similar observation in 'International Interventions and Imperialism: Lessons from the 1990s', *SAIS Review*, 23:2 (Summer-Fall 2003), pp. 71–92.

[48] As Bernard Waites writes, 'It was no secret that the modern colonial empires were acquired for the advantages they brought the European states.' Bernard Waites, *Europe and the Third World: From Colonialism to Decolonization, c. 1500–1998* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), p. 222.

[49] Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 91 and ch. 5.

[50] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study in Empire and Expansion* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1976), pp. 31–2.

[51] Jorg Meyer, 'The Concealed Violence of Modern Peace(-Making)', *Millennium*, 36:3 (May 2008), p. 573.

[52] There have been cases of international personnel accused of corruption and malfeasance, but these activities have not been sanctioned by peacebuilding agencies, which sets these transgressions apart from the colonial powers' systematic and deliberate exploitation of the territories they occupied. Indeed, for those who believe that only national interests (and not humanitarianism) should justify the deployment of military forces, it may seem 'strategically irrational' to contribute troops to a UN peacebuilding mission. See C. Dale Walton, 'The Case for Strategic Traditionalism: War, National Interest and Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (November 2009), pp. 717–34.

practice until the early 20th century.'[53] The anti-colonialist ethic continues to predominate today and shapes the normative environment in which modern peacebuilding operations have unfolded.[54] Even the longest-lasting and most intrusive missions of recent years have been designed to exercise temporary and transitional authority in their host states, and to create the conditions for effective self-government in those states.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that colonialism was wholly self-interested or that modern peacebuilding is wholly altruistic. Both practices involved complex mixtures of motivations and effects.[55] For this reason, it is interesting to compare and contrast these practices. But observing that there are *echoes* of colonialism in peacebuilding is quite different from asserting their *equivalence*. Not only is the colonialism-peacebuilding analogy overstated, but it also serves to discredit and delegitimise peacebuilding by establishing an 'interpretive frame' in which these missions are portrayed as exploitative, destructive, and ultimately disreputable forms of international intervention and assistance.[56] Further, such characterisations make it difficult to distinguish between different types of peacebuilding, some of which have stronger echoes of imperialism than others.

Mistake 3: defining the 'liberal peace' too broadly

Many problems of peacebuilding appear to stem from contradictions within the objectives of peacebuilding itself, including complex tensions between different 'liberal' reform objectives.[57] On one hand, liberalism contains a universalist (and universalising) vision of emancipation through political and economic liberalisation, but it simultaneously embraces an ethic of individual and collective choice or self-government, which can conflict with universalist formulas. Some interesting recent scholarship on peacebuilding has explored these tensions and contradictions – within liberalism itself, and between liberalism and other peacebuilding objectives.[58]

However, there is a danger of defining liberalism (or the liberal approach to peacebuilding) too broadly. If such definitions include elements of peacebuilding that have little to do with liberalism, they can lead to dubious conclusions about the viability or the legitimacy of the 'liberal peace'. Oliver Richmond, for example, argues that liberalism includes the idea of a 'victor's peace', or the notion that 'a peace that rests on a military victory, and upon the hegemony or domination of a victor peace, is more likely to survive' than one based on a negotiated settlement

[53] Crawford, (2002), p. 131.
[54] Roland Paris, 'Peacekeeping and the Constraints of Global Culture', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:3 (Sept. 2003), pp. 441–73.
[55] For example, national interests play a role in the decisions of individual countries to contribute troops to specific international operations. See Laura Neack, 'UN Peace-Keeping: In the Interest of Community or Self?', *Journal of Peace Research*, 32:2 (May 1995), pp. 181–96.
[56] For a discussion of 'interpretive frames' and their role in shaping understandings of particular issues or phenomena, see Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000), pp. 11–39.
[57] See Paris and Sisk (eds), *Dilemmas of Statebuilding*; and Simon Chesterman, *You, the People: The UN, Transitional Administration and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[58] See, for example, Oliver Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (London: Palgrave, 2005).

or ceasefire.[59] The assertion that liberalism contains a penchant for military victory over negotiated settlement, however, is dubious on both theoretical and an empirical grounds. Theoretically, this belief is more accurately associated with the realist project, as Richmond acknowledges elsewhere.[60] Empirically, there is little support for the claim that peacebuilding operations rest on a preference for military victory. As noted above, most of these missions have been deployed to implement and uphold negotiated settlements to civil wars, not military victories. Once in the field, moreover, international peacebuilders have generally sought to prevent formerly warring parties from remobilising or renewing their attempts to defeat their rivals – in other words, they have stood in the way of military victories – which is why commentators who view military conquest as a surer foundation for peace have tended to criticise peacebuilding on these very grounds. They have argued that peacebuilders display a reflexive preference for negotiation and compromise, which, they claim, is less effective as a strategy for building peace than allowing (or actively helping) one party to achieve victory over its rivals.[61] This is not a minor point: treating the victor's peace as a core element of peacebuilding serves to blur the distinction, once again, between post-conquest and post-settlement peacebuilding.

Another example comes from the writing of Beate Jahn.[62] By tracing the lineage of modern peacebuilding, Jahn offers an interesting analysis of the continuing relevance of modernisation approaches, but she then takes this argument to extraordinary lengths. Specifically, she suggests that post-settlement peacebuilding is an expression of the same liberal modernisation ethic that gave rise to realist balance of power and 'containment' policies during the Cold War, including US covert and overt interventions against authoritarian and liberal regimes alike. This claim is problematic. As one of Jahn's readers has noted: '[T]he inclusion of such a wide range of foreign policy motivations and activities under the liberal rubric makes the very idea of a particularly liberal foreign policy hard to specify.'[63] Such definitional stretching is especially unfortunate because it elides critical distinctions between different forms of external intervention and thus invites misleading interpretations of post-conflict peacebuilding as being yet another instance of imperial meddling.

Mistake 4: mischaracterising the peacebuilding record

If the purpose of peacebuilding is to create the conditions for self-sustaining peace, most missions cannot be judged to have fully succeeded, and for this reason important questions have been raised about the sustainability of peacebuilding

[59] Oliver Richmond, 'The Problem of Peace: Understanding the "Liberal Peace"', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 6:3 (October 2006), p. 293.
[60] Although the boundaries between liberalism and realism are diffuse, Richmond himself writes that the 'victor's peace' is associated more with realism than liberalism, yet he nevertheless maintains that the preference for military victory is 'a key aspect' of the liberal peace (Ibid., p. 310).
[61] See, for example, the discussion Jeffrey Herbst's and Jeremy Weinstein's writings above.
[62] Jahn, (2007).
[63] Oisín Tansey, 'Reply and Response to Jahn's "Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy"', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2:1 (March 2008), p. 89.

outcomes.[64] But recognising the many shortcomings of these missions and their sometimes troubling effects does not, in itself, demonstrate that peacebuilding has *on balance* been harmful to the societies into which these operations have been deployed. Most of these countries are probably better off than they would have been without such missions.[65]

Consider the specific case of Bosnia. Many commentators have critiqued the international role in that country – and with good cause. Rather than taking the time to design an electoral system that would encourage inter-factional compromise, international peacebuilders rushed ahead with elections that served to reinforce ethnic divisions and the power of the most recalcitrant nationalist leaders. In effect, international agencies wound up supporting 'the dysfunctional political structures that emerged from the war, while failing to buttress the development of alternative political and social projects in civil society'.[66] This is just one of several criticisms, including the one raised by David Chandler and others: that peacebuilders have been too *dirigiste* and have done too little to ensure democratic accountability or to foster genuine political participation within the population.[67]

Acknowledging the validity of these criticisms, however, tells us little about the overall impact of the Bosnia mission. Although the Wilsonian assumptions informing this mission did not produce the hoped-for results, the fact that Bosnians are no longer killing each other, and have not been doing so for well over a decade, should figure prominently in any calculus of the 'net' effects of the operation. Even the specific criticism that international administrators have exercised excessive power in Bosnia needs to be interpreted with caution. Not all of Bosnia's problems – from unemployment and corruption to the passivity of the country's political class – can be attributed to the international administrator's robust authority. On the contrary, some of the most important postwar achievements can be traced to the very exercise of these powers, including internationally-driven measures to allow the return of refugees and displaced persons, to create a Bosnian central bank and currency, and to remove ethnic identifiers from official documents including passports. As Sumantra Bose puts it, 'Virtually all developments in [Bosnia] since the end of the war that contribute to a slightly better present for its citizens and open up better prospects – however tenuous – for their future have been due to international effort, often very intensive and protracted.'[68] Bose's attribution of 'virtually all' major developments to international efforts may be debatable, but the broader point is that a balanced analysis of peacebuilding

[64] Keith Krause and Oliver Jütersonke, 'Peace, Security and Development in Post-Conflict Environments', *Security Dialogue*, 36:4 (December 2005), pp. 447–62.

[65] Determining what conditions would have been in the absence of a peacebuilding mission is a very difficult analytical task, but the evidence strongly suggests that peacebuilding missions have contributed to preserving peace in most countries that have hosted these operations: Fortna, (2008); Doyle and Sambanis, (2007); Michael J. Gilligan and Ernest J. Sergenti, 'Do UN Interventions Cause Peace? Using Matching to Improve Causal Inference', *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 3 (2008), pp. 89–122; and J. Michael Quinn, T. David Mason and Mehmet Gurses, 'Sustaining the Peace: Determinants of Civil War Recurrence', *International Interactions*, 33 (May 2007), pp. 184–5.

[66] Roberto Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 5.

[67] Chandler, (1999) and (2006); and Richard Caplan, 'Who Guards the Guardians? International Accountability in Bosnia', *International Peacekeeping*, 12:3 (Autumn 2005), pp. 463–76.

[68] Sumantra Bose, 'The Bosnian State a Decade After Dayton', *International Peacekeeping*, 12:3 (Autumn 2005), p. 331.

behaviour would consider both the costs and benefits of an assertive international presence, and that we stand to learn more from such an analysis than from caricatures of peacebuilders as a new 'Raj'.[69]

This point also applies to the larger peacebuilding record. Most of the countries that have hosted missions are no longer at war. This is not, in itself, an adequate measure of success, because the absence of fighting is not equivalent to stable peace. (Indeed, peacebuilders have devoted too little attention to the longer-term requirements for sustainable peace). But the record does not support claims that liberal peacebuilding, on the whole, has been 'counterproductive'[70] or 'nonsensical'.[71] It is impossible to say how many lives would have been lost if not for these interventions, but there is compelling evidence that peace agreements endure longer, and societies are less likely to slip back into internecine violence, when major peacebuilding missions are deployed.[72] The economic benefits of peace are also difficult to calculate, but one recent Oxfam study estimated the cost of Africa's armed conflicts from 1990 to 2005 as $284 billion, or approximately 15 per cent of GDP for the countries that experienced wars.[73] Compared to peaceful countries, moreover, African states in conflict have 50 per cent more infant deaths, 15 per cent more undernourished people, five less years of life expectancy, 20 per cent more adult illiteracy, 2.5 fewer doctors per patient, and 12.4 per cent less food per person on average.[74] If and when international actors help to prevent such conflicts from reigniting, these human and developmental costs may be avoided. In other words, the specific problems of peacebuilding need to be considered in the light of the overall effects of these operations.

Mistake 5: oversimplifying moral complexity

Mark Duffield is one of several commentators who dispute the moral foundations of international peacebuilding. Intervention in post-conflict societies and other fragile states, he argues, reflects the 'liberal urge to deepen the west's external sovereign frontier' and represents a new and noxious kind of 'international occupation', tinged with 'cultural racism'.[75] Duffield's analysis of peacebuilding – and of the larger security and development paradigm – is fascinating and insightful, but overstated and one-sided. He uses sharply reproving metaphors (occupation, racism) to characterise international development and peacebuilding efforts, while paying comparatively little attention to the positive effects of such interventions, or to the moral implications of *not* intervening in crisis situations. Nor does he spell out a clear alternative to current liberal peacebuilding practices,

[69] Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin, 'Travails of the European Raj', *Journal of Democracy*, 14:3 (July 2003), pp. 60–74.
[70] Jahn, (2007).
[71] Gray, (2007).
[72] Doyle and Sambanis, (2006).
[73] Oxfam International, *Africa's Missing Billions: International Arms Flows and the Cost of Conflict*, Briefing Paper 107 (October 2007).
[74] Ibid.
[75] Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War* (London: Polity, 2007), p. 27; and Duffield, "Development, Territories, and People: Consolidating the External Sovereign Frontier', p. 230.

other than offering attractive but vague appeals for 'a new formula for sharing the world with others'.[76]

William Bain, who focuses on missions involving the international administration of war-torn territories, is also interested in the ethics of promoting democratisation and self-government through external intervention.[77] Although Bain is more willing than Duffield to credit to the humanitarian rationale of such operations, he nevertheless portrays internationally-run transitional administration as a destructive enterprise that 'subjects' local people to 'alien rule' and thus leads to a kind of 'moral corruption' that 'augurs the breakdown of social life' – due, in part, to contradictions between the stated liberal goals of peacebuilding and de facto illiberal actions of the peacebuilders.[78] Like Duffield, Bain is a sophisticated observer who exposes uncomfortable and important tensions within the liberal peacebuilding project, but his ethical calculus is constricted and incomplete. If international administration of war-shattered territories is 'folly', as he concludes, surely this judgment should be based on a more complete evaluation of the various benefits of peacebuilding, not just its moral costs.

It is a truism to observe that there are elements of 'folly' in every human institution, including international peacebuilding. If we accept this as a given, the more important ethical issue is whether international peacebuilding – viewed as a whole, not just in fragments – remains a justified and worthwhile enterprise. Among other considerations, answering this question requires careful assessment of possible alternative courses of action (or inaction). To arrive at sweeping moral judgments about peacebuilding based on fragmentary analysis is not only methodologically suspect, but it is ethically problematic in itself, given how much is at stake in debates over how and when to provide assistance to societies emerging from conflict.

Liberals in disguise?

Based in part on these critiques, there has been much written in recent years on the need to promote 'alternative versions of peace' that are not rooted in liberal peacebuilding models.[79] On the surface, such writers appear to reject the idea of liberal peacebuilding, but on closer examination many actually embrace variants of liberal peacebuilding. Few critics endorse terminating the practice of peacebuilding altogether, or abandoning its broadly liberal orientation.

Consider, for example, Michael Barnett's intriguing discussion of a possible 'republican' approach to peacebuilding, which he portrays as a much-needed 'alternative' to the liberal approach.[80] Republicanism is a better model for stabilising post-conflict states, he argues, because it prioritises substantive and

[76] Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War*, pp. 227–34; and Duffield, 'Development, Territories, and People: Consolidating the External Sovereign Frontier', p. 242.
[77] Bain, (2006).
[78] Ibid., pp. 536–8.
[79] Roger MacGuinty, 'Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43:2 (June 2008), p. 159. See below for other examples.
[80] Michael Barnett, 'Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States After War', *International Security*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 87–112.

continuous deliberation among members of the society. Deliberation need not be limited to democratic elections; in fact, it needs to take place between elections in order to encourage 'individuals to consider the views of others, generalize their positions to widen their appeal, find a common language, articulate common ends, demonstrate some detachment from the self, and subordinate the personal to the community'.[81] This could have a taming effect on factional tensions, Barnett argues. Republicanism also emphasises the importance of representation, but in contrast to liberalism it is open to a wider variety of methods and types of representation than elected legislatures. Together, these and other features of republicanism offer a better basis 'for postconflict stability by establishing the process for creating a legitimate state that is restrained in its ability to exercise arbitrary power and can minimize conflict among factions'.[82]

All of this makes good sense, but whether Barnett's vision is truly an alternative to liberal peacebuilding is questionable. The distinction between liberalism and republicanism is, in reality, one of nuances. As Barnett notes, both philosophies rest on the values of 'liberty and the need to check the power of the sovereign through elections, representation, constitutions, and laws'.[83] He is not calling for disengagement from war-torn states, nor for authoritarian forms of governance, nor for state-socialist forms of economic planning. Barnett's vision is one of improved political participation and representation, all rooted in principles of individual freedom and accountable government. Thus, while his proposed strategy is interesting and compelling, it represents much less of an alternative to liberal peacebuilding than he suggests.[84]

David Chandler's critique of peacebuilding was described above. International actors, he argues, have taken a 'high handed approach' which has 'restricted [...] political party competition and policymaking by elected representatives' in the 'tiny postwar state of Bosnia'.[85] The result has been 'a situation where there is little accountability for the policy results of external rule'.[86] One of Chandler's central concerns, therefore, is not the liberal orientation of peacebuilding, but the *illiberal* behaviour of international administrators, including their relatively unconstrained and unaccountable exercise of power and methods that discourage local political activity and participation. Such criticisms are rooted in a distinctively liberal set of values, emphasising self-government, political participation and representation, and limitations on governmental power. Although he does not offer specific policy prescriptions, one apparent implication of his analysis is that peacebuilders should honestly acknowledge the gap between their stated liberal principles and their less-than-liberal actions, and that they should live up to the liberal principles they purport to espouse. Nevertheless, his writing has been wrongly interpreted as providing evidence that 'the liberal peace is in crisis'.[87]

[81] Ibid., p. 98.
[82] Ibid., p. 96.
[83] Ibid., p. 94.
[84] Barnett hints at this when he acknowledges that liberalism and republicanism are frequently conflated and 'with good reason' (Ibid., p. 93).
[85] David Chandler, 'Back to the Future? The Limits of Neo-Wilsonian Ideals of Exporting Democracy', *Review of International Studies*, 32:3 (2006), p. 480.
[86] Chandler, *Empire in Denial*, p. 125.
[87] Cooper, (2007), p. 606 (emphasis added).

Such misinterpretation would be less likely if Chandler and other deeper critics clearly explained what kinds of peacebuilding they would find more acceptable or effective. The purpose of seeking such clarification would not be to push every researcher into a 'problem solving' mode of analysis,[88] but simply to clarify the nature and scope of each critique. If, for example, a given analyst's preferred alternative turned out to be another mode of international intervention that still embraced and promoted liberal values, this critique should not be interpreted as a rejection or indictment of either 'liberal peacebuilding' or the 'liberal peace'. Misinterpreting such critiques can have real effects: it may unnecessarily delegitimise the *idea* of liberal peacebuilding rather than focusing attention on the *mode* or *methods* of liberal peacebuilding.

Some responsibility therefore rests on individual authors to clarify their views on what, if anything, would constitute a better approach to peacebuilding. For example, what exactly would 'emancipatory' peacebuilding involve in practice?[89] Duffield describes an emancipatory approach as one that enhances the 'solidarity of the governed'.[90] Pugh, for his part, suggests that it would involve greater 'participation of local actors' and more 'pro-poor engagement with local populations', which he contrasts to the 'subjugation' of the prevalent liberal model.[91] Who could disagree with appeals for emancipation, phrased in such vague terms? If these authors offered more specific recommendations, it would be possible to evaluate these alternative approaches in greater detail. It would also allow us to understand the degree to which these emancipatory approaches are genuinely distinct from liberal peacebuilding.

To confuse matters further, not all of the proponents of the emancipatory approach view it as distinct from liberal peacebuilding. Richmond, for instance, argues that the goal of 'emancipation' is actually integral to liberalism, but he maintains that current liberal approaches place insufficient weight on 'bottom up' policies and do not adequately empower individuals or free them from 'domination, and hegemony, as well as want'.[92] When Richmond turns to prescriptions, however, he offers little more by way of detail than either Duffield or Pugh. Emancipatory peacebuilding, he says, would focus more on 'social welfare and justice'[93] and embrace the ethic of 'human security'.[94] More precision would be welcome.

In spite of this lack of clarity, there are good reasons to take the concept of emancipatory peacebuilding seriously. Richmond correctly points out that 'liberal peacebuilding cannot succeed unless it achieves a broad consensus among its target population', and this may ultimately be connected to the idea of emancipation, depending on how the term is defined.[95] As I shall argue below, more research is

[88] In principle, however, there is no reason that 'critical' theorising cannot provide useful insights into 'what to do' questions. See Richard Price, 'Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics', *International Organization*, 62 (Spring 2008), pp. 191–220.
[89] Duffield, (2007), ch. 9; and Pugh, (2005).
[90] Duffield, (2007), p. 234.
[91] Pugh, (2005).
[92] Oliver P. Richmond, 'Emancipatory Forms of Human Security and Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Journal*, 62:3 (Summer 2007), p. 461.
[93] Richmond, (2006), pp. 301 and 311.
[94] Richmond, (2007).
[95] Ibid., p. 460.

needed on the sources of local legitimacy in peacebuilding, including the challenge of incorporating mass publics and non-elites into post-conflict political and economic structures and directly into the management of international peacebuilding operations themselves. The concept of emancipatory peacebuilding may provide a framework for pursuing such efforts, but we will not know until this concept is elaborated and specified. When this happens, we may also discover that emancipatory peacebuilding is not really opposed to liberal peacebuilding at all.

Is there an alternative to liberal peacebuilding?

In fact, there seems to be no viable alternative to some version of liberal peacebuilding. Consider, first, the question of whether international peacebuilding should be continued at all. As we saw, some commentators including Jeffrey Herbst and Jeremy Weinstein have suggested that conflicts should sometimes be allowed to burn themselves out, and that large-scale 'impartial' intervention (even after a ceasefire agreement) risks locking in conditions that are not sustainable or compatible with long-term peace. There is some logic to this approach, since wars ending in military victory may produce longer-lasting peace than those ending in negotiated settlements. But this strategy could also involve huge risks and costs: The victors might decimate the losers, or alternatively some wars might grind on for years or decades without resolution, all the while producing humanitarian crises before one side finally achieves victory. In the meantime, conflicts could spread to neighbouring territories, as several have done in Africa in recent years. On balance, then, failing to provide assistance when it is possible to do so, and when it is requested by local parties, would seem a short-sighted and dangerous solution to the shortcomings of these operations; just as suspending the practice of post-conflict peacebuilding would be a significant overreaction to the various problems that these missions have experienced and caused. Nor is there any sign of declining demand for new operations, given the increased trend for civil conflicts to end in negotiated settlements in recent years.[96]

But why, in this case, must peacebuilding be *liberal*? The simple answer is that alternative strategies – that is, strategies not rooted in liberal principles – would likely create more problems than they would solve. One approach, for example, might be for international agencies to establish permanent trusteeships over war-torn states – that is, externally run governments that have no intention of ceding their authority to local actors. This option is not unlike the formula proposed by Stephen Krasner, who called for direct international governance of dangerously fragile states 'for an indefinite period of time'.[97] The main problem with this approach is that it would come very close to colonial-type control – indeed, much more so than even the most long-lasting and interventionist post-settlement missions that have been conducted to date. Maintaining such an arrangement over the long term would likely require permanent suppression of

[96] *Human Security Brief 2007* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Simon Fraser University, Human Security Project, 2008).

[97] Stephen D. Krasner, 'Sharing Sovereignty. New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States', *International Security*, 29:2 (2004), pp. 85–120.

domestic political activity within the host state. As David Edelstein points out, even when foreign military deployments are made at the invitation of local parties, they face a problem of an 'obsolescing welcome' whereby elements of the local population tend to grow increasingly resentful of a powerful external presence in their society.[98] Continuing to embrace the objective of transferring full sovereign powers to local actors may thus be the single most important strategy for addressing this problem and for widening the 'window' of time available for peacebuilders to assist in strengthening domestic institutions within the host state. By contrast, establishing permanent foreign rule would reduce the time available for peacebuilders to do their work before local resentment begins to build and the peacebuilding mission becomes an obstacle to, rather than a facilitator of, consolidating a stable peace.

A second alternative to liberal peacebuilding might be for international agencies to identify local leaders who could rule as undemocratic strongmen over their society. This would, at least, provide a means for peacebuilders to scale back their presence quickly, as long as they continued to offer various types of support (financial, material, etc.) to the ruling person or party. Indeed, this was roughly that strategy that the US and Soviet Union pursued with their respective patrons in many parts of the world during the Cold War. However, one of the practical problems with this approach is that authoritarian regimes created and sustained by external parties have often turned out to be more fragile than they appear, in part because they tend to lack domestic legitimacy and therefore remain in power only by repressing or buying off their internal rivals. This was one of the lessons learned at the end of the Cold War, when a reduction or cessation of immense flows of superpower assistance led to the collapse of authoritarian regimes in Somalia, Zaire/Congo and elsewhere, followed by a violent scramble for power. Furthermore, in a country just emerging from civil war, where two or more factions were engaged in large-scale killing, a postconflict 'strongman strategy' would risk alienating unrepresented groups that might choose to resume violence rather than living under the new regime. Some measure of power-sharing, or at least a reasonable prospect of gaining power through an unrigged political process, generally helps to mitigate this danger.[99]

A third alternative to liberal peacebuilding might be to rely on traditional or indigenous practices of peace-making and governance, rather than elections and other accoutrements of liberal democracy. Roger MacGuinty has usefully highlighted the limited space provided for such approaches in existing peacebuilding models, which tend to be 'highly standardized' and rooted in a sense of the 'superiority of Western approaches to peace-making'.[100] In contrast to the more formalistic and legalistic approaches, traditional and indigenous methods tend to focus on 'consensus decision-making, a restoration of the human/resource balance, and compensation or gift exchange designed to ensure reciprocal and ongoing

[98] Edelstein, (2009).
[99] Anna K. Jarstad and Desirée Nilsson, 'From Words to Deeds: The Implementation of Power-Sharing Pacts in Peace Accords', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25:3 (July 2008), pp. 206–23; and Jack A. Goldstone and Jay Ulfelder, 'How to Construct Stable Democracies', *Washington Quarterly*, 28:1 (Winter 2004–05), pp. 9–20.
[100] MacGuinty, (2008), pp. 144 and 151.

harmonious relations between groups.'[101] Because they reflect local customs, he adds, these techniques may 'hold the potential to achieve a grass-roots legitimacy that may be lacking from more technocratic "alien" forms of dispute resolution that form the mainstay of Western-funded and designed peace-support programs and projects'.[102]

While MacGuinty makes a strong case for adapting policies to local conditions and traditions (using examples such as Afghanistan's Loya Jirgas, or tribal assemblies, which played an important role in that country's initial transition from Taliban rule), he does not recommend relying exclusively on such techniques. On the contrary, he wisely warns of the danger of romanticising traditional or indigenous practices – not least because they may serve to reinforce 'the authority of existing power-holders' and to impose 'social conformity', sometimes in brutal ways.[103] Tanja Chopra's analysis of local peacebuilding initiatives in Kenya offers cautionary tale illustrating these dangers. Efforts to tap into traditional conflict-resolution techniques through community-level 'peace committees' in Keyna have shown some success, but in some cases they have also served to "deepen existing rifts between communities" and "reinforce divisions' while also undermining concurrent efforts to strengthen respect for the rule of law at the national level.[104] Traditional and bottom-up approaches, in other words, should be part of peacebuilding, but they are no panacea.

There are other reasons to be cautious before embracing traditional governance methods. Those who believe that doing so will eliminate or reduce the intrusion of foreign peacebuilders in the domestic affairs of the host state fail to recognise that peacebuilders will still need to make crucial choices, whether they wish to do so or not. 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.[105] In any event, some measure of external influence may be necessary and desirable: if the post-conflict society could organise its own governance arrangements without international assistance, there would have been no need or demand for peacebuilding in the first place.

Given all this, consider the implications if international agencies were to adopt a general policy of relying on indigenous governance structures in post-conflict countries. Very likely, any political outcomes of this process would be questioned and contested due to perceived international 'interference', no matter how well-meaning and diligent the peacebuilders were in seeking to remain neutral. Further, in cases where one individual or group dominated such a process, the result could be the equivalent of the second alternative to liberal peacebuilding discussed above – strongman rule – with all the problems associated with that

[101] Ibid., p. 149.
[102] Ibid., p. 155.
[103] Ibid., p. 150.
[104] Tanja Chopra, 'When Peacebuilding Contradicts Statebuilding: Notes from the Arid Lands of Kenya', *International Peacekeeping*, 16: 4 (August 2009), pp. 531–45.
[105] Alex de Waal, 'Mission without End? Peacekeeping in the African Political Marketplace', *International Affairs*, 85:1 (January 2009), pp. 99–113.

option. These are all real concerns that counsel caution. Yet in spite of these risks and complexities, experience in Afghanistan, Cambodia and elsewhere suggests that more research attention needs to be devoted to the topic of hybrid arrangements in countries recovering from conflict, or approaches those that blend formal, informal, modern and customary methods of governance and conflict resolution.[106]

It is also interesting that MacGuinty argues that one of the benefits of customary arrangements could be to enhance 'political participation', while he also warns against the dangers of authoritarianism. Such arguments suggest that MacGuinty, like other commentators discussed above, is less concerned with the *liberal* orientation of current peacebuilding approaches than he is with their relative rigidity and lack of adaptability to local conditions. In fact, there is nothing in the idea of the 'liberal peace' or 'liberal peacebuilding' that mandates such inflexibility. Liberal polities come in many different styles and forms, from group-based 'consociational' proportional representation arrangements to Anglo-American-style plurality systems, and there is nothing to prevent liberalism from accommodating new models. Nor does support for liberal political principles stand in the way of pursuing any number of complementary initiatives and goals, including those focusing on post-conflict reconciliation,[107] social welfare and justice,[108] extensive public deliberations at the national and local levels,[109] or the empowerment and inclusion of women and other marginalised groups.[110] 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.

Without clear alternatives, some version of liberalism therefore remains the most sensible foundation for post-conflict peacebuilding. The overarching goal of such missions should be to create the conditions for representative self-government, not only because such an outcome is the least morally objectionable goal for peacebuilding, but also for the practical purpose of facilitating the eventual departure of peacebuilders through the restoration of domestic sovereignty over the territory. Further, while the importance of elections alone should not be exaggerated, they remain a crucial tool for populations to constitute their own governments, not only during the period of peacebuilding, but on an ongoing

[106] Tobias Debiel, Rainer Glassner, Conrad Schetter and Ulf Terlinden, 'Local State-Building in Afghanistan and Somaliland', *Peace Review*, 21:1 (January 2009), pp. 38–44; David Roberts, 'The Superficiality of Statebuilding in Cambodia: Patronage and Clientelism as Enduring Forms of Politics', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 149–69; and Heidrun Zinecker, 'Regime-Hybridity in Developing Countries: Achievements and Limitations of New Research on Transitions', *International Studies Review*, 11:2 (June 2009), pp. 302–31.

[107] Lisa A. Baglione, 'Peacebuilding: A Time to Listen and Learn from Reconciliationism', *Polity*, 40:1 (January 2008), pp. 120–35.

[108] Richmond, (2006), p. 311; and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 'Conflicted Outcomes and Values: (Neo)Liberal Peace in Central Asia and Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (November 2009), p. 648.

[109] Katia Papagianni, 'Transitional Politics in Post-Conflict Countries: The Importance of Consultative and Inclusive Political Processes', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3:1 (March 2009), pp. 47–63.

[110] Kristoffer Lidén, 'Building Peace between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitical Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (November 2009), p. 621.

basis.[111] While it is true that encouraging elections itself involves an external intrusion in the internal affairs of the host state, surely we can differentiate between more and less acceptable intrusions – including the fact that elections are meant to facilitate the society's ability to shape its own destiny and exercise self-government, so that the peacebuilders themselves can leave. Elections alone cannot achieve this goal; nor do elections equal democracy. But of all the possible ways in which international actors can influence the domestic politics of a country, the idea of promoting self-government is one of the least troubling – and, from the standpoint of not overstaying an 'obsolescing welcome', it may be a pragmatic necessity.

Similarly, while certain economic liberalisation strategies can be destabilising,[112] is there really an alternative to some version of market-oriented reform in states emerging from war? The second half of the twentieth century demonstrated that centrally planned and state-dominated development strategies – including not only Soviet-style communism but also import substitution strategies pursued in many parts of Latin America and Africa – generally produced lower levels of economic growth than market-oriented development strategies. Debates continue about the appropriate balance between the market and the state in economic development, including greater regulation of financial institutions and the like, but there is near-universal agreement today that non-market-oriented economic policies (or those that do not give the market a primary role in allocating scarce resources) are too inefficient to generate sustained economic growth. Most of those who have criticised the economic dimensions of liberal peacebuilding (including this author) have called for less aggressive adjustment strategies in order to reduce the destabilising effects of rapid marketisation, but have not rejected the idea of economic liberalisation itself – in part because economic growth is important to the long-term success of peacebuilding.[113] Although there is no guarantee that states pursuing market-oriented development policies will become richer, there is a near guarantee that those pursuing non-market-oriented strategies will stay poor.

There is no single, market-oriented model appropriate for all peacebuilding cases. Rather, there are countless variations of liberal economic policies that can be explored and pursued.[114] But all share one thing in common: a primary orientation toward markets as a foundation for long-term growth. If existing economic policies have been ill-suited to the needs of war-torn states, it is not because these policies have been 'liberal' or market-oriented in the broad sense of these terms, but rather, because they have paid too little attention to the particular vulnerabilities of countries just emerging from destructive and divisive conflicts, including the potentially destabilising effects of 'shock therapy' adjustment policies.[115] Addressing such problems primarily involves altering and customising, not abandoning, the economically liberal elements of peacebuilding.

[111] Timothy D. Sisk, 'Pathways of the Political: Electoral Processes after Civil War', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 196–223.
[112] See Paris, (2004), pp. 166–8 and 199–205.
[113] Sambanis, (2008).
[114] Paul D. Williams, 'International Peacekeeping: The Challenges of Statebuilding and Regionalization', *International Affairs*, 81:1 (January 2005), p. 170.
[115] Frances Stewart, 'Policies towards Horizontal Inequalities in Post-Conflict Reconstruction', *World Institute For Development Economics Research, UN University, Research Paper No. 2006/149* (November 2006).

Conclusion: saving liberal peacebuilding

If there is no realistic or preferable alternative to broadly liberal approaches, what can be done in the face of the current 'crisis' of liberal peacebuilding? The first step is to question the extent to which this crisis is real or imagined. In this article, I have attempted to show that some of the most sweeping critiques of liberal peacebuilding have rested on dubious claims and logic, including the conflation of post-conquest and post-settlement peacebuilding; un-nuanced analogies of peacebuilding and colonialism or imperialism; definitions of the liberal peace that are too broad; mischaracterisations of the peacebuilding record; and oversimplifications of the moral complexity of peacebuilding. Considered in this light, the purported crisis of liberal peacebuilding appears to be less severe and less fundamental than some have claimed.

The challenge today is not to replace or move 'beyond' liberal peacebuilding, but to reform existing approaches within a broadly liberal framework. This enterprise has both conceptual and policy elements. Peacebuilding remains ripe for theoretical treatments that shed light on the meaning and effects of these operations. In other words, the peacebuilding literature need not, and should not, be limited to narrowly policy-oriented or 'problem solving' analyses. In the 1990s, most of the peacebuilding literature was preoccupied with practical policy issues and paid little attention to the relationships between peacebuilding and larger phenomena in international politics. The rise of more critical analysis since then has been part of a welcome broadening of the field, which now places greater emphasis on exploring the theoretical underpinnings and implications of these missions. The great strength of critical approaches has always been their focus on exposing and dissecting widely held assumptions and orthodoxies. But critical scholarship can lose its intellectual and empirical moorings if it fails to be self-reflective and self-critical – that is, if its logic, evidence and implications are not themselves subject to scrutiny and challenge. Nothing in the recent critical literature offers a convincing rationale for abandoning liberal peacebuilding, rather than reforming it. If anything, the rise of what I have called hyper-critical scholarship – and particularly its dubious yet seemingly ritualised rejection of liberal peacebuilding – has served to cloud rather than clarify our understanding of what peacebuilding is, and what it does.

Of course, there is no single 'best' way of analysing these missions or the broader phenomenon of international peacebuilding. This field of research is – and hopefully will remain – a diverse bazaar of different theoretical and empirical approaches, open to discussion and debate across intellectual traditions and methodologies. This article has sought to contribute to this debate by arguing for a rethinking and rebalancing of liberal peacebuilding critiques. In contrast to the unconvincing hyper-criticism of today, or the irrational exuberance of earlier years, a more constructively critical approach might build on the recognition that: (1) both liberalism and liberal peacebuilding are deeply problematic concepts – in theory and application – and their internal contradictions play themselves out in peacebuilding, sometimes in troubling and destructive ways; (2) liberally-oriented peacebuilding can, in principle, accommodate a great deal of internal variation and adjustment, including many of the specific changes proposed by many critics; (3) scholars who repudiate liberal peacebuilding or call for 'alternative' strategies

should be expected to reflect carefully on the normative underpinnings of their own arguments and to clarify the alternatives they may be proposing, including the moral and practical implications of pursuing these alternatives. The third point should be particularly important for those who believe that critical peacebuilding scholarship has a useful contribution to make to the field – and that the recent turn towards a reflexive anti-liberalism has diminished the force of these critiques.

Adopting a constructively critical orientation does not mean accepting the current practices of peacebuilding. It does not mean that peacebuilding must be 'top-down' instead of 'bottom-up' – that is a criticism of centralism, not liberalism. It does not mean that peacebuilding should be fixated on formal institutions to the exclusion of informal or customary methods of governance – that is a criticism of formalism, not liberalism. It does not mean that peacebuilders should adopt a 'fixed, non-negotiable concept of what the state should eventually look like'[116] – that is a criticism of institutional isomorphism, not liberalism. Nor does it mean that peacebuilders should assume that liberalisation will necessarily foster peace – that is a criticism of naïve Wilsonianism, one variant of liberalism.[117] Addressing all of these real problems may entail probing the internal tensions of liberalism, but it does not require a sweeping rejection of liberal peacebuilding.

In fact, there are many recent examples of constructively critical research that raise important theoretical and practical questions, some of which challenge liberal premises without making the mistake of discarding the baby with the bathwater. For instance: What are the sources and dynamics of 'legitimacy' in international peacebuilding?[118] What obligations, if any, do international actors have in rebuilding societies after conflict?[119] What are the limits of external democracy promotion efforts?[120] How might 'non-elite' populations of host states be included more directly into peace negotiations and post-conflict institutional reform?[121] What is the relationship between power-sharing arrangements and peace?[122] How

[116] Stein Sundstøl Eriksen, 'The Liberal Peace Is Neither: Peacebuilding, State building and the Reproduction of Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (November 2009), p. 663.

[117] Paris, (2004).

[118] Andrea Kathryn Talentino, 'Nation Building or Nation Splitting? Political Transition and the Dangers of Violence', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21:3 (July 2009), pp. 378–400; Claire Mitchell, 'The Limits of Legitimacy: Former Loyalist Combatants and Peace-Building in Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 23:1 (February 2008), pp. 1–19; and Katharina P. Coleman, *International Organisations and Peace Enforcement: The Politics of International Legitimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[119] Alexandra Gheciu and Jennifer Welsh, guest editors, *Ethics and International Affairs*, 23:3 (Summer 2009), special issue on 'Postwar Justice and the Responsibility to Rebuild'.

[120] Oisín Tansey, 'The Concept and Practice of Democratic Regime-Building', *International Peacekeeping*, 14:5 (November 2007), pp. 633–46; and Thomas Ohlson and Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs, 'Peace Through Democracy? The Challenges of Post-War Democratization in Weak and War-Torn States', in Ashok Swain, Ramses Amer and Joakim Öjendal (eds), *The Democratization Project: Challenges and Opportunities* (London: Anthem Press, 2009), ch. 10.

[121] Papagianni, (2009); Jonathan Zartman, 'Negotiation, Exclusion and Durable Peace: Dialogue and Peacebuilding in Tajikistan', *International Negotiation*, 13:1 (2008), pp. 55–72; and Kirsti Samuels, 'Constitutional Choices and Statebuilding in Postconflict Countries' in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 173–95.

[122] Pippa Norris, *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jarstad and Nilsson, (2008); Anna K. Jarstad, 'Power Sharing: Former Enemies in Joint Government', in Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *From War to*

might ideas of 'local ownership' be developed in a manner that avoids simplistic bromides about the need for greater local ownership or emancipation?[123]

Other questions include: How do 'discursive frames' and organisational procedures shape the design and conduct of peacebuilding in practice?[124] How can peacebuilding agencies learn from experiences across missions without falling into the trap of assuming that 'technical' knowledge is readily transferrable across diverse local circumstances?[125] Why does the UN seem to make peacebuilding commitments that it subsequently fails to fulfill in practice?[126] What are the economic impacts of peacebuilding operations?[127] What is the relationship between 'peace conditionalities' in economic assistance and the durability of the ensuing peace?[128] How can economic liberalisation be pursued in ways that minimise the dangers of strengthening black markets?[129] Under what circumstances should peacebuilding missions end, and how should they 'exit'?[130]

This is just a small sampling of research questions that represent a broad mix of normative approaches. They point to even larger unresolved questions, including the crucial issue of how one should define peacebuilding 'success'.[131] Many of these research efforts also offer the possibility of making peacebuilding operations more effective, and more just, in the future.

In the end, however, whichever research paths one may chose to follow, those engaged in constructively critical analysis have an immense task ahead of them:

Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 105–33; and Hartzell and Hoddie, (2007).

[123] Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace: Aid, Reconstruction, and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan', *Disasters*, 34:S1 (January 2010), pp. S78–S102; Timothy Donais, 'Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes', *Peace and Change*, 34:1 (June 2009), pp. 3–26; Simon Chesterman, 'Ownership in Theory and Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:3 (March 2007), pp. 3–26; and Jens Narten, 'Dilemmas of Promoting Local Ownership: The Case of Postwar Kosovo', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 252–83.

[124] Séverine Autesserre, 'Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention', *International Organization*, 63 (Spring 2009) pp. 249–80; Paris, (2003); and Michael N. Barnett, 'The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda', *Cultural Anthropology*, 12:4 (November 1997), pp. 551–78.

[125] Touko Piiparinen, 'Putting the Cart before the Horse : Statebuilding, Early Warning and the Irrationality of Bureaucratic Rationalization', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:3 (November 2007), pp. 355–78; and Michael Barnett, 'Illiberal Peacebuilding and Liberal States', paper presented at the Roundtable on Humanitarian Action, New York, Social Science Research Council, (8 February 2005).

[126] Michael Lipson, 'Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:1 (March 2007), pp. 5–34.

[127] Michael Carnahan, Scott Gilmore and William Durch, 'New Data on the Economic Impact of UN Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 14:3 (June 2007), pp. 384–402; Christopher Cramer, 'Trajectories of Accumulation through War and Peace', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 129–48.

[128] Nikolas Emmanuel and Donald Rothchild, 'Economic Aid and Peace Implementation: The African Experience', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:2 (June 2007), pp. 171–88.

[129] Susan Rose-Ackerman, 'Corruption and Government', *International Peacekeeping*, 15:3 (June 2008), pp. 328–43.

[130] Richard Caplan, 'After Exit: Successor Missions and Peace Consolidation', *Civil Wars*, 8:3 (2006), pp. 253–67; and Dominik Zaum, 'The Politics of Exit: Transition and Exit from Post-Conflict Statebuilding Operations', paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association (Chicago, IL August 2007).

[131] Charles T. Call, 'Knowing Peace When You See It: Setting Standards for Peacebuilding Success', *Civil Wars*, 10:2 (2008), pp. 173–94.

peacebuilding is tremendously complex and prone to unanticipated consequences, yet it is also too important to lose or abandon. As long as both scholars and practitioners embrace an open discussion of peacebuilding's merits and flaws, without descending into unwarranted hyper-criticism, there is still hope of improving both the conception and delivery of international assistance to societies embarking on difficult transitions from war to peace.