'Post-Liberal' Peacebuilding and the Crisis of International Authority

Finkenbusch, P.

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Peter Finkenbusch

Abstract

This paper investigates how pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding might undermine the capacity of international policymakers to formulate a purposive, socially transformative project for their engagement with the Global South. Focusing on Oliver Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty's recent work on 'post-liberal' peacebuilding, the analysis draws out how notions of 'the everyday', hybridity and 'the local' are geared towards disassembling the existing stock of reductionist liberal-universal knowledge claims. These were the ideological basis on which international interveners used to cohere their policy frameworks towards the Global South. Pragmatic approaches posit that the key to successful post-conflict transition lies in local – non-western, non-universalist – epistemologies and that empowering this pool of idiosyncratic insider understandings requires the deconstruction of modern liberal-universalist forms of knowing. While this dynamic of analytical and normative self-deconstruction is heralded as an opportunity for radical change 'from below', it simultaneously corrodes international authority as the ability to initiate and transform.

Introduction

This article is about the way in which 'post-liberal' approaches to peacebuilding hinder international policy elites from formulating a socially transformative project for their engagement with the Global South. By deconstructing the liberal-universal foundations of international policy approaches, 'post-liberal' arguments undercut policymakers' capacity to 'create and initiate'.[1] While the regulatory ambit of post-Cold War interventions has grown notably, Western governments and international organisations seem to be finding it increasingly difficult to pursue a purposive political project vis-à-vis post-conflict and other transitional societies. As David Chandler has recently pointed out, Western interveners are more and more concerned 'not to be taking over decision-making processes, to be setting external goals, or to be measuring progress using external yardsticks'.[2] This reluctance and self-restraint stands in stark contrast to the original peacekeeping missions of the early 1990s which 'believed that improving knowledge of conflict and peace processes would enable a willing international

community to resolve […] problems'.[3] This type of 'solutionism' was able to focus on the 'technical questions of sequencing and speed' because it was based on the assumption that interveners possessed 'superior knowledge', prompting them to 'undertake more comprehensive and extensive interventions to secure global peace'.[4] Interestingly, rejecting these premises seems to have become the 'new mainstream'.[5] And the way this 'new mainstream' has formed is through the idea that peacebuilding should start looking 'beyond liberalism'.[6] While previous interventions were premised on the idea that 'liberalism offered a key for   solving'[7] the problems of post-conflict societies, it would appear as if contemporary 'post-liberal' frameworks are built on the understanding that the ideas associated with the liberal peace are, in fact, the biggest barrier to successful intervention. As Roger Mac Ginty and   Oliver Richmond write, 'the crisis at the international level is […] internal'.[8] While the policy impact of 'post-liberal' arguments might be limited, they seem to reflect with unparalleled clarity the wide-spread distrust of modern liberal-universal epistemology. With this concern in mind, the paper reconstructs critically the genealogy of the 'post-liberal' approach. The goal is to bring out how the construction of radical local agency beyond liberal-universal epistemology might be facilitating a policy impasse: Although post-conflict and post-colonial subjects are seen as in need of outside facilitation, international interveners are increasingly unable to purposefully and instrumentally engage with international governance problems.

The analysis begins by revisiting the classic neoliberal position which Roland Paris formulated in his famous 'Institutionalization Before Liberalization' strategy.[9] The purpose is to showcase how classic neoliberal frameworks depend on a quite accentuated epistemic hierarchy between capable interveners and incapable intervened and continue to valorise modern universalist episteme over idiosyncratic local forms of knowing. Paris' IBL strategy clings to the ultimate goal of liberal market democracy but emphasises the importance of putting in place the necessary sociocultural preconditions for pluralist politics and market economics. In doing so, IBL seems to call naturally for a thorough transformation of intervened societies 'requiring changes in behavior, expectations and norms'.[10]

Foucauldian governmentality studies have picked up on the neoliberal portrayal of intervention as a new 'mission civilisatrice'.[11] They have opposed international intervention for its disciplinary character reflected in what they see as a top-down imposition of standardized liberal-universal templates.[12] Here, the 'new interventionism'[13] is interpreted as a set of intrusive disciplinary techniques curbing local cultural diversity into conformity with a Western liberal ideal of the subject, market and state.

'Post-liberal' authors, in turn, feed off the governmentality critique. Like Foucauldian governmentality studies, they call for a broadening of civil society participation in order to incorporate the full range of local voices. Richmond's notion of the 'local-local' indicates the existence of genuine grass-roots actors hidden by reductionist liberal-universal episteme. It articulates the search for radical alterity beyond liberal universalism.[14] The key point is that accessing and enabling the 'local-local' involves 'confronting the edifice of Western ontological assumptions and […] epistemologies […] *without* resorting to new metanarratives of "peace"'.[15] The problem for 'post-liberal' peacebuilders in this situation is that 'local-locals' are largely invisible to Western

interveners who are steeped in reductionist liberal-universal modes of thinking. By setting up local participation as an 'engage[ment] with those who cannot speak'[16] or are invisible to the reductionist liberal-universal gaze from above, international interveners can never be sure they are talking to the right people (read 'local-locals') and are enabling them in a non-imposing way. 'Post-liberal' peacebuilders are constantly invited to give up some more of their obstructive liberal-universal baggage if they really want to access and enable radical alterity from below. They are constantly forced to surrender the analytical and normative foundations on which they used to construct their foreign policy outlook. Wanting to work exclusively through what is thought to already be in place, i.e. the 'local-local', and by constructing it as 'fundamentally different'[17] from the modern liberal-universal world, international interveners become increasingly passive and status quo-oriented. Their normative ambitions are shrinking and they are less and less in a position to initiate purposive political change. It would appear as if purposive social transformation led by international actors necessitates some sort of ideological framework capable of reducing empirical complexity to a pre-theorised set of foundational concepts, categories and assumptions. Heeding to this critique would involve a return to ideological foundationalism – liberal or other – which at this point seems unlikely.

Neoliberals

One may start the genealogy of 'post-liberal' peacebuilding with the work of Roland Paris. For Paris, international interventions after the Cold War have been trying to '"transplant" the values and institutions of the liberal democratic core into the domestic affairs of peripheral host states'.[18]
According to Paris, the problem with peacebuilding in the early 1990s was its naïve neglect of the question of transition, i.e. 'the distinction between liberal*ism* and liberal*ization*'.[19] That is, liberal peace advocates had been 'assuming[ing] away [the existence of] effective state institutions': 'They have tended to "bracket" or ignore the question of whether functioning governments exist'.[20] Here, Paris puts special emphasis on the selection role of interveners to 'promote "good" civil society while simultaneously restraining its "bad" variant'.[21] 'Institutionalization Before Liberalization' was a way of expressing the view that peacebuilders had been underestimating the importance of societal blockages which were supposedly preventing liberal democratic institutions from working properly. Successful transition therefore would involve enhanced policy efforts on the sociocultural preconditions of liberal market democracy. Paris' IBL strategy does not reject liberal market democracy per se 'but question[s] the process and timeframe' for its realisation.[22] In other words, classic neoliberal authors cling to 'the "end stage" of liberal democratic societies'[23] but want to move from quick fixes to a 'more holistic[…]'[24] engagement with the intricacies of local state-society relations. In this way, IBL is a pledge for more comprehensive and 'deeper' intervention. Classic neo-liberals call for 'societal transformation' brought about by 'long-term strategies involving large segments of society and extensive education and sensitivity campaigns'.[25] Against this background of thorough-going policy involvement and (benevolent) tutelage, talking about local ownership would be 'at best disingenuous':

'Ownership is certainly the intended end of such operations, but almost by definition it is not the means'.[26] On the contrary, classic neoliberals stress the degree to which 'malvol[ent] and incapa[ble]' [27] locals may profit from international expert knowledge. In Simon Chesterman's eyes, the problem is 'not that transitional administration is colonial in character' but that it is 'not colonial enough'.[28] So, while classic neoliberal frameworks, like IBL, arguably constitute a shift away 'from address-ing causes in universal and linear ways and towards a focus on endogenous processes and new-institutionalist framings',[29] there is still a quite strong hierarchy in terms of superior international expertise and associated forms of governance. There is still in Paris' work a palpable desire to remodel intervened societies in quite fundamental ways by an externally-driven reform project and with an idealized notion of liberal market democracy in mind. A pronounced idea of tutor and disciple still animates the engagement with the allegedly illiberal Other. With this notion of epistemic superiority in mind, it is possible to understand how Paris was able to claim and welcome the idea that the 'new interventionism'[30] was an 'updated version of the mission civilisatrice'.[31] As we will see next, his embrace of intrusive intervention and (re-)education has turned Paris' work into the target of a sustained and very popular critique by Foucauldian governmentality studies.

Foucauldian governmentality studies

The Foucauldian governmentality perspective recurs immediately on the neoliberal account sketched above. That is, Foucauldian governmentality studies build their analyses – and normative evaluations, for that matter – directly on the assertion that contemporary inter-national interventions aim at the 'creation of liberal polities',[32] or, as Paris would have it, are 'based on the principles of liberal democracy and market-oriented economics'.[33] Jeremy Gould and Julia Ojanen argue that Western intervention constitutes 'an attempt to build the capacity of "weak" Southern states to attain more responsible "citizenship" in the international community of liberal democracies'.[34] Equally, Foucauldian governmentality studies seem to have bought into the rather frank concession by neoliberals that local participation and ownership should be seen as rhetorical or pro forma (see Chesterman above). In this context, Foucauldian governmentality studies have elaborated extensively on the disciplining nature of neoliberal empowerment and civil society discourses.[35] Alastair Fraser sums up the Foucauldian governmentality view on local ownership in this way: '[P]articipation *disciplines individual participants*'.[36] Where indigenous knowledge is encouraged this is done in a purely exploitative, functionalised and highly asymmetric way: 'The purpose of "input" was not to learn about villagers' aspirations or engage in debate. It was to reform their aspirations and alter their conduct. The intended outcome […] was determined in advance'.[37] What matters here is how this kind of critique has, in turn, been the point of departure for 'post-liberal' approaches to peacebuilding, as we will see in the next section.[38]

'Post-liberal' peacebuilding

In this section, I would like to reconstruct how 'post-liberal' authors have assimilated the Foucauldian governmentality critique sketched above. Oliver Richmond, for instance, sees international intervention in the social, economic and political affairs of post-conflict societies as marked by a 'governmentalising distance and biopolitical tendency'.[39] According to Richmond, intervention is meant to 'tutor local actors away from their pathologies'.[40] In a critique that neatly mirrors Murray Li's argument on local civil society participation and ownership, Richmond complains that internationals 'turn to local cultural practices in order to assimilate them into the top–down construction of the liberal peace'.[41] They see the local simply as the object of 'social engineering projects associated with the liberal peace'.[42] Similar to Foucauldian governmentality critics,[43] this 'liberal imperialism' is seen as asserting a 'superior moral order, knowledge, justice and freedom and [the] devaluing, indeed discounting, [of] local experiences'.[44]

In response, 'post-liberal' authors have proposed 'a far greater consideration and respect for alternative modes of politics or polities'.[45] Rather than 'presume[ing] [a] uniform or "virgin" territory in the areas in which peacebuilding occurs', international interveners should try to pay much more attention to the rich local traditions and indigenous social practices which are *already* in place and may hold important ideational and political potential for peace.[46] The ethos of this 'much more empowering'[47] approach is to distance oneself from the 'unbecoming liberal claims that the post-conflict polity and post-conflict individual should all "become liberal"'.[48] For 'post-liberal' scholars, taking the 'next step'[49] in peace-building involves a self-critical reappreciation of the much more limited applicability of 'liberal democracy, liberal human rights, market values, the integration of societies into globalization and the centralized secular state'[50] in 'fundamentally'[51] different contexts. Peacebuilding would no longer demand of the Other to 'become liberal'.[52] Instead of 'identify[ing] the local as deviant',[53] peace processes should open up for a 'much more localized social, academic, policy and customary epistemic base'.[54] In fact, accusing others of failing to reach the liberal peace 'is to miss the point'[55] of the local and the everyday entirely. In 'post-liberal' frameworks of understanding, the local and the everyday are precisely about the aspiration to get in touch with constituencies '*beyond* the artificial parameters of the liberal state and induced liberal civil society'.[56]

 The reading of the liberal peace as blocking local agency has been voiced by a host of other 'post-liberal' authors. Roger Mac Ginty, for example, has warned of the 'vertical and linear picture' of intervention which might be 'overly simplistic' and, hence, 'overlook[…] the agency of local actors'.[57] And Jason Franks points out that the 'classic liberal peace framework' has facilitated 'a complete failure to engage with the local cultural-political systems and instead [has] look[ed] to replace them from above with Western patterns of liberal democracy'.[58]

At this point, we may clarify some of the differences and commonalities between the classic neoliberal approach exemplified by Paris' IBL strategy and the 'post-liberalism' of Richmond, Mac Ginty and others. To begin with, it seems to deserve special emphasis that both approaches represent 'varieties on the theme of problematizing the alleged imposition of liberal forms upon the non-liberal or a-liberal Other'.[59] In the classic neoliberal as well as the 'post-liberal' perspective, the problem of the liberal

peace is the 'existence of a non-liberal Other, which is either culturally or politically not amenable to liberal'[60] policy.   As Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam write:

> Both the authors who are more sympathetic to the liberal peace [such as Paris and Chesterman] and those who advocate a post-liberal […] peace [Richmond, Mac Ginty et al.] emphasize the binary division of the world into, on the hand, a set of liberal actors with […] interventionist capacities and, on the other, a set of non- or a-liberal actors in post-conflict or transitional countries who are seen to provide the problem in need of resolution […].[61]

Where they seem to differ is in their willingness to give up liberal-universal goals and assumptions in order to enable a new kind of engagement with the non-liberal Other. To be sure, both share a 'desire to alter these ["liberal-universalist"] assumptions and become more context-sensitive'.[62] But there seems to be a marked schism between those authors who vie to improve 'performance' through better 'sequencing (for example, establishing institutions before liberalization) or increasing "local ownership", participation and consultation' and those who have begun to question the general 'suitability of liberal political and economic values'[63] and claim to be looking for 'local alternatives'[64] even when these are 'far-removed from the worldview of liberal peace donors'.[65] As Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh laments, most practitioners still share a consensus that peacebuilding should be based on the idea that 'establishing free markets, rule of law, and liberal democracy could *in principle* lead to a sustainable peace'.[66] In contrast, 'imposing […] liberal notions of liberty' is categorically rejected in the 'critical literature'.[67] In 'post-liberal' approaches, even the goal of liberal market democracy is problematic. In this view, internationals should not even 'attempt' to transfer liberal market democracy because 'doing so creates or aggravates dysfunctional-ism and interrupts indigenous processes and may in fact prolong instability'.[68] Compared to classic neoliberal frameworks, like IBL, it appears as if 'post-liberal' perspectives put far greater emphasis on 'organic processes of endogenous development' and are even keener on   overcoming 'universalizing, mechanistic or reductionist approaches to policy intervention'[69] in order to facilitate them.
The question which arises here is, of course: Why, then, intervene in the first place? If solutions may only ever emerge 'from the bottom-up' and liberal-universal epistemology only hinders this process, why not leave post-conflict and other transitional societies to themselves? As Mac Ginty stresses, internationals should be vary of 'romanticis[ing] all things local'.[70] That is, for 'post-liberals' endogenous solutions still have to be somehow 'facilitated by external actors'.[71] In fact, Campbell is reintroducing the classic neo-liberal doubts as to whether local actors are really able to find appropriate policy solutions all by themselves: 'Do these actors actually have the capacity […]?'[72] Paris has made this weak spot in the 'post-liberal' argument the target of his critique by pointing out that 'peacebuilders will still need to make crucial choices', 'privileging some structures and not others'.[73] And the whole need for intervention, including in the 'post-liberal' perspective, grows out of the shared understanding that there must exist some sort of internal shortcoming requiring outside attention: '[I]f post-conflict society could organize its own governance arrangements without international

assistance, there would have been no need or demand for peacebuilding in the first place'.[74] What differs is that 'post-liberals' want to gain from peacebuilding a mutual 'pedagogy of peace' that is 'as much aimed at the liberal international as it is [at] the local […]'.[75] As far as international actors are concerned, this self-cleansing learning process would allow the 'Western model itself [to be] modified by its engagement with its […] "other"'.[76] As far as the interaction between liberal internationals and their non- or a-liberal Other is concerned, the 'post-liberal' peace would allow for 'unscripted conversations with local communities and elites'.[77] Hence, what is new about Richmond's 'post-liberal' peace and what distinguishes it from classic neo-liberal approaches like IBL is 'the way [it] engages with non-liberal others'.[78] The challenge to 'intellectually enable[…] an engagement with the lives of ordinary [non- or a-liberal] people'[79] is much more central here than in classic neoliberal approaches with their willingness to transform, impose and (re-)educate.

In the remainder, I would like to sketch what the parameters of thought would be if one wanted to operate from within a 'post-liberal' framework. How would interveners have to think (differently) if they wanted to do 'post-liberal' peacebuilding properly? And what would be the implications for their ability to confidently formulate and instrumentally pursue a socially transformative vision for their interaction with the Global South?

The fantasy of the 'local-local' and the critique of liberal universalism

For 'post-liberal' authors, civil society participation, understood as the 'consideration of local cultural knowledge, ontologies, reactions and requirements', has remained 'extremely limited'.[80] Civil society participation has been based on an 'idealized [liberal] version' 'imported from outside'.[81] As a result, what has been created is an 'artificial form of civil society, disconnected from'[82] or 'float[ing] above'[83] local processes and expectations. For Richmond, '[l]iberal bubbles' have formed 'with little reach beyond'[84] the capital. Thania Paffenholz has also argued that civil society participation in peacebuilding missions has been largely superficial.[85] According to Paffenholz, 'donor-driven NGO civil society initiatives have limited the capacity of other types of civil society to create domestic social capital and ownership'.[86] Rather than engaging with genuine grassroots actors, there has been a trend to 'fund a pre-selected set of activities carried out by urban elite-based NGOs'.[87] In consequence, Paffenholz argues, 'no meta-alternative is presented'.[88] According to Richmond, the more fundamental reason why civil society participation has been ineffectual and somehow fake is that the legitimacy of international interventions has so far been based on 'international norms' and 'liberal knowledge systems'.[89] Interventions have been 'unconsciously designed to distance and marginalize uncomfortable and authentic local voices, their needs, expectations and practices […]'.[90] Here, Richmond echoes again the popular Foucauldian governmentality critique that civil society policies are actually meant to 'hold back "uncivil society", the barbarians, the traditional or customary and the non-secular which it is feared lurk behind local politics and await an opportunity to undermine the liberal state'.[91] Ownership is conceived of only 'within the liberal framework',[92] 'depoliticizing the really existing context and the local'.[93] In this disciplinary apparatus, the local appears as an object to be 'mapped and defined from

an external perspective for the purpose of locating it in a rational "liberal" state'.[94] Under these circumstances, local agency [25] 'remain[s] hidden'[95] and its critical governance potential is wasted.

In consequence, what 'post-liberal' authors call for is a 'significant broadening of the representational capacity of the international peace architecture'.[96] The objective is to engage with the 'full breadth of local agency' even if it 'may not conform to Western-looking templates'.[97] Indeed, from the 'post-liberal' point of view, the 'search for an "authentic" local' is to 'drive[…]' the whole peacebuilding project.[98] The local is the centre piece of the argument. But the search for the local really only begins to develop its radical creativity once it is framed as the attempt to 'engage with those who cannot speak',[99] to see those who are invisible to the reductionist liberal-universal gaze. In order to get a better idea of what that means, we have to look again at Richmond's notion of the 'local-local'. Richmond sees the 'local' as constituted by the elite level and as donor-driven.[100] The 'local' originates in the misplaced projection of the interveners' liberal self onto a non- or a-liberal Other and is ultimately doomed to fail because of its inability to take root. In contrast, the more radical 'local-local' indicates the existence and diversity of 'political society beyond this often liberally projected artifice of elites and civil society',[101] i.e. the 'local'. The 'local-local' is 'far deeper' and lies beyond the 'liberally projected artifice'[102] of intervention. It is defined negatively as that which lies beyond reductionist liberal-universal forms of knowledge. And it is precisely the *difference* to liberal-universal epistemology that is behind the 'post-liberal' realisation that 'there is far more peacebuilding capacity at the local level than international actors […] could see'.[103] Unfortunately, the 'dominance of liberal epistemology' has generated a 'blind spot'[104] for the genuine 'local-local'. The 'obstacle' to accessing the 'local-local' and putting it in the driver's seat is epistemic: 'Quite simply, many proponents of the liberal peace find it difficult to see the local'.[105] In other words, what is at stake in 'post-liberal' conceptions of the local are 'ways of knowing […] that are inaccessible to [interveners] because of Enlightenment, rational and individualistic biases'.[106] The 'error' of liberal peacebuilding is its 'positivist, problem-solving methods and epistemology'.[107] The challenge, therefore, is to 'transcend reductive analysis' and open up policy to 'empathy' 'beyond rational and even normative epistemologies'.[108] Development and peacebuilding policies should be about 'support[ing] their subjects rather then defin[ing] them'.[109] As Chandler has pointed out, in this perspective, 'any attempt to know, rather than merely express "empathy" is open to hegemonic abuse'.[110] Instead of looking for 'rational patterns', peacebuilders should try to become more attuned to the 'lived experience' of conflict and avoid 'being overly reductionist'.[111] That is, the notion of the 'local-local' calls for critical self-reflexivity 'confront[ing] universalist ideas and practices'.[112] The 'local-local' is an explicit 'retreat from the certainties and binaries that underpin Western modes of thinking'.[113] Enabling local participation is a problem of ensuring that – as far as possible – policymaking is not 'tainted by Western, liberal and developed world orthodoxies and interests'.[114]

Against this background, it becomes clear why Campbell, Chandler and Sabaratnam have been arguing that the 'epistemological critiques' of intervention have become a field of adversity on which the '"liberal" assumptions of Western modernity'[115] have been questioned. More specifically, the 'post-liberal' critique has been a way of problematising the applicability of liberalism to an essentialised non-liberal Other.[116] This

comes out clearly in Franks' claim that the problems of intervention are 'inherent in the application of the liberal peace'.[117] They are the 'natural effect'[118] of implementing the liberal peace model in contexts where it does not properly belong. And Richmond's argument also depends on an essentialised boundary between interveners 'reflect[ing] a liberal project'[119] and 'fundamentally different'[120] (read non-liberal) intervened. This essentialised difference is replicated in the notion of an 'epistemological […] distance between liberal and local politics'.[121] In consequence, rather than critiquing intervention for its illiberal outcomes or even critiquing liberalism as such for its inability to facilitate socio-economic transformation, the 'spirit' of the local turn is to undercut 'liberal optimism and notions of universal rights'.[122] The concern of 'post-liberal' approaches is that peacebuilders 'should […] be far less certain about […] universalism'[123] when interacting with intervened states and societies, 'putting aside […] the notion that we can all become liberal'.[124] So far, the critical academic literature on 'post-liberal' approaches has focused on this tendency to reproduce essentialised differences and hierarchies between Western interveners and their localised Other. That is, discussing the limits of modern Western forms of knowledge has, in fact, been about a retreat from political and social emancipation and progress.[125] This is a poignant critique. Where this paper would like to further the discussion or add an additional dimension is in working out the detrimental effect of the 'post-liberal' search for the hidden and idiosyncratic 'local-local' on international policymakers' ability to act purposefully in the world. There is a downside to the fantasy of the 'local-local' as that which lies beyond the blinders of reductionist liberal-universal forms of knowledge: trying to see and enable all the local agency which is hidden by modern universal epistemology systematically undercuts policymakers' 'capacity to create and initiate'.[126] By putting the unknown knowledge of an essentialised Other at the heart of policy reflection, inter-national policymakers' own epistemic and normative foundations become progressively more instable. By trying to 'engage with those who cannot speak'[127] and to see those who are invisible, international policymakers lose their own authoritative knowledge and policy agency. The 'post-liberal' world is one which is increasingly unintelligible and immune to political change.

The crisis of international authority

As the preceding sections have tried to show, 'post-liberal' approaches demand that 'peace-building should begin from the local, the everyday'.[128] Importantly, in their attempt to make the local and even the 'far deeper local-local'[129] the starting point of peacebuilding, 'post-liberals' encounter a very concrete problem: '*Who* is the "local" and *where* is the "everyday"?'.[130] While 'post-liberal' peacebuilders acknowledge that peace must be 'negotiated locally', it is equally clear to them that this process must be 'prompted externally'.[131] Hence, identifying genuinely local counterparts becomes a top priority. For 'post-liberal' peacebuilders, this involves overcoming a double obstacle. Their 'methodological challenge' is to 'confront[…] the edifice of Western ontological assumptions and […] epistemologies […] *without* resorting to new metanarratives of "peace"'.[132] As we saw above, liberal politics and territorial forms of political organisation have been identified as 'moment[s] of exclusion'[133] and, therefore, have to be

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discarded. But this has to be achieved in such a way as *not* to formulate a new 'claim to know on behalf of others'.[134] 'Contextually restructuring' peacebuilding cannot possibly be done within a new 'general theory'.[135] Understanding local context is of a different nature than building a self-contained system of generalised analytical assumptions, concepts and norms. The goal of contextual peacebuilding is inherently antithetical to 'a new [...] cartography of power'[136] because that would constitute yet another epistemic 'sovereignt[y]'.[137] So the starting point of 'post-liberal' peacebuilding, i.e. the 'local-local', is something unknown to outsiders and any attempt to know it externally, reductively, from above defeats its very purpose. What interveners are left with – what 'post-liberalism' 'offers' them – is an 'ongoing critique'[138] of themselves geared towards eliminating the remnants of reductionist liberal-universal thinking. This deconstructive process reproduces itself continuously through doubt and uncertainty. One can never be sure to be non-reductionist and non-imposing enough. In the 'post-liberal'

framework, peacebuilders can never be sure they are not imposing their Western modern episteme again and are talking to an externally induced surrogate civil society disconnected from the genuine 'local-local' because peace is always 'situated *right at the limits* of Northern liberalism and social sciences'[139] and interveners are defined by their very being liberal. It is no surprise, then, that Richmond himself stresses that, despite attempts to increase participation, 'the local remains elusive for international actors'.[140] What opens up is on ongoing public trial 'questioning the very foundations of peace-building'.[141] That is the 'founding myths of Westphalia':[142] state-centrism, territorial borders and sovereignty. The key point is that these 'founding myths' are not to be substituted with an 'alternative paradigm' as that would 'miss the point completely'.[143] 'Post-liberalism' is all about '*not* becom[ing] a new universal' because any 'discourse of power, through knowledge, method, or ideology' would only render invisible or suppress the creative agency that is 'already developing'[144] locally.

In this way, 'post-liberal' authors reflect a growing crisis of *auctoritas*, i.e. a 'problem of foundational norms'.[145] They seem to have abandoned the 'ideal of a foundational authority which someone develops (augments) and takes forward into the present'.[146] Or as Hannah Arendt pointed out, 'what authority or those in authority constantly augment is the foun-dation'.[147] In contrast, it appears as if contemporary practices of critique go in the opposite direction. They seem to aim at diminution. They vie to take apart the existing foundations of liberal modernity, rather than to augment them – or, alternatively, to replace them with a fresh set of new foundational norms. They are about 'enabling people to destabilize even deeply institutionalized meanings',[148] rather than about (re-)building meaning. In other words, 'post-liberal' critiques seem to be part of a larger crisis of liberal foundations – one 15 which has not been followed by 'the constitution of a [...] novel version of foundational norms for validating authority'.[149] Instead, most contemporary critiques 'have opted for the strategy of evading the question [of "foundational support"] altogether'.[150]

Put differently, 'post-liberalism' seems to speak for a crisis of 'epistemic authority'.[151] When Michael Zürn, Martin Binder, and Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt define 'epistemic author-[20] ity' as 'rest[ing] on the assumption that knowledge and expertise are unequally distributed, but that there is a *common epistemological framework* that allows us to judge this ine-quality',[152] then it would appear as if today it is precisely this erstwhile taken-for-granted, coherent, universalist system of epistemologic references

which is being taken apart *from within* by 'post-liberal' approaches. Epistemic and normative self-deconstruction is the way in which leading academics and policymakers have responded to real-world policy failures. For them, the debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan testify to the liberal peace model itself have failed in alien contexts.

What is more, despite their claim not to 'collapse into a grand narrative of ideology',[153] 'post-liberalism' does posit its own new ontologic hierarchy: Reality over artifice. 'Post-liberal' solutions emerge 'from the realities of post-conflict societies' and not from 'theoretical ideals'.[154] Hence, the ontology of 'post-liberalism' privileges 'non-Western *life*' over 'Western *models*'.[155] While 'post-liberal' authors welcome this enthronement of reality, the drawback seems to be that democratic aspirations have to be given up: 'Statebuilding the-orists and practitioners should stop assuming that democracy should or could work for everyone'; results may be 'peaceful but not democratic'.[156] With Roberts' comment in mind, it becomes clear how 'privileging difference over universality is not inherently emancipatory or transformative'.[157] On the contrary, by aiming to work only through what is thought to already be in place, i.e. the 'local-local', and by constructing it as 'fundamentally different',[158] interventionary policy becomes increasingly passive and status quo oriented. Pursuing a set of normative objectives loses political purchase and meaning. What takes its place is a 'speculative and passive search for different, non-liberal forms of knowledge'.[159] And this search involves a continuous deconstruction of the reductionist liberal-universal foundations through which the emancipatory and instrumentalist policy projects of the past used to be cohered ideologically.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a critical appraisal of 'post-liberalism'. It began by analysing Paris' IBL strategy.[160] IBL defended the ultimate goal of liberal market democracy but demanded greater emphasis on the socio-cultural preconditions of imported Western institutions. In this way, IBL called naturally for a thorough 'social transformation' of post-conflict societies 'requiring changes in behavior, expectations and norms'.[161] Thus, in classic neoliberal approaches, there exists a strong epistemic hierarchy and a continued valorisation of international expertise. Foucauldian governmentality studies have made this hierarchy their favoured object of critique. They have opposed IBL as a form of governmentality which disciplines non-Western communities into conformity with modern liberal standards. 'Post-liberals', in turn, have taken up the Foucauldian governmentality reading. They equally critique civil society participation for its 'governmentalising distance and biopolitical tendency'.[162] In reaction, 'post-liberal' authors have called for a broadening of civil society participation in order to include the more diverse and radical 'local-local'.[163] As far as international interveners are concerned, identifying the 'local-local' requires 'confronting the edifice of Western ontological assumptions and […] epistemologies […] without resorting to new metanarratives of "peace"'.[164] In 'post-liberal' thinking, there is much less of an epistemic hierarchy than in IBL. Indeed, although the non-liberal Other still needs to be 'prompted externally',[165] the knowledge-power hierarchy between interveners and intervened is almost inversed in the 'post-liberal' framework. The problem for 'post-

liberals' is that even the radical 'local-local' needs to be somehow enabled from the outside while remaining largely invisible to the reductionist liberal-universal view. In this framework, peacebuilders can never be sure not to be imposing Western modern episteme again, build-ing a fake, surrogate civil society floating above the genuine 'local-local'. In fact, more often than not, when peacebuilders think they have managed to find the 'local-local', they will probably just be talking to their liberal-universalist avatars again. In the search for the mysterious 'local-local', 'post-liberals' are forced to deconstruct more and more of their obstructive liberal-universal foundations. And without these foundations, their engagement with the world becomes increasingly passive and status quo-oriented. Pursuing the 'post-liberal' fantasy of the 'local-local' as a policy framework systematically undercuts international policymakers' auctoritas as the 'capacity to create and initiate'.[166] Ironically, 'post-liberal' authors started out with critiquing the conservative character of contemporary interventions, but their rejection of liberal-universal episteme actually ends up reinforcing it. It would seem that deliberate, emancipatory social transformation is difficult without an ideological baseline – liberal or other – and that today this kind of reductionist and normative intellectual engagement with the world is thoroughly discredited.

Acknowledgements

Notes

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[5]Shahar Hameiri, 'A Reality Check for the Critique of the Liberal Peace', in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding*, ed. Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (London: Zed Books, 2011), 192.
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[8]Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building', 766.

[9]Roland Paris, *At War's End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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[13]Simon Chesterman, *You, The People. The United Nations, Transnational Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

[14]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

[15]Ibid., 213 (emphasis added).

[16]Oliver Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism. Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding', in *Rethinking the Liberal Peace. External Models and Local Alternatives*, ed. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 42. [17]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 19, 148.

[18]Paris, 'International Peacebuilding and the "Mission Civilisatrice"', 638.

[19]Paris, *At War's End*, 51 (original emphasis). [20]Ibid., 50.

[21]Ibid., 154.

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Chandler, 'Reconceptualizing International Intervention: Statebuilding', 76.

[25]See note 12 above.

[26]Simon Chesterman, 'Ownership in Theory and in Practice. Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations', in *Statebuilding and Intervention. Policies, Practices and Paradigms*, ed. David Chandler (London: Routledge, 2009), 21.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Chesterman, *You, The People. The United Nations*, 12.

[29]Chandler, 'Reconceptualizing International Intervention: Statebuilding', 78.

[30]Chesterman, *You, The People. The United Nations*, 2.

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[41]Ibid., 61.

[42]Ibid., 75; see also John Heathershaw, 'Seeing like the International Community: How Peacebuilding Failed (and Survived) in Tajikistan', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 2, no. 3 (2008): 347.

[43]Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation*.

[44]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 209.

[45]Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver Richmond, 'Introduction', in *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, ed. Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver Richmond (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2009), 14.

[46]Newman, '"Liberal" Peacebuilding Debates', 42. [47]Richmond, 'Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace', 691. [48]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 46. [49]Ibid.

[50]Newman, Paris, and Richmond, 'Introduction', 12.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 47–8.

[53]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 64.

[54]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 39.

[55]Oliver Richmond, 'A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday', *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 576. [56]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 37 (emphasis added).

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75 Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 197.

76 Ibid., 9.

77 Richmond and Mitchell, *Hybrid Forms of Peace. From Everyday*, 8.

78 Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 45.

79 Ibid.

80 Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 62.

81 Ibid., 61.

82 Ibid., 26.

83 Ibid., 28.

84 Richmond, 'Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace', 667. 85 Paffenholz, 'Civil Society

beyond the Liberal Peace'. [86]Ibid., 149.

[87]Ibid.; see also Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: How Does Hybrid Peace', 214.
[88]Paffenholz, 'Civil Society beyond the Liberal Peace', 143.
[89]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 34.
[90]Ibid., 28.
[91]Ibid., 29.
[92]Ibid., 152.
[93]Ibid., 28.
[94]Ibid., 57.
[95]Ibid., 183.
[96]Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building', 769. [97]Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: How Does Hybrid Peace', 214. [98]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 40.
[99]Ibid., 42.
[100]Ibid., 53, footnote 5.
[101]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 14.
[102]Ibid., 10.
[103]Ibid., 90.
[104]See note 50 above.
[105]Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building', 778; see also Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 14.
[106]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 190.
[107]Ibid.
[108]Ibid., 14; Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 39.
[109]See note 98 above.
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[111]Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: How Does Hybrid Peace', 210; see also Heathershaw, 'Seeing like the International Community', 347. [112]Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building', 772.
[113]Ibid., 780.
[114]Richmond, 'A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism', 571; critically, Chandler, 'Reconceptualizing International Intervention: Statebuilding', 70.
[115]Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam, 'Introduction: The Politics of Liberal Peace', 3. [116]Chandler, 'The Uncritical Critique of "Liberal Peace"'.
[117]Franks, 'Beware of Liberal Peacebuilders Bearing Gifts', 268.
[118]Ibid.
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46; see also Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 12.

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[136]Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism', 44.

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[157]Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam, 'Introduction: The Politics of Liberal Peace', 4. [158]See note 19 above.

[159]Chandler, 'The Uncritical Critique of "Liberal Peace"', 186.
[160]See note 11 above.
[161]See note 12 above.
[162]Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 186.
[163]See note 16 above.
[164]Ibid., 213 (emphasis added).
[165]Ibid., 10.
[166]See note 2 above.