

This is the Accepted version of an article that will be published by Sage in the *European Journal of International Relations* <http://ejt.sagepub.com/>

Accepted Version downloaded from SOAS Research Online: <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/22353/>

## A long view of liberal peace and its crisis

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### Abstract

The ‘crisis’ of liberal peace has generated considerable debate in International Relations. However, analysis is inhibited by a shared set of spatial, cultural and temporal assumptions that rest on and reproduce a problematic separation between self-evident ‘liberal’ and ‘non-liberal’ worlds, and locates the crisis in presentist terms of the latter’s resistance to the former’s expansion. By contrast, this article argues that efforts to advance liberal rule have always been interwoven with processes of alternative order-making, and in this way are actively integral, not external, to the generation of the subjectivities, contestations, violence and rival social orders that are then apprehended as self-evident obstacles and threats to liberal peace and as characteristic of its periphery. Making visible these intimate relations of co-constitution elided by representations of liberal peace and its crisis requires a long view and an analytical frame that encompasses both liberalism and its others in the world. The argument is developed using a Foucauldian governmentality framework and illustrated with reference to Sri Lanka.

### Introduction

The 'crisis' of liberal peace is the subject of considerable debate in International Relations amid the doubts that have overtaken post-Cold War confidence that a pacific world order based on liberal democracy, market economics and the rule of law could be generated by West-led engagement in the world's conflict spaces and institutional innovation in global governance. Scholars are divided over the viability and future form of liberal order, the sources and extent of its crisis and the efficacy of liberal peacebuilding as a modality of interventionist global order-making. Nonetheless, there is a shared and taken-for-granted understanding of where the frontier and limits of liberal peace are located: in the disorderly global South characterised by authoritarianism, civil war, identity conflict, underdevelopment, rights abuses and 'ungoverned' spaces. Relatedly, the crisis of liberal peace, in its various treatments, is understood as non-liberal and illiberal resistance to the assisted or imposed emergence of liberal rule.

As such, despite their many disagreements, proponents and critics of liberal peace share a common spatial and temporal framing that rests on, and reproduces, a problematic separation between 'liberal' and 'non-liberal' worlds. First, the international system is implicitly or explicitly divided into two distinct parts: a stable liberal core of market democratic states, and a volatile non-liberal/illiberal periphery comprising both 'rising' powers and weak, authoritarian or partially liberalised states. This divide is fundamental to, for example, studies of democratic peace and the global 'diffusion' of liberalism, democracy and capitalism. Second, international engagements for liberal peace in the periphery are treated in presentist fashion as 'first encounters' between liberalism and its non-liberal others. Contemporary peacebuilding, developmental, democratisation and other interventions are routinely studied as interactions between pre-formed and distinct 'international' (liberal) and 'domestic' or 'local' (non-liberal) actors, practices and contexts (cf. e.g. Williams, 2013), and often as

characteristic of a distinct post-Cold War context<sup>1</sup>. This is not because scholars do not recognise colonialism, Cold War interventions, military and otherwise, and the historic consolidation of global capitalism have had a profoundly transformative impact in the South, or the commonalities between current and earlier international attempts at liberal transformation and modernization (e.g. Jahn, 2007a, 2007b; Duffield, 2001). Rather, as this article shows, the ontological and epistemological premises of liberal peace as a universalising rationality of pacific order and of its critical treatments as a project of US/western hegemony, capitalist imperialism or ‘global governmentality’ preclude taking seriously the productive consequences of the long history of mutually constitutive relations between ‘liberal’ and ‘non-liberal’ worlds (e.g. Barkawi and Laffey, 2001; Jahn, 2013). In great part, the above divisions rest on a more fundamental assumed distinction, that between liberalism and other social orders, such as nationalisms.<sup>2</sup> However, as postcolonial scholars have emphasised (e.g. Goswami, 2004; Scott, 1999), failure to take the long view and an analytical frame encompassing liberalism and its others distorts our understanding of both and the intimate relations between them throughout what G John Ikenberry (2009) teleologically terms ‘two centuries of liberal ascendancy’.

This article argues that the obstacles and threats that a globally expansive liberal order apprehends in its periphery as representative of its limits, and its crisis, cannot be understood without reference to the productive consequences over the *longue durée* of attempts to advance liberal rule in non-liberal spaces. Liberal interventions since the nineteenth century may not have always resulted in liberal rule, but they have been nonetheless deeply consequential, enabling, strengthening, disrupting and otherwise transforming processes of alternate order production. That is, liberal order-making has been and is implicated in the constitution of the very subjectivities, practices, contestations and violence that subsequently

appear as major, and also self-evidently ‘external’, problems for liberal peace. More precisely, efforts to reorganise the nexus of population, territory and rule in ways required for liberal peace, turning on liberal conceptions of individual, citizen, society, economy and state, have been always deeply interwoven with efforts towards alternate configurations representing different conceptions of order, security and peace. In their dynamic interaction, the pursuits of liberal peace and competing social orders, both ‘local’ (e.g. nationalisms) and ‘global’ (e.g. Islamism), together generate the very identities, social relations, actors, power distributions, contexts, etc. that then appear as obstacles to, and also starting points for, expanding liberal peace.

What we are pointing to is not simply the established criticisms that liberal interventions have been easily co-opted by local actors, or, conversely, that liberal states have cynically exploited and strengthened illiberal actors and practices for geopolitical or other self-interested reasons, or that periods of democratic ‘transition’ or economic liberalisation exacerbate inequalities and hierarchies and thus potential for conflict and war; these are only surface problems. Moreover, by a long view are we not referring to, for example, how globalising neoliberalism results in state weakening and ‘new wars’, or inequality and exploitation and thus popular unrest, particularist mobilisations and conflict; our concern is with deeper constitutive relations between liberal and non-liberal worlds. We are also not restating the long-standing recognition that liberalism, nationalisms, and other social formations are always ‘hybrid’; this only gets us so far. Rather our argument, in the context of the perceived ‘crisis of liberal peace’, is that the pursuits of liberal and rival social orders, whilst informed by competing political rationalities and ontologies, nonetheless advance ‘in the world’ through shared political technologies, strategies and practices (such as securitised-development, democratisation, devolution, etc.), and in this interweaving together generate

over the long durée the sometimes perverse outcomes that appear as self-evident, and self-evidently external, problems for liberal peace. We develop our argument using a Foucauldian governmentality framework, a historically-informed approach and a focus on liberalism and majoritarian nationalism, two social formations routinely treated as self-evidently distinct and antithetical. Our case study is Sri Lanka, a site of liberal transformative efforts over two centuries and, from the late colonial period, ethno-nationalist contestation, violence and high-intensity war, to all of which, as we show, the former has been always integral.

The article proceeds through five sections. We first briefly review the recent literature on the crisis of liberal peace, highlighting the above noted spatial and temporal assumptions in apprehending the location of liberal order and its crisis. We next elaborate our analytical approach, making clear what we mean by governmentality-as-order and by liberal peace as a political rationality. In the third and fourth sections we explore our case study, Sri Lanka, and show how liberal and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order-making efforts there have been deeply interwoven since the nineteenth century. In particular, focussing on a key modality of order-making, securitised-development, we show how its manifestations in Sri Lanka through joint international and local practices came to generate a problem in common for both projects in the form of a resistant Tamil nationalism and resulted not in liberal peace but the antithesis of liberal rule: militarized demographic change, nationalist mobilisations and a high-intensity ‘war for peace’ waged under global-local management. The conclusion considers the implications of the argument for analysis of liberal peace and its crisis.

### **Locating liberal peace and its crisis**

After the Cold War liberal peace became the explicit ideational basis for western foreign policy and diverse yet converging transformative programs around the world by UN agencies, multilateral donors and an array of non-state actors (e.g. Duffield, 2001; Jahn, 2007b, 2013; Quinn and Cox, 2007; Paris, 1997; Zaum, 2012). However, these efforts have resulted typically not in stable liberal states and polities but fragile or illiberal ones (e.g. Jahn, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2011; Paris, 2010; Richmond, 2011). Amid persistent developmental failure, potent identity-based mobilisations, ‘illiberal democracies’, rise of transnational Islamic insurgency, etc. and liberal states’ violence in Iraq and Afghanistan and illiberal practices in the ‘War on Terror’, global liberal ambitions are also seen to be confronted by the ‘rise’ of non-western powers such as China and India, ‘decline’ in US/western power and authority, gridlock in international institutions and unevenness in global capitalism. Accordingly, a ‘crisis’ of liberal peace is apprehended both at the level of the international system and liberal peacebuilding, the project of expanding the West-centred market-democratic ‘zone of peace’.

At the systemic level, for many scholars the problem stems from the rise of non-western powers in an incomplete liberal-capitalist world order. For some, this is a ‘crisis of success’ as not only has this US-built order enabled the economic success underpinning new powers’ rise, they are seeking not to overturn it, but greater say in its management (Ikenberry, 2009: 84; Stephen, 2014). However, liberal order is conceived here as an ‘open and rule-based order’ that has ‘evolved and periodically reinvented’ itself and as encompassing the West-centred zone of democratic peace but less liberal than this core. Also emphasising evolution, other scholars drawing on the ‘practice turn’ in IR conceptualise liberal order(s) as a changing set of *social practices* (e.g. Adler, 2013; Koivisto and Dunne, 2010); the contingent outcome of constant negotiation between ‘multiple modernities’, producing ‘self-organising

modes of regulation and reproduction in liberal world politics' comprising a 'balance' of 'liberal and non-liberal practices' (Koivisto and Dunne, 2010: 640). However, for Charles A Kupchan (2014), such readings neglect the normative foundations of hegemony, as non-western powers will seek alternative, possibly regional, orders 'based on their own cultural, ideological and socio-economic trajectories'.

Other analyses focus on liberal expansionism. For Michael Mann, the crisis represents the failure of US imperial ambitions in an era where the 'balance of power has shifted in crucial military and ideological respects away from the Great Powers and the North toward poorer social movements in the South,' (2004: 631). Conversely, for Georg Sørensen (2011) the problem is liberal states' vacillation between extremes of 'imposition' and 'restraint' in advancing liberal values against the 'reactions' these provoke. 'The 'global governmentality' literature (e.g. Dillon and Reid, 2009; Duffield, 2007; Neuman and Sending, 2010) treats liberal order as a governmental and biopolitical formation centred in the West and seeking to expand by transforming non-liberal life into liberal life, or, if it proves too recalcitrant, containing or exterminating it. The crisis emerges with the stubborn resilience of non-liberal life and the liberal hyper-violence this calls forth. If for Mann the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan are how 'the wretched of the earth have made the New American Empire still-born,' but not weakened the imperialists' resolve (2004: 653), for Michael Dillon and Julian Reid (2009: 43), such pre-emptive/preventive wars are integral to securing global liberal life, even as they 'excite, intensify and extend' the dangers to it.

All these accounts rest on a self-evident separation between liberal and non-liberal worlds, implicitly or explicitly aligned with spatial and cultural difference. In a world of multiple modernities, a liberal (western) one jostles with non-liberal others represented by emergent

non-western poles. State-society formations in the non-West, distinct from those in the West, are generating modes of capitalism which are ‘transnationally integrated, but substantially less liberal than that of the Western core’ (Stephen, 2014: 925). For Mann, ‘the notion of outsiders marching in to install democracy is absurd, unless the natives want this and have experience of it’ (2004: 652; Sorensen, 2011: 82-87). In the global governmentality literature liberal order’s outside is collectively constituted by life, largely in the South, variously resistant to liberal rule, but otherwise lacking a specificity beyond this.

Similar dichotomies inform liberal peacebuilding scholarship (cf. Sabaratnam, 2013).<sup>3</sup> The mainstream literature locates the crisis in post-conflict spaces, wherein non-liberal agents, practices and conditions that sustain civil war, ethnic conflict, state weakness/failure, etc. also undermine international efforts to reproduce the conditions of self-sustaining peace in the liberal core in contexts of cultural plurality and absence of strong and legitimate state institutions, in contrast with historically stable governance and national coherence in the West (e.g. Barnett, 2006; Paris, 1997, 2010). Conversely, a diverse critical literature locates the crisis in the coercive/violent and market fundamentalist logics of international peace- and state-building more concerned with expanding global capitalism and security of the West than the needs and preferences of post-conflict societies (e.g. Cooper et al, 2011; Duffield, 2001). However, Roland Paris (2010) argues the authors of these ‘hyper-criticisms’ propose no solutions that do not, at base, return to liberal principles (for a response, see Cooper et al, 2011). Oisín Tansey (2014) argues the critics fail to distinguish which negative consequences are attributable to international operations and which to local actors, concluding ‘it is often clear that international influence is overshadowed by the primacy of domestic politics.’



Other analyses seek to transcend what Michael Barnett et al (2014) label the ‘blame the victim’ and ‘blame peacebuilding’ divide through focus on the dynamic relations between international operations and post-conflict spaces. Barnett et al (2014) use game-theoretic models to explore peacebuilding as a ‘strategic interaction’ between ‘international and domestic actors’ that results in a continuum of ‘compromised peacebuilding’. Similarly, the ‘post-liberal’ or ‘hybrid’ peace literature (e.g. Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011) locates the crisis in the resistance generated by the coercive and technocratic imposition of ‘one size fits all’ western state- and market-centred frameworks on ‘local’ cultures and contexts for which these are alien and illegitimate; the outcomes are neither liberal nor non-liberal, but hybrids of both. In these approaches also liberal (international) and non-liberal (local) worlds are analytically separated prior to meeting within liberal peace interventions (Nadarajah and Rampton, 2015; Sabaratnam, 2013: 266-8).

In sum, what is precluded in scholarly engagement with the crisis of liberal peace is taking seriously the productive consequences, in both North and South, of the long history of attempts to advance liberal rule in non-liberal spaces. In great part, this derives from how liberalism itself is treated; whether in mainstream analyses, which take liberalism as a (heterogeneous) set of ideological values and normative principles, or in post-positivist accounts emphasising, variously, ‘practices’, governmental order, the multiplicity of modernity etc., liberalism as a social formation is accorded a solidity that enables it to be self-evidently distinguished (on its own terms) from its others. By contrast, this article emphasises the interweaving and therefore the mutual constitution of liberal and non-liberal social formations. We elaborate this below, first explaining our theoretical approach, which treats social formations as the fluid and contingent reifications of political rationalities, and thereafter showing through our study of Sri Lanka how two rival social formations, liberalism

and majoritarian nationalism, have been co-produced over the *longue durée* through overlapping and interlaced practices and strategies undertaken in service of these competing ideals of order and peace.

### **Liberal peace as a governmental order**

Developing and pursued over centuries as a conception of human progress and peace, liberalism always has been a protean phenomenon, a shifting set of philosophical arguments and political-economic practices (e.g. Bell, 2014; Doyle, 1986; Gerstle, 1994). Significantly, liberal thought and practice have been mutually constitutive, developing together through colonial, Cold War and post-Cold War eras (e.g. Bell, 2014; Jahn, 2013; Mehta, 1999; Latham, 2000). In particular, as Duncan Bell shows, the specific conception of liberalism that has come to be taken-for-granted as the constitutive ideology of the West was produced in the mid-20th century by ‘a conjunction of the ideological wars fought against “totalitarianism” and assorted developments in the social sciences,’ mainly in the United States (2014: 685). Having also become the self-evident basis for a pacific world order, it remains the dominant policy framework for West-led efforts to this end (e.g. Cooper et al, 2013: 3).

The crisis of liberal peace, however, has prompted calls for eschewing dogmatic insistence on this singular ideal (e.g. Koivista and Dunne, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011), supported by references to liberalism’s historical heterogeneity and internal ‘tensions’ (e.g. Dunne and Flockhart, 2013; Ikenberry, 2009; Sorensen, 2011). However, for other scholars, such efforts to re/define liberalism are futile, as liberalism always has to be understood in ways that encompass its worldly diversity. For Bell (2014), liberalism ‘is best characterised as the sum of the arguments that have been classified as liberal, and recognised as such by

other self-proclaimed liberals, over time and space.’ For Beate Jahn (2013) the ‘contradictions’ within liberalism are more significant than simply evidencing its heterogeneity or historical multiplicity; in her ‘immanent critique’, these are the ‘fragmentary dynamics’ that ensue as liberalism encounters the gulf between theory and reality as it advances in the world. As such, rather than a resource for remaking liberal order, these contradictions are mutually constitutive of the recurrent - and inescapable - crisis of liberal peace as a project of global transformation. Her trenchant critique links liberal ideologies and (persistently abortive) western policy and practices but in so doing, her focus is on liberalism itself, as opposed to its dynamic relations with its non-liberal others in the world – something she recognises and leaves for future research to explore (2013: 12).

However, in other analyses, the liberal - non-liberal encounter is key to understanding liberalism as a social formation. For Kimberly Hutchings (2013; see also, Hindess, 2004; Mehta, 1999), the separation between liberal and non-liberal is itself constitutive of liberalism and embedded in its quotidian practices; first, as a universalising and transformative project, liberalism ‘operates on the fundamental premise that some subjects are closer to being liberal than others’, with human progress being entirely reliant on the agency of liberal subjects, and, second, it is the very capacity to distinguish between the liberal and the non-liberal that *defines* liberals; liberals ‘are line drawing subjects *par excellence*’ (Hutchings, 2013: 162; Walzer, 1984). Inherent to this line-drawing however, is a denial of how liberal order ‘everywhere contains or is articulated with elements not well-captured through its own concepts and categories’, which enables complex social formations, including whole world orders, to be described as liberal while simultaneously practices (such as racism and colonial/imperial violence) that are demonstrably integral to re/producing these are asserted to be not liberal (Laffey and Nadarajah, 2012: 407).

Drawing on such studies that seek to go beyond liberalism as a (heterogeneous) philosophy, theory or doctrine, and foregrounding the contingent calculations, categorisations, hierarchies, etc. inherent to its worldly practices, this article treats liberalism as a political rationality i.e. as an ideal or vision of how human practices everywhere must be organised and regulated if order (peace) is to be secured (Dean, 2010; Larner, 2000; Rose, 1999). Following Laffey and Nadarajah, we understand liberalism as ‘a specific form of governmental reason and practice produced at the intersection of the European and non-European worlds, [and] encompassing within its project both “liberal” and “non-liberal” spaces, practices and subjects’ (2012: 417). Central to our analysis is the assumption that the re/production of social order rests not on the universalisation of ideological beliefs and values per se, but that of appropriate forms of *conduct* (Foucault, 2007). As Barry Hindess notes, ‘most if not all of the governmental devices that might be seen as falling under the (...) liberal mode of government could be and were supported by those who had no particular commitment to liberalism as a doctrine’ (1993: 310). As such, the emphasis is on how an ideal of social order rests on and advances through the inculcation of specific (e.g. ‘liberal’) ways of behaving and calculating, i.e. the production and perfecting of desirable subjectivities and the reform or destruction of undesirable ones. To this end, our analysis draws on a Foucauldian governmentality framework (Foucault, 2007; Dean, 2010; Rose, 1999), which we specify next.

### *Governmentality and order*

Michel Foucault (2007) termed governmentality the circulating form of power at work when the regularised conduct of its subjects reifies an ideal of social order, the nexus of population,

territory and political rule inherent to a given political rationality. For example, liberalism conceives of the individual as a rational, interest-motivated economic ego, and, as Hutchings (2013: 160) puts it, central to any position calling itself liberal is the valorisation of individual freedom. Freedom, however, is exercised within and in relation to an ideal of society, and society as a device of liberal rule is coincident with the nation; nation refers to the population of the territorial state (Dean, 2010: 146-153; Canovan, 1996). In this way, as Margaret Canovan shows, even as they emphasise the primacy of the individual, liberal theorists nonetheless presuppose a political community ‘that has in practice been most closely approximated by certain nation-states’ (1996: 37). This inescapable contradiction has generated efforts to incorporate nationalism in political theorising by categorising its diverse manifestations in dichotomous and Manichean terms – e.g. civic/ethnic, political/cultural, West/East, etc. - aligned implicitly or explicitly with liberal/illiberal. However, as repeated critiques (e.g., Brubaker, 2004; Spencer and Wollman, 1998; Shulman, 2002) have shown, such dichotomies are untenable. Yet these are taken-for-granted in liberal peace theorising and praxis, manifesting in the routine categorisations of social orders, actors and practices as self-evidently either ‘liberal’ or ‘nationalist’. Consequently, not only is liberal peace equated with the individual (citizen) being able to attain her full potential through her maximised liberty, but in programmatic terms this has come to be seen as only possible within the framework of a market democratic state, pluralist polity and cosmopolitan society, all resting on a civic nation.

First, however, if these subjects and devices of rule are not in place, they must be produced. This is less a matter of setting up institutions (e.g. Paris, 2004), than inculcating a specific rationality into quotidian conduct, and in this way enacting ‘realities’ such as society, nation and markets which constitute both the objects (vehicles) and ends of governmentality (e.g.

Hindess, 1993; Hutchings, 2013; Rose, 1999). However, a political rationality, in and of itself, does not prescribe exact policies or practices; rather, it defines ‘the problem-space’ of producing order in ways that make the governing of conduct intelligible, calculable and ‘practicable’ (Rose, 1999 and Dean, 2010, *passim*). Consequently, liberal ends, for example, invoke diverse practices and policy responses to perceived problems that are both contingent on the calculations of liberal agents and at times contradictory (e.g. supporting or opposing self-determination, the use of force, etc.).

Second, any governmentality, liberal or otherwise, works through the freedom of its subjects by inciting them to take up appropriate forms of conduct and eschew inappropriate ones (Dean, 2010: 43-46; Rose, 1999: 40-47). Stable order derives from well-behaved subjects, it is the aggregate *effect* reproduced in and by the self-regulated conduct of individuals, groups, organisations, etc., irrespective of the specific motivations (e.g. ‘self-interests’) inherent to their calculations (Foucault, 2007: 72-3; Scott, 1999: 38-51). Consequently, it matters less whether the rationality in question is recognised and accepted, than that the routine practices of its subjects are in accordance with its ends (Foucault, 2008: 44-45; Hindess, 2004; Rose, 1999:47-51). As such, governmentality does not make redundant sovereign power or disciplinary power; rather it seeks to subordinate these to its utopian ends and operates alongside them in a ‘triangle’ to re/produce appropriate forms of conduct (Dean, 2010: 29-30; Foucault, 2007: 106-8). Coercion and the use of force are integral to any governmental order, including liberal ones (e.g. Kienscherf, 2014; Rose, 1999: 24).

Relatedly, it is the ideal of a good society that leads to the discovery within it of problematic sub-groups, and necessitates their subjugation and subjectification through sovereign and disciplinary powers such that if/once normalised, they can be integrated into it. Society, a

‘unitary, living plurality’ (Foucault, 2003: 254-8), has to be ceaselessly defended against extant and potential threats. For example, the (global) living plurality secured by liberal market democracy is continually threatened by ‘ethno-nationalists’, ‘religious fundamentalists’, ‘terrorists’, ‘rogue states’, monopolists, mercantilists, etc. Thus, with some subjects closer to being liberal than others, the key concern for securing liberal order is ‘what can be governed through the promotion of liberty and what must be governed in other ways’ (Hindess, 2004: 30), or as Markus Kienscherf puts it, ‘liberal social control is best understood as uneven processes of pacification targeting specific individuals, groups and populations through a combination of coercion and consent’ (2014: 1).

Third, and key to our argument, liberalism is always only one of multiple circulating ideals of rule (Walters, 2012: 68-74). The focus on liberalism (and western contexts) in governmentality studies has produced a relative eclipse of other political rationalities, such as nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Yet nationalism continues to produce, in the West and elsewhere, potent alternate orderings of the nexus of population, state and territory that both confront and yet are always already shaped by engagements with colonial and postcolonial liberal order (e.g. Goswami, 2004; Scott, 1999). In their workings competing political rationalities come into conflict but also alignment; they confront but also colonise each other’s practices, strategies and assemblages, working on the same targets of rule – individual, society, economy, etc. – and sometimes through the same technologies of governance (Hindess, 2004: 28-31; Nadarajah, 2010). The significance for our analysis is not simply that liberalism and nationalism, for example, are hybrid social formations, but that the liberal/non-liberal line-drawing inherent to analyses and praxis of liberal peace elides the integral role of liberal agents and practices in the production of rival social orders, and of the latter in the constitution of liberal order, and thus the joint re/production of the subjectivities, dynamics

and consequences that then appear as self-evident problems for liberalism's advance. We illustrate this in the next two sections with reference to Sri Lanka, but here we first outline some 'practicable'/programmatic implications of liberal peace as a political rationality.

### *Liberal peace as political rationality*

While any ideal of rule entails the differentiated government of its diverse subjects, the telos of liberal rule, as a global conception of peace (Foucault, 2008: 56-58; Hindess, 2004: 24), is the unitary and majoritarian territorial state of one people, one citizen and one nation (e.g. Canovan, 1996; Kymlicka, 2005). Liberal peace requires the members of its living plurality to engage in relations that are unprejudiced by their membership of any particular subgrouping. Individual (human) rights have primacy, with 'communal rights' enacted ideally not by legal or constitutional codification of particularist identities, but the absence of individual unfreedom. While particularist identities may be unavoidable in the realm of societal interaction, their political implications should be minimised, through the sovereign power of law and disciplinary spread of pluralist conduct. As such, any political demand based on the identity of a group smaller than the 'civic' nation is, by definition, exclusive and thus dangerous, and it is the persistent primacy of such particularisms that makes them stand out as problems for liberal rule (e.g. Baumeister, 2000). To this end, while sovereign power is required to foreclose the possibility of violence, democracy and market exchange become key governmental technologies for enabling the individual progress that would undermine particularist mobilisations, and thus for 'managing conflict' in 'divided societies', while 'civil society' provides the circumscribed arena for particularist politics (e.g. OECD, 2001: 20, 56, 121-2).



With liberal peace thus ‘irrevocably linked to the territorially sovereign state as an umbrella for political community’ (Richmond, 2007: 13), politics deriving from the notion of ‘homelands’ is deeply problematic. Inherently exclusivist, such claims threaten the ‘fragmentation’ of society and state along ‘mono-ethnic’ lines.<sup>5</sup> Thus even where forms of multiculturalism or constitutional recognition have been advanced as response to insistent particularist demands, the cosmopolitan imperative is to detach such recognitions of identity from territorial claims and impose the civic framework of ‘inclusive’ citizenship on ‘minorities’ (e.g. Hale, 2002). Similarly, while frameworks of devolution, federalism, etc. are key conflict resolution tools, where compelled to be deployed along *identity* lines these represent tactical, but nonetheless risky, compromises towards the eventual universalising of liberal conduct that would yet secure the civic nation and market democratic state. As Will Kymlicka notes, ‘historically, most liberals in the West have endorsed the idea of equal and undifferentiated citizenship within a unitary nation-state, and have viewed ideas of *multination* federalism as a regressive compromise with premodern ethnic allegiances’ (2005:41; emphasis added). In Sri Lanka, for example, although federalism was forcefully promoted by via the Norwegian-led peace process (2001-2006), this was explicitly *not* as recognition of a Tamil ‘homeland’ and associated demand for ‘national self-determination’, but as decentralisation of state power to ‘all’ (to-be-determined) ‘regions’. Moreover, as we discuss below, the explicit ambition of this intervention for liberal peace, as others before and since, was a pacific order ‘acceptable to all Sri Lankans’ and within a ‘united Sri Lanka’.

### **Sri Lanka I: liberalism, nationalism and crisis.**

Sri Lanka, our case study, is an enduring paradox on the frontier of liberal peace. On the one hand, since independence in 1948 the country has been an exemplar of the antitheses of

liberal rule: majoritarian exclusion, ethnic antagonism, communal violence, widespread rights abuses, protracted armed conflict and mass displacement. On the other hand, in all that time, except briefly after the war's end in 2009, western states, international financial institutions, UN agencies and international liberal actors more broadly have enthusiastically engaged with the country as a space of delayed but promising liberal peace. As such, Sri Lanka has long been simultaneously representative of two rival and, as we argue, co-constituted social orders-in-formation, liberalism and majoritarian nationalism.

In this section and the next we show how the pursuits of these competing ideals of social order have advanced together since the nineteenth century through interwoven and shared governmental strategies, practices and technologies working on the same targets of rule (individual, society, economy, etc.). Significant for our analysis 'is how the territorial nation-state serves as the unit of analysis and object of intervention for both international and state action' (Herring, 2001:153). To restate our overall argument, in Sri Lanka as in other places, liberal engagements penetrate the warp and weft of social life as they seek its transformation, and in so doing they encounter rival rationalities of social order, and together these generate interlaced and complex, if fluid and contingent, assemblages of international and local actors, practices and strategies; in this way liberal engagements are integral to the re/production of the very social orders and violent contestations later apprehended as obstacles and resistances to liberal peace. In Sri Lanka this has emerged in the form of a Tamil 'national' identity and attendant demands for political autonomy/independence of the 'homeland' in the island's Northeast.

This section provides an overview of post-independence Sri Lanka and discusses the colonial-era emergences of liberal and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order-making. The next

section shows how these aligned before and during three decades of war in a key modality of order-making, securitised development.

*Sri Lanka – an overview of crisis*

Sri Lanka's crisis emerged with independence as British-installed parliamentary democracy enabled the swift ascent to state power of populist nationalism and initiated the country's reconstruction as a Sinhala-Buddhist ethnocracy (e.g. Bose, 1994; De Votta, 2004; Kapferer, 2012; Krishna, 1999; Rampton, 2011; Tambiah, 1992). The colonising of state and social dynamics by a totalising majoritarian logic reached a watershed with the 1972 constitution which codified Sinhala-Buddhist primacy into law and removed already weak safeguards for minorities. While Buddhism had become a de facto official religion (Horowitz, 2014: 43), the new constitution made it the duty of the state to 'protect and foster' Buddhism, now accorded 'the foremost place' in the Republic. This articulation between Sinhala-Buddhism, national identity and territorial statehood only made visible the depth of nationalist social order well advanced through state policy and practices in spheres of development, security, administration, education and language (Rampton, 2011). For example, since 1962 recruitment to the armed forces, and to a large extent the police, has been exclusively Sinhala (Horowitz, 2014: 74; Blodgett, 2004: 54) and the military's ethos transformed into the defence of Buddhist order (Bartholmeusz, 2002; Kent, 2015).

Resistance to this territorialised nationalist order-making in turn came to be organised around preserving the Tamil 'nation' and its 'homeland' against violent state-led assimilatory efforts (Bose, 1994; Rasaratnam, 2016). Mobilisation through mass protest and civil disobedience moved from demands for federal autonomy to independent statehood. In the 1977 elections a

union of all major Tamil parties swept the Northeast on a manifesto of ‘national self-determination’ and secession. Stasis in the country’s crisis and militarisation of state-led Sinhala-Buddhist order-making produced in 1983 the island’s worst anti-Tamil pogrom and outbreak of armed conflict between Tamil insurgents and the Sinhala-dominated armed forces. Despite two international peace-making interventions, by India in the 1980s and the West, led by Norway, in the 2000s, the conflict intensified inexorably until its cataclysmic end in 2009 with the destruction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) amid the deaths of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians (e.g. United Nations, 2011).

Yet, throughout these turbulent decades, Sri Lanka has been treated as an integral, if imperfect, part of liberal order. In the fifties and sixties, despite the ascendance of majoritarian order, ‘punctuated by bouts of annihilatory violence’ against Tamils (Krishna, 1999: 63), Ceylon retained excellent relations with the West, the Bretton Woods institutions and the Commonwealth (e.g. Farmer, 1957; Horowitz, 2014), and was hailed as an exemplar of ‘third world’ democratization and social development (e.g. Moore, 1990: 347). Even as the ethnopolitical crisis became undeniable with the 1977 elections, assistance from western donors, the World Bank and IMF began to flood in (Herring, 2001: 144-5, 148), in great part as the new government decisively shifted its Cold War alignment towards the US and embarked on aggressive economic liberalisation, since continued by later governments (Lunstead, 2007: 12; Moore, 1990: 354; Shastri, 2004). Over the next three decades of armed conflict, rights abuses and mass displacement, Sri Lanka remained ‘historically one of the highest per capita recipients of international aid’, mainly from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan, but also major western donors (Goodhand, 2001: 10; Moore, 1990: 356; Ofstad, 2002). Annual USAID funding averaged US\$40m from 1956 to 2006 (Lunstead, 2007: 12).

The outbreak of war prompted strong support from the United States and Britain for the defeat of the secessionist Tamil militancy, read as another communist threat to a member of the 'Free World' (Bose, 1994: 136n; Krishna, 1999: 120, 157; Miller, 2015). In the mid-1990s West-led engagement, now explicitly aimed at liberal peace, expanded significantly through assistance for counter-insurgency, development, economic and institutional reform, peace-building, etc. The emergence of battlefield stalemate and economic crisis in 2001 produced what a key donor-funded study described as a 'more robust and multi-faceted international response to conflict and peace dynamics than has historically been the case' (Goodhand et al, 2005: 10). Alongside Norwegian-led negotiations between the government and the LTTE, this entailed, on the one hand, a massive aid package to support revival and further liberalising of the economy and a raft of peace-building activities (Goodhand et al, 2005), and, on the other hand, extensive western assistance - advanced weaponry and aerial surveillance equipment, training and advice - for strengthening the military (Blodgett, 2004; Lunstead, 2007: 17-18; Smith, 2011: 452, 458). With the collapse of the peace process in 2006 the government's renewed offensive drew unwavering backing from western states until the LTTE was destroyed in 2009. Only as the triumphant government overtly repudiated liberal peace in favor of consolidating Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order did liberal states move, albeit gradually and unevenly, towards a more disciplinary approach.

While heterogeneous factors, including geopolitical, strategic, commercial and other considerations, informed liberal international support for and interventions in Sri Lanka, what is significant for our analysis is how ideals of social order, here liberal peace, carry ontological and epistemological assumptions that define the 'problem space' within which emerge policy choices and practices amid multiple motivations (see below).

### *Competing ideals of order: liberalism and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism*

Efforts to produce liberal order in Sri Lanka began during British colonial rule, with the uniting in 1833 of three hitherto separate and ethnically-based administrative units (two Sinhala and one Tamil) into an all-island entity, and the concomitant constitution of a single ‘multi-ethnic’ community as the basis for and vehicle of liberal rule. Today’s taken-for-granted concepts of ‘Sri Lanka’ (the state) and the ‘Sri Lankan people’ (the ‘nation’) emerged as discursive products of explicitly liberal ambitions: the radical reforms of 1833 were based on an archetypal utilitarian blueprint, the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission’s report (Scott, 1999; Wickramasinghe, 2006). Rejecting ethnic territoriality in favour of uniform and unitary administration, the reforms also introduced ‘local’ representation in the Legislative Council and civil service, and sought to dismantle mercantilism and state monopolies in the economy (Scott, 1999: 40-52; Wickramasinghe, 2006: 28-41; Rogers, 1987).

This colonial era experiment in liberal peacebuilding was not of course representative of British imperial rule, but on its own terms appeared largely successful. Inter-ethnic violence was minimal and important aspects of cohesion emerged with the rise of social groups with a stake in the new order, including a multi-ethnic English-speaking elite that helped run the state and economy (Horowitz, 2014: 38; Rogers, 1987: 588). In contrast to neighbouring India, for example, there was minimal anti-colonial violence, except for a brief and localised uprising in 1848, so much so there was no standing army, only a volunteer force, from 1873, when the Ceylon Rifle Regiment was disbanded, till 1949. As Donald L. Horowitz puts it, in colonial eyes Ceylon ‘had become an established, productive and isolated island colony’ (2014: 59). Yet, this was to neglect the emergence and ascendance of a rival ideal of social

order, that we term Sinhala-Buddhism.

With considerable patronage from rising Sinhala middle classes, opposition to British rule was initiated in the late nineteenth century by Sinhalese Buddhist monks, lay activists and intellectuals, supported by international actors such as the Buddhist Theosophical Movement (e.g. Tambiah, 1992). The proximate target was liberal-secularism; resistance emerged as reaction to the perceived degeneration of (Sinhala) Buddhist religion and culture attributed to the de facto secular state's toleration of Christian education and proselytising (Tambiah, 1992: 5-6; Jayawardena 2004: 32-62; Rogers, 1987: 588-91). Commencing as protests against Christianity, anti-colonial resistance soon diffused to other areas of public life. This included education, as the Theosophical Movement established hundreds of Buddhist schools as alternatives to state and missionary education (Tambiah 1992), and worker struggles as extensive connections developed between Sinhala Buddhist revivalists and labour unions targeting British and colonial industries (Jayawardena 2004; Rogers, 1987). The temperance movement sought to mobilise the masses against the evils of alcohol, associated with polluting effects of colonialism (e.g. Rogers, 1987: 592). As such, the emergence of Sinhala-Buddhism as a rationality of order through diverse economic, political, cultural and social activities and a multiplicity of interests was not simply an elite phenomenon but encompassed the masses attending temperance meetings, strikes and anti-colonial protests.

Through these diverse critiques of the liberal rule emerged a potent mobilisation within modern frameworks of nation, state, popular sovereignty and self-rule. Key to this was restoring the putative link, held to have been lost with imperial conquest, between sovereign power and Buddhism, wherein the latter legitimated the former and the former served to protect and foster the latter (DeVotta, 2004: 27-28; Krishna, 1999). This articulation of

colonial rule and liberal-secularism with an existential threat to Buddhism and Sinhala culture was legitimated by a set of historic chronicles authored by Buddhist monks setting out a narrative in which the Sinhala and their island motherland had been subjugated by South Indian and European invaders (e.g. Kapferer 2012: 34-41). In this way, a racialized opposition was discursively produced between the true ‘sons of the soil’, the Sinhala, on the one hand, and, on the other, the deracinated, decadent and westernised elites close to the colonial state, as well as the Tamils, Muslims and others deemed at one point or another responsible for the subjugation of the Sinhalese and the degeneration of Buddhist order (e.g. Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988: 213). As such, this rationality of resistance/liberation, which powerfully shaped state- and nation-building after independence, turned on a specific ideal of order wherein, alongside the cardinal link between state and Buddhism, is a territorialised (all-island) social hierarchy with Sinhala Buddhists at the top and others, conceived in its logic (as in liberalism’s, see below) as ‘minorities’, lower down.

Confined to legal and peaceful spaces, this growing agitation was not deemed a serious threat to colonial rule or liberal ambitions (although the 1915 anti-Muslim pogrom prompted a crackdown), and in 1931 colonial rule enacted another liberal technology, universal suffrage - just two years after its introduction in Britain (by contrast Indians received universal suffrage only after independence). The explicit goal was to inculcate an inclusive civil-secular ‘national’ politics that would overcome the problems of both elitism and what was termed ‘communal politics’ (Scott, 1999: 164-165). Rejected by the British drafters of the new constitution were non-Sinhala demands for codified checks against majoritarian domination (DeVotta, 2004: 35-37). The coeval effect of unified administration and universal suffrage under a ‘national’ framework was to articulate a ‘Ceylonese’ (now ‘Sri Lankan’) identity and political community resting on a territorialised logic in which Sinhala-Buddhists were



conceptualised as a ‘majority’ and others as ‘minorities’ (Scott, 1999: 172-176; Rogers, 1987: 594-6). While the full potential of this politics of number was not mobilised until after independence (DeVotta 2004; Krishna, 1999: 67-8), liberal technologies of rule both prompted the emergence of Sinhala-Buddhism and enabled its ascent into, and later colonisation of, mainstream politics and state policy.

In treating Sinhala-Buddhism as a political rationality (cf. Larner, 2000), what is important is not whether its ideological principles or the historical claims on which they rest are consciously accepted, but how this ideal of order is given effect through the diverse conducts of its varied subjects. In other words, it is less important that Sinhalese, Tamils, and others within and beyond the island subscribe to its racialized hierarchical tenets than that their routine practices reify its ideal of order. We discuss this next with reference to a central strategy of modern order-making, securitised-development. In particular, we show how separate ambitions for liberal cosmopolitan and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist orders came to be pursued through the same projects of demographic reorganisation (development as security) and counter-insurgency (security as development), aiming to produce across the island territory an ideal of ‘one country, one nation, one people and one citizen’ albeit to different governmental registers of peace.

### **Sri Lanka II: Securitised development and ‘war for peace’.**

The link between development and security has a long genealogy, having been forged in Europe and colonial and postcolonial societies through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way of managing class and identity-based disorders linked to landlessness, urbanisation and proletarianisation consequent to capitalist development and colonial rule (e.g. Buur et al,

2007; Duffield, 2005). Each manifestation of this link, however, rests on one or other ideal of the ‘right’ nexus of identity, land, population and political community equated with stability and peace. As such, securitised-development is a governmental technology for containing and destroying extant or potential threats to social order *and* inculcating the diverse conducts and capacities necessary for its reproduction.

The section illustrates with reference to Sri Lanka a key dynamic in our argument: the coming together of different governmental ambitions in the same strategic projects of territorialized order (peace) making. We first discuss this alignment in relation to development, in particular how large-scale donor and state partnered programs of resettlement, land allocation and irrigation engineering were undertaken as responses to perceived disorder, actual and potential. We then discuss how it manifested in joint international and state efforts to contain and destroy the Tamil secessionist insurgency. Our emphasis is less on the motivations of individual participants (states, donor and UN agencies, corporations, NGOs, etc.) within these evolving assemblages, than on how ideals of stability and peace (here liberal peace, on one hand, and Sinhala-Buddhism, on the other) provide the ‘problem spaces’ for diverse calculations that produce their interlacing practices, with perverse outcomes.

### *Development, security and order*

Development as a security measure has a long history in the island. In the 1930s the colonial state saw resettlement of the poor and landless as a response to potential threats to social order (Farmer, 1957: 116-60; Moore, 1985: 34; Peebles, 1990). It thus initiated ‘internal’ colonisation, whereby peasants were moved from densely populated areas to vacant Crown

lands alongside irrigational development. But these ‘experiments’ in resettlement, mainly of Sinhalese (from the South) to Tamil-majority areas (in the Northeast), also incorporated a utilitarian ambition to foster ‘individual, independent, peasant proprietorship’ (Farmer, 1957: 103-108, 120-123). However, after independence, this state-led program not only expanded (see scale in Pfaffenberger, 1990: 366-7), it became reconstituted in state discourse, rituals and practices as the ‘reclaiming’ of lands where ancient Sinhala kingdoms had ruled before foreign conquest (Moore, 1985: 45; Herring, 2001: 150-2, 165). In the vast majority of developmental projects into the eighties, there was an explicit prioritisation of settling large numbers of Sinhala cultivators in areas where Tamil-speakers were the clear demographic majority (Herring, 2001: 149, 151; Manogaran, 1994; Pfaffenberger, 1990: 390-1).

The first point here is how Sinhala-Buddhist order-making through state-led demographic reorganisation itself generated a territorialised and equally modern rationality of Tamil resistance, articulated as a nation imperiled in its (northeastern) homeland. Whereas Tamil demands in the run up to independence had centred on constitutional safeguards against majoritarianism (i.e. power-sharing at the unitary centre), resistance now mobilised around preserving the demographic integrity of what was now termed the ‘Tamil homeland’ (Bose, 1994; Krishna, 1999; Rasaratnam, 2016). It began in the fifties as unsuccessful demands for territorial autonomy in the form of federalism. Notably, however, Tamil leaders rejected secession. But with the passing of the 1972 Sinhala-Buddhist constitution, Tamil resistance cohered on ‘national self-determination’ through independent statehood.

The second point is the integral role of international donors in these dynamics. Although the first colonisation projects after independence were almost entirely state-funded through internal loans, even these, such as the landmark Gal Oya scheme with its huge dam built by a

US firm, drew considerable foreign technical assistance, especially from Australia, New Zealand and the US (Farmer, 1957: 330-31; Uphoff 1992: 28). As state-led colonisation expanded through the fifties and sixties, these projects were increasingly funded by the World Bank and Commonwealth countries (Farmer, 1957: 330-332). Conceptualizing their engagement as supporting ‘national development’, donors initially adopted a supposedly neutral approach of infrastructural development and what were termed ‘basic human needs’ and ‘integrated rural development’. However, even as Sri Lanka became an enthusiastic testing ground for structural adjustment in the late seventies, the massive aid inflows that rewarded neoliberal reform (see above) were often directed towards large infrastructure development within state-led colonisation projects. Emblematic of this is the massive and entirely donor-funded Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme (AMDP), named after the island’s longest river, which alone drew almost half of Sri Lanka’s foreign aid between 1979 and 1984 (Herring, 2001: 149). This was by design, rather than co-option: not only was the AMDP only possible due to foreign aid, the scheme’s layout was itself drawn up in 1968 by the UNDP, based on an original plan by a US-Sri Lankan expert team (Herring, 2001: 149-151). The World Bank led the way, Britain, Germany, Canada and Sweden funded major dam building projects, and whilst USAID concentrated on Gal Oya, half its aid went to AMDP (Herring, 2001: 150; Levy, 1989: 453-57; Lundstead, 2007: 12; Uphoff, 1992: 30).

Donors envisaged schemes like the AMDP and Gal Oya as actually serving to contribute to peace by virtue of their ‘multi-ethnic’ character and developmental promise – for example, USAID’s major criterion in selecting Gal Oya was to help ‘the poorest of the poor’ (OECD, 2001: 34; Uphoff 1992: 31). Two logics effaced ethnic differentiation from donors’ ‘problem space’. At the macrolevel, the nation-state was the unit of analysis – ‘the nation had needs[:] rice, self-sufficiency, electric power, [and] a higher GDP’ (Herring, 2001: 153, inserts

added). At the microlevel, donors sought to foster in farmer beneficiaries pacific capacities such as self-management, self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship and cooperation, and equity in individual self-improvement (Uphoff, 1992). USAID assistance in Gal Oya, for example, was held to have ‘contributed – or better said, *elicited and reinforced* – positive relations between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities (...) where the project was located,’ (Uphoff, 1992: 113, emphasis added).

This was despite the schemes’ Sinhala-Buddhist thrust being obviated by, first, the state’s official rhetoric which included slogans such as ‘return to the land of the kings’, ‘monks and peasants of the Mahaweli’, and other references to ‘the glories of ancient Buddhist Sinhalese civilisation’ underlined by, for example, the building of twice as many Buddhist temples (216) as schools (Hennayake, 2006:108; Herring, 2001: 150-2, 165; Pfaffenberger, 1990: 391), and, second, the AMDP encompassing older colonisation schemes alongside new ones advanced through forcible eviction of Tamils and settlement of armed Sinhala colonists, now with the explicit added logic of broaching areas Tamils were claiming as part of their homeland (Manogaran, 1994: 114-5).<sup>6</sup> Donors’ occasional recognition later of the AMDP’s consequences for ethnic relations – and the now raging armed conflict - ‘did not stop the aid business from continuing as usual’ (Herring, 2001: 152; Levy, 1989).

In sum, colonisation and irrigation schemes served as a shared governmental technology for two competing projects of peace-through-development, with different conceptions of order and the sources of disorder. Consequently, at the advent of armed conflict, donors’ pursuit of liberal rule through state-partnered securitized-development had been integral to the advance of majoritarian nationalist order-making, and the very processes of ethnic polarisation, dispossession, displacement and militarization through which were constituted a Tamil

‘national’ identity, popular mobilization, and secessionist aspirations for the homeland. The outbreak of war, meanwhile, intensified western engagement in Sri Lanka, discussed next.

### *Global-local war for peace*

Following the anti-Tamil pogrom in July 1983, a simmering but small Tamil militancy exploded into a fully-fledged armed struggle (e.g. Bose, 1994: 93-94). Over the next three decades, this ‘war for national liberation’ posed the foremost obstacle to Sinhala-Buddhist order-making, including temporarily arresting colonisation. Significantly, simultaneously, it became securitised within global liberal frameworks. While non-violent secessionist agitation had already increased British-Sri Lankan security cooperation from 1979 (Miller, 2015), with the onset of war Tamil insurgency was read as the primary threat to advancing liberal rule in Sri Lanka. In the eighties it became integrated into the US-led war against global communist insurgency, with assistance delivered through military contractors and western allies – Israel, South Africa and Pakistan (Bose, 1994: 136n; Krishna, 1999: 120, 157; Miller, 2015). After the Cold War it was confronted as another of the violent identity-based extremisms and disorders preventing expansion of a now triumphant liberal peace. As such defeating the Tamil armed struggle (‘terrorism’) *and* the secessionist project of Tamil Eelam (‘extremism’) became a shared priority for both liberal peace and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order-making.

From the 1990s this alignment generated an integrated and intensifying global-local effort at pacification incorporating the Sri Lankan armed forces and other state arms, donors, western security establishments, UN agencies and an expanding network of humanitarian agencies, human rights and peace-building NGOs. While donor aid was increasingly framed around

‘peace’ and stabilizing the nation-state against fragmentary pressures (Goodhand et al, 2005: 77-87; Ofstad, 2002), counterinsurgency/ terrorism drew increasing emphasis. Centred on enabling the conditions (i.e. an end to war and secessionist demands) for ‘inclusive’ peacebuilding, a political solution ‘acceptable to all Sri Lankans’ and liberal progress more generally, the West-led international community’s approach to the conflict was well captured by the state’s own slogan of ‘a war for peace’ (Bartholomeusz, 2002: 34; Ofstad, 2002: 168-9).

As with the colonisation projects, this militarised pursuit of liberal peace, on the one hand, and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order on the other, manifested in a global-local security assemblage that waged, ultimately successfully, the war for peace. It brought together the militaries and intelligence agencies of Sri Lanka, the US and Britain amongst others, and later, with emphasis on curtailing Tamil diaspora support for the LTTE, also incorporated western police and domestic security agencies, charity watchdogs, the US Treasury, etc., assisted by western proscriptions of the LTTE (Laffey and Nadarajah, 2012; Lunstead, 2007: 17-18; Miller, 2015). While China has long been Sri Lanka’s largest arms supplier, and this is routinely cited as undermining liberal international efforts, it was Western assistance that proved crucial. For example, having fully reorganized the military’s communication networks, and provided a key warship and advanced naval guns, the US supplied real-time satellite intelligence to locate and destroy the LTTE’s supply ships far in the Indian Ocean, ensuring in great part the government’s victory (Smith, 2011: 455).

With the LTTE and its armed struggle perceived as the primary obstacle to liberal peace, what was less significant for international engagement was the deeply Sinhala-Buddhist character of the armed forces. Not only is the 300,000-strong military overwhelmingly

Sinhala, its institutional and ceremonial practices are steeped in Buddhist ideology (Bartholomeusz, 2002; Kent, 2015). Moreover, as Tessa Bartholomeusz shows in her study of Buddhist 'just war' ideology in Sri Lanka, the government not only 'ask[ed] its warriors to consider their campaigns against terrorism as holy work,' it equates securing peace with the 'defence of Dharma' (2002: 36). Whilst the international community was not blind to this, in the frameworks of liberal peace, they were assisting a modernizing market democracy's forces against a violent, ethno-nationalist, secessionist challenge. Thus, the alignment was not simply the Sri Lankan state co-opting the West's 'War on Terror' for its own ends; rather, the driving logic of international practices itself was how liberal progress in Sri Lanka required the containment/ destruction of the LTTE and 'its' nationalist secessionist project.

International expectations of and commitment to liberal peace in Sri Lanka remained steadfast even as the global-local counterinsurgency inflicted heavy civilian casualties, massive humanitarian deprivation and rights abuses and displaced over a million people, mainly Tamils, within the country and as refugees. The war ended in 2009 with the destruction of the LTTE amid the systematic killings of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians (e.g. United Nations, 2011). Yet even the mass atrocities did not dissuade liberal engagement. Instead, it was the victorious government's explicit rejection of liberal peace in favour of consolidating Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist order that produced from 2012 a shift away from peace operations within Sri Lanka to disciplining the state towards post-conflict 'reconciliation' and negotiated constitutional change via frameworks of UN-supervised accountability for war crimes.

## **Conclusion**



This article argued that attention to the long history of efforts to advance liberal rule reveals how these are inextricably implicated in the generation of the very problems and crises that are apprehended as characteristic of the non-liberal world and representative of the limits, and recently the ‘crisis’, of liberal peace. The analytical premise is that enactments of liberal ambitions may not always succeed and sometimes fail disastrously, but they nonetheless always *produce*. Processes of liberal order-making penetrate the warp and weft of social life in their transformative ambitions, and in so doing encounter rival rationalities of social order. Competing political rationalities come into conflict but also alignment, disrupting but also colonising each other’s practices, strategies and assemblages and working on the same targets of governance, albeit to different registers of the ‘right’ nexus of population, territory and rule representative of order and peace. In this way efforts to advance liberal rule are internal, not external, to the *longue durée* production of the subjectivities, practices, contestations and violence that are analytically delineated as self-evident obstacles and resistances to liberal peace and as endogenous to its periphery.

While our case study was Sri Lanka, similar dynamics are visible elsewhere. In Afghanistan, efforts in the eighties to defend liberal order (against communism) invigorated the advance of social orders turning on Wahabism and Pathan nationalism, calling up fresh liberal interventions this century. In Iraq liberal peace confronts Kurdish nationalist and other order-making projects shaped by resisting and appropriating international practices over a century, including colonial boundary making, support for and later a decade of no-fly zones to contain the violence of Saddam Hussein’s regime, and finally an attempt at liberal order-making through occupation. Competing political rationalities thus shape geopolitical outcomes as much as ‘local’ ones, and while mainstream histories of liberal peace may not be written at the margins, they are certainly produced there.

Making visible these dynamics of mutual constitution that result in what is apprehended as the crisis of liberal peace requires a long view and an analytical frame that encompasses both liberalism and its others. Yet the crisis, in its various treatments, continues to be read in presentist and dichotomous terms of non-liberal resistance to the assisted or imposed emergence of liberal peace. Foundational to this are a set of spatial, cultural and temporal assumptions, wherein liberal and non-liberal worlds are separated a priori and equated with, respectively, a West-centred zone of market democracy and the diverse and disorderly global South. Yet this is to distort the workings of liberalism ‘in the world’. For example, as David Williams shows, international development actors today are deeply embedded in developing state operations in ‘almost all areas of domestic economic policy, most political processes and institutions, many social and cultural practices’ (2013: 1214). Similar interlacing can be found in the evolving globe-spanning security assemblages defending liberal order through the ‘War on Terror’ (e.g. Bachman, 2014). As our analysis of Sri Lanka showed, the deep-seated and sometimes perverse outcomes of these global-local assemblages are not determined by the competencies or motivations of individual actors, but emerge over the *longue durée* through the interwoven pursuits of competing ideals of order.

As a specific conception of global order, liberal peace rests on transforming states and societies the world over through the inculcation of specific (‘liberal’) capacities and conducts, i.e. the production of appropriate subjectivities and eradication of problematic ones, through processes that are violent in both epistemic and material terms. To this end, liberalism colonises, even as it denounces and seeks to transform, the non-liberal and illiberal practices and assemblages it encounters in its expansion, including those of differently governmentalized states and societies (Dillon and Reid, 2009: 20). Conversely, however,

other governmental rationalities, both local (e.g. nationalisms) and global (e.g. Islamism) advance by appropriating as well as resisting the practices and assemblages of liberal order-making. Consequently, the routine dichotomising of liberalism and, say, nationalism into separate compartments of the universal and the particular becomes untenable. Instead, the interweaving of the always already mutually constituted universal and particular means the one confronts and yet permeates the other, in both North and South. Moreover, ‘peace’, liberal or otherwise, does not mean one ideal of rule has permanently replaced others, but that the latter remain submerged and immanent to it. As such, any governmental order is inherently unstable, a disequilibrium whose maintenance relies on constant vigilance and violent and disciplinary intervention. Consequently, the recent emphasis on scaling back liberal ambitions in favour of, for example, accommodation between ‘multiple modernities’ or hybrid forms of peace encompassing liberal and non-liberal practices as ways to overcome the crisis of liberal peace, misconstrues how governmental order, liberal or otherwise, embodies a totalising ambition in struggle with rival others. As such, the crisis of liberal peace should be understood as a specific interpretation of the present and past of liberalism in the world, the same line-drawing on which two centuries of efforts to advance liberal peace have been premised. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Chandler 2010: 22; Duffield 2007:1; Mac Ginty 2011: 5; Paris 2010: 337; Richmond 2011: 1.

<sup>2</sup> Central to the analysis presented here is the co-constitution of liberal and other social formations. Thus references to liberalism and nationalism as ‘rival’ social orders denote this assumption in liberal peace scholarship and praxis. We discuss this below.

<sup>3</sup> A seam of (quasi-realist) criticism sees this entire intellectual enterprise as flawed, as it ‘overstates the liberalism of contemporary peace interventions, and understates the enduring importance of strategy, states and geopolitics in the making of peace’ (Selby 2013: 58-59; Chandler, 2010; Zaum, 2012; for a response see Joshi et al, 2013). However, this is to posit a self-evident dichotomy between (objective) strategic interests and (cosmetic) ideological justifications. Geopolitics and strategic considerations are of course constitutive of foreign

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policy, but these do not stand apart from, but emerge through, ideologies, ‘world views’ or governmentalities. For example, tracing the direct links between the ‘liberal peace’ concept’s rise to dominance and the United States’ to global power, Quinn and Cox note ‘the United States seeks to create liberal societies as a means of securing its global role and its preferred form of ultimate international order’; ‘the ideological history of the United States has wedded it to a brand of internationalism that rests for its integrity, in American eyes, on the pursuit of liberal universalism’ (2007: 516; see also Latham, 2000; Jahn, 2007 a, 2007b).

<sup>4</sup> As William Walters (2012: 10, 68-74) points out, while in much of the literature governmentality has been erroneously treated as synonymous with liberalism, the rapidly expanding field includes studies of non-liberal rationalities and of non-Western contexts in both colonial and post-colonial eras.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, the liberal principle of self-determination given form in the dismantling of empire has since been recast in practice such that it applies to the state’s entire population, and not sub-groups (e.g. Etzioni, 1992; Archibugi, 2003). Where new states have emerged recently (e.g. Kosovo or South Sudan) this is less to do with the primacy of self-determination than failure to advance liberal peace against the majoritarian resistance of the states and polities they were part of, and independence has been always preceded by extensive efforts to produce unity-for-peace in the whole, and followed by probationary periods of international management during which the tenets of liberal peace have to be adopted and internalised.

<sup>6</sup> For a state manager’s detailed and explicitly nationalist account of state-led colonisation/development, in particular AMDP, as ‘permanent solution’ for ‘destroying the physical bases for Eelam’ see Gunaratna, 2009; for a donor expert’s liberal account of the same dynamics, see Uphoff, 1992. For a technical analysis of a century of internal colonisation, including donors’ role in the Mahaveli schemes, see Pfaffenberger, 1990.

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