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Values, Context and Hybridity

How can the insights from the liberal peace critique literature be brought to bear on the practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?

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Working Paper

The Future of the Peacebuilding Architecture Project

Values, Context and Hybridity

How can the insights from the liberal peace critique literature be brought to bear on the practices of the UN Peace-building Architecture?

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Preface – From the Project Director

At the 2005 World Summit in New York City, member states of the United Nations agreed to create “a dedicated institutional mechanism to address the special needs of countries emerging from conflict towards recovery, reintegration and reconstruction and to assist them in laying the foundation for sustainable development”. That new mechanism was the UN Peacebuilding Commission and two associated bodies: a Peacebuilding Support Office and a Peacebuilding Fund. Together, these new entities have been characterized as the UN’s new peacebuilding architecture, or PBA.

This Working Paper is one of nine essays that examine the possible future role of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture. They were written as part of a project co-organized by the Centre for International Policy Studies at the University of Ottawa and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. All of the contributors to the project were asked to identify realistic but ambitious “stretch targets” for the Peacebuilding Commission and its associated bodies over the next five to ten years. The resulting Working Papers, including this one, seek to stimulate fresh thinking about the UN’s role in peacebuilding.

The moment is ripe for such rethinking: During 2010, the UN will review the performance of the PBA to date, including the question of whether it has achieved its mandated objectives. Most of the contributors to this project believe that the PBA should pursue a more ambitious agenda over the next five years. While the PBC and its associated bodies have succeeded in carving out a niche for themselves, that niche remains a small one. Yet the need for more focused international attention, expertise, and coordinated and sustained assistance towards war-torn countries is undiminished. It remains to be seen whether UN officials and the organization’s member states will rise to the challenge of delivering on the PBA’s initial promise over the next five years and beyond, but doing so will at least require a vision of what the PBA can potentially accomplish in this period. The Working Papers produced in this project are intended to provide grist for this visioning effort.

Roland Paris
Ottawa, January 2010

Summary

The liberal peace critique literature sheds light on the values promoted through contemporary peacebuilding efforts and the implications of this. It shows that peacebuilding currently assumes the universal validity of the 'liberal peace thesis', and therefore involves the introduction of reform packages and programmes aimed at creating market economies and liberal democracies. This particular operationalisation of liberal peacebuilding is to a large extent treated as indisputable and 'common sense', hence excluding alternatives. Pointing out the status quo bias and intrusive nature of such activities, the authors argue that local ownership should mean taking the recipient societies' (rather than simply governments' and elites') understanding of the problems and solutions as the starting point of peacebuilding. Moreover, there should be a stronger focus on redistribution and social justice in order to build a sustainable peace. The literature demonstrates that current peacebuilding efforts favour general knowledge, standardisation and template use, which, doubtless unintentionally, constitutes an obstacle to adequately addressing the concerns and conditions of the host society. Consequently, there is a tendency to assume that the recipients of peacebuilding must be taught what peacebuilding is about and what they need. A warning is also issued against seeing post-conflict societies as purely traditional or illiberal. Rather they should be treated as complex, or hybrid, societies, and peacebuilding solutions should be sought at the interface between external and internal normative agendas.

In order to address the insights from the liberal peace critique literature, the Peacebuilding Architecture's future development of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBS) should:

- Start from broad-based and comprehensive consultations in the countries in question, in order to avoid privileging the views of governments and elites in their respective capitals as well as New York, and to mitigate the UN's inherent statism.
- Discard preconceptions of what peacebuilding is about, and rather base the IPBSs firmly in the particular context and on existing local agents, capacities, and conceptions of peacebuilding.
- Further prioritise local knowledge over general knowledge by strengthening the relevant sections of the Peacebuilding Support Office and refocusing (and renaming) the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

- Allow for locally-based peacebuilding strategies that are not in line with what is considered to be desirable values and outcomes, nor ‘the proper way of doing things’ in New York.

Introduction

Does the liberal peace critique still constitute an undiscovered message in a bottle or does it represent the proverbial elephant in the room when peacebuilding practitioners go about their daily work?¹ There is by now a vast literature ‘out there’, which seeks to uncover and denaturalise the values underpinning contemporary peacebuilding and the activities derived from these particular values. Nevertheless, the peacebuilding enterprise carries on as if the values promoted are indisputable or simply common sense. Regardless of definitional nuances in terms of scope², peacebuilding is seen as synonymous with activities such as the introduction of multiparty elections, security sector reform, rule of law programming, human rights promotion and the introduction of market-based economies.

This suggests that there is a glaring gap between the insights from the liberal peace critique on the one hand and the actual peacebuilding practices on the other. Whether the explanation is that these insights have not yet been made available to practitioners or that they have been deemed irrelevant or uncomfortable, is not for me to say. The aim of this paper is merely to start bridging this gap, by way of discussing how some of the central tenets of this academic literature can be brought to bear on the practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA).³ Intended as input into the discussions of the 2010 PBA review, the paper will investigate the following question: what would the process of developing so-called integrated peacebuilding strategies (IPBS) look like, if insights from the liberal peace critique were made

¹ The notion of academic work as a message in a bottle, there to be read, understood and potentially brought to bear on practice, is a recurrent theme in the work of the Frankfurt School, see, Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 347 regarding the initial usage by Max Horkheimer.

² For different definitions of peacebuilding, see, for example, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992), para. 21; Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38; Dan Smith, “Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together. Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding” (Oslo: the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004), 20; see also Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O’Donnel and Laura Sitea, “Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?” *Global Governance* 13, no. 1 (2007).

³ The PBA is the generic term used when talking about the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

endogenous to the practices of the PBA?⁴ The hope is that this discussion can constitute a humble contribution to making the PBA's work geared towards more sustainable outcomes.

What is here referred to as the liberal peace critique is not a uniform body of literature. Its contributions are based in different meta-theoretical traditions and vary in focus, both theoretically, empirically and with regard to policy-orientation. However, a common feature of these contributions is that they shed light on the values promoted through contemporary peacebuilding efforts and the consequences of this. In this way, they constitute what Robert W. Cox has dubbed critical theory, in that they stand 'back from the existing order of things to question how that order came into being, how it may be changing, and how that change may be influenced or channelled'.⁵ The term critique is thus used to denote an investigation into underlying assumptions and implications, and does not necessarily imply criticism or rejection.

This paper will proceed in three parts. First, some of the main arguments of the liberal peace critique literature will be presented. This presentation will be structured around the headings of values, context and hybridity, thus reflecting three central messages of this body of literature. Then, current practices of developing IPBSs will be viewed in light of the arguments presented, before the implications for future IPBS development are discussed.

Central tenets of the liberal peace critique literature

It is not possible to do justice to this broad and varied body of literature in a paper such as this. I will therefore discuss some of its contributions, focusing on three interrelated themes – themes I consider to be relevant for the following discussion of the PBA.

⁴ It should be noted, however, that some of the liberal peace critique authors might not support the development and implementation of such strategies in the first place.

⁵ Robert W. Cox "The Crisis in World Order and the Challenge to International Organization" *Cooperation and Conflict* 29, no. 2 (1994), 101; see also, Robert W. Cox "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981), 128-129.

Values

The common denominator for the liberal peace critique literature is, as the name suggests, that its different contributions demonstrate that contemporary peacebuilding efforts are underpinned by liberal values. The end of the Cold War and its implicit discrediting of an alternative ideology, meant that the promoters of liberal values got free rains, which in turn put its mark on peace operations conducted by the United Nations and other multinational organisations. Whereas their previous engagement had almost without exception been limited to peacekeeping operations guided by the respect for the host states' sovereignty, war-torn societies now became the stage for complex operations aimed at political and economic liberalisation in the name of building peace.⁶

This approach to peacebuilding is based on the assumption that such liberalisation will create stable and peaceful societies: by introducing multiparty democracy, conflicts will play out through party politics instead of through violent means, and the economic growth resulting from marketisation will put an end to conflicts that are due to poverty and struggle for resources. It is also believed that liberalisation will lead to peace at the international stage. This assumption is closely associated with the work of Michael Doyle. Drawing on Kant's ideas of how to achieve *perpetual peace*, he demonstrates that liberal democracies do not go to war with each other. Thus, systems of global governance should, in his opinion, aim to include more states into the 'Liberal Pacific Union'.⁷ 'This liberal peace thesis has been critiqued on several grounds. One regards its assumed universality. Critics take issue with the fact that the promotion of what are essentially Western values is treated as having universal validity. In other words, these are values that are historically and spatially specific but are portrayed as being timeless and spaceless truths. Moreover, derived from these values are particular forms of state, economy and social structure. By insisting on their universality there is little room for alternative interpretations.⁸ So, not only does this approach presume that it is possible to establish a set of universal 'root causes' to conflict, and an ever-valid recipe to address them, it also allows for 'the pre-representation

⁶ Paris, *At Wars End*; Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2008); Oliver P. Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁷ Michel W. Doyle "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs" *Philosophy in Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983) 205-235, 12, no. 4 (1983) 323-353; Michael W. Doyle, "A Liberal View: Preserving and Expanding the Liberal Pacific Union" in *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, eds. T.V. Paul and John A. Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41-66.

⁸ Cox, "The Crisis in World Order", 103; Oliver P. Richmond "UN peace operations and the dilemma of the peacebuilding consensus", *International Peacekeeping* 11, no. 1 (2004), 91; Michael Pugh "Peacekeeping and Critical Theory" *International Peacekeeping* 11, 1 (2004), 39-58.

of the political interest of war-torn societies'.⁹ Politics and context are thus taken out of the equation.

The universal presentation and apparently altruistic and benign motivations behind these prescriptions make them very persuasive. The same goes for their association with the United Nations and 'international community'.¹⁰ 'The inherent 'goodness' and desirability created by the rhetoric of peacebuilding serves to appease fears of Western hegemony'.¹¹ Indeed, as Roger Mac Ginty argues, 'one of the features of the liberal peace has been its success in convincing countries and communities that there is no alternative to it'.¹² Liberal peacebuilding is not just seen as the best way to create peace and stability – it is considered to be the only way.

Another ground for critique is the way in which the liberal peace thesis and liberal peacebuilding construct conceptions of war and peace as well as of the actors and recipients of peacebuilding. Underpinning the discourse of liberal peacebuilding is a dichotomous ontology. Binaries such as liberal-non-liberal, peace-war, modern-traditional, developed-underdeveloped, civilised-barbaric are implicit or explicit in discussion of causes, solutions, problems and remedies.¹³ Moreover, the 'negatives' such as war, underdevelopment, barbarism etc are located in the global South. The states that are objects for peacebuilding are thus 'pathologised'.¹⁴ They are seen as 'fragile' or 'failed', in need of external help in order to install the cure of liberal governance. Moreover, individuals or groups inside the recipient states who are resisting liberal reforms are often criminalised or simply considered to be "spoilers".¹⁵ Alternative ways of organising society are thus seen as morally inferior. This in turn justifies the intervention of outsiders, the assumption being that they know 'better than the people concerned what peace needs to be built' and how.¹⁶

⁹ Kristoffer Lidén, "Building Peace between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitical Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding", *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009), 626.

¹⁰ Roger Mac Ginty "Reconstructing post-war Lebanon: a challenge to the liberal peace?" *Conflict, Security and Development* 7, no. 3 (2007), 471-472.

¹¹ Jenny H. Peterson "'Rule of Law' initiatives and the liberal peace: the impact of politicised reform in post-conflict states", *Disasters* 34, no.1 (2010), s15-s39.

¹² Roger Mac Ginty "Reconstructing post-war Lebanon: a challenge to the liberal peace?" *Conflict, Security and Development* 7, no. 3 (2007), 472.

¹³ Kristoffer Lidén, "Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement: A Postcolonial Ethic of Liberal Peacebuilding" paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, New York, 2009 (accessed at www.allacademic.com). He emphasises that the explicit use of terms such as uncivilised and barbaric are not acceptable in the current liberal peacebuilding discourse (p. 4).

¹⁴ Caroline Hughes and Vanessa Pupavac "Framing Post-Conflict Societies: International Pathologisation of Cambodia and the Post-Yugoslav States", *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 6 (2005), 873-889.

¹⁵ Stephen J. Stedman "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes" *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997), 5-53.

¹⁶ Bruno Charbonneau "The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building): France, Europe, Africa" paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, New York, 2009, 20.

Peace is thus constructed as ‘obtainable...propagated through an epistemic peacebuilding community, involving political, social, economic, and even cultural intervention through external governance’¹⁷ By locating war in the global South and peace, and its building, in the hands of liberal outsiders, conceptions of war and peace are constructed in such a way that violence becomes an acceptable part of peacebuilding, but is illegitimate when it is conducted by its ‘objects’. Hence, illiberal practices can be justified as means towards a liberal peace.¹⁸

Similar mechanisms also serve to justify the large-scale social engineering project that liberal peacebuilding entails. Whereas Security Council resolutions or invitations from the host states serve to appease sovereignty-related worries, there is no question that this represents challenges to the recipient societies’ autonomy. In liberal peacebuilding, peace is equated with conflict management and the construction of strong states through a package of reforms and programmes. These include *inter alia* security sector reform (SSR), disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), rule of law programming (RoL), human rights promotion and monitoring, electoral reforms, and measures aimed at creating a market economy. Although these elements are emphasised to different degrees in different context, their inclusion in peacebuilding has become commonsensical.¹⁹ They constitute, however, a particular interpretation of the implications of the liberal peace thesis, in which Western models and politico-cultural and economic norms underpin the solutions arrived at. Their assumed universality serves to cloud the possibility for alternative interpretations of the liberal peace, based more solidly in the culture and conditions of the recipient societies.²⁰

Other reservations to this particular interpretation and operationalisation of the liberal peace thesis include warnings that these different components may be incoherent and work at cross-purposes with each other.²¹ It is also argued that the implementation of the various re-

¹⁷ Oliver P. Richmond, “The problem of peace: understanding the ‘liberal peace’”, *Conflict, Security and Development* 6, no. 3 (2006), 291-314.

¹⁸ Peterson; Lidén “Building Peace Between Global and Local Politics”; Annika Björkdahl, “To practice what they preach: International transitional administrations and the paradox of norm promotion” in *Globalization and Challenges to Peacebuilding*, eds. Ashok Swain, Ramses Amer & Joakim Öjendal (London: Anthem Press, 2007), 145-164; Simon Chesterman, “Ownership in Theory and Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1, no. 1 (2007), 3-26.

¹⁹ Neclá Tschirgi, “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges”, IPA Policy Report (New York: International Peace Academy, 2004), 10; John Heathershaw, “Unpacking the liberal peace: the dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses” *Millennium* 36, no. 3 (2008), 597-621.

²⁰ Mac Ginty, “Reconstructing post-war Lebanon”, 457; Oliver P. Richmond *Peace in International Relations*. London: Routledge; Lidén, “Building Peace between Global and Local Politics”.

²¹ Thomas J. Biersteker “Prospects for the UN Peacebuilding Commission”, *Disarmament Forum* 2 (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2007), 39-40; Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *The*

forms and programmes become ends in themselves rather than means to an end, or that the objective of implementing them as quickly as possible may become a primary concern overshadowing their ultimate objective.²²

Several liberal peace critics argue that the building of liberal democracies by external actors is actually counter-productive to the goals sought achieved through such interventions. In the words of Roger Mac Ginty it ‘often results in a poor quality peace in which the civil war has ended but intergroup antagonisms remain undimmed, political participation rates are low and any peace dividend is unevenly shared’.²³ On the basis of a study of eleven peacebuilding operations conducted in the period of 1989-1998, Roland Paris argue that the liberalization of the economic and or political sphere actually had a destabilising effect rather than contributing to peace. ‘In some countries, liberalization exacerbated societal tensions, and in others it reproduced traditional sources of violence’. In his view this is because proponents of the liberal peace ‘have tended to blur the distinction between liberalism and liberalisation’ and that little is known about the relationship between the latter and violence.²⁴ In an article on the political economy of peacebuilding, Michael Pugh argues that the socio-economic problems of war-torn societies are aggravated by market liberalisation. This is because it increases the populations’ vulnerability to poverty, deprive them from having a say in economic reconstruction, and does little to reduce engagement in and reliance upon shadow economies.²⁵ It is also argued that the international presence only contributes to a ‘negative peace’, despite its transformative intentions.²⁶ It seeks to control conflicts, not transforming them and results merely in the absence of war in the host societies. This is due to its failure to seriously address the question of what would constitute a just social order (‘positive peace’).²⁷ Oliver Richmond takes issue with contemporary peacebuilding’s lack of focus on and engagement with society. By being concerned with the ‘creation of the hard shell of the state and rather less so on establishing a working society, complete with a viable economy which has an immediately beneficial ef-

Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations (London: Routledge, 2009).

²² Peterson; Roland Paris *At Wars End.*; Oliver P. Richmond, “The problem of peace; Katarina Ammitzbøll and Stina Torjesen, “Maximum or minimum? Policy options for democratisation initiatives in UN Peace Operations” *NUPI Report* (Oslo: NUPI, May 2007).

²³ Roger Mac Ginty “Reconstructing post-war Lebanon”, 472.

²⁴ Roland Paris, *At War’s End*, 151, 51.

²⁵ Michael Pugh “The Political Economy of Peacebuilding: A Critical Theory Perspective” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005), 25.

²⁶ On these intentions, see, for example Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O’Donnell and Laura Sitea, 44.

²⁷ For the original discussion of positive and negative peace, see, Johan Galtung, “Violence, peace and peace research” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969), 167–191; and Johan Galtung “A Structural Theory of Imperialism” *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971), 81–117.

fect on the labour force or provides a welfare system', only a virtual peace is established.²⁸ This, he claims, has similarities with former colonial dependencies.

The intrusive and 'educational' nature of the liberal peacebuilding enterprise has also made other authors compare it to imperial modes of governance. Paris describes it as a benign form of the *mission civilisatrice*. The internationally-sanctioned model for governance serves as a 'standard of civilization' which must be adhered to in order to be fully accepted as a member of international community. He argues it is benign in that its promotion is not conducted primarily to advance economic interest. It also lacks the racial connotations often underpinning colonialism.²⁹ Also Duffield emphasises the difference between the liberal peace and the imperial peace. Whereas the latter was based upon direct territorial control, which would include violence, the former is a non-territorial form of governance in which its objects – people in the South – are not forced, but expected to adhere willingly.³⁰ David Chandler asserts that international actors' peacebuilding and statebuilding activities constitutes an 'empire in denial', in which the inherent power in such activities works under the guise of terms such as 'ownership', 'assistance' and 'facilitation'.³¹ Similarly, Bruno Charbonneau argues that peacebuilding is a hegemonic practice primarily aimed at governing and manage, not helping, its recipients.³²

A related critique regards this peacebuilding model's effect on world order. Several of the authors contributing to this body of literature point out liberal peacebuilding's status quo bias. It is argued that the emphasis on the liberalisation of the economy and the construction of liberal democracies and stable states, contributes to the smooth functioning of the current world order, thereby maintaining its particular distribution of power and wealth.³³ By prioritising the state as the frame for intervention, liberal peacebuilding contributes to maintaining the existing system of states, thus serving the interests of those benefiting from it and ignoring those who are marginalised or threatened by its very existence. In connection to the Balkan wars Susan Woodward argues that international involvement has consisted of 'a

²⁸ Richmond, "The problem of peace", 309 see also, Béatrice Pouligny, "Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building "New" Societies", *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (2005), 505; Oliver P. Richmond "UN peace operations and the dilemma of the peacebuilding consensus".

²⁹ Roland Paris "International Peacebuilding and the 'Mission Civilisatrice'", *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002), 637-656.

³⁰ Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 34.

³¹ David Chandler *Empire in Denial* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

³² Bruno Charbonneau, "The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)", 1-2; see also his "Dreams of Empire: France, Europe, and the New Interventionism in Africa", *Modern and Contemporary France* 16, no. 3, 279-295.

³³ On this see, for example, Eli Stannnes, *United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia: A Critical Security Studies Analysis*, PhD Thesis, University of Wales Aberystwyth (2002); Pugh, "Peacekeeping and Critical Theory"; Richmond, "UN Peace Operations and the Dilemmas of the Peacebuilding Consensus".

policy of containment . . . aimed at protecting . . . prosperous democracies against the effects of the region's instability'.³⁴ This kind of 'riot control'³⁵ has been conducted by the use of both coercion and rewards.³⁶ In the case of the Balkans, aspirations of EU and NATO membership have made the latter very tangible. Focusing on France-Europe-Africa security relations, Charbonneau states that 'the promotion of peace and security in Africa has meant the stability of modes of governance that benefit specific governing elites, and that uphold and/or defend a kind of economic development more favorable to France and Europe'.³⁷ With particular reference to the economic sphere, similar arguments are made by Pugh:

The means for achieving the good life are constructions that emerge from the discourse and policy frameworks dominated by specific capitalist interests – represented as shared, inevitable, commonsensical or the only available option – when they correspond to the prevailing mode of ownership. Economic wisdom resides with the powerful'.³⁸

So, despite the transformative intention of liberal peacebuilding, it has in this way conservative consequences. And, by portraying the creation of liberal regimes as inevitable if peace is to be built, these consequences are camouflaged. This is not to say that Western peacebuilding actors are consciously – or hypocritically, as Mark Duffield argues³⁹ – working to maintain the status quo, thus acting purely in their own self-interest. Such is the commonsensical nature of the liberal peace thesis that their motivations may indeed be progressive and altruistic.⁴⁰ The structural effects are nevertheless the same.

Context

Another main theme in this body of literature is the failure of liberal peacebuilding practices to adequately address the different local contexts in which they take place. Even though the importance of 'local ownership' is emphasised in documents and oral communication connected to contemporary peacebuilding efforts, there is widespread agreement that this is one of the areas most in need of improvement.⁴¹

³⁴ Susan L. Woodward "In Whose Interest is Security Sector Reform?" in *Governing Insecurity: Democratic Control of Military Security Establishments in Transitional Democracies*, eds. G. Cawthra and R. Luckham (London: Zed Books, 2003), 279.

³⁵ Pugh, "Peacekeeping and Critical Theory", 41.

³⁶ On this, see, for example Richmond, *Peace in International Relations*, 106; Duffield, 34.

³⁷ Charbonneau, "The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)", 19.

³⁸ Pugh, "The Political Economy of Peacebuilding", 38.

³⁹ Duffield, 12; see also Peterson: 'international actors have been effective in masking their political project'.

⁴⁰ Richmond, "The problem of peace", 310; Cf. Jarat Chopra *Peace-Maintenance: The Evolution of International Political Authority* (London: Routledge, 1999); for a discussion of the Nordic countries' various motivations for participation in peace operations, see, Eli Stamnes, ed., *Peace Support Operations: Nordic Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴¹ See, for example, Cedric de Coning in this volume; Ole Jacob Sending "Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context", *NUPI Working Paper 755*

Whereas proponents and critics of the liberal peace seem to agree there, the latter demonstrate that there are important differences in conception of local ownership between the two. Liberal peacebuilders, such as the UN, tend to view ownership as a means to ‘reinforce the perceived legitimacy of the [peace]operation and support mandate implementation’ for thus to ‘avoid the appearance of paternalism or neo-colonialism’⁴² Efforts to achieve local ownership in connection to such operations focus in this way on creating local support for the already defined mandate of the operations. Local ownership is thus not seen ‘as an ultimate goal or vision [...] but as a practical strategy for action’.⁴³ What is to be owned is, in other words, an externally defined agenda.⁴⁴ That agenda includes certain methodologies, objectives and norms. For the critics of liberal peacebuilding, on the other hand, local ownership means building peace from the bottom up, basing strategies on goals and activities defined by a broad constituency in the host society.⁴⁵ In this way it should be associated with experienced, not idealized versions of peace.⁴⁶

The assumed universality of the liberal peace thesis and its derived peacebuilding measures constitutes an obstacle to taking local conditions and resources into account, and for understanding the particular problems of the societies in question. Since the problem is pre-defined as a lack of liberal institutions etc., local preferences, culture and practices are devalued, often seen as part of the problem, and knowledge about these factors is considered to be relevant insofar as it will help implementing the liberal peacebuilding model.⁴⁷ The universality assumption means that the gathering of ‘lessons learned’ from previous engagements are seen as a useful way to better fine-tune future peacebuilding practices. This in turn, serves to reaffirm liberal peacebuilding’s ‘significance for everyone, everywhere’. The fine-tuning is therefore merely a repackaging of hegemonic practices.⁴⁸ This resonates with what Cox has dubbed ‘problem-solving’ theory. This ‘takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action’. Its aim is to make the current system function

(Oslo: NUPI, 2009); Oliver Richmond “The problem of peace”, 300-306; Tschirgi.
⁴² United Nations “United Nations Peacekeeping: Principles and Guidelines” [the so-called Capstone Doctrine], (New York: United Nations, 2008), 39; Chesterman, 9.
⁴³ Hannah Reich ““Local Ownership” in conflict transformation projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?”, Berghof Occasional Paper No. 27 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2006).
⁴⁴ Lidén “Building Peace between Global and Local Politics”, 626.
⁴⁵ Richmond “The problem of peace”, 300; Chandler, *Empire in Denial*.
⁴⁶ Roger Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes and Peace Accords* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 102.
⁴⁷ Duffield; Charles Call and Elisabeth Cousens “Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies” *International Studies Perspective* 9, no.1 (2008), 1-21.; Peterson; Woodward.
⁴⁸ Charbonneau, .8; Stannes, “United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia”, 78.

as smoothly as possible.⁴⁹ The failure of taking the local context into account can thus be seen to have consequences beyond the concern for the legitimacy and efficiency of particular peacebuilding operations.

There are also organizational reasons for downplaying the importance of context-specific knowledge. Due to the relatively fast rotation of personnel and limited bureaucratic and financial resources, there is a tendency towards standardization and the generation and use of templates. As a result, similarities are sought out and emphasized at the expense of context awareness.⁵⁰ 'For many intervening parties Bosnia becomes Bougainville and the same policy prescriptions (good governance, marketisation, elections, security sector reform, etc.) are introduced regardless of context and local need'.⁵¹ Moreover, contemporary management models with their emphasis on measuring output, outcomes, and impact leave little room for uniqueness and favour standardisation. They also tend to be self-referential, as achievements are measured according to their own standards.⁵² Peacebuilding is thus in danger of becoming formulaic and a 'technocratic exercise of ticking boxes'⁵³

The implications of the critiques presented above are manifold, and different solutions are suggested by different contributors. These range from the withdrawal from peacebuilding activities via limiting international involvement to 'security keeping', to revising or fine-tuning the liberal model.⁵⁴ The following section will take a closer look at some other suggested solutions. By utilising ideas from post-colonial theory and critical International Relations theory these authors seek to reconceptualise liberal peacekeeping while addressing concerns of the critique presented above.⁵⁵

Hybridity

Authors such as Charbonneau and Kristoffer Lidén seek to nuance the claims that liberal peacebuilding simply imposes liberal values in the recipient societies. Drawing on post-colonial theory, they argue that values imposed by external actors are received, interpreted, chal-

⁴⁹ Cox "Social Forces, States and World Orders", 128. On UN peace operations and problemsolving, see, Starnes, "*United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia*".

⁵⁰ Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore *Rules for the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Michael Barnett, "Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States after War" *International Security* 30, no. 4, (2006), 87-112; Tschirgi, 16.

⁵¹ Mac Ginty "Reconstructing post-war Lebanon", 458.

⁵² Richmond, "The problem of peace", 309.

⁵³ Roger Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace*, 3; Heathershaw.

⁵⁴ David Chandler "Back to the future: the limits of neo-Wilsonian ideals of exporting democracy" *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006), 475-494; Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Barnett "Building a Republican Peace"; Paris, *At Wars End*.

⁵⁵ For a thorough discussion of the reconceptualisation of liberal peacebuilding, see, Roland Paris, "Saving Liberal Peacebuilding", *Review of International Studies*, forthcoming.

lenged, and resisted in a variety of ways. In other words, it is not just a one-way street.⁵⁶ Their starting point is thus that

peacebuilding cannot be fully understood [...] if we do not recognize the complex dynamics between the peacebuilders and its recipients specifically, and between the “exporters” of peace situated in the global North and the “importers” of peace located in the global South generally.⁵⁷

Post-colonial theory provides good insight into the challenges facing liberal peacebuilding because it shows that the relations between colonisers and colonised were complex. It was not just a relationship reducible to violence, although this played a significant role.⁵⁸ Neither was it a relationship in which influence and material gains moved in only one direction. The relationship between liberal peacebuilders and its recipients can, according to these authors, be seen in the same light. Although peacebuilding may be described as a hegemonic practice, influence and ‘assistance’ can work both ways. For example, the recipients may enable peacebuilding actors to build their image as significant actors.⁵⁹ It is thus an asymmetric relationship that transforms both.

Moreover, post-colonial theory helps deconstruct the binaries underpinning liberal peacebuilding, such as liberal-non-liberal, peace-war, developed-underdeveloped, civilised-barbarian.⁶⁰ It points out that post-colonial societies cannot be described as pre-modern, but hybrid societies, which have experienced and adapted to outside intervention. The post-colonial condition is ‘an irreversible state of hybridity’.⁶¹ Since contemporary peacebuilding to a large extent takes place in post-colonial societies, it is not simply the case that external actors impose modern or liberal values on to traditional and non-liberal societies.

Peacebuilding practices based on these insights would, it is argued, involve awareness that measures aimed at liberalisation would cause reactions of acceptance, adaptation and resistance simultaneously.

⁵⁶ Lidén, “Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement”, 7; Charbonneau, “The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)”, 12.

⁵⁷ Charbonneau, “The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)”, 12.

⁵⁸ For more on post-colonial theory, see, for example, Phillip Darby, “Pursuing the Political: A Postcolonial Rethinking of Relations International”, *Millennium* 33, no.1, 1-32; Robert Young, *Post-colonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001); Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

⁵⁹ Charbonneau, “The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)”, 18; see also, Ståle Ulriksen, “Deployments for Development? Nordic Peacekeeping Efforts in Africa”, *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 4, 553-568.

⁶⁰ Lidén, “Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement”, 3-4.; Charbonneau, “The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)”, 11.

⁶¹ Lidén, “Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement”, 10.

'The interaction and dynamics between international peacebuilders and national recipients, "spoilers", combatants, and non-combatants' would thus constitute possibilities for change.⁶² It is from these possibilities a hybrid, non-hegemonic form of peace can be built. Hence, external involvement is not excluded, but their actions would be guided by the 'affected parties' conceptions of the substantial meaning of peacebuilding', the political objective being 'to create spaces for peaceful self-governance at all levels of society'.⁶³

By focusing on the interplay between international and local normative agendas and practices, the assumption that 'one size fits all' is left behind. At the same time it allows for local interpretations of the liberal peace. This may well consist of some of the main ingredients of contemporary peacebuilding, but it will be 'better rooted in the social conditions and political processes of the host-countries'.⁶⁴

The same emphasis on local interpretations of peace can be found in Oliver Richmond's emancipatory model of peacebuilding.⁶⁵ This is not presented as an alternative to the liberal peace project, but rather as a gradation of it. It is not a model that has an empirical equivalent. Rather it exists as an expressed aspiration by certain peacebuilding actors, as well as in critical International Relations literature. It is characterised by a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, mainly involving private actors and social movements. Compared to contemporary practices of peacebuilding, it is more needs based in focus and emphasises social welfare and justice to a much larger extent.

Richmond argues that the liberalisation processes of current peacebuilding have created weak states and institutions, with a resulting lack of confidence in the new polity, the economy and the external actors involved in the peacebuilding efforts. Their preoccupation with the reconstruction of the state 'raises serious questions about the sustainability of the peace that is being created.'⁶⁶ Hence, if the building of a sustainable peace is the main objective, there must be a stronger focus on redistribution and social welfare. A stronger grounding in the host society is also envisaged achieved by broad consultations as to the meaning of peace and the concrete contents of peacebuilding. The emphasis on peace as opposed to conflict is an important point here. In contemporary peacebuilding, conceptions of threats play a central role – threats that are identified against the liberal peace project. By focusing on concrete understandings of peace, the universalism of lib-

⁶² Charbonneau, "The Colonial Legacy of Peace(building)", 20.

⁶³ Lidén, "Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement", 11-12.

⁶⁴ Lidén, "Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement", 2.

⁶⁵ Richmond, "The problem of peace", 300-311.

⁶⁶ Richmond, "The problem of peace", 306.

eral peace and its resulting justification for coercive intervention is avoided.

Discursive practices and negotiations are central to this peacebuilding model.⁶⁷ Conditionality, which will always be a factor when external actors are involved in peacebuilding, is to be subjected to bottom-up negotiations. Moreover, the conditionality is expected to work both ways, in that the local actors will hold the external actors accountable for observing the terms of the conditionality. The interchange between local actors and the internationals is in this way seen as an integral part of the whole peacebuilding process. This even includes the decision to withdraw external assistance. There can be no exit until both locals and internationals have agreed that a sustainable peace has actually been achieved.⁶⁸

In conclusion, these suggestions do not imply that post-conflict societies are to be left alone. Recognising that peacebuilding is an expression of ‘external concern and responsibility’,⁶⁹ they argue for an engagement that is more on the terms of the recipients. They emphasise that post-conflict societies are complex, so also is the relationship between the external and internal actors. The case is thus made for interventions that do not arrive with preconceptions of what is best for the people concerned, neither in terms of contents, operationalisation or process. Instead they should entail broad consultations around the question of what peace would mean in the particular setting, and focus on building on immanent possibilities for change in the host societies.

Current IPBS development

As a relatively new addition to the United Nations landscape, the PBA face many challenges and its conduct may be scrutinised from many angles. This section will discuss one aspect of the PBA’s current practices from the perspective of the liberal peace critique presented above, namely the development of IPBSs in the two initial countries on the PBC’s agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone. The development of such ‘integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery’ is listed as a main objective in the PBC’s founding Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.⁷⁰ This work is conducted in the country-specific configurations of the PBC, with the assistance

⁶⁷ On this, see also Barnett, “Building a Republican Peace”.

⁶⁸ Richmond, “The problem of peace”, 304.

⁶⁹ Richmond, “The problem of peace”, 300.

⁷⁰ A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005.

of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). In general terms IPBSs are supposed to set out the commitments of a host government and the international community, with the ambitious goal to build ‘inclusive national capacities to tackle the root causes of conflict that impede sustainable peace.’⁷¹ Seen from a liberal peace critique perspective, this goal formulation poses as many questions as it answers. Let us now try to unpack some of them in the context of IPBS development processes in Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Values

Thomas J. Biersteker states that the ‘theoretical underpinnings of the Peacebuilding Commission are profoundly liberal, although they are not explicitly articulated as such’.⁷² The Secretary-General’s address at the PBC’s inaugural session seems to confirm this assertion. Without outright acknowledging the Commission’s liberal underpinnings, he stated that a ‘core task is to build effective public institutions, within constitutional frameworks and the rule of law’.⁷³ This reverberates with the particular operationalisation of the liberal peace thesis that we saw has underpinned the recent years’ peacebuilding efforts. The PBC was thus – in Kofi Annan’s mind at least – envisaged to contribute to liberal peacebuilding.

The IPBSs for the first two PBC cases fit this image. The Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi, finalised in June 2007,⁷⁴ lists the following priority areas: Promotion of good governance; Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Burundi and PALIPEHUTU-FNL; Security sector; Justice, promotion of human rights and action to combat impunity; The land issue and socio-economic recovery; Mobilisation and coordination of international assistance; Subregional dimension; Gender dimension. And the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, finalised in December 2007,⁷⁵ sets out the following priorities: Youth employment and empowerment; Justice and security sector reform; Consolidation of democracy and good governance; Capacity-building; Energy sector; Subregional dimensions of peacebuilding. Although some of these priorities are specific to the particular cases, a majority of them contains the buzzwords of contemporary liberal peacebuilding.

⁷¹ UN Peacebuilding Support Office, “Lessons Learned from Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks since the late 1990s” (New York: United Nations, September 2007), 1.

⁷² Biersteker, 39.

⁷³ “Opening first session of Peacebuilding Commission, Secretary-General Stresses importance of national ownership, building effective public institutions”, UN Document SG/SM10533 PBC/2, 23 June 2006.

⁷⁴ PBC/1/BDI/4, 22 June 2007. The Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of this IPBS was adopted in November the same year, see PBC/2/BDI/4, 27 November 2007.

⁷⁵ PBC/2/SLE/1, 3 December 2007. Note that this framework was later relegated to the Sierra Leone government’s *Agenda for Change*, see, PBC/3/SLE/6, 12 June 2009.

It is also interesting to note the similarities of the IPBSs in both Burundi and Sierra Leone with the countries' respective Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). Given the coordination mandate of the PBC, this, of course, makes perfect sense. In Sierra Leone's case the overlap is an explicit intention: 'the need to build on existing achievements, strategies and commitments for peace and development and to continue their implementation' is stressed in the framework's Principles of Cooperation.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, what is interesting for this discussion is that the PRSPs of the Bretton Woods institutions have been described as 'an exceptionally useful tool for the promotion of the liberal project'.⁷⁷

The formulation of an IPBS is highly political. By providing an 'analysis of priorities, challenges and risks for peacebuilding',⁷⁸ it passes judgement on what is important in the society in question and what peacebuilding should entail. The IPBSs of Burundi and Sierra Leone reflect understandings in line with the liberal peacebuilding model, and as we saw in the first section, this can be critiqued from several angles.

Context

In connection to local ownership, the Secretary-General expressed good intentions in his speech at the opening session of the PBC. He emphasised that 'Peacebuilding requires national ownership, and must be home-grown'.⁷⁹ In the context of the PBC, local ownership cannot be conceptualised the way it is in connection to peace operations, as discussed above. Since the PBC is not an operational body, but works at the strategic level, there is no operational mandate as such to 'sell' to the host society. So instead of creating local support for an externally defined agenda, the aim of the IPBS development process is to formulate one. However, this does not necessarily mean that the conception of local ownership that is underpinning the work of the PBC is identical to that promoted by the liberal peace critique authors. The founding resolutions of the PBC affirms:

the primary responsibility of national and transitional Governments and authorities of countries emerging from conflict or at risk of relapsing into con-

⁷⁶ For more on this see, Action Aid, Cafod and Care, "Consolidating the Peace: Views from Sierra Leone and Burundi on the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission" (London: Care International UK, 2007), 12.

⁷⁷ Alastair Fraser "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: Now Who Calls the Shots?" *Review of African Political Economy* 32, no.104/105 (2005), 317-340.

⁷⁸ In the case of Sierra Leone, and 'Objectives, analysis of major challenges and identification of risks' in the case of Burundi.

⁷⁹ "Opening first session of Peacebuilding Commission, Secretary-General Stresses importance of national ownership, building effective public institutions", UN Document SG/SM10533 PBC/2, 23 June 2006.

flict, where they are established, in identifying their priorities and strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding, with a view to ensuring national ownership.⁸⁰

In other words, local ownership is placed in the hands of the government of the countries on the PBC agenda. It is also important to note that the notion of ownership expressed here entails responsibility. A current buzzword in peacebuilding is ‘mutual accountability’ between the recipient and the international community.⁸¹ However, there are limits to how accountable an advisory body like the PBC can be. The Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi⁸², for example, confirms this. Here, much more substantial responsibility rests on the government than on the international community.

Both the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi and the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework emphasise that their development has been based upon the principles of national ownership and partnership between the countries and the international actors.⁸³ In practice this meant that the texts of the IPBSs were drafted in the capitals, giving the host governments a central role in developing the contents of the IPBSs. However, the texts were then negotiated, almost word-by-word, in New York, and were thus affected by the usual intergovernmental dynamics of the UN. This of course may be seen to constitute a limitation to national ownership. In addition, one should not forget the asymmetric power relationship between the donor states that are members of the PBC and Burundi and Sierra Leone. A major motivation for inviting the international community to take part in discussions of their internal affairs is arguably the expectation that this will lead to financial benefits.⁸⁴ This was very clear during the inaugural meetings of the country-specific configurations, which ‘was perceived as equating to a pledging conference’.⁸⁵ One could therefore wonder to what extent the Burundi and Sierra Leone governments were implicitly ‘disciplined’ to take part in the liberal peace project?⁸⁶

Given the intergovernmental character of the PBC, much emphasis is put on the ownership of the countries’ governments. But are there other local actor that count as ‘relevant actors’ in addition to the government and the different international peacebuilding actors? The PBC’s founding resolutions ‘Notes the importance of participation of regional and local actors’ and ‘Encourages the Commission to consult

⁸⁰ A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005.

⁸¹ See, for example, PBC/2/SLE/1, 3 December 2007, para 1b.

⁸² PBC/2/BDI/4, 27 November 2007.

⁸³ PBC/1/BDI/4, 22 June 2007, para 4a; PBC/2/SLE/1, 3 December 2007, para 1a.

⁸⁴ See, Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 25.

⁸⁵ Richard Ponzio, “The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: Origins and initial practice”, *Disarmament Forum 2* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2007), 10.

⁸⁶ Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*.

with civil society, non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate.⁸⁷ This opens up for the participation of regional and local actors, but the 'as appropriate' condition implies that they are not seen as central actors.

In light of the arguments presented in the first section, the participation of local civil society is of particular interest here. Initially, such participation in PBC meetings in New York took place as a result of the successful lobby efforts from the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP) and like-minded members of the Commission.⁸⁸ Provisional guidelines for the participation of civil society were then agreed upon in June 2007. These guidelines established that civil society representatives actively involved in peacebuilding may be invited to make oral statements or provide information in the formal meetings of the Organisational Committee and the country-specific configurations, if there is a perceived need and a consensus for this among the members.⁸⁹ Civil society representatives may also interact and provide input in the informal country-specific meetings. In addition there may be held public meetings for civil society actors prior to and after the formal meetings of the country-specific meetings, to exchange views and disperse information.⁹⁰ Civil society actors may also provide written statements, which the coordinator of the country-specific configuration and the PBSO will 'make every effort to ensure' are 'made available to the members of the respective country-specific configuration.'⁹¹

In the context of the development of the IPBSs in Burundi and Sierra Leone, this has meant that representatives of civil society have been able to make their views heard in PBC meetings in New York. In addition civil society organisations have engaged in national consultations on the peacebuilding process and frameworks in both countries, bringing together a host of civil society actors, government officials and international actors in-country.⁹² In this way they have been able to raise awareness of the PBC's role in the countries, while at the same time creating fora for the articulation of civil society perspectives on the peacebuilding processes in the two countries. Civil society organisations have hence been enabled to give 'timely and informed

⁸⁷ A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005, paras 19, 21.

⁸⁸ Renske Heemskerk, "The UN Peacebuilding Commission and civil society engagement" *Disarmament Forum 2* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2007), 21.

⁸⁹ PBC/1/OC/12, 4 June 2007, "Provisional guidelines for the participation of civil society in meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission, submitted by the Chairperson on the basis of informal consultations", para. 7-10.

⁹⁰ PBC/1/OC/12, 4 June 2007, para 11-13.

⁹¹ PBC/1/OC/12, 4 June 2007, para. 14.

⁹² For more on these consultations, see Action Aid, Cafod and Care; Heemskerk.

recommendations to the Commission'.⁹³ These consultations are believed to have had a real impact on the contents of the IPBSs, as well as having contributed to national dialogues and wider ownership of the peacebuilding process.⁹⁴ In this context it is important to note that the civil society consultations did not take place on the initiative of the PBC, but of the civil society actors themselves and, partly, the governments.

With regard to the claim that liberal peacekeeping prioritises general knowledge, standardisation and template use at the expense of local knowledge, the Secretary-General's opening speech reflected a degree of self-reflexivity: 'We must also remember that peacebuilding is inherently political. At times, the international community has approached peacebuilding as a largely technical exercise, involving knowledge and resources. The international community must not only understand local power dynamics, but also recognise that it is itself a political actor entering a political environment'.⁹⁵ However, the resolutions establishing the PBC clearly prioritise this kind of knowledge, when stating that one of its main purposes is 'to develop best practices'.⁹⁶ This work is to be conducted partly by the PBSO by 'gathering and analysing information relating to [...] best practices with respect to cross-cutting peacebuilding issues'⁹⁷ and partly by the PBC's Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL). The latter systematises insights from past peacebuilding experiences and seek to raise awareness among its members, other member states and UN registered organisations. According to Christian Büger 'it has been used as a tool for identifying and deliberating knowledge that should inform the peacebuilding approach of the PBC'. He also cites PBSO staff describing the WGLL's role as 'training the diplomats'.⁹⁸ Underlying such statements is an assumption of the existence of universally applicable peacebuilding knowledge. However, Büger also identifies groups of individuals within the PBC and PBSO who reject such a universalist assumption.⁹⁹

The accompanying assumption of a need to educate the recipients of peacebuilding can also be found during the IPBS development process. The description of the situation and peacebuilding challenges in

⁹³ Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 20.

⁹⁴ Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 3; Severine M. Rugumamu, "Does the UN Peacebuilding Commission Change the Mode of Peacebuilding in Africa?" *FES Briefing Paper 8* (New York: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009), 7.

⁹⁵ "Opening first session of Peacebuilding Commission, Secretary-General Stresses importance of national ownership, building effective public institutions", UN Document SG/SM10533 PBC/2, 23 June 2006.

⁹⁶ A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005, para 2c

⁹⁷ A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005, para 23.

⁹⁸ Christian Büger, "The birth of an international organization for building peace: A tale of clashing practices", paper presented at NUPI, Oslo, 05.12.08, 22.

⁹⁹ Büger, 19-20.

the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi seemed to stem from a local understanding of the issues since it was built upon points made by the Burundi government at the first country-specific meeting.¹⁰⁰ However, preceding this presentation was a trip to Burundi conducted by PBSO staff, during which individuals connected to the government had been told which issues constituted peacebuilding issues and which did not.¹⁰¹ Similar attitudes could also be observed throughout the drafting period of the Strategic Framework, in that PBSO staff expressed opinions about the appropriate design of a strategy and concerns that the Burundian version fell short of this.¹⁰² It is important to note here that this is not a criticism of the staff of the PBSO. Their mandate is to serve as a knowledge base for peacebuilding and to offer advice and secretarial services.¹⁰³ In other words, they were just doing their job. The point is rather to point out that these are examples of the prioritisation of general, assumed universal peacebuilding knowledge at the expense of local understandings as well as illustrations of the technocratic character of the peacebuilding enterprise.

An example that demonstrates the tension between the assumption of universally applicable peacebuilding measures and the need to take the local context into account, took place during the Sierra Leone IPBS development process. During the energy crisis in Sierra Leone in 2007, the government argued for the need to include the energy sector in Sierra Leone's IPBS. Since it was seen as rather controversial to include something that was 'normally considered a medium-long-term development concern' in a peacebuilding strategy, an informal thematic discussion within the country-specific configuration was dedicated to this issue.¹⁰⁴ The meeting concluded, however, that it could be included as an overarching priority issue, and the IPBS was completed the following month.¹⁰⁵

Hybridity

The example of the inclusion of the energy sector in Sierra Leone's IPBS may hint to the interplay between international and local norma-

¹⁰⁰ See "Presentation du gouvernement du Burundi a la reunion specifique de la commission pour la consolidation de la paix sur le Burundi", New York, 13 October, 2006; and PBC/1/BDI/SR.1, Summary Record of the 1st meeting, republished 18 May 2007.

¹⁰¹ Interview with government official involved in the work of the PBC, 24.08.09; see also Center on International Cooperation and International Peace Institute, "Taking Stock, Looking Forward: A strategic Review of the Peacebuilding Commission", (Commissioned by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN), April 2008, 13-14; Ponzio 2007, p 10, regarding similar 'educational' visits.

¹⁰² Interview with government official involved in the work of the PBC, 24.08.09; interview, UN official, 18 February 2009.

¹⁰³ Decision no. 2007/28, 22 May 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Center on International Cooperation and International Peace Institute, "Taking Stock, Looking Forward: A strategic Review of the Peacebuilding Commission", (Commissioned by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN), April 2008, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Chair's summary note, para 10.

tive agendas, which the liberal peace critique authors argue should be central to a conceptualisation of peacebuilding. Moreover, the fact that Sierra Leone's IPBS is based upon already existing strategies and commitments, such as Sierra Leone Vision 2025, the Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Peace Consolidation Strategy, the Improved Governance and Accountability Pact and the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, emphasises the point drawn from post-colonial theory that peacebuilding often take place in societies that have already received and adopted to foreign interventions of various kinds.¹⁰⁶ However, it is doubtful that the authors presented in the first section would describe the framework as a hybrid, non-hegemonic peacebuilding strategy, or its political objective as creating 'spaces for peaceful self-governance at all levels of society'.¹⁰⁷

The two IPBSs focus to a certain extent on social welfare and justice issues as advocated by Richmond and others. The economic argument underpinning the inclusion of the energy sector in Sierra Leone's is one example. So also is its inclusion of youth employment and empowerment, which can be seen as a redistribution issue. The prioritisation of the land issue and socio-economic recovery in Burundi's IPBS can also be said to reflect social welfare and justice concerns. Likewise, the inclusion of the gender dimension as a separate priority area there, demonstrates the intention of redistributing power and making women's social welfare a public – and no longer private – matter.

Although the development of the two IPBSs involved a degree of consultation with civil society actors, the processes cannot be said constitute a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Nor did they mainly involve private actors and social movements. National governments, both in the PBC and in Burundi and Sierra Leone, were the main actors when developing the strategies, although they cooperated and consulted with other international and national actors. By UN staff's own admission, the civil society consultations conducted in the countries were insufficient.¹⁰⁸ Several obstacles to participation have been identified in both Burundi and Sierra Leone, such as poor information flows, lack of adequate preparation time, language barriers and lack of financial and logistical resources. The latter were particularly important in limiting civil society organisations in taking part in meetings in New York.¹⁰⁹ It has also been pointed out that there was an overrepresentation of Western-style, capital-based NGOs. Whereas these are more skilled in communicating with the international actors, and fit

¹⁰⁶ PBC/2/SLE/1, 3 December 2007, para 3; see also Center on International Cooperation and International Peace Institute, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Lidén, "Peace, Self-Governance and International Engagement", 11.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with UN official, 18 February 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Action Aid, Cafod, Care, 16, 27-28; Rugumamu, 7; Ponzio, 12-13.

the participation requirements set out in the provisional guidelines for participation¹¹⁰ better, they did not represent the rural grass root communities most affected by conflict. This meant that rural people's conception of problems and solutions were not taken into account while at the same time they also lost out on information about the PBC and the development of the IPBSs.¹¹¹

To sum up the arguments made in this section, one could say that the practices of the PBC in connection to developing the IPBSs for Burundi and Sierra Leone fit well into Richmond's *orthodox* model of the liberal peace. Here 'actors are wary and sensitive about local ownership and culture, but still also determined to transfer their methodologies, objectives and norms into the new governance framework ... This equates to a balanced and multilateral, and still state-centric peace'.¹¹²

Future IPBS development – implications of the liberal peace critique

Let us now turn to the implications that the insights from the liberal peace critique may have for the PBC's practices of developing IPBSs in the future. This discussion will first be structured around the same headings – values, context, hybridity. Then, some of the main points will be summarised in the form of critical questions to be posed during the current configuration of the IPBS process.

Values

One of the messages from the liberal peace critique literature presented under this heading is that contemporary peacebuilding is based on the assumption of the universal validity of the liberal peace thesis. This entails an acceptance of the proposition that the creation of liberal market democracies is the best, and indeed, only way of achieving stable, peaceful states. Moreover, the universality assumption also includes the tools derived from the liberal peace thesis, making the implementation of these particular reforms and programmes appear as

¹¹⁰ PBC/1/OC/12, 4 June 2007, annex 1.

¹¹¹ Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 16; Rugumamu, 7. In Burundi there was an ethnic imbalance in civil society as well, see, Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 28.

¹¹² Richmond, "The problem of peace", 300.

common sense and thus excluding the possibility of alternative operationalisations.

So, how can these insights be brought to bear on the PBC's work of developing IPBSs? Essentially it means that there is a need for increasing the self-reflexivity of all the parties involved in the PBC's different configurations with regard to the values underpinning their discourses and activities. It does not necessarily mean a rejection of the current liberal peacebuilding model, but it entails an awareness of the fact that it is actually a chosen approach, not just common sense or a necessity. Especially, there should be increased awareness of the effects of assuming its universality, with regard to approaching situations with a pre-defined understanding of what the problems are and how to approach them. This is not to say that actors involved are conscious of these dynamics, or approach the issue with arrogance. It is rather to point out that their frames of reference when discussing peacebuilding are coloured by liberal understandings of conflict, war and threats, for example when identifying key concerns in the recipient countries. Hence, there might be an element of 'we know what is best for them' even in the best-intentioned practices. I will propose that such awareness-raising become part of the agenda of the Working Group on Lessons Learned and the PBSO.

Another message from the liberal peace critique literature is that contemporary peacebuilding contains a status quo bias. The privileging of a market economy and the maintenance of the stability of the current system of states means that it serves the interests of those benefiting from this particular world order. The involvement in the PBC of the World Bank and other donors favouring this particular economic system seems to suggest that this may be hard to do something about. A mitigating factor, though, is the strong representation of developing countries in the PBC. This may mean a stronger presence of alternative perspectives than what is the case with other peacebuilding initiatives. Nevertheless, self-reflexivity is of essence also in this context.

Given that the UN is made up of member states, does that mean that the Organisation is too much 'the servant of the present state system, responsive to the existing configuration of power' or can the PBC become one of the 'interlocutors for the new forces that, in the long run, can change forms of states and the very nature of the state system?'¹¹³ It is in my opinion too early to say, but the PBC can seek to mitigate the inherent statism by choosing to relate to other actors in the host countries in addition to their governments. In order to address this concern, it is crucial that the PBC allow for widespread consultations

¹¹³ Robert W. Cox, "Reconsiderations" in *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order*, ed. Robert W. Cox (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 255.

with civil society when developing IPBSs. Here, it is important to keep in mind Béatrice Pouligny's reminder regarding the large diversity in local civil society.¹¹⁴ Another relevant question in this context is how to deal with minority-related conflicts when one of the key partners in the PBC is the host government. These are sensitive issues that can easily taint or destroy good working relationships, and the concern for this can constitute an obstacle to dealing with issues that are central to the society in question. This is a topic for further exploration both in connection to the PBC's work on IPBS development and for UN peace operations more generally.¹¹⁵

Context

The discussion of the liberal peace critique literature underlined the importance of local ownership in peacebuilding, and the need to reconceptualise it. Local ownership, it was argued, should not just be an efficiency concern and be taken to mean how to secure local support for externally defined mandates. Rather it should mean taking the recipient countries' understanding of the problems and visions of solutions, as the starting point of peacebuilding initiatives. In the context of developing IPBSs, this would have wide-reaching implications for the PBC's *modus operandi* as well as resources and time spent on these processes. In line with what was argued above, the development of the IPBSs should be based on much broader consultations in the host society. It would mean a rejection of the assumption that governments, by virtue of being representatives of the states' citizens, have a privileged position in IPBS development. For a solid grounding of the peacebuilding efforts in the host society, people with a variety of experiences must be allowed to have a say, not only the political elites and a few chosen representatives of civil society. This does not just mean that it will be a more time consuming process. It would also mean increased costs for organising consultations, translating documents and oral presentations, and other ways of facilitating participation. Perhaps enabling different segments of society to have a say would prove such an immense task that it would become the Commission's primary role?

The tendency to privilege general knowledge, standardisation and template use, is also seen as an obstacle to adequately address the concerns and conditions of the society in which peacebuilding take place. This also means a preoccupation with the gathering of 'lessons learned', which in turn serves to reinforce this tendency. Moreover, the resulting prioritisation of generic peacebuilding expertise over lo-

¹¹⁴ Pouligny; see also Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk, "Civil Society, Civic engagement and Peacebuilding" *Social Development Papers Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction* 36 (Washington: World Bank, 2006).

¹¹⁵ For more on this issue see, Stannes 2002, 2009; see also Biersteker, 41.

cal knowledge means that there is a tendency to assume that the recipients of peacebuilding must be taught what peacebuilding is about, and hence what they need. If the PBC were to take these insights seriously, it would mean letting the countries in question set their own agenda, without offering any advice on what are relevant peacebuilding issues. It would also mean privileging a different kind of knowledge. For the PBC and the PBSO, the focus should not be on lessons learned with the purpose of drawing-out general knowledge, applicable in all contexts. Rather, a priority should be to generate country-specific knowledge. This would of course have huge implications with regard to financial and bureaucratic resources. A practical proposal in this regard would be to rename and refocus the Working Group on Lessons Learned, and this should be coupled with an expansion of the relevant sections within the PBSO.

Hybridity

The first section of the paper also introduced two related suggestions as to how to address the insights from the liberal peace critique while at the same time not rejecting outside involvement in peacebuilding, nor the possibility that elements of the liberal peacebuilding model could be desirable in the recipient societies. Emphasising the complexity – or hybridity – of post-conflict societies, arguments are in these approaches made for basing peacebuilding efforts on local visions of peace stemming from the meeting of external and internal normative agendas. It is suggested that the focus should be more on redistribution and social justice, rather than the building of ‘the hard shell of the state’.¹¹⁶ Consultations and negotiations with broad sections of the society are seen as an integral part of peacebuilding, so also the involvement of civil society actors in the building of a sustainable peace.

The implications of these arguments for the IPBS development process are similar to those already listed above, that is, self-reflexivity with regard to the asymmetrical power relationship inherent in peacebuilding, an emphasis on broad local participation and the prioritisation of the local perspective. One additional implication is that the main focus should not be on conflicts and threats, thus easily reproducing the contemporary liberal peacebuilding agenda. Rather, it should be on visions of peace. Richmond’s recommendation in this regard deserves to be quoted in full:

When internationals engage in conflict zones, one of the first questions they might ask of disputants at the many different levels of the polity might be what type of peace could be envisaged? Working towards such an explicit

¹¹⁶ Lidén, “Building Peace between Global and Local Politics”, 621-622; Richmond, “The problem of peace”, 309.

end goal would be of great benefit to both internationals and recipients of intervention.¹¹⁷

He emphasises, however, that these visions must have their basis in the specific context in which peacebuilding occurs.

Another implication is the emphasis on negotiations between the external and internal actors throughout the peacebuilding process and until there is agreement that a sustainable peace has been reached.¹¹⁸ This might have radical implications for how the tracking and monitoring element of the IPBS is carried out. Since both the process and success criteria are up for continuous debate, there would be little room for generalised benchmarks, etc. This might be a bitter pill for donors to swallow. A third, and perhaps the most difficult implication, is the fact that the PBC would have to be prepared to accept locally-based peacebuilding strategies that are not in line with what is considered to be desirable values and outcomes, nor ‘the proper way of doing things’ at its headquarters in New York.

Critical questions

The implications of the insights from the liberal peace critique literature can also take the form of critical questions posed throughout the process of IPBS development as it is today. Christian Büger has summarised the current IPBS process in a three-column table, detailing phase, technique, and structuring question.¹¹⁹ Drawing on the insights presented above, I would propose adding a set of critical questions to his table (the gray column):

¹¹⁷ Richmond, “The problem of peace”, 309.

¹¹⁸ Richmond’s suggestion that interveners should be held accountable for sticking to their part of the deal is difficult to apply in this case, given that the PBC only has an advisory role.

¹¹⁹ Büger, 23-24.

Phase	Technique	Structuring Question	Critical Questions
1) Needs assessment	Policy Dialogue (CSM)	What does the country want?	Who counts as 'the country'?
	Mapping (PBSO)	What is already in place?	What is the frame of reference here – state capacities, civil society capacities?
2) Prioritisation	Policy Dialogue (CSM) Field Missions	What is a critical issue?	What is the frame of reference here? Threats to the liberal peace or other conceptualisations?
	Policy Dialogue (CSM) WGLL	Is it a peacebuilding issue? Should it be handled in the PBC?	Who decides? What kind of knowledge is considered relevant?
3) Recommendations and Commitment	Policy Dialogue (CSM) Informal Consultation WGLL	What can be done?	What are local visions of peace and how to get there?
	Policy Dialogue Informal Consultation Compact Benchmarks	Who can and will do what?	Who counts as relevant actors?
4) Monitoring and Tracking	Research/Data gathering (PBSO) Field Missions (CSM)	What is being done/implemented (resource flows)? How are the priority issues developing? (How is the security situation in the country developing?)	Who decides? According to which standards?
5) Policy Review	Policy Dialogue on MTM Outcomes	What needs to be revised? (3? 2? 1?)	What are the underlying criteria?

These critical questions are intended to increase self-reflexivity with regard to the values, conception of relevant knowledge and relevant actors, and the conception of problems/threats/peacebuilding that are underpinning the IPBS process. They represent thus one way of making some of the insights presented above integral to the process. However, a more wholesale embrace of the liberal peace critique would mean that the processes in different countries would not easily be fitted into a table intended to fit all. In this context – and as a concluding remark – it could be useful to remind ourselves of a lesson from post-colonial theory: the practises of the interveners are also shaped by the recipients, by their challenge, resistance and exploitation. Hence, the future of the PBA and its IPBS practices is not only dependent upon the outcome of the 2010 review process. It depends to a large extent upon the members of the societies in which the PBC chooses to become involved in the years to come.

List of Working Papers – The Future of the Peacebuilding Architecture Project:

Kwesi Aning and **Ernest Lartey**: *Establishing the Future State of the Peacebuilding Commission: Perspectives on Africa*

Thomas Biersteker and **Oliver Jütersonke**: *The Challenges of Institution Building: Prospects for the UN Peacebuilding Commission*

Cedric de Coning: *Clarity, Coherence and Context: Three Priorities for Sustainable Peacebuilding*

Rob Jenkins: *Re-engineering the UN Peacebuilding Architecture*

Carolyn McAskie: *2020 Vision. Visioning the Future of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*

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