

# The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace

Written by Oliver Richmond

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OLIVER RICHMOND, DEC 23 2012

Hybrid forms of peace and hybrid forms of politics are emerging in post-conflict locations around the world as has been noted, from Timor Leste to Afghanistan (Mac Ginty 2010). These hybrid forms mediate between local and international norms, institutions, law, right, needs, and interests. A hybrid form of peace implies that legitimacy and agency rest partly at the local level, meaning both state and society. It is plausible that more sophisticated and contextual versions of peace may gradually emerge through political contestation between a range of local actors and transversally between local and international actors as a result. They develop through a tense process of hybrid politics, whereby various local factions and international norms and interests remain opposed until an accommodation is reached that maintains both local and international legitimacy. This is at least partly representative of a post-colonial process, whereby pre-colonial pasts are re-imagined, and colonial disruption and injustice is addressed. Local, everyday forms of peace and politics encounter the state and its elites, and the liberal peace system in various ways, often despite the incapable or predatory states in which they develop. Though hybrid forms of politics may still maintain structural or overt violence they represent an encounter between international and local norms, law, institutions, and practices.

Some significant issues have arisen as a consequence. Do hybrid forms of peace reiterate colonial epistemologies or localised conflicts in an ever more subtle fashion (Richmond 2009: 562)? Or do they offer an understanding of a range of local and international agencies that may constitute more legitimate forms of peace? Does this imply 'going local' so the state disappears, or new forms of state reflecting alternative, non-western, post-colonial patterns of legitimacy? Does this imply a new type of local- international relationship (bearing in mind the blurred lines between 'local' and 'international')? What impact may these processes have on international institutions and organisations, law, and norms? Does a compromise over generally agreed 'cosmopolitan' standards and norms result in a post-liberal escape from rights frameworks? Or does it mean a post-liberal accommodation between the local and liberal forms of politics and peace?

### Differentiating Between Hybrid Peace and Hybrid Politics

Hybridity might be seen as somewhat overloaded as a conceptual framework, being 'all things to all people'. It also represents the contingent and complex nature of the reality of peacemaking, and the dynamics of power, agency, and identity it involves. Hybrid forms of peace have been born out of a combination of international blueprints for a liberal or neoliberal form of state, development, rule of law, political institutions, and local socio-historical dynamics of conflict. Elite and state predation or partial reform in context, the emerging role of the 'BRICS plus' (Nel 2010) and even the 'G7+' (Wyeth 2011: 11) in development and peacebuilding, as well local agency and resistance, have recently all contributed to this mix. A hybrid peace or form of politics brings together localised forms of peace (Richmond 2011; See also Mac Ginty 2008), the use of aid and development for national interest, and the liberal humanitarian impulse of the international community, which emerged during the brief period of a peacebuilding consensus from the end of the Cold War to interventions in Kosovo, and later Afghanistan and Iraq (Paris 2004; Bellamy and Williams 2005).

This has produced a new politics of peacebuilding, development, and statebuilding. In response innovations in IR and peace and conflict theory are emerging. These affect both existing donor and liberal institutional contexts, and provide new pressures for reforming the tools and practices of peacebuilding and statebuilding. These dynamics

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have evoked various reactions from within the UN system, as well as donors, and international policy makers who are now involved in the project of [neo]liberal statebuilding (See especially Chandler 2010; For a defence see also Paris 2010). Often grassroots level actors are more understanding of these shifts than those who work in the political and bureaucratic frameworks in mainly metropolitan centres (at least in private transcripts) (Confidential Source 2010a: 2010b).

Hybrid forms of peace and politics comprise contradictory and often paradoxical dynamics. They seek the reconstruction of a predominantly liberal understanding of emancipation (meaning that an individual is constituted by property rights, human rights, free trade and democracy). Simultaneously they involve the recognition of alternative norms, interests, standards, institutions, as well as culture, identity, and custom, politics, economics, and society. They bring together, albeit in a tense relationship, the local, regional, and global.

These dynamics include a wide range socio-political organisation, from the local and customary (Boege, Brown, Clements, and Nolan 2008) local elites' project of state and economy, the liberal peace and neoliberal state, and the liberal internationalist and institutionalist architecture of peace, security and global governance. The clash between the modern neoliberal state and customary praxis, law or institutions in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, or Liberia, or tension over the governance and sovereignties of the various entities, states, and self-declared states in the Balkans, hints at potential hybridities to come. In all of these cases international statebuilding and liberal peacebuilding provided a blueprint for the donor-led construction of institutions, law, and civil society, but historical practices, customary law, religion and identity provided a basis by which these were locally resisted and subsequently converted in a hybrid incorporating aspects of the local political and social milieu as well as the liberal peace. The contestation of political power in these cases has meant hybrid forms of politics are playing themselves out. They also offer the potential of a hybrid form of peace, however.

Hybrid forms of peace and hybrid forms of politics and order are interwoven, but they are not the same (For a variety of perspectives see Spivak 1988: 75; Bhabha 1994: 33; Kapoor 2008: 568). Nor do they necessarily represent the institutional, sovereign, and territorial rigidity of modern liberal political order. Recognition of hybridity makes it far easier to understand the difference between peacebuilding and statebuilding and also highlights the intimate and complex relationship between peace and politics, in its negative and positive aspects. Hybridity represents the attempt of the liberal, developed world, to evolve interventionary practices designed to end conflict and poverty, as exemplified by *Agenda for Peace*, the MDGs, and R2P and subsequent documentation. It is also meant to maintain the legitimacy of the liberal self, state, and international organisation (See for example UN 2008; 2009b; 2009c; 2011). It indicates the juxtaposition of local forms of agency, authority, legitimacy, and alterity in other contexts, bringing together a shifting range of conflicting capacities (in the context of the liberal, western exhortation to 'do no harm' and observe norms of local ownership) (OECD 2010; OECD 2007; Anderson 1999; Donais 2009).

## Towards a Hybrid Peace

Hybridity, according to post-colonial literatures is an outcome of attempts to decolonise peoples, territories, and knowledge, and to recognise the strategies of those who resist overt and subtle forms of colonisation (Kapoor 2003: 568). Such historical processes have also been recognised in various UN documents, including in the General Assembly and Security Council, as well as by various Agencies, including the World Bank and IMF. Documents make reference to the need for self-determination, local legitimacy, ownership, and partnership, as well as the preservation of a range of rights, whether indigenous or for minorities (variously understood in terms of their contribution to international political, legal, and economic architecture) (UN 1945; 1960; 1966a; 1966b).

Often radical transformations have evolved via a confrontation between elite and grass-roots agency, whether aimed at emancipation, reform or even revolution. It also emerges from the relationships, oppositional or cooperative of local and international actors. Hybrid forms of peace emerge from local agency and its attempts to mitigate conflict in everyday life, elite conflict, or to resist external prescriptions for the nature of the polity that emerges from peacebuilding. Such processes arise sometimes through passive or hidden forms of resistance, often mainly of a discursive nature, sometimes through open demonstration or violence, complete rejection and refusal, partial reform, co-optation, or political counter-organisation. Such agency tends to contest the legitimacy of hegemony in a way that

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it cannot respond without appearing authoritarian. This is a common but under-appreciated tactic against structures of oppression (De Certau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Bhabha 1994: 330; Foucault 2009). Local agency is an essential part of the emergence of a hybrid form of peace and politics, which ultimately is driven by a series of local to global encounters in the fields of security, institutional reform, law, development, and civil society.

Liberal understandings of peace and political organisation have proven to be fairly responsive to such dynamics given their focus on rights and representation, though governmental dynamics also emerge (Foucault 1991). Much of the architecture of development, peacebuilding, and now statebuilding, while driven by democratic states and reflecting their values also contends with a bureaucratic culture and the difficulties of understanding the needs and rights of post-conflict actors in emerging polities after conflict. This has been well illustrated by statebuilding praxis in both Afghanistan and Iraq more recently.

Often the goal of resistance to international or elite policy narratives, whether of liberal peace or elite control, is to induce a type of hybridity even if this is still very much in favour of hegemony. Through resistance it is at least slightly subverted. Or at least a private space is preserved whereby the weak can maintain a degree of autonomy to be devoted to more localised understandings of politics, peace, needs, rights, and custom. Such approaches maintain to some degree that the private is political, and that actors, however subaltern may have peace formation agency even if indirect and not a product of public mobilisation (Spivak 1988; On this concept see Richmond 2013).

A good example of the characteristics of such local agency, and its potential in shaping peace, the state, norms, and institutions, even despite elite power of international prescriptions, is the widespread emergence in post-conflict sites around the world of what has been called 'local infrastructures for peace' (Odendaal 2010: 2). These involve local groups, NGOs, customary organisations, civil society organisations, and a range of government ministries and agencies, spanning locations as diverse as Nicaragua and South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, and many of the more recent UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions around the world. In this way contextual institutional mechanisms, often based on national or local peace councils, provide a platform or an encounter between a range of local, state, and international agencies. They facilitate formal and informal debates about the security, institutional, legal, and material dimensions of peace and embed them in the state, so producing local ownership and legitimacy if successful. UNDP has played a role in supporting these infrastructures in many countries around the world, including in Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nepal, Timor Leste and others, meaning that such encounters also influence international narratives (Kumar 2011). This might be termed peace formation, emanating from a range of grass roots and bottom-up sources that do not necessarily follow the western understanding of political agency and mobilisation. They may be informal and operate in a very limited context, or they may become part of the constitutional structure of the state. In different ways they enter into the discourses of international peacebuilding and statebuilding.

## The Dilemmas of Hybridity

There are two main sets of dilemmas to consider arising from an encounter between local peace formation agency and the apparatus of the liberal peace. From the perspective of the international actor agency revolves around how to use its capacity to legitimately induce a top-down liberal peace, so addressing the local causes of conflict. From the perspective of its local subjects agency revolves around how to both learn from peacebuilding or statebuilding in order to address root causes, and how to merge international support or prescriptions with local political frameworks necessary for localised autonomy and identity.

The range of dilemmas entailed by post-liberal and hybrid forms of peace may be summarised as follows:

1. Which comes first: local consent and legitimacy, or those inherent in either the state or international norms, law, and community? Can all be attended to simultaneously, or should some take precedence?
2. Which comes first: rights or needs, and how are these defined differently by local actors and internationals?
3. What are the conflicts and concurrences inherent in the array of local and international forms of legitimacy, legality, agencies and institutions?
4. Do power imbalances, resistance, and legitimacy deficits, lead to an order in which normative and strategic compromises must be made for international or local legitimacy to be sustained?

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5. Where, why, and how might local and international actors compromise on their norms and standards relating to rights, needs, and identity in order to achieve sustainable peace?
6. Which form of ownership, at which level, and which local interests should be seen as representative of an 'authentic' and sustainably peaceful polity?
7. Who bears material responsibility for peace: international or local actors (or both)? Should peace or order arise through either or both external intervention or enablement of local agency? Which mix of these factors is required?
8. What is the priority of peace in hybrid or liberal form: the local community level, the state, regional or international order, or all? A liberal peace prioritises international peace with the state's role in mediating between conflicting local interests following closely behind. Local forms of peace would reverse this balance and focus on local, community, and perhaps national issues;
9. The diffusion of power, identity, sovereignty, and international capacity, inherent in hybrid forms of peace appears to weaken or undermine the claims made for the state as the sole basis for local sustainable, peace. It also weakens the international community's credibility in making peace especially where peacebuilding is occurring in a post-colonial context. International/state level peace seems to depend on distant governance, directive donors, and alien processes, norms, and institutions. Local level peace is small scale, socially oriented, sometimes hidden from the liberal gaze, and often fragile. A combination of both requires the mediation of different forms of polity, norms, identities, understandings of society and economics. Material power seems to outweigh local legitimacy but hybridity suggests this is not so clear-cut.
10. Thus, some peace agency lies in the hands of the least obviously powerful; local political agency may be asserted by those who do not want an emancipatory peace;
11. Legitimacy and agency in local terms may be hard to trace and formal political peace processes are often ineffective due to the participation of predatory or corrupt actors, or because informal actors were left out;
12. A liberal state provides some support and limited pluralism internally, as well as regional stability. However, it also creates normative obstacles for alterity and local agency to emerge and create hybridity. This undermines local legitimacy in favour of international legitimacy. A neoliberal state provides few material resources to enable weak actors to assert their rights. A localised form of state may engender structural or historical bias or not have the capacity that liberal statebuilders require or the strength to engage in global markets.

These dilemmas arise because of different interests, norms, differences in diplomatic, national, and local cultures and identities, and the grander structures of the international system. A hybrid peace would entail the gradual resolution of these dilemmas.

## The Politics of a Post-Liberal Peace

To move from hybrid politics to peace requires an empathetic and emancipatory approach as defined by its subjects rather than external actors. This means that oppressive social, economic, political, or military structures cannot be termed hybrid forms of peace (as has been the fear with the role of the Taliban in an Afghan peace, for example) (See Boerger and Boone 2010). They may be called hybrid politics or order. The attempt to include the Taliban in a peace process in Afghanistan cannot be emancipatory or empathetic if gender issues are not addressed or any 'high peace council' results in an oppressive framework for other groups, unable to provide them both rights or needs. The status quo in Cyprus cannot be termed a hybrid peace if it means inequalities and injustices in representation, freedom of movement, rights, property and law are not addressed. The situation after the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka cannot be termed a hybrid peace given the level of destruction, injustice, disruption of everyday life, not to mention illegality it has entailed. Situations as in Rwanda, Mozambique, Liberia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Guatemala engender a level of discrimination, violence, inequality and marginalisation, which mean 'peace' is far from empathetic or emancipatory. These situations represent conflict management where elite or certain group interests are maintained, even if mitigated by wider societal interests. These are indicative of hybrid forms of politics, and the crucial next step is to see how hybrid peace might be enabled.

The emergence of hybrid forms of peace evokes various reactions from within the UN system, major donors, and

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international policymakers. Some see it as beneficial for building more sustainable and locally owned peace processes in which there is reconciliation rather than exclusion. Others see it as a compromise on liberal norms or on the responsibility of international actors to assist those in need.[1]

A hybrid form of peace may arise where legitimacy is local, regional, and international, in which all subjects agree even if grudgingly, and the nature of the polity reflects contextual, national, regional, and global political and economic interactions and interests. It may be post-colonial and probably post-territorial. This process offers an emancipatory praxis to all of its constituencies in a framework that enables representation, needs, rights, law, and security. It is complex but fundamental to any self-sustaining, emancipatory.

Hybrid forms of peace may emerge not just from local-liberal dynamics of interaction, but also from a broader range of post-western, post-colonial relations with the newly emerging donors, peacekeepers, and development actors (providing assistance or seeking profit), including many 'non traditional' actors. What is crucial is how far these new forms of peace are both emancipatory and empathetic in their hybrid and post-liberal form, and whether they are an advancement on liberal peace thinking or more orthodox statebuilding approaches. Of course, it is also important to hold them up to the standards offered by localised and customary praxes of peace and politics as well as international standards.

This should not romanticise local capacities of course; peace is a mutual endeavour of support, empathy and transformation. This means more than mere participation or local ownership as externalised praxis of intervention seeking local support. This is not to reinscribe the international, national or local with new forms of colonialism or with local power dynamics posing as 'local knowledge' leading to relativist and mutual incomprehension (Giles 2001: 153).

This does not mean a post-liberal escape from rights frameworks. This rests on a conflation between liberalism and superiority, and a reluctance to see the local as part of the international. The necessary task lies in realising the post-liberal accommodation between local and international processes of politics and peace. Or if 'post-liberal peace' can now be unpacked, it lies in understanding how to redress causal factors of conflict, provide for needs, offer contextual rights and dignity, facilitate the creation of political and social structures that resonate widely and support reconciliation, while also facilitating the evolution of international law, norms, the state, and post- territorial sovereignty. This may reflect the breadth of the post-colonial, post-liberal moment that has arisen.

This process needs to be very careful of the dilemma that colonial administration recognised in Africa and India. Colonial administrators were often aware of the possibilities inherent in hybrid political structures, and indeed saw the task of colonial administration as reconciling the local with the colonial (Citing Malinowski 1945; James 1973: 17). This is not the point of a hybrid peace, which is more focused on the emancipatory potential of the international frameworks as well as the autonomous but networked and related agencies and dynamics of peace formation on the ground, whereby the two should develop a complementary relationship rather than a paternalistic or hegemonic and top-down one (Asad 1973: 114).[2]

What emerges from the above analysis is that there are two main categories of hybridity, both for peace and politics. The first is a hegemonic form that is predicated on superficial mimicry and compliance with the liberal peace system but with modifications around its fringes, mostly dependent on local, critical forms of agency. The second is a more radical form of hybridity where such critical agency might mobilise on a grander scale to take the lead in producing forms of peace that are more local than liberal but still offer an emancipatory framework (Sabaratnam 2011).

## Conclusion

Hybrid forms of peace do not fit neatly with state sovereignty or nationalistic understandings of political order, though hybrid forms of politics and order might. Peace cannot solely be liberal and hybrid at the same time. Though liberalism is a 'broad church' it lacks global reach and instead operates as a model of exclusion for many in development settings in the global south. A hybrid peace transcends state borders and formal levels of analysis, reaching into an informal and social sphere. It also indicates a loss of control on the part of international planners and

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a potentially a letting go of neo-colonial mindsets (even if unintended).[3] Some international and local actors may now be deliberately pursuing hybrid forms of peace given a general realisation of the limitations of both the liberal peace and local agency. Thus hybrid forms of peace are both pragmatic and prosaic, while also offering a thought experiment for more suitable and legitimate engagements between local peace 'formers' and international actors. They represent (to some degree at least) an escape from governmentality, and from the fixed and hegemonic categories of the local and the international. They show how peace agencies, both local and international, are instrumental in building hybrid and legitimate forms of peace.

Hybrid forms of politics result from the local/international encounter, resulting in a possible typology of several possibilities, which has implications for the resultant hybrid forms of peace.[4] Some hybrid permutations may be regressive, some may have little chance of achieving a breakthrough, some may be defensive of exclusive identities or limited resources, and some may merely accommodate power. Some may aspire to liberal or neoliberal outcomes while others may be emancipatory as defined in post-colonial terms.

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Oliver Richmond is a Research Professor in the Humanitarian and Conflict Research Institute and the Department of Politics and IR, University of Manchester, UK. He is also International Professor, School of International Studies, Kyung Hee University, Korea. His publications include *A Post Liberal Peace* (Routledge, 2011), *Liberal Peace Transitions*, (with Jason Franks, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), *Peace in IR* (Routledge, 2008), and *The Transformation of Peace* (Palgrave, 2005/7). He is the editor of the Palgrave book series, *Rethinking Conflict Studies*.

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[1] Such a range of views were expressed at a recent workshop I helped organise at the UN in 2011. "From Rhetoric to Practice: Operationalizing National Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, A Policy Workshop", New York: UN

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Peacebuilding Support Office, March 14, 2011.

[2] Even more ambivalent is that fact that it is probably the case that liberal interventionism has made fieldwork more viable.

[3] This is something which many, particularly some foreign policy establishments are unwilling to do: it even reaches as far as some quarters of the UN. It is often disguised by a paternalistic discourse of trusteeship, or a focus on counter-factual securitisation: i.e. on what security threats may arise if intervention does not occur?

[4] Thanks to Neil Cooper for refining this preliminary typology.

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## About the author:

**Oliver Richmond** is a Research Professor in IR, Peace and Conflict Studies in the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute at the University of Manchester, UK. He is also International Professor, College of International Studies, Kyung Hee University, Korea and a Visiting Professor at the University of Tromsø. His publications include *Peace Formation and Political Order in Conflict Affected Societies* (Oxford University Press, 2016), *Post-Liberal Peace Transitions: Between Peace Formation and State Formation* (with Sandra Pogodda; Edinburgh University Press, 2016), *Failed Statebuilding* (Yale University Press, 2014), *A Very Short Introduction to Peace*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), *A Post Liberal Peace* (Routledge, 2011), *Liberal Peace Transitions*, (with Jason Franks, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), *Peace in IR* (Routledge, 2008), and *The Transformation of Peace* (Palgrave, 2005/7). He is editor of the Palgrave book series, *Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*, and co-editor of the Journal, *Peacebuilding*.