Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace

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"Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic."

(Foucault, cited in Dean & Villadsen 2016, p. 92)

Critical Challenges to the Orthodoxy of "Peace in IR"

Drawing on critical, feminist, post-structural, and post-colonial thinking in IR, as well as critical movements in other disciplines, and particular a combination of the local and spatial 'turns' (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002, p. 981; Tickner, 1992; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), we now know a lot about an emancipatory peace. This is both in terms of the many major and minor war settlements since Westphalia, and in particular since 1989, but also in terms of structural violence and inequality after the Cold War (Boulding, 2000; Boulding, 1978).

It is no accident that in recent times mainstream IR theory is becoming interested in practice, and is shifting towards the critical and Foucauldian engagements with the everyday and micro-politics (drawing on developments in other disciplines and perhaps 30 years later than those other disciplines) (Bueger & Gadinger, 2015; Pouliot, 2013). This is a domestication of previously radical and critical, feminist or post-structural contributions including the still prevalent Foucauldian approach to critical IR (Selby, 2007). It has tended to moderate their radical implications. Theories that have resisted critical influences or have failed to engage with interdisciplinary debates continue to refute the implications of this accumulation of peace knowledge, which partly explains the emerging middle ground of constructivism in its critical and more mainstream guises which has succeeded though co-opting critical literatures. Often this position is deemed preferable to a closer engagement with Marx or with the implications of historical materialism or core-periphery thinking (Tickner, 2013).

Though practices, the everyday (but not in the sense suggested by de Certeau (de Certeau, 1984) but a banal and resilient sense) (Chandler, 2013), and micropolitics (Solomon & Steele, published online March 7, 2016) (again rarely in the sense outlined by Foucault) have entered the mainstream discourse, they rarely engage with the evolution of peace or rights in modern IR beyond the liberal canon. This is a common feminist, post (and anti)-colonial, anti-colonial, and environmentalist critique (Sjoberg, 2009) of such quasi critical work (Paris, 2010), which often posits that the state and international architecture is conceptually and materially fixed by political, military, economic or bureaucratic forms of power and point to resilience and the engine of subaltern agency by way of facilitating or supplanting debates about rights and justice. This has stripped out the essence of peace, echoing neo-colonial counter-insurgency thinking, as well as undermining the legitimate authority of the emerging interventionary system which has been designed to extend rights and maintain order (though mainly in the interests of the global north) (Darby, 2000; Hobson, 2007). One could draw a historical analogy here connecting the emergence and marginalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement with the failed revolutions of the Arab spring- a hollow victory for those who refused to engage with NAM over the last 60 years (Devetak, et al., 2016; Mishra, 2012).

By contrast, revisiting the critical legacy of liberal progressivism, and Marxist thought, as well as including feminist,

Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace
Written by Oliver Richmond

post-colonial, post-structural, and environmental thought, aimed at the limitations of the colonial, post- war, and post-cold war settlements, we should be able to begin to build a picture of the requirements for peace in the 21st Century. This needs to incorporate the political, social, and economic organisation fit for the 21st Century at local, state, regional and international levels, as well as being relevant to the increasingly trans-national and trans-scalar, mobile and networked nature of IR. Peace formation is as significant as state formation or the strengthening of the international architecture, and should shape both the state and the international. Are the older elements of peace: a stable territorially sovereign state, an international conference system and international institutions, collective security, minimalist goals of self-defence and the prevention of aggression, and rights of varying sorts, fit for the purpose of providing the foundations for peace treaties today?

New Critical Currents

The answer is clearly not. Rights and material claims have expanded beyond the potential of the modern state and the related international architecture, especially in view of the circulation of agency, materiel, capital, and technology in the modern world. Rights claims lead to further, upwards cascading rights claims, and top-down representative frameworks of legitimate authority must respond institutionally, legally and materially. This is also true of the shift from an understanding of a null relationship between politics and the physical environment (with implications for both war and peace) towards critical Anthropocenic engagements (Lövbrand, et al., 2015). One hopes this critical linkage in the scientific literature, which is increasingly being shifted into international law, will not suffer the same fate as previous UN and international conventions covering matters from decolonisation, indigenous rights, and independence struggles to the global economic order.

All of this means that the underlying normative framework for peace is now much more complicated. Intervention (broadly defined as emanating from the full scope of the current international architecture), government and governance associated with peace and order, need to be significantly rethought. What makes this imminent are the escalating rights claims relating to peace formation's dynamics, with an increasingly material nature, and connection with long standing issues of historical and distributive injustice, such as in the Middle East, the states of the MENA region, and many others often in the Global South. Subaltern rights claims inevitably cascade upwards, and test the legitimacy of existing structures and frameworks. An 'interventionary order' has emerged to respond to such tests on the legitimacy of international order, but it has so far failed to engage with the expanded rights claims that are now connected with peace in critical and popular debates. Instead, it still often prefers the liberal grounds of the 1990s despite their late post-colonial and Eurocentric leanings (Richmond, 2016).

As a consequence of peace formation, and of new technological possibilities, new and more mobile, transnationally and transversally networked, scalar forms of political agency and rights claims are emerging to challenge the older notions of territorial states, fixed architecture, and static citizenship grounded in natural rights, human rights, and various forms of law (Scholte, 2005). Mobility reflects new spatial and scalar possibilities, despite neoliberal governmentality appearing to limit the possibility of expanded rights and their materialisation in more concrete forms (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 8).

Blockages, Checks and Balances

IR theory generally works with 19th and 20th century liberal conceptions of peace, order, and rights, determined mainly by power or structure and a fixity in the relationship between states, institutions and citizens. This both provides rights and security but may also act as a blockage. However, critical and interdisciplinary contributions have pushed much further, into new normative and conceptual terrains, particularly during the course of the last 25 years. These have built upon existing layers, which are often in tension. We know from orthodox forms of realism rooted in the 19th century that military security and law and order are required (Morgenthau, 1975). From the 20th century's evidence and that of the post-Cold War era, we know that a state and institutions, along with law, rights, and public services are necessary, normally in some varied configuration of liberalism (Doyle, 1983; Doyle, 1983). From Marxist approaches, we know material equality and global solidarity are strong demands (Wallerstein, 1974). From feminism, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism, we know that broader forms of equality, empathy for everyday conditions, historical justice, and sustainable development are needed (George, 1994; Sylvester, 2002). Later variants of

Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace

Written by Oliver Richmond

political liberalism gave us new understandings about the nature of the state and society, the relationship between inequality and rights, and the normative and institutional expansion of the 'international community' (Frost, 1994).

As cosmopolitan thinking developed with the contributions of the likes of Held, Habermas, Giddens and many others (Beck, 2006), balancing these approaches into a new universal framework of understanding and international order became imperative. This tried to balance what we know about a recognition of identity and materiality, along with complex constitutional, and regional architectures, all lessons of the 20th century and more recently. It posited that a compromise and a global agreement on norms and international organisation is also necessary to approximate global justice. But reactions, misapplications, and abuses of this system of thinking, especially in view of post-colonial perspectives raised the problem of socially legitimate resistance. Finally, we learned that practices, culture, micropolitics, local agency and the everyday are very important, and often in unexpected ways. We also now understand the limitations of political liberalism, liberal internationalism and liberal institutionalism, of neoliberal approaches to capital and development, the problem of the arms economy, and the limits of technology in achieving peace or order in the light of global justice claims, which themselves emanate from subaltern positionalities.

From Blockages to Critical Agency and Peace Formation

Over the period since the end of WW2 and since the end of the Cold War, it has become apparent however, that the academy tends to take either a power oriented or a liberal oriented perspective of international relations and the production of order, replicated by the character of international policy (without much clarity on which leads to which). This line repeats itself through the evolution of "new" theory, leading to blockages. This means, given the ease of access to detailed information about conflict, perhaps for the first time, that subaltern and conflict-affected citizens are unlikely to reflect on scholars', policymakers', or the international community's performance very positively. This leaves them little option but to exercise agency in the greyer areas of IR (i.e. outside of the liberal and balance of power order, and even beyond the transnational system which has more recently emerged- as Foucault and before him Marx foresaw) (Golder, 2015, p. 16). This is a direct challenge to the political theory of the state and its centrality to order, good or bad, as well as to liberal political theory's interest in a liberal international order, rights and justice, and related interventionary praxis (as can be seen with the many problems which have faced the doctrine of R2P). Where the state, global economy, and the liberal international order has failed to deal with conflict or expand rights, conflict-affected citizens must look to other tactics whilst tactically exploiting the space liberal order provides. They are bringing into being a new world as a consequence, one which modern liberal subjects also recognise but also often reject because of its otherness (Chandler & Richmond, 2015).

Peace formation reflects these dynamics, complete with opportunities for expanded rights claims and limitations in confronting entrenched power. It stems from local-scale agency, networks, and forms of mobilisation for legitimate and progressive forms of peace. It makes use of everyday, localised understandings of positionality vis-à-vis politics, justice, and reconciliation, and is scaled up- at least theoretically- towards the state and international order (Richmond, 2016). It often draws upon liberal international norms but makes further claims upon governance. It is central to generating legitimate authority within the state and to embed a sustainable level of peace. Its varied dynamics are hinted at in formal peacebuilding or peace processes, from Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus and Colombia to various revolts against unjust authority, like the recent ones in the MENA region.

A Mobile Peace: Mobility, Agency, Hybridity, and Arbitrage

Thus, it is clear that the entwined and contradictory mobility of people, knowledge, capital, and arms, is now very important, and that the state and international architecture are incredibly static, and welded to territory and status, to the point of moribundity. By contrast, everyday agency is clever, hidden, committed, and ingenious (Scott, 2009). Increasingly, it is transnational, trans-scalar and transversal. It is often resistance based, perhaps revolutionary, but normally more subtle and disguised for reasons of safety and effectiveness, as Scott has famously argued. It cannot defeat direct or structural forms of power, but it has impact on legitimate and effective governance as well as being able to produce parallel state and international systems (as say in Kosovo, with the parallel state and regional diaspora or the so called 'fourth United Nations') (Weiss, et al., 2009). Perhaps, it is becoming true to say that if an emancipatory peace is to overcome the contradictions caused in the liberal international system by highly mobile

Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace

Written by Oliver Richmond

capital and arms, then everyday agency must also be mobile, networked, and agile. Peace formation, meaning peaceful, political self-making, which is never complete and always constrained by structure, emerges from related peace formation actors rather than state formation (which represents power-sharing over military, territorial and economic resources at best) (Richmond, 2016). Multilateralism can rarely reach these everyday agencies: a new system of multi-verticalism is required to connect multilateralism to informal, trans-scalar peace formation actors and networks. These agencies need to help iron out three dimensions of conflict and inequality -historical, economic, and social- leading to historical and distributive, global forms of justice. This potential can perhaps be seen in UNHCR and UNICEF's "Blue Dot Hub" system, which supports people fleeing the Syrian war across Europe, and is designed to engage with questions of rights under mobile circumstances (UNHCR & UNICEF, 2016).

The capacity of everyday agency also helps us understand the limits of the current state and international architecture and theories which are torn between mobility and fluidity, as most critical theories claim, or the fixity of an institutional order or international system. Reconciling order, inequalities relating to history, identity, materiality, gender, and mobility, is a major task, which we can actually assume to shape the essence of IR in orthodox theory (Tickner, 1992). Forget interests, forget balancing between states, forget the mutual constitution of identity and institutions (Bleiker, 1997). Everyday agency and peace formation also help us understand the limits of social actors in dealing with war and conflict through the strategies and tactics they have available to them. It helps us understand the path dependencies, interests, hierarchies, and inertias in current systems and discourse of peace and development, and points towards ways forward.

Peace settlements, responses to structural violence, inequality, poverty, and environmental degradation operate in a core-periphery environment of IR, and impose limits. These limits – the failure of the state to domesticate its power, the failure of the international community to prevent or stop wars (as in Syria), and the limits of everyday agency in the face of state and international power– mean that the most emancipatory step that an individual can take is to migrate away from violence, in the absence of state or international assistance. To regain legitimacy and authority, international architecture has to respond to this dynamic. Yet, this has not been the case since at least the 19th Century. The liberal state and the liberal international architecture, along with non-liberal states, are often now obstacles to this sort of agential, mobile and networked, informed and technologically enabled, emancipatory form of 'peace' through political-geographic arbitrage. The international system is defending its structure and privileges, but its legitimacy has been weakened as a result. After the warlords, the dictators, and the nationalists, the modernisers, the conservative state and 20th century architecture now ultimately block such mobility even where it is urgently needed (as today in Syria). Globalisation, rights, and democracy require mobility, otherwise they degrade into domination and Northern or Euro-centrism.

Thus, contemporary peace cannot be found in land, blood, or glory, or in fixed settlements and inflexible institutions in the 21st Century, which have all created their own violence or inertia. Critical theoretical contributions have pointed us in the direction of identity, resource distribution, gender, and historical power relations, and have generally agreed on the fluidity, networked and mobile nature of critical agency in dealing with such matters (Richmond, 2011). Capturing the essence of such critical intent across different methodologies and epistemologies (from quantitative and qualitative, North and South) has remained theoretically difficult. As with institutional development, intellectual development confronts the difficult task of reconciling the irreconcilable; hence, the very awkward nature of constructivism's relationship with the state, power, identity, and expanded rights claims, or post-structuralism's rejection of any political project, fixed claims, or unified system, and cosmopolitanism's attempt to shoehorn difference into global solidarity in an enormously unequal, post-colonial world.

Peace may well be emerging, ironically, through the agential and critical subject, armed with 21st century technology, information, and potential, following the global political economy towards the world's centres of relative stability and prosperity and away from violence or structural violence. The peace of Westphalia, the UN peace, and even the liberal peace, now look antiquated and anachronistic, and even an obstacle to peace and positionality arbitrage. Mobility is perhaps emerging as a new right claimed by modern subalterns. Global inequality and untreated direct and structural violence causes a significant 'peace arbitrage' within international relations, where the failure of local politics and economics, the state or the regional and international organisation leads not to voice but exit. The UN Human Development Index (along with the Gini Index, the Failed States Index, the Peace Index, and Freedom

Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace

Written by Oliver Richmond

House's rankings and others), which ranks states according to their development, rights, and stability, provides an excellent road map for subjects claiming these new rights according to their new capacities. The dexterity of local agency has made mobility through global networks, formal, informal, and shadow connections, the new emancipation and the new social justice. It is disaggregated, sometimes divisive, and individualistic, not to mention of ambiguous relational and ethical quality, lacking the firmament of institutional creation, but also offering the possibility of new rights claims and progress. Nevertheless, it is a product (and a moral hazard) of the awkward mix of liberal internationalism, techno-neoliberal capitalism, and authoritarian capitalism that now dominates international relations, in the face of much weakened diplomacy, neoliberal states and regional organisations (like the EU), multilateralism, and international organisation.

It points to how individuals are bringing a new and hybrid 'international' into sight: they may seek their own peace, emancipation, and social justice through migration, trading failed states for shadowland journeys, in order to re-establish themselves in a better environment, even if they sacrifice possessions, status, identity, and rank along the way. The 'stable' grounds of the states-system and international architecture have become inadequate, though international citizenship, a global commons, and 'community of the governed' have become clearer (Foucault, cited in Golder, 2015). Clusters of localised interaction, which transcend territoriality, now (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 8) bypass the formal states-system and international architecture where they are deemed to have materially and normatively failed. Hybridity, temporality, and mobility do not necessary belong anyway, and are not fixed to, institutions, norms, law or standards. Universal rights are also not necessarily the goal, though there is a strong sense that peace and order are based upon the right to claim rights as part of an ongoing self and institutional formation. They relate peace to critical agency as much as to existing institutions, law or expert knowledge[i]. This should be no surprise, as it is a dynamic that has existed in every phase of international order throughout history.

Critical agency and peace formation is a consequence of the material inequality that currently undermines the legal equality of states, differences in national rights frameworks, the failure to address historical and distributive matters of justice (a painful example being the Palestinians), failure to reform the UN system, and the unsuitability of the modern states-system in addressing contemporary problems in a progressive, equitable, and fair manner. In the 21st century, relative emancipation and justice for the individual is found through mobility and networking by any plausible means over the bare life of remaining in situ and remaining subject to war, multiple forms of violence, underdevelopment, and failed development, peacebuilding, and statebuilding. This is a poor indictment of the liberal international order designed to bring peace and prosperity, the capacity of politicians and policymakers to respond to modernity, and the ethics of our relations with others. Everyday mobility, networked peace and emancipation seem to be a sophisticated response by contrast. It is peace formation writ large and points to the need for significant rethinking in IR and to the importance of international reform.

Notes

[i] Here I am drawing on Ben Golder who is writing about Judith Butler's interpretation of Foucault, in Ben Golder, *Foucault and the politics of rights*, Stanford University Press, 2015, p.72.

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Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace

Written by Oliver Richmond

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Escape From A Liberal-Colonial IR: Hints of a 21st Century Peace
Written by Oliver Richmond

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