

Dear Readers,

This issue is devoted to the CCTS Seminar held, under the title below, on 5th June at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. It was introduced by Professor Oliver Richmond who was invited because of the relevance of his writing to our chosen topic. Oliver Richmond is a Professor in the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews, and Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. His publications include Peace in IR Theory (Routledge, 2008) and The Transformation of Peace (Palgrave, 2005). The day, facilitated by Liz Philipson and Diana Francis, began with an extended presentation by Oliver and continued with several rounds of discussion. The report was written by Michael Randle.

Whose war? Whose peace?

Presentation by Oliver Richmond

Introductory remarks

I was not sure how formal the occasion would be and I came with a formal paper.

In fact it is clearly informal, so we can talk around the paper and what lies behind it – what brought me to these ideas, and why, in a sense, I dared put them out into the public domain when I knew that the policy reaction would often be quite negative, and the formal liberal response very sceptical. In my defence I have to say that I did not just imagine these things: they are based a great deal of field work over a period of several years.

I wanted to ground my understanding of peacebuilding in specific places by talking to ordinary people, not simply engaging with policymakers in formal constitutional settings. This is one reason why I have rebelled to some degree against the formal toolbox of the literatures, both methodological and theoretical, that we are given. I feel we have somewhat lost our way in International Relations (IR), because of the narrowness of research methodologies. These are mainly influenced by Western and US approaches to the social sciences, and are linked to elite policymaking processes. The academic process has really been configured to confirm what policymakers think, rather than to examine received views critically. We need to be more sceptical, to re-engage with the deep universal norms that lie behind the Academy, behind peace and conflict studies, and behind IR. Fortunately, within the British university system there is a long critical tradition.

The challenge we face in peacebuilding is much greater when we start engaging with ‘the other’ - those who do not share liberal assumptions derived from the Enlightenment. Although we can never escape from the Enlightenment and the liberal culture that is inculcated within our institutions and systems, we are required to think how they connect, communicate, respond and react to other discourses and political systems. There is a kind of culture war going on in the research policy nexus, over the purpose of research and what policies are for.

The Liberal Statebuilding Project

This is what my book, *The Transformation of Peace* (Palgrave 2005), is about. It looks at the whole notion of peace, including peacebuilding, conflict transformation and conflict resolution, and suggests that it has been, to a degree, co-opted into the liberal statebuilding project and into a set of practices that are not necessarily conducive to peace. (I refer here not to the level of activist scholars and practitioners but to the higher levels of donors, state and agencies.) The liberal state becomes the solution to every problem there is – war, development, the environment, security – and it is driven increasingly by an idealistic American foreign policy.

It may seem ironic to call current US foreign policy idealistic, but in a sense it really is so. There has always been within the liberal spectrum an almost anarchical tendency at one end and a coercive, imperialistic but idealistic tendency at the other. There are graduations within this framework which you can see represented in the key documentation of the international system as it has developed since the end of World War II. If you look at the UN system, from the Declaration of Human Rights, through to the notion of a Responsibility to Protect (R2P), you always find this tension. In the case of R2P, someone has to determine the normative framework in which someone else is protected, therefore determining who is to be designated as a victim, according to what reasons and standards.

One particularly interesting document for me in the genealogy of this documentation is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), because it is here that one starts to see, at the high international level, a discussion of the person, and the non-material rights and needs of people, and these considerations being brought into the discussion of what peace is, and how one regulates political behaviour and reduces instability between and within states. The document discusses the right to work, the right to welfare, the right to cultural expression – things which we seem to have lost in policy terms. But there is a wing of Academia which has always been concerned with these things, even though its representative thinkers may not frame their ideas within that particular international document, but see things from the perspective of Marxist or Foucauldian thinking or some other theoretical approach to critique liberalism.

The net result of the orthodox, conservative framework of liberalism has been a focus on states, on territoriality and on sovereignty, as the main stabilising mechanisms to deal with peace and conflicts. So it is no surprise that the discussion in the Middle East is about a two state solution, and that it is automatically assumed that the states will house a set of liberal institutions: they will be democracies, they will conform to standards of human rights, they will have a rule of law which guarantees those institutions and frameworks and that normative setting.

However, the experience of conflict and war is borne chiefly by people in an everyday setting, and the documentations, instruments and mechanisms we have to deal with that experience are rather anachronistic. We send in armies to do peacekeeping or peace enforcement or bring about regime change, on the understanding that there will be an automatic trickle down of benefits to the population following the displacement of authoritarian regimes, or the changing or reforming of institutions that will allow peacebuilding to follow. But the main benefit of such interventions in conceptual terms, and in the minds of policymakers, is that they provide the opportunity to create states with peaceful regional relations. There is much less emphasis on the internal experience of daily life on the ground. This harks back to nineteenth century diplomacy, which, in the context of Europe, was an elite conversation between members of a mono-cultural group in which interests, states and territories were integral to each other and in which that elite exercised power and authority in all sorts of ways, whether along the lines of an enlightened, benevolent version of liberalism, or an interest-based and conservative version.

The notion of state building, as the twentieth century progressed, was focused on international peace, defined as peace between states. The peace produced in this context was owned by states and, more precisely, by the multilateral institutions that govern state frameworks: international law, the UN systems, and the sets of different agencies and actors surrounding them. This notion of peace was very top-down, an architectural project mainly of the United States, comprising a set of institutions in which everything was nested – ordinary life, ordinary people, communities and societies.

If you look at the literature, not just the policy literature but the academic literature, you find that there is no discussion of ideology, or liberalism, or its ontology – i.e. the basic assumptions underlying all of this. These are taken as read. It is taken for granted that a set of institutions, human rights, democracy, development and the rule of law within the territorial state are the key to it all, with the states being nested within an international system and regional organisations. I call this a conservative version of the liberal peace. It reflects the nineteenth century diplomatic culture, which was re-configured throughout the institution building in the twentieth century from Versailles to San Francisco.

The other side of the liberal project, the good life, freedom side, is also there, represented by social activism, advocacy, a concern for everyday life and needs. But these have not had the huge material resources, or the states-level and international-level normative power, to be presented as the key to thinking about peace. You can point to a host of examples showing how ordinary people taking civil action have resisted some tendencies, and also shaped and reformed institutions and put their interests onto the political agenda as things developed in the nineteenth century and right through. I call this the emancipatory wing of the liberal peace framework, within which ordinary people have the rights and capacities to express their needs and interests in ways that may work within or circumvent the liberal paradigm.

This, then, is the liberal peace typology I am proposing, with graduations between the *conservative* and the *emancipatory*. Right in the middle I put the *orthodox*, which I relate to the UN vision of peace, which is multi-level and multi-dimensional. The argument here is that when the UN became involved in conflict and peacekeeping, and then increasingly in peace operations and peacebuilding (and a range of other issues such as democratisation, human rights, development, the environment and gender equality), it was imagining a statist form of peace in a very orthodox setting, right in the centre of the liberal peace typology. It was well away from imperialism but also well away from the dangerous emancipatory, possibly anarchic, notion of individuals taking on politics for themselves, rather than working through institutions.

The Social Contract

The whole liberal project is held together by a social contract. The social contract is between those who are represented but also have agency – that is to say, the communities that conflict transformation and emancipatory peacebuilders are most concerned with – and the governments and institutions of state that are supposed to represent them and to channel their interests. Whether this is a positive social contract in the sense that it favours the people, or a negative one in that it favours the states, is a matter of some debate. The argument I make in *The Transformation of Peace* is that in the states that were being created through liberal peacebuilding, whether orthodox (Bosnia and East Timor being possible examples) or conservative (in which you might include Afghanistan, or Bosnia in the very early stages), there was no social contract. These were top-down states. They had institutions in place, but the people, the societies, in these states had very little agency to express themselves through these institutions, or to resist, modify or change them without resorting to extreme forms of action.

So there is something problematic about the way the liberal peacebuilding, or the statebuilding paradigm developed, creating a virtual peace, and virtual states that are basically empty. They are not populated, the people are hidden, and therefore any notion of solidarity or resistance or community, welfare, or culture is legitimately overlookable; they are not things you have to engage with as part of the peacebuilding project. This global peacebuilding-statebuilding project represents some kind of institutional consensus.

I know that is a large claim to make and a big generalisation, because if you examine the role of different actors you see that there are many variations, and actors who sometimes disagree with each other. However, I think there was, and probably still is in the post Cold War period of triumphal liberalism, a consensus that if you can get the five key institutions of the liberal state in place, everything else will follow. Everything revolves round building Democracy, the Rule of Law, Human Rights, Development, and Free Markets, as the silver bullet to establish the liberal peace.

I think there was also a sense that this would be an orthodox peace. It would not necessarily be emancipatory, in the sense of being owned by the people for the people, because you also had to deal with the problematic groups and people who had conducted the war and continued the violence. You had to bring them into the situation, and take account of other interests, so the goal would not be too ambitious, but it would not be the very conservative form that we see today in Afghanistan or Iraq. It might start there, but it would certainly graduate to something more ambitious later on.

Liberalism and the use of military force

I think this question replicates the classic dilemma of liberalism. As a liberal policymaker you become seduced by the idea that one finds in the R2P language, and in the UN framework, namely that you can use force or coercion legitimately to build peace. It is legitimated by your ambition to build something that is more orthodox and potentially emancipatory in the future, and the conviction that force can be the basis for the achievement of these goals. In 1990 there was a big debate about military intervention, and then you had the Clinton-Blair-Bush era in which there was an increasing sense that we knew what peace was and therefore needed to use the tools we had in order to introduce it in conflict areas and to produce a post-conflict polity which would start at this very tough end of liberalism and move forward from there. This argument and agenda were based on the understanding that the liberal state is universal and can work in any space and under any conditions.

There are so many problems with this thinking that I don't know where to begin. However, I will make a few observations about it. One negative consequence of it is that it has co-opted other people who see themselves as involved in conflict resolution, conflict transformation and peacebuilding into that same project. The very people who were mining at the coalface, that is working at the civil, emancipatory, human end of peace, were at the forefront of the legitimisation of the global consensus for building liberal states as a response to conflicts.

The kind of argument that was implicitly being made was that the people in the countries concerned were capable of engaging in emancipatory processes whereby some form of reconciliation would be achieved, and some kind of consensus reached at least about institution building. This was surely a shortcut that enabled NGOs and activists to engage and therefore was a good thing. This was an argument to legitimise this very old-fashioned interventionary project. UN peacekeeping is a classic in this regard. It uses military forces for intervention to bring 'peace'. This, I think, is a euphemism for something which is not peace, or which you could call, at best, the victor's peace.

Clearly this is a peace that is owned by a specific set of actors and institutions. It conforms to their interests and their world view, and conveniently it is generally thought of as universal – which means it can be used to justify all sorts of interventions. The things we see happening in the 1990s right up to the present time in Baghdad and Kabul are the result of this kind of thinking. Yet in a sense it is almost delusional because the evidence stacks up quite largely against it. If we compare the way the institutions were justified with the way they have performed, the positive elements have been very limited. Their achievement in the way they have dealt with the views of people on the ground is limited.

It is limited even in the way they have dealt with security, although there you see relative improvements. There is not much evidence at all that a self-sustaining peace has been achieved, that is, a peace built up from inside and resting on community support, as against a peace dependent on external forces to keep it in place. So we have the consensus that the liberal state works, but evidence involving a lot of people and issues that it hasn't worked very well. There is a debate to be had about what success means in that kind of peacebuilding. When do we say this has been a success, and when do we say this hasn't been a success so far? There is also the question of alternatives. How would the liberal, peacebuilding-statebuilding constituency deal with these criticisms? Would they reform the model or replace it?

An Ideological Project

My biggest concern is that this peacebuilding-statebuilding project is an ideological one, not rooted in universal norms. If that is the case, then we need to engage much more carefully and sensitively with the post-conflict individual, that is to say the non-liberal other, our counterpart who isn't part of the nested environment in which we find ourselves. We have to think not only about unintended consequences but also about how to communicate.

I had a conversation yesterday, with someone who works for the European Bank of Reconstruction, which throws light on how they see these sorts of problems. They, along with other organisations like the World Bank, accept the neo-liberal paradigm of development, in which free markets get things moving within states and across state boundaries, at a trade and development level. So they engage very much with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and they fund 80 per cent private initiatives, but they don't do any welfare work or give any grants, and they impose punitive interest rates. In the Balkans and other places, they are working with SMEs which are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to operating across global markets. Local people probably don't have any sort of welfare support, and are therefore least well placed to operate in the neo-liberal market.

This brings me to the almost unexplained importation of the neo-liberal framework into the liberal peace. The notion is that all markets are free, all property is private, all individuals help themselves. This has become a core belief and value system – part of the culture we now have in the liberal peace consensus, which again is largely traceable to the US approach. There has always been a resistance within this framework to the idea that the individual is significant, except in so far as they relate to the market. If you look at the evolution of politics, particularly liberal politics, the person has always trailed behind the institutions – the states, the elites, whoever they are. The rights and material well-being of the ordinary person in the street come in later. So historically the abolition of slavery, gender issues, the extension of voting rights – all these things were brought in later, well after the state and its institutions.

In the countries where the liberal peacebuilding-statebuilding project has been put in place, it is largely the prosperous elites who have benefited and have the ownership of the peace, even if they are implicated in war or have 'dirty hands'. These are the people best able to benefit from peacebuilding. They can learn the language and engage with institutions like the European Bank of Reconstruction. The net result, as we see in Bosnia now, is political and economic stagnation. Prosperous elites are emerging out of these new settlements, but the states themselves are not representative of a self-sustaining, civil form of peace. So local ownership, even where it is beginning to emerge, is still problematic.

Case Study I: Cambodia

I turn now to some case studies, starting with Cambodia, which is where I first became alerted to the very negative consequences of this international consensus and the way it is being propagated. Early on in Cambodia there was a critique of peacekeeping and the UN's role, including the conduct of some peacekeeping individuals on the ground, and of the collusion with political groupings which were seen to be predatory and self-interested. I found in discussions with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank that they feel that the population, which operates at the subsistence level, is not visible and therefore not relevant to the construction of Cambodia as a viable liberal state. They cannot play a role in the economic side of things, are not politically active, and not really engaged in the democratic politics of the state, other than through the occasional act of voting. Since they don't consume, produce or threaten violence, they are not significant.

Those who matter are the corrupt and predatory elites with whom internationals have to make an unspoken bargain. Their corruption is tolerated, as is the massive drain upon aid and loans due to the fact that they are siphoning much of them off. Some of the figures here are scarcely believable. Fifty per cent or more of the resources that were put into Cambodia since the early 1990s has gone missing. The attitude of the Banks towards the subsistence economy is, 'We can't measure this, it is not part of our formal understanding of the economy in the liberal setting – indeed it is an indigenous form of

welfare which we can tolerate.’ So the *burden* of the ‘peace’ is passed onto the ‘post-conflict individuals’, the subsistence farmers who constitute something like 85 per cent of the population of Cambodia, but are not given *ownership* of that peace. Ownership is at the elite level, with those who run the government and the institutions, even though they are ‘empty’. It is not surprising therefore that the fragility of the state continues.

Case Study II: Bosnia

In Bosnia there was much more direct international involvement through the Dayton Agreement, the use of force and the establishment of a kind of Trusteeship. If you compare the Dayton Agreement with the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, you see two very different approaches to peacemaking at the official level. The critique which you get from the policymakers, and the reporting of the International Crisis Group (ICG) for example, is that there has been stagnation because there has been no post-Dayton settlement. Dayton ended the war, but what is needed now is an agreement to end the post-war period and bring about a sustainable peace. There are claims that the state is too ethnically divided, and counter-claims that the ethnic divisions are imaginary: that when the internationals arrived in Bosnia what they saw there were Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs and concluded that this must be the way in which politics is configured there.

When you ask why those in charge of the official peacebuilding project do not engage more in civil society, why they do not promote more the notion of a civil peace and of re-building the state from the ground up, the answer you get is that civil society’s relations with donors are dominated by a few groups who get all the money and then use it for what they want. In other words there is a very distant relationship between ordinary people and this artifice of a civil society of NGOs. Hidden beneath that are the real people, if you like. And then there is the very divided and fragmented politics of the different governmental levels in the complex political entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. So there is the sense that this stagnation is the peace. Dayton is the peace – but Dayton was a very old-fashioned form of peace, focused on a diplomatic settlement between the warring elites. It is not based on some kind of integrated societal complex, nor an aspiration for an emancipatory form of peace.

The ‘silver bullet’ in the case of Bosnia is seen as the EU – and indeed the EU is regarded as the one solution in many post-conflict societies in and around its boundaries. The idea is that the normative setting of the EU will unpick the ethnic divisions, force through harmonisation, and induce political players to make the political reforms that are needed to move things on. The notion is that this will also enable the economy to open up, so that people can begin to self-help, be competitive in the global markets, and produce and consume in ways that the liberal market consensus indicates that they should operate. They will fulfil their role within the liberal state both by voting and consuming.

There is a very sophisticated local critique of this project that I have come across in Bosnia. The argument is that what has been brought to Bosnia is in some respects less sophisticated than what existed before the war, particularly in respect of welfare provision and cultural hybridity. People had more resources before the war, because they lived in a socialist setting, and the way which identities were dealt with in a hybrid cultural context was much more successful than it has been since. There is also the claim that many of the Western agencies, including the EU and OSCE, have accentuated ethnicity and divisions in their own political interest, as a way of creating political entities for the purpose of statebuilding and reform.

So again the sense on the ground among the non-political players – those who don’t inhabit parliaments or the institutions of government, or work for the internationals – that this is a virtual peace. The local constituency that is involved and integrated into the Commission, and the various internationals, receive enormous benefits, but this alienates them from the social context in which they live and work.

Various contacts of mine in NGOs and human rights groups accuse the internationals of being ambivalent. The internationals, they say, come with big ideas and institutions, but produce a very ambivalent form of peace. It doesn’t compare favourably with what they had before the war, and it doesn’t live up to what they expected. However, even they look to the EU as the new liberal nested

setting in which they can re-constitute a viable state. So there is in Bosnia a kind of rhetorical resistance and a sophisticated conceptualisation on the ground which one doesn't find in other settings. A critique is emerging, a recognition of the problems of this kind of project which we would do well to listen to more attentively.

Case Study III: Kosovo

My next case is Kosovo, a particularly interesting one. The European Bank individual I spoke to yesterday said that it was not possible for them to do the work that they would like to do at the local level, and it was the local people who were the problem. They did not have the capacity and were too implicated in conflict. My response to them was that the primary problem was not the local people but institutions such as theirs and the local elites. The liberal state project in Kosovo started very coercively and progressed through Trusteeship and a protracted contest over sovereignty that culminated in the recent declaration of Unilateral Independence. This process illustrates how much agency local leaders and local people can have, particularly if they coalesce around an agenda – in the case of Kosovo, statehood, and the ethnic Albanian control of the state. It was in Kosovo that we had the almost pragmatic merging of peacebuilding and statebuilding. The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) went in to stabilise the situation and provide security, and to co-ordinate the many different actors – to do all these things, but not to prejudge the outcome. Would Kosovo remain part of Serbia or be autonomous or independent? The UN mission kept that discussion at bay, almost to prevent the self-determination of the majority ethnic community. Its role was to prevent that debate from happening while it dealt with institution-building.

In Kosovo there was a consensus within the Albanian majority that statehood should be the outcome. There was a tension between the international administration and the majority community and their representatives who entered parliament or, in many cases, got good jobs in the OSCE and the Commission and other international agencies involved in peacebuilding. I think the internationals, the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the World Bank, did not foresee that. What they wanted was to have consensus within Kosovo and across the border, which they couldn't get and which they should have known they wouldn't. (Actually they did know they wouldn't but for a long time the US in particular were pushing statehood for Kosovo as the outcome of this project, regardless of Serbia's position.) Then there was local cooption of peacebuilding, merging it, with US and to some degree British complicity, with statebuilding, leading to the UDI of a state that is not ethnically pluralist.

Some of the dynamics that allowed this to happen had to do with local ownership – with local elites adopting and exploiting the language of the liberal peace. They cooperated with the OSCE, the EU and the UN to a large degree, but occasionally flexed their muscles, even with riots in the streets, to show in which direction things should go, and put pressure on the international community to hurry up the statebuilding project. In the end even the internationals themselves were beginning to assume that there would be a national state as an outcome of intervention in Kosovo.

This subversion of the statebuilding project has some very negative connotations. It was designed for a national project, not a Greater Albania, but a pluralist Kosovo/a. Discussions about avoiding partition, avoiding the shifting of ethnic populations, were quite Machiavellian in some quarters, and were designed to lend support to the international project liberal peace and pluralist project. The argument was that it wasn't really the Kosovan Albanians who were being un-cooperative but the Serbs who were withdrawing – which was also true. But that was indicative of a lack of consensus about the politics of the state, and did not necessarily indicate whose fault it was that we now have an ethnically divided polity in the region. Pluralism has almost been abandoned, under pressure from both international policymakers and the local majority who wanted self-determination.

In some instances we see liberal statebuilding focused on the top, with no social contract. In this instance there is a social contract, but it is not with the internationals but with the local elites, who were then able in various ways, all of them legitimate, to mould the project in a way which probably none of the internationals themselves would have wanted – not very pluralist, rather pragmatic, not well recognized and potentially regionally destabilising. Certainly the situation which has emerged out of the peacebuilding operation is very risky. So there is a real paradox here, where local

ownership of the peacebuilding project has taken it in a direction which the internationals did not want and which is not necessarily conducive to regional peace or local pluralism. And it may not be conducive either for an everyday peace on the ground for Serbs and other minorities.

Case Study IV: East Timor

In East Timor, we see some of these same dynamics but also others. This was the one case in which the internationals had absolute sovereignty. Again there is the notion that the establishment of a liberal state is *de-facto* legitimate, to the extent that the internationals can have sovereignty over another territory. The theory is that it can be right to deny self-determination for a time in order for a territory to achieve self-determination. The interim can be used to put the institutions for liberal democracy in place. This was not colonialism and not imperialism, but it was external sovereignty, and was a kind of mandate. It was also ideological, and extremely ambitious. The goal was to use this blueprint machinery of state-building to institutionalise democracy, deal with the constitution, translate all of the legal documents, gain consensus, establish human rights, build a viable economy, and put the state and government in place.

Initially, things looked good, at least as far as the internationals were concerned. However, if you talked to local NGOs who were more involved in social justice issues, their comments were often damning. This was early on, well before the near collapse of the new state in 2006. Lots of people recognized that the state being constituted was a UN state, owned by certain people at the elite level, and that it did not reflect many of the dynamics on the ground, not least the emerging ethnic divides, the language question, and the distribution of resources. All these things were pushed into the background because the key issues were governmental training, governmental reform, dealing with the budget, and dealing with the revenues from the Timor Gap.

So when independence was declared, and the drawdown of the UN peacekeepers began, what we had was a virtual state. It had the institutions, the political players, all the labels, but it didn't really reflect what was going on within society in its socio-political and economic dimensions. It wasn't a liberal state. The social contract was missing completely. It was a great irony that the Head of the World Bank visited Indonesia and pointed to East Timor as an undoubted great success, in a speech given very shortly before the relatively minor incident that led to state collapse and the re-engagement of the UN in March 2006. Then came the beginning of the recognition at the institutional level that issues like poverty, youth unemployment and inactivity, as well as ethnic and identity issues, and these sorts of things were dangerous, and needed to be dealt with institutionally. The agenda had to encompass thinking about a meaningful future, about the welfare aspects of the state, and about redistribution, rather than relying only on the market.

There had also been a cultural resistance at the grassroots level. In Kosovo people longed for Kosovization and talked about local control and ownership of the peacebuilding project. In East Timor there was much the same debate – though I think it might have been more of a top down, elite level, discussion. There was a demand for Timorization that would give a local colour and flavour to the new state, as it was being born. I was given the impression at one point that there was the potential, before the events in Afghanistan and Iraq, for quite physical local resistance, amounting almost to political and social rebellion against the new state, if Timorization did not occur within the peacebuilding process. It was an interesting dynamic, which was reminiscent of resistance to colonialism in an earlier epoch. So there was some sense of a need and desire for local ownership, but local ownership of a state that didn't yet really exist, and could not provide its citizens with the resources they needed. I think that is still true today, but I am returning there soon to look at this question further.

Another interesting outcome of all the peacebuilding-statebuilding projects has been a re-institution of class systems, that is, configurations of power within these societies which would be regarded from a liberal perspective as rather negative and inequitable, but not necessarily so from a neo-liberal perspective. This has been particularly the case in East Timor, especially in light of the language laws that have been brought in, which favour Portuguese over the far more widely used indigenous languages.

Romanticizing the local

What do we see from all this? The first thing that occurs to me is that there is a kind of ‘romanticization of the local’. We see this both positively and negatively in the debate about who owns the peace. This romanticization takes a number of different forms, but the main dynamic in East Timor and other cases is first a classic orientalism – seeing local culture as something exotic and also quixotic and unknowable, something we can’t quite get to grips with in our engagement with local elites and the grassroots because of its differences and because of language. And because the peacebuilding-statebuilding framework cannot engage, this becomes an argument for top-down statebuilding. The argument, as I heard it at the Asian Bank of Reconstruction, is that we can’t really engage and so we don’t engage; instead we do what we know we can do which is to build institutions which are universal, derived from the Enlightenment, and have a record of success in producing stable, successful and peaceful states.

This becomes a justification for illiberalism. If we remember the spectrum of liberalism, this takes us down towards its coercive end. However, in saying you can’t engage with the local culture, you shrug off any responsibility for welfare. Also human rights and self-determination can be deferred: not for ever of course, as in imperial/colonial systems, but just in the short to medium term, until you can really understand and access the local, and the local has been ‘tutored’ into taking up ownership. There are many problems with this, but it is one of the core mindsets within the major institutions involved in all the aspects of peacebuilding at the elite policy level. Sensitivity to the local dynamics is much greater as you move down to the grassroots level.

You also find the assertion of a lack of capacity. In East Timor, for example, it was suggested when internationals arrived after the violence of 1999 that there was nobody with whom one could engage. The locals couldn’t speak English and couldn’t even drive. So they were helpless, blank sheets. The country was a *terra nullis* on which one could inscribe the liberal state.

Let me just add a footnote to that. One of the claims that liberalism as an ideology made was that indigenous peoples did not exist. They didn’t exist because they did not have ownership of land, did not use land in a certain, productive, way. They did not farm, they roamed. This was used to justify the parcelling out of colonial lands both in a private capacity but also to colonial powers. You see this in Lockean thinking, for example, and in other great liberal thinkers who then come on the scene. In Lockean thought, it was extremely important that you had the right to take away land from indigenous peoples and create the liberal state and the social contract with those who would be productive.

A third assertion is of local deviousness, a form of incivility and illiberalism. A fourth assertion, which is slightly more positive but also can have negative connotations, romanticises the indigenous capacity for peacebuilding. This has been taken as something which the internationals can co-opt; they can use the indigenous approaches for peacebuilding, if they can access them, for liberal statebuilding.

To engage with critiques of this kind requires a close understanding of the local, of the community, of the peoples one is engaging with, of the potentially non-liberal other, and I am not sure policymakers are capable of this, or that necessarily the methodological and theoretical frameworks we have in our Kantian universities give us much access to it either. Even ethnology and anthropology have been part of colonial projects.

The Post-Liberal Peace

What would a post-liberal form of peace be like? It would be one where we are able to engage with these sorts of dynamics, to overcome the failings of the peacebuilder in engaging with the local. It would mean seeing ownership not just in the functional and institutional way that I think internationals often see it, but as something much more related to culture, to emotion and empathy, and not just to the technical, the material, the political and the economic. That kind of empathy has, I think, been expunged from the state run projects as a result of the fact that the Enlightenment project itself has an imbalance towards rational interests over the qualitative and everyday experience of

societies. It is not that rationality is wrong or bad; it is just that such a narrow view of it has become hegemonic. What comes out of all this is that it is important to recognize that peacebuilding at whatever level is itself a cultural practice, rooted in certain social conventions, political mores and so on.

The post-liberal peace agenda, then, means moving on from liberal peace as a product of Western modernity to a peace or peaces which may be developed much more broadly. You could see this as being a much more cosmopolitan practice than that which the cosmopolitans themselves believe in. This is not to attack liberalism per se, but an attempt to sophisticate and refine it, to say that it is only a staging post. Liberalism is not, as some have claimed, the end of history, the ultimate paradigm. To engage with that fact, to begin really to understand the dynamics of the local, organic, engine of peace, one needs to have a very intimate access to a society, not for the purpose of social engineering but to allow unscripted conversations to take place which give voice to the local on the various levels on which peacebuilding takes place.

Discussion of Oliver's presentation

Statebuilding, peacebuilding and conflict transformation

The relationship between statebuilding, peacebuilding and conflict transformation was a recurrent topic in the discussions that followed Oliver's presentation. One point of view expressed was that the state was the primary unit of militarism. Statebuilding in the guise of peacebuilding often followed massive violence and frequently involved the very people who had perpetrated the violence. So war and the so-called peace were part of the same project – a coercive route to this wonderful liberal outcome. Kosovo was a well-explored example of this. Conflict transformation, by contrast, was primarily carried out by people who live in the area in question, sometimes with solidarity and support from outside. The question for those of us on the outside was how to provide that support without distorting the local efforts. However, several speakers maintained that some kind of state structure is essential to establishing a grounded peace based on the rule of law. Without it, the notion of engaging local people and constructing the social contract was not even a starter. Security for individuals and groups was a prerequisite for a peaceful society.

One speaker found the analysis of the highjacking of peacebuilding in pursuit of a liberal or neo-liberal agenda disturbing, given that many of us work in areas funded by, or potentially funded by, governments that may be pursuing a divide and rule policy, and/or pacifying populations rather than responding to their needs. The speaker suggested it would be useful to discuss examples of grassroots community actions that have been successful, like those of Gandhi in India.

Oliver said we needed to reclaim conflict resolution, which was much more focused on human needs than institutions, sovereign territorial states or political systems. Starting with the human gives us a very different perception of the kind of action one might take when engaging with someone else's conflict. But that requires a sophisticated knowledge of the culture and society in question. The conflict prevention argument, too, was quite a good one because it was about not waiting until there was a crisis and having to respond hastily. Conflict prevention means taking into account social indicators like the distribution of resources, and inequalities in the class systems. But to do this is also problematic because it means that a deviation from agreed standards would be taken to mean that a future problem would arise. It could again legitimate regime change without anything really having gone wrong at that point.

Alternatives to the liberal peace

Some time was spent discussing alternatives to the liberal peacebuilding-statebuilding project. Several speakers commented on the alternative approach Oliver had sketched, namely working with genuinely local people and movements, as opposed to imposing a peace from outside or engaging only with local elites. But how, someone asked, would one recognize a 'local local'? One participant said she found the notion of 'the people' in Oliver's presentation, glib and romantic. And if the former Yugoslavia was so wonderful, why did it collapse? Another speaker said that local elites frequently owe their position to the popular support they enjoy, and to the extent that this is the case they do represent the authentically local. (Oliver interjected the caveat that popular opinion could also be manipulated.) Sometimes the leaders of popular opposition movements during the period of foreign

occupation, dictatorship or repression play a leading role in the post-conflict state-building and institution-building, process. One example here was José Ramos-Horta in East Timor.

The question was raised as to whether the internationals – organisations like the UN, EU, OSCE and INGOs – were capable of a sufficiently intimate knowledge of the societies in which they intervened to be able to identify and work with ordinary people and grassroots organisations. The example of Kosovo was again cited. In the 1980s and 1990s, one speaker said, there were many people doing good work. But when the UN arrived, following NATO's military intervention, they got pushed aside and an educated and well-off elite were embraced as they were considered safe to work with. Many of the activists, like Adam Kurti and Adam Damaci, who had fought non-violently for years, and endured beatings and imprisonment, were now seen as dangerous. The speaker said she could not imagine people from organisations like the UN coming in from outside to a culture which was not their own and finding a way to work with people at the grassroots.

Oliver thought the root of the problem lay in some of the universalist claims liberals make. The people projecting the value of liberalism come in with superior technological knowledge, romanticise the local in negative ways and can pick and choose whom they engage with, and marginalize others using various excuses – they might be terrorists, or too far off the political agenda to work with. However, he did not think it was beyond the bounds of possibility for the governments and internationals to have the detailed local knowledge that engaging with local people required. The speaker who made the point responded that for that to happen the outsiders would have to take a back seat. At present, when internationals like the UN come in, their people want to run things – yet they were the last people who should be doing so.

One paradox, another speaker said, was that when money from official sources began to be directed to peacebuilding, in part as a result of pressure from the peace movement, the operation became professionalised and you got people who made a career out of going on successive peace missions. They went from East Timor to Kosovo, to Rwanda, to Sierra Leone and to Afghanistan, and therefore had very little knowledge of the local context. Oliver said he agreed about the dynamics described by the speaker, but felt the experience of the 1990s had resulted in some improvement in the area of providing humanitarian assistance and upholding human rights. A permanent critique of peacebuilding efforts was required. The peace process was not one that came to a cut and dried conclusion. In a sense the term peace was a misnomer, because the situation was always going to be fluid, transient and changing.

Another speaker emphasised the crucial role of process. The starting point should be an inclusive process that might or might not produce the outcome of a liberal state. If people were not included in the conversation, the chances were that they would oppose whatever came out at the other end. They would not own that decision or be party to it. There were a lot of people around who wanted from the outset to dictate the end result – sometimes parties to the conflict, foreign governments, or international bodies. This produced a response from another participant that some people involved in process know exactly where they want to go and push the outcome in that direction. The classic study of this was Jo Freeman's pamphlet of 1970 entitled *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*. Another speaker said the idea of an inclusive process was itself a liberal one. An illiberal process would be one in which the only people who could participate were male patriarchs, mullahs or elected MPs. Oliver responded that he did not think this was an accurate depiction of liberalism, because liberalism has priorities. The liberal conversation favours certain groups, and has certain priorities. Not everyone is equal in the liberal concept. He was not saying that a liberal conversation was always an elite one, but in a state-territorial conversation it was so.

This produced the comment from one participant that Oliver was using the term liberal in different senses. In one sense it covered all of us who did not believe in an autocratic or theocratic state; in another it referred to an approach with a more narrow and specific agenda, which he was critiquing.

At another point in the discussion, Oliver said he was using the term liberalism as it is used in political philosophy and theory, not in ideological terms as we know it in political debates in the contemporary West. Liberalism in political philosophy is a broad church, which encompasses both the victors' peace and emancipatory liberalism – an emancipatory approach that pre-dates Marxism and is the root of the conflict transformation approach. Liberalism lends itself to going off in all sorts of directions. It can end up in a glorification of power and money. It can also end up with the essence of spirituality or the humanistic understanding of the human being in society.

Asked where he personally was coming from he replied that obviously he came from the emancipatory end of liberalism and saw the need for a political structure with checks and balances as well as freedom. However, he did not have to decide whether even emancipatory liberalism was viable. He was more inclined to see it as a transitional stage for something we have to reach for. The next stage would not be reached by a simple process or some technocratic fix. It would require deep reflection on contemporary interventions and other experiences.

Social contract

There was a discussion of Oliver's contention that what was missing in the institutions being put in place as part of the liberal peacebuilding-statebuilding project was the social contract – support for the institutions, and active involvement in them, by the population. One contributor said that trust was an essential element of a peaceful society – trust in each other and trust in the institutions. The latter, however, developed over years and decades – if one was lucky. It required people to inhabit a similar moral universe, to have a shared sense of right and wrong; it was not something one could simply put in place from outside at short notice.

Another speaker pointed out that trust was generally lacking in deeply divided societies such as those as Bosnia or Northern Ireland. Efforts to overcome mistrust and create understanding, for instance through interfaith dialogue, should concentrate on the practicalities of co-existing peacefully. Oliver referred to a critical literature that maintained that Western liberal states have become obsessed with security. A Reith lecturer some years ago argued that we had lost trust in the community and were now relying increasingly on institutions such as insurance companies. The capacity not just to trust but to empathise was a crucial component that had been lost in our risk averse society.

Oliver also questioned the widespread assumption that the social contract had to be with the state. There could be contracts with different forms of political organisation, whether international agencies, multinational organisations, regional organisations, community organisations. Why were we so ready to delegate all power to the state – particularly as in so many conflicts it is the state, or one state in particular, that is the obstacle to a settlement?

Intervention

The problems of external military intervention, and sometimes of other forms, were discussed at various points during the day. In answer to questions, Oliver said he was not saying that there were no circumstances in which state intervention might be necessary. But it was also problematic to maintain that the only way to deal with, say, situations of ethnic cleansing or genocide was intervention by states acting under international law in a formal framework, and guided by the Security Council or whatever it might be. The notion that only states have military power had long gone, and the idea that only states can intervene should go too. Although his paper was critical of the way states and international organisations operate, he was not anti-state. But neither was he a state supporter. He was questioning the assumption that the state is the ultimate form of political organisation.

One speaker said the structural dysfunctionality of emerging politics in Bosnia and East Timor raised major questions. Some critics of the intervention in these countries argued that the mistake was that it took a military form and that this mistake was compounded by the subsequent behaviour of the international bodies concerned. But at which point could one have disengaged from what occurred? Ought one to say that the UN should never have gone into Croatia in 1991 to effect a ceasefire there? Or intervened in Bosnia from 1992 onwards to attempt to create humanitarian corridors in the middle of the fighting, while purporting not to be on anybody's side? This claim itself was illogical because all material interventions affect the strategic outcome – that is the rationale for attacks on aid convoys. But what form of assistance leading to a humanistic outcome could one devise?

Another participant said that whatever criticisms could be made of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, it did end the fighting. Oliver agreed that there was no choice but to have the Dayton agreement, given the circumstances of the time. But the subsequent use of Dayton as a political act was problematic. It established the complex governmental system of the state, scripted a constitution and put in place the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Dayton was not a peace process but a ceasefire agreement onto which the Americans tagged a whole legal regime and constitution. It imposed the liberal model without any agency at the local level having a say in what kind of state people wanted.

One speaker who has done a lot of work in East Timor, said she was heavily involved in getting the UN to intervene there, but was hugely critical of what happened afterwards. However, the UN was what we had, and we needed to look at the criticisms and decide whether to oppose UN intervention and let the country go to hell in a handbasket, or support UN intervention and possibly see the country go to hell in a handbasket anyway. Was it possible for the UN to intervene but then not to act in a way that prevented genuine progress? What tended to happen, as it did in East Timor and to some extent in Nepal, was that the UN came in with the big ideas and big money, and everyone ran after the money – including INGOs and many of the people we work for. And we don't challenge that as much as we should. We challenge ad-hoc. This or that small thing here shouldn't happen. We allow ourselves to be put in the position where the choice is between the UN and nothing.

A discussion ensued on how far it was necessary or desirable for the people who had taken part in violence to be involved in the peace process. One participant thought this was essential and that it did not rule out participation by other actors. Another said she found this a difficult issue, as the involvement of the perpetrators of violence demonstrated that using violence does give people power. However, she reflected that people can change, and that this can be true of the people who had been involved in the maiming and killing but were now willing to participate in making peace. Another speaker said there was a central contradiction in the idea

that it was permissible for state with large arsenals to dictate not only the outcomes but the processes, and the structures which lead to the processes, whilst claiming to be constructing a liberal amphitheatre. 'I will use my coercive and indeed violent powers to allow you to be part of the debate so long as you do as I say. Otherwise. I'll kill you.' That actually was the nexus within which we all worked.

We had been speaking, one participant remarked, about intervention by the international community, and in some instances this referred to a 'coalition of the willing', partly because the UN did not function properly. Her ideal world would be one in which the UN was a global government, with police powers to intervene where necessary; this would ensure that if force had to be used it would not be used in the pursuit of national interests. Part of the paradox was that the much derided liberal states were arguing that there are times when, on humanitarian grounds, military intervention in another state was necessary because that state was killing its own people. It was the non-liberal states which objected to such intervention, maintaining that what happened inside a state was its own business. They could then block action by the UN, resulting in 'coalitions of the willing' who were prepared to take action. However, another participant said she did not want to see a global government of any sort but an active global citizenry that had woken up to its responsibilities and took them seriously.

At what point, another participant wondered, was it ethical to intervene in any way, since all of us are always structurally implicated in some system or other? Was it possible for individuals to disengage, spiritually, personally or in any other way, in order to make space for emancipation? He favoured the Kantian approach – acting as if one were free in the hope that this would begin to grow a little pool of freedom. He gave examples of how some people kept going in extreme circumstances. In one case a Croatian woman, married to a Serb, fought for sixteen years to bring the killers of her nineteen year old daughter to justice, despite obstruction from the Croatian State and court system. In another, a woman teacher in central Bosnia set up a youth centre right on the Bosniak-Croat cease-fire line in the divided town of Vornik Vaku.

These people and others acted with enormous civil courage, disengaging from the materiality of their situations, and from fatalism. By small acts of solidarity, and by providing some material help, one was growing space that could expand. Individuals were moulded by the society in which they are born, but were we simply the aggregate of the causal influences or was there a still source of emancipatory capacity within individuals, and potentially within clusters of human beings which permitted them to explore ways forward that were not automatically co-opted? He thought there was, and said he cited these cases not for sentimental reasons, but because they were examples of power. It would be wrong to see them as completely autonomous. They started off that way, but to keep going they needed and received solidarity and support. The issue, then, for all of us was this: in which direction do we push the causal structures in which we are implicated and how can we best support those in other countries who are doing so?

Closing the meeting, Diana Francis thanked Oliver, remarking that we had had an energetic and responsive discussion. We had not given either him or ourselves an easy time, but that was all to the good.

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