The Uncritical Critique of 'Liberal Peace'[i]

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Introduction

Since the late 1990s, commentators have developed critical frameworks of the 'liberal peace' to understand the new, more interventionist, approaches to the problems of post-conflict rebuilding and the threat of state failure (see, for example, Duffield 2001; Paris 2002; Pugh 2005; Richmond 2005; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2007). In essence, the 'liberal peace' is held to go beyond traditional approaches of conflict prevention, or 'negative peace'; towards the external engineering of post-conflict societies through the export of liberal frameworks of 'good governance', democratic elections, human rights, the rule of law and market relations (see Richmond 2008a). As Alex Bellamy summarises: 'The principle aim of peace operations thus becomes not so much about creating spaces for negotiated conflict resolution between states but about actively contributing to the construction of liberal polities, economies and societies.' (Bellamy 2008: 4-5) The critical discourse of the liberal peace flags up the problem that - under the guise of universalising Western liberal frameworks of democracy and the market – the needs and interests of those subject to intervention are often ignored, resulting in the maintenance of inequalities and conflicts and undermining the asserted goals of external interveners. The critique of international intervention and statebuilding, framed by the construction of the liberal peace, has been highly effective in challenging assumptions of easy fixes to post-conflict situations (see, for example, Chesterman, Ignatieff and Thakur 2005; Dobbins et al 2007; Paris and Sisk 2009a).

This chapter seeks to forward an alternative framework and to question the use of the 'liberal peace' rubric to describe and analyse post-conflict and international statebuilding interventions in the post-Cold War period. It will be argued that the critique of liberal peace bears much less relation to policy practice than might be assumed by the critical (radical and policy) discourses and, in fact, appears to inverse the relationship between the critique of the liberal peace and the dominant policy assumptions. The shared desire to critique the liberal peace leads to a set of assumptions and one-sided representations that portray Western policy-interventions

as too *liberal*: too fixated on Western models and too keen to allow democratic freedoms and market autonomy. It will be explained here that this view of 'liberal' interventions transforming post-conflict societies through 'immediate' liberalization and 'rapid democratization and marketization' is a self-serving and fictional policy narrative (Paris 2004: 235). This narrative fiction is then used, in the frameworks of policy-orientated critiques, as the basis upon which to reflect upon Western policy and to limit policy expectations (while often extending regulatory controls) on the basis that the aspirations of external interveners were too ambitious, too interventionist, and too 'liberal' for the states and societies which were the subject of intervention.

It is unfortunate that this policy narrative can appear to be given support by more radical critiques of post-Cold War intervention, similarly framed through the critique of liberal peace. For example, Oliver Richmond is not exceptional in re-reading the catastrophe of the invasion and occupation of Iraq in terms of an 'attempt to mimic the liberal state', which has 'done much to discredit the universal claims of the transferability of the liberal peace in political terms' (Richmond 2008b: 458). Michael Barnett argues that 'liberal values' clearly guide peacebuilding activities and that their 'explicit goal' is 'to create a state defined by the rule of law, markets and democracy' (Barnett 2006: 88). Beate Jahn has argued that 'the tragedy of liberal diplomacy' lies in the ideological drive of liberalism, in which intervention is intensified despite the counterproductive results (Jahn 2007a; 2007b). Foucaultian-inspired theorists, Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, similarly reinforce the claims that the key problematic of intervention is its liberal nature in their assertion that we are witnessing a liberal drive to control and to regulate the post-colonial world on the behalf of neoliberal or biopolitical power, seeking 'to globalize the domesticating power of civil society mechanisms in a war against all other modes of cultural forms' (Dillon and Reid 2009).

This view of a transformative drive to regulate and control the post-colonial world on the basis of the liberal framings of power and knowledge stands in stark contrast to the policy world, in which, by the end of the Cold War, leading policy institutions were already highly pessimistic of the capacities of non-liberal subjects to cope with liberal political, economic and social forms and suspicious of even East and Central European states coping with democracy and the market, let alone those of sub-Saharan Africa. Bringing the critique back in relation with the policy practices

seems to suggest that the policy critics of the liberal peace offer succour and consolation to the policy-makers rather than critique. This leads to the concern of this paper that more radical critiques of the liberal peace may need to ensure that they are not drawn into a framework in which their critical intentions may be blunted.

There are many different approaches taken to the critique of liberal peace approaches, nevertheless, for heuristic purposes, it will be useful to frame these diverse critiques within two broad, distinctive, but often interconnected, approaches; which are here categorised as the radical, 'power-based', and the more policy-orientated, 'ideas-based', critiques. The former approach tends to see the discourse of liberal peace as an ideological and instrumental one, arguing that the rhetoric of freedom, markets and democracy is merely a representation of Western self-interest, which has little genuine concern for the security and freedoms of those societies intervened in. The latter approach suggests that rather than the concepts being misused, in the discursive frameworks of the projection of Western power, the problem lies less with power relations than with the universal conceptualizing of the liberal peace itself.

The 'Power-Based' Critique

In this framework, the liberal peace is critiqued on the basis that it reflects the hegemonic values and the political, economic and geo-strategic needs of Western states. This critique focuses on the role played by the interests of Western powers in shaping policy and the impact of the economic and structural inequalities of the world economy. It also pays attention to the naturalising of policy assumptions based upon this perspective. There are three main versions of this power-based perspective.

Firstly, there is a critical approach which tends to engage with a Left or neo-Marxist structural critique of liberal peace approaches. This framing suggests that Western intervention is inevitably reproducing hierarchies of power due to the structural constraints of neoliberal market relations – opening up societies and economies through the demands for democratisation and the free market (for example, Pugh 2005; also Pugh, Cooper and Turner 2008). This approach focuses on the problems of neoliberal economic policies for the reconstruction of post-conflict societies and suggests that, in serving the interests of dominant Western powers and the international financial institutions, the policies of the liberal peace inevitably

reproduce the conditions and possibilities for conflict (see also Abrahamsen 2000; Barbara 2008; Cramer 2006; Jacoby 2007).

This approach often draws upon Robert Cox's critical theory to suggest that the narrow problem-solving approach taken by Western policy-makers is problematic as it takes for granted the interests of these actors and treats market-based economic solutions as merely technical 'problem-solving' approaches to address problems of post-conflict development (see Cox 1981). These critical approaches to the liberal peace suggest that it is necessary to reflect on these assumptions to reveal the power interests that lie behind them and to question the presentation of these policies in policy-neutral technical terms (see, for example, Bellamy 2008). Michael Pugh, for example, has consistently highlighted how neoliberal economic practices are naturalised as technical solutions to development and reconstruction, marginalising or preventing political discussions of economic alternatives better suited to post-conflict societies (2005; also Pugh, Cooper and Turner 2008).

Secondly, there is a more Foucaultian structuralist approach, which critiques the 'liberal peace' not so much on the liberal basis of its interventionary policies per se as on the interests behind these policies: understood as perpetuating the needs and interests of liberal, neoliberal or biopolitical capitalism in the West. Mark Duffield has pioneered this approach in his 2001 book *Global Governance and the New Wars*. Here the focus is less on the opening up of non-Western economies to the world market and more on the reshaping and transformation of these societies in order to prevent instability. In his 2001 work, Duffield argued that the project of 'liberal peace reflects a radical development agenda of social transformation' with the aim 'to transform the dysfunctional and war-affected societies that it encounters on its borders into cooperative, representative and, especially, stable entities' (2001: 11).

This transformative liberal intervention has necessitated the radicalisation of both development and security discourses, giving the external institutions of global governance new mandates to: 'shift the balance of power between groups and even to change attitudes and beliefs' (2001: 15). In his later work, Duffield expands on this framework of the projection of liberal interests in stabilising 'zones of conflict' through the use of the Foucaultian conception of biopolitics, where intervention is understood as saving, developing, or securing the Other, at the same time legitimising and extending external regulatory control (Duffield 2007; see also Dillon and Reid 2009; Jabri 2007). Duffield argues that in the interests of stabilising the neoliberal

economic order, the divisions between the 'developed' and the 'undeveloped' world are reproduced through policies of containment such as 'sustainable' or 'community-based' development.

The third approach engages from the approach of critical theory and human security. Like the first approach, it highlights that 'liberal peace' policies should be seen as political and power-based, rather than as purely technical solutions (for example, Bellamy, 2008). However, the focus is less on the assumptions about market relations or securing the needs of global neoliberal or biopolitical power and more on the assumptions made about the political and institutional framework and positivist and rationalist forms of Western knowledge. For writers, such as Alex Bellamy, a central concern is the problematic focus on the rebuilding of Westphalian state forms, for Oliver Richmond, the focus is on the liberal assumptions of political community assumed in the approach of 'liberal peace', which tends to ignore vital local concerns of identity and culture (for example, Richmond 2008a).

The power-based approaches in this third category clearly take on board the concerns over universalizing Western liberal assumptions which will be dealt with in the following section, sketching the 'ideas-based' critiques. However, they are classed within the first category as the conception of Western 'power' still plays a vital role. Unlike the first two approaches, these more subjective or constructivist frameworks of critique suggest that frameworks of liberal peace, projected through Western power, can be successfully challenged by other more reflective, emancipatory, or 'bottom-up' approaches to liberal peace; suggesting that there is not necessarily a clash of interests between those intervening and those intervened upon (Richmond 2008b: 462). Some commentators from within this perspective would argue that elected Western politicians could pursue alternative polices by constructing their interests in a more enlightened way, for example, through pursuing more human security orientated policies, which could be conceived as in Western self-interest, in a globalised and interconnected world, or that non-state actors may be able to intervene in ways which engage more equally and empathetically with those on the ground (see Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007; Maclean, Black and Shaw 2006).

The 'Ideas-Based' Critique

The 'ideas-based' critique of liberal peace presents itself as a critique of the grounding universalising assumptions of the liberal policy discourse itself, rather than merely as a critique of the forms of its implementation. These critics of liberal peace advocate less liberal frameworks of intervention, with less attention to the reconstruction of sovereign states, democracy and the free market. While upholding the values of democracy and the free market aspirationally, these critics argue against the liberal peace approach on the basis that it is unsuitable in the context of post-conflict states and situations of state failure.

This approach tends to focus on the problem of Western interventionist 'ideas' or 'values' rather than on interests or power relations. While their critique of the liberal peace thesis therefore may appear to be more radical, their intentions can also be understood as more conservative or policy-orientated. Rather than problematizing relations of power or the interests behind policy-making, there is a tendency to view the liberal peace approach as a projection of Western ideals in a context where they can be counterproductive. This critique has been developed by Jack Snyder (2000), Fareed Zakharia (2003), Stephen Krasner (2004; 2005), Robert Keohane (2002; 2003), and Roland Paris (2004), amongst others, who argue that liberal peace assumptions have undermined the effectiveness of international statebuilding.

One of the core liberal assumptions problematised in this approach is that of sovereign statehood. These critics argue that focusing on (re)constructing sovereign states is unlikely to solve the problems of post-conflict societies, merely to reproduce them. Krasner argues that sovereignty is problematic for many states because they lack the capacity for good governance and require an external regulatory framework in order to guarantee human rights and the rule of law (2004: 89; see also Fearon and Laitin 2004). Robert Keohane forwards a similar perspective with differing levels of statehood applicable to different levels of governance capacity: 'We somehow have to reconceptualise the state as a political unit that can maintain internal order while being able to engage in international co-operation, without claiming exclusive rights…traditionally associated with sovereignty.' (2003: 277)

Pursuing a similar approach, Paris argues that the assumptions of the liberal peace – that democracy and the free market will ensure social progress and stability – neglects to consider the problematic nature of transition. Questioning the assumption that 'liberalization fosters peace', Paris advocates less emphasis on interventionist policies which promote democracy and the market, both of which can encourage

competition and conflict without adequate institutional frameworks (2004: 40-51). Instead, Paris advocates a policy of 'Institutionalization before Liberalization' in order to establish the regulatory frameworks necessary to ensure that post-conflict societies can gradually (and safely) move towards liberal models of market democracy (2004: 179-211; see also Huntington 1968; Chandler 2006b).

These critics of liberal peace do not argue that they are anti-liberal; merely that liberalism, as projected in liberal peace frameworks, has to take into account the non-liberal context in which intervention takes place. Fareed Zakharia, for example, argues that, while in the West, we have historically associated liberalism and democracy, in much of the non-Western world we have to make a choice between liberalism and democracy as, without the institutional framework of limited government, 'elections provide a cover for authoritarianism' and are 'merely legitimized power grabs'; in this context, therefore, 'what Africa needs more than urgently than democracy is good governance' (2003: 98-99; see also Snyder 2000).

This critique of the liberal peace is that, rather than being based on the needs and interests of Western hegemonic powers and international financial institutions, the problem is one of projecting an idealised understanding of the West's own historical development; one which tends to naturalise the smooth working of the market and understand liberal political frameworks as an organic product of democratic processes such as free elections. For these critics, the founding assumptions of the liberal peace are the problem: attempts to universalise Western models in non-liberal contexts, will merely reproduce, and maybe even exacerbate, the problems of conflict and instability.

A 'Critical' Consensus?

This chapter seeks to argue that the radical intent of the critics of interventionist Western policies has been blunted by their articulation within the problematic of a 'liberal peace', enabling their critique to be assimilated into the policy discourse of how policy might be reformed and legitimated in the wake of the discrediting of the claims of Western policy-making after the debacles of Iraq and Afghanistan. The two fairly distinct critical framings of the 'liberal peace' stem from very different methodological perspectives and political and policy intents. While the 'ideas-based' critics tend to seek to defend and legitimate regulatory external intervention, the

'power-based' critics tend to challenge and oppose these frameworks as the projection of Western power and interests. Nevertheless, in critiquing Western policy interventions, developed since the end of the Cold War, within the problematic of 'liberal peace' it seems that there is often much less distance between the radical approaches and the policy approaches than might be assumed on the basis of political intent and occasionally there is a surprisingly large area of confluence.

The critique of liberalism as a set of assumptions and practices seems to be driving the approach to the study of post-cold war interventions in ways which have tended to produce a fairly one-sided framework of analysis in which the concept of liberalism is ill-equipped to bear the analytical weight placed upon it and appears increasingly emptied of theoretical or empirical content. Liberalism appears to be used promiscuously to explain a broad range of often contradictory policy perspectives and practices across very differing circumstances and with very differing outcomes. In this sense, it appears that liberalism operates as a 'field of adversity' (see Foucault 2008: 106) through which a coherent narrative of post-cold war intervention has been articulated both by critical and policy-orientated theorists. The promiscuous use of liberalism to explain very different policy approaches is, of course, facilitated by the ambiguous nature of the concept itself.

It is this ambiguity which enables liberalism to be critiqued from opposing directions, sometimes by the same author at the same time. Good examples of this are Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk who criticise 'liberal' peacebuilding for being both too laissez-faire and too interventionist in its approach to the regulation and management of conflict. In the peacebuilding literature today, the experience of the early and mid-1990s and the 'quick exit' policies of the 'first generation' peacebuilding operations in Nambia, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia and Guatemala has been repackaged as evidence that Western interveners had too much faith in the liberal subject (see, for example, Paris and Sisk 2009b). Similarly, the ad hoc responses to the problems of the early 1990s in the development of 'second generation' peacebuilding with protectorate powers in Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor, has been criticised as liberal hubris, on the assumption that international overlords could bring democracy, development and security to others. It seems that, rather than adding clarity, the critique of the 'liberalism' of intervention tells us very little.

The mechanism through which these liberal framings have been facilitated and critiqued is that of the discursive centring of the non-liberal Other; on whose behalf the policy critics assert the need for different policy practices. In this way, the policy critics of past policy approaches evade a direct critique of liberal assumptions about equality, autonomy, and transformative capacity, instead, arguing that the non-liberal Other (in various ways) invalidates, challenges or resists (passively as well as actively) policy practices which may otherwise have been less problematic.

Rather than a critique of liberalism for its inability to overcome social, economic and cultural inequalities, both the policy, 'ideas-based', critique of the liberal peace and the more radical, 'power-based', critiques argue that social, economic and cultural inequalities and differences have to be central to policy practices and invalidate universalizing liberal attempts to reconstruct and rebuild post-conflict societies. In this context – in which the dichotomy between a liberal policy-making sphere and a non-liberal sphere of policy intervention comes to the fore – there is an inevitable tendency towards a consensual framing of the problematic of statebuilding or peacebuilding intervention as a problem of the relationship between the liberal west and the non-liberal Other.

The rock on which the liberal peace expectations are held to crash is that of the non-liberal Other. The non-liberal Other increasingly becomes portrayed as the barrier to Western liberal aspirations of social peace and progress; either as it lacks the institutional, social, economic and cultural capacities that are alleged to be necessary to overcome the problems of liberal peace or as a subaltern or resisting subject, for whom liberal peacebuilding frameworks threaten their economic or social existence or fundamental values or identities. The 'critique' becomes apology in that this discursive focus upon the non-western or non-liberal Other is often held to explain the lack of policy success and, through this, suggest that democracy or development are somehow not 'appropriate' aspirations or that expectations need to be substantially lowered or changed to account for difference.

International Statebuilding and the Critique of Liberalism

It would appear that the assumptions held to be driving liberal peace approaches are very much in the eye of their critical beholders. The most obvious empirical difficulty is that international policy regarding intervention and statebuilding seems to have

little transformative aspiration: far from assumptions of liberal universalism, it would appear that, with the failure of post-colonial development, especially from the 1970s onwards, international policy-makers have developed historically low expectations about what can be achieved through external intervention and assistance. The lack of transformative belief is highlighted by one of the key concerns of the policy critics of the liberal peace – the focus on capacity-building state institutions and intervening to construct 'civil' societies. The focus on institutional solutions (at both the formal and informal levels) to the problems of conflict and transition is indicative of the narrowing down of aspirations from transforming society to merely regulating or managing it – often understood critically as the 'securitising' of policy-making. This is a long way from the promise of liberal transformation and the discourse of 'liberating' societies economically and politically.

In fact, it is the consensus of opinion on the dangers of democracy, which has informed the focus on human rights and good governance. For the policy and radical critics of liberal peace, liberal rights frameworks are often considered problematic in terms of the dangers of exclusion and extremism. Today's 'illiberal' peace approaches do not argue for the export of democracy – the freeing up of the political sphere on the basis of support for popular autonomy. The language of illiberal institutionalist approaches is that of democratization: the problematization of the liberal subject, held to be incapable of moral, rational choices at the ballot box, unless tutored by international experts concerned to promote civil society and pluralist values. In these frameworks, the holding of elections serves as an examination of the population and the behaviour of electoral candidates, rather than as a process for the judgement or construction of policy (which it is assumed needs external or international frameworks for its production).

The focus on institutionalism does not stem from a critique of liberal peace programmes; institutionalist approaches developed from the 1970s onwards and were rapidly mainstreamed with the end of the Cold War. From 1989 onwards, Western governments and donors have stressed that policy interventions cannot just rely on promoting the freedoms of the market and democracy, but need to put institutional reform and 'good govenance' at the core (see, for example, World Bank 1989; 1992; 1997; 1998). Even in relation to Central and Eastern Europe it was regularly stressed that the people and elected representatives were not ready for freedom and that it would take a number of generations before it could be said that democracy was

'consolidated' (for example, Dahrendorf 1990). The transitology literature was based on the critique of liberal assumptions – this was why a transitional period was necessary. Transition implied that markets and democracy could not work without external institutional intervention to prevent instability. While markets needed to be carefully managed through government policy-making it was held that civil society was necessary to ensure that the population learnt civic values to make democracy viable (see, for example, Fukuyama 1995; Schmitter and Karl 1991; O'Donnell 1996; Gunther et al 1996).

It was through the engagement with 'transition' and the problematic negotiation of European Union enlargement that the discursive framework of liberal institutionalism – where human rights, the 'rule of law', civil society, and anti-corruption are privileged over democracy – was programmatically cohered. It was also through the discussion of 'transition' that the concept of sovereign autonomy was increasingly problematized, initially in relation to the protections for minority rights and then increasingly expanded to cover other areas of domestic policy-making (see, for example, Cordell 1998). It would appear that the key concepts and values of the 'liberal peace' held to have been promoted with vigour with the 'victory of liberalism' at the end of the Cold War were never as dominant a framing as their radical and policy critics have claimed.

Rather than attempting to transform non-Western societies into the liberal self-image of the West, it would appear that external interveners have had much more status-quo aspirations, concerned with regulatory stability and regional and domestic security, rather than transformation. Rather than imposing or 'exporting' alleged liberal Western models, international policy making has revolved around the promotion of regulatory and administrative measures which suggest the problems are not the lack of markets or democracy but rather the culture of society or the mechanisms of governance. Rather than promoting democracy and liberal freedoms, the discussion has been how to keep the lid on or to manage the 'complexity' of non-Western societies, usually perceived in terms of fixed ethnic and regional divisions. The solution to the complexity of the non-liberal state and society has been the internationalisation of the mechanisms of governance, removing substantive autonomy rather than promoting it.

While it is true that the reconstruction or rebuilding of states is at the centre of external projects of intervention, it would be wrong to see the project of statebuilding

as one which aimed at the construction of a liberal international order: the states being constructed in these projects of post-conflict and failed state intervention are not liberal states in the sense of having self-determination and political autonomy. The state at the centre of statebuilding is not the 'Westphalian state' of classical IR theorising. Under the internationalised regulatory mechanisms of intervention and statebuilding the state is increasingly reduced to an administrative level, in which sovereignty no longer marks a clear boundary line between the 'inside' and the 'outside' (see Walker 1992). Whether we consider EU statebuilding, explicitly based on a sharing of sovereignty, or consider other statebuilding interventions, such as those by the international financial institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, it is clear that the state is central as a mechanism for external coordination and regulation rather than as a self-standing actor in so-called 'Westphalian' terms (see Ghani and Lockhart 2008; also Harrison 2004; Chandler 2006a).

Too Liberal?

Empirically, the radical critics of liberal peace may be correct to argue that external policies of intervention - which operate at the formal level of exporting human rights frameworks, the rule of law and mechanisms of 'good governance' - marginalise the people of these societies. This, however, is not the same as arguing that this is because the frameworks of intervention are too *liberal*. At the empirical level it is unproblematic to argue that the result of these external programmes of intervention might be seen as 'façade democracy' or as 'reproducing state failure' (Chopra 2003; Bickerton 2007) or to highlight that Western policy aspirations have little purchase on very different realities and often therefore result in 'hybrid polities' where the state formally accords to Western norms but informally still operates on the basis of traditional hierarchies and exclusions (Roberts 2008).

Where this critical discourse becomes problematic is in the confidence with which its proponents assert that the reasons for these policy failings can be located in the liberalism of the interveners or the illiberalism of the subjects of intervention. Roland Paris, for example, argues that 'there is no logical requirement for international agencies to resurrect failed states *as states*, rather than [as] some other type of polity', and argues that this is the 'latest chapter in the globalisation of the Westphalian state', where this state form is being propped up despite its failings (Paris

2002: 654). Paris argues that just as the non-liberal Other cannot deal with the liberal state form, they are similarly ill-suited to handle electoral democracy, warning particularly against the holding of elections in post-conflict situations. It is asserted that holding elections when societies are still divided or segmented will be counterproductive, often giving enhanced legitimacy to warring parties and bolstering the legitimacy of the forces successful in conflict. Often the solutions advocated by the policy critics are along similar lines with regard to both sovereignty and democracy: the need for greater international engagement in the state institutions, under the guise of guaranteeing that no voices are 'excluded' and the need to constrict the autonomy of elected authorities. Under the rubric of the critique of the liberal peace, these critics of the liberal peace often advocate the reform of policy interventions away from the focus on liberal rights frameworks and electoral democracy.

When it comes to aspirations of development and mondernization, there has been a similar lowering of horizons through the discursive critique of liberal universalism, similarly centered on allegedly empowering and giving 'voice' to the needs and concerns of the non-liberal Other. In this regard, it is often difficult to tell the policy perspectives apart from the viewpoints of some of the more radical critics of the liberal peace. There is a danger that liberalism is criticised not for its inability to universalise economic growth and overcome the problems of combined and uneven development, but for the aspirations of development itself. For example, Michael Pugh asserts that rather than the 'economic rationalism of (capitalistic) entrepreneurship', other, 'non-liberal', values need to be taken into account. Following the work of those critical of liberal development models, such as Amartya Sen (see Sen 1999), he argues that in non-liberal societies:

> Inequalities and non-physiological needs are considered more significant than either absolute poverty or, beyond a survival point, physiological needs. This means that provided people are not destitute…they may choose to live humbly in order to be fulfilled. Such an approach recognises that the paths to modernisation may not be convergent at all, and the marginalised peoples of the world are entitled to choose the extent to which, and how, they integrate in the global economy. (Pugh 2005: 34)

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It would seem that at the core of the policy and radical critiques of the liberal peace is a critique of liberal aspirations rather than a critique of international interventionist policies and practices. The critique reflects the ease with which liberalism has become a 'field of adversity', through which both policy reform and critical claims for theoretical advance can both be made. The construction of a liberal 'field of adversity' seems to have little relation to policy realities. This is reflected in the fact that, while there is a consensus on the view that Western policies are problematic in that they are too liberal, there is much less attention to how the problems of the post-colonial world might be alternatively addressed. Here, as discussed below, the discursive critique of the liberal peace unfortunately has very little to offer in ways that go beyond present policy perspectives.

Beyond the Critique of the Liberal Peace?

It would appear that the ostensibly more radical critics, those who draw out the problematic nature of power relations – the 'power-based' critiques above – in fact, have very little to offer as a critical alternative to the current policies of intervention and statebuilding, other than a scaling back of the possibilities of social change. The leading critics of the liberal peace, like Mark Duffield, Michael Pugh and Oliver Richmond - working through critical theoretical frameworks which problematise power relations and highlight the importance of difference - suggest that the difference between the liberal West and the non-liberal Other cannot be bridged through Western policy-making. For Pugh, as we have seen above, taking critical theory to its logical conclusion, capitalist rationality is itself to be condemned for its universalising and destabilising impulses. Similarly, for Duffield, it seems that the problem of hegemonic relations of power and knowledge cannot be overcome, making any projection of the ideals of development or democracy potentially oppressive (see 2007: 215-234). Oliver Richmond, has systematised this perspective, highlighting the problems of the disciplinary forms of knowledge of 'liberal peace' approaches and suggesting that while it may be possible to go beyond them through the use of post-positivist and ethnographic approaches - enabling external interveners to have a greater access to the knowledge of 'everyday life' in non-liberal societies being intervened in - any attempt to know, rather than merely to express 'empathy', is open to hegemonic abuse (2008a: 149-165).

It would appear that, without a political agent of emancipatory social change, the radical 'power-based' critics of liberal peace who draw upon the perspectives of critical theory, cannot go beyond the bind which they have set themselves, of overcoming hegemonic frameworks of knowledge and power. In fact, it could be argued that these critical approaches, lacking the basis of a political subject to give content to critical theorising, ultimately take an uncritical approach to power. Power is assumed rather than theorised, making the limits to power appear merely as external to it. It is assumed that there is an attempt to transform the world in liberal terms and that the failure to do so can therefore be used to argue that liberal forms of knowledge are inadequate ones. The critique is not essentially of power or of intervention but of the limited knowledge of liberal interveners. The alternative is not that of emancipatory social transformation but of the speculative and passive search for different, non-liberal, forms of knowledge or of knowing. This comes across clearly in the conclusions reached by Duffield, Richmond and others, and highlights the lack of a critical alternative embedded in these approaches.

The more ostensibly conservative critics of the liberal peace, drawn largely to the policy-making sphere, have much clearer political aims in their critique of the liberal peace. This is manifest in their focus on institutional reform, understood as a way of reconciling non-liberal states and societies both to the market and to democratic forms. This, like the transitology discourse before it, is a radical critique of classical liberal assumptions. In their advocacy of these frameworks, discursively framed as a critique of the 'liberal peace', they have a clear point of reference. Although, as highlighted above, this point of reference is a fictional one: a constructed narrative of post-Cold War intervention, which enables them to ground the scaling-back of policy expectations against a framework of allegedly unrealistic liberal aspirations.

The institutionalist discourse of intervention and regulation is not one of liberal universalism and transformation but one of restricted possibilities, where democracy and development are hollowed out and, rather than embodying the possibilities of the autonomous human subject, become mechanisms of control and ordering. Institutionalization reduces law to an administrative code, politics to technocratic decision-making, democratic and civil rights to those of the supplicant rather than the citizen, replaces the citizenry with civil society, and the promise of capitalist modernity with pro-poor poverty reduction. To conceptualize this inversion

of basic liberal assumptions and ontologies as 'liberalism' would be to make the word meaningless at the same time as claiming to stake everything on the assumed meaning and stakes involved in the critique of the 'liberal' peace.

Conclusion

The critique of the liberal peace is based upon the assumption that Western intervention is too 'liberal'. The fact that it is too liberal is alleged to be revealed in its lack of success on the ground; in its failure to achieve liberal outcomes. For the policy critics, the sources of this failure are held to be located in the non-liberal nature of the societies intervened upon. In the dominant policy framing of interventionist agendas, this failing is because of the lack of capacity of domestic societies and political elites; for more radical readings, the problematic impact of external policy-making is often re-read as the resistance of indigenous ways of life and knowledges, which should instead be understood and empathised with.

If the critique of intervention is for its liberalism, then it suggests that the self-image of the West is being projected where it cannot work. The critique can easily flatter the self-understanding of liberal interveners that if they are incapable of transforming the post-conflict societies and failing states, that they are engaged with, it is merely because they cannot easily be anything other than liberal and that the societies being intervened in are not ready for liberal frameworks of governance. This critique, can, in fact, result in the reproduction of the ideological binary of the civilizational divide between the interveners and the intervened in, which is seen to be confirmed the more interventionist approaches appear to have little impact and to have to be scaled back.

There are a number of problems with the critical construction of 'liberal peace'. These stem not merely from the fact that the interventionist policies being critiqued seem to be far from 'liberal'. Of greater concern is the way that the term 'liberal' appears to have become an easy and unproblematic assertion of critical intent. The critique of the 'liberal peace' – and its ability to encompass both policy advocates and radical critics of intervention - appears to reveal much more about the problematic state of radical and liberal thought than it does about the policies and practices of intervention and statebuilding. The ostensible framework of the 'liberal peace' – of the transformative dynamic ontology of the universal rational subject –

had already long since been critiqued and displaced by the framework of governance and regulatory power. It is peculiar, in these circumstances, that the dominant policy discussion and the radical discursive framing of post-Cold War intervention should both therefore take this form.

While apologetic intent can perhaps be reasonably applied to some critics working within policy-making circles and attempting to justify the continuation and revamping of current policy framings, this charge cannot so easily be placed at the feet of those articulating more 'power-based' critiques of the liberal peace. That the radical critique of the 'liberal peace' should reproduce similar framings to that of the policy-orientated institutionalist critique of liberal peace, highlights the use of the liberal paradigm as a 'field of adversity' to give coherence to radical frameworks of critique. However, in focusing on the target of liberalism rather than on the policy practices and discourses themselves, there is a danger that radical criticism can be enlisted in support of the institutionalist project, which seeks to rewrite the failures of post-Cold War intervention as a product of the universalizing tendencies of a liberal approach and suggests that we should give up on the liberal aspirations of the past on the basis of an appreciation of the irreconcilable 'difference' of the non-liberal subject.

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