Pointing at Difference to Rationalize Failure: Vorarephilia in the Critique of Liberal Peace

POL BARGUÉS-PEDRENY

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Abstract

Over the last decade the liberal peace has suffered a fierce critique. Scholars have underlined the problem that international peacebuilders have failed to understand the political, societal and cultural heterogeneity of post-conflict societies, resulting in peace processes that exclude the interests of the majority of the population. Alternative approaches of thinking about peace (e.g. hybrid peace or post-liberal peace) have been theorised, but they are increasingly accused of reproducing the same errors: post-liberal approaches are also failing to embrace alterity. This paper is an attempt to conceptualise why scholars are repetitively able to point to the failure of approaches to peacebuilding. Engaging with William Connolly’s work on pluralism, I argue that critique rests comfortably on the assumption that difference will always exceed any conceptual scope. The metaphor of a vorarephilia of critique reveals that there are few possibilities for rethinking peacebuilding.

Introduction

Alongside the policy difficulties in building a stable and durable peace in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Afghanistan and Iraq, to name only a few cases, over the last decade scholars have come to the fore to announce the crisis of the ‘liberal peace’. Two strands of critique, heuristically put here, have contributed to this backlash. Some scholars place greater emphasis on the fact that processes of international governance have been driven by the economic, security and political interests of Western states, thereby reproducing hierarchical relations and the logic of a neoliberal system.¹

Other scholars underline the ethical problem that international liberal policy-makers have ignored the political, societal and cultural heterogeneity of societies intervened upon, excluding the interests of the majority of their population. A deeper engagement with the everyday life of these societies thus has both exposed the weaknesses of current peacebuilding processes and has animated an alternative way of thinking about peace: ‘post-liberal’ or ‘hybrid’ peace. As Richmond argues, ‘the limitations of the liberal peace project have sparked new forms of peace in reaction, response, or as resistance, by a repoliticization of post-conflict subjects. This represents the inadvertent rediscovery or rebirth of post-liberal politics in infrapolitical terms’. This second strand of critique, which delves around the question of how to engage more sensitively with ‘difference’, is the focus here.

At stake in this article is the problem that critical understandings of the liberal peace are also under siege. That is, there is an increasing dissatisfaction with the existing discursive alternatives to the liberal peace. These authors point out that critiques of the liberal peace are reproducing the same liberal reductionist categories, failing to engage more sensitively with the alterity of post-conflict societies. Amidst the certain anxiety caused by the emergence of the ‘critique of the critique’, this paper is an attempt to conceptualise why scholars are repetitively...


able to criticise and point to the failure of approaches to peacebuilding. Engaging with William Connolly’s work on pluralism, I argue that critique rests comfortably on the assumption that difference will always exceed any conceptual scope. Far from emancipatory, the metaphor of a vorarephilia of critique suggests that critical scholars are finding pleasure in a process of self-destruction: the impossibility to find new shores for international peacebuilding.

The article proceeds through four sections. Firstly, it analyses Connolly’s work on pluralism, as it is useful to frame the ethical disposition of the critics of the liberal peace. Secondly, it focuses on the critical evaluation of existing practices of liberal peacebuilding. The third part explores the critics’ alternative proposition. This is expressed as hybrid peace, which encompasses an agonistic negotiation between multiple actors in order to produce a locally engrained peace. However, as it is seen in the fourth section, hybrid peace has also been critically reappraised. Some authors have identified further Eurocentric assumptions in the critique of the liberal peace, leaving a hopeless picture for the future of peacebuilding.

**Connolly’s Pluralism: the Fragility of Identity| Difference and Ethics**

Early in his career, William Connolly was in the vanguard of left-wing critics who argued that the pluralist ideal – as it was codified in societies like the United States – was biased in favour of certain groups who could formulate rules and laws and against others who were subordinated or excluded from the public. Since the ideal imagined by Tocqueville did not fit the new circumstances affecting modern societies, Connolly sought to extend ‘the limits of politics’ and point to new areas where diverse views could also be included. The affirmation of a new pluralist ideal, which has been coined as the ‘new pluralism,’ was developed in three different books: *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (2002 [1991]), *The Ethos of Pluralization* (1995) and *Pluralism* (2005). These books will be examined below, with special attention on the earliest, where Connolly develops his ethics by presenting two paradoxes. One way to pose the first paradox is this:

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9 Ibid., 26.
every identity necessitates differences in order to be, but differences are considered problematic when there is an attempt to pursue security in identity. The second may be synthetized like this: having some ethical standards is indispensable for social life, but finding an ultimate ethical command that could work for ever and for all is a fantasy. By negotiating these two paradoxes, Connolly aims to subdue the politics of generalised resentment against difference that have emerged in what he calls ‘the late-modern time’ as responses to the condition of uncertainty, deterritorialisation and globalisation of contingency. Below I consider these paradoxes and, in the following section, Connolly’s work on pluralism will be placed in relation to the contemporary critique of the liberal peace.

‘The first paradox’ arises from the tense relation between identity and difference. For Connolly, identity is a mixture of cultural and biological features that is fundamentally relational and essential for human beings. Because identity and difference are mutually constitutive, the question whether it is possible to live with difference outside the space of identity is answered negatively. However, identity and difference exist in a complex political relation. Due to contemporary experiences of contingency, fragility and disruption in the self, some people seek to deprecate the differences that are at odds with the identities they live. This is because, Connolly explains, individuals and collectives need to protect the certainty and coherence of their identities in a context of existential despair. But in so doing they tend to subjugate the (indispensable) differences that pose a challenge to the self. And therein lies the paradox: the temptation to pursue an unambiguous and secure identity independent from difference automatically implies being disrespectful towards difference. Connolly writes:

[T]he multiple drives to stamp truth upon those identities function to convert differences into otherness and otherness into scapegoats created and maintained to secure the appearance of a true identity. To possess a

12 Ibid., 9–12, 93–94.
13 Ibid., 15; see also William E. Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralisation (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 22.
14 Connolly, Identity/Difference, xvii.
15 Ibid., 158.
16 Another way of understanding the paradox is by looking at the ambiguities of ‘borders’. As Connolly argues, ‘boundaries form indispensable protections against violation and violence; but the divisions they sustain also carry cruelty and violence’, Ethos of Pluralization, 163.
true identity is to be false to difference, while to be true to difference is to sacrifice the promise of a true identity.\textsuperscript{17} For Connolly, therefore, it is the aspiration to achieve a true or total identity that is problematic, for it converts difference into otherness in a process that is most often violent. The stronger is the willingness to secure the identities of the normal individual, the society or the nation-state, the more otherness are produced that can be potentially assimilated, marginalised, opposed or condemned.\textsuperscript{18}

For example, the pursuit of a territorially coherent nation-state may generate ‘persecution, forced conversions, refugees, boat people, terrorism, ethnic cleansing’ and ‘evil’.\textsuperscript{19} All societies privilege some identities in the process of defining norms and building institutions. Irremediably, at the same time, they treat differences as deviations from the normal standards that need to be corrected and modified or even as threats that ought to be eliminated.\textsuperscript{20} These struggles against difference, instead of pursuing a ‘political engagement’ with the paradox, as Connolly advises us to practice, are moves to ‘suppress’ the paradox.\textsuperscript{21} So, a vital question lingers: how is one to combat the longing for the completion of identities that cause the exclusion or eradication of their differences? In other words, is there a way to overcome the risks implicated in the politics of identity\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{|}}|} difference? In facing this challenge, ‘the second paradox’ comes in.

Connolly contends that an ethical sensibility is required to resolve the problems that appear when seeking to protect identity from difference.\textsuperscript{22} Yet the second paradox, the paradox of ethics, lies between the need for normative frameworks that seek to contain violence against others and the cruelties and injustices installed in any attempt to do so. As he states: ‘without a set of standards of identity and responsibility there is no possibility of ethical discrimination, but the application of any such set of historical constructions also does violence to those to whom it is applied’.\textsuperscript{23} Connolly uses this paradox to criticize forms of liberalism – as well as Marxism, secularism or other perspectives that hold specific presuppositions of the self and universal aspirations.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{17} Connolly, \textit{Identity\textsuperscript{|}Difference}, 67.
\textsuperscript{18} Connolly, \textit{Ethos of Pluralisation}, xxi, 89–90.
\textsuperscript{19} Connolly, \textit{Pluralism}, 29. See also Connolly’s discussion about territorial democracy, \textit{Identity\textsuperscript{|}Difference}, 198–222.
\textsuperscript{20} Connolly, \textit{Ethos of Pluralisation}, 88–89.
\textsuperscript{21} Connolly, \textit{Ethos of Pluralization}, xxi.
\textsuperscript{22} Connolly, \textit{Identity\textsuperscript{|}Difference}, 9–12.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{24} It is important to note that Connolly’s ethics do not seek to reject liberalism. He revises it by cultivating an ethics that affirm the ambiguities and contingencies of life. See Connolly, \textit{Identity\textsuperscript{|}Difference}, 83; also Mortom Schoolman, ‘A Pluralist Mind: Agonistic Respect and the
Because all forms of liberalism, he argues, organise societies by bestowing privilege to certain identities, norms and ideals, but fail to 'identify the constellation of normal/abnormal dualities already inscribed in the culture they idealize'. In assuming a model for all, Connolly argues, these theories lack self-reflexivity and care for the differences they deprecate, imprison, or punish as abnormalities. In brief, these approaches fail to recognize that no particular form of the common life can be responsible for the fullness of diversity.

By contrast, Connolly’s ethics do not stem from a transcendental command nor are deduced from any authority, reason or divine force. He is not willing to respond 'why be ethical? Or 'what is the epistemic ground of ethics’. Instead, he pursues ‘ways to cultivate care for identity and difference in a world already permeated by ethical proclivities and predispositions to identity’. His ethics, therefore, are motivated from the care for the abundance and rich diversity of life that is constantly foreclosed by drives to secure identities and ethical guidelines. In other words, his sensibilities are governed by the readiness to appreciate the energies and fugitive experiences that exceed any form of identity or model for human organisation.

In order to surmount the problem of violence against difference – this is Connolly’s highest aspiration that cannot be fulfilled by any fundamentalist framework – Connolly proposes to negotiate (rather than suppress or ignore) both paradoxes at once. On the one hand, efforts are needed to ‘cultivate the experience of contingency in identity’ and, on the other, to ‘interrogate exclusions built into [people’s] own entrenched identities’ with the intention of developing ‘a politics alert to a tragic gap between the imperatives of organization in the order it idealizes and admirable possibilities of life that exceed those imperatives’. His ethics thus operate on two levels or registers: the individual and the community. At the individual level, in order to negotiate the first paradox, there is the need to adopt tactics of self-reflexivity and self-modification. This means to defy the resentment

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25 Connolly, Identity/Difference, 74.
26 Ibid., 70–94.
27 Ibid., 10 [Emphasis in the original].
28 Connolly, Ethos of Pluralization, 27, 93.
29 See, for example, Connolly, Identity/Difference, 82. In his latest work, this appreciation has become greater, seeking to pay more attention to ‘fragility’ of objects in a world in constant flux that is never ready for human understanding (Connolly 2013).
30 Connolly, Identity/Difference, 14.
against the other that emanates from the failure to achieve the fullness of identity. Rather than hoping for the attainment of a true identity or a life without difference, Connolly urges people to adopt self-reflexivity and, for example, ‘live one’s own identity in a more ironic, humorous way’ or ‘affirm contingency in identity’ to open up alternative possibilities for relating to the others that could otherwise be stigmatized, punished or condemned.31 As these strategies of self-modification are necessary but insufficient, Connolly orients his ethics towards the community level.

Here, Connolly enacts a democratic ethos, guided by the principle of contestability.32 His pluralist democratic position can be explained in terms of ‘a bicameral orientation to political life’: this means the adoption of a creed or the defense of an ideology or philosophy in the world, while assuming that it is contestable by alternative faiths.33 This orientation demands, firstly, an element of humbleness in the faith one preaches because others might not share its value and desire to question it. Secondly, it shows ‘agonistic respect and critical responsiveness between diverse constituencies’.34 For Connolly, therefore, while the pluralist accepts the fragility of her faith, she is, at the same time, alert to contest the dogmatisation of hegemonic identities and fundamentalisms in others, disturb conventional judgements, suspect about frozen consensus and resist practices that cement contingency.35 Far from reducing public life into static or passive place in which no meaning or consensus can be advanced, a pluralist engagement with diversity creates new possibilities for a peaceful identification. As he puts it, the contestation of dogmatic identities ‘forms an essential prelude to the effort to devise creative ways through which a wider variety of identities can negotiate less violent terms of coexistence’.36

What is important for the present article is that Connolly’ ethical sensibilities respond to what he calls the ‘late-modern time,’ in which struggles for identity abound, as seen, for example, in religious crusades, terrorist plots, cultural wars and the projects of international

31 Connolly, Identity/Difference, 180; Ethos of Pluralization, xvi.
33 Connolly, Pluralism, 4.
34 Connolly, Ethos of Pluralization, xx.
35 Ibid., xxiii, 85–93. For example, pluralise ‘the modern territorial imagination,’ as territories contain exclusive boundaries.
36 Ibid., 90.
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governance and justice intended to remedy them. Connolly’s thoughts thus can be situated vis-à-vis the explosion of the civil wars of the 1990s and the ensuing liberal peace interventions. Even if Connolly rarely addresses particular cases, it is my intention to use his ethical sensibilities – a commitment to affirm contingency in identity at both individual and community registers in order to contest the violence perpetrated against different identifications (by engaging with the first paradox) and to problematize universal attempts of dealing with the problems of identity/difference (by engaging with the second) – to examine the core assumptions of critical understandings of liberal peace interventions.

Negotiating Connolly’s Paradoxes: the Critique of Liberal Peace

The critiques of liberal peace are more vivid than ever, responding to the continuous difficulties encountered by international organisations in building stable and peaceful societies. From an ethical point of view, some scholars have highlighted the failure of liberal peace interventions to be respectful of the needs and interests of war-affected societies, calling for the emergence of a ‘hybrid’ or ‘post-liberal’ peace. ‘Ethically’, as Richmond argues, ‘moving beyond these limitations would amount to an ontological commitment to care for others in their everyday contexts, based upon empathy, respect and the recognition of difference’.

The rest of the article seeks to examine the ethical assumptions informing the critique of the liberal peace.

The liberal peace critique flags up the problem that international policy-makers have failed to recognize the importance of the diverse ‘infra-political areas’ of the conflict-affected societies intervened upon.

37 Ibid., 193. For Connolly, it is this same contemporary era of speed and global contingency, which ‘forms a condition of possibility for emergence of a more generous pluralism’, 99.
38 For instance, Connolly briefly discusses Bosnia as an example opposed to his sensibilities. Because in Bosnia ‘some identities insist upon universalizing themselves by conquering, assimilating, or liquidating their opponents’ (1995: 27).
39 There are recurrent references to Connolly’s work in the critique of the liberal peace (i.e. Richmond 2011: 109; MacGinty and Richmond 2013: 764), but this is not to imply that Connolly guides the critics’ normative positioning.
40 See Fn. 1 and 2.
41 Very much like Connolly’s framework of ethics, the critique is a critical reappraisal of liberalism, rather than a rejection of its main tenets. See Connolly, Identity/Difference, 93.
42 For an overview, see Richmond, A Post-Liberal Peace.
44 Richmond means by ‘infra-political areas’ the ‘hidden transcripts of peacebuilding’. These are the ‘social, historical, cultural, political, and economic realities, in their everyday contexts’,
Two main interrelated reasons explain this inattention. The first is that peacebuilding proposes neoliberal strategies, security-based policies and human rights principles in a subtle colonial form which privileges a West-dominated world order to the detriment of the local population of non-Western countries.\textsuperscript{45} As Mac Ginty and Richmond succinctly put it, peace building and state building strategy appears to confirm a longstanding colonial narrative that places the global North in a dominant, selfish and also vulnerable position. The West exercises structural and governmental power against the local, simultaneously preaching democracy, human rights and accountability and assuming the subaltern has little agency.\textsuperscript{46}

The second reason, the focus of this paper, concerns the notion that the infra-political areas of post-conflict zones or ‘difference’, as it may be put here, cannot be comprehended, represented or governed from an externally driven perspective. Beatrice Pouligny, for example, after her extensive experience as practitioner in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Balkans, has documented how the orthodox approach to peacebuilding overlooks the ‘stories written at the community level’.\textsuperscript{47} Her studies represent, already from a reflexive methodology, a step further toward the comprehension of local subjectivities. Knowledgeable of local languages (or working closely with linguistic and anthropologist colleagues and local experts), she pursues formal interviews as well as informal contacts with diverse people in the street, in markets or in buses and pays a careful attention to daily life to get as close as possible to local actors’ views.\textsuperscript{48} With analyses from ‘below’,\textsuperscript{49} from the complexity of everyday practices that resist organisational structures,\textsuperscript{50} critical scholars point at the flaws of the liberal peace approaches who have merely focused on formal institutions, state-centric models and elite-bargaining processes, have

\textsuperscript{45} This critique follows the point stated by other power-oriented critics (see fn. 1) – it is not the focus of this article.
\textsuperscript{46} Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘local turn’, 773.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.; see also Boege et al. ‘Building Peace’, 609.
applied a one-size-fits-all prescriptions and have used reductionist categories to evaluate conflict-affected societies.51

Although most authors recognize that international policy-makers are increasingly adopting more context-sensitive and bottom-up peace endeavours, they regard the shift with utter suspicion.52 For them, the local turn is only happening rhetorically, as a tactic to improve the legitimacy of the international authorities, but not in practice, wherein the parameters of peacebuilding are established from an external perspective.53 Boege and colleagues, for example, argue that the recent talks of ‘local ownership’ are merely paying ‘lip service’, but international actors do not actually take national customary rules into account.54 Another charge is that international organisations only give support to the local perspectives that fit their interests or purposes,55 rather than dealing with a more inclusive, pluralist and contextual representation of conflict-affected societies. For Richmond, the liberal peace provides a superficial dialogue with elites or internationally sponsored civil society instead of allowing for the participation of the more complex, deeper and richer ‘local-local’.56 This point is crucial because it rationalizes the failure of the liberal peace: though international peacebuilders are increasingly showing a greater respect for local agency and contexts, external actors have nevertheless maintained a superficial and limited embracement of local alterity and reproduced divisive and violent categories, thereby excluding the majority of the population57 and facilitating the ‘co-option’ of the peace process by self-interested elites or nationalist entrepreneurs.58

51 Richmond’s genealogy of peace and conflict theory is useful to have an overview of the critical perspectives. He identifies that the first three generations of peace have only maintained a marginal inclusion of the locals in the processes of peace. By contrast, the fourth generation of peace or post-liberal peace that I am analysing here wishes to overcome these weaknesses (2006; 2010b).
53 Belloni, ‘Hybrid Peace’, 35; Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘Local Turn’, 775; Richmond ‘Eirenism and the Everyday’ 565; ‘Pedagogy of Peacebuilding’, 120.
54 Boege et al., ‘Building Peace’, 611.
55 Richmond, A Post-Liberal Peace, 29.
56 Richmond borrows the concept local-local from Arjun Appadurai to highlight the difference between the liberal engagement with the local and an emancipatory ‘deeper’ understanding of the local. So the local-local denotes ‘the existence and diversity of communities and individuals that constitute political society beyond this often liberally projected artifice of elites and civil society’, A Post-liberal Peace, 13–14. See also, Richmond, ‘Pedagogy of Peacebuilding’, 120.
57 See, for example, Aidan Hehir, ‘Autonomous Province Building: Identification Theory and the Failure of UNMIK’ International Peacekeeping 13, no. 2 (2006): 200–213; Lesley J. Pruitt,
Here, for the purpose of understanding the ethical sensibilities underpinning this argument, it might be useful to re-engage with Connolly’s ‘paradox of ethicality’: while some ethical standards are necessary to organize social life, any particular standard is problematic, as it will inescapably exclude, relegate or undermine some views. Following this perspective, Mac Ginty contends that ‘the single-transferable peace package risks minimizing the space for organic local, traditional or indigenous contributions to peace-making’. The critique of the liberal peace, therefore, points out the inescapable failure to appreciate and engage with difference - or the deep ‘local-local’, as Richmond puts it - in present practices of peacebuilding. As Brigg points out, ‘currently available theoretical frameworks tend to be insufficient for addressing the challenges of cultural difference in peace and conflict studies’. What ought to be recognized is that the observation that difference exceeds the conceptual grasp of an external or universal perspective is not only an empirical point, stressing the numerous methodological complications encountered when approaching the complex realities in the ground. It is also a normative judgement. For the critics of the liberal peace, as for Connolly, the aim is to develop an account of peace that affirms the ambiguities and contingencies ubiquitous in the everyday life of post-conflict zones without relying upon another set of a priori principles or out-of-context institutional frameworks. The highest aspiration may be cast in terms of developing a process of peacebuilding that is ‘infinitely’ responsible and respectful of the particularism of the other.

By highlighting the limits of external governance, however, critical understandings of the liberal peace do not consider post-war societies automatically unproblematic or benign, opposed to the domineering, interest-based and quasi-colonialist international interveners. Indeed, some local actors are accused of having strong partisan feelings, 

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For an analysis of how civil society is very narrowly framed in Bosnia, see Richmond (2011: 71–78).


60 Brigg, ‘Culture’, 339.

61 For Richmond this is the contradiction of peace: ‘it requires a method, ontology, and epistemology which is negotiated locally, but prompted externally by agents who must engage with the other, but cannot know one another a priori’; *A Post-liberal Peace*, 10 [emphasis in the original].

62 It is important to note that beyond discussions of peace, this ethical commitment to the Other has been discussed for long. A radical interpretation of this ethical position can be found, for example, in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, who underscores a relation to the “Other as other”, even if this is unknown, incalculable.
pursuing hierarchical social relations or seeking to exclude ethnic minorities. As Mac Ginty argues, ‘rather than a romantic defence of all things traditional or indigenous or the pursuit of a discourse of authenticity (which attaches premium to anything deemed authentic), all peace-making techniques and assumptions should be exposed to rigorous tests of relevance and fitness for purpose’. Analogously, even if Connolly is committed to pluralism and to highlighting the limits of conceptual capture, he does not applaud all the ideas or practices defended by other constituencies in a relativistic gesture; actually, he even proposes to take military or police action to fight the most pernicious faiths. To understand this position, at the core of critical understandings of the liberal peace, one must recall Connolly’s engagement with the first paradox – there can be no identity without difference and yet the stronger the attempt to secure one’s identity, the more difference is concealed. This paradox cannot be negotiated by a move to protect, let alone to reinforce or reassure, a particular identity – for example, by the means of designing territorial arrangements or favouring national agendas. These strategies would undermine pluralism as much as doctrines or movements with universal ambitions. In other words, the tense relation between identity and its differences can neither be tamed through the means of strengthening the existing relations among identity groups, nor by upholding some principles at the expense of others.

By contrast, as analysed in the previous section, Connolly proposes ‘to enliven the awareness of contingency within established constellations of identity and difference’ on both individual and collective registers, opening up new possibilities for co-operation and coexistence. The important point here is that Connolly’s sensibilities eschew both Universalist and Culturalist frameworks because no position can show fidelity to the diversity of the human condition. His ethics thus propose to embrace difference through a ‘bicameral orientation’ toward political life: affirming identities or faiths and, at the same time, negotiating with others in an agonistic process that is never completed. This new pluralism is useful to understand the proposed alternative to the liberal peace, discussed in the following section: this is

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63 Belloni, ‘Hybrid Peace’, 33; Boege et al., ‘Building Peace’, 612; Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘the Local Turn’, 770.
65 Connolly, Identity/Difference, 14–15.
66 Connolly, Pluralism, 35, 41.
67 Connolly, Ethos of Pluralization, 27, 97; Pluralism, 28–29.
68 Connolly, Ethos of Pluralization, 192.
69 Connolly, Pluralism, 31–35.
a ‘hybrid peace’ project, which moves away from the liberal peace universal assumptions and seeks to avoid the problem of accepting willy-nilly aggressive nationalist movements. However, as it will be discussed in the last section of the article, as much as the new pluralism enables the thinking of a hybrid peace process, it is also the source of its critique and its inevitable failure.

Hybrid Peace: Unsettling Binaries to Be True to Difference

The proponents of a ‘hybrid’ or a ‘post-liberal peace’ do not yield an alternative to the liberal peace, at least not in the sense of developing another set of principles or political institutions to foster peace. What they yield is a new way of thinking through the problem of failing to be true to difference identified in earlier approaches of peacebuilding.70 Rather than originating in an abstract discussion, hybrid peace appears to be a ‘real-world condition’ of contemporary war-affected zones, in which local actors resist, modify, ignore, co-opt, adapt and contest liberal peace governance.71 This accommodation, negotiation, tension or clash along the international/local divide neither produces the outcome favoured by liberal practitioners, based on market economy, stable institutions and a pro-Western civil society, nor an indigenous peace based on the illiberal practices that ignited the war in the first place. Instead, what is emerging today is an emancipatory form of hybrid, or hybridized, peace.72 Differently labelled in the literature as ‘hybrid political orders’, ‘hybrid peace’ or ‘hybrid peace governance’, hybridity provides a new lens for thinking about contemporary cases of peacebuilding and, even more importantly, the interactions between multiple actors provide new opportunities for a more locally engrained form of peace.73

A good place to commence an analysis of hybrid frameworks of peacebuilding is to understand that these hold a positive view of the ‘contextual, non-elite, and infrapolitical processes’ of post-war societies.74 For critics like Richmond, the dynamic forces of the everyday resist external forms of governance and need to be taken into

70 See Connolly, Identity/Difference, 92.
73 Belloni, ‘Hybrid Peace’ 22.
74 Richmond, ‘Pedagogy of Peacebuilding’, 120.
account in order to foster an emancipatory version of peace.\(^{75}\) The point is not limited to the need of recognising that culture matters or of comprehending other cultures – for liberal forms of peace have insisted on the importance of acknowledging the differences among societies.\(^{76}\) The point is to see that ‘culture’ is ‘an under-recognised human heritage and resource for processing conflict and pursuing peace’.\(^{77}\) The distinction therefore can be expressed like this: while liberal peace frameworks considered culture a constraint to the development of peace, hybrid peace approaches take it as a valuable resource.\(^{78}\) These assumptions become clear when observing that, for Boege and colleagues, the success of cases such as Somaliland or Bougainville and the failure of others such as East Timor depend on ‘the involvement of traditional actors and customary institutions’.\(^{79}\) Whether these cases are successes or failures is beside the point. What matters is that, for these scholars, the critique of liberal peace and the solution to its political aporias must ‘invariably emerge from below’.\(^{80}\)

Resources for peace are not always visible at first glance. Indeed, these are invisible to international eyes or approaches that simply focus on the analysis and reform of formal institutions.\(^{81}\) According to the critics, it is indispensable to pursue a ‘deeper contextualisation’ to comprehend more sensitively the needs and complex situations of local actors. Also it is important to adopt ‘ethnographic’ methods to have access to the opportunities for peace that emerge in the everyday struggles.\(^{82}\) That is, rather than adopting the rigid, standardized and institutionalist take-over of the liberal peace, hybrid peace is alert to the ‘hidden’ and ‘non-obvious’ elements of peace through innovative and spontaneous methods.\(^{83}\) ‘Collective narrative methodologies’, as one commentator proposes, ‘open up the space for diverse meanings and alternative stories that can contribute to peacebuilding and recovery.

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\(^{75}\) Ibid., ‘Eirenism and the Everyday’, 571.

\(^{76}\) See, for example, Ruth Benedict \textit{The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).

\(^{77}\) Brigg, ‘Culture’ 341. Brigg uses ‘culture’ here in broad terms, as a way to know human differences. This conceptualisation of culture is similar to Richmond’s ‘infrapolitical areas’, as the sphere where multiple resources for peace are located. See also, Belloni, ‘Hybrid Peace’, 34.


\(^{79}\) Boege et al. 606–610.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 611.

\(^{81}\) Richmond, \textit{Post-liberal Peace}, 128.


from the effects of trauma’.  

A hybrid approach, however, cannot be taken as a naive middle ground option agreed between international and national actors. In fact, it can be said that the appeal of hybridity in analyses of peace is precisely the possibility to move away from the dominance of binaries (i.e. international-local), which plague liberal peace thinking. This understanding of hybridity, as it will become clear in the following section, is informed by post-colonial views that contend that, ‘the hybridity angle on history unsettles the boundaries as well as the codes that sustain them’. Like Connolly’s sensibilities, hybridity eschews both Universalist and Culturalist positions. Therefore, hybrid peace represents ‘a form of agonism’ between local and international actors, in which there is rejection and acceptance, the negotiation of public and hidden transcripts, contextualization and deterritorialisation. This process of peace, which continually redefines the relational identities of international and local actors, is driven by reflexivity in the identity one professes and responsibility to question already established identities in others. A hybrid peace framework thus cultivates a ‘critical responsiveness’, to borrow Connolly’s words, ‘to challenge the self-confidence and congealed judgements of dominant constituencies’. This means that local and international positions are transgressed and modified to the point where it is no longer possible to visualise a fixed or clear – and therefore hierarchical – divide. This is ‘a fusion of global and local’, as Roberts suggests, which ‘accommodates the inevitable while pluralizing the possible’.  

Of course, the critics of liberal peace do not assume that all hybrid formulations have an emancipatory potential. But, in short, the angle

88 Connolly, Ethos of Pluralization, xv.  
89 Richmond, ‘Pedagogy of Peacebuilding’, 121.  
91 For example, Peterson highlights that scholars and practitioners lack a more accurate understanding of different types of hybridity and the reactions to it, ‘Conceptual Unpacking, 19’. For a review of diverse practices of hybridisation, which do not all have positive outcomes, see also Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell "Introduction – Towards a Post-Liberal Peace: Exploring Hybridity via Everyday Forms of Resistance, Agency and Autonomy.” In Hybrid
of hybridity – which is a condition, ‘an ordinary experience’ – enables critical scholars of the liberal peace to think about peacebuilding differently from a peace dominated by either international ‘liberal’ practitioners or local ‘illiberal’ actors. Hybrid peace thus is able to destabilizing the drives to true identities of international and local actors; second, it is committed to a form peace that is aware of the violence committed against others in every move forward, thereby discarding to be a new model for peacebuilding (negotiating the second). In Richmond and Mac Ginty’s words: hybrid peace takes ‘a pluralist view of difference and see[s] peace as hybrid, multiple and often agonistic’. Similar to Connolly’s sensibilities, therefore, the promise of critical understandings of the liberal peace is to be ‘open to the everyday, difference, resistance, to agency, and the conditions of liberation, especially beneath the state’. And yet, as it will be addressed in the following section, they are nevertheless accused of failing to be true to difference.

The Critique of the Critique of Liberal Peace

For long and from different angles, there has been a backlash against the notion of hybridity in post-colonial studies debates. A salient critique suggests that discussions of hybridity tend to focus on identity and culture, while distracting from and silencing (if not reinforcing) the perpetuation of an unequal political and economic system. The discourse of hybridity, Friedman argues, creates an ‘ideological’ dichotomy: ‘good guys versus bad guys, essentialist, nationalist, refugees longing for their imagined homeland, versus hybrid cosmopolitans adeptly adapting to their current circumstances.’ For Hutnyk, similarly, ‘the theorists of hybridity appear complicit in the middle-class comforts that their own cosmopolitan lives afford, while

92 Pieterse, ‘Hybridity, so what?’, 238.
93 Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘Local Turn’, 764.
95 For an interesting overview of the critiques of hybridity, see Pieterse, ‘Hybridity so What?’.
97 Friedman, ‘From Roots to Routes’, 29.
denying the same to others left to languish in the third world’.\(^9^8\) While the *ad hominem* accusations are not important here, Friedman, Hutnyk and other critical scholars point to those in the third world who cannot be (and those who do not want to be) as hybrid, pluralist or as cosmopolitan as the theorists who exalt hybridity. Boundaries matter for those who struggle to overcome colonial legacies, globalisation pressures, national exclusion, post-conflict situations or the effects of capital accumulation. However, from the advantage point of the promises of hybridity, their claims about identity, territory or statehood are considered erratic.\(^9^9\) Those people are asked to emancipate from their particularistic views and join the experience and rightness of hybridity in what soon edifices a hierarchical distinction between enlightened scholars and obtuse people.\(^1^0^0\) Even if hybrid thinkers affirm difference against liberal, colonial or national governance, this affirmation is true as long as difference is articulated beyond boundaries, in a pluralist guise. It is in this sense that the framework of hybridity, as counter-intuitive as it may seem, may confront and belittle the people it initially tried to defend.

The focus now is on another critique of hybridity that may be synthesised like this: scholars are suspicious of hybridity’s hidden essentialist traces and the asymmetrical relationship established between the two identities or cultures that form the hybrid – albeit these are in constant flux and therefore can never be considered two.\(^1^0^1\) Far from rejecting hybridity,\(^1^0^2\) as some of the critics above would suggest, these scholars propose to further pluralise or hybridise the hybrid relations that have already been solidified. A prime example is offered by Anthias who fears that ‘new hybridities’ could replace the dangerous exclusions of ‘old cultures’. She inquires, ‘to what extent does hybridity signal the end of ethnicity, in the sense of struggle and contestation around the ethnic boundary?’\(^1^0^3\) After putting hybrid frameworks to the test of their own objectives (i.e. transcending cultural naturalisations), her conclusion is straightforward: ‘while being anti-

\(^9^8\) Hutnyk, ‘Hybridity’, 95.
\(^1^0^0\) Ahmad, ‘Whose Underground?’, 81.
\(^1^0^1\) Some critiques of hybridity would fit under these two rather sketchy categories proposed here. For example, Floya Anthias, ‘New Hybridities, Old Concepts: the Limits of “Culture”’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001): 619–641; or, in the context of peace studies, see Suthaharan Nadarajah and David Rampton, ‘The limits of hybridity and the crisis of liberal peace’, *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 49–72. However, for the purpose of this article, it is still useful to heuristically differentiate these two forms of critique, as they have different effects: while the first group seeks to move away from discussions about identity and difference; the second proposes to adopt a more radical understanding of difference.

\(^1^0^2\) Ahmad, ‘Whose Underground?’, 84.
\(^1^0^3\) Anthias, ‘New Hybridities’, 622.
essentialist, [hybridity] has not been able convincingly to move away from old notions of culture and ethnicity which still lie at its head.\textsuperscript{104} I contend that this critique of hybridity, which demands a ‘new’ more radical hybridisation to avoid the same ‘old’ exclusions, has filtered in the current critique of the critique of liberal peacebuilding.

It seems that the proponents of hybrid peace did not go far enough in their attempt to disrupt the domineering top-down perspective of the liberal peace. The main flaw identified in the critical literature is that the dichotomy of local and international, whose interaction allow for hybrid outcomes, fails to capture the complex and diverse relations among agencies existing in post-conflict scenarios.\textsuperscript{105} As Nadarajah and Rampton argue, this shallow notion of hybridity ‘denies the deeper and more thoroughgoing hybridisation of the world’.\textsuperscript{106}

This critique of hybrid peace is sustained on the need to use a more radicalised understanding of difference. Hybrid peace implicitly assumes the existence of two pure, homogenous and identifiable entities prior to the hybrid moment.\textsuperscript{107} But this notion of difference, and hence of hybridity, is considered indefensible, as there can be no prior identity to hybridity: no identity that is not a hybrid. As Bhabha argues, ‘the structure of meaning and reference [of culture] is an ambivalent process’. And continues: ‘it is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or “purity” of cultures are untenable’.\textsuperscript{108} Hence, the flaw of hybrid peace frameworks is that these have not been able ‘to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities’.\textsuperscript{109} In other words, the crucial point is that, if hybridity is a sensibility that helps to unsettle the violent boundaries that exist in the present,\textsuperscript{110} hybrid peace proposals have failed to undo the boundaries constructed by the liberal peace.

This is problematic to the extent that critical understandings of the liberal peace still carry ‘avatars of Eurocentrism’. Sabaratnam, for example, argues that the emphasis on a more sensitive approach that respects the agency and contexts of the people intervened upon, as

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 622.
\textsuperscript{107} Peterson, ‘Conceptual Unpacking’, 13.
\textsuperscript{108} Bhabha, \textit{Location of culture}, 37.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{110} Pieterse, ‘Hybridity, for What?’ 238.
theorised in hybrid peace frameworks, reproduces a static relation and hierarchical division ‘between the liberal, rational, modern West and a culturally distinct space of the local’.\textsuperscript{111} Therefore, the argument goes, by relying upon an ontologically different other – even if there is a positive understanding of local actors in their everyday settings – hybrid discourses reify power relations. On the one hand, one identifies international actors that are liberal and powerful, on the other, local actors merely resist governance mechanisms. As Drichel explains, hybrid frameworks maintain ‘the original colonial [liberal] distinction in postcolonial [hybrid or post-liberal] times’.\textsuperscript{112} Even if scholars who defend the emancipatory potential of a hybrid peace acknowledge that local and international are ‘not discrete categories’ or propose an agonistic process of negotiation between multiple actors;\textsuperscript{113} or even if they incorporate Bhabha’s understandings of difference to think of hybrid peace,\textsuperscript{114} other critics recognise these gestures as insufficient, unable to overcome their Eurocentric assumptions.\textsuperscript{115}

The point I am trying to make is that the critique of hybrid peace and the previous critique of liberal peace have a very similar logic. In other words, the same premises the authors of peace-as-hybridity used to dismiss the liberal peace have been placed against them: in short, a seemingly essentialist framework (either liberal or hybrid peace) has failed to capture the elusive reality and particularism of the people in conflict-affected zones. For the critics of hybridity, so much as for the critiques of the liberal peace before them, proposals for peacebuilding are enable to be true to difference and overcome hierarchical relations. It seems that critical scholarship are using Connolly’s paradox of ethics to highlight ‘the limited, porous, and problematic character of any particular effort’ to shape peace.\textsuperscript{116}

Rather than retreating from the possibility of international peacebuilding,\textsuperscript{117} however, the trend is to take further responsibility and push towards a form of engagement with the other that shows an even deeper understanding of its historicity, seeking to do so ‘beyond Western ways of knowing culture’.\textsuperscript{118} As Chandler observes, for critical

\textsuperscript{111} Sabaratnam, ‘Avatars of Eurocentrism’, 267.
\textsuperscript{112} Drichel (2008).
\textsuperscript{114} Richmond, for example, argues that ‘what Bhabha refers to as the “in-between space” represents the emergence of hybrid forms of peace’, \textit{Post-Liberal Peace}, 128.
\textsuperscript{116} Connolly, \textit{Identity | Difference}, xi.
\textsuperscript{117} For a defense of retreat of international governance missions, see Olivia U. Rutazibwa, ‘Quid Ethical Retreat? Lessons from Somaliland’.
\textsuperscript{118} Brigg and Muller (2009: 138).
scholars ‘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’. 119 Sabaratnam’s alternative scheme to liberal and hybrid peace frameworks confirms the point. After detecting avatars of Eurocentrism in the critique of the liberal peace, she proposes a ‘decolonising critique’ through ‘an extended appreciation of the historical political presence of societies targeted by interventions, and of forms of rule, power and resistance that existed in the territories concerned’. 120 How different this ‘extended appreciation’ is to other approaches she criticises is unclear. However, I want to call the attention to her new attempt to be respectful towards the other without fixing or essentialising its difference, enabling a non-hierarchical or non-colonial relation.

Like Sabaratnam, other scholars are seduced by the ethical responsibility to further decolonise peacebuilding beyond previous unsuccessful efforts. Drichel’s concern is telling: ‘how can postcolonialism continue to embrace “the other” without simultaneously recycling stereotypes?’ 121 His answer is twofold: first, there is the need to deconstruct current forms of representation that have arrested and fixated the other and subsumed its singularity to abstract categories or concepts. Second, he is willing to go a step further and develop an approach that goes ‘post-the other’ in order to overcome the colonialist traces of previous theories. 122 While Drichel claims to theorise ‘beyond’ existing perspectives, it may well be that he is only reproducing a critique that enjoys being devoured, as in vorarephilic phantasies. This is a critique that finds its pleasure in its irremediable failure. Because if pluralism escapes any ethical approach that wishes to embrace it, the ‘new pluralism’ will soon be ‘old’ for the critics of tomorrow.

Pol Bargués-Pedreny is a post-doc fellow,
Centre for Global Cooperation Research,
Duisburg, Germany, October 9, 2015

120 Sabaratnam, ‘Avatars of Eurocentrism’ 271.
122 Ibid., 588–602.