

Human Security and Liberal Peace

Endre Begby

Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature, University of Oslo

J. Peter Burgess

International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)

Abstract. This paper addresses a recent wave of criticisms of liberal peacebuilding operations. We decompose the critics' argument into two steps, one which offers a diagnosis of what goes wrong when things go wrong in peacebuilding operations, and a second, which argues on the basis of the first step that there is some deep principled flaw in the very idea of liberal peacebuilding. We show that the criticism launched in the argument's first step is valid and important, but that the second step by no means follows. Drawing a connection between liberal peacebuilding and humanitarian intervention, we argue that the problems that the critics point to are in fact best addressed within the framework of liberal internationalism itself. Further, we argue that the development of the notion of human security marks a dawning awareness within liberal internationalism of the kinds of problems that the critics point to, however difficult it may still be to embody these ideas in practice.

Key words: peacebuilding, liberal peace, liberal internationalism, post-conflict reconstruction, democratization, intervention, human security.

I. LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM AND HUMAN SECURITY

The end of the Cold War precipitated a great faith in a new role for moral concern in international affairs. The initial focus of this development was on the concept of humanitarian intervention: the idea that states (or international coalitions of states) could act militarily within the boundaries of another sovereign state in order to defend citizens of that state from grave and sustained human rights abuses from their own government (or from their fellow citizens in cases where their government was unwilling or unable to provide that protection). Later, this idea also came to be supplemented with the notion that the intervening power (or some other representative of the international community) could also rightly assist in the post-intervention reconstruction in that country, in particular, to help implement democratic institutions. The aim of the first form of action would be to stop some grave and ongoing injustice; the aim of the second would be to build fair and sustainable political institutions that would go some way towards preventing such injustices from occurring again. One way of capturing the impetus behind both moves is in terms of the concept of *human security*: the demise of the Cold War, with its threat of nuclear cataclysm, permitted a shift away from an exclusively state-centered notion of security, toward a notion of human security, under which the fate of individual human beings becomes a legitimate concern of the international community.¹

1] Key documents include UNDP 1994 and ICISS 2001.

In this paper, we will be referring generically to these developments as embodying the moral-political outlook of *liberal internationalism*.² While post-Cold War liberal internationalism was taken by many – state-leaders and intellectuals – to inaugurate an entirely new era in international political thinking, critics were quick to point out that neither development was entirely without precedent. First, and most obviously, a line could be drawn connecting it to the Wilsonianism that dominated the post-World War I settlements. But, also, and even less flatteringly, critics would draw a connection back to the era of colonialism. When Western states today are proclaiming their right to intervene in conflicts within sovereign nations and to dictate the terms of the post-conflict settlement, they are again asserting the hegemony of the Western moral-political outlook, and asserting their competence to pass moral judgment on the cultural and political ways of other people.³

Recently, the intense critical debates surrounding the idea of humanitarian intervention seems to have abated somewhat, as the focus has shifted toward the second development; Western “hegemonic” involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, guided by ideals that are typically captured under the heading of the liberal peace, with a focus on democratic institutions, human rights, and economic liberalization.⁴ It is these recent criticisms which will provide our focus here. These criticisms acquire a special sense of urgency from the fact that many, if not most, of the liberal peacebuilding operations undertaken in the last decade have been failures. Determining the exact reasons for such failure in any particular case is, of course, a complex matter. But the critics point quite plausibly to a set of factors that jointly would go a long way towards explaining the failures: the democratic reforms that are sought are implemented in a way that is perceived by its subjects as an imposition from outside of a victor’s justice; it marks a top-down, blueprint approach to peacebuilding, displaying inadequate sensitivity to the actual needs, interests, and self-images of the people on the ground. To this extent, the liberal peacebuilding approach is incapable of securing a lasting peace and can instead be seen as geared more

2] Another coinage, which more strongly emphasizes its historical roots going back to the Stoics and more recently to the work of Immanuel Kant, is *cosmopolitanism*. We choose not to use this term here, in part because it raises assumptions about the debates between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, about which we shall have more to say later.

3] One recent broad-front attack on “neo-imperialism” (or “postmodern imperialism”) is Easterly 2006, notable in particular for its inclusion of development aid in the plethora of ill-conceived Western policies.

4] Our use of the term “liberal internationalism” here is intentionally generic, not distinguishing between “democratic peace” ideals and more encompassing “liberal peace” ideals (i.e., those that involve strong requirements on economic liberalization, in addition to democratization). While the recent emphasis on economic institutions marks an important advance in the study of war and peace (cf. the research summarized in Collier 2007), it is far from clear that rapid free-marketization is the best way to achieve the economic conditions conducive to a stable and peaceful society. However, since this topic reaches well beyond the mandate of the present paper, nothing in what follows will depend on any particular view concerning the role of economic liberalization in peacebuilding efforts.

towards satisfying our own, Western moral sentiments than doing anything good for the target society.

Our analysis will proceed by distinguishing two strands to this recent type of critique: (i) a primary argument offering a diagnosis of what goes wrong when things go wrong in liberal peacebuilding, and (ii) a secondary argument that attempts to distil from the primary argument a negative assessment concerning the very idea of liberal peacebuilding. As we shall argue below, much of what is claimed under the primary argument is quite plausible. However, the secondary argument is not well-founded and in no way follows from the primary argument. In a nutshell, the critics offer perceptive and persuasive diagnoses of the errors of many current efforts at liberal peacebuilding. But these diagnoses point in no decisive way to the bankruptcy of the very idea of liberal peacebuilding. Instead, we will argue that these problems reflect rather the failure of the current *practice* of liberal peacebuilding – primarily its manner of implementation – to adequately reflect the *principles* of the liberal peace. In fact, much of what lends credibility and urgency to the critics' argument is precisely that they implicitly affirm central tenets of the liberal tradition of thought by pointing out how our current practice falls short of these ideals. There will always remain, of course, difficult theoretical and practical questions concerning which role – if any – foreigners can legitimately play in shaping the political institutions of a country, especially when military or economic pressures are involved. But when the argument is presented in terms of a stark opposition between “them” and “us” – “their” political ideals and traditions hegemonically supplanted by “ours” – the critics are, as we shall argue, neglecting the backdrop of recent severe conflict in the country in question. The critics' mode of argument breezily refers to a “they,” whose ideals and interests the foreign technocrats fail to properly take into account. In many cases, this may be true. But it neglects the fact that in many societies recently emerging from conflict, there is no simple “they” to refer to. *Whose* interests and ideals are we talking about? Hutus or Tutsis? Bosnian Serbs or Bosnian Muslims? The critics neglect the fact that in such societies, a large part of the self-image that we are now counseled to take into consideration is sustained by the conflict with the other group. They neglect that in societies emerging from civil conflict, the aim is precisely to erect a political structure that will moderate in a fair and transparent manner between the diverging ideals and interests of these communities. Nothing in the critics' primary argument should dissuade us from thinking that liberal democratic institutions are the ones best suited to achieve this aim, no matter how hard it is to achieve in practice.

II. LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM: HEGEMONY AND NEO-COLONIALISM

In this section we will review some representative samples of the new critique of liberal internationalism, focusing on the critique of post-war reconstruction and democratization efforts. While different critics vary greatly in terms of how radical their critiques are, they typically converge on certain central themes, for instance that post-war democ-

ratization represents a form of victor's justice, a blueprint approach to peace, an imposition from outside of a political and institutional structure that can only work if cultured from within, a hegemonic assertion of the superiority of Western culture and values over local customs and sensibilities. In support of these claims, critics typically refer to the dismal record of post-war peacebuilding operations in recent years. Indeed, to a large extent, critics see themselves as merely drawing the diagnostic lesson from what should be demonstrably clear from the recent historical record itself.

The most important difference between the radical and the more moderate critiques lies in their respective views of how these discouraging results of recent post-conflict peacebuilding efforts stand to the intentions of the Western powers that undertake them. Thus, proponents of a moderate critique will allow that the intentions might be good, and that the end result is simply the consequence of idealist naivety, ignorance of local conditions, and a general lack of understanding of the processes by which political allegiances are formed and sustained. Thus, for instance, Sumantra Bose argues that the "rose-tinted view of benign liberal internationalism dispensing democracy and human rights is deeply naïve, extraordinarily uncritical, and in some versions at least, blindly arrogant" (2005, 323). As damning as this form of criticism is, it still allows that the hegemonic results are, as it were, merely the unintentional byproduct of otherwise well-intentioned (if "deeply naïve") actions.

The contrast with the more radical critique is striking. For on the radical critique, the primary driving force is indeed the establishment or furtherance of hegemony. The proclaimed humanitarian motive is just the empty rhetoric devised to cover up these imperialistic stratagems. Thus, Tim Jacoby argues that "the hegemon uses post-war reconstruction processes as an opportunity to preserve and extend an international order friendly to its principles, its security and its prosperity" (2007, 521). Even this might be tolerable, however, if indeed democratization were a reliable by-product of such reconstruction processes. But this is not the case. For these new post-war reconstruction efforts aim only at a "faux democratization" (Jacoby 2007, 526).

In what follows, we will largely pass over this more radical critique. This is not because it does not deserve an answer, but rather because this radical critique utterly fails to even raise the question that we are exploring here, namely whether post-conflict liberal peacebuilding would be a legitimate effort *if* the alleged humanitarian concerns are indeed the driving force. That is, we want to investigate the claim that there is something intrinsically problematic with such efforts even when they are motivated and executed in the right kind of way.

Thus, we will focus on assessing a more moderate form of critique, one that succeeds in making contact with and challenging the (alleged) ideals and principles of liberal internationalism and the liberal peace. We will let Oliver P. Richmond speak for this more moderate approach. Thus, while Richmond's diagnosis of the actual effects of liberal

peacebuilding efforts is in many ways as bleak those of the more radical critics, he seems clear that this is in spite of, and not because of, the intentions that Western powers put into these efforts:

liberal peacebuilding in post-conflict environments has effectively begun to reinstate social and economic class systems, undermine democracy, cause downward social mobility, been built on force rather than consent, failed to recognize local cultural norms and traditions, and has created a virtual peace in its many theatres. (2008, 1)

Indeed, “IR’s strategic reifications” – among which we may presumably count notions like human security – are so far from providing solutions to conflict torn societies. Instead, they “can be partly blamed for the spiraling of conflicts around the world” (Richmond 2008, 12). Richmond persuasively argues that a large part of the problem is a lack of knowledge of, or at any rate, a lack of sensitivity to, various important local cultural factors – customs, traditions, and the self-images of the people on whom the democratic institutions are to be foisted. The almost exclusive focus on the form of governance – that the “reconstructed” regime be a human rights respecting, democratic regime – “neglects interim issues such as the character, agency, and needs of civil society actors, emotion and empathy . . . The resultant peace is therefore often very flimsy and ‘virtual’ or neo-colonial at best” (Richmond 2008, 1).

Thus, one would think that more knowledge of, and greater sensitivity to, local factors might improve the success rate of the liberal internationalist program. This would allow us to tailor implementation to the specific needs and sensibilities of the relevant subjects, thereby securing the consent that would provide the crucial local legitimacy to the project. At times, this seems to be Richmond’s claim: “What therefore needs to be considered by the peacebuilding community is how to identify the very rights, resources, identity, welfare, cultural disposition, and ontological hybridity, that would entice grass roots actors and individuals to accept the regulatory governance of institutions engendered in any peace emerging from liberal or non-liberal forms of peacebuilding” (2008, 2).

At other times, however, doubt is cast even over this view. Tapping into a line of thought that seems to gain currency in social theory at regular intervals, Richmond argues that “the other” – the subjects of the target community – may be “unknowable,” at least to Western technocrats like us. Such epistemic problems further exacerbate the peacebuilding effort. A paternalist policy is bad enough; a paternalism that does not actually know what is best for its subjects is so much worse:

The discipline’s deeper contest is over how far its right to interpret the other, who may be unknowable at least without a deep investigation of more than simply political and state level structures, extends. But this right is so valuable, particularly in a context of an environment in which peace is defined by hegemony. Partly as a consequence, IR has predicated its disciplinary enterprise on constructing a right for its epistemic communities of policymakers, analysts, academics, officials, and other personnel, to interpret and make policy on behalf of unknowable others. Much of this move has been predicated upon the desire of this community to emancipate the other from war, violence, and unstable political, social, and economic structures. Yet how can we know if and when the other is emancipated? (Richmond 2008, 6)

We note the slight tone of hesitation in this passage. The “unknowability” of the other may, perhaps, be redressed by “deep investigation” that goes beyond “political and state level structures.” Later we shall be asking questions about the relevance and plausibility of such a view. Yet, no matter what we think of this supposed epistemic predicament, there remains a crucial question of how “outsiders” can ever be in a position of legitimately passing policy-forming and institution-forming judgments on what constitutes emancipation for cultural others. For imposing *our* favored notion of good governance from without is the essence of paternalism, whether or not we have the requisite insight into what constitutes emancipation for the people in question. Thus, critics – moderate as well as radical – find the use of terms like “hegemony” and “neo-colonialism” more than merely rhetorical epithets, no matter how benign or “humanitarian” the motivating impulse of the new liberal internationalism might be.

These reflections eventually come to cast doubt even upon the idea of human security itself, in particular, on its right to shape a moral-political agenda of potentially universal validity. As we have seen, the idea of human security is meant to signal a turning away from a state-centered notion of security to one that emphasizes concern for the lives of individual subjects (and sub-state communities of subjects). Moreover, human security also signals a broadening of the notion of security itself, such that it is no longer exclusively concerned with armed violence, but also with other factors that impact on the life quality and prospects of human beings in their everyday life, such freedom from poverty and disease.

At first glance, one would think that these are aims and ideals that the critics would concur with.⁵ Yet its intimate connections with the liberal internationalist paradigm also draw shadows of doubt over the very idea of human security. Thus, Richmond:

Liberal peace projects aim more specifically at building the shell of a state where such structures have failed or never existed at all. Incorporating HS into this liberal peacebuilding project has been taken to effectively legitimate its different strands and discourses, and increasingly has outweighed the interventionary aspects of this project associated with victor’s peace. HS has been utilized by theorists and policymakers in order to fill this empty shell by motivating international and local attempts to deal with issues which impinge upon the individual. This strategy has also had the side effect of legitimizing the state-building project by providing a more humanist dimension, rather than it being merely an exercise in the pacification of warlords or regional states as it sometimes appears. (2006, 78)

In this sense, it can be argued that the human security idea is as much a part of a Western, hegemonic imposition on cultural others as is the original idea of foreign-led post-war reconstruction. In particular, the idea that the rights and needs asserted through the concept of human security are *universal* smacks of just such a hegemony. This leads to the false and unreflective assumption that the human security program dictates political priorities that can rightly be applied or insisted on everywhere. Thus, Richmond: “At

⁵ Cf. Richmond’s sensible claims concerning the need to go beyond “political and state level structures” (2008, 6).

no point in [the UNDP] is there an acknowledgement of multiple conceptualizations of peace, and that the liberal peace might be but one of those; the liberal peace is presented implicitly as an ideal form and ontologically stable. HS provides a framework to guide non-state and state actors in its achievement” (2006, 80). In all of this, supporters of the program overlook – or as the case may be, they realize it, but have no real concern for it – that “making a decision on the basis of pragmatic or idealistic humanitarianism is itself a hegemonic act made by third parties over ‘others’” (Richmond 2006, 82). Noble intentions or not, there are deep and abiding problems with the very idea of foreign involvement in local post-war reconstruction.

III. MEETING THE CRITIQUE

In this section, we will take a first step toward meeting this critique of liberal peacebuilding. In section I, we distinguished between two strands of this critique: (i) a primary argument offering a diagnosis of what goes wrong when things go wrong in liberal peacebuilding, and (ii) a secondary argument offering a negative judgment on the very idea of liberal peacebuilding. This secondary argument proclaims the moral bankruptcy or incoherence of the very idea of foreign involvement in post-conflict reconstruction, at least to the extent that such reconstructions are guided by liberal principles and ideals. It is clear from the flow of the dialectic that it is the observations gathered and conclusions drawn under the primary argument that is supposed to lend support to the secondary argument. Accordingly, the aim of this section is to show that this inference is premature, and that the record of recent failures of liberal peacebuilding operations, although certainly worrying, does not warrant the conclusion that the very idea of such peacebuilding is bankrupt or incoherent. This can be seen from the fact that the liberal internationalist can – and we shall even argue that she ought – take on board the crucial core of the critics’ primary argument, and can do this without in any sense abandoning her commitment to the idea of liberal peacebuilding. The critics’ error is to neglect the fact that the primary argument draws plausibility and urgency from concerns that lie at the heart of the liberal ideal itself. What the argument shows is that the current *practice* of liberal peacebuilding does not adequately reflect the principles and ideals of liberal peacebuilding, not that there is something intrinsically wrong about these principles and ideals themselves. Moreover, we shall argue that not only *can* these concerns be addressed within the liberal internationalist framework; we think it plausible to say that they are also *best* addressed within that framework. In particular, what is required is a better and more clear-eyed appreciation not only of the institutionalized *political rights* that have long defined the core agenda of the liberal ideal, but also of those more intangible but no less important needs that have more recently been added under the heading of human security. It may turn out, then, that human security, so far from being guilty by virtue of its association with the liberal internationalist paradigm, may be just what is needed to redress its shortcomings.

In this sense, our stance is by no means wholly dismissive. On the contrary, we think the liberal internationalist has much to learn from these criticisms. The liberal internationalist cannot claim to be satisfied with the success rate of recent and ongoing liberal peacebuilding efforts. The critics offer an insightful and largely compelling diagnosis of the factors that conspire to make this so: lack of knowledge of – and consequently, lack of sensitivity to – local culture, history, and traditions, and self-images; failure to draw on and incorporate local expertise; a top-down approach where foreigners call the shots and impose, in the shortest amount of time possible, bureaucratic structures that mirror the structure of Western democratic institutions, but fail to achieve even the semblance of local legitimacy.

But the critics have not yet shown that these problems must be endemic to the idea of liberal peacebuilding, or that they are somehow integral to its principles. And indeed it would be odd if they had, since it should be clear that the kinds of concerns that they trade on are concerns that lie at the heart of the liberal tradition itself. When the ideological trappings of the rhetoric are toned down, it is clear that the liberal internationalist and the critics share some fundamental concerns about human freedom and the conditions of its flourishing. When the critic points out that political institutions can hardly be expected to achieve the legitimacy that is required for them to be sustainable if they are imposed in a manner that is insensitive to the needs, interests, and self-images of their would-be subjects, they are clearly speaking to liberal concerns. For being ruled by institutions of foreign origin, insensitive to one's needs, interests, and self-images, is the very antithesis of the liberal ideal, no matter how much those institutions preserve the formal structure of liberal democracy. "Local ownership" of political processes – self-determination – is, without a doubt, the supreme principle of liberal political philosophy. To this extent, there is no disagreement between the liberal internationalist and her critics. The critics are right to ask, however, whether what currently passes as the liberal agenda in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction is in good keeping with this principle. Much of the evidence that they bring to bear on the matter suggests that it is not. But this question bears not on the validity of the liberal ideal – for in a real sense, the criticism implicitly confirms this ideal – but rather on our best prospects for achieving the ideal.

It is striking that the critics never outline an alternative set of principles and ideals for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction. Thus, insofar as they do not argue for a strict non-involvement – that foreigners should never take part in post-war peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in this way⁶ –, we think the current debate is best viewed as a debate not about the validity of the liberal peace as such, but rather about how to conceive of it and how to implement it. Certainly, thinking of it this way allows us to keep the focus where it belongs, namely with human suffering and what to do about it.

Throughout much of this, one receives the impression that the critics are operating with an understanding of liberal philosophy according to which it is simply incapable of absorbing and addressing concerns such as these. Thus, according to a widespread criti-

6] We shall have more to say about this in our next and final section.

cal understanding of liberal thought, liberal political philosophy is exclusively concerned with individual rights of a certain kind, specifically, those individual rights that allow for meaningful implementation in political and bureaucratic structures. In this sense, the current debate intersects with the debate between liberals and communitarians, which has been a mainstay of political philosophy since the 1970s.⁷

Against this background, critics then seem to hold that the liberal internationalist's notion of human security is simply more of the same: it signals an exclusively (or predominantly) individualistic conception of human value and human flourishing, and must thereby fail to address the kinds of concerns that are now at stake, inasmuch as these are concerns about less tangible matters, such as ideals and self-images, and – not least – community claims that might even, in some cases, be in tension with the individual rights asserted by the liberal.

We shall have more to say about the relevance of the liberalism—communitarianism debate in our next and final section. But for now it will suffice to note that while this form of argument certainly points in the direction of a problem that needs to be taken into account, it is wielded here in a very tendentious manner. Balancing the claims of individual and community is the defining problem of modern political philosophy on any reasonable approach to that task. Many liberals have tried to resolve this too decisively in favor of individual rights (perhaps thereby, as the critics allege, implicitly testifying to their Western, individualist bias). But to assert that the liberal approach is incapable – or any less capable than a competing approach – of allowing us to address such conflicting claims in any particular case is unfounded. Indeed, here is where critics neglect that the development of the concept of human security may be part of a solution, rather than just more of the same. For while the concept of human security is certainly rooted in a conception of individual rights and their political priority, it is not insensitive to competing claims as well. Human security beckons us to study the needs of concrete individuals in the concrete settings of their lives. In areas marked by prolonged and bitter conflict, certain material needs will quite naturally take precedence: freedom from persecution and the threat of violence; freedom from poverty, hunger, and sickness. But as human security marks a distinct broadening of the liberal agenda, it is simply wrong to assert that it cannot also accommodate the idea that the needs of human individuals to be part of larger communities is among their *basic needs*, inasmuch as it is through membership in such communities that individuals derive their basic sense of self and the value-sets around which they organize their lives. (Indeed, to the extent that human security makes any suppositions about the relative claims of individual and community, it is merely the negative supposition that the nation-state may not be the primary – or at any rate the only – community to which individuals belong. This is a point on which we take it that the critics would agree.)

7] The communitarian critique of liberalism targeted the re-emergence of rights-based political philosophy in the 1970s, chiefly in Rawls 1971, but also Nozick 1972. Key works in this wave include Walzer 1983, Taylor 1985, and Sandel 1982.

So far, then, we conclude that the critics have failed to provide an argument that brings out a fundamental flaw with liberal internationalism. True, they point to problems and challenges not currently met by liberal peacebuilding operations. These are important practical-political matters that must be addressed. However, the critics have given us no reason to think that they cannot be addressed, and are not in fact *best* addressed precisely within the liberal framework itself. Moreover, there is good reason to think that these are challenges that can only be met on a case by case basis. There cannot be a general solution – liberal or other – to problems of this kind. To this extent, we certainly agree with the critics' observation that what is required is more knowledge and greater sensitivity cultivated for any single case.

The critics suggest no parameters along which to judge the performance of international peacebuilding operations other than those which are part and parcel of the very liberal internationalist paradigm that they purport to criticize (e.g., self-determination and local ownership of political processes). Thus, insofar as they do not intend to rule out the legitimacy of all forms of international peacebuilding efforts, their arguments do not amount to a foundational criticism of the liberal internationalist paradigm, but rather precisely affirm it. The problem lies not, so far as the substance of these criticisms give us any right to assume, with the principles or aspirations of the liberal internationalist paradigm, but rather with the fact that the current practice of peacebuilding operations does not adequately reflect or embody these principles.

In peacebuilding, as in much else, we are prone to seek quick and easy low-cost solutions, where what is required is patience and investment. It might be useful to point to the fact that similar problems often beset humanitarian interventions, with which liberal peacebuilding projects are often connected. Here too, having decided that a particular situation warrants intervention, we are prone to seek low-cost, minimum-risk strategies, thereby spoiling much of what could have been achieved in the process (e.g., high-altitude bombing during the Kosovo intervention). This is tragic, and it does raise the question of whether there is any simple way of balancing the exigencies of intervention with the concern that politicians and military leaders must have for their own citizens and soldiers. Nonetheless, these debates do not – or at least not yet – cast a decisive shadow of doubt over the morality of humanitarian intervention. For that, a very different order of argument would be required; an argument that would show that it would never be right for a foreign power to intervene militarily within the borders of a sovereign nation. In light of a disaster of non-intervention such as resulted in the Rwandan genocide, it is hard to see how such an argument could be made plausible.

IV. CIVIL CONFLICT, INTERVENTION, AND PEACEBUILDING

We ended our previous section by drawing a parallel between the problems that we face in humanitarian intervention and the problems we face in liberal peacebuilding efforts. We intend this not merely as an analogy. In our view, there is a deep connection between the problem of humanitarian intervention and the problem of liberal peace-

building that is all but entirely neglected in much of the recent criticism. The plausibility of the criticism suffers as a result of the lack of appreciation of this connection.

When critics deride the new liberal internationalism as “neo-colonialism,” they argue as if the current peacebuilding operations were entirely motivated by the lack of modern, democratic political institutions in the target country. We are familiar enough with the old justifications for colonialism in terms of “spreading civilization” to understand the nature of this implication. On this view, the mere perception of a “backward state of society” is enough to justify intervention and subsequent liberal reconstruction.⁸

But it cannot plausibly be claimed that this is how most liberal peacebuilding efforts are put in motion today. Rather, most such operations occur in the aftermath of the most severe forms of civil conflict, the consequences of which have typically been considered grave enough to warrant a humanitarian intervention. Since the critics never take on the burden of arguing that so-called humanitarian interventions are *never* justified, they cannot evade the question of how the interveners are to comport themselves in the aftermath of the intervention.

Unfortunately, space limitations prevent us from addressing this question as fully as we would like. However, some cursory remarks are in order. Most of the current literature on intervention takes its cues from Walzer 1977. There, Walzer argues for a strict, but non-absolute rule of non-intervention. The few exceptions that he admits are the ones that we today recognize as the occasion for humanitarian intervention proper – genocide, massacre, and enslavement.⁹ By contrast, Walzer argues for a strict rule of non-intervention in cases that fall short of these levels of abhorrence. This means that foreign powers should in most cases stay out of a people’s struggle for freedom from their own tyrannical government. The reason Walzer offers for this rule of non-intervention is one that we expect will resonate with many of the critics of current liberal internationalism. In a memorable phrase, Walzer writes: “It is not true that intervention is justified whenever revolution is, for revolutionary activity is an exercise in self-determination, while foreign interference denies to a people those political capacities that only such exercise can bring” (1977, 89).¹⁰

Walzer’s argument for non-intervention, and specifically its rather strict conception of the cut-off line for intervention, met with no shortage of criticism.¹¹ The *pro et contra* that ensued is worth a closer study in its own right, but this will have to await

8] We allude, of course, to the infamous passage in Mill [1859] 1989, 13-14, where he goes on to argue that “[d]espotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end”. A similar sounding passage can be found in Mill 1867, 252-253.

9] Shortly after the publication of the book, Walzer also came to admit massive forced displacement as a potential justification for humanitarian intervention. See Walzer 1980, 218.

10] It is worthwhile noting that Walzer’s communitarian argument for non-intervention ultimately derives from an argument given by one of the great historical figures of liberalism, namely John Stuart Mill, in his 1867.

11] Cf. Beitz 1978, Luban 1980, Doppelt 1978, Slater and Nardin 1986.

another occasion. Instead, we will focus on the question of how an intervening power is to comport itself in the aftermath of a justified humanitarian intervention. Walzer's initial answer, as given in *Just and Unjust Wars*, was that the intervening power should retreat immediately upon succeeding in its narrowly circumscribed objective, namely to stop the ongoing atrocities. This, which Walzer would later dub the "in and quickly out test," serves a double objective: first, it exposes nations who seek to use the intervention also to serve their own hegemonic or imperial interests; second, it upholds the line of thought that led us to impose such strong restrictions on intervention in the first place – under no circumstances should foreigners seek to shape the politics and the institutions of a country, either toward or away from democracy. Democratic reforms must emerge organically from within, if they are to emerge at all.¹²

This is a view that Walzer has subsequently recanted – in our view, wisely. Walzer mentions "Uganda, Rwanda, Kosovo, and others" as cases where the "in and quickly out test" cannot be applied in the manner he and many others had envisaged in the 1970s. On his view, these are cases "where the extent and depth of the ethnic divisions make it likely that the killings will resume as soon as the intervening forces withdraw. If the original killers don't return to their work, then the revenge of their victims will prove equally deadly. Now 'in and quickly out' is a kind of bad faith, a choice of legal virtue at the expense of political and moral effectiveness. If one accepts the risks of intervention in countries like these, one had better accept also the risks of occupation" (2002, 246).

About this, Walzer is surely right. In many of the cases that today prompt us to consider the humanitarian intervention, one must be open for the possibility, even the necessity, of a prolonged presence if one is to intervene at all. And here, of course, is where the dialectic of liberal peacebuilding finds its place, and not merely in response to, say, lack of adequate political representation. What one hopes to achieve by such peacebuilding is to erect the foundations of political institutions that could make for a lasting peace. Of course, one hopes for such ideas and institutions to find some resonance with the people on the ground – with their self-images, with their culture and traditions –, for without such resonance one cannot hope that these ideas and institutions will survive or do much good. But in societies recently emerging from conflict, this can realistically only be an *aim* to steer for, not a solution to be applied along the way. For the critics would be wrong to assume that there is a "they" – or at any rate, a single or unique "they" – with whom such institutions must find cultural resonance. A central aim is to help build the kind of cultural and political solidarity whereby one might speak simply of "their" history, "their" traditions, "their" self-images, and so on. Meanwhile, we cannot neglect the fact that in many such situations, the culture and self-images that we are now beseeched to accommodate are forged through a long and bitter history of con-

12] Cf. Mill's argument that liberties bestowed on a people from outside cannot be expected to last long: "if they have not sufficient love of liberty to be able to wrest it from merely domestic oppressors, the liberty which is bestowed on them by other hands than their own, will have nothing real, nothing permanent. No people ever was and remained free, but because it was determined to be so" (1867, 259).

flict with the group they are now trying to build a peaceful future with. When it comes to building for such a future, the critics have given us no reason not to think that fair and transparent liberal democratic institutions are the ones that stand the best chance. Which is not to say, of course, that the task is easy or will always succeed.

endre.begby@gmail.com

peter@prio.no

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