Realising the post-modern dream: Strengthening post-conflict resilience and the promise of peace

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Routledge
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Strengthening the resilience of societies is increasingly becoming the key international organisational policy strategy for addressing situations of fragility and post-conflict and for rectifying the shortcomings of liberal peace approaches, considered to lack respect for local needs and values. By focusing on facilitating resilience, governance approaches are thus moving away from top-down liberal peace models to experiment with long-term, iterative and relational processes, respectful of local alterity. By analytically capturing this shift, this article argues that resilience approaches are increasingly adopting the ethico-political sensibilities of critical understandings of liberal peace, which over the last decade have reclaimed hybrid forms of peace, open to difference. In highlighting the resemblance between policy approaches and academic critiques of liberal peace, two implications are considered: first, the need to reappraise critical approaches that are facilitating current shifts in policy strategy; second, the need to reconsider whether resilience and hybrid peace approaches merely rationalise the failures of international peace-building.

Keywords: resilience; liberal peace; hybridity; culture; difference

Introduction

In 2008, the World Bank introduced a new 'conceptual framework' to deal more effectively with situations of fragility and post-conflict in the Global South, which focused on 'strengthening the resilience of societies to violence' (pp. 1–3). In recent years, other international organisations have also used the framework of strengthening resilience[1] to improve the performance of earlier modes of intervention (Department for International Development [DFID], 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008, 2011a, 2011b; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2012). Within these frameworks, international actors have learnt from the shortcomings of previous top-down, highly interfering and externally driven missions and now adopt a secondary role of facilitation in which local actors are the ones who own and lead the peace- and state-building project. The OECD (2011b), for example, emphasises 'the endogenous nature of the statebuilding process', understood to set 'the limits for external action', proposing forms of 'indirect intervention and facilitation' (pp. 47–48). Resilience approaches (international policy discourses that focus on the strategy of strengthening the resilience of societies) are held to empower marginalised groups and to be more inclusive and respectful of the local population (DFID, 2010, pp. 6–9; UNDP, 2012, p. 12). While resilience has been theorised from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (Bourbeau, 2013, pp. 4–10), the focus here is on the strengthening of resilience in post-conflict situations.

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In academic debates, the burgeoning concern with resilience is often related to the nature of neoliberal governance (Chandler, 2014; Evans & Reid, 2013; Haldrup & Rosén, 2013; Joseph, 2013). This article is less concerned with whether resilience is neoliberal or not and more interested in resilience as a framework through which practices of peace-building intervention have evolved – from the domineering and top-down approach of the liberal peace[2] to the increasing incorporation of ethico-political sensibilities towards the Other. Critiques of liberal peace have highlighted the problem of governing post-war societies from an externally driven perspective and have instead proposed external engagement in process-based, bottom-up, open-ended peace initiatives, more respectful of local alterity (Belloni, 2012; Brigg, 2010; Campbell, 1998; Chandler & Richmond, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2011).

Resilience approaches would seem to meet this demand. In order to illustrate the policy shift from the liberal peace to resilience approaches, I will focus on how these frameworks have conceptualised 'culture', as the lens through which human differences have been understood (Brigg & Muller, 2009, p. 124; Malik, 1996, pp. 128–209). It will be suggested that, while the culture of post-conflict societies was perceived as a problem for consolidating peace throughout the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s (under discourses of liberal peace), culture is increasingly reconceptualised as a tool-kit, to be used positively in resilience approaches, along the lines advocated by the critics of liberal peace.

In this article, I heuristically distinguish three approaches: first, that of 'liberal peace'; second, I outline the critiques of liberal peace; and third, the policy practices of resilience. It is, of course, possible to debate whether or not all three approaches may be classified as 'liberal' (Heathershaw, 2008; Paris, 2010; Richmond, 2011). The concern here, however, is to emphasise the evolution of practices of peace-building governance. The first section thus engages with liberal peace approaches and the dilemmas that emerged after the failures of applying universal understandings of peace in post-conflict societies of the Global South. The second section deals with the conceptual grounding of critiques of liberal peace. Finally, the third section examines resilience approaches, which, building upon the deconstructive logics of the critique of the liberal peace, seek to shape peace-building practice by the means of bottom-up, context-sensitive and iterative actions that embrace the needs and values of post-conflict societies.

The liberal peace and the dilemma of promoting peace in a diverse world

With the end of the Cold War, international and multilateral peace-keeping and peace-building missions were deployed to stabilise conflict-ridden societies. In the early 1990s, these approaches had a clear transnational applicability and were based on a universal concept of peace. This assumed that successful rules and institutions at home could be internationally exported and that wars and other crises in the Global South could be addressed through the promotion of democratisation, the rule of law, human rights and market-led reforms (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 201). The democratisation processes in Latin America and Southern and Eastern Europe seemed to provide democratic peace scholars and practitioners with supportive evidence, enhancing their claims (Diamond, 1995; Gleditsch, 1992; Huntington, 1991). Thus the universal understanding of 'liberal peace' was enthroned as an international policy mantra (Duffield, 2001, p. 10; Paris, 1997, 2004, pp. 40–54).

However, the transnational applicability of the liberal peace started to be questioned both empirically and conceptually as scholars and practitioners engaged with the civil

wars of the 1990s. At the empirical level, the difficulties in establishing prosperous, stable societies and strong political systems after the conflicts prompted a loss of confidence in democratisation processes and universal models for peace (Cooper, 2007, p. 613). Policy-makers increasingly realised that elite-bargaining processes, post-war elections and market-led approaches to stabilisation were not sufficient and indeed often exacerbated the situation. Thus there was a shift to the social pre-conditions for success, for example, through intervention to construct a tolerant and peaceful civil society before processes of liberalisation and democratisation could be sustainable (Carothers, 2002; North, 1990; Paris, 2004).

At the conceptual level, the bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia, in the South Caucasus and in Africa – particularly Somalia, Rwanda and Congo – seemed to lack the clear ideological grounds of 'legitimate' conflicts and to be based upon a 'new' or 'uncivil' rationale dependent on the manipulation of ethnic identities (Kaldor, 1999; Snow, 1996). Kaldor (1999) expressed succinctly what appeared to be a fundamental difference in the patterns of warfare: 'The politics of ideas is about forward-looking projects. [. . .] In contrast, identity politics tend to be fragmentative, backward looking and exclusive' (pp. 77–78). Furthermore, journalistic accounts of the wars emphasised their barbaric and seemingly 'irrational' nature (Kaplan, 1994, pp. 44–76).

In debates assessing the difficulties of peace-building, in the aftermath of the civil wars in the Global South, the concept of *culture* increasingly came to the fore as an explanatory variable for the failure of allegedly universal policy solutions.[3] The fact that democratisation or economic liberalisation failed to stabilise post-war societies led to the conclusion that these societies were *different* and that this difference, culturally framed, had to be taken into account (Malik, 1996, p. 219).

Reflecting upon the wars of the 1990s, many scholars and practitioners recognised that culture – the views and perceptions of a local population and their 'complex psychological attributes' (Avruch & Black, 1991, p. 32) – was constitutive of conflict and, even more importantly, that it could not be ignored in the processes of peace (Avruch, 2006; Avruch & Black, 1991; Eriksen, 1991; Lederach, 1995; Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 1999). Billings (1991, p. 250), for example, compared two Guinean communities with different cultures and concluded that they required diametrically opposed solutions to their conflicts. These analyses were considered a step forward compared to earlier understandings of peace-building that relied on universal assumptions.

In accepting the powerful analytical value of culture as a category – based on a strong normative commitment to honour diverse forms of being – a dilemma confronted peace-building analysts. While Western theorists and practitioners increasingly valorised cultural pluralism at home (Glazer, 1997), nationalist leaders in the Global South were seen to be instrumentally politicising ethnicity[4] as a strategic resource.[5] In short, cultural understandings of conflict introduced a dilemma for international peace-builders: should cultural diversity be safeguarded even if peace processes might be undermined (Shannon, 1995)?

The delicate balance of wanting to respect culture but only insofar as it does not become a barrier to peace is explicitly addressed in the work of Kevin Avruch. An anthropologist interested in conflict analysis, Avruch (2003) criticised universal strategies of peace-building that ignored the importance of culture. 'Undervaluing culture', he suggested, was the 'first type of error' in the practices of conflict resolution which merely focused on the negotiation between the representatives of disputing parties. But an obverse 'second type of error' becomes apparent in the process of trying to overcome the first. In conflicts, in which participants instrumentalised culture to pursue

their goals against another group, analysts risked 'overvaluing culture' (pp. 362–364). Avruch argues that, by placing too much emphasis on ethnic, religious or racial backgrounds, peace practitioners can 'reify culture', 'homogenise groups' and 'essentialise cultural and racial differences' (2003, p. 367). This second 'error' was increasingly problematised in the light of the 'cultural turn'.

Avruch cleverly navigates between the problem of not considering culture and the risk of its reification. He is sensitive to the symbolic worlds of other people and yet aware of the possibility of essentialising them. Avruch (2003) suggests that in the most difficult cases – the conflicts in which groups are divided along identity/difference lines – third parties ought to take a more scientific 'experience-distant' conception of culture that is different from the exclusivist 'experience-near' version used by the participants (p. 355; see also Eriksen, 1991, p. 276). In other words, Avruch concludes that focusing on culture may become an obstacle to peace negotiations and thus advocates a more technical solution to the conflict that is to be found 'outside' in the objective eye of the international practitioner. It is at this point of the argument that Avruch epitomises the liberal sensitivity in war-affected scenarios: initially defending the uniqueness of the participants, but subordinating their difference to universal values (Eriksen, 2001; Shannon, 1995). In short, Avruch places emphasis on the need to comprehend how the social construction of wars differs among societies, but his final appeal to a scientific judgement of the conflict indicates that he still perceives culture to be a barrier to peace.

This ambivalent position of privileging local cultures while still acknowledging the drawbacks of doing so characterised the internationally led peace processes of the former Yugoslavia. These wars had developed as conspicuous cases in which participants instrumentalised culture to divide, expel and even kill other people (Hayden, 1996, pp. 783–801). International administrators, committed to democratisation and multi-ethnicity, opposed ethno-nationalist claims that challenged the territorial settlement and adopted invasive institutional measures to curb representative processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (PIC, 1997; The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1995). The inclination to respect and even to impose diversity, while denying the demands of those allegedly undermining international agreements, was also clear in the context of Kosovo. In Resolution 1244 and subsequent negotiations on the status of the country, the international representatives revealed an explicit respect for pluralism (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 1999). However, the preferences for statehood of the majority of Kosovo's citizens were continually deferred and were subordinated to the achievement of European standards of cultural respect and ethnic coexistence (UNSC, 2007).

These policy debates on power-sharing in Bosnia and Kosovo highlight the dilemmas at the core of liberal multiculturalism. For example, Kymlicka (2001) firmly supports multiculturalism in Western states. However, he suggests that, in order to deal with 'illiberal' minorities in non-Western states, it is necessary firstly to adopt democratic standards and foster tolerance at both national and regional levels and only secondly to grant autonomy to the minorities (p. 355). Otherwise, unless accompanied by a cultivation of personal respect and democratic values, decentralisation or deterritorialisation of power to illiberal groups can only perpetuate the frictions, as they will treat their own minorities violently (Varady, 2001, p. 143).

The crucial point is that throughout the 1990s, culture moved to being a key explanatory variable for policy outcomes and, in the case of policy failures, the culture of post-war societies was considered to be the barrier to international peace-building, which had to be regulated, managed or subordinated to peace implementation strategies.

Even academic critics of peace-building operations shared this assumption. Kaldor (1999), for example, identified a threat to peace and cooperation in the politics of particularistic identities, ubiquitous in the 'new wars'. For Kaldor, the problem in Bosnia was that, on the one hand, nationalist leaders used culture for strategic reasons – identity politics – and fought for power against the civilian population and, on the other hand, international negotiators legitimised the nationalist views with the strategy of partitioning the territory along ethnic lines (p. 58). As an alternative, Kaldor developed a cosmopolitan approach (pp. 112–137). This consisted of removing the nationalist leaders and liberating the cosmopolitan ethics she believed to be intrinsic to the multicultural society of Bosnia.

In conclusion, Kaldor, while critical of peace-building in practice, shared the consensus that the advocacy of universal liberal values was necessary to address the dangerous instrumentalisation of culture for ethno-nationalist purposes. However, the belief in universal, objective, external solutions or viewpoints – such as democratisation and liberalisation, scientific detachment, European norms or cosmopolitanism – dwindled with the persistent crises of peace-building projects. Each failure in the stabilisation of post-conflict societies became interpreted as a shortcoming of universal blueprints. Subsequently, the tendency has been to carefully delve into the human relationships and social practices of the everyday life to search for key answers in the context of a particular society (Paffenholz, 2014). As disputes across ethnic lines could not be resolved by appealing to universal moral judgements, the search for solutions turned instead towards the radical celebration of difference.

The critique of liberal peace: 'Writing against Culture'

Culture became popular in peace discourses precisely when it lost its momentum in anthropology (Vrasti, 2008). During the 1980s, the rise of non-Western anthropological studies was accompanied by a normative predisposition to criticise the reductionism of earlier Western attempts to interpret other forms of life (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 145; Bhabha, 1994, p. 35; Sewell, 1999, pp. 37–38). The ensuing development of an anthropology more attuned to the specificities of other cultures adopted the radical approach of 'writing against culture' or 'disturb[ing] the concept of culture' as such, as a strategy to defy 'homogeneity, coherence and timelessness' (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 152). Because cultures were not closed systems of symbols amenable to generalisations, conceptual comparisons or governmental rationality, anthropologists increasingly adopted narratives of the particular that reconceptualised culture as 'a practice, resistance or tool-kit' (Sewell, 1999, p. 44; see also Bhabha, 1994, p. 2; Swidler, 1986, pp. 273–286).[6] These approaches emphasised culture as a sphere of contingency and emergence that resists any attempt of capture, but that, at the same time, can be used as a resource for solving disputes. The idea of developing 'ethnographies of the particular' to approach other cultures more sensitively, relationally and productively (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 138), thus heavily influenced critical understandings of the liberal peace.

The view of culture as a 'tool-kit' facilitated a critique of liberal peace approaches, cultivating a purportedly emancipatory version of peace that was context-informed and process-based. This can be illustrated through examining Campbell's (1998) work on Bosnia, which criticised the 'problematizations' of the war made by local nationalist leaders, international policy-makers and academics of the time.[7] According to Campbell (1998), these discourses and their simplistic representations of the war as a clash between clear-cut ethnic groups contributed to the 'ethnicisation of the political field' that reduced Bosnia to an intractable tragedy (p. xi). The Dayton Agreements, for example, divided the

Bosnian state into two ethnically separated enclaves, highlighting that for international peace-builders: 'culture is regarded as a naturalised property such that differences are inherently conflictual or threatening and apartheid is legitimised as an antiracist solution' (Campbell, 1998, pp. 161–162; see also Campbell, 1999, p. 400). In other words, when culture is taken as a fixed and immutable category, the only solution for peace seems to be to align identity groups in different territories (Norval, 1996, p. 80). The Balkan peace accords are thereby considered problematic because they reproduce the nationalist imaginary of communities dwelling in homogeneous territories – legitimising population transfers and curtailing the myriad alternative possibilities of being that exist and might exist in the future (Vaughan-Williams, 2006, pp. 513–526). Campbell (1998) relies on his face-to-face encounters with the Bosnian population to question this international policy approach and strive for a non-nationalist option that could be found in 'the complex and contested nature of Bosnian life' (p. 114).

At this point of Campbell's argument, one might expect that his critical take on the reductionism of the international approach to conflict resolution would be followed by a cosmopolitan proposal, such as the one provided by Kaldor (1999, pp. 44–45). Instead, however, Campbell argues that cosmopolitanism or other totalising discourses are forms of dominance and power because they seek to order and embrace the totality of life. For him, these discourses must be equally confronted because by having a transcendental objective they fail to be respectful of difference (Campbell, 1998, p. 205).[8] The lesson to be drawn from Campbell is that any attempt to capture, manage or affirm cultural diversity is in itself unavoidably reductionist, supressing the plurality of human aspirations and forms of existence. Following the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, Campbell (1998) argues that the problem which needs to be brought into focus – thus enabling the contemporary critiques of liberal peace-building – is precisely this 'ontological totalitarianism' (p. 172). In other words, it is the 'totalities' of contemporary liberal peace discourses that Campbell (1998) wishes to resist and therefore advocates 'better political responses attuned to the relationship to the other' (p. xi).

In defence of the Other, Campbell (1998) identifies and rejects the spectre of ontological totalitarianism, haunting both the international community's narrow conceptualisation of peace and other alternatives that similarly 'efface, erase, or suppress alterity' (p. 206). Unlike advocates of the liberal peace, Campbell resists seeing difference as problematic. From this viewpoint, culture and peace have reversed their relation: the problem is not culture, but the hubristic project of peace. The alternative therefore cannot be another peace settlement for Bosnia based on universal values. Instead, Campbell (1998) aspires to 'ethical communities' that remain open-ended, rejecting final representations and identity formations and thereby being responsible for the Other (p. 208). As he puts it:

> Justice, democracy and emancipation are not conditions to be achieved but ambitions to be strived for; they are promises the impossibility of which ensures their possibility; they are ideals that to remain practical must always be still *to come* (1998, p. 207, emphasis in original).

Campbell (1998) condemns the violence that accompanies the efforts to define coherent borders, pursue hegemonic identities or make universal truth claims. Instead, he proposes to think of peace in Bosnia as a 'promise' – in the Derridean sense – which remains yet 'to come'; something which can never be 'institutionalized', but which symbolises the 'ad infinitum of nomadic movements' (p. 202).[9] This iterative approach without ultimate end seeks to avoid the violence present in linear peace plans with a final goal. In so doing, it

opens up the possibility of interpreting peace initiatives as never-ending processes of contestation dedicated to the affirmation of difference – or 'différance'.[10]

Today, this ethico-political sensibility (Campbell, 1998, p. 4; see also Campbell & Schoolman, 2008) – the embrace of difference and the problematisation of the totalities of existing discourses – pervades critical understandings of the liberal peace. These approaches discard the state-centric, universalistic and domineering nature of the liberal peace and point to the limitations of governing post-war societies from an external (Western) perspective, which is seen as top-down and invasive (see Richmond, 2010). Contra Avruch (2003), Kymlicka (2001) or Kaldor (1999), analysed in the previous section, critics argue that there can be no superior, scientific or neutral viewpoint in practices of peace-building. For example, Brigg and Muller (2009) criticise Avruch for appealing to universal standards to resolve conflicts in which culture is a sensitive issue:

> Avruch is correct to note that the use of culture is (sometimes) strategic, but by doing so he risks delegitimising the arguments and culture of the "players" while prioritising the frameworks and (social science) approaches of the (Western) conflict resolution academic and analyst. (p. 129)

Brigg and Muller (2009, p. 131) argue that there is no position from which to privilege one way of interpreting a dispute over another. Such a position would court the dangers of imposing a hierarchical relation between the West and other cultures, as well as ignore or marginalise alternative frameworks for making peace.

These critical perspectives thus focus on the logics and dynamics of the local context to reveal the shortcomings of universalist liberal governance approaches. Yet this position does not imply a romantic defence of all the norms or values that emanate from the local (Campbell, 1998, pp. 196–207; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 149). As Richmond (2011) recommends, 'culture should not be re-essentialised nor necessarily perceived as a benign site of agency' (p. 184). When analysing peace initiatives in the Balkans, for example, these critical approaches do not support local ethno-nationalist agendas (Devic, 2006; Franks & Richmond, 2008). For them, since peace can neither be designed from a solid Archimedean point nor from the local in an unreflective manner, the way forward is to cultivate self-reflexivity and a constructive relationship between multiple international and local actors.

In result, peace-building consists in 'an iterative process' driven by diverse local actors and international partners that 'has no end point' in order to disarticulate static and thereby hierarchical positions (Brigg & Muller, 2009, p. 137).[11] As Drichel (2008) explains, 'iterability – as the temporal logic upon which hybridity relies – has an immediate ethical appeal' because 'it offers the possibility to reintroduce, quite literally, the sense of alterity that has been disavowed in the stereotype as a fixed form of otherness' (pp. 601–602). It is the anti-essentialist process, the iterative practice or as Duffield (2007) puts it, 'the unscripted conversation' that is considered crucial to solve the deficiencies of the liberal peace (p. 234). Hybrid formulations, as the dynamic interaction between local and international actors, are thus seen as emancipatory and more respectful and inclusive of local needs (e.g. Mac Ginty, 2010, p. 392; Peterson, 2012; Richmond, 2009, p. 565). In these frameworks, it is counterproductive to design a peace plan in advance or out of context. This is because practices and experiences of the everyday become an unlimited resource or tool-kit to be explored (Richmond, 2011, 27–30). As Abu-Nimer (2001) observes, 'religion can also bring social, moral, and spiritual resources to the peace-building process', in her study of inter-religious conflicts that is paradigmatic of an attempt to revise the use of culture in peace-building settings (p. 686).

To sum-up this section, critical understandings of the liberal peace contest universal or hegemonic discourses on the basis that no representation can exhaust the rich diversity of human life. Following anthropological insights, these approaches reinterpret culture as a tool-kit to be drawn upon, rather than a problem that needs to be managed or solved through outside intervention. Within these emancipatory frameworks, peace-building is projected as a joint endeavour that seeks to care for the Other but, at the same time, takes cognisance of the violence that goes with any advance to demarcate the Other.[12] In this regard, there is a 'promise' to do justice to the Other that can never be fulfilled; a 'promise' to which every attempt to reach it, or even name it, becomes a betrayal of it.[13] This is a form of 'writing against culture' – of affirming difference without representing it – and it has become a deliberate move to respect both culture and peace. The following section considers how through the discourse of resilience, these abstract reflections have been increasingly turned into concrete strategies for peace-building as leading international policy actors – such as the EU, OECD, UN and World Bank – have incorporated these sensibilities.

The community 'to come': enhancing resilience and the promise of peace

Policy analysts involved in international peace interventions are increasingly focusing on resilience as a strategy, moving away from universal and top-down liberal peace frameworks and increasingly adopting the post-structuralist sensibilities outlined above. Here, I address how resilience approaches have sought to radicalise difference, shifting from essentialist understandings of culture as an obstacle to adopting a constructivist interpretation of culture as a tool-kit. I then highlight two implications of this: first, the need to reinvigorate academic critical perspectives, which, far from opposing current governance frameworks, appear to reinforce and further their logics; and second, the need to suggest that the apparently progressive project of resilience, in fact, masks a deep disillusionment with emancipatory projects.

Reinterpreting culture to enhance resilience

International policy actors place a much greater emphasis on the different socio-cultural dynamics of societies intervened upon and have consequently reoriented their strategies on the assumption that no single model is internationally valid (Haldrup & Rosén, 2013; Paffenholz, 2014; Pouligny, 2005). As the World Bank (2011) admits, its own reports can no longer be read as if they were 'a cookbook that prescribes recipes' because 'every country's history and political context differ, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions' (p. 247). Similarly, for the UNDP (2012), 'there is no single template' and, therefore, 'a unifying principle is that in every setting, approaches must be shaped by context' (p. 41). Today, it has become a truism to say that context is important and that the history, politics and culture of societies have to be carefully studied to guarantee the success of external interventions (International Peace Institute, 2009). For example, it is believed that the failure of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq was, in part, due to 'the inadequate understanding of both Iraqi culture and the complicated internal political relationships that existed among and within various Iraqi groups' (World Bank, 2011, p. 196). It is for this reason that organisations such as Armed Violence Monitoring Systems, Conciliation Resources, International Alert or Peace Direct are progressively incorporating detailed analyses of local actors into their programme planning for strengthening resilience (Ganson & Wennmann, 2012, p. 7).

The idea that people are different and that this difference – broadly framed in terms of culture – is a decisive factor in understanding war and peace was also prominent during the debates of the 1990s (Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 1999). However, in conflict-affected environments, culture was usually deemed problematic – particularly in cases in which questions of ethnicity or religion had been violently mobilised – and liberal peace frameworks tended to appeal to external or out-of-context solutions to design peace. By contrast, contemporary policy approaches, which affirm that there can be no universal blueprints, are compelled to view local alterity in much more positive terms.

The crucial point to note is that resilience approaches, similar to critical perspectives of the liberal peace, start from the assumption that difference exceeds the possibility of governing from an outside perspective (Kaufmann, 2013, p. 67; see also Campbell, 1998; Connolly, 2002). The focus on enhancing resilience thus can be interpreted as a strategy that takes a constructivist interpretation of culture as a resource to be used positively in an endogenous peace-building process, respectful of pluralism.[14] The constructivist understanding of culture can be seen in the contemporary reports of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which reinterpret culture as a 'complex web of meanings': as an 'evolving dynamic force' that is 'acquired through the process of cultivation' and facilitates development (UNESCO, 2010, p. 2).[15] For UNESCO (2010), 'culture builds resiliency by reinforcing the abilities of people to be innovative and creative especially in the adversity of disasters and conflicts' (p. 7). Other international organisations similarly understand culture as a tool-kit to build resilience, even if these rarely refer to culture explicitly when pointing to the fact of difference.[16] This 'silence' with regard to 'culture' implies an attempt to write beyond (or against) culture – assuming that difference cannot be represented (even with the concept of culture) – enabling policy actors to be seen as embracing difference more genuinely (see further Carrithers, Candea, Sykes, Holbraad, & Venkatesan, 2010, p. 175).

This positive consideration of the specificity of the local is illustrated in international organisational claims that the resources necessary for peace-building already exist in the socio-cultural milieu of conflict-affected communities. As a recent UNDP annual report explains:

> Despite escalating violence amongst pastoral communities in north-eastern Kenya, UNDP observed the pressures applied by mothers on their sons to assume greater roles in cattle raiding. After a comprehensive assessment, UNDP worked with local groups to re-engineer prevailing attitudes by urging mothers to assume roles as 'ambassadors for peace'. (2012, p. 91)[17]

Elsewhere, the UN has similarly asserted that 'women and girls are the [in]visible force for resilience' (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2012). In the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, which were initially framed in a top-down liberal peace perspective, the international organisation SaferWorld (2013) argues that its initiatives now 'help communities to build on the resources and skills *they already have* to address their security concerns' (emphasis added). In fragile situations, international actors barely do more than to help life follow its course, as there is a widespread perception that communities learn by themselves, use local networks of knowledge, offer protection from dangerous threats and adapt to unpredictable violence (De Weijer, 2013; Kraus, 2013).

On the assumption that difference exceeds the possibility of external governance and wishing to privilege difference over universal norms, peace- and state-building are increasingly transformed into much more relational processes, in a shift that echoes the post-structuralist logics considered above. The OECD (2011b) writes:

> When Technical Assistance personnel are *outside* of government structures, engagement and ownership by the partner country tend to be low and accountability diffused. Agreeing with national counterparts on the parameters for the delivery of assistance may take time. Until then, small, *iterative* activities are best to give the development partner time to better understand the context and agree with the partner country on where outside assistance can be most useful.' (p. 86, emphasis added; see further De Weijer, 2013, p. iv)

For the OECD (2011b), because there are 'limits as to what the international community can and should do', 'statebuilding is first and foremost an endogenous process' (p. 11). International institutions increasingly acknowledge the limitations of traditional top-down approaches and have began to experiment with innovative and bottom-up models to take cognisance of nonlinear dynamics (Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, 2013; Kaufmann, 2013; Kraus, 2013).

In current peace-building settings, therefore, there is a shifting responsibility from international stakeholders to local actors. Rather than international administrators copying and implementing programmes that have been successful elsewhere, the policy strategy of enhancing resilience 'needs to be firmly embedded in national policies and planning' (European Commission, 2012, p. 2; see also Chade, 2012, p. 4). In policy documents, there is a growing emphasis on the principle of local ownership – understood in terms of endogenous or internal social processes – which is indicative of the increasingly perceived limits of external policy intervention:

> National ownership of the development and governance agenda is a bedrock principle of UNDP and many of its partners. Notwithstanding the crucial role of external donors and agencies, UNDP recognises that the transition from fragility to durable peace and stability is primarily an internal process. (UNDP, 2012, p. 101)

While the idea of 'ownership' has been present in international documents at least since the end of the 1990s, the meaning of 'ownership' has transformed from being the end goal of the process, which justified interventionist practices (Chesterman, 2007, p. 7), to being understood as the process itself (OECD, 2011a, pp. 20, 45). Indeed, at odds with earlier liberal peace frameworks, the propensity is to adopt a self-critical position and admit as a 'lesson learnt' that local ownership needs to be recognised as even more 'real' (Ganson & Wennmann, 2012, p. 6; see also OECD, 2011a).

Within a framework that recognises the priority of locally owned processes and interactions, external organisations have limited their role to acts of 'support', 'facilitation', 'nurturing', 'indirect intervention' or 'work in the background' (OECD, 2011b, p. 47). One commentator goes even further to argue that 'the best external actors can do is to try and "nurture processes to enhance resilience" rather than "build resilience" (or any more active verb that could be used)' (De Weijer, 2013, p. 13). This transformation of the role of external actors is also encapsulated in the motivation to 'do no harm' – in the sense of not making things worse – and the policy recommendation of being aware of both the 'intended and unintended consequences of their interventions' (OECD, 2010, p. 3; see also De Carvalho, De Coning, & Connolly, 2014, p. 2).

However, it is important to see that even if resilience approaches prioritise local attitudes and knowledge, to overcome the drawbacks of the liberal peace, they do not fall into the trap of cultural relativism (Chandler, 2014, pp. 107–110). The strategy of enhancing resilience does not imply support for 'illiberal' practices of local groups or potentially exclusivist discourses (e.g. religious fundamentalism). In peace-building practices, along the lines of hybrid peace proposals (Belloni, 2012; Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2011), the efforts to build resilience are translated into a fruitful 'joint endeavour' between donors, agencies, community leaders and diverse members of civil

society (UN, http://jplg.org/). According to the UNDP (2012, pp. 98–111), partnerships are flexible and open, diverse, overlapping, heterogeneous and transnational. International and local actors are involved in processes of 'deep appreciation without pre-conceived or fixed ideas' (OECD, 2011b, p. 36), in which they are seen to learn and adapt reflexively by thinking critically about their positions and roles (Capacity.Org, 2010).

To sum up, contemporary policy approaches are seeking to correct top-down liberal peace models. This way forward for building peace and respecting other ways of living adopts a constructivist understanding of culture as a tool-kit for facilitating resilience. Rather than intrusive models of intervention, peace-builders adopt a subtler role of support or facilitation of local actors, using their everyday resources, who are seen as the real 'owners' of an endogenous peace-building process. The result of this new policy interpretation of peace-building is comparable to the hybrid forms of peace put forward by the critics of liberal peace: both policy-makers and their critics are willing to be more inclusive, flexible and participatory and there is the projection of a 'pluralised ethos of peace' that eschews violent dichotomies and transcends the dangers of universalism and cultural relativism (Chandler, 2014, p. 105; Ganson & Wennmann, 2012, p. 17; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2015, p. 7).

The exhaustion of critique and the 'promise' of resilience

This analysis of the international institutional incorporation of critical approaches has a number of important implications. The first is the need to consider what is at stake in the fact that critical approaches, such as hybrid peace formulations, seem to be reproducing international policy frameworks. Does it matter that rather than proposing alternative ways of thinking about peace, critical approaches add legitimacy to ongoing policy reinterpretations of peace-building, based on context-informed, bottom-up and iterative processes between multiple actors? The second implication derives from the fact that the project of embracing difference appears to stem from the disillusionment with the application of universal understandings of peace-building in countries affected by war. The project of facilitating resilience, which seeks to be more appreciative of other cultures than liberal peace models, highlights the perceived inability of international organisations to lead, design or implement peace agreements and foster meaningful policy advances. While this inability to foster international peace could be a seen as a problem and a matter of concern, throughout the 2000s policy-makers and critical academics have learnt to live with and, in fact, to celebrate this failure.

Critical scholars of liberal peace-building – who have pointed at the irreducible specificity of the local to highlight the problem of governing from an outside perspective – have either downplayed or have ignored the international institutional policy focus on resilience. Brigg (2013), for example, welcomes 'the relational sensibility' turn in policy approaches but wonders whether it might be 'a type of diffuse tyranny' in which international organisations still dominate the peace process (p. 17). For others, the focus on strengthening resilience is only a rhetorical shift that is not respected in practice (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, pp. 775–779). Critics insist that peace-builders ought to engage even more sensitively with the socio-cultural dynamics of post-war societies (Brigg & Muller, 2009, p. 137; Richmond, 2009, p. 566).

For the critics, top-down liberal models are always alive and well – the key is to develop 'an extended appreciation of the historical political presence of societies targeted by interventions' (Sabaratnam, 2013, p. 271) or to move 'beyond Western ways of knowing' culture and peace (Brigg, 2010, p. 341; see also Drichel, 2008). For instance, in

the context of the former Yugoslavia, whatever policy-makers do to go beyond ethnic engineering (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, 2009, pp. 6–7; Stroschein, 2008, p. 665), the critics can always request even more all-encompassing peace projects that could respect the rich variety of cultures of the region (Lehti, 2014, p. 101; Popolo, 2011). However, the increasing similarity between policy and critical frameworks blurs the possibility of contesting the policy-making assumptions in contemporary peace-building settings. If anything, it appears that critical academics are pushing policy-makers to develop resilience thinking further.

Critiques of liberal peace opened up the possibility of rethinking peace-building attuned to the Other (e.g. Campbell, 1998) but appear to have been co-opted by contemporary policy-makers in their focus on resilience. The response of critical scholars seems to be to argue that greater sensitivity is still possible and necessary, clinging onto the notion that difference will always exceed any attempt to govern it.[18] But this assumption and the gesture of seeking to approach peace-building ever more sensitively may also be considered as the 'promise' of resilience approaches (see Campbell, 1998, p. 202). Therefore, in order to formulate a meaningful critique of resilience approaches that could identify its flawed assumptions and potentially improve the practice of contemporary peace-building, scholars may need to shift gears. Rather than uttering 'difference' in an attempt to criticise peace-builders, critical approaches could, for example, highlight the problems of governing other societies within a 'post-modern' policy framework that is increasingly suspicious of peace agreements, majority rule or final decisions over territorial and national sovereignty.

The close resemblance between international policy approaches of resilience and critiques of liberal peace leads to a second implication: that this convergence is less a sign of a radical shift in international policy-making than a critical retreat from the universalist aspirations of the international peace movement. For the critics as well as for international policy-makers, there has thus been a reversal of the problematic of peace-building: first, in the 1990s, universalist understandings were displaced by pluralist and problematic understandings of culture; and second, through the 2000s, the problem came to be understood as universalism itself. Thus very little is left of any international or universalist peace project (see Malik, 1996, p. 265; Scott, 2003, p. 111).

The 'humbleness' expressed in the strategy of enhancing resilience and the predisposition to value the knowledge of the local – in detriment of externally driven proposals for peace – is considered to be the strength of current governance frameworks. Thus peace-building has (normatively) been turned upside down. Writing at the end of the 1990s, Avruch (2006) argued that placing too much emphasis on difference contained a potential problem of 'intertranslatability': of finding ourselves 'in the sealed cylinder of a postmodern solipsism' (p. 10). Today, Avruch's fear of losing the possibility of conceptualising peace if we disposed of notions of universality is not a concern for contemporary peace-builders. Without preconceived goals, practitioners embark upon iterative processes that are continuously recalibrated. As the UNSC (2009) argues, building peace 'is intended to be an iterative process, which can be initiated rapidly and successively expanded and detailed over time, with greater national involvement and ownership' (p.14).

The idea of intervening with caution and wariness goes hand in hand with the assumption that resilience approaches are better practised without fixed goals. As the OECD (2011b) writes: 'external actors need to acknowledge that the ideal end-"state" they aim for is but a distant prospect in many circumstances' (p. 22). The World Bank (2011) asks for 'time and patience' as the remedies for success (p. 193; see also OECD,

2011a, p. 45). The belief is that, by deferring the end of the process and promoting practices of iteration (in opposition to liberal peace interventions that had a clear diagnosis and firm goals to be achieved in a delimited time frame), multiple international and local actors may work on a more inclusive peace that is sensitive to difference. It might well be, therefore, that the nightmare of liberal peace frameworks – the difficulties of achieving peace settlements – is turning into a post-modern dream in which the state of resilience will constantly remain 'to come'. It is in this sense that the self-congratulatory dream of enhancing resilience, ennobled by academic critics of the liberal peace, is at the same time the end of international peace-building: peace can hardly be conceptualised and agreements or settlements are constantly deferred and problematised.

Conclusion

This article has explored the growing focus on strengthening the resilience of post-conflict societies as an international policy strategy to promote peace. I have argued that resilience approaches have moved away from top-down liberal peace models of intervention, prevalent throughout the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, and are increasingly incorporating the sentiments of critical understandings of the liberal peace, which over the last decade have called for hybrid proposals more attuned to the needs and values of societies intervened upon. In contemporary post-war settings thus iterative and relational processes understood as 'owned' by local actors have replaced the earlier invasive attitudes of international organisations. A widespread assumption is that 'it is crucial for development partners to step back, work in the background and, as appropriate, dilute their own relative role to domestic actors' (De Carvalho, De Coning, & Connolly, 2014, p. 4; OECD, 2011b, p. 47).

I have illustrated this shift by focusing on how culture – broadly taken as the lens to know human differences – has been differently conceptualised within contemporary policy frameworks. While liberal peace approaches privileged a hierarchical under-standing of universal values and therefore viewed the different beliefs and norms of conflict-affected societies negatively, resilience approaches – along the lines of critiques of the liberal peace – consider the socio-cultural elements of these societies as positive resources to be facilitated. Today, rather than exporting universal values the question is 'how can external actors provide such a society with the space it needs to allow its own resilience to emerge and for the country to achieve sustainable peace?' (De Carvalho, De Coning, & Connolly, 2014, p. 2).

By capturing the shift from liberal peace models of intervention to resilience frameworks, I have concluded with two implications for further research on resilience. The first is that critiques of liberal peace-building, which once identified the limits of top-down interventions and called for peace processes more sensitive to the Other (Campbell, 1998), are today reinforcing the logics of current governance frameworks. Critiques of peace-building should therefore be reappraised in the light of the rise of resilience policy approaches: instead of issuing an appeal to practitioners to have greater self-reflexivity or a deeper appreciation of the local (a move already embraced by practitioners), critiques could usefully focus on the problems or costs of intervening in a seemingly 'post-modern' framework. The second implication is that the project of resilience reflects a predisposition to rewrite the failures of the recent past. The apparent step forward towards embracing difference thus should not blind us to the retreat from the goals of international peace-building: within resilience approaches, it is increasingly difficult to know about peace, to

promote structural changes or reach final agreements. It is not hard to see, therefore, that end of the liberal peace leaves as many problems as it solves.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Notes

1. Definitions and usages of the concept of resilience vary, but the OECD (2008) is representative in understanding resilience as key to post-conflict peace-building: 'Resilient states, in contrast [to states that suffer from fragility], are capable of absorbing shocks and transforming and channelling radical change or challenges while maintaining political stability and preventing violence' (p. 78). It is important to add that it is not only 'states' that are considered to move along the continuum of fragility/resilience in the documents analysed here, but also people, communities, societies, individuals or cities.

2. The term 'liberal peace' is used in the literature to designate the governance project to transform post-war societies of the Global South into liberal and democratic societies (Dillon & Reid, 2000; Duffield, 2001, pp. 10–11; Paris, 1997, 2004). While resilience approaches are a continuation of these projects, I contend that frameworks of governance have shifted from a reliance on top-down mechanisms to relational and bottom-up processes of peace-building.

3. The focus on culture in peace studies correlates with a broader trend in the social sciences towards the investigation of how culture affected social relations – 'the cultural turn' (i.e. Geertz, 1973; Lapid & Kratochwil, 1997; North, 1990; Steinmetz, 1999).

4. The concept of ethnicity was read as the instrumentalisation of culture for a specific struggle (Eller, 1999, p. 42), and as such became a decisive element in the academic and policy explanations of the civil wars of the 1990s. The literature on ethnicity and ethnic conflict can be loosely divided between 'essentialist' accounts, in which ethnicity is a fact or a given (Connor, 2004), and 'instrumental' or 'constructivist' accounts, in which ethnicity is socially constructed (Eller, 1999).

5. Eller (1999, pp. 47–48), for example, distinguishes between defending culture or cultural rights legitimately and 'using' culture as a 'weapon' to achieve particular interests. This second perspective refers to the civil wars in which culture is politicised as ethnicity in order to create clear-cut opposing groups. Eller's distinction, therefore, illuminates the challenge facing policy-makers and academic commentators at the time: how is one to pursue peace, if culture is a necessary and productive analytical lens to overcome war and yet, at the same time, it has become the most divisive element for participants in the conflict? I contend that it is precisely over this question that liberal peace advocates and their critics divide.

6. For example, Swidler (1986) reinterprets culture 'as a tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems' (p. 273).

7. Following Foucault, Campbell means by problematisation the approach of thinking of something in terms of problem and solution. One of the aims of his book is to problematise the problematisations that reduce Bosnia into an ethnic problem-solution (1998, p. x).

8. See also Connolly's (2002) work on pluralism and in particular what he calls 'the paradox of ethicality'. This is the paradox that, while we need standards of ethics, no standard can truly protect difference (p. 12).

9. Notice that Campbell (1998) does not use 'peace initiative' or 'peacebuilding' in his ethos of affirmation because he wishes to avoid the 'totalitarian' risk entailed in the design of any plan

for peace. Rather, he uses 'justice' as an aspiration that is always ongoing and thus evades final closure.

10. Derrida's (1982) notion of 'différance' philosophically underpins the subversion of hegemonic discourses that seek to capture difference, undermining any grounds of stabilisation (p. 26).

11. Following Derrida, Campbell (1998) also puts emphasis on using the strategy of 'iteration' that consist on 'processes of repetition without having to invoke a prior ideality'. This practice, for Campbell, 'is always linked to alterity' (p. 200).

12. Campbell (1998) makes this point when he explains his two main contributions: 'the ethos of deconstruction thought can appreciate the contradictions, paradoxes and silences of political problems in a complex world', (but, at the same time, it) 'calls for an ongoing political process of critique and invention that is never satisfied that a lasting solution can or has been reached' (p. 242).

13. In these critical framings, having no end is viewed as positive. As Connolly (1993) states, our 'sickness' resides in a 'quest to reach the end of a trail which has no terminus' (p. 138).

14. Rather than taking a reductionist notion of culture, international organisations are committed to the deconstruction of cultural divisions. For example, the UNDP (2012) seeks to create 'unique safe spaces for interaction of youth across identity-based cleavages' (p. 71) and the OECD (2008) wishes to 'appeal across factional divides' (p. 81).

15. Also, see how UNESCO (2009, p. 2) is committed to diversity, but not to the perpetuation of any particular or static form of diversity.

16. See the discussions on the 'ontological turn' in the field of anthropology, for example, the debate on whether 'ontology is just another word for culture' (Carrithers, Candea, Sykes, Holbraad, & Venkatesan, 2010).

17. The focus on informal mechanisms to enhance resilience clearly has implications for gender in practices of peace-building (such as 'mothers' taking a leading role). This is a by-product of the assumption that 'harnessing and strengthening formal and informal mechanisms to mediate and negotiate grievances is central to ensuring resilient social relations' (UNDP, 2012, p. 91).

18. Campbell already told us, following Derrida, that every 'decision' is necessarily 'unjust' to difference, as it is a 'finite moment' that 'cuts' the infinite realm of the 'undecidable' (1998, p. 186).

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