

## Book reviews

***Liberal peace transitions: between statebuilding and peacebuilding.* By Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2009. 240pp. £60.00. isbn 978 0 74863 876 5.**

This book provides a set of illuminating insights (both empirical and theoretical) from the study of a series of post-Cold War 'liberal peace' interventions. Oliver Richmond and Jason Franks use the theoretical framework developed in parallel by Richmond (*The transformation of peace*, Palgrave, 2005) to analyse post-conflict international interventions in Cambodia, Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo and the Middle East, from which they draw a number of lessons (for both policy-makers and academics) about recent developments in liberal peace discourse and policy practice.

They open the book with a typology of liberal peace interventions, using three gradations: from the more authoritarian 'conservative' model of top-down coercion, operationalized by military intervention, political conditionalities and state-led peace; through the 'orthodox' model, more sensitive to the need for liberal institutions and local ownership; and, finally, the 'emancipatory' model, which assumes a more critical epistemological stance, focusing on bottom-up approaches and willing to challenge liberal orthodoxies through prioritizing social justice and people's needs, thereby giving far more space for local agency. The authors note that in many cases there appears to be an attempt to shift along this spectrum as external interveners seek exit strategies and search for locally sustainable solutions. However, attempts to shift from conservative to more emancipatory models have failed. This book sets out to explain why.

Richmond and Franks argue that interventions under the rubric of the liberal peace have remained predominantly within the conservative spectrum because of the subordination of the liberal peace to the perceived needs and practices of the international state-building agenda. This agenda is one which is state-centric, puts the needs of security first and is oriented around the promotion of the 'neo-liberal' market. For the authors, this is a betrayal of the emancipatory aspirations of liberal peace and an approach that is counter-productive. The initial starting assumptions and policy practices of the conservative statist and securitizing approach appear to make any future transitions along the path to emancipatory peace much more difficult. Here the concept of hybridity plays an important role.

From the case-studies covered, the authors argue that the liberal peace approach adopted under the conservative influence of state-building discourses has tended to produce hybrid outcomes. This hybridity is in many senses the worst of both worlds, the neo-liberal and statist and security excesses of the international liberal peace agenda, and the manipulation of this at the local 'non-liberal' level, highlighted through corruption, elite capture and blockages of reform. The outcome is that the local voices, capable of expressing the needs and interests of social justice and addressing the causes of conflict, remain doubly marginalized. This hybrid outcome of external intervention, they argue, is unlikely to lead to emancipation; instead it

secures and legitimizes the power of local elites (uninterested in progress) often with the complicity or connivance of international interventionists, who are happy to allow elite rule on the grounds of maintaining stability. They argue that this explains why the liberatory promise of the liberal peace is so often reduced in reality to merely the stabilizing regulation of negative peace. Even worse, this stability will be continually threatened by the re-emergence of the original causes of conflict, which are not touched upon by the conservative governance framework of international actors working in collaboration with local elites.

Unlike many authors who take a critical approach to the liberal peace, Richmond and Franks do not shy away from making policy recommendations. They suggest that the liberal peace should free itself from the conservative state-building agenda and that policy actors should focus on an emancipatory form of liberal peace. This would also create a hybrid result, but instead of the worst of the liberal and non-liberal worlds, it would be a more positive outcome where liberal aspirations towards emancipation give full recognition to the needs and interests of local civil society. In this way the root causes of poverty and social injustice could be addressed and the hybrid outcome could enable moves along the path to emancipatory peace. Hybridity between the external 'liberal' interveners and the 'non-liberal' local actors would result in both cases. The fundamental difference is that one form of hybridity—that of the liberal peace as currently practised under the domination of state-building prerogatives—merely reproduces the conditions of conflict, while the other form of hybridity—tentatively theorized here as that of a 'post-liberal' peace (pp. 208–14)—creates a platform through which international and local actors can work together to reconstruct post-conflict societies through a renewed 'social contract' based on the needs and interests of the local societies themselves.

Richmond and Franks offer a radical critique of the policies and practices of the liberal peace but, interestingly, do not attempt to escape from the problematic which they set out to critique. The 'post-liberal' peace outlined in the substantial concluding chapter is designed to address the problems and shortcomings of international 'liberal' social engineering of post-conflict societies rather than to reject the assumptions of the liberal peace tout court. The problematic remains that of the encounter or mediation between the 'liberal' interveners and the 'non-liberal' subjects of intervention. The critique concerns the practices, techniques and understandings through which this encounter takes place. This is a call not for less intervention or even for less 'societal engineering' but for this to be done more reflectively and to be 'predicated upon an intimate understanding of everyday life and individual political agency and needs in each context, and what a peaceful everyday life might be facilitated by' (pp. 209–11). The implications of critical work within the liberal peace problematic and what critical policy advocacy might entail with regard to our understandings of both local agency and the repoliticization of post-conflict policy practices are thereby the fundamental critical questions raised by this book.

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