6

Against Hybridity in the Study of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

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Introduction

In recent years, 'hybridity' has emerged as a fashionable concept, primarily used for describing the outcomes of the interaction between international interveners and target societies. Several related literatures have grown rapidly, focusing on hybrid peace, hybrid governance and hybrid political orders. Its popularisation is part of a wider 'local turn' in the study and practice of intervention, with attention shifting from the refinement or critique of interveners' ideas and modalities towards examining how recipients' ideas, culture, institutions and agency shape intervention outcomes.[2] This refocusing stemmed from the evident failure of most peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions to attain their desired political and governance ends, or even pacify target societies.

2   Hughes et al., 'The Struggle versus the Song'; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building'; World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*.

This research agenda is far superior to the earlier, narrow preoccupation with interveners' official agendas. Doubtless, we cannot understand or normatively evaluate the widely divergent outcomes of international interventions without considering how the interveners and intervened-upon interact. The concept of hybridity, however, is a highly problematic approach to this objective and, in our view, it should be replaced by better frameworks. Hybridity does not accurately describe the effects of international interventions on local politics, so it cannot explain their uneven outcomes or serve as a basis for normative evaluation. Despite incessant proclamations to the contrary by hybridity scholars, and several recent efforts to nuance the concept, hybridity intrinsically dichotomises and reifies 'local/traditional' and 'international/liberal' ideal-typical assemblages of institutions, actors and practices. Conflicts between these binary assemblages are seen to generate hybrid orders. This approach is descriptively inaccurate insofar as some 'locals' support some 'international' peacebuilding and statebuilding intervention agendas, while others resist. Nor do 'internationals' always promote 'liberal' agendas while 'locals' favour 'traditional' ones. Although recognised by some hybridity scholars, these complex realities are impossible to address coherently within an inherently dichotomising framework. Moreover, merely locating intervention outcomes on a 'local–international' spectrum, as the hybridity scholarship tends to do, does not explain why particular modes of governance emerge or whose specific interests they serve. Hence, hybridity's analytical purchase is very limited.

In this chapter, we first show how hybridity scholarship is unable to escape binaries based on dichotomised categories of the illiberal-local and liberal-international, despite considerable efforts to do so. We then demonstrate why the binary view produced through the concept of hybridity distorts empirical analysis. We conclude by outlining an alternative framework that overcomes hybridity's fatal flaws.

Hybridity: Trapped in binaries

In the peacebuilding literature, 'hybridity' denotes how:

> local actors attempt to respond to, resist and ultimately reshape peace initiatives through interactions with international actors and institutions … hybrid forms of peace arise when the strategies, institutions and norms

of international, largely liberal-democratic peacebuilding interventions collide with the everyday practices and agencies of local actors affected by conflict.[3]

Hybridity is thus 'a state of affairs in which liberal and illiberal norms, institutions, and actors coexist'.[4] It emerges because of a 'gap',[5] or 'agonism'[6] between the agendas of 'liberal' international interveners and those of 'non-liberal' target societies.

Hybridity is used both to describe intervention outcomes, and to prescribe the incorporation of local priorities into peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions to achieve success.[7] Scholars often suggest that 'hybrid' outcomes, being more locally legitimate, create greater stability.[8] For some, hybridity is even potentially 'emancipatory', though critical scholars increasingly doubt that interveners can simply harness local agency towards predictable or desirable ends, or should seek to do so.[9]

Before its adoption in peacebuilding, hybridity was already widely used in cultural and postcolonial studies, where extensive criticism created an 'anti-hybridity backlash'.[10] Peacebuilding scholars therefore attempted to avoid well-recognised pitfalls with the concept, particularly accusations that it depends upon, and thus reifies, prior, 'pure' social categories and identities. They thus strongly deny that hybridity essentialises or dichotomises the 'international'/'local' distinction, or romanticises 'local' institutions and norms. For example, Boege, Brown and Clements state:

> there are no clear-cut boundaries between the realm of the exogenous 'modern' and the endogenous 'customary'; instead processes of assimilation, articulation, transformation and/or adoption are at the interface of the global/exogenous and the local/indigenous.[11]

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3   Richmond and Mitchell, 'Introduction—Towards a Post-liberal Peace', 8, 33.
4   Belloni, 'Hybrid Peace Governance', 22; Boege et al., 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States'; Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*.
5   Belloni, 'Hybrid Peace Governance', 23.
6   Richmond and Mitchell, 'Introduction—Towards a Post-liberal Peace', 26.
7   Millar, 'Disaggregating Hybridity', 501.
8   Belloni, 'Hybrid Peace Governance', 35; Boege et al., 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States'; Chopra and Hohe, 'Participatory Intervention'; Kumar and De la Haye, 'Hybrid Peacemaking'.
9   Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders'; Millar, 'Disaggregating Hybridity'; Visoka, 'Three Levels of Hybridisation Practices'.
10   Pieterse, 'Hybridity, So What?'.
11   Boege et al., 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States', 15.

Hybridity scholars repeatedly disavow binaries like 'local/international', 'Western/non-Western' or 'modern/customary', emphasising their interaction instead.[12] Similarly, they claim that the 'local' is 'neither monolithic nor necessarily incompatible with liberal norms'.[13]

However, as Heathershaw rightly notes, despite being 'caveated to the point of defensiveness', in practice, hybridity accounts *still* rely 'on the bifurcation between ideal-types of local-indigenous and international-liberal'.[14] To demonstrate this we focus closely on the work of Roger Mac Ginty,[15] who has gone furthest of all hybridity scholars in denying that hybridity reifies binary categories. He argues:

> Hybridity is taken as the composite forms of social thinking and practice that emerge as the result of the interaction of different groups, practices, and worldviews. It is not the grafting together of two separate entities to create a third entity. Instead, it is assumed that norms and practices are the result of prior hybridisation. This helps move us away from notions of discrete categories that are somehow pristine and insulated from social negotiation and interaction over the millennia.[16]

For Mac Ginty, every actor—whether local actor or international statebuilder—is always 'already hybridised'; '[f]urther hybridisation [then] ensues as (the already hybrid) local and international interact, conflict and cooperate'.[17] This conceptualisation supposedly 'frees [analysts] from the static thinking of binaries'.[18]

In practice, however, as Heathershaw highlights, Mac Ginty actually reinstates other dichotomous (binary) categories when establishing his analytical framework.[19] In the statement just quoted, outcomes result from how the 'local and international' interface—a binary. Likewise, in the framework that guides his case studies, Mac Ginty states that hybridised peacebuilding outcomes reflect tensions between two sets of forces: (1) the 'compliance' and 'incentivising powers' of 'liberal peace agents' and

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12   Peterson, 'A Conceptual Unpacking of Hybridity', 12; see also Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace', 397.
13   Belloni, 'Hybrid Peace Governance', 23; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building'; Richmond and Mitchell, 'Introduction—Towards a Post-liberal Peace', 11.
14   Heathershaw, 'Towards Better Theories of Peacebuilding', 277; see also Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful', 424.
15   Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*.
16   Ibid., Introduction.
17   Ibid.
18   Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders', 223.
19   Heathershaw, 'Towards Better Theories of Peacebuilding'.

(2) the ability of 'local actors, networks and structures' to 'resist, ignore, or adapt liberal peace interventions' and 'present and maintain alternative forms of peacebuilding'.[20] Thus, the outcome is a struggle between the 'liberal' interveners and the 'locals'—another dichotomy. Likewise in his theorisation of hybridity, Mac Ginty states: 'hybrid spaces and forms develop as external and internal agents, ideas, and processes interact, and new meanings are attached to existing entities'—another dichotomy, this time between 'external' and 'internal'.[21] Mac Ginty immediately insists (again) on 'prior hybridisation', such that 'internationally sponsored and resourced peace interventions' cannot simply be labelled '"external", "exogenous", "international", or "western"'; and yet he has clearly just used one of these labels himself.[22] Even in his most recent work with Oliver Richmond, binaries abound: 'liberal peacemaking' versus 'stubborn locals', 'the modern and traditional', 'the formal and informal', 'the "local" and the "social"' versus 'top-down forms of power (the state or the international)', 'subaltern subjects' versus 'external actors' and so on.[23] Thus, while Mac Ginty tries to evade the criticism that his concepts are dichotomised by invoking 'prior hybridity', this merely provides the cover to continue using those exact same dichotomous categories. He apparently recognises the contradiction between insisting on prior hybridisation yet continuing to use these dichotomous categories, but simply declines to resolve it:

> If … everything and everyone is a hybrid, then concepts such as endogenous and exogenous, indigenous and international risk losing their currency. The stance adopted in this book is to recognise the shortcomings of concepts and language but to move on.[24]

Mac Ginty further states that, notwithstanding his apparent rejection of dichotomies and insistence on 'prior hybridisation', we can still recognise that 'some actors, societies, and processes are more hybridised than others … it is possible to identify degrees of hybridisation'.[25] It is this emphasis on 'degrees' or 'levels' that apparently avoids dichotomous thinking. Yet, if we accept Mac Ginty's caveat that everything is already hybridised, and there are no pure categories, how can anything ever be identified as 'more' hybridised than something else? In reality, assessing

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20   Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance,* Chapter 3.
21   Ibid.
22   Ibid.
23   Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders', 222, 223, 230.
24   Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*, Chapter 3.
25   Ibid.

the 'degree of hybridisation' always involves identifying some point on a spectrum between two binaries. Thus, Mac Ginty suggests, some 'local' actors, like national governments, might become 'more' hybridised than others, as their actions come to 'reflect the mores of the external peace champions'.[26] How do we know they are 'more hybridised' than other 'local' actors? We observe how far they *move away from one pole* (the 'local') *towards the other pole* (the 'external'). Similarly, 'it is possible to think of some actors and norms as being more locally constituted than others (a "local local" as opposed to an "international local" that is patterned by global forces)'.[27] How do we know whether a 'local' actor/norm is 'more local'? Because they are closer to the 'local' end of the spectrum than the 'international/global' end.

Mac Ginty's problem here is intrinsic to the concept of hybridity itself. *By definition*, hybridisation is the mixing of two (or possibly more) distinct entities in order to produce something new. Even if those entities are themselves also the product of prior hybridisation, there is simply nothing capable of being 'hybridised' unless at least two *distinct* things previously exist. Notwithstanding protestations to the contrary, then, hybridity as a concept is *inherently* 'based on the existence of two oppositional and apparently dialectically related forces'.[28] As Visoka writes (citing Canclini, whose definition is frequently used by hybridity scholars):

> hybridisation should be seen as a process whereby 'discrete structures or practices, *previously existing in separate form*, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices' [emphasis added].[29]

Accordingly, assessing the *degree* of hybridity, as Mac Ginty proposes, *must always* rest upon the degree to which entity *x* has moved away from its original form by adopting some aspects of entity *y*. Consider Mac Ginty's statement:

> hybridisation helps visualise the dynamics in societies undergoing liberal interventionism as a series of balances (for example, a balance between mainly internal and mainly external thinking on how to organise the economy). Such a visualisation discourages thinking about absolutist categories.[30]

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Heathershaw, 'Towards Better Theories of Peacebuilding', 277.
29 Visoka, 'Three Levels of Hybridisation Practices', 25.
30 Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance,* Chapter 3.

In fact this visualisation clearly relies entirely on dichotomous categories (here, 'internal' and 'external') that a society is supposedly 'balancing' between. Despite Mac Ginty's endless caveats and contortions, it is clearly impossible to escape the need for 'absolutist' and 'binary' categories while using the concept of hybridity: it is hardwired into the concept's DNA.

Why it matters: The distortion of empirical analysis

The inability of even hybridity's most sophisticated theorists to evade its intrinsically dichotomising approach has seriously negative consequences for how peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions are described and their outcomes explained or evaluated. Hybridity encourages analysts to draw binary, dichotomising contrasts between 'local' and 'international' actors and to explain outcomes as stemming from conflict and cooperation between these two forces. This considerably distorts empirical reality, which simply does not fit into such binary frameworks. What we instead observe is different forces, located across multiple territorial scales, promoting, contesting or rejecting different governance interventions depending on their interests and agendas.

The easiest way to apprehend the problems of hybridity for empirical analysis is to consider the problem scholars have specifying 'the local' half of their equation. Sometimes, 'local' means everything not-international, with scholars lumping entire target societies together, as in formulations focusing on the '"contact zone" … between local and external'[31] or 'the melding of the "international" with the "local"'.[32] Elsewhere, however, 'local' seems to denote something more subnational, as in dichotomous presentations of 'non-state indigenous societal structures and [externally] introduced state structures'.[33] Here, 'local' means 'traditional, indigenous and customary',[34] denoting social relations 'at an individual or communal level rather than at the national level'.[35]

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31 Peterson, 'A Conceptual Unpacking of Hybridity', 11.
32 Millar, 'Disaggregating Hybridity', 502.
33 Boege et al., 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States', 17.
34 Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace', 391.
35 Millar, 'Disaggregating Hybridity', 502.

Neither definition is satisfactory. The first approach clearly cannot account for the presence, in every target state, of some groups that collaborate with international actors and support their projects. This is what leads to such awkward and unhelpful formulations as 'local local' and 'international local' that seek to recognise the existence of 'local' collaboration with intervention, yet remain straitjacketed by dichotomising categories. However, the second approach is no better, because it arbitrarily locates resistance at a subnational level, where 'tradition' and 'custom' supposedly hold sway, while assuming that the 'national' level is amenable to intervention. Whatever definition is adopted, then, hybridity compels the analyst to homogenise whichever group is defined as 'local' ('traditional', 'customary', etc.) and set it in opposition to that which is 'international' ('modern', 'liberal', 'Western', etc.) as an explanation for why a particular intervention encountered difficulties. This produces crude generalisations about how 'local' actors think and behave that seriously distort reality.[36]

Consider Millar's treatment of Sierra Leone. Millar defines hybridity as 'the melding of the "international" with the "local"'.[37] He recognises, though, that national elites play a role in interventions, and prefers the term 'local' to 'national' as it allegedly permits the disaggregation of 'local' actors. Millar is also sensitive to Mac Ginty's 'prior hybridisation', describing how many revered, supposedly traditional practices in Sierra Leone were previously externally introduced. Nonetheless, Millar explains difficulties encountered by Western-led efforts to demobilise child soldiers by invoking 'the concept of "childhood" in Sierra Leone', stating that 'local concepts' are 'defined quite differently from [those in] the West'.[38] In practice, then, Millar does not really disaggregate 'the local', but makes sweeping claims about how all Sierra Leoneans (and indeed all Westerners) view childhood. Millar admits that some militias may have used these notions strategically to recruit children, but does not explore this. Armed groups simply thrived because they met the locally defined 'needs of … young people and provided them … with something they deeply wanted'.[39] This absurd claim fails to explain why thousands of children had to be abducted, drugged or brutalised into joining militias. In reality, it was the *erosion* of 'traditional' kinship structures (and associated family control over youths), induced by economic and political crises,

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36 Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful'.
37 Millar, 'Disaggregating Hybridity', 502.
38 Ibid., 507–508.
39 Ibid., 508–509.

that paved the way for child soldiering.[40] Most importantly, Millar fails to investigate or even identify *any* Sierra Leonean resistance to these notions about childhood, or their use by militias. As Shepley shows, while militias certainly exploited cultural norms to recruit children, most Sierra Leoneans were 'dismayed' by child soldiering, and many children were press-ganged only when their resisting parents were threatened, tortured or killed.[41] However, in Millar's account, the need—imposed by hybridity as an organising concept—to explain outcomes with reference to a local/international dichotomy leads Sierra Leoneans to be falsely homogenised.

The reality that, in every target society, some actors will support some aspects of intervention while others resist is never adequately captured by a *spatial* definition of 'the local', whether this encompasses the entire society or just those residing (presumably) in rural areas. Henrizi critiques the first approach through a case study of Iraq.[42] Contrary to hybridity approaches that restrict 'local' agency to resistance of 'the international', Henrizi shows how Iraqi women's non-government organisations selectively embraced international peacebuilders' gender programs after 2003 to resist the restoration of highly patriarchal social relations sought by many Iraqi men—who have, contrariwise, resisted this intervention.[43] Similar complexity exceeds the dichotomising grasp of the hybridity framework in Visoka's essay on Kosovo.[44] Typically, Visoka defines hybridisation as interaction 'between local and international agents', reflecting the 'disconnect between the Western liberal agenda and local indigenous practices, needs and interests'.[45] As usual, dichotomies abound: local/international, Western-liberal/local-indigenous. Ironically, however, Kosovo's reality simply does not fit into these binary categories. Visoka discovers 'local' people resisting *both* 'local *and* international governance' [emphasis added].[46] A Kosovar social movement, Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (which opposed compromise with the Serbian minority), and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) veterans demanding legal immunity and welfare payments, challenged *both* the United Nations Mission in Kosovo *and* the KLA regime. Similarly, 'local' people are observed engaging in tax dodging and informal economic activity, defying other 'locals' trying

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40   Zack-Williams, 'Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone'.
41   Shepley, 'The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone'.
42   Henrizi, 'Building Peace in Hybrid Spaces'.
43   Ibid.
44   Visoka, 'Three Levels of Hybridisation Practices'.
45   Ibid., 24.
46   Ibid., 29.

to make the formal economy function. Clearly, the conflicts shaping intervention outcomes are too complex to be reduced to the dichotomies imposed by hybridity. As Visoka belatedly admits, outcomes are instead 'shaped by multiple actors interacting at different societal levels'.[47]

An even clearer indication of this comes from Hirblinger and Simons' study of peacebuilding in Burundi and South Sudan.[48] These authors rightly attack the simplistic depiction of 'the local' in hybridity studies, showing that 'the local' cannot be objectively identified. Rather, what counts as 'the local'—what actors, practices, institutions and so on are considered 'legitimate'—is a discursive construct that is contested by different actors.[49] In Burundi, for example, Hirblinger and Simons show how some international statebuilders promoted the decentralisation of conflict resolution to 'traditional', 'local' institutions called 'Bashingantahe', but this was resisted by the national government, which instead promoted 'modern', local 'hill councils', recruiting a rival set of local collaborators.[50] This was because the Bashingantahe were seen as instruments and bulwarks of the previous regime, whereas the new government wished to cultivate its own local power bases. This example shows there is no clear or necessary divide between the local/traditional/ customary and the international/modern/liberal, however one defines them. Certain international actors allied with certain 'local', apparently 'traditional', actors (the Bashingantahe, which had previously been co-opted into a modern system of rule), while elites at a national scale allied with rival 'local' forces, promoting an apparently more 'modern' and 'liberal' mode of governance. The real cleavage here was not 'local' versus 'international' but rather involved two coalitions of actors, comprising groups located at multiple territorial scales, struggling over which mode and scale of governance should prevail, and whose interests would be privileged thereby.

East Timor presents yet more evidence of these complex, inter-scalar alliances and dynamics. This again defies the territory's dichotomised depiction by hybridity scholars, who widely attribute the failures of the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) to a 'clash of paradigms' between liberal-international statebuilders and the

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47 Ibid., 33.
48 Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful'.
49 See also Randazzo, 'The Paradoxes of the "Everyday"'.
50 Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful', 430–434.

'tribal-traditional' Timorese, producing an 'empty shell' state.[51] Since, supposedly, most villagers' 'only experience [is] of customary governance', they rejected the nation-state imposed by internationals, producing a 'major "gap" between government decision-makers and … people in the villages'.[52] For example, the World Bank's Community Empowerment Project (CEP), implemented during UNTAET's rule, sought to establish local elected councils empowered to disburse small development budgets. These excluded traditional village elders but guaranteed women and youth representation. Hybridity scholars claim CEP failed miserably because, being based on international-liberal principles, it 'lack[ed] … local legitimacy' and 'could not compete with the authority exercised by [customary] leaders'.[53] In reality, far from being uniformly rejected by tradition-bound 'locals', CEP was enthusiastically embraced by many women and youths as a way of wresting power and control from male elders.[54] It was also supported by Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorense leaders, who were keen to sideline local chiefs. Yet, it was opposed by UNTAET and, unsurprisingly, by village elders.[55] Thus, we see two multi-scalar alliances contesting postconflict governance in East Timor: one comprising some internationals, some national actors and some village-level actors; and another comprising some internationals and some village-level actors.

The reasons behind these configurations are relatively simple but are obscured by dichotomisation imposed by hybridity analysis. Contrary to claims that 'local' Timorese uniformly respected traditional elders and customary law, Cummins notes that Timorese village life had been radically transformed by colonialism and capitalism, such that several key groups—notably women, youths and national political leaders—reject traditional attitudes.[56] However, because Cummins is hidebound by the hybridity framework, she is nonetheless compelled to homogenise the Timorese in explaining outcomes, as the above citations of her work show. Thus, she insists that *lisan* is 'central to people's lives', 'every' Timorese

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51   Grenfell, 'Governance, Violence and Crises in Timor-Leste'; Hohe, 'The Clash of Paradigms'; Lemay-Hébert, 'The "Empty-Shell" Approach'.

52   Cummins, *Local Governance in Timor-Leste*, 34, 38.

53   Ibid., 35–36. See also Ospina and Hohe, 'Traditional Power Structures and the Community Empowerment Project and Local Governance Project'.

54   Ospina and Hohe, 'Traditional Power Structures', 16, 93, 109, 115, 117–120, 138–142, 153.

55   Totilo, 'Development in the Shadows', 76–83.

56   Cummins, *Local Governance in Timor-Leste*, 48, 57, 85–91, 110–111.

favours its retention and 'in general, customary authorities are well-respected and their roles are actively relied upon', even though her own findings undermine such claims.[57]

Such self-contradictions are not generated by misunderstanding or inadequate research; they are imposed by the hybridity framework, which drives analysts to group actors, institutions and values into two homogenised, opposing camps with crude, inaccurate, spatial labels. This framework clearly struggles to accurately describe the forces contesting statebuilding and peacebuilding projects so it cannot hope to adequately explain their outcomes, let alone guide normative evaluation of international interventions.

Conclusion: What is the alternative?

This chapter has shown that hybridity, despite repeated caveating and refinement, remains intrinsically bound by binaries, mainly between the illiberal-local and liberal-international, which fatally compromises its utility in describing and explaining the outcomes of intervention— its purported objective. The concept, therefore, is unfit for purpose and must be entirely jettisoned by scholars of peacebuilding and statebuilding. Fortunately, a good alternative is available. Given space constraints, we cannot fully develop it here, but only present its broad outlines.[58]

A first step is to jettison 'hybridity' in favour of a Gramscian understanding of the state and other governance institutions as condensations of social power relations.[59] Institutions distribute power, resources and political opportunities. Consequently, they are endlessly contested by sociopolitical forces—classes and class fragments; state-based groupings; distributional coalitions; ethnic, religious and regional groups; forces based in international agencies and overseas; and so on. These groups struggle over power, resources and ideational goals, seeking to mould institutions to favour themselves and their allies. What emerges in practice is a contingent outcome of this struggle. Typically, leading groups must make material and ideological concessions to subordinate groups to stabilise their hegemony or domination. Accordingly, institutions reflect an uneven compromise

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57   Ibid., 44, 47, 104.
58   The approach is elaborated in Hameiri and Jones, 'Beyond Hybridity to the Politics of Scale'.
59   Jessop, *State Power*; Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*.

between different forces. Thus, even when international statebuilders are materially preponderant, what emerges is still a result of struggle, accommodation and compromise.[60] This is arguably what 'hybridity' has unsuccessfully sought to capture. A Gramscian approach is superior since it has no need to reify binary categories or insist on analysing outcomes as an accommodation between two poles. It admits as many different parties to a conflict as there exist. It does not inaccurately lump together actors into 'local' or 'international' or any other reductive category but insists on studying the real sociopolitical coalitions that coalesce around particular governance projects.

This approach deals with the particular, spatialised nature of struggles around peacebuilding and statebuilding by incorporating a 'politics of scale' approach, as urged by Hirblinger and Simons.[61] This provides a far more sophisticated way of grasping what is at stake in struggles invoking 'the local'. In political geography, 'scale' denotes hierarchised social, political and economic territorial spaces, each denoting 'the arena and moment, both discursively and materially, where sociospatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated and regulated'.[62] Scale matters in peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions because interveners inevitably seek to reallocate power and resources among different scales, for example, embedding international disciplines into a centralised national state,[63] or decentralising power to subnational, state-based or 'traditional' agencies.[64] A 'politics of scale', then, refers to struggles to define the power exercised and resources controlled at different territorial tiers and by associated governance institutions. In analysing this contestation, crucially, political geographers do not reify or dichotomise scales and associated sets of actors, unlike hybridity scholars. For example, 'locals' do not automatically prefer 'local' modes of governance, and indeed what counts as 'local' is always open to contestation. Scales are not fixed or pre-given but are rather 'the product of economic, political and social activities and relationships; as such, they are as changeable as these relationships themselves'.[65] Thus, we avoid dichotomies like 'local' and 'international' altogether, foregrounding instead specific

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60 Hameiri, *Regulating Statehood*; Jones, 'State Theory and Statebuilding'.
61 Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful'.
62 Swyngedouw, 'Neither Global nor Local', 140.
63 Hameiri, *Regulating Statehood*.
64 Hirblinger and Simons, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful'.
65 Smith, 'Remaking Scale', 228.

sociopolitical groups whose orientation to specific intervention projects varies according to their particular interests, agendas and strategies. Where a given scaled mode of governance is potentially favourable to a particular group, the intervention will likely be supported or adapted; where an intervention is deleterious, it will likely be resisted. Accordingly, different 'locals', even those co-located in a given spatial setting—in the same village, for example—will potentially have very different attitudes to specific intervention projects, generating complex, multi-scalar alliances and contestation. These produce variegated outcomes for international intervention, depending on the particular project examined and the relative strength of the coalitions assembling in each case.

Our preferred framework may not be adopted by everyone. Yet all scholars of international intervention should certainly cease refining frameworks stemming from the flawed concept of hybridity, and instead shift their attention to other, more fruitful, avenues.