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Hybrid Peace/War

Gavin Mount

We are all hybrids. Our polities, societies, and economies are the result of a long process of hybridisation.¹

Introduction

It is intuitive to view peace and war as inherently opposite categories. Peace is routinely defined as the freedom from organised collective violence, or as the ‘absence of war’. Conversely, war is generally conceived either in Clausewitzian terms as organised violence to achieve political ends or as a moral or legal condition defining the permissible limits of organised violence.² And yet, one of the founding tenets of contemporary peace and conflict studies has been to reject this binary ‘negative’ concept of peace as merely the ‘absence of war’ by asserting a positive concept of peace that refers to consensual values and the ‘integration of human society’.³ The enduring aspiration of how to achieve peace can be summed up with the phrase ‘peace through peaceful means’. While the field has remained normatively grounded on sustaining a prohibition on the resort to violence—*peace through peaceful means*—it has also grappled with

1 Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*.

2 See Metz and Cuccia, *Defining War for the 21st Century*.

3 Galtung, ‘An Editorial’, 2. For an extensive analysis of modern peace studies, see Galtung, *Theories of Peace*.

questions of how, how much or in what way, military force ought to be deployed in contemporary challenges such as humanitarian interventions, complex emergencies and stabilising postconflict societies.⁴ Strategic and security studies have also been grappling with a widening (issues) and deepening (agency) security agenda which has opened up questions about the utility of force to respond to so-called non-conventional threats and in responding to non-state actors. Both fields of scholarship have utilised the concept of *hybridity* in their efforts to understand the blurred lines between peace, war and across a range of challenges in contemporary world politics.

In trying to frame different notions of hybridity, contributors to this volume have differentiated between descriptive, prescriptive, analytical, normative and instrumental understandings or uses of hybridity.⁵ In broad terms, hybridity has been characterised as arising from a process of mixing or blending, ‘an integration of two or more systems producing something different ... where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’.⁶ Both its etymological origins (Greek, *Hybris*: violation of nature; Latin, *Hybrida*: offspring, mongrel) and links with ‘controversial pseudoscientific theories’ have been problematically associated with imperialism and racialism. Notably, in the contemporary vernacular, the term has acquired more positive overtones (such as the environmentally friendly ‘hybrid car’). These positive uses of the term have also had a longstanding usage in botany (‘hybrid rose’) or animal husbandry (‘the mating of a wild boar with a tame sow’). The notion of hybridity used here retains some of this lineage and acknowledges the concept has elements of *enhancement* built into it, but still recalls less savoury meanings of the term. I also want to cautiously retain the idea that hybrid outcomes can be viewed as an offspring because it serves a purpose of revealing concepts that have been discarded or neglected. Two things should be obvious here: even ‘descriptive’ uses of the term are likely to have some normative agency seeking to manipulate, observe or evaluate the hybrid output, and we should not imagine that modern uses of the term are any less positional.

4 Lawler, ‘Peace Research, War, and the Problem of Focus’.

5 Brown, this volume; Forsyth, this volume.

6 From the initial brief sent to participants of the 2015 workshop.

One of the six themes identified by the editors of this volume⁷ was the notion that hybridity has been used to reinscribe binaries of spatiality (local/global), temporality (traditional/modern) and governance (coloniser/colonised, state/tribal). Hybridity opens up space to recognise how the interactions between these categories are themselves bound up with the ‘dynamics of power, agency and identity’.⁸ Seeking to understand how these (already) hybrid interactions are continuously renegotiated has been viewed as being central to the human condition; one that negotiates subject–object relations and is manifested ‘through crises of identity or changing relationships’.⁹ While analysis of violence and violent practices are inherent throughout peacebuilding scholarship, it would appear that questions relating to the blurred boundaries between war and peace require further consideration.

The following analysis will apply a ‘hybrid sensibility’ as a heuristic tool to consider how the peace/war binary might be reinscribed. It begins with a review of canonical texts that inform peace and war studies and asks two questions: ‘how has *war* been understood in peace theory?’ and ‘how has *peace* been understood in war studies?’ It then considers contemporary peace and conflict empirical research to show how a focus on hybridity helps to understand how the major trend of conflict recurrence is related to the interstitial period between the ending of war and the negotiations of peace.

Hybrid concepts of war in foundational peace texts

Augustine is widely regarded as a founding figure of the just war tradition, but he also made important contributions by introducing the concept of *jus post bellum* and was an early proponent of a universal peace understood as the ‘harmonic interaction of individuals with each other’.¹⁰ The central focus of Augustine’s work was to understand the conditions through which Christians could endure their existence in the City of Man in such

7 Kent et al., ‘Introduction’, this volume.

8 Richmond, ‘The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace’, 52.

9 Bassetti, ‘Hybridity’.

10 Recent reflections on St Augustine by Zwitter and Hoelzl have argued that he should not be thought of as a founding just war theorist but a founding figure of the just peace tradition. Zwitter and Hoelzl, ‘Augustine on War and Peace’.

a way that might prepare them for their ascendancy to the City of God. This meant pursuing a life that was moral and just, even when engaging in practices as transgressive as fighting a war. From his theological perspective, the profane world was full of strife and disappointment. Even in a condition of relative peace, Augustine warned of the dangers of sin and political manoeuvring:

For every man seeks peace by waging war, but no man seeks war by making peace. For even they who intentionally interrupt the peace in which they are living have no hatred of peace, but only wish it changed into a peace that suits them better ... even robbers take care to maintain peace with their comrades, that they may with greater effect and greater safety invade the peace of other men [emphasis added].¹¹

The notion that war is waged for peace illustrates a form of conceptual hybridity, but Augustine's observations about agency and interest in the peace that follows is an inherently political insight demonstrating how he can be read as a key influence for contemporary hybrid postconflict analysis.

Contemporary just war theorists such as Michael Walzer have recalled and restated *jus post bellum* to remind military planners of the moral obligations that come with the transitional period from war to peace.¹² In his *Law of Peoples*, John Rawls also insists that at the end of a war, 'the enemy society is to be granted an autonomous well-ordered regime of its own'.¹³ More astutely, he recognised how 'statesmen' must take into account the way that the dispositions and grievances of a war can generate resentment in the host community:

The way a war is fought and the deeds done in ending it live on in the historical memory of societies and may or may not set the stage for future war. It is always the duty of statesmanship to take this longer view.¹⁴

If we now turn to Immanuel Kant as a foundational thinker of universal peace, we might also explore how, if at all, he conceived of war. Kant is most famous in modern peace studies for arguing that peace should not merely be understood negatively as the 'absence of war' but as a positive conceptual category. In *Perpetual Peace*, he developed the philosophical

11 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*.

12 Walzer, *Arguing about War*.

13 Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 122.

14 *Ibid.*, 96.

case for the republic (or democratic) peace thesis and for a cosmopolitan world order. At his most utopian, Kant envisaged the abolition of standing armies and spies. Nevertheless, even in such a profoundly ‘categorical’ and normative work, there are signs of hybridity. We need look no further than the ‘First Preliminary Article’, which states:

No peace treaty is valid if it was made with mental reservations that could lead to a future war.¹⁵

Kant’s ‘mental reservations’ reveal how the formal process of making peace can itself be a potential cause of future war. In the modern era, one need only think of the ruptures and resentment encoded in famous peace treaties from Versailles, the Arusha Accords or the Dayton Agreement to see how formal conflict resolution structures can serve to calcify grievances and resentment which may be at least partly used to rationalise the next wave of violence.

Brian Orend has recently applied a Kantian cosmopolitan framework to the question of justice after conflict and arrived at a number of principles that he feels ought to peacefully guide the transition from war to peace.¹⁶ More controversially, Roger Scruton asserted there were ‘good Kantian reasons’ for the ‘civilised world’ to ‘take pre-emptive measures’ in the Iraq war.¹⁷ A decade later, Scruton declared that Iraq was a ‘write-off’ because liberal principles had not, and perhaps would never, take hold. He argued that the 2003 Iraq war failed because it was formed on two fundamentally naive assumptions:

First, that democracy is the default position in politics, and secondly that you can achieve democracy even where there is no genuine nation state ... What makes a democrat possible? The answer is: the nation. When you and I define our loyalty in national terms, we can put aside all differences of religion, tribe and ethnicity, and submit to a shared system of law.¹⁸

Dynamics of power, legitimacy and identity are revealed in this hybrid reading of Kant’s moral philosophy. Kantian observation about peace treaties forewarns about how failing to apply moral philosophy to formal peace negotiations can become the seeds of grievance for future war and

15 Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*.

16 The principles are: proportionality and publicity; rights vindication; discrimination; punishment #1 (leaders), #2 (soldiers); compensation; and rehabilitation (Orend, ‘Justice after War’, 55–56; see also Orend, *War and International Justice*).

17 Scruton, ‘Immanuel Kant and the Iraq War’.

18 Scruton, ‘Why Iraq Is a Write-Off’. See also Schmidt, *Rethinking Democracy Promotion*.

organised violence. It highlights how interstitial periods of transition from war to peace are often the most challenging and volatile. While Kantian cosmopolitanism (especially in Scruton's interpretation) can be accused of imposing ethnocentric 'civilising' liberal state structures in interventions such as Iraq, what is revealed through the application of Kantian philosophy is the renegotiation of cultural identity during periods of conflict transformation. As James Gow observed in his analysis of the Balkan wars:

A critical challenge to legitimacy at a governmental level is not so serious as a challenge at the community level where the very existence of a political community, such as the Yugoslav state, is brought into question.¹⁹

The above analysis has brought us to a curious twist. At the cosmopolitan 'international' level, the tacit conditions for war following a peace settlement reside in the neglect of, or failure to implement, core liberal principles. But, the 'mental reservations' that appear to be most responsible for perpetual conflict reside in the stubbornness of tribal or ethnic loyalties and authority. For Scruton, the failure to form a national identity lies at the heart of naive liberal interventions. It follows that externally imposed coercive liberal 'nation-building' projects have been the central target of criticism in the current hybrid peacekeeping literature.

Hybrid notions of peace in foundational war texts

Turning now to foundational texts on war, we may begin with Thomas Hobbes as the pre-eminent theorist on the state of nature being a condition of war of all against all. Hobbes's philosophy asserts that the human condition is governed by a restless desire for power in us all and the condition of fear that this creates in others. The purpose of a commonwealth (or *leviathan*) is to assuage these fears among its citizens. Hobbes's views on the state of nature need not be recited except that we appear to have persistently forgotten how the passage ends:

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man ... so the nature

19 Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*.

of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. *All other time is PEACE* [emphasis added].²⁰

Even though Hobbes was writing amid a protracted civil war, his notion of war of every man against every man was hypothetical and, most intriguingly, understood as an ontological ‘disposition thereto’ or a state of mind. The commonwealth is assigned the responsibility to provide the normal condition of peace at all other times and it would appear that Hobbes also understood that the process of reconstituting a commonwealth required complex negotiations of power, legitimacy and identity. Central to this task was the ability for the state to command a historical narrative of possession and belonging. In this regard, his analysis concerning the dissolution of commonwealths is astonishingly prescient and relevant for contemporary postconflict analysis.

That they [states] will all of them justifie the War, by which their power was first gotten, and whereon (as they think) their Right dependeth ... Therefore I put down for one of the most effectuall seeds of the Death of any State, that the Conquerers require not onely a Submission of mens actions to them for the future, but also an approbation of their actions past; when there is scarce a Common-wealth in the world, whose beginnings can be justified.²¹

While the above emphasis on Hobbes’s vision of peace may seem tenuous for some, our neglect of his theory of the peaceful condition of normal political life means that we have also tended to overlook other nuances in his philosophy that have attracted considerable critical attention in recent international political theory.

In *The Empire of Security*,²² William Bain reminded us that Hobbes provided one of the most succinct and pertinent conceptions of security when he declared: *the safety of the people is the supreme law*.²³ Bain goes on to explain that the term ‘safety’ has critical and contemporary relevance and should be differentiated from cruder notions of mere survival: ‘not the sole preservation of life in what condition soever, but in order to its

20 Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, ch. 13.

21 *Ibid.*, bk 29.

22 Bain, *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*.

23 Hobbes, *De Cive (The Citizen)*, bk 13.2.

happiness'.²⁴ More interestingly for our purposes of searching for a hybrid sensibility is how Hobbes conceives of 'the people' as 'not one civill Person, namely the City it selfe which governs, but the multitude of subjects which are governed'.²⁵ In part, Hobbes is distinguishing the citizenry from his notion of the leviathan as an embodied political actor. But the above statement may also refer to a wider sense of the 'people' which includes all of those who reside under the aegis of the commonwealth. We might, for instance, imagine he is contemplating the challenge of living together after the experience of a civil war.

Another major re-examination of the Hobbesian legacy asserts that the persistent misrepresentation of Hobbes has created a significant distortion in how international relations understands itself. Reassessing Hobbes is a necessary step in helping international relations move past crude notions of state centrism.

International theory can be understood as a field of *politics* rather than just the study of the *inter-state* clash of national interests in a balance of power. Hobbes is self-consciously aware of the intimate connection between sovereignty and what we would now call politics ... He establishes his conception of sovereignty—the greatest accomplishment of the artifice of men—precisely as a solution to politics.²⁶

Recent reinterpretations of Hobbes provide an opportunity to view this profoundly influential work in new ways. One aspect that must be borne out when viewing Hobbes as a theorist advocating the 'safety of the people' is that he was writing amid such violence. This is perhaps symptomatic of Western liberal philosophy whereby 'modern liberalism begins by forgetting the English revolution'.²⁷ Hobbes's aspiration to find a solution to the problem of human nature, as he saw it, was precisely to understand the dynamics of power, agency and identity during a tumultuous period of civil war and postconflict transformation.

At first glance, it may seem ambitious to search for a theory of peace in Clausewitz's seminal work, *On War*.²⁸ In addition to his most famous aphorisms considered below, he also stated 'to secure peace is to prepare for war'. Basil Liddel Hart also accused Clausewitz of making policy

24 Ibid., bk 8.4.

25 Ibid., bk 13.3.

26 Prokhovnik and Slomp, *International Political Theory after Hobbes*, 189.

27 Feltham, *Anatomy of Failure*.

28 Clausewitz, *On War*.

the slave of strategy and in doing so ‘looked only to the end of war, not beyond war to the subsequent peace’.²⁹ More recently, Gideon Rose has taken a different view, perhaps not of Clausewitz, but of how his work might inform analyses of these transitional periods. In *How Wars End*, Rose documented the failure of successive United States administrations to satisfactorily manage the conclusion of six wars spanning the twentieth and early twenty-first century.³⁰ Central to his argument is what he calls the ‘Clausewitzian challenge’:

Wars actually have two equally important aspects. One is negative, or coercive; this is the part about fighting, about beating up the bad guys. The other is positive, and is all about politics. And this is the part that, as in Iraq, is usually overlooked or misunderstood.³¹

When we think about this notion of the ‘other means’ in Clausewitz, we can discern that he has firm ideas about the nature of what might constitute normal political life. Like Hobbes, Clausewitz concludes his aphorism with an indication that we might all share a consensual understanding of the everyday or the ‘normal’ means of political life.³² What Rose found in his application of the political meaning of war in Clausewitz was a fixation in United States military and political leadership to win the war combined with a persistent failure to build the peace. The mindset and institutional momentum were entirely oriented towards the former at the expense of the latter:

Both the planners and the commander had been schooled to see fighting as the realm of war and thus attached lesser importance to post-war issues. No officer in the headquarters was prepared to argue for actions that would siphon resources from the war fighting effort, when the fighting had not yet begun ... Who could blame them? The business of the military is war and war is fighting ... Only a fool would propose hurting the war fighting effort to address post-war conditions that might or might not occur.³³

29 Howard, ‘The Influence of Clausewitz’, 39–40.

30 Rose, *How Wars End*.

31 Ibid. Clausewitz’s two concepts of war were: (1) an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will and (2) nothing but a continuation of policy by other means. Clausewitz, *On War*, bk 1.1, 24.

32 This is not to say that we find a pluralist and vernacular understanding of everyday experience of security and politics in Clausewitz. For a contemporary hybrid analysis of this see Luckman and Kirk, ‘Understanding Security in the Vernacular’.

33 United States military planner Lieutenant Colonel Steven Petersen. Cited in Rose, *How Wars End*, ch. 1.

It is routinely observed that strategic failures are often attributable to the phenomenon of commanders still trying to 'fight the last war'. What Rose showed was that successive United States administrations failed to win the last peace. Clausewitz continues to exert enormous influence over contemporary war studies. Contemporary Clausewitzians acknowledge that while the character of war will always be susceptible to change with political, economic, social and technological shifts, the essential nature of war as violent, instrumental and political remains constant.³⁴ Even within this traditionalist mode of war studies, we can discern profoundly constitutive, dynamic and hybrid understandings of the relationship between war and political legitimacy. For instance, postcolonial theorists Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton call for the *decentring* of war, describing how:

the changing character of war concerns relations between the transformation of polities and societies through war and the effects of those transformations on war itself ... war disrupts knowledge (and thereby generates the need for new knowledge) and how this process of disruption and generation has direct consequence for political authority ... the formulation 'war *in* society' ... attending to the co-constitutive character of war and society relations in world politics.³⁵

More radical scholars have also returned to war studies to reclaim the ground, especially as an embodied and deeply social experience. Acknowledging that she has 'no stomach for war', postmodern feminist Christine Sylvester nevertheless insists that it should be examined from a critical perspective because:

war cannot be fully apprehended unless it is studied up from people's physical, emotional, and social experiences, not only down from 'high politics' ... [and] bodies, always contested identities, can become bewildering in their multiplicities and overlapping identities during war.³⁶

In using Clausewitz's enduring notion of war as a continuation of policy or politics, we arrive at a point on our hybrid journey where the most famous theorist of war has provided one of the most enduring insights into the possibilities of peace. Following Rose's analysis, Clausewitz reminds us that the failure to think through the implications of rebuilding consensual and pluralist political communities is likely to lead to conflict recurrence. Contemporary war studies is extending this notion of politics by other

34 Strachan and Scheipers, *The Changing Character of War*.

35 Barkawi and Brighton, 'Conclusion: Absent War Studies?', 525f.

36 Sylvester, *War as Experience*, 2, 117.

means into co-constitutive epistemological and social understandings of war (and peace). The ‘experiential turn’ in international relations has set its sights on the conventional intellectual terrain of war studies precisely because it seeks to reveal the emotional and embodied experiences of people, especially those who are most seriously affected and marginalised, by the practices of modern warfare.

Conflict dynamics and recurrence

The above ruminations on philosophical arguments suggest that binary categories of ‘war’ and ‘peace’ have always been viewed critically and that notions of hybridity are quite discernible in formulations such as Augustine’s caution about the ‘invasion of peace’ or Kant’s ‘tacit conditions’ of war. Hybridity encourages a focus on the dynamics of power, legitimacy and identity in ‘conflict affected’ societies. Whereas Clausewitz had established the idea that war was a continuation of politics by other means, hybrid approaches to peace recalibrate that aphorism to reveal how the interstitial space between war and peace is also inherently anchored to the ‘political’.

Current empirical research on the trends of armed conflict also reveals that the dominant trend over the past decade especially has been the high rate of recurrence of armed conflict. Leading providers of armed conflict data such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program confirm that the dominant trend over the past few decades has been that most conflicts are not new but recurring.³⁷ In other words, the empirical evidence of conflict recurrence demonstrates that wars are not only the continuation of policy by other means, but are tending to occur because peace processes are regularly breaking down.

Analysing this data through the lens of hybridity encourages us to think more critically about the limitations of top-down approaches to conflict resolution and management. Conflict transformation theory has explored the idea of *negative* transformations understood as the potentially violent outcomes of peace resolution, settlement or management processes.³⁸ Notions of critical realism or what we might call a strategic understanding

37 See Gates et al., ‘Conflict Recurrence’; Hewitt, ‘Trends in Global Conflict’ and Melander et al., ‘Organized Violence’.

38 See Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*; Ryan, *The Transformation of Violent Intercommunal Conflict*.

of peace have also challenged the rigid categorical binary between war and peace.³⁹ Critical peacebuilding scholars have also examined notions of negative and positive hybridity and shown how these generate significant dilemmas.⁴⁰ Empirically, this intellectual movement in hybrid peace has encouraged more research from the point of view of localised people caught up in the everyday challenges of transformation. Mac Ginty and Richmond observe that internationally prescribed peace agreements fail because they do not engage with ‘the local’:

Attempts at making peace agreements around the world are normally negotiated in Western bubbles (geographically in the West or within a ‘green zone’ in the conflict environment), according to Northern rationalities, with few local elites involved who have a controversial claim to represent local constituencies.⁴¹

To understand the emotional and social dynamics of conflict recurrence, qualitative research that documents feelings of frustration and grievance has produced powerful insights into the dilemmas of transformation.⁴² Conceptually, new arguments are emerging through this analysis. One example is Mary Kaldor and Sabine Selchow’s *Subterranean Politics in Europe*, which documented ‘ripples of discomfort in established institutions, challenging dominant ways of thinking and unsettling normal assumptions about how politics is done’.⁴³ Kaldor’s recent commentary on identity and war has also led to an incisive observation about ‘sectarian’ identity:

Sectarian identity is an outcome of war rather than being a deep-rooted legacy of the past that can lead to war, even though such identities build on (selective) memory and culture. The implication of this proposition is that war should be interpreted less as an external contest of will between two sides but rather as a one-sided and/or parallel effort to construct unidimensional political identities as a basis for power. Power derived from identity so constructed is likely to be authoritarian and repressive.⁴⁴

Empirical research deploying notions of hybrid peace is often strongly focused on the operational and agency level. As Richmond puts it, hybrid peace refers to ‘the politics of peacemaking and the dynamics of power,

39 Piiiparinen, *The Transformation of UN Conflict Management*.

40 Richmond, ‘The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace’.

41 Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peace Building’, 763–764.

42 Brown and Gusmao, ‘Peacebuilding and Political Hybridity’; Wallis, ‘A Liberal–Local Hybrid Peace Project’.

43 Kaldor and Selchow, *Subterranean Politics in Europe*, 8.

44 Kaldor, ‘Identity and War’, 345.

agency and identity'.⁴⁵ This has produced important analysis challenging the effectiveness of peacebuilding operations and seeking to understand conflict transformation from the ground up. Some of the more interesting conceptual arguments to emerge from these studies return to the central themes identified in the earlier discussion of the canon. It has a future-oriented goal and seeks to grapple with the challenges of negotiating legitimacy under stressful conditions of political community reformation. As Brown and Gusmao put it:

peacebuilding works toward the *restoration or reconstitution of political community*, in the most fundamental and inclusive sense, in the face of a legacy or the ongoing reality of violent conflict ... Political hybridity is the co-existence of introduced Western (generally liberal institutional) models of governance and local governance practices, rooted in place and culture, and enjoying widespread social legitimacy [emphasis added].⁴⁶

Trying to make sense of the interaction between international ideas, agendas and practices and various forms of local response, resistance and reinterpretation is a major empirical challenge for analysts of hybridity in postconflict societies. Normative assumptions about 'restoration', for example, need to be carefully scrutinised because they may provide political support for conditions that caused earlier conflicts. As the problem of conflict recurrence continues to bedevil policymakers at the global level, more careful consideration and dialogue with a wider array of local actors have been demonstrably successful.⁴⁷ It will not be the case that all local responses are viewed favourably. Indeed, as Kaldor and others have shown, the international community is liable to grow increasingly anxious about local practices of resistance, especially those that are deemed to pose serious threats to global security.

Conclusion

Projects of making or building peace are not merely concerned with settlement or restoration of previous power relations. They are also crucially about more dynamic practices such as reconstitution and many other things. In order for 'normal' political life to return, decisions must be

45 Richmond, 'The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace', 52.

46 Brown and Gusmao, 'Peacebuilding and Political Hybridity', 61, 62.

47 See Boege, 'Vying for Legitimacy in Post-conflict Situations'; Regan, 'Lessons from a Successful Peace Process in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea'.

made to support 'everyday' life. People need to eat, be housed, hopefully get to school and find employment. Postconflict societies are in this sense anything but 'still'; they are busy and complicated. Political decisions must also address issues of opportunity and equality. Perceived or real biases, resentment, grievances and rights must be managed in the political space. Many of these decisions do not occur at the level of government, but at the level of the home or the village. Some disputes may be addressed through traditional mechanisms such as tribal councils. Goods and services may be more readily available through illicit entrepreneurs.

Observers of postconflict societies have sought a new lexicon to make sense of these complex transitional forms of political and social life. Hybrid analysis is drawn towards these alternative governance and agency stories and is likely to rebound critically on top-down, static, linear structures often attributed to 'international' institutions or the 'governmental' viewpoint. Hybridity should also be alert to the way that empowering local agency dynamics might generate pernicious outcomes.

Questions of legitimacy are all the more important and acute in postconflict societies because political life is being remade. A postconflict scenario is tumultuous not only because it is a statebuilding activity, but crucially a nation-building one. Conflict may reignite because questions of power, agency and identity are unresolved. Perhaps there were portions of the community that sought advantage or opportunities to invade the peace of others? Perhaps the formal agreements incorporated elements that systematically disadvantaged some members of the community? Perhaps the hybrid political order had not adhered to the supreme law of ensuring the safety of all the people (not just the citizens and elite)? Or maybe the elite were focused only on winning the war and failed to fulfil their responsibilities to continue and restore normal political life?

As a conceptual or heuristic tool, hybridity allows analysts to reinscribe rigid binaries to reveal nuances and overlapping understandings. Peace and war are difficult to define but they are not static and perhaps not usefully understood as pure categorical opposites. A brief review of the canon reveals that peace/war exist on a continuum that is conceptually anchored to the 'political'.

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