

# Foreword

A group of scholars based at several Australian universities have long been influential in the development of our understanding of hybrid political order. The term was first used in relation to peacebuilding (to the best of my knowledge) by Kevin Clements, Volker Boege, Anne Brown, Wendy Foley and Anna Nolan in a now seminal paper published in 2007 called ‘State Building Reconsidered: The Role of Hybridity in the Formation of Political Order’ in *Political Science*. A bolt out of the prescriptive liberal blue, it turned this field of debate on its head.

Discussions of agency, particularly local agency, of the possibility of new political forms—of resistance, but also of the risks of neocolonial forms of administration—suddenly swung into our view. They formed part of a broader and emerging intersection between liberal, Marxist and postcolonial thought, and the use of this concept has proliferated enormously ever since. It is now the mainstay of policy thinking in conflict-affected societies around the world, as well as the target of much academic debate. Hybridity is nothing if not highly complex and controversial, but it has attracted the interest of many academic and policy quarters because of its intuitive and easily observable empirical dimensions: relationality in a rapidly globalising and fluid world. It also points to power inequalities and injustices, to the painful yet plausible potential of rubbing along together after conflict, as well as to the prescriptive over-reach of liberal interventionism on the post–Cold War world. Somewhere between the liberal peace, its interventionary nature and individualist/constructivist rationalities and the older concepts associated with anti-colonialism and non-alignment, a real sense of the current reality of peace and order in the periphery began to emerge, with both unnoticed positives as well as obvious dangers.

Thus, it is very apt that this important discussion is carried forward in this volume, including by some of the concept's original scholars. What has become clear over the time that this concept has come into use is that it can be used in negative ways (to indicate or even camouflage neo-trusteeship or counter-insurgency) and in positive ways, where it takes an important place in the production of new political orders, in which rights are expanded and peace is more sustainable. In my own work I have used the notion of post-liberalism to point to this potential as a way of escaping problems in particular relating to the limits of liberalism in Eurocentric form.

At a workshop in Canberra in December 2015 (where I was present) held to discuss the draft chapters for this volume, it became clear how widely entangled the dynamics of hybridity are, across so many issues from rights, identity, indigeneity, materiality, local governance, justice, reconciliation, sustainability, the nature of the state and international system, globalisation and the commons, to name but a few. It begins to bring a far more complex view of peace and order, one that accentuates the open and hidden violence of more parsimonious approaches. Indeed, as an epistemological framework, with methodological–ethical sets of tools, it offers a completely new ontology of relationality across at least four dimensions as opposed to the black-and-white world of rational self-interest. Due to the work of the scholars included in this study, it is gradually becoming clear that another world is not just 'possible' but is already in existence and that concepts and thinking about peace and peacebuilding need to respond. This volume continues this important research agenda.

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