

Crossing Concepts: A Critical Examination of Liberal Peace-building in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Abstract

The rebuilding of a state after conflict is a difficult task and must be constantly critiqued to avoid repeating errors of the past. This paper critically examines Liberal Peacebuilding within Bosnia-Herzegovina. It first views the history and context of what brought about the peacebuilding mission, and then it explains Liberal Peacebuilding and its issues. Finally, it moves to examine possible ways to absolve these problems. By examining the issues within Liberal Peacebuilding, it becomes apparent that these must be resolved so as to avoid the same issues within states in the future.

Introduction

When wars end, the time to rebuild begins. This, however, is far more easily said than done. In situations where the international community has had to intervene, such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the issue lies in how to properly rebuild the state. The question is, therefore, to what degree is liberal peace-building effective? With tens of thousands of lives lost in the war, and massive amounts of money being spent by intervening states on the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this is a very important question to examine. Through researching the existing literature, it is apparent that this is a heavily debated topic amongst scholars, primarily between liberal theorists and critical theorists. The main discussion surrounds what is the most practical method that would likely achieve success in the rebuilding process of the state in question. Liberal theorists argue in support of liberal frameworks. Critical theorists, however, are skeptical of liberal frameworks and argue that liberal peace-building has some distinct flaws that can be remedied through their suggestions to change aspects of the structure. This essay will argue that while liberal peace-building is an effective option, it does have some issues that can be resolved through options proposed by critical theorists.

To support this argument, this essay will be broken down into three sections. Section one, titled 'The Bosnian War and Intervention', is broken down into two subsections: the first being a brief description of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and how the international interventionists became involved. The second subsection will detail the peace-building mission mandates, as well as discuss liberal peace-building. This will also define what 'success' is in terms of peace-building, as well as define what liberal frameworks and peace-building are. This connects with the research question for it sets up the context in which this paper will discuss liberal peacemaking.

Section two, titled 'Problems with Liberal Peacemaking', is broken down into two subsections as well. The first will discuss the critical-theorist viewpoints and critiques of liberal peacemaking. The second will concern the negative outcomes that have resulted in Bosnia-Herzegovina because of liberal peacemaking. This paragraph relates to the research question for it examines the critical points and downsides of liberal peacemaking

that have been examined.

Section three, titled 'Possible Methods to Fix Liberal Peacemaking', will discuss the various solutions raised by the critical theorists as to how to solve the issues of liberal peacemaking, and why they are legitimate and realistic answers to the problems of liberal frameworks. This relates to the research question for it not only shows to what degree liberal peacemaking has been effective, but also the possible solutions raised by scholars regarding how to fix the issues observed.

The Bosnian War and Intervention

The Conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Numerous events led to intervention by the United Nations (UN), and subsequently the involvement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many scholars have debated the causes of the war. One argument is of the old hatreds that lie between the varying ethnic groups that inhabit Yugoslavia, which also relates to the thesis of Samuel Huntington (1993), that ethnic nationalism will be the new reason of warfare and violence. Other analyses argue that the war was the result of:

Instrumental domestic elites in their quest to hold onto power, the rise and erosion of Yugoslav national culture, political economic institutions that gained separate force within each of the republics, relative deprivation fueling animosity between wealthy and poor republics, and international actors who fueled different sides of the war. (Howard, 2008: 44).

Andrea Talentino supports these claims as well, stating how in the mid-1980s republics such as Slovenia, which was wealthy, leaned towards Europe, whereas Serbia, a poorer republic, wished to preserve Yugoslavia. The various republics were also caught by inflation, unemployment, and a decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) (Talentino, 2005:163). These failing economic conditions caused allegiances to splinter along ethnic and republic borders, and allowed politicians to utilise nationalist appeals to garner support and power, as well as using the ethnic divisions for scapegoating to the increasing inflation (Talentino, 2005: 163-64). Slovenia, the richest and most western-influenced republic, seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991 and was quickly followed by Croatia. The leader of the communist party in Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, wanted to hold Yugoslavia together in an attempt to incorporate all Serbs within the state into a unified Greater Serbia. The Yugoslav National Army (JNA) attempted to force Slovenia back into Yugoslavia, but after 10 days of fighting, retreated. As for Croatia, with its Serbian minority (Krajina Serbs), Milosevic declared that it must never leave Yugoslavia (Talentino, 2005: 166-67). The leader of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, had declared that Croatia was the sovereign state of the Croatian nation, and promised to build an exclusive state for Croats. Very quickly, in Croatia various Krajina Serbian paramilitary groups fought in open warfare against the Croats, and were assisted by the JNA. This war ended in 1992 (Talentino, 2005: 166-67).

Bosnia-Herzegovina, the most ethnically mixed of all the republics, consisting of 44 per cent Muslims, 31 per cent Serbs, 17 per cent Croats (Paris, 2004: 1), felt rising ethnic tensions. Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, agreed with Milosevic to annex territory for Serbians in Bosnia-Herzegovina rather than cede it to an

independent state, and lose the dream of Greater Serbia. Milosevic and Tudjman even agreed to split Bosnia between the Croats and the Serbians, leaving no place for the Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs, with their nationalist flames fanned by Karadzic and Milosevic, boycotted the election for Bosnia to become independent. In 1992, when Bosnia did become independent, Karadzic declared the independent Serb republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska (Paris, 2004: 1). Land control immediately exploded into violence between Muslims, Serbs and Croats, and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina began, as well as the siege of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serbs. The war that followed had massive human rights violations, genocide, mass rape and mass execution (Paris, 2004: 1). Across the country, Bosnian Serbs were aided by the JNA forces. At this time, the forces had disbanded, and their weapons, artillery and 80,000 troops became the new Bosnian Serb army, the army for Republika Srpska, led by General Ratko Mladic. The Serbians began to clear two-thirds of Bosnian territory to claim for themselves, in a method that became known as ethnic cleansing (Talentino, 2005: 169-70).

In March of 1992, before the war had broken out, 12,000 lightly armed United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) peacekeepers established command in Sarajevo, Bosnia (Howard, 2008: 44). The main mandates of this force, after war broke out, was to attempt to aid in humanitarian missions and try to mediate peace talks. UNPROFOR also declared various cities and zones as 'safe areas' and attempted to protect places such as Srebrenica, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorasde, and Bihac (Howard, 2008: 46). As well, it implemented sanctions against Serbia (Talentino, 2005: 174). As the situation in Bosnia quickly spiralled out of control ("[in] 1993, between 140,000 and 250,000 people had been killed or were missing, and 4,000,000 people had been displaced" (Talentino, 2005: 172)), NATO became more and more involved in the war, flying surgical strikes against Serb artillery, and it reached the point where NATO had a much stronger presence in the Balkans than the UN. As Kaplan states, "NATO removed the UN from its authority in the Balkans" (2010: 156). By 1995, pressured by the economic sanctions and international pressures, Milosevic had to switch views from supporting the Bosnian Serbs to publicly lashing out at them for thwarting the various peace proposals. After talks, he represented them at the Dayton peace talks in 1995. The Dayton agreement set up the guidelines for liberal peacebuilding in Bosnia, and from the day the Dayton Accords were signed, a NATO force of 60,000 members along with the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNMIBH) began its campaign to rebuild the state (Talentino, 2005: 176-77).

Peacebuilding Mission Mandates

The liberal peacebuilding mission in Bosnia follows a distinct set of guidelines as to how to rebuild the state. Bosnia itself became a social experiment in complete liberalisation, the first state to be an example of "full-blown nation building intervention" (Talentino, 2005: 178). Paris defines liberal peacebuilding as:

In the political realm, liberalization means democratization, or the promotion of periodic and genuine elections, constitutional limitations on the exercise of governmental power, and respect for basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and conscience. In the economic realm, liberalization means

marketization, or movement toward a market-oriented economic model, including measures aimed at minimizing government intrusion in the economy, and maximizing the freedom for private investors, producers, and consumers to pursue their respective economic interests. (2004: 5)

This was no small task. Along with rebuilding the state the intervening powers, with NATO and UNMIBH, had to clean up the remnants of a war in a scenario where social problems and ethnic divides were gaps that were exceptionally difficult to bridge. Through this method of liberal peacebuilding, the hopeful outcome of success (and of what success actually is) is described by Kofi Annan and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as “the establishment of a ‘sustainable’ peace, or a peace that will endure long after the peacebuilders depart from the country” (as cited in Paris, 2004: 6).

Problems with Liberal Peacemaking

Critical-theorist Viewpoints and Critiques of Liberal Peacemaking

While there are writings that support liberal peacebuilding, critical theorists are very skeptical of the liberal method emplaced in Bosnia for several reasons. They argue that, while some factors of liberalism do make sense in theory, it is in practice where it fails. Oliver Richmond argues that with the way the liberal peace has been designed, in Bosnia-Herzegovina “the West has little connection with the local, and far more with the international or transnational” (2011: 72). Another argument is that through liberal peacebuilding, the intervening states have taken on a perspective similar to that of the colonial era. The internationals “romanticisation of their own local...and projecting this as an exemplar for the local...It is used to catalogue, explain, govern and organize, but not to understand” (Richmond, 2011: 72). Roland states that political liberalisation has sparked renewed violence or “enforced the power of the most belligerent groups in the society” (2004: 154). He also argues that economic liberalisation has worked against establishing a stable peace (2004: 154). Chandler has pointed out that liberalization has led to a political dependency of the host states on the internationals:

It is now becoming apparent to some observers that the trend towards giving greater decision-making powers to international administrators can produce unintended results, undermining Bosnian institutions and creating relations of dependency rather than a basis for stable democratic self-government. (2000: 3)

Some scholars argue that liberalism is truly the most successful method of peacebuilding, but as pointed out by Paris, this argument has some holes:

Downs and Stedman prefer to judge the effectiveness of peacebuilding primarily on whether or not peace exists at the moment peacebuilders go home. I have already explained why their standard for evaluating peacebuilding is inappropriate: It pays too little attention to the declared purpose of peacebuilding – the creation of self-sustaining peace – and therefore sets the bar too low. (2004: 154)

Paris's counter argument makes complete sense, seeing as he uses the definition of peace set by Kofi Annan, for what is the purpose of liberal peacebuilding if peace in the host state simply disintegrates the moment intervening internationals leave?

The Negative Outcomes in Bosnia-Herzegovina Because of Liberal Peacemaking

The effects of liberal peacebuilding are vast, and not all of the results are good. Various concepts within liberalization, with their implementation, have simply failed to achieve the goals of peacebuilding. This section will explain four of such concepts that have either failed or have had limited success: democratization, justice, economic liberalization, and Growing Inequalities Impacts (GINI) and Human Development Index (HDI).

Democratization

To begin, with liberal peacekeeping (an essential step to peacebuilding), Fortna states that while it is effective at maintaining peace, it does not necessarily leave democratic societies in its wake (2008: 174). Also, intervening internationals have a tendency to, in the attempt to create a democracy, become very undemocratic. Chandler writes, "A foreign official cited in the *New York Times* stated: 'It troubles me that the less democratically we act, the more success we have...'" (2000: 3). This democratic deficit that has occurred due to liberalism has the adverse side effect of causing the government of the state to become reliant on the internationals. This goes completely against the purpose of the peacebuilding mission, seeing as to be considered successful the state should be able to have a self-sustaining peace after the intervening powers have left. Chandler continues with:

Similarly *the Economist* has raised worries 'that the protectorate seems to know no limits', citing one of the UN High Representative's aides saying that 'we do not know what we can't do' and concluding that Bosnians may 'forget how to rule themselves'. (2000:3)

The next issue is that liberalization has led to internationals missing important resources, such as locals. The internationals, in their attempt to instill democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, have ignored and misidentified the civil society and the essential role of identity, while underestimating the local political agency (Richmond, 2011: 73). Continuing with this issue, internationals have critically examined their roles and mandates with the civil society actors and elites, without "reflecting on the compatibility of their own agendas with those of civil society, or the local-local beneath" (Richmond, 2011: 73). So what is occurring is that the intervening states, namely western societies, are attempting to implement their conceptions of civil society onto the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

The ideological foundations that were laid during the Cold War, that is, the presentation of the capitalist world as the 'free world' and the perception of formal democracy and human rights as equivalent to justice and emancipation. (Manokha, 2008: 141)

This has led to resistance by the local population, who feel that their point of view is being ignored, even though it is their country that is in direct consequence of the foreign internationals' decisions. For example, “[locals] felt that the state and international statebuilders had ignored or undermined their role in stabilising society through the customary means at their disposal” (Richmond, 2011: 175). For peacebuilding to work, it must have willful participation of the host state, from local to elite levels.

Justice

Next, part of the mandate decreed by liberal peacebuilding and the Dayton Accord was to try war criminals in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This has been viewed with debatable success. Hoare argues that while the ICTY has aided in stabilising the hard-line nationalists by forcing moderates to confront them, it has “greatly underachieved” (2011: 16) its mandate in dealing justice. Meernik, however, defends the ICTY, stating that it has not, as accused, dealt with “victor’s justice”, and has made fair rulings under various principles (2003: 140).

Economic Liberalization

The next fault of liberalism is within its economic mandates. Vesna Bohicec-Dzelilovic states that economic liberalization has actually damaged the peacebuilding effort:

[Economic liberalization] has produced inadequate growth in Bosnia-Herzegovina and has not benefited the population at large. The economic policies have been deficient in providing opportunities for regular and appropriately remunerated employment and have been damaging to the consolidation of key social institutions, including health care, education, pensions and welfare. (2009: 213-14).

As well as having the liberalization of their economy fail, the Bosnians lose control of their economy to foreign powers, much like their political choice, as described earlier. As Berger states: “The nation states under the new order have lost their economic independence, their political initiative and their sovereignty” (1998: 3).

Growing Inequalities Impacts (GINI) and Human Development Index (HDI)

The GINI and HDI are statistics used to determine various social conditions. Using the data gathered and presented in *A Post-Liberal Peace* by Oliver Richmond (2011), one can see that in the years of state development in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995-2002, the HDI improved, whereas the GINI became worse. This shows how the living conditions (HDI) in Bosnia have improved, but the economic disparity has worsened (GINI).

Possible Methods to Fix Liberal Peacemaking

Critical Theorists' Solutions for Liberal Peacemaking

To solve these issues within liberal peacebuilding, various critical theorist scholars have proposed methods to resolve the problems. Two such methods are “Institutionalization before Liberalization”, proposed by Roland Paris (2004), and “Post-Liberal Peace: Local-Liberal Hybrid”, proposed by Oliver Richmond (2011).

Institutionalization before Liberalization

The method proposed by Roland Paris is one that addresses the issues with the tumultuous transition of states to liberal democracies and economies. The new strategy dictates that peacebuilders should delay democratic and economic reforms until a “rudimentary network of domestic institutions, capable of managing the strains of liberalization, have been established” (Paris, 2004: 7). Next, peacebuilders will begin to introduce democratization and marketization slowly, so as to avoid “unleashing political and economic competition” (Paris, 2004: 7). The reason this method is a legitimate possible solution is because it focuses on having the internationals create a basis for the host state, by having the host state form the institutions required for self-government rather than having the state become reliant on the internationals. By creating these base institutions, this will help ensure that the liberal frameworks do not collapse once the internationals stop supporting the structure. It also allows more stability within the host state for the democratization and marketization process. By allowing the liberal economy to slowly grow rather than open up the state to free trade instantly, it allows the local economy within the state to grow before it becomes induced into the world market. This allows the economy to fall under control of the state rather than control of the internationals, another issue discussed earlier. From here, once the internationals leave, the state should have a solid base of institutions for self-government, and an economy that is controlled by the state in a stable condition. This lessens the chance of the state’s new liberalization collapsing, and will possibly allow the peacebuilding process to fall under the definition given earlier of success.

Post-Liberal Peace: Local-Liberal Hybrid

This method, proposed by Oliver Richmond in *A Post-Liberal Peace* is a combination of various methods. It addresses the issue that liberal peacebuilding fails to work with the context of the scenario within the host state, as well as working with the locals and the elites. Basically, this method is dynamic, making the intervening internationals take each case as individualistic, identifying key issues in economy and government, while developing “social justice; rural, urban, national political systems” (2011: 194). It also looks at the various ideological and social movements that are involved within the host state. This context/local peace process is then combined with liberalism and post-liberal peacebuilding, which are designed to enable the state to become self-governed and in control of its economy, rather than having the internationals completely control the state, thus addressing the democratic deficit issue. This is also a legitimate possible solution to liberalism for it addresses key issues in which liberalism fails.

Conclusion

The process of rebuilding a state after conflict completely relies on the distinct issues that brought about the conflict, as well as how the intervening powers bring about the reforms. It is obvious that the issues that brought about the conflict must be addressed, but to do so correctly one must have the compliance of the actors in the state, as well as the locals. The internationals cannot devise a system that will collapse immediately after they stop supporting the structure, as well as the fact they cannot enforce their social dynamics upon the host state. Examining the evidence at hand, one can make the conclusion that while liberal peacebuilding is an effective option, it does

have some issues that can be resolved through options proposed by critical theorists. The issues that haunt liberalism greatly disrupt the peacebuilding process by causing more harm than good within economic and political reforms. As well, they cause the host state to become too reliant on the internationals, who also do not take the local context enough into account. This was the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1995-2002. However, the possible answers to these issues may be within the proposed reforms made by various critical theorists, who have identified and addressed these problems within liberal frameworks. Looking at the extensive research already done by various scholars, the only limit on the paper was of time. With the information gathered in this essay, future peacebuilding missions should closely examine the failures within liberalism and past peacebuilding operations, and take into account how to avoid making the same mistakes. By implementing correct methods in the future, this could lead to a more cost effective and safe route to stability within the host states that will last. States that have stable economies and governments is one of the many steps to ensure international stability.

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